GUATEMALA 1963-1970: THE LIMITS TO DEMOCRATISATION

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The subject of this thesis is the transition from de facto military rule to constitutional civilian government in Guatemala between 1963 and 1970. The focus is upon the limits to democratisation inherent in this process at a time of intense political polarisation and increasing militarisation. The work opens with a consideration of the debates that emerged in the context of the political transitions in Latin America during the 1980s. The second chapter charts the central characteristics of a foundational period in Guatemalan politics between 1944 and 1954 and argues that later political developments can only be fully understood with reference to this earlier period. Chapter Three addresses the military coup of 1963 and the period of military government which followed. The emphasis is on the effort to define the parameters of the Guatemalan political process and the military response to the guerrilla challenge which emerged after 1962. Chapter Four examines in detail the elections of March 1966 and the political campaign which preceded them. Particular consideration is given to the origins and character of the pact signed with the military establishment before the new government was permitted to take office. The following two chapters present a case study of the civilian government between 1966 and 1970. Chapter Five addresses the rhetoric and reality of the government programme with respect to three key policy areas and suggests that the failure to make progress in each was indicative of the true limits to this democratic experiment. The thematic focus of Chapter Six is insurgency and counterinsurgency and the extensive political violence which became the overarching feature of this period. The thesis concludes with a brief examination of the 1970 elections and goes on to argue that the failure of democratisation between 1963 and 1970 derived from the historic absence of a liberal democratic consensus and the predominant role of the military in the political process.
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<td>Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>American Federation of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFL-CIO</td>
<td>American Federation of Labour - Congress of Industrial Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGA</td>
<td>Asociación General de Agricultores</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANACAFE</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Café</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASIES</td>
<td>Asociación de Investigacion y Estudio Social de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CACM</td>
<td>Central American Common Market</td>
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<td>CACIF</td>
<td>Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras Agrícola de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CADEG</td>
<td>Consejo Anticomunista de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNCG</td>
<td>Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNDCC</td>
<td>Comité Nacional Democrática Contra el Comunismo</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNRS</td>
<td>Comité Nacional de Reorganización Sindical</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNT</td>
<td>Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONDECA</td>
<td>Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONSIGUA</td>
<td>Confederación Sindical de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONTRAGUA</td>
<td>Confederación de Trabajadores de Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPDR</td>
<td>Centro Provisional de Dirección Revolucionaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSG</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSJ</td>
<td>Corte Suprema de Justicia</td>
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<td>Confederación de Trabajadores de Guatemala</td>
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<td>DAT</td>
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<td>DCG</td>
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<td>FCN</td>
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<td>IRCA</td>
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<td>JOC</td>
<td>Juventud Obrera Cristiana</td>
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<td>MAP</td>
<td>Military Assistance Program</td>
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<td>MANO</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDN</td>
<td>Movimiento Democrático Nacionalista</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLN</td>
<td>Movimiento de Liberación Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNR</td>
<td>Movimiento Nacional Reformista</td>
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<td>MR-13</td>
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NOA  Nueva Organización Anticomunista
ORIT Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores
PAR Partido de Acción Revolucionaria
PCG Partido Comunista de Guatemala
PGT Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores
PID Partido Institucional Democrático
PIN Partido de Integridad Nacional
PMA Policía Militar Ambulante
PR Partido Revolucionario
PRO Partido Revolucionario Ortodoxo
PSG Partido Social Guatemalteco
PUR Partido Unificación Revolucionaria
RN Renovación Nacional
SAMF Sindicato de Acción y Mejoramiento Ferrocarriilero
SETUFCO Sindicato de Empleados y Trabajadores de La United Fruit Company
SIG Servicio de Inteligencia de Guatemala
STEG Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Educación de Guatemala
STETCAG Sindicato de Trabajadores de Tiquisate de la Compañía
UFCo United Fruit Company
URD Unidad Revolucionaria Democrática
USAID US Agency for International Development
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CHAPTER ONE
APPROACHES TO TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Introduction

Beginning with the political transition in Ecuador in 1979, Latin America experienced transitions from military to civilian rule throughout the following decade. Part of a wider democratising trend internationally, this phenomenon in Latin America has provoked extensive debate about the nature of these changes and the longer-term prospects for democracy in the region. Before 1980, the lack of stable democracy in Latin America had been explained largely in terms of regional underdevelopment and obstacles to democratisation. Modernisation theorists' 'optimistic equation' argued that when certain levels of socio-economic development had been reached, specifically in terms of per capita income, literacy and urbanisation, democracy would

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follow.\textsuperscript{2} A central supposition was the emergence of a middle sector with a pre-programmed inclination towards political democracy.\textsuperscript{3} With similar underlying assumptions, political culture theorists argued that a 'civic culture' characterised by mutual trust, tolerance and compromise was an important prerequisite for a democratic polity. Latin America's cultural heritage of Iberian colonialism was a central factor in the absence of democratic values in the region.\textsuperscript{4} Again in the developmentalist mode, Samuel Huntington pointed to inadequate institutional development in the context of increased political participation as the source of democratic instability in developing countries.\textsuperscript{5}

The emergence in the 1960s and 1970s of institutionalised military regimes in some of Latin America's most developed nations countered modernisationist assumptions about the unilateral and evolutionary nature of political change and exposed their failure to take account of international factors and historical and regional specificities. While culturalist explanations persisted, an alternative approach argued that the region's particular insertion into the


\textsuperscript{3} John J. Johnson, \textit{Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors} (Stanford, 1958).


\textsuperscript{5} Samuel P. Huntington, \textit{Political Order in Changing Societies} (New Haven, 1968).
international capitalist economy was the determining factor distorting Latin American development. The problems of dependent development - and particularly those associated with the end of the 'easy' phase of import-substituting industrialisation - were argued to have given rise to 'bureaucratic authoritarian' regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and in Chile after 1973. Structuralists and dependency theorists emphasised external factors as another set of preconditions ultimately affecting the possibilities for Latin American democratisation. The experience of Latin America in the 1980s appeared to challenge these earlier paradigms of authoritarianism and democratisation in the region. Of particular salience in the current debate has been the shift in emphasis away from structurally-led analyses to an assessment of the political processes and institutional forms involved in moving from one regime to another and the focus on elite actors and contingent choice.

Definitions of Democracy

Integral to the debate on democratic transition and consolidation in Latin America is the fundamental question of how liberal democracy is itself defined. If the Schumpeterian formulation of a polity permitting the choice between elites by citizens voting in regular and competitive elections largely describes Western democracy

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7 Cristobal Kay, Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment (London and New York, 1989); Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America (Berkeley, 1978).
in practice, it is often considered to be too narrow a model on which to judge the existence or otherwise of political democracy in Latin America. In Central America, where periodic elections have historically been used to reinforce dictatorial rule and where more recent transitions to civilian government have taken place under militarised conditions, to equate non-fraudulent elections with democracy - as did US policy-makers in the early to mid-1980s - is particularly unsatisfactory. In Guatemala and El Salvador, these elections failed to establish a significant rupture with the past and predated the regional move towards peace after 1987. Part of the continuing 'reality gap' in many Central American polities between a constitutionally-established institutional framework which incorporates liberal democratic processes and safeguards in theory and their violation in practice, elections on this basis reinforced what Mario Solórzano has described as democracias de fachada.

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9 See, for example, Edelberto Torres Rivas, 'Authoritarian Transition to Democracy in Central America', in Jan Flora and Edelberto Torres Rivas (eds.), Sociology of 'Developing Societies': Central America, (London, 1989); John A. Booth, 'Elections and Democracy in Central America. A Framework for Analysis' in Booth and Seligson, Elections and Democracy in Central America.

10 Mario Solórzano Martinez, Guatemala: Autoritarismo y Democracia (San José, 1987), pp.277-336. Herman and Brodhead, Demonstration Elections: US-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam and El Salvador (Boston, 1984), argued that such elections in the 1980s were externally manipulated 'demonstration elections'; see also, Susanne Jonas' qualification of this view: Susanne Jonas, The Battle For Guatemala. Rebels, Death Squads, and US
An election may be 'democratising', but does not in itself constitute democracy. Conversely, an election may liberalise without democratising in order for a regime to legitimise itself or to improve its image, either in terms of its own population or in response to international pressures for democratisation. O'Donnell and Schmitter's fundamental distinction between liberalisation and democratisation is central to their analysis. While the former implies the easing of repression and the extension of civil liberties within an authoritarian regime, the latter refers to a change of regime and a move towards democracy. In a situation where authoritarian rulers feel the need to relieve pressure on the system, liberalisation may exist without democratisation.

While there can be no doubt that free and fair elections are an essential part of any liberal democracy, a more demanding set of conditions is required. The mainstream literature on democratic transition broadly follows Robert Dahl's classic model structured around the dimensions of contestation and participation. In such a system, all sectors of the population have a regular opportunity to compete for political power and all have the possibility of participation in partisan and other forms of collective action. Rulers are accountable to the ruled for their actions and policies, while citizens are required to accept the legitimate outcome of competition and permit winners to govern with authority. Within this 'relatively stable mix


O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, pp.7-11.

Ibid., p.7.

of liberalisation and democratisation', O'Donnell and Schmitter identify citizenship to be the guiding principle of democracy. A further crucial dimension in the Latin American context, and one generally lacking in democratic theory, is that of civilian control over the military.

Broader issues of social justice and widespread popular participation outside elections are usually excluded from this procedural minimum. While what are termed 'maximalist' approaches may be ethically desirable, it is argued that they are unrealistic and make analytical precision difficult. Political democracy and economic equality are distinct concepts and should be treated as such. An alternative position argues that in Latin America, where extreme inequalities of income and resource distribution often coexist with unresponsive governments and political elites, political equality is meaningless without profound social and structural change.

14 O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, p.8.
16 See for example Karl, Dilemmas, p.2; Michael Burton, Richard Gunther and John Higley, 'Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes' in Higley and Gunther, Elites and Democratic Consolidation, p.2; O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, p.12.
a strong case for the inclusion of substantive issues in a procedural definition of liberal democracy. As Carlos Vilas points out, extreme poverty challenges the very notion of citizenship in the way it excludes people from access to education, jobs and healthcare. \(^{18}\) Similarly, Christian Anglade has argued that the failure of governments to attend to basic social needs, reflects and confirms the lack of political representation of those who are socially marginalised. \(^{19}\) In Central America, Vilas has argued that these different interpretations of democracy were at the centre of the revolutionary struggles - socioeconomic transformation to recast power relations and establish participatory democracy, against an elite perception of liberal democracy in its narrowest procedural sense. \(^{20}\) Yet historically, elites have not been prepared even to countenance the outcome of elections they considered unfavourable to their own interests and have been unable to agree on the most basic 'rules of the game'; with military intervention and electoral fraud as a frequent result. In this sense then, a transition which had as its outcome a political democracy according to the procedural minimum established above, might be argued to be a considerable achievement.

\(^{18}\) Vilas, 'Democratisation in Central America', p.468.


Transitions from Authoritarian Rule

At this point, the distinction between Central American authoritarianism and transition in comparison with the South American cases should be made explicit. Indeed, the Central American cases are notably absent from O'Donnell et al's multi-volume collection. As Rachel Sieder and James Dunkerley have observed, the institutionalised military dictatorships which characterised the Southern Cone and Brazil before the recent transitions were less common in Central America. The prevalent pattern in the isthmus was rather one of 'mixed regimes', in which armies either established their own front parties or participated in civilian alliances. While it is generally agreed that the transition process in the Southern Cone had its origins in schisms within the authoritarian coalition, in Central America democratisation emerged in a context of civil war and mass opposition. Involving a parallel process from war to peace, the transition in Central America has been characterised by greater international involvement than elsewhere in the region.

If there is a general consensus that the liberalisation in South America was prompted by divisions in the ruling coalition, there is considerably less agreement on the factors leading to authoritarian breakdown in each country. Several discrete strands of explanation can be discerned.

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23 Sieder, Fragile Transition, p.4.

and centre around questions of declining legitimacy and the political economy, the relative strength of civil society, opposition alliance and negotiating strategies, and corporate interests. Karen Remmer has remarked on the multiple and heterogeneous character of the propositions on offer and the fact that each case is open to a variety of interpretations. Both Remmer and Gillespie note the resulting absence of a single theory to explain democratic transition.

O'Donnell differentiates between transitions that occur by collapse and those that occur by transaction. In the former, the sudden emergence of massive and active opposition, or defeat in an external war, precipitates the military's retreat to the barracks. In Argentina, military defeat in the South Atlantic was central to the collapse of the authoritarian regime. However, the regime was already in crisis, with economic policy failures as a key source of conflict within the ruling coalition, together with succession struggles between military 'hardliners' and 'softliners' in the context of an all-party opposition alliance. Initiated from above and emerging from a


28 Ibid., pp.62-75. Several other typologies of transition have been suggested. For a synoptic discussion see Scott Mainwaring's 'Transitions to Democracy', pp.317-26; and Karl, Dilemmas, pp.9-10.

crisis in the 'internal economy' of the regime, Brazil's transition was marked by a decade-long process in which the regime proved able to retain the initiative to a considerable degree. While the Brazilian case most closely approximates the model of transition through transaction - at least until the early 1980s - Mainwaring has argued that a two-fold typology of transaction or rupture fails adequately to capture the reality of most contemporary transitions in Latin America. He points to the Peruvian and Uruguayan cases, in which weakened regimes remained in a position to dictate important terms of the transition. The Chilean case provides a further example of this kind. Mainwaring posits an intermediary category of transition by extrication between transaction and collapse. It is the nuances involved in the negotiations, dialogue and power plays that characterise the two former categories to which most of the transitions literature has been addressed.

The move to liberalise a regime occurs either because the costs of staying in power increase, or because the risks in liberalising decrease. Declining legitimacy often derives from the failure to resolve the structural and economic problems which originally brought the authoritarian regime to power. A further consideration for the military are the institutional risks associated with growing politicisation at the same time as popular pressures increase. Most importantly perhaps, is the contradiction

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between the continuing position of the military in government and its stated objective to restore liberal democracy. 33 Defeat of the 'subversive threat', political demobilisation or greater socio-economic stability may encourage 'depressurisation' as a first step towards limited democratisation. 34 More often than not, this process is a means to resolve elite differences rather than encourage greater popular participation, while readiness to engage in popular consultation or political competition is influenced by the belief that the desired outcome will be obtained. Whether or not democracy is the intended outcome however, the process that is set in motion by the superficial observance of liberal democratic precepts may have democracy as its end result. 35

The focus on splits in the authoritarian coalition as the impetus to liberalisation has led to an emphasis on the role of elites in the transition process and follows the established tendency to view elite dispositions as a central factor in stable democracies. 36 A contemporary contribution to this mode of analysis is the collection of


34 Scott Mainwaring, 'Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues' in Mainwaring et al, Issues in Democratic Consolidation, p.323.

35 O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, p.10; Laurence Whitehead, 'The Alternatives to "Liberal Democracy": A Latin American Perspective', Political Studies (Special Issue, 1992), pp.146-159, p.150.

studies edited by Higley and Gunther. Drawing on the paradigmatic Latin American cases of Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia, the introduction to this work argues that elite agreements - which take the form of either 'elite settlements' or 'elite convergences' - and the subsequent arrival at elite consensual unity, are essential components in a stable, consolidated democracy.

There is an inherent tension between the idea that democratic consolidation largely depends on the commitment of key political actors, and the notion of contingency so prevalent in the earlier transitions literature. Mainwaring has argued that the emphasis on democracy as the unintended consequence of elite instrumentalism neglects the importance of a normative commitment in the initial transition. While this is not a sufficient condition for stable democracy, such a commitment facilitates the construction of effective democratic institutions and helps in the process of building regime legitimacy. Again with reference to the cases of Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia, Mainwaring affirms that democracy as a system worked only because political elites saw it as the most desirable solution. Although much of the stuff of political democracy requires compromise from all sides and in many cases represents a second-best choice, this does not imply that democracy itself is regarded in the same manner.

37 Higley and Gunther, Elites and Democratic Consolidation.

38 Burton et al, 'Introduction', in ibid., pp.1-37. Included in the authors' definition of elites are the holders of key positions in powerful dissident organisations and movements. Ibid., p.8.


40 Ibid., p.309-10.
The emphasis on elite processes has led to a corresponding neglect of popular contributions to democratisation. Yet different layers in civil society have often played a fundamental role in pushing forward the political opening, whether through professional organisations or popular movements, or both. Middle class organisations led the push for expanded political space in Brazil, Uruguay and Ecuador, while the role of working class organisations has been judged central to accelerating the process in Brazil, Chile and Peru. At the same time, the intensity of this popular mobilisation is shaped by a number of variables, including past patterns and networks of contestation, as well as the type of transition in process. Burton et al have further argued that unless popular protest is directed by acknowledged leaders and is organised, it usually dissipates or is quickly repressed. Thus, the extent to which social groups are organised and led by elites and the ability of such elites to reach agreement on divisive issues, are considered essential to eventual democratic consolidation and stability.


44 Laura Hastings' review, Journal of Latin American Studies, 25 (February 1993) questions the authors' insistence on stability in politics as evidence of democratic consolidation, and J. Samuel Valenzuela has similarly warned of the tendency to equate consolidation with regime stability and hence to assume that durability is a basic criterion for democratic consolidation: Samuel J. Valenzuela, 'Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings', in Mainwaring et al, Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in
Characterising the transition process in terms of a multi-layered chess game which takes place in a series of overlapping stages, O'Donnell and Schmitter acknowledge the role of civil society and the possibility of a 'popular upsurge' once the initial liberalisation has begun.\textsuperscript{45} It is these pressures, they argue, which often bring political parties to the centre of the transition.\textsuperscript{46} As part of the ongoing process of negotiations involving regime hardliners and softliners and their opposition counterparts - similarly divided amongst an opportunistic opposition, a moderate opposition and 'maximalists' who reject any deal with regime incumbents\textsuperscript{47} - a series of interim arrangements are often reached on the new rules of the political game.\textsuperscript{48}

In this sense, Adam Przeworski's notion of institutionalising uncertainty has strategic limitations.\textsuperscript{49} The pacts which drive the transition process towards 'founding elections' implicitly or explicitly map out 'no-go areas' in which the property rights of the bourgeoisie remain 'inviolable' as do the assets and institutional privileges of the military.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{itemize}
\item[45] O'Donnell and Schmitter, \textit{Tentative Conclusions}, pp.48-56.
\item[46] Ibid., pp.40-5, 57-8.
\item[49] Adam Przeworski, 'Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy', in O'Donnell et al, \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives}, pp.58-63; see also, Mainwaring's reservations on this subject: Mainwaring, 'Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation', pp.
\item[50] O'Donnell and Schmitter, 'Tentative Conclusions',
argued, such elite pacts are also undemocratic mechanisms which can freeze a conservative bias into the polity and block further progress towards political, social and economic democracy.\(^5\) Whether or not such restricted democracies are able to endure and develop in a more participatory direction depends to a large extent on the strength of civil society and the effectiveness of political parties in channelling popular demands.\(^5\)

The heavy emphasis in the literature on the contingent nature of the transition process and the autonomy of political factors, distinguishes it from earlier structurally-led analyses which focused on preconditions for democracy. However, this approach might be argued to run the risk of excessive voluntarism in its wider neglect of structural factors.\(^5\) In an effort to locate elite behaviour in a wider structural-historical framework, Karl has argued that the emergence of democracy is made more or less possible by existing socio-economic structures. While labour-intensive agrarian structures in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala have traditionally linked politics and economics in ways inimical to democratisation, she suggests that petroleum revenues in Venezuela contributed to the absence of a large landowning elite – a crucial element in permitting the strategic choices which culminated in the 1958 Pact of Punto Fijo.\(^5\) In contrast,


\(^5\) Terry Lynn Karl, 'The Hybrid Regimes of Central America', Journal of Democracy, 6 (July 1995), p.82.


\(^5\) Karl, 'Hybrid Regimes', p.82; Karl, 'Dilemmas',
Mainwaring's emphasis on the importance of elite commitment to democracy in normative terms, reintroduces the problematic concept of political culture.\textsuperscript{55} In the case of Venezuela he argues that it was this normative commitment, rather than oil which was decisive in explaining the construction of democracy in that country.\textsuperscript{56}

There is a tendency in the transitions literature to minimise the impact of external factors on democratisation in Latin America, in marked contrast to the emphasis given these questions in dependency analysis.\textsuperscript{57} Remmer has stressed the need for greater attention to the changing international context in which these transitions took place.\textsuperscript{58} The importance of international involvement in the Central American transition has already been signalled, with the role of the United States seen as particularly problematic. In the rest of Latin America, Washington apparently did little to influence or control the democratisation process. A possible answer lies in the location of these countries outside the immediate sphere of US influence — although this had been not prevented various

\textsuperscript{55} See John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, 'Paths to Democracy and the Political Culture of Costa Rica, Mexico and Nicaragua', in Larry Diamond (ed.), \textit{Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries}, (Boulder, Colorado, 1994); and Vilas, 'Democratisation in Central America', pp.498-501 for current assessments on the relationship between political culture and democratisation.

\textsuperscript{56} Mainwaring, 'Transitions to Democracy', p.327. For Mainwaring's more general arguments on this point see, \textit{ibid.}, pp.308-12.

\textsuperscript{57} O'Donnell and Schmitter, \textit{Tentative Conclusions}, p.18.

\textsuperscript{58} Remmer, 'The Study of Latin American Democracy', p.486.
kinds of intervention in the past.\textsuperscript{59} Peter Smith further suggests that no serious threat was perceived to US interests by these transitions and in particular, that there was no risk of a party of the radical left taking power.\textsuperscript{60} A more critical view contends that the democratisation process is a deliberate US strategy to dissolve political barriers as part of a transnationalising neo-liberal agenda which is itself inherently undemocratic.\textsuperscript{61}

**Issues in Democratic Consolidation**

The process which begins with the inauguration of a democratic government and ends in a consolidated democratic regime has been referred to as a second transition.\textsuperscript{62} An ongoing process leading to the increased permanence and stability of a democratic system, its progress is measured by - amongst other factors - the new regime's ability to undertake far-reaching institutional reforms. The volume edited by Mainwaring et al focuses on some of the key issues and constraints in the South American transition towards consolidation, while the particularities of this transition in the Central American context are treated by Sieder et al.\textsuperscript{63} Both focus on the enduring question of effective military subordination to civilian rule in the


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61} See Gills et al, 'Low Intensity Democracy', in Gills et al, 'Low Intensity Democracy, pp.3-34.


\textsuperscript{63} Mainwaring, O'Donnell and Valenzuela, Issues in Democratic Consolidation; Sieder, Fragile Transition.
post-authoritarian setting, the need for reform of key political actors, and the problems involved in reconstructing political parties and party systems to provide effective channels of representation and accountability.\textsuperscript{64}

Substantive issues are increasingly seen to be linked to the longer-term consolidation of political democracy.\textsuperscript{65} O'Donnell and Schmitter address this question in hypothesising a possible second transition, consisting of two independent but related processes - social democracy and economic democracy. While this 'socialization' is envisaged as a 'remote' goal - better not attempted before political democracy has been achieved - Vilas has warned against a sequential approach to democratisation in Central America.\textsuperscript{66} Failure to combine the formal and substantive dimensions of democratisation can lead to delays in both. In this sense Vilas argues, the integrated character of the current Guatemalan peace negotiations with their incorporation of socio-economic and ethno-cultural issues, offer a possible way forward for democratic advance and consolidation.\textsuperscript{67}

The ability of the military to influence to varying

\textsuperscript{64} For the latter see in particular, Rodolfo Cerdas Cruz, 'Political Parties and Party Systems', in Sieder, Fragile Transition, pp.15-54; and Frances Hagopian, 'The Compromised Consolidation: The Political Class in the Brazilian Transition', in Mainwaring et al, Issues in Democratic Consolidation, pp.243-283; see also, Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (eds.), Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America (Stanford, 1995).

\textsuperscript{65} Mainwaring, O'Donnell and Valenzuela, Issues in Democratic Consolidation, p.5.

\textsuperscript{66} O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, pp.11-14; Vilas, 'Democratisation in Central America', p.502; see also, Karl, 'Hybrid Regimes', pp.78-9.

\textsuperscript{67} Vilas, 'Democratisation in Central America', p.502.
degrees all the Latin American transitions, is seen as a principal problem for eventual consolidation. In Argentina, the collapse of the regime in the wake of the South Atlantic conflict was accompanied by 'a state of political passivity and social confusion' which left the military able to influence the transition despite its external defeat. Brazil's 'liberalisation from above' initially gave the regime wider scope to control the transition process, although opposition strategies and popular mobilisation proved increasingly important in the unstoppable momentum towards democratisation. In Central America, military tutelage of the democratisation process has been greater still, with the Guatemalan military in particular as a major force in the transition.

Using the Chilean case as an example, J. Samuel Valenzuela identifies the various 'perverse institutions'

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68 Felipe Aguero, 'The Military and the Limits to Democratisation in South America', in Mainwaring et al, Issues in Democratic Consolidation, pp.153-98, argues that this military predominance was a critical difference between the Spanish and South American cases.


which can be carried over from the authoritarian regime. Military-enacted constitutions and legal frameworks provide the military establishment with tutelary powers and permit discriminatory practices to occur in the electoral process. Similarly, 'reserved domains' guaranteeing military autonomy over such matters as income, expenditure and promotions and appointments, may be embedded in the inherited legal apparatus. Often the subject of tacit or explicit agreements between the military and the new authorities in the initial transition process, the challenge becomes one of how to regain civilian control over these areas.

More than a decade after the wave of Latin American democratisation began, the perception of the fragility of these newly-democratic regimes persists. Yet, early predictions that this was merely the latest stage in a cyclical pattern of regional authoritarianism and democracy have proved precipitate. The debt crisis of the 1980s did not occasion a reversion to military government and civilian regimes have survived the implementation of harsh austerity programmes. The experience of reactionary authoritarianism or - in the case of Central America - civil war was central to this, altering perceptions and convincing maximalists on both sides to reduce their demands.

What might be termed the 'politics of exhaustion' also implies a lowering of popular expectations of what can be achieved through political action and the consequent

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demobilisation of civil society. The return to democracy has been accompanied by considerable disenchantment with the political process and with politicians in particular, who are plausibly perceived as corrupt and self-interested. One outcome of this disillusion has been the emergence of populist presidents who govern without the constraints of political parties or the parliamentary process. While a return to the institutionalised military dictatorships of the 1970s appears increasingly unlikely in Latin America, the tendency towards civilian authoritarianism represents a new challenge for democracy in the region.
CHAPTER TWO

REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the transition from de facto military rule to constitutional civilian government in Guatemala between 1963 and 1970 which will be examined with reference to the debates that emerged in the context of the political transitions in Latin America during the 1980s. However, the degree of political polarisation in the 1960s and the consequent constraints on democratic government can only be understood with reference to an earlier foundational period in twentieth century Guatemalan political history. It is argued here that there are important points of similarity and comparison between the experience of 1944-1954 on the one hand, and 1963-1970 on the other, which bear consideration in any analysis of the second period.

The 'revolution' of 20 October 1944 ushered in a singular decade in which the governments of Juan José Arévalo (1945-1951) and Jacobo Arbenz (1951-1954) presided over an unprecedented expansion in political democracy accompanied by efforts at socio-economic and structural reform. Ten years after its overthrow in June 1954 it remained an emblematic era for both the left and the right. In the context of severe restrictions on political and popular organisation after 1954 and the explicit proscription of communism, the reformist decade continued to be perceived as something of a 'golden age' for the Guatemalan left. Conversely, it was presented by the right as a narrowly-averted path to communism to which any return must be prevented at all costs. Still vivid in the popular memory and political culture of the 1960s, the weight of this particular history was crucial in shaping not only the
forces which brought Julio César Méndez Montenegro to office in 1966, but also in defining the acute limits to democratic government in the period which followed.

The later chapters in this work have been arranged with a view to the themes arising from this earlier period in Guatemalan political history. However, the intention is not one of direct comparison, but rather to signal points of continuity as well as rupture in the political process. Indeed, while it might tentatively be argued that with the 'Third Government of the Revolution' (1966-1970), the revolution experienced its final defeat, the political context and content of the latter period was very distinct to that of the 1940s. In particular, the emergence of a guerrilla insurgency in the 1960s significantly altered the political focus and led to renewed efforts on the part of the United States to counter the communist threat in Guatemala.

While the internal language of reaction had shifted from 'arbenzcomunismo' to 'castrocomunismo', the anti-reformist precepts of anticomunismo in relation to the 1944-1954 period remained firmly in place. It is also worth stressing that several of the main political actors in the 1960s had been participants in one way or another in this earlier process. Similarly, the seeds of what was to become an enduring military influence in Guatemalan politics can also be found in the reformist decade. Finally, the popular impact of the key socio-economic reforms undertaken between 1944 and 1954 was such that, while of limited practical substance, they remained in some form on the statute books and continued to form part of the political rhetoric in the following two decades. The purpose of this chapter therefore, is to give an account of this earlier period with particular reference to the factors which remain central to any interpretation of Guatemala in the 1960s.
Patterns of Historical Development

The popular insurrection which overthrew the remnants of the 13-year regime of General Jorge Ubico signalled a new era in Guatemalan political history. Ubico was heir to an entrenched system of personalistic and authoritarian rule. This began with the conservative interventions of José Rafael Carrera between 1835 and 1868, and extended into the period of liberal free trade with Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885) and Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920).

The advent of coffee as Guatemala's main cash crop after 1870, brought with it the emphatic revival of liberalism. In response to growing demands for land and - most importantly - for seasonal labour, the logic of coercive government gained particular force. The nationalisation of the extensive property holdings of the Church and the commoditisation of communal lands facilitated the exceptionally large landed estates which came to characterise Guatemala's system of land tenure. For the Indians who made up the bulk of the rural population, these reforms had profound implications. While the full repercussions of the alienation of communal lands only became apparent as the rural population increased into the twentieth century, the demand for a readily available seasonal workforce was of immediate impact. The colonial system of coerced labour was revived and codified through the traditional system of mandamientos (corvée) and the enforcement of debt peonage contracts. The latter, while

that it not forced labour as such, amounted to as much in that it tied peasants into a complex system of debt which was generally required to be paid off through plantation labour.

Underpinning state control and repression in the countryside lay the newly professionalised army - Barrios established the elite military training school, the Escuela Politécnica in 1873 - and the militias, reorganised as an army reserve and acting as a rural police force. While the land-owning class gained directly from these arrangements, they were also beholden to a state mediating labour relations on their behalf and in particular to the powerful jefes políticos in each department. Largely as a consequence, in Guatemala there was an absence of even the feeble systems of oligarchic competitive politics being essayed elsewhere in the region in the early decades of the twentieth century. Long before the military became a part of the ruling coalition in the rest of Central America, the Guatemalan ruling class had traded control of political administration for social and economic power.

By 1890, the coffee trade was established as a major source of foreign exchange revenue throughout the isthmus with the exception of Honduras. The rapid expansion of US-controlled banana cultivation after the turn of the century consolidated the export-led model and completed Central

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3 James Dunkerley, 'Guatemala, 1944-1954', in idem., Political Suicide in Latin America (London, 1992) p.84; idem., Power in the Isthmus, pp.29-30. As McCreery, Rural Guatemala, p.335, points out, it is indicative of the lack of organisation among the elites and the tensions between the caudillos and the coffee planters that large landowners were unable to form a national organisation until after the 1920s.
America's integration into the world market. While the banana enclave became a feature throughout the region, in Guatemala it was represented by a single company - the United Fruit Company (UFCo). Estrada Cabrera proved particularly supine in his dealings with the UFCo, his generous concessions to the banana industry and to its subsidiary - International Railways of Central America (IRCA) - contributing to his longevity as well as his eventual overthrow in 1920. In so far as banana land did not impinge on coffee land, UFCo presented no threat to the plantation elites. However, resentment obtained from the heavier taxes applied to coffee under Estrada Cabrera and in particular, the discriminatory rates charged by IRCA to transport the grain. Again, in 1931, Ubico's backing for UFCo and its subsidiaries against increasing elite opposition helped him gain support from the United States. These questions were to remain central to the unravelling of elite support for him in 1944.

In 1920, they provided the opportunity for Estrada Cabrera's opponents to muster finquero backing for his removal from office. His overthrow inaugurated a decade without precedent in Guatemala - a precursor to later transitions - with a series of relatively free and honest elections accompanied by greater press freedom. While the proto-nationalist government of Carlos Herrera was removed by a coup some eighteen months later, the subsequent governments of Generals José Maria Orellana (1921-1925) and Lázaro Chacón (1926-1930) were forced to accede to limited competition and continued to face opposition on the question of UFCo concessions.

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5 Export taxes for bananas in 1928 were 1.9% as compared to 8.7% for coffee: Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.62.

6 Ibid., p.63.
Dominated by the so-called 'Generation of 1920' - a group of students advocating a number of mild reforms - the period was notable for its flourishing associational life. This mobilisation was largely limited to the urban sphere and was periodically repressed, but there were also frequent bursts of unrest in the countryside as the rural population responded to the weakening of state control following Estrada Cabrera's fall.\(^7\) In the context of the 'rural bolshevism' sweeping Mexico, and no longer certain of the authority of the state or its capacity for repression, the planter elite regarded such disorder and the threat of indigenous protest with great alarm.

With the onset of the Depression in Guatemala the scope for oligarchic politics ceased. The corporate interests of the landowning class as a whole overcame those of certain competitive groups within it.\(^8\) It is notable that this early attempt at democratic transition ended in elections rather than a coup, a situation which also pertained in 1970 with the election of Colonel Arana Osorio.

The Fall of Ubico and the October Revolution

General Jorge Ubico's uncontested election in 1931 at the head of the Partido Liberal Progresista reflected the regional trend towards caudillismo in the wake of caudillismo in the wake of the Depression. However, in Guatemala it represented less a rupture with the liberal oligarchic model than a revival an established tradition of personalist and autocratic politics. Despite the appearance of liberal democratic procedure - thereby facilitating continued US support -

\(^{7}\) McCreery, Rural Guatemala, pp.297-300.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., pp.312-316; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.63.
Ubico's government was particularly monolithic and brooked no opposition. Dissenters were labelled 'communists' and dealt with accordingly. In his zealous attempts to centralise the state, all independent associations - including the Chamber of Commerce and the Guatemalan Agricultural Association (AGA) - were suppressed.

Responding to the economic crisis, the government slashed public expenditure by 30 per cent and pursued an anti-corruption campaign in the public sector. Austerity programmes maintained a reduced and servile bureaucracy, largely staffed by military officers who were themselves invigilated by a formidable police force and spy network. With 80 generals and some 700 officers, the bulk of the 6,000-strong military remained poorly-trained and poorly-equipped. Resentment regarding this state of affairs was an important source of junior officer support for the 1944 Revolution.

In the countryside, Ubico's moves to strengthen state power were especially notable. Fundamental to these were the replacement of the expensive debt peonage system with a vagrancy law in 1934 and the imposition of centrally
appointed intendentes in place of locally elected indigenous mayors, who had hitherto governed in conjunction with local ladino authority. Decree 1996 defined as a vagrant any man without sufficient property to provide an 'adequate' income, or who had not complied with a contract to work on a finca, or who did not have a contract to work on a finca and who did not cultivate specified areas of coffee, sugar, tobacco or various subsistence crops. Since few Indians had access such amounts of land in the 1930s, almost all became legally bound to be available for both plantation labour and unpaid road-building. A further amendment in 1935 effectively required all agricultural labourers to work for wages for either 100 or 150 days a year depending on their access to land. Presented as a democratic advance, the transition from debt peonage to 'trabajo libre' corresponded rather to the insufficiencies of debt servitude to control the increasing rural population in a context of growing land shortages and represented another mechanism with which to institutionalise the coercion of labour whilst reducing its costs to plantation owners.

These measures, together with his government's success in balancing the budget and presiding over a slow but steady economic recovery after the crisis of 1930-32, won Ubico oligarchic acceptance if not outright support. In exchange for order in the countryside, the landowning class was

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13 McCreery, Rural Guatemala, p.317.

14 For Ubico's public works programme see Grieb, Guatemalan Caudillo, pp.126-40, 163-76.

evidently prepared to forego political control. Yet, Ubico's relations with this group were never close, and this partially explains oligarchic indifference to his eventual departure.\textsuperscript{16}

The unravelling of Ubico's political control can be attributed to a number of factors which were symptomatic of the exhaustion of caudillismo through the region. Demographic changes in the two decades leading up to the Second World War had increased the urban sector with an accompanying transformation in the composition of employment.\textsuperscript{17} In Guatemala City, the regional expansion of the middle class was reflected in the five-fold increase in teachers during this period.\textsuperscript{18} The decline in real living standards as a result of wartime restrictions, exacerbated frustration with the lack of representation in a system where liberal democratic form bore little resemblance to political reality. An important additional factor was the anti-dictatorial ethos of the war itself. Unadulterated by the censorship usually applied to foreign news reports, Allied propaganda spoke of the Atlantic Charter, Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms' and the need to defend liberty and democracy. Against this background, authorised demonstrations in support of the Allies began to acquire a new and more subversive meaning.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} As \textit{Jefe Político} in Alta Verapaz between 1907 and 1909 Ubico had at times come into conflict with local German coffee planters: Dunkerley, \textit{Power in the Isthmus}, p.111, n.44; see also, Adams, \textit{Crucifixion by Power}, p.183; Gleijeses, \textit{Shattered Hope}, p.19.

\textsuperscript{17} Bulmer-Thomas, \textit{Political Economy}, pp.100-101.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Flores, \textit{Fortuny: un comunista guatemalteco}, pp.51-73; Ernesto Capuano, 'Guatemala 1944-1954' in Cáceres, \textit{Aproximación a Guatemala}, p.35. It is also significant that the United States adopted a position of strict neutrality towards the popular mobilisations which forced Ubico from power. While Ubico followed the US lead in declaring war on the Axis powers and deporting German
Inspired by the civil unrest in neighbouring El Salvador which had brought down his contemporary - General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez - in May 1944, Guatemalan university students and teachers began to organise in open defiance of Ubico in June. Initial demands for university autonomy resulted in immediate repression and the subsequent delivery to the presidential palace of a petition signed by 311 Guatemalan notables calling for the restoration of constitutional guarantees. The protests rapidly gained popular backing and escalated over several days into a full-scale demonstrations demanding the dictator's resignation and finally a week-long general strike in the capital. On 1 July Ubico resigned and turned over power to a lacklustre trimvirate of generals. After much behind-the-scenes negotiation and a considerable amount of military pressure - namely, the occupation of the Congress by troops on 3 July - the National Assembly elected General Ponce Vaides provisional President and convoked presidential elections for December 1944.

nationals - in common with his Central American counterparts - and 'intervened' their extensive property holdings in 1941, he had continued to resist State Department pressure for outright nationalisation until a few days before his fall in June 1944: Dunkerley, 'Guatemala, 1944-1954', p.91.


21 Generals Buenaventura Pineda, Eduardo Villagrán Ariza and Federico Ponce Vaides: see José Luis Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como una Fuerza Política', pp.132-3; Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, p.86.

22 It was at this point that Arbenz resigned his military post and began to conspire to overthrow the government: Gleijeses Shattered Hope, pp.25-7; Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.81-4; see also, Francisco Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política de Guatemala - los pactos políticos de 1944 a 1970 (Guatemala, 1993), pp.3-5; Kalman Silvert, A Study in Government, p.7; Luján Muñoz, 'Hace medio siglo', p.10-11.
In the period of liberalisation which followed, restrictions on the formation of political parties and unions were lifted and political exiles began to return. By the end of August some eight political parties had been established, of which the most significant were the student-dominated Frente Popular Libertador (FPL) and Renovación Nacional (RN), led by schoolteachers. Both supported the nomination of Dr Juan José Arévalo as their presidential candidate. Little was known about Arévalo apart from his reputation in academic circles as an intellectual and teacher who specialised in the philosophy of education and who had lived in self-imposed exile in Argentina for several years. While he had no record of active opposition to Ubico, he was sufficiently distant from the regime to enjoy considerable prestige and anonymous enough to appear to be all things to all people. As one of the founders of the RN put it, Arévalo was 'a blank page'.

With Arévalo's return to a tumultuous reception on 3 September, repression began to increase. Notwithstanding his statements to the contrary, it was clear that Ponce intended to run for the presidency in December. Supported

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Others included the Partido Social Democrático backing the candidacy of Colonel Guillermo Flores Avendaño; the Frente Nacional Democrático campaigning on behalf of Ubico's erstwhile ambassador to Washington, Adrián Recinos; and Concordia Nacional proposing Clemente Marroquín Rojas - who declined in favour of Arévalo: Villagran Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.5-7; Luján Muñoz, 'Hace medio siglo', p.11; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.27.


Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, p.70; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.34-5; Silvert, A Study in Government, p.8.

Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, p.42; Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.103, 107-8.
by the government bureaucracy and Ubico's Partido Liberal Progresista, Ponce sought to bolster his candidacy with the promise to distribute recently-nationalised German lands to campesinos who were brought into the capital to march in his favour. The most spectacular of these stage-managed demonstrations took place on Independence Day, when thousands of Indians wearing medallions bearing Ponce's portrait, paraded through Guatemala City waving machetes and sticks, shouting 'Viva Ponce'.

The repression peaked with the assassination of the editor of the leading opposition daily El Imparcial on 1 October and opposition leaders began to take refuge in foreign embassies. Others were deported. The results of the 13 October elections to fill vacant seats in the Congress confirmed Ponce's intention to take power with the government-supported slate winning by 'a handsome, not to say fantastic margin, garnering 48,530 votes out of a total of 44,571' ballots cast. Orders were issued for the

27 Adams, 'Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944', in Carol A. Smith (ed.), Guatemalan Indians and the State 1540-1988 (Austin, 1990), pp.154-5. The Patzicia revolt of 22 October was one unhappy consequence of such manipulation. In response to an Indian uprising demanding land and the restoration of Ponce which had left around 20 ladinos dead, up to 900 men, women and children were massacred by soldiers: see Adams, 'Ethnic Images', pp.144-47; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.31.

28 Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, p.45; Luján Muñoz, 'Hace medio siglo', p.11; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.27-8. On the fearful ladino images of Indians 'like cattle...waiting to pounce' and more generally on the question of ethnic conflict during the reformist decade, see Jim Handy, Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala 1944-1954 (Chapel Hill and London, 1994), pp.48-76.

29 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.28; Luján Muñoz, 'Hace medio siglo', p.11; Silvert, A Study, p.8.

arrest and deportation of Arévalo.

The resort to electoral fraud and repression appeared to signal the closure of the political apertura. Liberalisation had been pursued by the regime primarily to garner legitimacy, but Arévalo's evident popular appeal required the reversion to a more familiar pattern of control. While the opposition appeared to be losing momentum in the face of mounting intimidation, several conspiracies to overthrow the regime were being planned. A plot by FPL students had failed shortly before the events of 19 and 20 October. The action of junior officers was to make the vital difference to the efforts to unseat the last vestiges of ubiquismo.

On the night of the 19 October the Guardia de Honor, led by tank commander Major Francisco Arana, rose in revolt. The rebels were joined by fourteen students and Jacobo Arbenz Gúzman, the young infantry captain who had masterminded the plot after resigning his post in July. After taking the Guardia de Honor, the rebel soldiers and some two to three thousand civilian volunteers, fought through the night to obtain the surrender of the other army units in the capital. A 'direct hit' scored against the central ammunition store of the Castillo de San José.


31 Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.92-124.

32 Ibid., p.98; see also, testimony of Colonel Carlos Paz Tejada in Cáceres, 'Un militar honesto en la revolución', p.38.

33 The students included future president Julio César Méndez Montenegro (1966-1970); Ricardo Asturias Valenzuela who became Director of the Social Security Institute and later Health Minister in the Méndez Montenegro government; Oscar de León Aragón and Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras: Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.91-124; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.28-9.
barracks effectively ended the battle. At midday on 20 October 1944, representatives of the Ponce regime officially surrendered to the 'revolutionary forces and the armed people who accompany them' before the entire diplomatic corps assembled in the US Embassy.

Clearly a 'transition by collapse', it is important to stress that it was secured only with military intervention. This situation had several implications. In the short-term, the military was able to negotiate considerable concessions for the armed institution, as well as establishing a legal basis for military intromission in the act of government. More generally, this state of affairs set a new precedent for military intervention in the future, and confirmed a tradition in which the armed forces had been central in defining the social order.


35 Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.12-15. It is interesting to note that General Ydigoras Fuentes was present as a 'guarantor' of this treaty and equally, that both he and Colonel Peralta Azurdia had been considered by Arbenz to lead the revolt: Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.94-5.
The Reformist Decade

Lo que ha ocurrido en Guatemala no es un Golpe de Estado; es algo más profundo y algo más benéfico: es una Revolución. No se trata simplemente de echar a unos hombres para sustituirlos por otros. Se trata de transformar las bases sobre las que descansaba el corrompido orden político del ubicismo. Es una Revolución que irá a las raíces del sistema político y no se quedará en la superficie de los escritorios. En una palabra, es una Revolución llamada a lavar, a purificar nuestro sistema de vida pública, para tranquilidad de todos y para honor de Guatemala.36

The October Revolution opened an exceptional period in Guatemalan political history and one which set it apart from the general pattern of post-World War II politics in the region. In this sense, as James Dunkerley has pointed out, the reformist decade represented an historical anomaly in the context of the 'Cold War resolution' which had been imposed almost everywhere else in the region between 1945 and 1948.37

The initial strength of the anti-dictatorial movement which led to this experiment and sustained it beyond the ostensibly similar coalition which overthrew Martínez in El Salvador in May 1944, can be interpreted in a number of ways. In historical terms, conditions associated with a deep-rooted tradition of autocratic government based on force of arms together with the particularities of the enclave economy in Guatemala had contributed to a politically weak oligarchy which was in any case disinclined to come to Ubico's defence. However, a central feature of the revolution was its ability to secure

36 Juan José Arévalo, El Candidato Blanco y el Huracán (Guatemala, 1984), pp.335-6, quoted in Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.16.

37 Dunkerley, 'Guatemala, 1944-54', p.84.
military support for the new regime.

In contrast to the popular mobilisations in June from which the military had been absent, the October insurrection had been instigated by junior officers who had armed civilian volunteers. While it was this crucial military role which proved decisive in determining the composition of the revolutionary Junta in which interim power was vested, it was also a factor in winning the armed forces considerable autonomy from the executive. At the same time, the military domination of the Junta - Major Francisco Arana, Captain Jacobo Arbenz and a civilian, Jorge Toriello - and the nature of the October Revolution itself, contributed to an initial measure of complacency on the part of the oligarchy.38

On 28 November 1944, the revolutionary Junta issued Decree 17, Article 1 of which declared what were deemed to be the fundamental principles of the October Revolution.39 Codified in the subsequent constitution of 11 March 1945 - four days before Arévalo took office having won the presidency by a margin of 255,000 out of 295,000 votes cast in a poll still restricted to literate males - these principles incorporated the basic elements of a liberal

38 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.32.

39 The ten revolutionary principles were: decentralisation of Executive powers; effective separation of State powers; replacement of presidential designates by vice-President; alternation in power; reorganisation of the military; municipal autonomy; effective judicial autonomy; university autonomy; constitutional recognition of political parties; compulsory secret voting for literates, compulsory public voting for illiterate men in municipal elections; recognition of citizenship for the 'mujer preparada'; administrative transparency: Mario Garcia Laguardia and Edmundo Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático (Guatemala, 1984), p.88; see also, Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.19-21.
democratic state. At the same time however, they also entailed significant limitations on full participation and political competition and constraints on civilian authority over the military institution. While suffrage was extended to literate women as well as men, illiterate males were required to cast their ballot in public. Illiterate women - a substantial proportion of the population - remained excluded from the franchise altogether and did not receive the vote until 1965. Whether or not illiterates should be allowed to vote at all had been an issue of considerable debate in the Constituent Assembly, a debate which turned on the question of whether or not illiterates were capable of reasoned and informed deliberation in the voting process and their susceptibility to demagogic manipulation by official parties.

A striking feature in these discussions was the tendency to elide the terms 'Indian' and 'illiterate' and was characteristic of the proclivity of the ladino elites to ignore the distinction between rural Indians and rural

40 The hastily-drafted Constitution of 1945 contained guarantees of assembly, press, speech, political organisation and religious affiliation, to which were added the concepts of social security and welfare and the recognition of the social function of property. Employment was both a right and an obligation and, while the coercive features of the 1934 vagrancy law were abolished, vagrancy itself - now defined simply in terms of those without sufficient work, property or income to sustain themselves - remained theoretically punishable.

41 In these three cases the vote was compulsory.

42 In 1950, 76.1 per cent of women and 95.2 per cent of Indian women were illiterate: Susanne Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala. Rebels, Death Squads and US Power (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford, 1991), p.23; see also, Silvert, A Study in Government, p.55-61; Garcia Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático p.93.

43 Garcia Laguardia and Vasquez Martinez, ibid., p.93, note that the socialist minority opposed the enfranchisement of literate women; see also Silvert, A Study in Government, pp.55-61.
ladinos. More importantly, the reluctance to extend the vote to (Indian) illiterates reflected an ingrained and complex racism which continued to view Indianness as an obstacle to national development. The indigenous population itself remained notably absent from these early processes of institutional reorganisation. Neither the Arévalo nor the more progressive Arbenz government made a policy distinction between Indians and the campesino population at large.

At the same time however, the restoration of municipal autonomy in the 1945 Constitution and the direct election of local mayors allowed the possibility of greater Indian representation and a consequent shift in local power relations in some areas. This pattern was varied, dependent on local circumstances and often corresponded to a new set of clientelist relations pursued by urban political parties seeking rural support. Equally, Handy has suggested that local revolutionary parties were prone to cooptation by still dominant elites and sometimes worked against the reforms being undertaken at national level.

Overall though, the tenor of the period and the early

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44 Ibid.; see also Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.24.
45 Adams, 'Ethnic Images and Strategies', p.156; Fortuny in Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, p.133, comments that David Vela's intromissions on behalf of the Indian majority were conditioned by 'folkloric' rather than proper considerations of culture.
46 Jim Handy, 'Corporate Community, Campesino Organisations, and Agrarian Reform, in Smith, Guatemalan Indians, p.166.
47 Of 45 predominantly Indian municipalities studied by the Instituto Indígena in 1948, 27 had indigenous mayors; Silvert, A Study in Government, p.66; see also, Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, pp.138, 166; idem., Gift of the Devil, pp.125-6; Ricardo Falla, Quiche Rebelde, 1948-1970 (Guatemala, 1978), p.431.
48 Handy, Gift of the Devil, pp.125-6.
abolition of the coercive aspects of the vagracy law contributed to an important extension of civil liberty for the Indian population, even before rural organisation was officially sanctioned in 1948.49

During most of the Arévalo administration, communist organisation was effectively illegal. While Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution recognised the rights of 'democratic' political parties to organise, the 'formation and functioning of political organisations of an international or foreign character' were prohibited.50 Approved without debate by the Constituent Assembly, the ostensible reason for this exclusion was to preempt the formation of fascist parties.51 Clearly, however, it was open to wider interpretation. The measure was used on a number of occasions to obstruct communist organisation before 1951 and provided the basis for the closure of two evening schools for workers in 1946 and 1950.52 When the Communist Party was finally legalised in December 1952, the increasingly vocal opposition to the Arbenz government continued to insist on the anti-communist interpretation of Article 32.53 More generally, Ubico's propensity to label as a communist anyone who had opposed the status quo continued into the reformist decade, with the opposition proclaiming communist inspiration behind any threatening

49 Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.139.

50 Silvert, A Study in Government, p.58; García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, p.93.

51 Ibid.

52 Fortuny in Flores, Fortuny: una comunista, p.180, argues that Arévalo was under considerable US pressure on the question of communism; see also, ibid., pp.147-9, 179-82. On the US perception of the Communist threat during the Arévalo government see Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.81, 98-102, 119-124.

53 García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, p.93.
reform. After 1954 anticomunismo became an article of faith and communist organisation was explicitly proscribed in the constitutions of 1956 and 1965.

The provisions relating to the armed forces were a particularly controversial aspect of the 1945 Constitution. Establishing the Superior Council of National Defence and the Chief of Armed Forces, a new Army Statute had been one of the fundamental revolutionary principles laid down by Decree 17. Yet the authority invested in both institutions remained highly problematic vis-à-vis the 'essentially apolitical and non-deliberative' constitutional role assigned to the armed forces and effectively institutionalised military intromission in the act of government. Such tutelary powers and reserve domains set a pattern for future civil-military relations in post-revolutionary Guatemala and particularly after 1963. Moreover, the manner in which they were secured is significant in terms of the transfer of government in 1966.

In 1945, it appears that a significant fraction of the military were reluctant to hand over power to civilians who, Arana argued 'would reap the benefits of what we, the military had accomplished. At the heart of the issue lay the question of military autonomy and concern that an anti-military president - supposedly Arévalo - would set about dissolving the military institution. While Arbenz and Toriello apparently insisted that Arévalo be permitted to take office, it seems that the President-elect came under considerable pressure to ensure that the Constituent

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54 1945 Constitution, Article 149.
55 Letter from Arana to Jorge Toriello, 26.4.47, in El Imparcial, 29.4.47, cited in Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.52.
56 Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.25-44.
Assembly approve the Army Statute.\textsuperscript{57}

As an indication of how civilian sectors viewed the situation at the time, it is worth quoting at length the statement by \textit{constituyente} Alberto Paz y Paz:

\begin{quote}
El ejército, aún sin una plena conciencia de ello de parte de sus integrantes, ha sido una superestructura con frecuencia todopoderosa. Era preferible encauzar esa fuerza, acotarla, para que de alguna manera se pusiera al servicio efectivo del país. Se pretendió reducirlo a normas, digificarlo como institución nacional y ponerle fin al predominio de la fuerza bruta...si hubo presiones, muy explicables, de parte de los sectores civiles más avanzados intelectualmente. Se tenía plena conciencia del peligro de una fuerza armada prepotente a la que sacaba de su ámbito habitual para ponerla al servicio del poder civil...el mismo Presidente electo...ejerció indirectamente cierta presión, temeroso como estaba de no ser obedecido por la fuerza armada...\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

In exchange for the establishment of the Superior National Defence Council and a new post of Chief of Armed Forces, the military would accept the rest of the constitution in total. The clear implication was that without these concessions, Arevalo would not have been able to take office.\textsuperscript{59}

The debate on these questions revolves about the politicised character of the Superior Council and the

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\item\textsuperscript{57} Gleijeses, \textit{Shattered Hope}, p.53; Cruz Salazar, \textit{'El Ejército como Fuerza Política'}, pp.132-48; Villagrán Kramer, \textit{Biografía Política}, pp.20-44; Cardoza y Aragón, pp.48-49.
\item\textsuperscript{58} 'Don Alberto Paz y Paz habla de la revolución y la contrarrevolución en Guatemala. Entrevista de Jorge Mario García Laguardia', El Gráfico, 22.10.68, cited in García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, \textit{Constitución y Orden Democrático}, p.94, n.138.
\item\textsuperscript{59} Cardoza y Aragón, \textit{La Revolución Guatemalteca}, p.48; Villagrán Kramer, \textit{Biografía Política}, p.40.
\end{itemize}
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parallel power represented in the Chief of Armed Forces. 60 Charged with resolving questions relating to the operation of the military - whose ascribed role included defence of the constitution and to ensure the principle of alternation in power - the Superior Council was automatically imbued with a political function. 61 It was further required to give real content to the annual oath sworn to the Congress by the Chief of Armed Forces which itself included obligations to defend the 'rights and freedoms of the people' and to guarantee democracy. 62 It was therefore inevitable that the Superior Council would find itself in the position of debating the constitutionality or otherwise of executive actions and that it would intercede accordingly. 63

The office of Chief of Armed Forces was all the more problematic since its creation related directly to Arana's own pursuit of power. It also placed him in direct competition with Arbenz as Minister of Defence, and both

60 See Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como Fuerza Política', pp.132-48; Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.20-44; Luis Cardoza y Aragón, La Revolución Guatemalteca, new ed. (Guatemala, 1994) pp.48-49; García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, pp.94-5.

61 Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como Fuerza Política', p.137.

62 García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, p.95; Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como Fuerza Política', pp.137-8; Cáceres, 'Un Militar Honesto', p.40-1. According to Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.24-5, the initial swearing of this oath by the Arbenz and Arana together with the entire military high command, officers and troops duly assembled on 22 December 1944, went along way to quelling civilian fears about military intentions.

63 Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como Fuerza Política', pp.137-8, argues that the number of political prisoners and exiles in Guatemala was evidence of this constitutionally-sanctioned military intromission, but gives no further details.
proceeded to carve out separate spheres of influence with an eye to the 1950 elections.\textsuperscript{64} Responsible for all military appointments through the Minister of Defence, as Chief of Armed Forces Arana had immense personal influence about which Arévalo frequently complained.\textsuperscript{65} This situation has particular resonance with the Méndez Montenegro government (1966-1970), and it is worth noting that the statement attributed to Arévalo to the effect that two presidents ruled Guatemala and one with a machine gun with which he is always threatening the other, has been similarly attributed to Méndez Montenegro in respect of his Defence Minister, Colonel Arriaga Bosque.

In contrast to the more negative assessments of this constitutional situation, José Manuel Fortuny has posited a more sanguine and indeed positively insouciant view.\textsuperscript{66} In effect, he argues, the risks inherent in this parallel power were more hypothetical than real since Arana's manoeuvrings remained quite marginal in terms of the military as a whole. When it came to the point where civilian power was seriously challenged, the split in the

\textsuperscript{64} It is significant that Arana was a line officer who had been promoted through the ranks while Arbenz was a politec\nica graduate, this being a traditional cleavage within the Guatemalan Armed forces: see Richard N. Adams, 'The Development of the Guatemalan Military', Studies in Comparative International Development (4, 1968-1969), p.96.

\textsuperscript{65} Villagrán Kramer Biografía Política, p.52 and Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.182, both quote Arévalo's apocryphal statement that in Guatemala 'there are two presidents and one of them has a machine gun with which he is always threatening the other.'

\textsuperscript{66} Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, p.140. Fortuny's role during the reformist decade should be noted here. A founding member of the FPL and later the Partido de Acción Revolucionaria (PAR), he was a member of the Constituent Assembly and later a deputy in the legislatures under both Arévalo and Arbenz. He was also a founding member and Secretary General of the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT) and played a crucial role as close friend and advisor to President Arbenz.
high command was such 'that it decided the future destiny of the revolution'.\textsuperscript{67} Fortuny is here referring to July 1949 Arana was assassinated, it having become evident that he had abandoned his attempts to seek power by constitutional means. This cleared the way for Arbenz's presidency and the more concerted reforms which accompanied it. However, Arana's death also crystallised the anti-revolutionary coalition and became a central focus for right-wing opposition against Arbenz.

Promulgated on 15 March - the same day that Arevalo took office - the 1945 Constitution provided the basis for a series of socio-economic and structural reforms essayed by the Arevalo and Arbenz governments over the following nine years. The internal conditions for such a 'bourgeois democratic' project in Guatemala after the Second World War were hardly propicious. The overwhelming majority of the population remained rural and tied into a system of labour in which extra-market forces predominated, while the pattern of land tenure was particularly regressive. In 1950, 76 per cent of all agricultural units controlled less than 10 per cent of cultivable land while 2.2 per cent of farms controlled over 70 per cent.\textsuperscript{68} Outside Guatemala City, urban growth was still in its incipient stages with only 12 per cent of the population living in conurbations of more than 10,000 people.\textsuperscript{69} Illiteracy stood at more than 70 per cent. Industry was virtually inexistent. In 1946, there were 776 'industrial' enterprises employing a total labour force of 23,914 which included artisanal

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Cardoza y Aragón, \textit{La Revolución Guatemalteca}, p.98; see also, Handy, \textit{Gift of the Devil}, p.127.

\textsuperscript{69} Dunkerley, \textit{Power in the Isthmus}, p.140.
production as well as light industry. As few as 1.7 per cent could be classed as an industrial proletariat. A further 15,000 rural workers were engaged in waged labour on the UFCo plantations in the departments of Escuintla and Izabal, while its subsidiary IRCA employed some 5,500 on the railroads and at port facilities.

Arevalo's administration is generally noted for its moderation in relation to Arbenz's more resolutely reformist project. Yet, despite his reluctance to address the question of land tenure - latifundia were prohibited in the constitution which authorised expropriation under certain conditions - and his lack of a coherent economic project, Arevalo made some important advances in the socio-economic sphere, including the establishment of the Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social (IGSS) in 1946.

Of particular impact however, was the controversial Labour Code of 1947. The first legislation of its kind in Guatemala, it can be seen as a political watershed in terms of the definition it gave to what had hitherto been a rather amorphous opposition to the revolutionary regime. Equally, the reaction to the Labour Code reinforced

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70 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.37. The total population in 1950 was 2,790,868, 11.5 per cent of whom were employed in manufacturing including artisanal production: Nathan L. Whetten, Guatemala: The Land and the People (New Haven and London, 1961), pp.28, 90.


72 Ibid.

73 A 1951 report for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank was critical of the haphazard nature of Arévalo's developmental initiatives: Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.377; see also, Handy, Gift of the Devil, pp.115-6.
labour's commitment to the revolution in the conviction that the movement could not survive without it. Indeed, the intensely political character of the labour movement between 1944 and 1954 was determined in large part by an intransigent opposition which continued to deny the former's right to exist.\textsuperscript{74} It is significant that while the Labour Code remained on the statute books after 1954 - with important modifications - by 1964 the total number of unionised workers had been reduced to 24,000 - 2 per cent of the economically-active population - from the 100,000-strong membership claimed by the Confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG) in 1954.\textsuperscript{75} The contrast in the rural sector was even more stark, with just 9,386 or 0.2\% of campesinos unionised in 1964 as opposed to 256,000 organised under the aegis of the Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala (CNCG).\textsuperscript{76} In 1966, the prospect of a party in government which claimed its roots in the reformist decade had a particular resonance with a union movement which remained in the early stages of recomposition in the aftermath of 1954.

The 1947 Labour Code confirmed the right to unionise and to strike after due arbitration, provided for collective bargaining and established legal norms to regulate employment. This was radical in Guatemalan terms, but the code remained profoundly conservative with regard to rural organisation. Whereas urban unions with a minimum of 20 workers were permitted to organise, unions on farms with less than 500 workers required a minimum of 50 members of


whom 60 percent had to be literate. 77 By January 1948, only 11 campesino unions had legal status, of which two were on the UFCo plantations on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. 78 While many arevalistas did not believe the measures went far enough, the right argued that Labour Code was unconstitutional and communist-inspired. 79 Opponents took to the streets each Sunday in aggressive anti-government demonstrations and appealed to both the Chief of Armed Forces and the US State Department to intervene. 80 In the event, it did so, but on behalf of UFCo, the company having interpreted the restrictions as a direct attack on large commercial concerns. Largely as a result of this pressure, the government amended the code in June 1948. The somewhat ironic consequence of US intervention was therefore the extension of labour organisation in the countryside, although it remained atomised until the formation of the CNCG in 1950 and only gained force with the land reform of 1952.

Arevalistas had themselves been divided over the scope of the labour legislation and this was one aspect of a wider tendency towards shifting alliances and personalistic intrigue which was to characterise the revolutionary bloc throughout the reformist decade. 81 Symptomatic of the political inexperience and lack of ideological definition amongst many revolutionaries, these conflicts were also part of a struggle for presidential patronage which Arévalo

77 Brian Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations' in Adams, Crucifixion by Power, p.444.
78 Ibid.
80 Ibid. p.61; Galich, Por Que Lucha Guatemala, p.134.
81 Mario Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala - Monografia Sociologica (Mexico, 1959), p.311; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.39; Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, pp.30-2.
himself encouraged.\textsuperscript{82} Between 1944 and 1954 the revolutionary parties splintered and recomposed into some 20 different political configurations and were often united only in relation to the right-wing opposition.\textsuperscript{83} It is significant that many of these earlier revolutionaries were also integrants of the Partido Revolucionario (PR) at its foundation in 1957, which continued to be viewed with suspicion by the right and the US State Department, notwithstanding a series of purges to eliminate more radical elements.

Dominating the legislature - in which two-thirds of the representatives were under 35 years old - the three main parties in the revolutionary bloc were the Partido de Acción Democrático (PAR), the RN and the FPL.\textsuperscript{84} Organised by schoolteachers and university students in the wake of Ubico's resignation, the latter two had merged to form the PAR in November 1945 which subsequently fragmented into three separate parties in 1947. Notwithstanding further splits, the PAR, the RN and the rump of the FPL backed Arbenz's presidential candidacy in 1950, together with the union movement and the Communists, and the tiny Partido de Integridad Nacional (PIN) which remained the signal exception to the generalised elite opposition to Arbenz.\textsuperscript{85}

In addition to the revolutionaries' propensity for infighting, it is worth noting here the tendency for corruption amongst officials in the Arévalo administration,

\textsuperscript{82} Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.39; Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala, p.311.
\textsuperscript{83} Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.119.
\textsuperscript{84} Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.45.
\textsuperscript{85} Based on a handful of finqueros and industrialists from Quezaltenango, the PIN's support for Arbenz derived from friendship and regional loyalty: Arbenz was a paysano: see Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.73; Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, p.185.
prompting Arbenz later to rely on a small group of dedicated union leaders and Communists to administer his programme of reforms.\textsuperscript{86} The Communist Party - Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT) - finally legalised in December 1952 - itself emerged as a marxist enclave within the PAR in 1948 and later withdrew to found the clandestine Partido Comunista Guatemalteco (PCG) in 1949. Tactical differences between the latter and labour militant Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez led to the establishment of a separate workers' party - the Partido Revolucionario de Obreros Guatemaltecos (PROG) - which disbanded in February 1952 with the reincorporation of Gutiérrez into the mainstream communist bloc.\textsuperscript{87} The labour movement was itself sundered for a time between the sindicalist Frente Sindical de Guatemala (FSG) led by the powerful railway workers' union, SAMF, and the more ideologically-driven Confederación de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CTG) under the leadership of Gutiérrez.\textsuperscript{88} In practice these separate wings often acted together to push for their demands, and their rapprochement following the establishment of the CGTG in October 1951 responded both to a recognition of what such cooperation had been able to achieve, as well as the overall radicalisation of the movement in the face of the growing reactionary opposition to the regime.

It is a significant reflection of the historical absence of oligarchic competition in the political sphere that the

\textsuperscript{86} Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.119; idem., Revolution in the Countryside, p.45; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.40, 193; Ronald Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, p.40.

\textsuperscript{87} See Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.168-176; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.78, n.26, 76-81; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, pp.145-6.

\textsuperscript{88} With some 4,000 members, the SAMF reemerged after 1954 as a dominant if at times compromised force in labour politics until its demise in the 1970's following the nationalisation of IRCA in 1969.
elite opposition remained a minor participant in electoral politics.\footnote{Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, p.49.} Centred in the newly-reinstated Asociación General de Agricultores (AGA) and interpreting all social reform as communist in inspiration, the opposition disseminated anti-communism through the media and the Church and continued to look to the military to protect its interests.\footnote{Ibid.} This 'other way of doing politics' was to remain the predominant pattern into the 1960s, with the extreme right-wing Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) in particular employing a dual strategy of party political competition whilst simultaneously conspiring with recalcitrant military officers to undermine the government.

As a founding member of the FPL, the role of Mario Méndez Montenegro bears consideration in the light of political developments after 1954. Indeed, it was on the basis of his earlier association with the FPL that the leader of the Partido Revolucionario claimed that party's roots in the reformist decade on its foundation in 1957. A central protagonist in the political struggles for presidential patronage which characterised Arévalo's administration, as Mayor of Guatemala City between 1946 and 1948, Méndez Montenegro's alleged corruption was symptomatic of the graft which was rife during this period.\footnote{Ibid., p.40.} More important however, was his support for the political ambitions of the Chief of Armed Forces and his subsequent coordination of the military revolt which exploded in response to Arana's death in July 1949.

The origins of this relationship can be found in a deal forged between members of the FPL and RN on the one hand, and Arana on the other, in the wake of a serious car accident suffered by Arévalo in December 1945. At this
stage intended to forestall a coup, the *pacto de barranco* pledged revolutionary support for Arana in the 1950 presidential elections in exchange for the latter's continuing defence of the revolution. This pact largely explains Arana's role in fending off some 30 conspiracies against the Arévalo government - for which support the former also required the suppression of a good deal of government policy. By mid-1949, many in the PAR and the RN, as well as in the labour movement, had decided to back Arbenz in the 1950 elections. Arana's commitment to the revolution had become increasingly suspect, and his anti-labour activities had alienated the bulk of the revolutionaries. His final hope - the notably conservative FPL - threw out the motion to nominate him at its party convention in April 1949. While this rejection was due more to the party's civilista inclinations than to any significant radicalisation, it prompted the exit of the aranista faction from its ranks into the splinter FPL Ortodoxo, led by Mario Méndez Montenegro.

Increasingly seen as the candidate of the right, Arana's manoeuvres to secure the presidency had begun to irritate military as well as civilian sectors. In particular, his efforts to influence the choice of his successor through the Superior Council of National Defence gave rise to growing concern about military politicisation and threats

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93 Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside*, p.181; see also, idem., *Gift of the Devil*, p.111; Cardoza y Aragón, *La Revolución Guatemalteca*, p.54.


96 Ibid., p.58.

to institutional unity.\textsuperscript{98} Equally, dissidents within the armed forces and the aranista opposition began to pressure for a coup. Apparently unwilling to take power by unconstitutional means, but wanting to preempt any action by his subordinates, Arana presented Arévalo with an ultimatum: to replace the cabinet with the men of his choice, including - according to Arévalo - Mario Méndez Montenegro.\textsuperscript{99} Two days later, on 18 July 1949, Arana was killed during an abortive attempt to arrest him.

The precise details of Arana's death need not concern us here.\textsuperscript{100} Its importance lies in how the event was perceived in Guatemala and its political consequences for the revolution and in the longer term. In the immediate aftermath, the Guardia de Honor rose in revolt under the civilian leadership of Mario Méndez Montenegro.\textsuperscript{101} The most serious challenge yet to Arévalo's government, the uprising was crushed by Arbenz and loyal officers who distributed weapons to civilian volunteers.\textsuperscript{102} The failure of the coup signalled a change in the balance of forces, with the right losing the initiative to a reinvigorated

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\textsuperscript{98}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{99}] Ibid, pp.74-80; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.62-5.
\item[\textsuperscript{100}] Various versions of the events leading up to his death and the circumstances of the assassination itself are given in Flores, Fortuny: un comunista, pp.160-8; Galich, Por Qué Lucha Guatemala, pp.200-207; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.59-71; Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, pp.44-9; Sierra Roldán, Diálogos con el Coronel Monzón - Historia viva de la Revolución Guatemalteca 1944-1954 (Guatemala, 1958); Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.66-78.
\item[\textsuperscript{101}] Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.68.
\item[\textsuperscript{102}] Ibid.; Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército', p.142; Galich, Por qué Lucha Guatemala, p.205; Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, p.111. The military quickly put pressure on the government to retrieve the weapons which had been distributed to some two thousand civilian volunteers during the uprising, and labour unions conducted their own neighbourhood searches to assist in the collection: Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.73.
\end{footnotes}
left, while union action against the commemorative minutos de silencio for Arana on the anniversary of his death led to bloody battles with regime opponents and Arévalo's temporary handover of control to the armed forces.103

At the same time, however, Arana became the first martyr of the right and a powerful focus for the opposition who continued to view his death as a premeditated assassination. Such speculation was fed by Arévalo's refusal to state the true circumstances of the case and his implausible explanation that reactionaries frustrated by Arana's loyalty to the government were responsible for the crime.104 His comments about Arbenz confused issues further by suggesting that military factionalism had led to Arana's death. These questions were revived some ten years later with the prospect of Arévalo's candidacy in the 1963 presidential elections, when, directly accused of ordering in Arana's murder the ex-President responded that 'everybody in Guatemala knows who killed Arana, why he was killed, and who benefited from it'.105

The events surrounding Arana's death marked a watershed

103 Cáceres, 'Un Militar Honesto', pp.49-51; Handy, 'The Guatemalan Revolution and Civil Rights', pp.8-9; Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, p.32; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, pp.143-4.

104 A close associate of Arbenz had been present at the scene: Gliejeses, Shattered Hope, p.69-71; Villagrán Kramer, Biografia Politica, p.70; Galich, Por Qué Lucha Guatemala, p.204; see also, Thomas Melville and Marjorie Melville, Guatemala -Another Vietnam? (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.59; Susanne Jonas and David Tobis (eds.), Guatemala (Berkeley, 1974), p.156, n.8; Richard Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala. The Foreign Policy of Intervention (Austin, 1982), pp.59-60, who contend that Arana was killed by his 'friends' to remove him as an obstacle to a coup and to discredit Arbenz.

105 Juan José Arévalo, Carta Politica al Pueblo de Guatemala Con Motivo de Haber Aceptado la Candidatura Presidencial (Mexico, 1963), p.14, cited in Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.393.
in the direction of the revolution and confirmed Arbenz's rise to power based firmly on the left of the political spectrum and within the union movement. Moreover, the subsequent purge of almost a quarter of the officer corps ensured significant support from the military and permitted him a greater autonomy of action as President than Arévalo had enjoyed.

Yet, even at this stage many believed that Arbenz was simply an opportunist who, once in office, would move to curb the 'radicalism' of the Arévalo years. Winning 258,987 of the 404,739 votes cast in the November 1950 elections against 72,796 for his closest rival - the ubiquista General Ydigoras Fuentes -Arbenz's victory sparked opposition denunciations of official fraud and claims of government harassment. The suspension of constitutional guarantees for thirty days following the disturbances of July 1950 were argued to have limited the freedom of the election campaign. While the extent of Arbenz's popular support is hardly in doubt and few of these claims can be substantiated, it is worth noting a pattern which was to become increasingly familiar in election campaigns after 1954, when restricted competition enhanced the scope and possibility of fraudulent practices for government candidates. Indeed, it was largely on the basis of Ydigoras Fuentes' claims of official fraud in 1957 that the military moved to annul those elections.

106 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.73, 125-6; Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, p.35.


108 Ibid., p.9.

109 Ibid., pp.7-11.
In 1950 however, he had been implicated in a failed plot to overthrow the government, and while his campaign at the head of one party – Redención – had been hampered for this reason, he was permitted to continue as a candidate for the Partido Unido Anticomunista (PUA).\textsuperscript{110} Notwithstanding Arévalo's reluctance to openly endorse Arbenz, the latter was clearly the official candidate and as such was afforded certain advantages not available to other contenders, including the use of government vehicles for campaign purposes, support from local government officials and sole propaganda access at official ceremonies and government rallies.\textsuperscript{111} Nevertheless, if it is unlikely that the bulk of the rural population would have voted against a candidate who clearly had the support of the government and the military, as Scheider has argued, it is clear that Arbenz had a substantial political and popular base which would have guaranteed him the election in any case.\textsuperscript{112}

Arbenz's inaugural speech of 15 March 1951 outlined the three fundamental objectives of his government: economic independence, capitalist development and an improvement in the standard of living of the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{113} In following many of the recommendations made by a World Bank mission to Guatemala in 1950, the programme was hardly the bolshevik programme it came to be perceived of by the internal opposition and Washington officials, yet together with the encouragement of mass

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., pp.8-9. The failed plot had been launched by Colonel Castillo Armas who would lead the counterrevolution in 1954. Arrested conspirators who were members of Redención repeatedly implicated Ydigoras Fuentes and a warrant for the latter's arrest was issued: see also, Gleijeses, \textit{Shattered Hope}, pp.82-4.

\textsuperscript{111} Handy, 'The Guatemalan Revolution', pp.9-10.


\textsuperscript{113} Villagrán Kramer, \textit{Biografía Política}, p.92.
\end{footnotesize}
organisation and legalisation of the Communist Party under Arbenz, it represented a concerted challenge to established interests at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{114}

At the heart of the programme lay agrarian reform, the punto critico on which the regime finally foundered. While the moderation of the proposals are well-established and it has become a commonplace to argue their similarity to the type of land reform proposed by the Alliance for Progress some ten years later, it is indicative that by the early 1960s the landed elites were prone to view the Alliance itself as communist-inspired. If in 1952, the spectre of the Mexican Revolution and agrarian chaos hovered in the minds of the oligarchy and the urban middle classes, the counter-revolution was founded upon the repudiation of what was interpreted as a massive assault upon the social and economic order.\textsuperscript{115} At the same time however, it is significant that the rhetoric of land reform was never completely erased from the political agenda, while it remained by definition central to the identity and politics of the Partido Revolucionario following its creation in 1957. Nevertheless, the parameters imposed by the counter-revolution were such that private property remained inviolable, while in 1966 the PR's promise to redistribute national finca land proved to be largely unworkable.

The conditions for such a reform had been established in the 1945 Constitution which explicitly outlawed latifundia and provided for the expropriation of land for the social good. To this end, the government sought a rationalisation along capitalist lines of the exceptionally skewed pattern

\textsuperscript{114} Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.115; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.147.

of land tenure indicated by the 1950 census.\textsuperscript{116} While two per cent of the population controlled almost 74 per cent of farmland, 76 per cent of farms had access to only 9 per cent of land; 88.4 per cent of all farms possessed less than 17 acres and 21.3 per cent worked less than two acres, some 7 acres less than that considered the bare minimum to support a family.\textsuperscript{117} Passed by Congress on 17 June 1952, Decree 900 provided for the expropriation of unused or underused land from different types of agricultural enterprises, including national fincas and municipal land, which would then be redistributed in ownership or lifelong usufruct to peasants and workers.\textsuperscript{118} All farms under 90 hectares (219 acres) and those of up to 300 hectares (488 acres) of which two-thirds were cultivated were exempt from the decree, together with all communal lands, forests and fully-cultivated farms.\textsuperscript{119}

Expropriations were to depend on local initiative, it being necessary to 'denounce' illegally-held land to local agrarian officials before action would be taken under the law.\textsuperscript{120} Thus, the signal importance of the reform lay as much in the participation it induced at local level as in the expropriation of private property itself. The stipulation that it would be compensated in government bonds at a price determined by the property values submitted for the last tax assessment caused particular

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{116} Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.127.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.90. That much of the land distributed was given in usufruct was one of the main criticisms of the law: Handy, 'Corporate Community, Campesino Organisations, and Agrarian Reform', in Smith, Guatemalan Indians and the State; see also, Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.101; Nájera Farfán, Los Estafadores, p.157; Sierra Roldán, Diálogos, p.65.
\item\textsuperscript{119} Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.148.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, pp.88-90.
\end{itemize}
resentment, given the general propensity to undervalue land as a means of tax avoidance. Even so, the measures rebounded far less sharply on the oligarchy than a cursory glance at the figures might suggest. Of the 917,659 acres expropriated and redistributed to 87,569 families, more than one-third belonged to national fincas and other state and municipal lands. Moreover, apart from land held by UFCo - with some 653,197 acres marked for expropriation - only 3.9 per cent of privately-owned land was affected by the measures.

It was support for UFCo's claims for compensation that drew the United States government into a headlong campaign against the Arbenz administration, the company demanding compensation of $75 per hectare or a total of $15.8 million instead of the $627,527 at $2.99 per hectare offered by Guatemala on the basis of UFCo's 1950 tax declaration. The role of UFCo in accelerating the US government's anti-communist campaign against the Arbenz regime and the campaign itself have been treated extensively elsewhere, and will not be addressed in detail here. Nonetheless, it is worth noting UFCo's early campaign against the Labour Code which fanned State Department concern regarding communist influence within Arévalo's government,

121 Whetten, Guatemala, Table 24, p.163; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.148. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.156 and Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.94, argue that 1.4 million acres of land were expropriated and distributed to some 100,000 campesinos.
123 Ibid., p.149.
124 See, in particular, Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit. The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (London, 1982); Aybar de Soto, Dependency and Intervention; Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, esp. pp.223-387.
notwithstanding the latter's stated aversion to communism.\textsuperscript{125}

A similar view of Arbenz took some time to emerge, with initial expectations that the former would curb the radicalism of the Arevalo years, influenced in large part by the conviction that the Guatemalan military remained untainted by communist infiltration.\textsuperscript{126} However, while the importance of the communist threat was consistently overstated by the US government - the PGT won only four seats in the 1953 congressional elections and there was at no stage any overt Communist representation in the Cabinet - the PGT became a full partner in the revolutionary coalition under Arbenz and its leadership was consulted on all major government matters.\textsuperscript{127} Indeed, its influence far outweighed its size, of which estimates vary between Monteforte Toledo's conservative figure of 1,300 and PGT Secretary General Fortuny's claim to a rather more impressive 5,000 members by June 1954.\textsuperscript{128}

At the same time, the impression of communist dominance within the regime remained central to subsequent interpretations of the Arbenz administration and became a key point of reference with the Third Government of the Revolution in 1966 when the communist threat again loomed large on the horizon. As in the 1950s, the combined forces

\textsuperscript{125} Arévalo's nationalism with regard to US companies was often viewed by US officials in terms of crypto-communism, as were his escapades with the Caribbean Legion: Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.85-124.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., pp.123-6; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, pp.144, 147.

\textsuperscript{127} Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.145; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.182.

\textsuperscript{128} Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala, p.316; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.195, citing interview with Fortuny. Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.164, n.104, notes the State Department's assessment of fewer than 1,000 in 1953; see also, Cardoza y Aragón, La Revolución Guatemalteca, p.139; Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, pp.1, 44.
of the new radical challenge were small, yet in the post-1954 order, their impact was sufficient to provoke a backlash which seriously undermined the attempt at civilian democratic government.

It was the question of communist influence in the government, together with the growing importance of rural mobilisation and the central role played by activists within the CGTG and the CNCG - on whom Arbenz relied to implement the reform - which became the focus for internal opposition during the final months of his administration. Most importantly, the hitherto neutral military became increasingly concerned at the unprecedented levels of rural organisation in its traditional sphere of control. This issue should not be underestimated, since the CGTG and the CNCG were beginning to train popular militias and were successfully countering military attempts to retain vigilance by removing troublesome military commissioners. Moreover, in January 1953, the opposition press had begun to focus on a series of land invasions as further evidence of communist-fomented agitation and the loss of control in the countryside. Until 1954, Arbenz had managed to retain the military's acquiescence by extending the benefits extended to the institution under Arévalo and ensuring its monopoly on arms. A further unspoken understanding was that its ranks

129 Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, p.39; Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, p.46.

130 Handy, Revolution in the Countryside, pp.187-9; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.135; Sierra Roldán, Diálogos con el Coronel Monzón, p.72.

131 Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.135.

132 Ibid., pp.105-8; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.155. Gleijeses, ibid., p.162, argues that there were few concrete cases of illegal land occupations and that reports were exaggerated by the opposition press to further undermine the regime.
remain free from communist subversion. The growing threat of US aggression altered this balance of forces. In early June 1954, the military Chief of Staff presented Arbenz with a questionnaire - in essence an ultimatum. The President's refusal to cede to the implicit demand that he forsake the support of the Communists and remove hostile elements, was decisive in the withdrawal of military support for the government and the military failure to defend the revolution.

On 17 June 1954, a ramshackle army of some 150 mostly Guatemalan rebels led by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, crossed the border from Honduras. The final stage in the multifaceted United States operation 'PBSuccess' which had managed to isolate Guatemala internationally through the United Nations and the Organisation of American States, the success of the so-called 'forces of liberation' owed little to military prowess and almost everything to the refusal of the Guatemalan armed forces to fight. The internal coup precipitated Arbenz's resignation on 27 June, when to all intents and purposes the Guatemalan revolution ended. While United States intervention was crucial in bringing about this defeat, the internal tensions generated by the agrarian reform had ensured Arbenz's downfall. If the counter-revolutionary forces inside Guatemala remained weak in terms of organisation beyond the vocal anticomunismo employed by the Church and the oligarchy, the ease with which the 'liberación' took power testified to the limits of organised political support for the regime. The weakest link of all however, had proved to be the Guatemalan military.

133 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.202-3.
134 Villagrán Kramer, Biografia Política, pp.129-34.
The Counter-revolution

In the same way that the transition from military to civilian rule in 1966 must be set against the reformist decade, a brief account of the counter-revolution is essential to understanding the political culture after 1954. Together with its leitmotif of anticomunismo, the central feature of the counter-revolution was its essentially disorganised character. It is possible however, to distinguish between two separate periods in which the dominance of the liberacionista forces gave way to military intromission and a tentative liberalisation under military auspices. Between 1954 and 1957, under the increasingly tenuous rule of Castillo Armas, a profoundly unstable reactionary coalition set about dismantling the apparatus of the revolutionary decade. The caudillo's assassination and the fraudulent elections that followed, marked a second period in which the balance of forces shifted towards a rather more confident military emerging from the shadow of its phantom defeat in 1954.

It is important to note the tensions which continued to exist between what remained a militarily undefeated army and the liberacionista forces. In the aftermath of the invasion a series of US-orchestrated manoeuvres systematically discarded combinations of military juntas until Castillo Armas remained in sole charge of the government. Simultaneously, two separate pacts between the liberacionista forces and the Guatemalan military sought to reach a settlement, the limitations of which were revealed on 2 August when military cadets rose against liberacionista forces, in reaction to attempts to incorporate the latter into the regular forces.\(^{135}\) It is significant however, that at no point did the rebellion

either call for a return to the revolution, or attempt to free those in asylum in foreign embassies.\footnote{Villagrá

Neither the action was praised by the high command in full-page advertisements in the press, while the Defence Minister described the revolt as a 'glorious act which vindicated the good name of the army'.\footnote{Andrew Schlewitz, 'The Institutionalization of Militarism in Guatemala', unpublished paper for the Historical Studies Spring Conference 1995, New School for Social Research, New York, p.9.}

The repressive tendencies of anticomunismo in power were initially directed at removing the channels for political expression and the decisive demobilisation of society. The 1945 Constitution was declared to be at the root of the country's problems and was replaced by a temporary charter, which cancelled municipal and judicial autonomy and disenfranchised illiterates.\footnote{Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.111; Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales Guatemalteca [ASIES], Más de 100 Años del Movimiento Obrero Urbano en Guatemala. Tomo III: Reorganización, Auge Y Desarticulación del Movimiento Sindical (1954-1982) (Guatemala, n.d.), p.3. The latter forms part of a valuable four-volume study which reconstructs the history of the urban labour movement in Guatemala between 1877 and 1990 using a combination of primary and secondary documentary sources and oral history.} At the same time all urban and rural union leaders were deregistered with the Comité Nacional de Reorganización (CNRS) established to ensure the apolitical and non-communist bona fides of future union leadership, and 533 rural sindicatos and unions were cancelled.\footnote{ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.6; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.435.} Within a year, union membership stood at 27,000.\footnote{Ibid., p.436.} In the anti-communist psychosis that followed, the Comité Nacional de Defensa Contra el Comunismo (CNDCC)
was authorised to compile a register of all those who could be associated in any way with 'Communist' activities, a system of control which was to be revived by the military after 1963. By mid-November some 72,000 people had been blacklisted and those arrested on the orders of the CNDCC were denied the rights of habeus corpus.¹⁴¹

Measured against the extensive repression, the rhetorical attachment to the concept of social justice as part of the liberacionista ideology - and insisted upon by Castillo Armas and his ministers - appeared contradictory. That the regime felt the need to pay lip service to the reformist ethos of the revolution is indicative of its need to build a social base beyond the unstable anti-communist coalition which was already breaking down into rival factions. But while the retention of the Labour Code at the urging of the CNRS, the Federación Autónoma Sindical (FAS) and the American Federation of Labour (AFL) - and to the displeasure of the AGA - represented a small victory for labour, its most important provisions on basic rights and social welfare were suppressed.¹⁴² Moreover, the flurry of anti-communist decrees continued to violate what remained of its safeguards.

In the same way, the agrarian reform was all but dismantled over the following two years, notwithstanding the moderate and conciliatory tone of the relevant legislation. Excluding the land returned to UFCo, 368,481 of the 529,939 manzanas (626,418 and 900,896 acres respectively) expropriated under Decree 900 were

¹⁴¹ Ibid.; Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.151; Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala, pp.320-1.
¹⁴² ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.18-21; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.436.
The central tenet of post-intervention agrarian legislation was the exclusion of direct campesino involvement in either the administration or the decision-making process in agrarian issues, while the prevailing atmosphere of repression meant that few peasants were willing or able to take advantage of the theoretical protections extended to them.\textsuperscript{144}

In the face of official repression, the popular opposition remained generally muted, yet occasional protests continued to be registered. The student organisation \textit{El Derecho} published a manifesto in March 1955, which called for the speedy emission of a new constitution, without which there could be no democratic future for Guatemala.\textsuperscript{145} Repeatedly, during 1955 and 1956, secondary and university students acted through strikes and demonstrations to show their discontent with the regime, while at the 15,000-strong May Day parade of 1956, students and unionists took over the platform and denounced violations of the Labour Code as well as the 'yellow' unionism of their official representatives.\textsuperscript{146} The 'independent' press began to express similar sentiments and, notwithstanding its role in the fall of Arbenz, criticised the negative character of anticomunismo as the sole basis for political action.\textsuperscript{147}

The essentially unstable character of the new regime was

\textsuperscript{143} Handy, \textit{Revolution in the Countryside}, p.195: Handy notes that this figure was considerably less than the usually-quoted figure of 99.6 per cent; see, for example, Susanne Jonas Bodenheimer, \textit{Guatemala: plan piloto para el continente} (Costa Rica, 1981), p.239.

\textsuperscript{144} Handy, \textit{Revolution in the Countryside}, pp.195-7.

\textsuperscript{145} ASIES, \textit{Más de 100 Años}, pp.80-1. It is notable that this manifesto wholeheartedly embraced anticomunismo.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., pp.95-6.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{El Imparcial}, 15.6.55, cited in \textit{ibid.}, p.82.
revealed in at least three military uprisings between January 1955 and January 1956 and the imposition of a State of Siege.\textsuperscript{148} Such unrest was symptomatic of the internal struggle taking place within a politically diverse liberacionista bloc which encompassed traditional conservatives, the newly-formed Christian Democratic Party (DCG) and a collection of ultramontane elements and pure opportunists.\textsuperscript{149} Out of a series of ephemeral anti-communist organisations, the Movimiento Democrático Nacional (MDN) emerged as the 'official' party, led by the self-proclaimed Fascist, Mario Sandoval Alarcón.\textsuperscript{150} Based in the government bureaucracy, the anti-communist students' association and local liberacionista forces in the north-east of the country, the MDN mutated into the MLN after 1957 which was to be at the centre of the extreme right-wing violence of the mid-1960s.

The 1956 Constitution was promulgated after 17 months of debate and took its predecessor as a negative point of reference.\textsuperscript{151} It broadly confirmed the counter-revolution's reactionary principles and explicitly prohibited communist organisation. While social guarantees remained, their protective character was reduced. Similarly, union activity was limited to economic questions and the section on labour rights abolished. The social function of property was eliminated as was the prohibition on latifundia, and for the first time since the Liberal Revolution, the Church acquired the right to own property.

\textsuperscript{148} ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.80.

\textsuperscript{149} Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.438. The DCG was registered as a legal party on 24 August 1955.

\textsuperscript{150} ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.86; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.436.

\textsuperscript{151} García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Ordén Democrático, p.98.
for religious, educational or charitable use.\textsuperscript{152} Significantly, the power of the president was strengthened in relation to the armed forces.

The promulgation of a new constitution did nothing to resolve the inherent instability of the regime in which Castillo Armas was becoming increasingly isolated. On 26 July 1957 he was assassinated. Despite the alleged communism of the assassin - who 'committed suicide' immediately following the deed - and the detention of some 400 persons under the State of Siege which followed - there is general agreement among analysts that the caudillo's demise was the result of infighting within the anticomunist bloc.\textsuperscript{153}

In the political vacuum which followed Castillo Armas' death, a struggle for power unfolded within the anticomunist bloc with the military eventually moving to annul fraudulent elections in what appeared to be a reassertion of democratic procedure. While the MDN presented the Interior Minister Ortiz Passarelli as the official candidate in elections to be held on 20 October, this attempt at continuismo was thwarted by the return from diplomatic exile of Castillo Armas' erstwhile rival, General Ydigoras Fuentes.\textsuperscript{154} Campaigning on the platform

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p.99.

\textsuperscript{153} A prime suspect was Major Enrique Trinidad Oliva - brother of the Defence Minister - who was later tried and acquitted. Speculation also centred on the involvement of the Dominican dictator, General Rafael Trujillo: Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.439; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.292. Thirty years on, MLN leader Mario Sandoval Alarcón stated that only he and fellow right-winger Eduardo Taracena de la Cerda knew who was really responsible: ibid.

\textsuperscript{154} For Ydigoras Fuentes' earlier history see Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.82; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.105-8; Ydigoras Fuentes, My War with Communism (Englewood Cliffs, 1963). The US government had rejected him in favour of Castillo Armas to lead the
of 'a clean slate' ('borrón y cuenta nueva'), his insistence that a victory for Ortiz Passarelli would be tantamount to fraud indicated that he was not prepared to lose the election. Indeed the US Embassy noted that his 'reckless' language 'makes it abundantly clear his hopes of attaining [the] presidency are based not on winning at [the] polls but on marshalling public opinion behind him after elections'.

It is generally accepted that the October poll was fraudulent and it is significant that a good proportion of the votes remained uncounted when Ortiz Passarelli declared his victory the day after the elections. A massive convergence of Ydigoras Fuentes supporters on the National Palace ended in violence and the imposition of a State of Siege, much of the repression being directed against the newly-formed Partido Revolucionario which had reportedly supported Ydígoras in exchange for guarantees for its participation in a new poll. Led by ex-militants of the revolutionary RN and FPL - outlawed by the counter-revolution - the PR had been denied registration on the basis that many on its requisite list of 5,000 party members corresponded to those on the so-called 'blacklist' liberación, though in 1954 the CIA predicted that he was one of two possible heirs to the presidency 'when Castillo Armas steps down': Carrolton Press Declassified Reference System [hereafter DDRS], (83)000038, CIA memorandum, 19 November 1954.


156 The votes in this election were probably never counted. Some days after the 20 October poll, the chairman of the Electoral Tribunal showed US Embassy officers rooms full of sealed boxes which he said he had no intention of opening, given the current charges of fraud: DDRS DOS R-500C, American Embassy Despatch No.337, 23.11.57.

of Communists compiled in the wake of the liberación.\textsuperscript{158}

By 24 October the military had taken control of the situation. The 1956 Constitution was suspended and an interim military junta established, effectively removing the MDN from government in a move indicative of the continuing tensions between the two entities. In the negotiations that followed, the issues at stake revolved around the question of whether or not new elections should be held, and whether these should take place under \textit{de facto} or \textit{de jure} conditions. Another question, and one of particular concern to anxious US monitors, was whether or not the PR would be permitted to participate in new elections.\textsuperscript{159}

The military intervention and installation of Colonel Flores Avendaño as interim president signalled a period of contradictory trends in which the military promoted a political \textit{apertura} before subsequently moving into full political power. While Avendaño's determination to allow the PR to register had altered the balance of forces to some degree, the new political conjuncture also represented an irrevocable reversal of the roles of the military and the \textit{liberacionista} forces, effectively ending the latter's stranglehold on government.\textsuperscript{160}

Ydígoras won a plurality in a new poll in January 1958 and was duly elected President by the MDN-dominated Congress on 12 February in exchange for guaranteed MDN

\textsuperscript{158} DDRS DOS R-500E, Weeka No.48, American Embassy Despatch 346, 27.11.57.

\textsuperscript{159} Villagrán Kramer, \textit{Biografia Política}, pp.310-311; DDRS DOS R-495G, Outgoing Telegram 217 from Dulles to Ambassador Sparks, 25.10.57; DDRS DOS R-496C, Ambassador Sparks to Stewart; DDRS DOS R-496E, Telegram 163 from Ambassador Sparks.

\textsuperscript{160} Flores Avendaño, \textit{Memorias}, p.468.
cabinet positions. While Cruz Salazar has suggested that the friendship between Flores Avendaño and Ydigoras Fuentes secured his victory, there is little doubt that the General was able to garner considerable support at this juncture. His campaign had promised an end to repression and revenge, the return of political exiles, labour and agricultural reforms, all of which had been a contributing factor in the show of working class support for him following the October elections. Notwithstanding the evident right-wing orientation of the new regime, the promise of borrón y cuenta nueva indicated a new toleration and created a palpable air of expectation in terms of the possibilities inherent in the apertura política which appeared to be taking place.

It is worth contrasting the honeymoon period of this government with that of Méndez Montenegro a few years later when the parameters for democratisation were a good deal more limited. The new spirit of reconciliation was shortlived. While the deepening economic crisis provided the background to increasing industrial conflict, within the Ydigoras Fuentes administration corruption reached unprecedented levels, most notoriously with the sell-off of the national fincas. The administrative chaos was mirrored in the deterioration of the political process as

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161 DDRS DOS, American Embassy Despatch No.308, 12.11.57. The results for the main contenders were as follows: Ydigoras Fuentes (Redención) - 190,972; Col Cruz Salazar (MDN) - 138,488; Mario Méndez Montenegro (PR) - 132,824; Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.315-23.

162 Cruz Salazar, 'El Ejército como una fuerza política', pp.150-151; Flores Avendaño, Memorias, p.471.

163 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.122.

164 Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala, pp.301-302; Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, p.316.

165 Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, p354; Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.190; Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.150-5.
the President sought to sustain his weak political base by exploiting serious divisions within the MDN and the PR, both of which fragmented into rival groups. Moreover, by mid-1959, the PR together with other groups identified with the 1944 revolution were becoming the focus of government repression, while the campaign for congressional elections was characterised by illegal detentions and kidnappings. 166

A central factor in the increasingly unstable political situation was the Cuban Revolution. This event had a profound effect on Guatemalan politics, becoming at once an inspiration and a threat as Castrocomunismo replaced Arbenzcomunismo as the invisible hand behind all acts of opposition, whether emanating from the left, the right, or the military. In this way, a series of bomb attacks in the capital in May 1960 was variously blamed on the Partido Unificación Revolucionaria (PUR) - a splinter from the PR - the PGT, as well as the MDN, all 'supported by Fidel Castro'. 167 However, the attempt by Ydigoras to present the military uprising of 13 November 1960 in similar terms was received with scepticism. As US Ambassador Muccio reported to the State Department, the air force and military, 'because of [the Government of Guatemala's] cries of wolf over past months' were no longer prepared to believe that the rebels 'are really Castro agents'. 168

The irony of this observation is that participants in this revolt did indeed come to lead the first guerrilla

166 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.205-7; Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala, p.326.

167 Prensa Libre, 16.5.60 in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.207.

168 DDRS DOS (76)71-E, American Embassy Telegram 226, 14.11.60. This did not however, prevent the US from lending 'discreet surveillance' in order to intercept any reinforcements or supplies from Cuba: DDRS DOS (84) 2074, Memorandum to The President from Secretary of State Herter, 16.11.60.
focos in Guatemala. At the time however, the uprising was in part a nationalist response to the US training of Cuban exiles on Guatemalan soil - for the Bay of Pigs invasion - underpinned by more mundane institutional concerns and resentments. Central to these was the long-standing tension between line and academy-trained officers, aggravated by Ydigoras Fuentes' practice of appointing his ubiquista cronies - generally line officers - to command positions over academy graduates. Moreover, in a situation where government employees and military personnel had not been paid for two months, the large bonuses earned by Guatemalan officers selected to train the Cubans and the superior materiel of the latter, was the source of as much indignation as the existence of what was effectively a foreign army on Guatemalan territory.

It is important to stress the role of the United States in the suppression of the revolt, with CIA pilots reportedly joining the bombardment of the conspirators in Zacapa. One year later, the air force - which had been generously rewarded for its loyalty during the 13 November revolt - joined with wealthy landowners in another attempted coup, apparently provoked by Congressional approval of a new income tax and increases in land taxes two days earlier.

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169 These positions were frequently abused, as in the case of the Defence Minister who used army personnel and machines to harvest cotton on his plantation: Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Hernández, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94; see also Cifuentes Hernández, 'Causas y consecuencias del alzamiento del 13 de noviembre de 1960', Crónica, 19.11.93, p.34; César Augusto Silva Girón, Cuando Gobiernan Las Armas: Guatemala - 31 Años de Miseria (Guatemala, 1987), pp.130-131.

170 Ibid.

171 Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.442.

172 Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.154; Ydígoras Fuentes, My War with Communism, p.78. Ydígoras claims that opposition to these taxes, proposed in 1958, had resulted
The first clear indication of guerrilla activity appeared in early 1962 coinciding with the most serious popular opposition to the government to date. The spark to this latest crisis had been the congressional elections in the previous December when the official party had scooped thirty of the thirty-three available seats provoking inevitable cries of fraud. Initially led by the three main opposition parties - the MLN, DCG and PR - secretly united in a pact of cooperation to unseat the government, the AEU coordinated a fresh wave of protests in March as the new deputies took their seats in Congress. The most serious clashes occurred on 16 and 17 March with hundreds of arrests and several deaths. Faced with such a concerted challenge across the political spectrum and alarmed by guerrilla activity in Baja Verapaz, Ydigoras appointed a military cabinet leaving only the post of Foreign Relations in the hands of a civilian.

The ultimate failure to remove Ydigoras at this stage was due to a variety of factors. The movement lacked organic leadership, its very heterogeneity and unorganised character precluding its cohesion into a politically defined force. Only belatedly was the Frente Civico Nacional (FCN) formed, a coalition incorporating the three parties to the left of the PR - all splinters resulting from internal struggles and expulsions - FASGUA, SAMF, FUMN and FUEGO, as well as the Asociación Guatemalteca para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, the Asociación de Locutores and several other small groupings. None of the officially-recognised parties nor the professional sectors were included. Meanwhile, a significant section of organised labour had remained outside the struggle, while the Church vociferously condemned the protests and ordered

in four years of unrest, manipulated by the left.

173 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.227-228.
Most importantly perhaps, the military was not yet ready to act. Nevertheless, the mobilisations of March and April served to expose once again the extreme fragility of the political system imposed since 1954, both in terms of the sterile competition within the counter-revolutionary bloc and the risks involved in any putative attempts at liberalisation. By March 1963, the picture had changed with the military feeling compelled to move in defence of Guatemalan democracy against those abusing 'the widespread liberty granted by the Constitution' and intending to implant Communism from within.  

174 Ibid., p.228.

...lo apoyamos porque sabíamos que el coronel Peralta era un hombre muy...honrado. Él botó a Ydigoras Fuentes...Por eso fue que nosotros [el PR] acuerpamos a ese movimiento, como acuerpó todo Guatemala, por que la caída de Ydigoras significaba romper con un sistema muy corrupto.¹

Con aquel acto final de fuerza, el Ejército no sólo liquidad un Gobierno constitucional más...Cerró, además...el camino a una posible vida democrática del país, al impedir la celebración de las elecciones presidenciales...²

Introduction

On the night of 30 March 1963, a three-man committee arrived at the presidential residence on foot.³ Accompanied by the Director of the Escuela Politécnica and the Second-in-Command of the Guardia de Honor, Colonel Juan de Dios Aguilar de León woke President Ydigoras Fuentes to deliver the news that he had been removed from office. Shortly afterwards, a tank from the Guardia de Honor smashed down the main door of the residence. The President and his wife were transported to the Air Force Base, from where they were flown to Nicaragua the following day.⁴

¹ Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94.


³ Colonel Juan de Dios Aguilar de León, interview, Guatemala City, 4.4.94.

⁴ Colonel Aguilar de León's version of the events differs markedly from that in Ydigoras Fuentes', My War with Communism, p.2.
The military incursion into the political sphere was nothing new in itself. What distinguished this particular intervention was its institutional character. The coup decision had been taken unanimously at a meeting of all high-ranking military officers and base commanders at the Cuartel General de la Zona Militar General Justo Rufino Barrios, with the Minister of Defence, Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia, as highest-ranking officer, becoming Jefe del Gobierno rather than president. Moreover, while the new regime acknowledged its transitory assumption of power in order to defend Guatemalan democracy, it was clear that there would be no early return to constitutional rule.

The first act of the military government upon seizing power was to suspend the Constitution and all party political activity:

Que por la situación caótica a que ha llegado el país, es imposible resolver sus graves problemas dentro del margen constitucional, que los comunistas, aprovechándose de la amplia libertad que concede la Constitución vigente, se han infiltrado en el Gobierno y en los diferentes partidos políticos, propiciando el

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6 Decree Law No.8, prologue, Carta Fundamental de Gobierno, p.1. As Alan Angell has pointed out, for all the times it has been violated, the basic political discourse of Latin America remains that of constitutional and representative government, 'And this is the tradition that the military claims it has come in to protect, perfect and eventually transfer to civilians... A military government has therefore to present itself as transitory': Angell, 'The Soldier as Politician', pp.282-3.
The following three years saw a determined effort to restructure the Guatemalan polity in the name of a putative democracy in which the emphasis lay decisively with order and security. As part of this restructuring process a new party was established and the parameters for political competition severely circumscribed. Attempting to stabilise an intensely unstable political situation, the military reorganised the internal security apparatus and succeeded in carving out for itself greater autonomy and power base. This chapter begins by exploring the military's motives and sources of support underlying the coup and goes on to examine some of the key policies of the military in government. Of particular interest for our purposes, is the military role in refashioning the political system and the dynamics involved in the return to the constitutional process.

**Motives for the Coup**

El Ejército se hizo cargo del mando de la Nación para poner fin a la demagogia, a las ambiciones políticas, a la inmoralidad administrativa y al peligro comunista; así como para rescatar al país...
The proximate cause of the 1963 coup was the presence of ex-president Arévalo on Guatemalan soil, and his declared intention to stand in the forthcoming presidential elections. The issue of the ex-president's return - and more importantly the apparent readiness of Ydigoras Fuentes to accept this state of affairs - had been of increasing concern to the armed forces since Arévalo's declaration of his candidacy from Mexico. In January 1963, Defence Minister Peralta Azurdia had warned that the army would use all means at its disposal to prevent a government 'with communist tendencies' from taking power and invoked its constitutional duty in this regard.

9 'Mensaje del Jefe del Gobierno Coronel Enrique Peralta Azurdia al Pueblo de Guatemala', 31.3.65, mimeo, p.5.


11 According to the CIA, Arévalo arrived in Guatemala from Mexico on the night of 27 March, landing at a farm near Coatepeque, San Marcos. His reception committee was late and he spent two hours in the company of local campesinos before being driven to the capital: DDRS CIA 001817, Information Report, 29.3.63.

12 While the President's public position had been somewhat erratic on this question, in private talks with US officials he had repeatedly argued against attempts to prevent Arévalo's entry on the grounds of illegality, believing a strategy of divide and rule with the left would be more effective and would undermine Arévalo's support at the polls: DDRS DOS 001952, Ambassador Bell for Assistant Secretary Martin, Telegram 489, 11.2.63; DDRS DOS 001954, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram 580, 25.3.63.

13 Peralta Azurdia, 'Categorica Posicion del Ejercito'; Prensa Libre, 10.1.63.
As Edelberto Torres Rivas has noted, the coup represented continuity as well as rupture. In response to the concerted challenge to his leadership one year earlier, Ydigoras Fuentes had provisionally appointed an almost exclusively military cabinet. Although Peralta Azurdia insisted the officers were cabinet members in their own right, the new ministers signalled their difference by refusing to present their end-of-year resignations to the President, as was customary. Ydigoras Fuentes' move succeeded in deflating the protests as well as maintaining the loyalty of the armed forces for the time being. It also proved a critical step in the military trajectory from veto power to absolute control of the state. The military failure to respond to repeated calls for a cuartelazo in March 1962 had been due primarily to an inherent suspicion of civilian politicians and their motives. In particular, it was believed that the 'subversive elements' perceived to be behind the protests would ultimately benefit from any such military action. Peralta Azurdia asserted that the 'Guatemalan Communist

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14 Torres Rivas, 'El golpe militar', p.35.

15 Peralta Azurdia, 'Categórica posición del Ejército'; Hispanic American Report, Vol.15, No.4, p.306; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.228; Caesar D. Sereseres, 'Military Development and US Military Assistance: The Case of Guatemala 1961-1969', PhD diss. (University of California at Riverside, 1971), p.53. Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.370, notes that these military ministers were all university professionals and implausibly argues that this was evidence that Ydigoras Fuentes did not intend to subordinate his government to the military.


Party' had explicitly pointed to military unity as a central factor in the failure of the protest movement. However, his comment that the communists had since been targeting the political inexperience of 'some army members' to persuade them to undertake a coup d'état suggests that institutional solidarity was less firm than the Defence Minister indicated.

The question of institutional unity is of primary concern for military establishments. Perceived threats to institutional cohesion are often a precipitating factor in regime liberalisation. In the same way, corporate self-preservation is frequently the impetus for military revolts—although by the same token, their success usually depends on a significant degree of unity. Moreover, as Alan Angell has argued, a military regime that subsequently attempts a fundamental reordering of the social and political structure, must have other concerns beyond that of self-preservation per se. The experience of the Ydigoras Fuentes regime had been profoundly unsettling for the Guatemalan military, the resultant tensions having

19 Peralta Azurdia, 'Categorica posición del Ejército'.
20 Ibid.
contributed to the two unsuccessful military rebellions in November 1960 and November 1962.

In particular, Arevalo represented an intolerable threat. In the eyes of many he had been responsible for delivering Guatemala into the hands of Communism and remained its representative in the form of so-called 'arevalo-arbencismo'. Nor had his role in the death of Colonel Francisco Arana in 1949 been forgotten. The 'hoja apócrifa', issued by the 'comité de defensa de las instituciones armadas' and supposedly emanating from the Guardia de Honor, listed numerous soldiers 'massacred' during Arevalo's regime and argued that his objective now - as then - was to eliminate the military. Memories of the phantom defeat at the hands of the liberacionista forces in 1954 still loomed large in the collective military psyche - as did the fragmentary effects of liberacionista attempts to integrate themselves into the regular army. The fear of revolutionary revenge and institutional destruction remained strong and had been exacerbated by the fate of Batista's armed forces in the wake of the Cuban Revolution.

Attempting to win army approbation for his presidential ambitions, Arevalo had claimed that his government had maintained good relations with the military and offered to reinstate the military autonomy which the 1956 Constitution had effectively suppressed. In his lengthy written

22 MLN: 'La grave situación anárquica que priva en el país...', Prensa Libre, 11.3.63; DDRS DOS 001953, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram 534, 6.3.63; DDRS DOS 001954, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram 580, 25.3.63; see also, Juan José Arevalo, Carta Política, pp.7, 21-33; Franklin Patterson, 'The Guatemalan Military and the Escuela Politécnica', Armed Forces and Society (Spring, 1988), pp.376-7.

23 La Hora, 1.3.63.

24 Arevalo, Carta Política, pp.48-49; Journalist Marroquín Rojas [pseud. Canuto Ocaña], La "Carta Política" del ciudadano Juan José Arevalo, p.109-110, warned that
address to the Guatemalan people, he also sought to
distance himself from the Arbenz regime and strongly
implied that it had been Arbenz who had planned and
executed Arana's murder. By March 1963, however, the
Ydigoras Fuentes government was openly accusing Arévalo of
having ordered the assassination, while Foreign Minister
Unda Murillo suggested to the United States Embassy that
Arévalo's return to Guatemala might be blocked on grounds
of criminality.25

Given the extent of military antipathy to Arévalo - and
by implication any suggestion of a return to the reformist
decade - it is striking that only three years after the
coup, the institution permitted the installation of a
civilian president, who, together with the political party
he represented, unambiguously claimed to be the legitimate
heir of the 1944 Revolution. Most importantly, of course,
Julio César Méndez Montenegro was not Arévalo; nor was the
Partido Revolucionario arevalista in its sympathies. On
the contrary, its very success as one of three legally-
registered political parties in 1966 was largely premised
on its anti-Arévalo position.26 While the answer lies to
a great extent in the special circumstances accompanying
that transfer of power - and these will be addressed in the
following chapter - the experience of the military in
government is also important. Its success in completely
reorganising political life and setting new parameters for
this was simply a ploy to abrogate the former and return to
1945 Constitution with all that it entailed.

25 Hispanic American Report, Vol.16, No.3; DDRS DOS
001953, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram
534, 6.3.63.

26 The PR's erstwhile leader and Julio César's brother
Mario Méndez Montenegro was aligned with the Arana camp in
1949. For specific references to the rivalry that existed
between Mario Méndez Montenegro and Arévalo see DDRS DOS
001952, Ambassador Bell for Assistant Secretary Martin,
Telegram 489, 11.2.63; DDRS DOS 001953, Ambassador Bell to
Secretary of State, Telegram 534, 4.3.63.
a 'guided democracy' in which all but 'safe' organisations were excluded from elections, was not matched in other areas. Not only had its actions against the guerrillas proved largely ineffective, but its claims to administrative honesty and efficiency became increasingly open to question. As the 1966 elections approached and with the guerrillas pursuing a politically-damaging campaign of kidnapping wealthy Guatemalans for ransom, it became clear that the military government had lost much of its initial support.

In April 1963 however, the private sector had been quick to extend its approval to the new regime following the coup - in the form of an acuerdo delivered to the new Chief of Government by representatives of the Comité Coordinadora de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Industriales, Comerciales y Financieras (CACIF). The prospect of a return to the policies of the reformist decade under Arevalo was anathema for the oligarchy. Moreover, by this time there was also profound antagonism towards the economic policies of the Ydigoras Fuentes administration. While outrage at endemic corruption within the government may have had as much to do with who did and did not receive a share of the spoils as any principled position on the matter, the passing by Congress of the country's first income tax bill proved too much to swallow. The timing of the liberacionista-backed

27 DDRS CIA 002411, 'Guatemalan Communists Take Hardline as Insurgency Continues', Special Report, 6.8.65.


29 'El Respaldo Unánime de Pueblo No se Hizo Esperar', Ejército (April 1963), p.5.

30 Recopilación de Leyes, Congressional Decree No.1559, 'Ley de Impuesto sobre la Renta', 24.11.62, Vol.81, p.74. In contrast to most accounts of this
Air Force rebellion on 25 November 1962 coincided suggestively with the new legislation, while the CIA cited the 'rapidly deteriorating' situation under Ydigoras and the desire to prevent Arévalo's return, as motives for the predicted attempt to overthrow the government. 31 There is thus a certain irony in the fact that the Peralta Azurdia government itself went on to impose an income tax, 32 as well as displaying a tendency toward state intervention in specific areas of the economy and most notably with the nationalisation of the National Coffee Association (ANACAFE) in early 1966. 33

...neither Guatemala nor the US could accept the control of the GOG getting into hands which would be likely to deliver [the] country into Communism again...[The] problem was therefore one of strategy and tactics...Certainly, if it were

government, Jerry L. Weaver, 'Administration and Development in Guatemala', PhD diss. (University of Pittsburgh, 1968), p.40, disputes claims that a prima face case of maladministration under Ydigoras Fuentes was convincingly established by his accusers.

31 DDRS CIA 001815, 'Possible Attempt to Overthrow the Guatemalan Government', 24.11.62; René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94; Ydigoras Fuentes, My War with Communism, p.78; Juan Fernando Cifuentes H., 'Operación látigo', Crónica, 11.2.94; New York Times, 1.4.63. This latter source suggests that the 'Ley de Transformación Agraria', passed in October, was an additional cause of discontent: see Recopilación de Leyes, Congressional Decree 1551, 'Ley de Transformación Agraria', 11.10.62, Vol.81, p.39.

32 Recopilación de Leyes, Decree Law No.229, 'Ley de Impuesto Sobre la Renta', 23.6.64, Vol.83, p.64: Jerry L. Weaver, 'The Political Style of a Military-dominated Regime: The Guatemalan Example', The Journal of Developing Areas (April 1969), p.69, notes that the new income tax granted generous exemptions to economic elites and was weighted against shopkeepers, professionals and other middle-sector interests.

33 Decree Law No.417, 'Ley de la Asociación Nacional del Café', 4.1.66, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.84, p.194, was replaced by Decree Law 449, 19.4.66, ibid., Vol.85, p.40, after intense opposition from coffee interests: see Weaver, 'Political Style', pp.76-77.
possible to defeat Arévalo in an honest and clean election this would be ideal solution. However, there was great danger that Arévalo might win election either because the issues weren't clear, because the opposition was too divided, or because the people were deceived by his character.  

The US State Department was also anxious to prevent circumstances under which Arévalo might triumph in presidential elections, as revealed in Ambassador Bell's reports of his communications with Ydigoras Fuentes. Although Arévalo now distinguished between the 'dinosaurs' of Truman's America and the Harvard-educated elites populating Kennedy's administration, State Department officials continued to focus on his earlier denunciations of United States imperialism.  

Reminding US officials that Arévalo's administration had permitted Communist infiltration, Secretary of State Dean Rusk further commented,

[i]t seems doubtful that Arévalo has any understanding of or sympathy for the Alliance for Progress, which...he referred to as being designed only for the progress of the United States'.

It is usually argued that the US position was central to the decision to stage a military coup, Kennedy reportedly having given the 'green light' to such action in March 1963.

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34 Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, DDRS DOS 001954, Telegram 580, 25.3.63.

35 Arévalo, Carta Política, p.38. For Arévalo's earlier vilifications of United States foreign policy see Juan José Arévalo, Fábula del tiburón y las sardinas (Santiago de Chile, 1956); idem., Guatemala: la democracia y el imperio (Buenos Aires, 1955).

on the advice of his four 'Latin America experts'. However, while this argument is persuasive, it has yet to be conclusively proven. The CIA reported in mid-February the growing unity of officers around a plot to overthrow the President, but noted that Peralta Azurdia 'has definitely decided to remain neutral and take no active part'. Peralta Azurdia himself affirms in his memoirs that the coup had been in preparation for two years under his direction and that the United States Embassy knew nothing about it.

Whatever the case, the failure of the United States to recognise the new government for almost three weeks - while it attempted to 'extract' a tentative promise of elections from the de facto government - suggests that any such short-term formula to remove Arévalo from the electoral

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37 The source for this appears to be an article by Georgie Anne Geyer in the Miami Herald 24.12.66, although it is rarely cited directly: see, for example, Susanne Jonas Bodenheimer, Guatemala: plan piloto para el continente (Costa Rica, 1981), p.363, n.20; Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.171.

38 Neither Ambassador Bell, nor Assistant Secretary of State Edwin Martin - two of the five participants at the meeting in which this approval was allegedly given - were prepared to confirm this story, although both implied that the US was not unhappy that the coup took place. The other three participants were not contacted: Schlesinger and Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, p.244, 291.


40 Cited in Gabriel Aguilera, Jorge Romero Imery et al, Dialéctica del Terror en Guatemala (San José, 1981) p.89. General Ricardo Peralta reportedly also maintains that the United States Embassy was only informed of the coup when it was a fait accompli: Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes, interview with Andrew Schlewitz, Guatemala City, 28.7.94.
scene had immediately begun to run into difficulties.\textsuperscript{41} Peralta's fiercely nationalistic disposition, 'very sensitive to any form of pressure ...especially from Gringos' made for a problematic relationship between the two governments, particularly in the delicate area of counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{42} In terms of the latter, it was with obvious relief that Bowdler reported to President Johnson in March 1966, that the Peralta government had finally responded positively to US offers to 'improve its capabilities for dealing with rural and urban insurgency'.\textsuperscript{43}

Above and beyond the question of whether the United States explicitly approved the coup, lies the issue of how far US military aid and influence enabled the coup to take place. Adams implies a direct correlation between the amounts of military aid supplied to Guatemala in the preceding years and the ability of the Guatemalan armed forces as an institution to take action at this time.\textsuperscript{44} Handy has made a similar argument, asserting that US military aid resulted in increased expenditures and levels

\footnotesize{41} Britain and France recognised the new government shortly after the coup. \textit{New York Times}, 1.4.63, 6.4.63, 9.4.63, 18.4.63; \textit{Hispanic American Report}, Vol.16, No.5, p.437. While Walter LaFeber, \textit{Inevitable Revolutions. The United States in Central America} (New York, 1984) p.165, has remarked on Washington's 'quick reaction' in recognising the Peralta regime, Jonas, \textit{Plan piloto}, p.295, stresses the delay and implausibly asserts that it was a deliberate ploy to suggest US opposition to the coup. Nevertheless, the US response was a good deal more muted than it had been with Peru in July 1962, and there were no moves to cut economic aid.

\footnotesize{42} DDRS DOS 001391, Ambassador Bell to Assistant Secretary Vaughn, Telegram 965, 27.5.65; see also, Villagrán Kramer, \textit{Biografía}, p.384; \textit{New York Times}, 1.4.63.

\footnotesize{43} DDRS White House [hereafter WH] 003442, Memorandum for the President from William G Bowdler, 5.3.66.

\footnotesize{44} Adams, 'The Development of the Guatemalan Military', p.103.
of technological competence, growing involvement in rural development and better-educated officers, all of which 'solidified [the military] as the most cohesive and efficient organisation in Guatemala'. In their somewhat inconsistent efforts to refute this position, Sereseres and Jenkins place greater emphasis on the internal political and institutional processes which bring about military intervention in national politics - notwithstanding their lengthy introduction describing the major institutional and operational effects that the US Military Assistance Program (MAP) have had upon the Guatemalan military. They argue that while United States military assistance facilitated the process, many of the numerous changes that took place within the military would have happened anyway, as a result of the institutional development and growth in Guatemala itself. In relation to the 1963 coup, this was also the opinion of Ambassador Bell - for the record at least. In a telegram discussing the status of MAP in Guatemala he emphasised that it 'did not weigh in balance in the slightest in [the] army's decision to depose Ydigoras'.

In view of the latter comment, it is instructive to note that the 1963 MAP budget of $1,667,000 approved for Guatemala in January 1963 was later revised upwards to a total of $2,524,000 on 19 March. According to Michael

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45 Handy, Gift of the Devil, pp.156-7.


47 Ibid.

48 DDRS DOS (77)60E, Ambassador Bell to State Department, Telegram 480, 26.2.64.

McClintock, 1963 was also the first year in which United States Agency for International Development (AID) funds went to the Guatemalan military in the form of a budget of $325,000 for 'Civic Action' operations, with an additional $382,000 of AID money allocated to its 'Public Safety' programme.\textsuperscript{50} It is impossible to ignore the role of United States military assistance to Guatemala over time - a total of $14.1 million between 1953 and 1970.\textsuperscript{51} At the same time however, direct correlations between United States aid and the actions of the Guatemalan military remain problematic and over-simplistic, not least because - as we shall see for the 1963-66 period - such aid was no guarantee that the military in government would act in accordance with the wishes of United States officials.

The alacrity with which the three major political parties - the MLN, the PR and the DCG - aligned themselves with the de facto government also deserves comment at this stage. On 2 April, they called their supporters to a joint rally in the Parque Central in support of Peralta's new government. More striking still, appeared the brotherly embrace amidst the throng between Mario Méndez Montenegro (PR) and Mario Sandoval Alarcón (MLN) - hitherto supposedly arch political enemies.\textsuperscript{52} The answer to this surprising unity of spirit can be found in an earlier secret agreement

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{52} Prensa Libre, 12.8.66, pp.8,45; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p382.
between the three parties.\textsuperscript{53} Signed in December 1960 - less than one month after a serious military revolt had shaken the government - the pact's immediate objective had been the removal of Ydigoras Fuentes, to be followed by:

\[\text{[i]ntegración y sostenimiento de un nuevo régimen en Guatemala en el cual participen con exclusividad, en todo momento y con idéntica representación, los tres partidos que suscriben este pacto.}\textsuperscript{54}\]

The existence of this agreement was crucial to the unfolding of events up to the military coup, as well as in underwriting the exclusionary character of the post-1963 political system.\textsuperscript{55} While the radicalisation of the protests in March and April 1962 had caused the traditional parties temporarily to withdraw their demands for Ydigoras Fuentes' resignation, after November 1962 his removal became seen as imperative. Decisive to this renewed sense of urgency were the results of the November 1962 elections for Guatemala City mayor. The victor was journalist Francisco Montenegro Sierra - an independent 'of extreme leftist leanings' according to the White House - closely followed by PR dissident Unidad Revolucionaria Democrática (URD) leader Francisco Villagráñ Kramer.\textsuperscript{56} While the two front-runners shared an almost equal number of votes - 24,428 and 23,017 respectively - the MLN/DCG coalition candidate received some 13,000 votes and the PR's Mario Fuentes Pieruccini trailed in last after Jorge

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} 'Pacto Tripartito DC-PR y MLN, Clause 40, in Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, p.357.

\textsuperscript{55} The full text of the 'tripartite' pact can be found in Villagráñ Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.355-8 and, together with his commentary, in Marroquin Rojas, 'El Pacto Tripartito del año 1960', La Hora, 23.8.66, p.6.

\textsuperscript{56} DDRS WH (80)218B, Colonel Burris to The Vice President, 7.11.62.
Toriello with less than 5,000.\(^{57}\)

Torres Rivas has argued that the outcome of these elections underlined what everyone already knew - that in a free election Arevalo would win the presidency - and it appears that the results prompted Arevalo's declaration of his candidacy from Mexico.\(^{58}\) Yet, it remains unclear exactly which sections of the politically organised left did support Arevalo. While Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez later appeared to be giving the PGT's endorsement of Arevalo in his response to the latter's Carta Política, in the December 1962 elections the party had backed Jorge Toriello - with impressively poor results.\(^{59}\) Villagrán Kramer was supported by the four tiny arevalista parties, but has since denied that the URD backed Arevalo's candidacy:

La veía con una gran simpatía pero no apoyaba. No la apoyaba abiertamente. Nos daba la impresión que un retorno a la tesis muy atrás, muy vieja, que estaba cambiando muy rápidamente el país...\(^{60}\)

Indeed, it appears that Arevalo and Villagrán Kramer were potential rivals for political power, a fact recognised by


\(^{58}\) Torres Rivas, 'El golpe militar', p.36.

\(^{59}\) Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez in La Hora, 12.3.63. Guerrilla leader César Montes later denounced the PGT's alliance with Toriello: 'Declaración de César Montes', cited in Richard Gott, Rural Guerrillas in Latin America (Harmondsworth, 1970).

\(^{60}\) Francisco Villagrán Kramer, interview, Guatemala City, 22.10.93.
Ydígoras Fuentes who argued that the latter's electoral success had made him 'ambitious and vulnerable to suggestions'.\(^6^1\) In addition, Villagrán Kramer and Mario Méndez Montenegro were confirmed political enemies, as were Méndez Montenegro and Arévalo. With the opposition so divided, Ydígoras Fuentes' proposed solution to the Arévalo 'threat' was to manipulate the rivalry between its three central protagonists, and particularly that between Villagrán Kramer and Arévalo.\(^6^2\)

More generally, the central effect of the November 1962 election had been to convince the left of the need to retain Ydígoras Fuentes in power until the presidential elections. Conversely, the traditional parties now desired his rapid removal in order to eliminate the 'fantasmón' of arevalismo and its threat to the party political status quo.\(^6^3\) Accordingly, the PR declared that the next presidential elections should not take place until 'Ydígoras Fuentes is no longer in power', while the MLN argued that the only solution to the current political crisis lay in the hands of the military.\(^6^4\)

The Military in Government

As is generally the case with military regimes of an institutional character, the government over which Peralta Azurdia presided was a complex coalition of military officers, economic notables and technocrats in which the

\(^6^1\) DDRS DOS 001952, Ambassador Bell for Assistant Secretary Martin, Telegram 489, 11.2.63.

\(^6^2\) Ibid.

\(^6^3\) 'Declaraciones del PR', Prensa Libre, 11.3.63.

\(^6^4\) Ibid.; MLN, La Hora, 30.3.63.
officer corps predominated. Pre-dating the Brazilian coup by a year, it is interesting to consider the Guatemalan military government in the light of the military regimes which seized power in the Southern Cone and Brazil during the following decade. While the comparison with Guatemala should not be overstated - the Peralta government achieved neither the institutional cohesion nor the autonomy of its South American counterparts - underpinning all these regimes lay their belief in the military qualities of patriotism and self-sacrifice in the service of national welfare and security. The military as an institution was thus distinguished from the venal and self-seeking political class who were perceived to have consistently failed to live up to their national responsibilities and brought the nation to economic and political crisis. Similarly obsessed with internal subversion and security, the Peralta government attempted to assume control of economic, social and political activities and to eliminate administrative corruption with varying degrees of success.

Immediately following the coup, leading arevalistas, a number of prominent student and union leaders and other 'undesirable' elements, including Ydígoras Fuentes' close associate, Roberto Alejos Arzú, were rounded up, many being briefly held in Chimaltenango's prison before being sent into exile. All political parties were suspended - Reconcilación Democráti ca Nacional (Redención) and Colonel Cruz Salazar's Movimiento Democráti ca Nacional (MDN) were later banned - and political activity prohibited. Somewhat surprisingly, it appears that the URD retained its

65 Weaver, 'Political Style', p.64.
legal status as a 'civic committee' and - according to Villagrán Kramer - was permitted a certain margin of tolerance until early 1965, when its leaders were arrested and expelled from the country.\(^{68}\)

Under Peralta Azurdia, arbitrary road blocks, house-to-house searches, harassment and expatriation of regime critics, and press censorship, were all standard procedure.\(^ {69}\) The country was under siege, off and on, for some twenty months. Substituting the previous *Ley de Defensa de las Instituciones Democráticas* passed in February 1961, Decree Law 9 outlawed 'Communism' which was vaguely defined in the following terms:

Art. 1o ...todas las actividades que tiendan a atacar, vulnerar o destruir el sistema democrático en que se basa la vida institucional de la Nación.

Art. 2o Queda prohibida la organización y el funcionamiento de Partidos Políticos, agrupaciones, asociaciones, comités, células... en general, toda clase de entidades ideología comunista en el territorio nacional.\(^ {70}\)

Penalties ranging from two years in prison to death were established for infractions of this law, which were to be adjudicated exclusively by military tribunals. Echoing the style of the Castillo Armas regime, Article 19 authorised the Ministry of Defence to compile a register to record the names of those individuals found guilty under the new *Ley*...

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\(^{68}\) Villagrán Kramer, interview, Guatemala City, 22.10.93; Villagrán Kramer, *Biografía Política*, pp.401-3.

\(^{69}\) The press generally heeded the warning not to criticise the government, the exception being the prolific Clemente Marroquín Rojas whose pithy editorials in *La Hora* made it only newspaper to have an official censor imposed. Foreign correspondents' dispatches were also censored: *New York Times*, 27.9.63, 3.11.63.

\(^{70}\) *Decreto Ley. Carta Fundamental de Gobierno*, 'Decreto Ley No.9', pp.11-12.
de Defensa de las Instituciones Democráticas, together with those affiliated to communist organisations, the names of the organisations themselves, and those countries 'considered within the communist bloc'.

Union leaders were obvious targets of this legislation, particularly those who were not the objects of regime strategies of cooptation. While the Confederación Sindical de Guatemala (CONSIGUA) enjoyed official support throughout the military government, the directorate of the Federación Autónoma Sindical de Guatemala (FASGUA) was subject to constant harassment during the Peralta regime. The most serious incident followed a demonstration organised for May Day 1965, in which several demonstrators were injured and some 40 were detained. Almost the entire executive committee of FASGUA was arrested on the pretext of having planted a bomb in the Ministry of Labour and sentenced for having infringed the Ley de Defensa de las Instituciones Democráticas.


72 CONSIGUA was affiliated with the AFL-CIO and ORIT. FASGUA had evolved from its liberacionista origins into a radical organisation with links with the PGT and had been an active participant in the 1962 protests: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.97-113, 223, 245-6, 259; Deborah Levenson-Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror: Guatemala City 1954-1985 (Chapel Hill and London, 1994), pp.36-38; Brian Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', p.459.

73 El Imparcial, 3.5.65; Prensa Libre, 3.5.65; both cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.246-7.

74 Prensa Libre, 31.8.65, cited in ibid., p.247. The facts of this case remain somewhat unclear since, notwithstanding the cited newspaper report, the records from the Auditoría de Guerra de la Zona Central record that all seven defendants were absolved of guilt 'por falta de plena prueba' and note that the evidence presented by the judicial police was unreliable. Tribunal Militar: Guatemala, 11.10.65, Auditoría de Guerra de la Zona Central, Copias de Sentencias Sep-Dic 1965.
The railway workers union (SAMF) was also subject to repression in the early days of the military government as a result of its prominent role in the 1962 popular mobilisations in the capital. In mid-April 1963, 17 samfistas were arrested and imprisoned as a 'security measure'. A February 1964 Ministry of Labour investigation of the union's accounts found evidence of 'excess and negligence' on the part of the executive and has been similarly interpreted as an attempt by the regime to restrain SAMF activities.

In addition to outright repression in selected cases, procedural obstruction continued to be a common method of dealing with attempts by labour to organise. Union registration itself remained a lengthy and drawn-out process, while workers attempting to organise under existing labour legislation often faced mass dismissal by their employers. At the same time however, Weaver's contention that Labour Ministry officials were distinctly pro-management in industrial disputes does not appear to have been uniformly the case. The attempt by Papelera Centroamericana to sack 140 employees - in retaliation for their petition to the labour courts for union recognition - failed when the Labour Ministry ordered the plant to re-

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75 Prensa Libre, 19.4.63.

76 ASIES, Más de 100 Años', p.270. A US Embassy report commented that the audit had 'revealed...what had long been suspected...[that] the previous (Communist-infiltrated) Executive council of SAMF had seriously mid-managed...union funds: DDRS DOS 003221, Airgram 393, Weeka No.8, 24.2.64. In fact, the union was noted for its anti-communist position.

77 Levenson-Estrada 'Trade Unionists Against Terror', p.41, recounts the problems faced by the Tailors' Union in this respect; see also, Weaver, 'Political Style', p.73.

78 Weaver, 'Political Style', p.73.
open. Conversely, the attempt by the Frente Cristiano de Trabajadores de Guatemala (FECETRAG) to obtain union recognition for the workers of tyre-makers Ginsa was thwarted when employees were forced to join a parallel union established by the management. After a long legal battle, the latter was finally registered with the Departamento de Administración de Trabajo (DAT) in August 1963.

Amidst rumours that the Labour Code was to be altered - reportedly accompanied by various illegal actions against colonos and urban workers by employers and landowners - the new government issued the Carta Guatemalteca de Trabajo. This charter effectively guaranteed those rights pertaining to labour contained within the suspended constitution, and Peralta used the occasion of May Day to declare the army's concern to improve living conditions and social justice for the workers. To some extent these pledges were adhered to. The setting of minimum wages in various economic categories and the introduction of the aguinaldo - the end of year bonus - have both been acknowledged by trade unionists as important innovations in labour legislation, albeit within a framework of 'economic paternalism'.

The rate of union registration actually gained pace under

79 Prensa Libre, 14.8.63, 22.8.63, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años.
81 Prensa Libre, 2.4.63, 5.4.63, 15.4.63, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.238.
82 Prensa Libre, 3.5.63.
83 Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.239.
Peralta, if only in post-intervention terms. While the previous regime had registered thirteen new unions of which only one was agrarian, between 1963 and 1966 personaria jurídica was granted to twenty-five new unions including six rural organisations. In addition, the first liga campesina to be organised under the aegis of FECETRAG received legal recognition in September 1965. Nevertheless, rural organisers were closely monitored and often arrested, whilst the newly-created Mobile Military Police (PMA) was directed to help keep order on the plantations. Repression became gradually more extensive and reached its apogee with the seizure and subsequent murder of 28 labour activists and Communists in the weeks leading up to the March 1966 elections.

As part of the Peralta government's declared goals to purify public administration and achieve the honest management of public funds, Operación Honestidad took immediate measures against certain executive and middle level bureaucrats, while a 'Black Book' recorded the names of all former public employees suspected of dishonesty or

84 The percentage of the economically active population which was unionised hardly reached 2 per cent overall, while in the countryside the figure was a bare 0.1 per cent: ibid., pp.259-60.

85 Ibid.

86 The ligas incorporated 'independent' campesinos; those who farmed their own parcel of land, or farmed rented land, or who were employed seasonally: ibid., p.252.


disloyalty. Decree Law 52 declared all transactions involving state property under the previous government subject to investigation, and attempts were made to bring Ydigoras back to the country to stand trial for corruption. In economic terms, the government's corrective policies included currency exchange controls to halt capital flight, and fiscal reform, including the imposition of a new income tax law.

In March 1964, the United States Embassy reported the 'noteworthy progress' achieved by anti-corruption measures and in fiscal management more generally. Revenue from tax collection had increased by 24 per cent compared with same six-month period a year earlier. Wages and salaries of government employees were up-to-date 'for the first time in recent history'. However, these early endorsements were qualified by a more critical assessment of the government's longer term socio-economic policies and the lack of progress towards Alliance for Progress goals. The government's attempts to regulate economic activities brought it into conflict with the private sector on occasion. As the State Department noted in March 1964,

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89 Weaver, 'Administration and Development in Guatemala' p.25.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., p.2, 7.
95 For example, Decree Laws 444 and 468, 12.4.66 and 4.5.66, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.85, p.34, 82, obliged the transportation of tax-exempted imports with state-owned
While expressing interest in a wide variety of reforms, the GOG has been unable to arrive at an internal consensus on how far or how fast (or in some cases even in what direction) to proceed. Conservatives within the Government and the Army and business elements who fear change have thus far been influential enough to resist reforms being sought by some.96

It is in this light that the new income tax law should be seen. In 1963, Peralta had defended income tax as a necessary 'instrument for capitalist development' and not 'a socialist policy'.97 However, the replacement of the 1961 legislation with a law which shifted the tax burden from industrialists and planters to commercial and other middle sector interests, suggested the limits to the military's capacity and/or willingness to modernise the economy.

Significant policy differences existed between different groups within the government. Whereas the 'economic reformers' headed by Finance Minister Major Jorge Lucas Caballeros advocated measures to combat insurgency with basic socio-economic reforms, government hardliners represented the interests of the traditional agro-export sector which rejected any alteration of the status quo.98 A third group of 'moderators' supported Peralta and strove to remain above the factionalism.99 Such problems go some

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98 Weaver, 'Political Style', p.65.

way to explaining the 'suspicion and apathy of Guatemalan officials' encountered by US officials attempting to complete negotiations on several loans authorised by AID, as well as the impression that the Ministry of Economy often appeared 'confused and unwilling to do anything but hold the line'.

Moreover, the struggle for the nomination for the military's presidential candidate - to stand as the candidate of its newly-created party, the Partido Institucional Democrático (PID) - produced partisan schisms within the institution which, by early 1966, had resulted in two of the three military contenders being nominated by opposing political parties, several coup conspiracies, and a stern warning from the United States that it would not recognise another de facto government. If one of the objectives of the coup had been to secure institutional cohesion, by late 1965 it was coming under considerable stress.

The Military Government and Counterinsurgency

...ese gobierno dentro de su ilegalidad quiso actuar dentro un marco legal...el deseo de mantenernos dentro la legalidad fue lo que hizo...no se combatieron [los guerrilleros] como se combatiera después, dieron la marcha a la guerra sucia...

Notwithstanding its promise to eliminate the communist threat in Guatemala, the Peralta regime failed to eradicate
the small but persistent guerrilla challenge which had been harrassing government forces since 1962. Estimated at no more than 80 to 100 men in early 1964 - and divided into small, mobile groups operating in the north-east with an additional 50 to 70 Guatemalans reportedly being trained in Cuba - the guerrillas were not considered to represent a serious threat to the government. United States officials were concerned about their potential for expansion, however, and became increasingly frustrated with the Guatemalan government's failure to take decisive action against the insurgents whom Peralta insisted on classifying as 'bandits'.

Government resistance to US counterinsurgency advice and training was a further source of irritation. Specific grievances included Peralta's restrictions on the number of officers participating in US-sponsored training programmes and his instructions that military information should not be divulged to the United States Military Assistance Advisory Group because 'the US already know too much'. In June 1965, the 'Latin American Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Group on Counter-Insurgency' concluded that

102 DDRS DOS 003218, Ambassador Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram 412, 15.1.64; DDRS DOS 003223, 'Internal Defense Plan For Guatemala: Progress Report and Prospects', Airgram A-428, 6.3.64, p.6. The New York Times, 20.12.64, reported guerrilla numbers to be estimated at 150-300 with more than 1,000 adherents in urban areas.

103 DDRS DOS (78)404C, Transmittal Memorandum, Robert M Sayre to McGeorge Bundy, 12.6.65; DDRS CIA 002411, CIA Special Report, 'Guatemalan Communists Take Hardline as Insurgency Continues', 6.8.65; Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra...A la Guerra. La Dificil Transicion Politica en Guatemala, (Guatemala, 1995), p.102.

one of the key impediments to the development of a counter-insurgency program in Guatemala is ineffective government leadership and the unwillingness of the Peralta government to make decisions involving the economic, political and social development of the country.

In addition to governmental reluctance to take what US officials considered appropriate socio-economic measures to counter the growth of subversion, a further bone of contention was the role of the police. The Peralta regime proved particularly resistant to United States efforts to improve and define police functions for counterinsurgency purposes. Fourteen months after dismissing the Guatemalan police as being 'not worth much', Ambassador Bell was forced to admit that United States criteria regarding the 'roles and missions' of police as distinct from those of the military 'are not shared by GOG':

...problem is not one of adequacy of amount of US aid but rather one of basic philosophy of government and of functions of police and military...For foreseeable future fact is role to be played by police in providing internal security in Guatemala is going to be very limited.

The Guatemalan military was clearly not prepared to countenance the development of a rival security apparatus outside its control.

While US military aid to Guatemala had risen significantly under Ydigoras Fuentes, by the last year of

105 DDRS DOS (78)404C, Robert M Sayre to McGeorge Bundy, Transmittal Memorandum, 12.6.65.

106 DDRS DOS (77)60E, Bell to State Department, Telegram 480, 26.2.64; DDRS DOS 003239, Bell to Secretary of State, Telegram 950, 23.5.65.

Peralta's regime it had fallen from a peak figure of $2.6 million in 1963 to $1.3 million. At the same time however, it should be remembered that Peralta had been Minister of Defence at the time of this largest disbursement. Indeed, the emphasis that is often placed on his nationalism and hostility towards the United States and various forms of US aid can be misleading. Peralta proved to be an enthusiastic proponent of coordinated regional security measures and his support was central to the establishment of the Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana (CONDECA) in December 1963. With funding from USAID's 'Public Safety Program', Guatemala's intelligence system was successfully linked to the rest of Central America and the Canal Zone through the Regional Telecommunications Centre - known locally as 'la Regional'.

Of particular impact was the strengthening of the rural security apparatus and the reinvigoration of the military commissioner system. Previously an army reserve appointee, whose major task was to maintain public order and ensure adequate levels of military conscription in the villages, the comisionado militar was transferred to active status and became a central component in the control of the countryside following the 1963 coup. It further appears

108 Jonas and Tobis, Guatemala, p.195; DDRS DOS (78)404C, Sayre to McGeorge Bundy, Transmittal Memorandum, 12.6.65.

109 Bulmer-Thomas, Political Economy of Central America, p.178, notes that the formation of CONDECA exemplified the limits to Central American integration at a time when military-dominated governments were in power everywhere except Costa Rica; see also, Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.94; McClintock, The American Connection, p.55.

110 Ibid., pp.70-75; see also Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.109.

that commissioners and their auxiliaries assisted in
Peralta's political restructuring at local level, forcing
through personnel changes on municipal councils.\textsuperscript{112}
Whilst it seems unlikely that their increase in numbers was
as steep as McClintock has argued - from as few as 300
under Ydigoras Fuentes to more than 9,000 by the mid-1960s
-a measure of the full scope of the system can be gauged
from statistics collected in the department of Jutiapa.\textsuperscript{113}
Here, in 1965, some 971 comisionados and their auxiliares
were employed -a ratio of one agent to every fifty adult
males.\textsuperscript{114}

At the same time however, the system operated differently
in different regions. In the north-east the majority of
military commissioners were known to have close links with
the MLN, and the system later became a means through which
to recruit irregulars for vigilante and death squad
operations against guerrillas and 'guerrilla sympathisers',

\textsuperscript{112} G. A. Moore, 'Social and Ritual Change in a
Guatemalan Town', PhD Diss., (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1966),
cited in Adams, 'The Development of the Guatemalan
Military', p.110, n.10. Hispanic American Report, Vol.16,
No.8, reports Peralta's reorganisation of municipal
governments by which elected officials were replaced by
'more malleable appointees'.

\textsuperscript{113} During the reformist decade the military expanded
the number of commissioners in an effort to maintain its
control in the countryside. Handy, Revolution in the
Countryside, pp.184-6, cites an interview with Arbenz in
which he claims that the number of military commissioners
had grown from 2,000 to 7,000 by 1947; see also Serereseres,
'Military Development', p.111.

\textsuperscript{114} Weaver, 'Political Style', p.74 citing Durston,
Power Structure in a Rural Region of Guatemala: The
Department of Jutiapa, MA Thesis, (Austin, Texas 1966); see
also, Ricardo Falla's discussion, Quiché Rebelde, p.507, of
the role and number of military commissioners in San
Antonio Iotenango.
in addition to MLN supporters.\textsuperscript{115} By contrast, in the Indian departments of the western highlands, Adams maintains that there was little evidence of 'commissioner turned-spy' activities.\textsuperscript{116} The obvious reason for this was the almost total lack of guerrilla activity in the region at the time. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, the commissioner system was firmly entrenched as part of the local rural power structure and the potential for its development into a local spy network certainly existed. Indeed, the capacity of commissioners to appoint civilian auxiliaries prefigured the highly controversial civil defence patrols (PACS) in the conflict 20 years later.\textsuperscript{117} Finally, Ricardo Falla has observed how, in the town of San Antonio Llotenango, military commissioners acquired a powerful police function and acted as local bailiffs, throwing drunks into jail on fiesta days and generally keeping law and order.\textsuperscript{118}

Two further aspects of the system of rural surveillance should be noted. In February 1965, the Mobile Military Police (PMA) was established. Articles five and six of Decree Law 332 made the PMA responsible for the defence of commercial agriculture and the observation and control of the peasantry.\textsuperscript{119} Military civic action was also a crucial component of counterinsurgency activities, both in terms of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{115} McClintock, \textit{The American Connection}, pp.68-69.
\item\textsuperscript{116} Adams, 'Development of the Guatemalan Military', p.106.
\item\textsuperscript{117} McClintock, \textit{The American Connection}, p.249. In a significant slip of the tongue, Méndez Montenegro's ex-Interior Minister referred to the 1960s vigilantes in the north-east as PACs: Héctor Mansilla Pinto, interview, Guatemala City, 9.3.94.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Falla, \textit{Quiché Rebelde}, p.507.
\item\textsuperscript{119} Recopilación de Leyes, Decree Law 332, 23.2.65, Vol.83, p.210; McClintock, \textit{The American Connection}, pp.64-5.
\end{itemize}
an additional surveillance mechanism and an important public relations function for the military in the countryside. Begun in earnest at the end of 1963, the Civic Action programme was a coordinated effort by the Ministries of Defence, Education and Health receiving advisory and financial assistance from both USAID and MAP. Designed with the dual purpose of intelligence gathering and forging closer links with the rural population, military civic action carried out inoculation programmes, school lunches and literacy campaigns. Indeed this was one aspect of the Alliance for Progress package that was seized upon with particular enthusiasm by the government. Acción Civica Militar was referred to in numerous articles in military journals and speeches by Head of State Peralta Azurdia, and was the subject of prize-winning dissertations by junior officers. However, whilst United States officials acknowledged this military effort to counter the public perception of 'an army of occupation in the areas [it] visit[s]', they continued to express disappointment that so few of the civic action projects had been located in areas of rural insurgent

120 According to Yates, 'The United States and Rural Insurgency in Guatemala', pp.57, 65, n.10, the United States Army established a formal civic action programme in Guatemala as early as May 1960, with a Civic Action Mobile Training Team (MTT) arriving in Guatemala on 26 November 1960. Lack of funding hampered its activity for two years.

121 LBJL, AID Agency Reports, WHCF, Confidential File, Box 107, 'AID and Alliance for Progress Report: Program and Project Data Related to Proposed Programs - FY 1965 Region Latin America, Table III', p.160.

122 See for example, 'Mensaje del Gobierno Militar al Pueblo de Guatemala', Ejército, (April 1963); 'Acción Civica Militar y Comunismo', Ejército, (October 1965); 'La Prensa Opina', Ejército, (September 1965); Sargento Primero de Infanteria, Raúl Bogumil Marchena Barrios, 'Acción Civica del Ejército (lenguaje de esperanza)', Academia Militar de Capacitación para Aspirantes a Oficiales de Reservas Militares, mimeo (Guatemala, 1963); Coronel de Infanteria D.E.M., Pedro Díaz M., 'Estudios Sobre "Acción Civica"', mimeo (Guatemala, n.d.).
activity.\textsuperscript{123}

Finally, in this regard, it should be stressed that - in its early stages at least - the guerrilla presented the Guatemalan military establishment with a more complex challenge than simply one of left-wing revolutionaries attempting to overthrow the state. The origins of the insurgency in the failed 1960 military rebellion and the fact that its principal leaders were graduates of the Escuela Politécnica, contributed to a certain ambiguity of attitude among some in the officer corps towards their dissident 'brothers-in-arms'. While Peralta’s amnesty to almost all the participants in the 1960 and 1962 rebellions was an example of the overall institutional reluctance to impose severe sanctions on its own, it further appears that personal loyalty and military esprit de corps afforded the key guerrilla leaders a certain degree of protection.\textsuperscript{124} Lieutenant Marco Antonio Yon Sosa was rumoured to have been present at a party for members of his promoción in Guatemala City, while Second lieutenant Luis Turcios Lima reportedly used to stay at the Escuela Politécnica whenever he was in the capital.\textsuperscript{125} Moreover, it can be assumed that the irony of both having been trained by the United States

\textsuperscript{123} DDRS DOS (78)404C, Sayre to McGeorge Bundy, Transmittal memorandum, 12.6.65. This was to change following Méndez Montenegro's establishment of the 'Pilot Plan for the socio-economic development of the north-east' at the end of 1966; see also, Sereses, 'Military Development', p.253, n.26; Gott, Rural Guerrillas, pp.126-130.

\textsuperscript{124} 'Concede amnistía a los autores, cómplices y encubridores de los delitos políticos cometidos...[el] 13 de noviembre de 1960 y 25 de noviembre de 1962. Hace excepciones...', Decree Law 16, 23.4.63, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.82, p.31. A similar amnesty for the 1960 rebels had been passed under Ydigoras Fuentes: Congressional Decree 1538, 28.6.62, ibid., Vol.81, p.18; on military esprit de corps see Adams, 'Development of the Guatemalan Military', p.94.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p.101; Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94.
military in counterinsurgency techniques would not have been lost on an institution which continued to be imbued with a residual anti-Americanism.\textsuperscript{126}

Any such military ambiguity toward the guerrillas, however, was decisively erased by the Zunzapote ambush in May 1966, when an army patrol was ambushed by a group led by Turcios Lima, killing between 12 and 18 soldiers.\textsuperscript{127} While the success of the attack 'en las barbas de la Zona Militar de Zacapa', provoked public criticism of the military, the execution of the wounded captain in charge of the patrol - reportedly by Turcios Lima himself - served to harden remaining agnostics within the officer corps.\textsuperscript{128} As Gramajo Morales points out, this was not the first time that fellow officers on both sides had been killed in confrontations.\textsuperscript{129} However, the significance of the Zunzapote attack seems to have been twofold. In the first place, the manner in which the officer was killed - in cold blood by a former classmate - represented a fundamental break with an unwritten code of honour. And secondly, the recognition that this was no longer simply a fight with disaffected officers, but a different kind of struggle which now involved military outsiders and more

\textsuperscript{126} Turcios Lima had spent six months at the ranger school at Fort Benning, Georgia between 1959 and 1960, while Yon Sosa has received training at Fort Gulick in the Canal Zone: Gott, \textit{Rural Guerrillas}, pp.74-5; Adams, 'Development of the Guatemalan Military', p.105.

\textsuperscript{127} The subsequent military bulletin which reported the attack, published in \textit{La Hora}, 17.5.66, did not give precise numbers for casualties; see Régis Debray, \textit{The Revolution on Trial} (Harmondsworth, 1978), p.298; Gramajo Morales, \textit{De la Guerra}, p.102; Yates, 'United States and Rural Insurgency', p.59.

\textsuperscript{128} Marroquin Rojas, 'Quien conozca el sitio se quedará asombrado', \textit{La Hora}, 18.5.66; Yates, 'The United States and Rural Insurgency', p.59.

\textsuperscript{129} Gramajo Morales, \textit{De la Guerra}, p.102.
specifically, 'Communists':

Eramos amigos. Eso es cierto, de un día para otro los amigos, compañeros de clase resultaban en diferentes bancos...ya era en la segunda fase cuando la JPT se involucró en la lucha...con gente de la universidad...Zunzapoté marca el punto en que los oficiales indecisos ya no estuvieron más, porque el Capitán Dolores Amézquita era muy querido, muy recto...Entonces abrimos los ojos que estábamos en guerra, que ya no valían las amnistías ni los compadrazgos ni los compañeros de clase...

The 1965 Constitution

La constitución se semeja ahora a una piñata suspendida sobre la fiesta electoral, pero las 'golosinas' que contiene no podían ser saboreadas sino hasta que la fiesta haya terminado.

The promulgation of the new constitution on 15 September 1965 effectively confirmed the government's intention to return to the constitutional order, its resolve on this issue having been constantly called into question during the long months of the Constitutional Assembly (Constituyente) and before. Yet, even at this stage the path to free elections and a 'return to democracy' was far from clear. A series of transitory articles suspended the operation of the new constitution until 5 May of the following year - the day when the newly-elected Congress would take its seats. While this situation recalled

\[\text{130} \text{ Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94.}\]

\[\text{131} \text{ Ibid.}\]

\[\text{132} \text{ El Imparcial, 1.9.65.}\]

\[\text{133} \text{ Until this date the Carta Fundamental contained in Decree Law 8 remained in force (Trans. Art.10), while the Constituyente was empowered to rule on the validity of the congressional elections and install those elected in office}\]
Arévalo's election in 1945 which also took place under de facto conditions, a central criticism of the 1965 constitution was its lack of legitimacy deriving from the unrepresentative character of the Constituyente.  

Following increasing domestic political pressure and continuous urging from the United States, elections to a National Constituent Assembly were finally convoked in March 1964 and the State of Siege - in place since the coup - lifted. A petition from more than 200 respected professionals demanding immediate steps towards free elections had been openly circulated during the previous autumn. The United States Embassy reported that various political figures 'ranging from left to right...including some who strongly backed [the] army coup' were either planning to participate or were actively engaged in a 'National Front' to demand a rapid return to the constitutional process.

(Trans. Art. 6).

134 Adolfo Mijangos, 'La Constitución Guatemalteca de 1965', Cuadernos Americanos (3, 1966) pp.65-6. This question became the brief focus of debate in September 1966 between Clemente Marroquin Rojas - now vice-President - and the IV Congreso Jurídico. The latter, having declared the illegitimacy of the Constitution, found itself forced to declare categorically that the Méndez Montenegro government was 'democratically and juridically legitimate' in the face of taunts to the contrary from Marroquin Rojas: Prensa Libre, 20.9.66, 23.9.66; La Hora, 22.9.66, 23.9.66.

135 Decree Laws 190 and 191, 25.3.64, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.83, pp.11-12.

136 DDRS DOS 001955, Corrigan to Secretary of State, Telegram 234, 17.10.63; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.401-2.

137 MDN leader, Colonel Cruz Salazar - a vehement critic of the de facto government - was apparently the lynchpin of this movement. The same report mentions rumours of plots involving certain officers, but concluded that while there were two opposing currents of thought within the military regarding an early 'return to the barracks', the differences were 'not profound at this
The subsequent elections in May were carefully controlled. Decree Law 175 imposed stringent eligibility conditions upon political parties, requiring a minimum 50,000 members to permit registration for electoral purposes. Villagrán Kramer's URD was thus excluded from the poll. In effect, the elections became a plebiscite to approve the government-imposed single slate coalition, of which 60 of the 80 available seats had been allotted to 'unaffiliated elements friendly with the Peralta government'. The remaining 20 were divided between the MLN and the PR, the DCG having pulled out at the last minute after a national general assembly of the party in April 1964 rejected the 'deal' being negotiated between its leadership and the government. An attempt to register a separate DCG slate failed with the refusal of the Electoral Tribunal to recognise the legitimacy of the new party leadership. While both the URD and the DCG called on their supporters to abstain, US officials expressed concern at the exclusionary nature of these arrangements - in particular, the possibility that disenfranchised groups would move to join 'more extremist forces'. Nevertheless, they seemed ready to accept the premise on stage': DDRS DOS 001955, Corrigan to Secretary of State, Telegram 234, 17.10.63; New York Times, 3.11.63.

New York Times, 5.5.64, 24.5.64. These appointees - including some individuals associated with the formulation of the previous Constitution - were to form the basis of the new official party, Partido Institucional Democrático (PID): Sloan, 'The Electoral Game in Guatemala', PhD diss. (University of Texas at Austin, 1968), p.104; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.393.

As a result the party leadership passed to younger, more radical party members associated with the Frente Estudiantil Social Cristiano (FESC), including future president Vinicio Cerezo and Fernando Andrade Diaz Durán: René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94; see also DDRS DOS 003226, Intelligence Note, 7.5.64.

DDRS DOS 003223, Ambassador Bell to State Department, Airgram A-428, 9.3.64.
which the Guatemalan government and the legally-registered parties appeared to be relying, that 'the majority of the generally politically apathetic populace will heed the blandishments of neither extremists nor excluded leaders, but will be content to make the choice offered to them at the polls...

In the event, an estimated 40 to 50 per cent of registered voters went to the polls, compared with 66.8 per cent in 1958 and 71.5 per cent in 1950 and despite repeated warnings about the penalties for abstention. While the turnout was somewhat higher in the departmental capitals, a significant number of ballots were spoiled. In Guatemala City, of approximately 81,500 votes cast, almost one third were invalid.

Based in form on the 1956 Constitution, the new constitutional arrangements reaffirmed the former's anticomunismo, the scope for the definition of 'communist organisations' being expanded to cover those whose 'doctrinal tendency, methods of action or international links, threaten the sovereignty of the State or the bases of democratic organisation in Guatemala'.

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141 Ibid.


143 New York Times, 26.5.64; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.393-94.

144 Art.27.
property was guaranteed and the social function of property continued to be denied. In common with that of 1956, the new constitution admitted the possibility of 'agrarian transformation' and even expropriation under certain conditions. However - given the furore caused by the manner in which parties expropriated under Decree Law 900 were compensated - it is notable that both constitutions specified that expropriated property be compensated in advance according to its 'real value', and that compensation be paid in legal tender.\textsuperscript{145}

Hailed by Peralta for its progress in the institutional realm, the new constitution's most significant permutation in this area was its treatment of the party system.\textsuperscript{146} Codifying Decree Laws 175 and 387, the 1965 constitution laid down the minimum membership necessary for a 'democratic' political party to present candidates in elections.\textsuperscript{147} The requirement of a 50,000-strong party list, of whom at least 20 per cent be literate, effectively ossified the Guatemalan party system for the next 20 years, with the political landscape limited to the MLN, the PID, the PR and the DCG. These disproportionate exigencies - in a population of some 4,300,000 of whom 63 per cent were officially illiterate\textsuperscript{148} - and designed principally to exclude the participation of reformist forces, were justified by Peralta on the grounds that a profusion of parties exacerbated instability. Moreover, the capacity of

\textsuperscript{145} Arts.125 and 71 respectively.

\textsuperscript{146} Colonel Peralta Azurdia, \textit{El Imparcial}, 13.9.65.

\textsuperscript{147} 'Ley Electoral y de Partidos Politicos', Decree Law 387, 23.10.65, \textit{Recopilación de Leyes}, Vol.84, p.138. The previous requirements introduced in March 1960 had been 10,000 members, of which 10 per cent had to be literate. The 1956 electoral law had required only 5,000 members and the same percentage of literates: Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.129.

the Registro de Ciudadanos to determine the eligibility of the names on the requisite lists provided the regime with an additional tool to exclude organisations which managed to fulfill the numerical requirements. How far these measures were originally aimed at preventing the participation of the DCG - as some have asserted - is arguable, since the party leadership had clearly acquiesced to both the coup and to Decree Law 175. Nevertheless, the party's exclusion from the 1966 elections - on the basis of incomplete lists and other delay tactics employed by the Registro de Ciudadanos - should be seen in the light of its refusal in May 1964 to continue its compromiso with the Peralta government, and represented in the eyes of regime critics, 'the first step towards electoral fraud that the people fear...will happen with the elections of next March'.

Further institutional innovations included the reduction of the presidential term from six to four years with a concomitant increase in the minimum age of the incumbent from 35 to 40 years, a move apparently designed to exclude

149 Colonel Peralta Azurdia, El Imparcial, 13.9.65. Nevertheless, even the imposition of such stringent limits on party formation controlled by a politically-manipulated electoral body eventually proved too liberal for a regime which, by 1974, felt compelled to resort to blatant fraud to prevent the election of Rios Montt and the Christian Democrats.


151 René de León Schlotter, 'Carta Abierta al Jefe del Gobierno', El Gráfico, 12.1.66. De León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94, argues that the DCG was the only party to have genuinely collected the 50,000 members and that its efforts in this area permitted the formation of strong links with the popular and peasant sectors.
the candidacy of the URD's Francisco Villagrán Kramer.\footnote{Art.182; Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.135; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.399. Art.183 also stipulated that the president should never have adopted foreign nationality or citizenship, a condition which effectively excluded Arevalo.} Peralta expressed the conviction that a shorter presidential term would minimize the threat of constitutional rupture and amendments to any article referring to the principle of non-reelection were constitutionally prohibited.\footnote{Peralta Azurdia, El Imparcial, 13.9.65. While Mijangos, 'La Constitución Guatemalteca', p.65, has commented on the 'rigidity' of the 1965 Constitution which demanded a two-thirds vote of Congress to call a Constituent National Assembly to undertake any such reform, the principle of non-reelection had become an article of faith, similarly enshrined in the 1945 and 1956 Constitutions as well as in existing 1985 Constitution.} A particular point of contention was the question of whether or not authors of the 1963 coup should be permitted to stand as presidential candidates. While Article 184 prohibited the incumbency in the future of leaders of a coup d'état, it did not apply retroactively. Vigorous in its opposition on this point, the PR's failure to prevent such an outcome provided the catalyst for its exit from the Assembly in April 1965.\footnote{García Laguardia and Vásquez Martinez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, p.100, n.150; DDRS DOS 003236, Report on Guatemala, 12.6.65. In 1994-5, this question was once again very much to the fore in Guatemala as General Efrain Ríos Montt attempted to find a way around the 1985 constitutional prohibition on golpístas as presidential candidates.} Article 191 instituted the vice-presidency to substitute the first and second designates to the president. In addition to his traditional roles - to represent or replace the president as necessary - the vice-president presided over the newly created Council of State.\footnote{Arts.207-14.} This body - originally signalled in Article 28 of the Carta Fundamental
de Gobierno and given legal substance in May 1963 - represented a corporatist attempt to institutionalise interest groups and provide a forum for the resolution of conflicts. Its duties included issuing opinions on the negotiation of contracts and concessions for the creation of public services on legislation and other government matters submitted to it for study, and on disputes arising between decentralised, autonomous or semi-autonomous agencies where no other solution was provided by law. In addition, the Council of State had authority to initiate legislation and to submit for consideration by the president initiatives and solutions regarding the general problems of the country.

While García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez pointed to the potential importance of these attributes, they state elsewhere that such co-legislative functions were in fact very limited. Adolfo Mijangos speculated in 1966 that the surprise election of the PR had somewhat confounded the purpose of this mechanism of legislative control, given the possibility of a democratic and progressive majority within the organism. In this respect, it is interesting to note the appointment of a FASGUA-affiliated trade union

156 Decree Law No.30, 17.5.63, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.82, p.43, 17.5.63; García Laguardia and Vásquez Martínez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, pp.201-223. According to the Constitution the Council of State would be composed of two members for each of the branches of government, designated by Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court (CSJ) respectively; one member designated by the presidents of the professional associations recognised by the University of San Carlos; one member appointed by the municipalities; one member representing urban workers and one representing farm workers (trabajadores del agro), appointed by the juntas directivas of their respective legally-registered unions; and one for each representative organisations of agriculture, industry, commerce and private finance (banca privada).

157 Ibid., p.103, 207.

158 Mijangos, 'La Constitución Guatemalteca de 1965', p.64.
leader as 'alternate' to the labour representative on the Council of State in October 1966 and military complaints of communist influence within the government as a result.\(^{159}\)

Notwithstanding criticisms of the 1965 Constitution overall, in some instances it was rather progressive - at least in terms of its immediate predecessor. Mario López Larrave has pointed to certain improvements in the labour system which were incorporated into the new constitution, and particularly to the mention of social justice as a governing concept.\(^{160}\) Protective measures for labour included rights to social security, compensation and the aguinaldo. The employment of minors and workers over 60 years of age was to be regulated and women were to receive 100 per cent of wages whilst on maternity leave. While the right to union organisation continued to be recognised exclusively in terms of 'economic defense and social betterment', the 1956 distinction made between urban and rural conditions was dropped. A less-recognised innovation was the acquisition of the vote for illiterate women, who had remained excluded even under the 1945 Constitution. Suffrage was declared to be universal and secret for all, although the illiterate vote continued to be optional.

Given the nature of government which took control in 1963, García Larguardia and Vásquez Martinez have questioned the need to abrogate the 1956 Constitution at all.\(^{161}\) Yet this fails to take into account the very different origins and circumstances of the movement which formulated that earlier constitution. For while there was

\(^{159}\) DDRS CIA 003061, 'Guatemala - A Current Appraisal', Intelligence Memorandum, 8.10.66.

\(^{160}\) López Larrave, Breve Historia del Movimiento Sindical Guatemalteco, p.72.

\(^{161}\) García Laguardia and Vásquez Martinez, Constitución y Orden Democrático, p.102.
certainly a high degree of ideological coincidence between the liberación and the golpistas of 1963 in terms of their anti-communism, the underlying tensions remained. In this sense, with the 1965 Constitution, the military was finally laying the humiliation of the liberación to rest.

Perhaps a more interesting question to ask is why, having seized power, the military pursued a return to the constitutional order at all. The most obvious answer must be that it came under considerable pressure to do so, from within as well as without. In terms of the latter, with the threat of Arévalo dispatched, the US State Department had been pressing for an early return to constitutional government since the coup and had become increasingly frustrated with the military regime's performance on a number of fronts.

Party political support for the coup had been similarly short-term and instrumental and had surely not envisaged either its relegation to the margins of the political process in the constituyente, nor the establishment of a new party to carry the military into constitutional government. The Partido Institucional Democrático - formed in November 1964 though not registered until January 1965 - incorporated businessmen and government candidates in the Constituent Assembly and threatened to usurp the political ambitions of such politicians as Mario Méndez Montenegro.162 Moreover, if business and agricultural sectors had been initially wary of a rapid return to constitutional government, as the US Embassy reported in mid-1964, the longer-term performance of the military in government convinced them otherwise. In this regard, Guatemala's dominant position in the CACM should be stressed, with the combination of rapid growth and high levels of US investment providing an additional rationale

for civilian management of the economy, particularly in the context of unwelcome government attempts at economic regulation.\textsuperscript{163}

Finally, Peralta Azurdia's character has been cited as a factor in the decision to return to constitutional rule.\textsuperscript{164} Yet a central assumption of the Chief of State had remained an electoral victory for the PID. In the event, it proved impossible to obtain the conditions necessary to achieve this outcome. Forced to submit to the uncertainty inherent even in such a limited democratic process as were the elections of March 1966, the strength of the PR vote and the corresponding right-wing response, required that the government reformulate the terms of the transition.

\textsuperscript{163} Dunkerley, \textit{Power in the Isthmus}, p.446.

\textsuperscript{164} René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94; Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94; Adams, 'Development of the Guatemalan Military', p.108.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ELECTIONS OF MARCH 1966: FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN RULE

La realización de estas elecciones, es el resultado más elocuente de que el Ejército cumple lealmente sus promesas. Asumió el poder sin ambición alguna y retornará a sus cuarteles, siempre y cuando se respete el resultado de la voluntad popular.

Introduction

The elections of 6 March 1966 resulted in an unexpected victory for the Partido Revolucionario and its presidential candidate, Julio César Méndez Montenegro. Yet the victory itself seemed less surprising than the fact that it was accepted by the military government, albeit after an interval of several days. Not only was this the first time in Guatemalan history that an opposition party had triumphed against oficialismo in an election, but the winning party and its candidate claimed their roots in the revolutionary decade, a prospect which had prompted the intervention of the military three years earlier. However, the PR's revolutionary credentials had been constantly called into question by dissident groups since 1958. The

1 Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia, 'Dirigido a la Nación Antes de las Elecciones Realizadas el 6 de marzo', Ejército, (March 1966), pp. 3, 12.

2 PR, 44.4 per cent; PID, 31.7 per cent; MLN, 23.9 per cent: see Table 1, p. 148, for a breakdown of results by department.


4 Intra-party conflicts led to the formation of three splinter groups in 1958: Partido Auténtico Revolucionario (PAR); Partido Nacional Revolucionario de 1944 (PNR-44); Partido Unido Revolucionario (PUR).
term 'opposition party' needs also to be qualified. The PR was one of only three 'acceptable' parties allowed to participate under a system in which exclusionary electoral laws were reinforced by their selective application. While its eligibility had been obtained through its support of the March 1963 coup and subsequent submission to the terms of the constituent elections of 1964, the willingness of the party leadership to make alliances with its supposed political enemies had alienated many to its left.

Nevertheless, by the time of the 1966 elections the reformist platform of the PR had apparently achieved such a level of consensus on the left that even the guerrilla had suspended armed operations. The implications of this ceasefire compounded the deep sense of unease within sectors of the military and the right, already profoundly suspicious of any reformist project. Their resistance spurred the final challenge to the transition, the resolution of which suggested less a victory for electoral democracy than its limits: 'a sorry lesson in how military power is superior to...that of civil authority'.

The Pre-electoral Balance of Forces: Conflict and Consensus

While a certain consensus existed around the return to constitutional rule, the electoral campaign was characterised by a general lack of faith in the electoral process itself, and this was true both for the political parties - legal and extra-legal - as well as for the population at large. The exclusionary nature of the

5 Gabriel Aguilera, Jorge Imery et al, Dialéctica del Terror en Guatemala (San José), p.95; the ceasefire will be discussed in more detail below.

6 Edelberto Torres Rivas, Crisis del Poder en Centroamérica (San José, 1981) p.149.
political system was not simply reflected in the legal restrictions applied to political competition, but more widely in a socio-cultural and economic context in which large sectors of the population remained politically marginalised. Party machines did not encourage participation, their organisation and action being primarily directed at the election of their candidate. Outside electoral periods, party political activity was minimal, a situation which had been exacerbated by frequent states of exception.7 Remark ing on the difficulties involved in gathering the requisite number of members to ensure party registration - 'even though it is no secret that many of them are either invented or dead' - El Imparcial also noted the tendency of party leaderships to act in small committees, 'almost exclusive clubs, in whose decisions only a few were involved and particularly when it came to sharing out positions'.8

Centrally-organised and unrepresentative, party leaderships and candidates were 'ratified' rather than elected at national conventions.9 Such a lack of democratic practice within the party organisations themselves mirrored the absence of a national democratic consensus and agreement between competing entities to abide by the rules of the game. Elections were thus viewed as only one way of obtaining political power, to be supplemented or pre-empted by other means.

The new constitution - itself a limiting document in

7 The total period spent under states of exception between 15 March 1945 and 31 December 1968 was approximately 6 years: Josef Thesing, 'La Política en Guatemala', in Amaro, El Reto de Desarrollo, p.243.

8 El Imparcial, 17.3.69, cited in ibid., pp.243-4.

terms of the scope for true political competition - had been suspended until after the elections had taken place and would not come into effect until 5 May. It was widely believed that this delay was designed to favour the official party, the Partido Institucional Democrático, and Peralta Azurdia's persistent efforts to forge a political alliance - 'around programmes and not personalities to avoid the proliferation of candidates' - were seen as evidence of his intended continuismo through imposition, despite his frequent statements to the contrary. 10

Allegations of fraud were commonplace throughout the election campaign, directed mainly - though not exclusively - at the PID. 11 The PR response to such a possibility was to threaten civil unrest. 12 The readiness to cry fraud on all sides also reflected a reluctance to accept an unfavourable electoral outcome. With its dual strategy of overt electoral campaigning and behind-the-scenes conspiracy, the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional epitomised the acutely partisan manner in which the political parties approached the democratic process. 13 Resort to coups and electoral fraud in the past had contributed to the apathy and pessimism with which the population viewed elections - this 'sharp indifference' being identified by El Imparcial as the most serious problem confronting the political process in 1966:

10 El Imparcial, 8.9.65, 1.9.65, 11.9.65; 'Peralta: Fue el PR el que pidió el Pacto Militar', Diario La Tarde, 24.8.73.

11 LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 377, 16.12.65. In the election aftermath, the PID even accused the PR of fraud: Prensa Libre, 9.3.66, 10.3.66; El Gráfico, 10.3.66.

12 New York Times, 21.10.65; Prensa Libre, 5.3.66.

actitud que no puede atribuirse solamente a falta de civismo de la población, sino a una concurrencia de hechos y factores que mantienen al ciudadano común alejado de las cuestiones políticas.  

The failure of the MLN and the PID to agree on a joint presidential candidate was the single most important factor in the defeat of the right in 1966, and one for which each party angrily blamed the other in the election aftermath. If Peralta Azurdia's intention had been to legitimise the military regime through controlled elections to be won by the officially-sponsored party, his failure to forge an alliance around the PID, together with the size of the PR vote in key areas, effectively scuppered such a plan. While the possibility of a national coalition around an official candidate had been under discussion for some time, by early 1965 these plans were floundering. The establishment of the PID and its rapid accumulation of some 110,000 members - thereby more than fulfilling the conditions of Decree Law 175 - sparked the disintegration of the already weakened alliance which had supported the

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14 El Imparcial, 9.11.65. In the event approximately one quarter of the electorally-qualified population voted: see Table 1, p.2.

15 El Imparcial, 12.3.66. El Imparcial, 5.12.65 and 7.12.65 had earlier warned of the dangers posed by the separate candidacies of Ponciano and Aguilar de León in terms of a possible unification of the left.

16 'An election may also liberalize without democratizing. that is, an authoritarian regime may relax its usual repression during an election for the purpose of legitimizing itself or refurbishing its image, but without truly adopting lasting participatory norms': Booth, 'A Framework for Analysis', in Booth and Seligson, Elections and Democracy in Central America, p.15; see also O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, pp.7-11.

17 DDRS DOS 003234, Hughes to The Secretary, Intelligence Note, 12.1.65.
The struggle for the PID candidacy reinforced divisions between moderate and hardline groups within the military, embodied respectively in Finance Minister Major Jorge Lucas Caballeros, and Air Force Commander and Chief of General Staff, Colonel Miguel Angel Ponciano. The competition between the two conformed to the enduring legacy of the 'revolution' and its aftermath: 'la vuelta al arbencismo' versus 'el regreso a la liberación'. Lucas Caballeros had been an economic advisor to Arbenz and had a reputation as a 'reformer'. He had retired from active military status in 1958. By contrast, Ponciano was a hardliner, reportedly sensitised to the communist threat by an earlier stint as Ambassador to Cuba and popular both with the MLN and 'conservative' elements within the military. Peralta Azurdia was said to dislike him for 'personal and professional reasons'.

The eventual choice of Colonel Juan de Dios Aguilar de León has been interpreted as Peralta Azurdia's effort to steer a moderate course between these two opposing factions, but could equally be seen as an attempt to retain control over the transition process. A civil engineer

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18 El Imparcial, 16.1.65. The Christian Democrats (DCG) had pulled out of this alliance when it refused to support the single slate for the 1964 Constituent Assembly.


21 Ibid.; DDRS DOS 003234, Hughes to The Secretary, Intelligence Note, 12.1.65.

22 Ibid.

23 Sloan, 'The 1966 Presidential Election', p.20; Weaver, 'Political Style', pp.65-67. In mid-1965, the CIA reported that Peralta Azurdia had given his 'tacit
and Director of the National Electrification Institute, Colonel Aguilar de León had acted as Peralta Azurdia's personal envoy in the removal of Ydigoras Fuentes from office. Like Peralta Azurdia, he subscribed to the view that the free world was under threat from communism and that the military remained the ultimate bulwark of democracy. He had been an opposition deputy during the Arbenz government, but remained sympathetic to the latter's nationalist project and in 1966 sought a 'reencuentro' with the reformist decade in these terms:

...ni Arévalo ni Arbenz eran comunistas... Jacobo Arbenz era el hombre más burgués que se puede imaginar. Nunca ví Jacobo sin rasurarse y siempre con su vestido o su uniforme pulcro... fue un gran guatemalteco, un gran patriota y su programa lo resumio en 3 puntos: la carretera Atlántico, el Puerto Santo Tomás de Castilla, y la hydro-eléctrica Jurún-Marinalá...

The announcement of Aguilar de León's nomination prompted the immediate selection of Ponciano as the MLN candidate and produced precisely the 'proliferation' of candidates that Peralta Azurdia was so anxious to avoid. Supporters of Lucas Caballeros within the PID were already in the process of organising the Partido Social Guatemalteco (PSG)
- which later allied itself with the PID\textsuperscript{28} - and in December 1965 Lucas Caballeros was also nominated by the Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca (DCG) as its presidential candidate.\textsuperscript{29}

The split between the two major parties on the right contrasted with the temporary coalescence of opposition interests as certain disenfranchised sectors pledged their support for the PR candidate. Following the PR's electoral success in March 1966, MLN leader Sandoval Alarcón openly criticised Peralta Azurdia and argued that the marginalisation of the left had allowed its unification around a single candidate.\textsuperscript{30} However, tactical voting was not a uniform response by those parties disqualified under the new electoral laws. While Colonel Cruz Salazar instructed his Movimiento Nacional Reformista (MNR) supporters to join the ranks of the PR in February, and the URD conceded their support for the PR candidate at the last minute, the DCG called on its members to spoil their ballots -apparently after its offer of support in return for an electoral alliance had been rejected by the PR.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} The understanding between the PSG and the PID prompted the resignation of certain PID members, while the PR claimed that such an agreement represented the first step towards an alliance between the official party and the PGT: Prensa Libre, 7.8.65 and El Gráfico, 8.8.65, cited in Sloan, 'The 1966 Presidential Election', p.19; Prensa Libre, 4.3.66, 5.3.66.

\textsuperscript{29} Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.406, claims that it was Peralta Azurdia's exasperation with this new setback to his plans which caused him to 'order' the administrative delay in processing DCG party lists which effectively excluded the party from the elections.

\textsuperscript{30} El Imparcial, 12.3.66.

\textsuperscript{31} El Gráfico, 11.2.66, 5.3.66; 'DCG al pueblo de Guatemala' La Hora, 4.3.66; René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94. The MNR was Cruz Salazar's latest vehicle, the MDN having been dissolved along with Ydigoras Fuentes' Reconciliación Democrática Nacional (Redención) in November 1963.
Interestingly, an exception was made in the case of the election for Guatemala City's mayor, apparently on the basis of its better-educated population and the reduced opportunities for electoral fraud. Here, the DCG supported the eventual victor, independent Ramiro Ponce Monroy. Notwithstanding the party stance on ballot-spoiling nationally, DCG presidential candidate Lucas Caballeros later claimed that he had told supporters to vote according to their conscience. He believed most of his potential votes to have gone to Julio César Méndez Montenegro - because of the Christian Democrats' 'outspoken stand against militarism'.

On 31 October 1965, PR leader and presidential candidate Mario Méndez Montenegro was found dead in his bedroom, shot through the heart. Predictably perhaps, neither the PR nor the Méndez Montenegro family accepted the official version of suicide, insisting that he had been assassinated for political reasons. In this regard, it is interesting to note Méndez Montenegro's apparent conviction that Lucas

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32 'DCG al pueblo de Guatemala', La Hora, 4.3.66. Neither the PR, MLN nor the PID endorsed any candidate for the capital's mayor.

33 Ponce Monroy was considerably to the left of the PR and considered to be a 'communist' in some quarters: New York Times, 8.3.66.


35 The Fourth Party Convention held in November 1965 declared Mario Méndez Montenegro a martyr: 'Declaración Ideológica de 1965. La Cuarta Convención Extraordinaria del Partido Revolucionario', reproduced in Cartilla del Segundo Congreso de la Juventud Revolucionaria (Guatemala, 1968). Julio César Méndez Montenegro, together with other prominent PR members and sympathisers during the period, continue to insist that Mario was murdered to prevent him coming to power: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; Héctor Mansilla Pinto, interview, Guatemala City, 9.3.94; Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94; Oscar de León Aragón, interview, Guatemala City, 4.2.94.
Caballeros and José Luis Aguilar de León - brother of the PID candidate - were conspiring to eliminate him.\(^{36}\) His son, Alberto Méndez Martínez, further denied suggestions that economic problems may have been a motive for suicide, claiming Mario had recently raised Q10,000 for the election campaign from the party leadership.\(^{37}\) While Handy has argued that Méndez Montenegro's death disrupted Peralta's plans for a PR-PID alliance, the PR's withdrawal from the Constituent Assembly in April 1965 suggests that the possibility of such an alliance had long since been exhausted.\(^{38}\) This departure had been prefaced by Méndez Montenegro's earlier announcement that he would no longer discuss a coalition with an official party, and should be seen in the context of his fading hopes of gaining official backing for his candidacy, together with opposition from within the party towards unification.\(^{39}\) The PR's attempt to secure a ban on coup-participants standing for

\(^{36}\) A CIA Memorandum, DDRS CIA (84)35, July 1965, cited reports that Mario Méndez Montenegro believed the two to have instigated 'an alleged abortive attempt by two guerrilla leaders to kill him on 28 May 1965'.

\(^{37}\) He named PR stalwarts Gregorio Prem, Enrique Claverie, Francisco Montenegro Girón, Carlos Sagastume, Mansilla Pinto among others, as contributors: El Imparcial, 2.11.65. El Imparcial, 1.11.65, reported that Mario Méndez Montenegro had acknowledged, in an interview the day before his death, that the party temporarily lacked sufficient funds for its campaign. Mansilla Pinto has stated that he obtained the Q10,000 for Méndez Montenegro from his friend Arturo Castillo, a member of the economically powerful Castillo clan: Héctor Mansilla Pinto, interview, Guatemala City, 9.3.94.

\(^{38}\) Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.159.

\(^{39}\) DDRS DOS 003234, Hughes to The Secretary, Intelligence Note, 12.1.65; 'Peralta: Fue el PR el que pidió el Pacto Militar', Diario La Tarde, 24.8.73. As PR Secretary General, Carlos Sagastume Pérez declared in 1973 that the MLN, PID and PR had earlier agreed to support Mario Méndez Montenegro as a unity candidate and that the agreement had been guaranteed by Peralta. The MLN and PID had later broken this agreement and nominated their own candidates: La Hora, 30.8.73.
presidential election represented a final attempt to achieve such backing and its failure prompted the party's belated move into opposition. Villagráin Kramer claims it was these events, together with a lack of funds with which to finance the PR electoral campaign, which lay behind Méndez Montenegro's suicide:

Desilusión con el gobierno de Peralta. Desilusión con los sectores financieros quien ya no estaban dando apoyo financiero para su campaña. Peralta le había prometido a él que sería candidato de la presidencia. Y después Peralta lo traiciona porque pone a otro, a un militar... él se queda muy solo. No crecía su candidatura y posiblemente una gran desilusión de que se había peñado tanto, que había entrado en relaciones con Peralta, que había sido traicionado, y la cuestión financiera lo golpeó mucho. Habría sido un momento de un rapto tal vez...

Mario Méndez Montenegro's death is generally said to have been an important factor in bringing together previously alienated sections of the left. The caudillismo and pragmatism of the PR's erstwhile 'líder máximo' had been a divisive element within the party since its inception and had provoked several splits, most notably in 1958 when rumours of secret deals between Ydígoras Fuentes and the PR leader caused the party's opposition status to be denounced as fraudulent. In December of that year the PR Second

40 Francisco Villagráin Kramer, interview, Guatemala City, 22.10.93.

41 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.290; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.448; Monteforte Toledo, Centro América, Vol.2, p.34; Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.159; Sloan, 'The 1966 Presidential Election', p.28; also interviews with René de León Schlotter, Guatemala City, 8.2.94; Mario Fuentes Pierruccini, Guatemala City, 2.2.94; Francisco Villagráin Kramer, Guatemala City, 22.10.93.

42 Opinión Revolucionaria, 2.7.58, and New York Times, 18.1.58, 22.1.58, cited in Sloan, 'The Electoral Game'. The splits produced three new 'revolutionary' parties:
Extraordinary Convention expelled sixty members - including Francisco Villagrán Kramer and Adolfo Mijangos López who later went on to form the URD -

por no seguir la línea de conducta eminentemente democrática que el Partido ha trazado y también por atentar contra la unidad y acción del Partido Revolucionario.\(^4^3\)

Further purges took place in 1959 and 1962, the latter spawning the Partido Revolucionario Ortodoxo (PRO).\(^4^4\) In part a product of the personalista jockeying for position within the party and illustrating the leadership's pragmatic accommodation with the exigencies of anticommunismo, this fragmentation also echoed the centrifugal forces at work within the revolutionary bloc during the 1944-54 period.

At the time of Mario Méndez Montenegro's death, the PR had been shorn of much of its 'revolutionary' credibility. This was subsequently briefly resuscitated by the swift installation of his brother as the party's new candidate.\(^4^5\)

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\(^4^3\) 'Algo que el Revolucionario Debe Saber de su Partido!', in Cartilla del Segundo Congreso de la Juventud Revolucionaria (Guatemala, 1968), p5; see also Monteforte Toledo, Centro América, Vol.2, p.33; Sloan, 'The Electoral Game'.

\(^4^4\) 'Algo que el Revolucionario Debe Saber de su Partido!', in Cartilla del Segundo Congreso de la Juventud Revolucionaria, p.5; Monteforte Toledo, Centro América, Vol.2, p.34. The former does not record the 1962 purge which, according to Monteforte Toledo, was directed against arevalistas.

\(^4^5\) The decision was formally ratified by the party convention two weeks later, at which journalist Clemente Marroquín Rojas was confirmed as vice-presidential candidate and Alberto Méndez Martínez as the new PR Secretary General: El Imparcial, 31.10.65, 15.11.65.
Julio César Méndez Montenegro's participation in the events of 20 October 1944, together with his passing into political obscurity shortly thereafter - to continue his professional and academic career 'totally apart from politics' - aided his reputation as a genuine representative of the ideals of the revolutionary decade. The fact that his withdrawal from active politics had been prompted by the assassination of Colonel Francisco Arana in 1949 - whose presidential ambitions were supported by both Méndez Montenegro brothers - seems to have been largely ignored. A net result of this move, however, was that Julio César Méndez Montenegro was not identified with anticommunismo - unlike his brother. He was widely respected as Dean of the University of San Carlos law school and had been a labour lawyer during the 1950s with close connections to the powerful railway workers' union, SAMF.

This reputation undoubtedly produced support for the PR

46 Julio César Méndez Montenegro, interview, 24.1.94.

47 URD assessment in El Gráfico, 5.3.66. Julio César Méndez Montenegro had been a student leader in the struggle against Ubico and had taken up arms with several other students in the insurrection launched against Ponce Vaides from the Guardia de Honor on 20 October 1944. Together with his brother, Mario, he was a founding member of the arevalista Frente Popular Libertador (FPL), served as Vice-minister of the Interior during the Junta Revolucionaria and held several posts in the Arévalo government.

48 From Chile - where he was studying labour law - he publicly condemned the government's inaction in pursuing the culprits and renounced his government scholarship: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; Irma Flaquer, La Hora, 2.3.66.

49 Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94. A close friend, René Montes, interview, Guatemala City, 11.3.94, has suggested that Julio César left politics so as not to compete with Mario.

50 Brian Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', p.471.
presidential candidate which may not otherwise have been forthcoming — including widespread student backing. The Comité de Derechos Humanos declared in 1969 that without the death of Mario Méndez Montenegro, there would have been no popular choice in the elections, while a publication by the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales de Guatemala (ASIES) assumes — in the absence of statistical evidence — that large numbers of workers voted for the PR candidate hoping for a return to the labour conditions experienced during the revolutionary decade.

For the US State Department, Méndez Montenegro remained something of an enigma. As Ambassador Mein reported:

On the Communist issue MM is simply a big question mark... We believe him to be anticommunist... but he does not show any desire to risk losing extremist votes by taking a firm stand now.

Of particular concern for the State Department was the


52 La Violencia en Guatemala. Dramática y Documentada Denuncia Sobre 'El Tercer Gobierno de la Revolución' (Mexico, 1969) p.31, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.290; ibid., p.295. Road-workers claimed that they had voted for Méndez Montenegro 'en un 95 por ciento': El Gráfico 17.8.66, cited in ibid.; see also manifestos in support of the PR presidential and vice-presidential candidacies by the Frente Cívico Universitario Por la Revolución and the Bloque Ferrocarrilero Revolucionario, La Hora, 1.3.66; statement of support by the URD, El Gráfico, 5.3.66.

53 DDRS DOS 003252, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 594, 24.2.66.
tacit endorsement that the Méndez Montenegro candidacy received from the revolutionary movement.\textsuperscript{54} While Sloan has noted the sudden cessation of guerrilla activity 'for unknown reasons' a few weeks before the elections,\textsuperscript{55} this situation was the outcome of an ideological dispute within the Provisional Central Directorate (CPDR) of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) in which the view of the PGT leadership - to support the Méndez Montenegro candidacy - had prevailed over that of the guerrillas.\textsuperscript{56} Despite an apparently unqualified commitment to armed struggle established in a May 1965 party document, the changing political scene revitalised the PGT's interest in the 'peaceful road to socialism':\textsuperscript{57}

\[U\]n gobierno democrático, revolucionario y patriótico en el que estén representados la clase obrera, los campesinos, la pequeña burguesía y la

\textsuperscript{54} Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94, recalls the circulation of a leaflet in which the revolutionary movement urged electoral support for Méndez Montenegro: see also, Comité de Derechos Humanos, La Violencia en Guatemala, p.31, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.279; El Gráfico, 5.3.66; Gott, Rural Guerrillas, pp.118-19; Aguilera, Dialéctica del Terror, p.95; Handy Gift of the Devil, p.159.

\textsuperscript{55} Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.123.


\textsuperscript{57} Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', p.185; Comité Central del Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT), 'Diez tesis sobre organización', May 1965, reproduced in Centro Intercultural de Documentación [hereafter CIDOC], Guatemala. La Violencia, Dossier No.21, pp.4/228-249.
burguesía nacional. Este gobierno es condición indispensable para la realización de la revolución democrática que a su vez abrirá a nuestro país la perspectiva socialista... En el camino hacia la constitución del gobierno arriba mencionado apoyamos todo movimiento popular y democrático... todo paso, por modesto que sea...

Reiterating the line determined at the PGT's 1960 Congress, and emphasising that the PR had broken its previous links with the government and the MLN, leading party theorist Victor Manuel Gutiérrez argued in La Hora that the elections represented a valid form of struggle in Guatemala's revolutionary development:

Ahora, la principal tarea es poner punto final a la dictadura militarista y establecer un régimen democrático y patriótico, respetuoso de la vida humana y de todos los derechos inherentes a los guatemaltecos.

Using the opportunity of Turcios Lima's absence in Havana, the CPDR decision to support Méndez Montenegro overrode opposition from guerrilla leaders César Montes and Néstor Valle. This decision also clashed directly with

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58 'Plataforma Política - Aprobado por el III Congreso del PGT', May 1960, mimeo. In its efforts to pursue peaceful and legal forms of struggle the PGT apparently sustained negotiations with the URD and the DCG as well as the PR. 'Comunicación de Carácter Nacional e Internacional de las FAR', reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios de América Latina, pp.83-7.

59 Gutiérrez, 'Las elecciones deben realizarse', La Hora, 3.1.66. The tragic irony of Gutiérrez' support for these elections is underlined by his abduction and summary execution together with several other labour and communist militants by the authorities on the eve of the poll: Prensa Libre, 7.3.66.

the position of Turcios Lima - expressed at the Tricontinental - in which he vilified the PR leadership and the defunct Mario Méndez Montenegro in particular:

Si los revolucionarios participáramos en esas elecciones o si llamáramos al pueblo a participar en ellas votando por el PR o cualquier otro partido de oposición, le estariamos brindando nuestro propio apoyo, nuestro respaldo de principios, nuestra aprobación revolucionaria y el apoyo de las masas que creen en nosotros, a gente que sabemos que no tiene ningún escrúpulo, que sabemos que son cómplices de la reacción y el imperialismo. 61

The 1966 Election Campaign

The electoral campaign was dominated by two main issues: the likelihood of official fraud, and the threat of communism. Neither were new issues in terms of Guatemalan electoral politics. Protests against official fraud had caused the elections to be annulled in 1957, while the communist threat had been the primary justification for the military coup in 1963. However, in contrast to 1957 when the period of military intromission had been relatively brief, the return to constitutional rule after three years of de facto military government unleashed a partisan power struggle within the institution itself. Divided military loyalties complicated any attempt at official manipulation of the poll, yet the PR and the MLN appeared convinced that a PID victory could represent nothing else:

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...both PR and MLN seem convinced that Peralta regime is so much committed to support of PID that elections will be rigged, and both parties see only hope for free elections is change of regime.\textsuperscript{62}

This issue was subsequently taken on board by the US State Department, which by February 1966 had decided that Méndez Montenegro was the best option in Alliance for Progress and counterinsurgency terms, and that a victory for either the MLN or the PID would 'probably be the result of a managed election or a political deal or both'.\textsuperscript{63}

The shape of the communist threat had altered since 1963 and had been sharpened in the early months of the election campaign by the new guerrilla tactic of kidnapping wealthy Guatemalans for ransom.\textsuperscript{64} Systematically dismissed by Peralta as bandits and subject to rigorous press censorship, the guerrillas had hitherto been viewed more as an irritation than a serious threat by urban government officials and private individuals alike.\textsuperscript{65} Having claimed legitimacy for its de facto status in the need to defend the country's institutions from communism, the regime's apparent inability to confront the guerrilla assault on its 'last significant sector' of civilian support proved

\textsuperscript{62} LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, 27.12.65, Incoming Telegram 395.

\textsuperscript{63} DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, 14.2.66, Outgoing Telegram 390. Ambassador Mein disputed this view: DDRS DOS 003252, Ambassador Mein for Sayre and Burrows, 24.2.66, Incoming Telegram 594.

\textsuperscript{64} By early December the five publicly-acknowledged cases were widely believed to be just the tip of the iceberg. Journalist Manuel Angel Ponce put the number at ten: 'El caso de los secuestros', El Gráfico, 26.11.65; see also, New York Times, 21.1.66; LBJL, Office of Central American Affairs, 'Report on Guatemala', 13.12.65.

\textsuperscript{65} Adams, Crucifixion by Power, p.268.
particularly damaging. The government's loss of prestige in this area reflected sharply on the PID, which found itself forced to echo official denials regarding the prevailing state of insecurity. At the same time however, the military failure to eliminate the guerrillas was also potentially harmful to Ponciano, given his previous position as Army Chief of General Staff. Called to account for military actions during his time in office, he defended the army role in 'the emergency', but was unequivocal as to where the blame for any failure should lie.

las órdenes militares no emanan de la jefatura del Estado Mayor, de cuartel o sección especial alguna, sino directamente del comandante general del ejército y del ministro de la defensa nacional.

The kidnap threat provided a suitable context for hardline opponents of the regime to seek support for bypassing the electoral process altogether. While the MLN strove publicly to maximise the government's predicament, calling on the PR and PID to meet to discuss the problem,

66 LBJL, Office of Central American Affairs, 'Report on Guatemala', 13.12.65. The MLN claimed that the country was investing in communism through payment of ransoms, the total amount paid by early December being estimated as at least $255,000: DDRS DOS 0003250, Vaughn to The Secretary, Information Memorandum, 10.12.65.


The MLN's position reflected its increasing political isolation. With little possibility of winning an election against either an official party which had assumed the mantle of anticomunismo whilst sidelining the liberación, or a party claiming to embody the ideals of the 1944 Revolution, the only chance of political power for the MLN at this stage was the exploitation of divisions and ambitions within the military high command. The party published no programme of government, Ponciano maintaining that elaborate government plans were worthless without political stability. Discussion of future policy was limited to a promise of austerity and the standard developmental projects: a good road to the Petén, an electrification programme and a new Pacific port. Instead, MLN propaganda concentrated on the struggle against communism and the chaos facing the country in the event of either a PID or a PR victory. For Ponciano and the MLN, the priority remained the eradication of the guerrillas through a combination of repression and military civic action in affected zones:

71 The MLN leadership approached General Somoza in Nicaragua and Guatemalan exile Roberto Alejos Arzú - a crony of Ydígoras Fuentes: ibid; see also, letter from Alejos Arzú in New York Times, 14.3.66.

72 The CIA related the MLN's declining political influence to the appearance of 'several rightist terrorist groups' in June, even before Méndez Montenegro had taken office: DRRS CIA 003057, National Intelligence Estimate, 'Prospects for Stability in Guatemala', 24.6.66.

73 El Imparcial, 8.11.65.

74 Ibid.

75 La Hora, 28.2.66. These were of course precisely the measures subsequently taken by the Méndez Montenegro government.
A las urnas! Ha llegado el momento de salvar con votos, lo que más tarde - si no actuamos como guatemaltecos patriotas - tendríamos que defender con las armas... A las urnas! A las urnas! No puede haber neutrales frente al comunismo sediento de sangre!... Para no ser otra Cuba! Para no ser otra República Dominicana! Para no ser otro Viet Nam! A las urnas! Para no tener que decir nunca A las armas! Todos los guatemaltecos deben concurrir a las urnas, el domingo próximo, para sepultar con votos al comunismo, aliado de las izquierdas revolucionarios e infiltrado en los cuadros del oficialismo!

That the MLN's plotting was ultimately unsuccessful was due to a number of factors. While the army was clearly divided in its loyalties, the extent of support for Ponciano was uncertain, notwithstanding the frequency with which his name was associated with various conspiracies. Perhaps most importantly, there remained military suspicion of the MLN, as well as an enduring awareness of the dangers of a divided institution. It is notable that the negotiations following the elections specifically excluded the MLN, while the pact that Méndez Montenegro eventually signed with the military retained the principle of institutional unity established in its manifesto of 31 March 1963. Peralta's address to the nation in early December warned against political interference in the military institution and represented a 'virtual order to

76 MLN election publicity, Prensa Libre, 1.3.66
77 Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 28.2.66. Colonel Ricardo Peralta Méndez, Chief of Presidential Staff and Peralta Azurdia's nephew, was also rumoured to be plotting a pre-electoral coup, with the possible knowledge of the Chief of State himself: DDRS DOS 003250, Vaughn to The Secretary, Information Memorandum, 10.12.65; DDRS CIA 002412, 'The Situation in Guatemala', Intelligence Memorandum, 10.12.65; LBjl DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 395, 27.12.65.
[the] army to desist from political intrigue and remain united behind [the government]'.'

Mal signo es, por cierto, el afán de los dirigentes de un partido a inducir al Ejército a intervenir en la política. Tal actitud merece el más enérgico rechazo y justifica toda previsión del Gobierno acerca de las consecuencias que podría acarrear al país. Debe comprenderse que ya no hay inexperiencia en el Ejército, que puedan explotar los políticos. Los miembros de la Institución, todos, tienen plena conciencia de cuál es el cumplimiento de su deber, de manera que, como lo dije hace unos años en reunión de jefes y oficiales en el Casino Militar, a quienes creen que es de otra forma y tratan de inducir a la intervención del Ejército en la política para provecho de tortuosas intenciones, les repito que 'están predicando en el desierto y están perdiendo sus energías'. Con satisfacción plena confirmo en esta oportunidad que la unidad de la Institución Armada prosigue inquebrantable y su estructuración granítica es un hecho frente al cual se estrellan y han de estrellarse las intrigas de la política de bajo fondo.

The tenor of this speech sought to reassure the population of the government's ability to maintain public order and to guarantee the scheduled return to constitutionality, but a measure of the tension can be gauged from Peralta's demeanour at a minor public ceremony two days earlier. In an 'impromptu and highly emotional speech...he had literally wept, to the astonishment of all those present'.

The US State Department actively discouraged a coup, both at this stage and later, more publicly, after the

79 DDRS DOS 003249, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 360, 9.12.65.

80 Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia, El Imparcial, 9.12.65.

elections. While the prospect of an Arevalo victory had been considered inimical to US interests in 1963, Mendez Montenegro was judged to be 'a reasonably good candidate, [who] would follow a program of moderate reform within a democratic framework...and is acceptable to us on security grounds'. Couched in terms of Alliance for Progress precepts, this manner of thinking was influenced both by the negative experience of dealing with the military government as well as fears that a violent reaction to either a coup or official fraud might create a 'Dominican Republic situation'. Specific approaches were made to Ponciano to make clear US support for the election process and the problems involved in US recognition of a de facto government; President Schick of Nicaragua was also advised of the US position, and the message transmitted to Somoza. At the same time however, if the threat of a coup by disaffected officers and political schemers was serious enough to elicit US diplomatic intervention on more

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82 Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 16.2.66, questioned the unity of US government officials on this point and asserted that the Pentagon was pressing for a 'cuartelazo preelectoral'. The US Embassy issued a statement following the elections to the effect that it did not support plans for a coup as was being claimed by 'a political party': Prensa Libre, 15.3.66.

83 DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66.

84 The Washington Post, 20.3.66; see also Bowdler's angry response to this article which suggested differences between Embassy officials and Washington: DDRS WH 00471, Bowdler to Komer, Memorandum, 22.3.66. It is worth noting that the Dominican Republic scenario was an important point of reference in the calculations of key actors at this stage: see MLN election publicity, Prensa Libre, 1.3.66; 'Discurso en la Conferencia Tricontinental. Cmdte. Turcios Lima', reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios en América Latina, pp.54-56.

85 DDRS DOS 003248, Incoming Telegram 355, 8.12.65; LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 377, 16.12.65; LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 380, 17.12.65; LBJL WH, Bowdler to Bundy, Memorandum, December 1965.
than one occasion, there was also an element of
brinkmanship and 'psychological warfare' in many of these
rumours. The regime responded in kind by uncovering a
spurious communist conspiracy in a last-ditch effort to
unite the country against the common enemy and encourage a
political alliance around the PID.86

As self-proclaimed heir to the 1944 Revolution, the PR
was particularly vulnerable to charges of communism in
spite of considerable efforts to distance itself from the
left over the years. Like the MLN, it declined to publish
a comprehensive programme of government,87 confining itself
to a reiteration of the 'Declaration of Principles'
proclaimed at the First Extraordinary Party Convention in
June 1958 and ratified by all subsequent conventions.88
Specifying communism in its rejection of all forms of
totalitarianism, this statement called for democracy and an
'evolutionary' capitalist system based on social justice.89

El Partido Revolucionario es un producto genuino
de la Gloriosa Revolución del 20 de Octubre.
Todos sus esfuerzos se encaminan a la realización
y desarrollo de los principios que informan ese

86 The regime's 'discovery' of the subversive plot was
followed up by a 'discreet' attempt by the PID to persuade
its opponents to renounce their candidacies 'for the sake
of democratic unity': El Imparcial, 14.12.65, 15.12.65;
LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming
Telegram 377, 16.12.65. Ambassador Mein speculated that
coup rumours over the Christmas weekend which prompted a
government denial were part of a 'war of nerves' initiated
by the PR and the MLN against the regime: LBJL DOS, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram
395, 27.12.65; El Imparcial, 26.12.65.

87 The PID was the only party to publish a Programme
of Government, 'based entirely on government plan submitted
to CIAP last November': DDRS DOS 003252, Ambassador Mein
for Sayre and Burrows, Incoming Telegram 594, 24.2.66.

88 'Declaración Ideológica de 1965: La IV Convención
Extraordinaria del Partido Revolucionario 14.11.65'.

89 Ibid., p.28.
movimiento esencialmente democrático... [L]a democracia [no es] un simple instrumento y mucho menos... un montaje para justificar el dominio de ciertas minorías. Se requiere un concepto de democracia que aproveche a todo el pueblo y no descanse únicamente en criterios formalistas... Para la realización de sus objetivos el Partido Revolucionario considera indispensable... [f]ortalecer, crear y desarrollar los instrumentos de la democracia (Partidos Políticos, Sindicatos, Cooperativas, Reforma Agraria, Autonomía Universitaria y Municipal, Derechos Humanos, Seguro Social, Democratización de la Cultura, Racionalización de la Producción, etcétera)...  

While allegations of communism were inevitable in a context where even the military government was accused of being infiltrated by communists, the PR's position was complicated by an electoral strategy which appeared to offer the chance of a negotiated end to the guerrilla challenge, at the same time attempting both to placate and put pressure on the military. The former proposition stood in stark contrast to Ponciano's promise of a 'war without quarter' against the guerrillas and suggested some kind of pre-electoral agreement with the FAR, coinciding as it did with the suspension of the latter's kidnapping campaign.  

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the 'armed truce' declared by the FAR after the inauguration of Méndez Montenegro - the PGT having allegedly negotiated with the PR, 'before, during and after the elections of March 1966'. Although Méndez Montenegro continued to deny this, César Montes has claimed that negotiations took place...

90 Ibid., pp.25-26.  
91 El Imparcial, 21.2.66; 'Lucha de guerrillas: diálogo entre Marroquín Rojas-Ponciano' and 'Los guerrilleros: diálogo entre Marroquín Rojas-Ponciano-II', El Gráfico, 22.12.65, 24.12.65; Flaquer, 'Un mensaje a los señores guerrilleros', La Hora, 4.2.66; Marroquí Rojas, La Hora, 25.2.66; Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.123.  
92 'Comunicación de Carácter Nacional e Internacional de las FAR' 10.1.68, reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios de América Latina, p.84.
after the elections between the former's representative - Foreign Minister Emilio Catalán Arenales and members of the FAR's Provisional Directorate. But if there are indications that elements within the PR were indeed seeking 'an honorable peace' with the insurgents, the PR's public stance on this issue was contradictory. While vice-presidential candidate Clemente Marroquí Rojas apparently advocated a pact, he was also deeply critical of the military failure to defeat the FAR.

At this point, the maverick and almost machiavellian role played by Marroquí Rojas in Guatemalan politics should be noted. A veteran of the 'generation of 1920' and the political struggles against Estrada Cabrera and an outspoken anti-cleric and anti-communist, Marroquí Rojas had stood down as a rival presidential candidate to Arevalo in 1945 and later ran against Arbenz in the 1950 elections. He used his newspaper La Hora as a tribune from which to campaign for and then castigate the Ydígoras Fuentes government and he was similarly unrestrained in his criticisms of the military government which followed. His evident influence on public opinion had encouraged Mario Méndez Montenegro and the PR to invite him to stand as vice-presidential candidate in March 1966 and Marroquí Rojas was personally convinced that his support had been central to the party's victory in these elections.

However, his relationship with Julio César Méndez

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93 Méndez Montenegro insisted that he never personally had any contact with the guerrillas, nor received proposals for any dialogue: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.300.

94 'Lucha de guerrillas: diálogo entre Marroquí Rojas-Ponciano', El Gráfico, 22.12.65; Marroquí Rojas, 'El Ejército Nos Entregará el Poder', Impacto, 16.1.66; La Hora, 25.2.66.

95 Marroquí Rojas, La Hora, 27.9.66.
Montenegro was strained from the beginning and once in power, relations between the vice-president and the PR also deteriorated. Following the kidnapping of the Guatemalan Archbishop Mario Casariego in March 1968 and rumours of Marroquin Rojas' own involvement, his censure by PR deputies in the legislature led him to place La Hora at the disposal of the MLN/PID alliance for the 1970 election campaign in which he openly backed the candidacy of Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio.

Notwithstanding articles by Marroquin Rojas in which he argued the need for negotiations with the guerrillas 'before it is too late', the PR public relations office refuted PID claims that either the party or its presidential candidate had arrived at such an agreement:

El PR...[e]stá decidido a terminar con la subversión en el campo y en la ciudad...Si las peticiones de los alzados son inaceptables el gobierno nacional del PR las rechazará y entablará contra aquellos una lucha a muerte con ayuda de todos los recursos militares, económicos y morales del país.

Such a vague position was perhaps to be expected given that the party's primary objective was to establish the confidence of the military, but it also suggests that

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96 For a somewhat uncritical biography of Marroquin Rojas to 1966 see Argentina Diaz Lozano, Aquí Viene Un Hombre: Biografía de Clemente Marroquin Rojas (Mexico, 1968); Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94 and interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94, refused to answer any questions regarding his relationship with his vice-president.

97 Esp. Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 25.2.66.

98 'Refutación del PR a las declaraciones del PID - Posición Franca', La Hora, 4.3.66; see also, Comité Pro Salvación Nacional, 'Posición franca; el PR proclama su entendido con la "guerrilla marxista"', El Gráfico, 2.3.66; and 'Aclaración: el PR no está mezclado con la izquierda roja (como dice el PID)', El Gráfico, 3.3.66, reproduced in CIDOC, La Violencia, Dossier 19, pp.4/44-4/50.
voters' perceptions on this issue may not have been as clear-cut as Kenneth Johnson has argued.\textsuperscript{99} Indeed, it is likely that of at least equal concern to voters was the return to the achievements of the revolutionary era that the 'Third Government of the Revolution' appeared to promise.\textsuperscript{100}

Similarly, claims regarding the PR's 'strongly anti-militarist' character need to be qualified.\textsuperscript{101} For while its fielding of the sole civilian presidential candidate was clearly of central importance in an election which marked the transition from a de facto military government to a constitutional regime, the party had previously been an ally of this same government and continued to recognise the validity of the army's seizure of power in 1963.\textsuperscript{102}

Seeking to exploit divisions within the officer corps and drive a wedge between the military as an institution and its Commander-in-chief, the PR appealed for the outcome of the elections to be respected:

Se han propalado interesadas versiones, emitidas por los enemigos del pueblo, del PR y del Ejército de Guatemala...Que el PR pretende la destrucción del Ejército, y que el Ejército jamás entregará el poder al PR...El Ejército es emanación del pueblo...Es el pueblo en armas...El PR es un partido nacido del pueblo y destinado a servir al pueblo...Luego, no puede estar contra el Ejército...El Ejército asumió con beneplácito general, el gobierno de la República; El Ministro de la Defensa Nacional, Colonel Enrique Peralta

\textsuperscript{99} Johnson, 'From Terrorism to Terror', p.12; and 'The 1966 and 1970 Elections', p.38. Adams has commented that shifting party alliances made it difficult to see consistently just how voters perceived the particular bent of a party: Adams, Crucifixion by Power, p.206.

\textsuperscript{100} Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94.


\textsuperscript{102} 'El PR Se Dirige Al Noble Ejército de Guatemala', La Hora, 2.3.66.
Azurdia asumió, como delegado del Ejército, las funciones legislativas y ejecutivas. Significa esto que el Coronel Peralta haya asumido por sí la soberanía de la nación y el mando irrestricto de los destinos patrios? No, y el PR estima que el Ejército debe ser simplemente el garante de la voluntad popular, y no seguir a su actual y transitorio jefe en el camino equivocado de apoyar, impolítica y antimilitarmente, una candidatura oficial. Exigid Ejército de Guatemala, a vuestro jefe, que deje a un lado sus simpatías personales a favor de determinado candidato!103

The Elections of 6 March 1966

El espectáculo de los ciudadanos frente a las mesas electorales el día de ayer ratifica la urbanidad de los guatemaltecos, su postura cívica y su propósito de contribuir a resolverse, dentro de los cánones de la convivencia civilizada, los problemas políticos...Los que hablaban de apatía a lo largo del proceso eleccionario menospreciaban festinadamente las cualidades notables de la ciudadanía guatemalteca...104

Although it had polled badly in the November 1962 municipal election in Guatemala City, by March 1966, a PR electoral victory seemed inevitable for a number of reasons. Most crucially, the MLN and the PID were unable to negotiate an alliance. Moreover, the lack of legal political competition to its left, cleared the way for the PR. The impact of support for Méndez Montenegro from the revolutionary movement is difficult to measure, although CIA estimates putting the number of PGT members at 1,200 with another 3,000-4,000 supporters, provide a possible

103 Ibid. A press bulletin from the military's public relations office interpreted this appeal as an attempt to split army ranks: La Hora, 4.3.66.

104 Editorial, Prensa Libre, 7.3.66.
Table 1
Presidential Election Results: 6 March 1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>PID</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>MLN</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>20,667</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>29,997</td>
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<td>Escuintla</td>
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<td>18.5</td>
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<td>19.7</td>
<td>14,050</td>
<td>61.8</td>
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<td>Sacatepéquez</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>2,676</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>4,012</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimaltenango</td>
<td>5,560</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>3,995</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>4,927</td>
<td>34.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quetzaltenango</td>
<td>12,029</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>5,558</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>12,927</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sololá</td>
<td>5,054</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3,766</td>
<td>35.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totonicapán</td>
<td>7,047</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>2,207</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marcos</td>
<td>10,393</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>5,453</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>17,487</td>
<td>52.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retalhuleu</td>
<td>3,714</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>1,584</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>6,109</td>
<td>53.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suchitepéquez</td>
<td>5,795</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4,131</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>13,251</td>
<td>57.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa</td>
<td>5,409</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>3,819</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>6,416</td>
<td>41.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jutiapa</td>
<td>7,443</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>6,136</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>5,698</td>
<td>29.5</td>
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<td>Jalapa</td>
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<td>El Progreso</td>
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<td>32.8</td>
<td>2,058</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>2,161</td>
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<td>Zacapa</td>
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<td>2,101</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>4,136</td>
<td>43.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chiquimula</td>
<td>3,866</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>5,627</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>5,633</td>
<td>37.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Izabal</td>
<td>3,183</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>2,102</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>4,266</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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<td>Alta Verapaz</td>
<td>8,418</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>3,912</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>4,790</td>
<td>29.2</td>
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<td>Baja Verapaz</td>
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<td>2,178</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>31.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiché</td>
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<td>53.3</td>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>2,288</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huehuetenango</td>
<td>10,268</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>6,793</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>7,228</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petén</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>136,257</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>102,953</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>190,899</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Diario de Centroamérica*, 14.3.66.

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105 DDRS CIA 003057, 'Prospects for Stability in Guatemala', National Intelligence Estimate, 24.6.66. The same report put the number of guerrillas in the FAR and MR-13 at no more than 200 members each.
While the DCG responded to its exclusion with a call for ballot-spoiling, the URD urged its supporters to vote for Méndez Montenegro. Leader of the URD, Villagrán Kramer has claimed the party brought between 80,000 and 100,000 votes to the PR in March 1966. The effects of this tactical voting were clearest in metropolitan Guatemala, although the propensity of this area to return an oposicionista vote should also be recognised. Here, the PR's 1966 showing was more than halved in 1970, although its losses overall were less dramatic.

If the PR vote was sufficiently strong to discourage any serious attempts at ballot-stuffing by the government, its plurality represented a rather more modest rejection of militarism nationally than either Johnson or Villagrán Kramer have argued. The PR won a clear majority in only five of the country's 22 departments and would have been defeated by an MLN-PID coalition in every other province. Conversely, in the 1970 elections, the MLN-PID would probably have lost with a combined PR and DCG vote.

The areas where the PR did win a clear majority were significant and suggested not only support for the party

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106 Francisco Villagrán Kramer, interview, Guatemala City, 22.10.93. This figure is clearly exaggerated, but the November 1962 municipal elections had shown that the URD commanded considerable support in the capital.


108 In the 1970 presidential election, the PID-MLN won 42.1 per cent in Guatemala City, the PR 21.7 per cent, and the DCG (Frente nacional) 36.2 per cent: see Table 2, p.237.

109 Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.408; Johnson, 'The 1966 and 1970 Elections', p.35. Johnson's declaration that the results of the 1970 election - in which the joint PID-MLN ticket won a plurality - was a clear vote for military reactionism is similarly an overstatement: ibid., p.42.
from particular social groups, but also that an association was being made between the PR and the earlier revolutionary experience. Located along the Pacific coast, Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu were areas geared to export agriculture with large numbers of migrants and wage earners, a combination of factors which Nelson Amaro has argued makes a vote for the 'left' more likely.\(^{110}\) They had also been centres of mobilisation and agitation during the reformist decade. San Marcos established more than 300 local agrarian committees to petition for land under Decree 900.\(^ {111}\) Similarly, Escuintla had large numbers of agrarian committees and was the scene of illegal land invasions following Arbenz's land reform. As an area of UFCo banana cultivation, large tracts of land in Escuintla had been marked for expropriation. More recently in 1964, 2,500 UFCo workers had lost their jobs when the company closed down its operations on the Tiquisate plantations, in compliance with a 1958 anti-trust ruling against it in the

\(^{110}\) Guatemala and, to a lesser extent, San Marcos also had relatively high levels of migrant and waged labour. Amaro, 'Factores influyentes en la votación', pp.269-70 and Table 8, p.282, posits a correlation between levels of migrants and waged workers in a department and its propensity to vote for parties of the 'left': the PR in 1966 and the DCG (Frente Nacional) in 1970. That this correlation was less clear in some areas in 1970 is explained by specific factors — for example anti-clericalism in San Marcos — and more generally with the argument that the DCG, in its new leftist incarnation, remained as yet an unfamiliar alternative: see also, Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.223.

Finally, in the light of PGT support for Méndez Montenegro in the 1966 elections, it is also worth noting that party's traditional influence among waged labour on the banana plantations.

Elsewhere, support for the PR was more patchy. In the ladino eastern districts the majority voted for the right, although all but Jutiapa delivered a plurality for the PR. In the core areas of guerrilla activity - Zacapa and Izabal - the PR showed strong pluralities but did not win outright. It was weakest of all in the Indian-populated west where the PID did particularly well, illustrating the tendency of these areas to return an oficialista or rightist vote. This tendency reflected a combination of cultural traditions, landlord coercion and patron-client relationships in the highlands, yet the Indian vote was clearly important and political parties often exploited local religious and ethnic tensions in order to acquire support at municipal and national level.

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112 Whetten, Guatemala, p.133, n.7. Attempts by the UFCo workers' union to buy the lands failed: Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.201-2.

113 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.147.

114 See John W. Durston, La Estructura del Poder en una Región Ladina de Guatemala' (Guatemala, 1972) p.116, for a discussion of the debilitating effects of the 1958 anti-communist purges in the PR on the local party organisation in Jutiapa.

115 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.194; see also, Amaro, 'Factores Influyentes de la Votación', pp.271-2.

However, Sloan's prediction that 'the traditional Indian will support - or be controlled by - the PR government in the next election' proved to be only partially correct.\textsuperscript{117} The PR was able to increase its share of the vote in most of these areas in March 1970, but won only Alta Verapaz outright. With respect to the 1966 election results, Vice-President-elect Marroquín Rojas echoed the familiar ladino lament regarding the easy manipulation of the illiterate indigenous vote:

\cite{117} Sloan, 'The Electoral Game', p.224.
\cite{118} Marroquín Rojas, \textit{La Hora}, 14.3.66.
\cite{119} DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to American Embassy, Guatemala, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66.
\cite{120} 'La IV Convención Extraordinaria del Partido Revolucionario', pp.26, 29; PR publicity quoting Méndez Montenegro's reply to the 'Iniciativa Privada Agropecuaria', \textit{El Imparcial}, 28.2.66.

\begin{quote}
...están todavía en la época más bárbara: temerosos, sometidos, analfabetas y abandonados por el gobierno de todos los tiempos. En cambio, todos los pueblos en donde la civilización va penetrando, donde el analfabetismo pierde terreno, donde el ladino se ha confundido ya con el indio puro de los altillanos, la victoria fue del PR.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

The problems inherent in a PR plurality of this kind had earlier been acknowledged by the US State Department, when the question of resistance by military and 'other conservative elements' had been raised.\textsuperscript{119} For if the PR had expressed its intention to promote the private sector and establish an 'evolutionary capitalist regime' in Guatemala, its references to social justice and the need to resolve socio-economic problems remained anathema to the 'upper sector'.\textsuperscript{120} The latter, reported the CIA, 'regards Méndez Montenegro as a Communist, as it does any community and exposed latent ethnic rivalry between Indians and ladinos in San Juan Ostuncalco.
reformist'.

Articulating this aspect of elite concern, El Imparcial warned that the concept of 'social justice' was a call to marxist agitation and unrest. A similar view prevailed amongst many in the officer corps. Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes recalls being told by his military chiefs that Méndez Montenegro's victory represented a victory for communism which had to be opposed.

While visceral anticomunismo was central to this resistance in its own terms, at the same time it also gave expression to other fears associated with the prospect of a PR government - in particular the fear of 'revolutionary' revanchism and revenge-taking by those uprooted by the 1954 events. These concerns were highlighted by journalist Isidoro Zarco who urged a conciliatory formula in order to diminish fears of reprisals. Failure to guarantee the integrity of the losers through some kind of power-sharing agreement would drive them to desperate measures. For the military such fears apparently centred on the prospect of retired arbencista officers being reinstated - a concern addressed by the PR and its candidates on several occasions. Of equal concern was the possible

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121 LBJL CIA, Office of National Estimates, 'Special Memorandum' 18.1.66. This document predicted a military coup before or shortly after the March elections.

122 Editorial, El Imparcial, 1.11.65.

123 Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94; General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes, interview, Guatemala City, 4.11.94, confirmed that many in the military believed Méndez Montenegro to be a communist.

124 Isidoro Zarco, Prensa Libre, 10.3.66.

125 Clemente Marroquin Rojas, 'El Ejército Nos Entregará el Poder si Triunfamos', Impacto, 16.1.66, and 'EL PR y el Ejército deben llegar a un Entendido', La Hora, 11.3.66; 'El PR Se Dirige Al Noble Ejército de Guatemala', La Hora, 2.3.66; 'Manifiesto al Pueblo y al Ejército de Guatemala del PR y de sus Candidatos: Licenciados Julio César Méndez Montenegro y Clemente Marroquin Rojas', Prensa Libre, 22.3.66.
persecution of government and military officials or their families for actions carried out in the line of duty during the de facto regime.

The Secret Pact

...hacemos la advertencia de que dificilmente el gobierno militar hará entrega del Poder al PR y que posiblemente exigirá muchas condiciones, entre otras, no tocar al Ejército en su organización y desenvolvimiento. Esto es que habrá un Estado militar dentro de un Estado civil...

El pacto tiene algunos puntos especiales pero no tiene mayor importancia porque tanto Méndez Montenegro como Clemente Marroquín Rojas eran abogados. Ellos sabían muy bien hasta donde podía llegar ese pacto de punto de vista legal...

Within the restricted parameters for competition in the March 1966 elections, a PR victory was not entirely unexpected. Indeed, as a White House memorandum pointed out in mid-March, 'it was pretty evident that if the elections were reasonably honest' Méndez Montenegro would win. However, the delay in releasing the official results indicated that the way to a smooth transition remained far from clear. In addition, the arrest and subsequent disappearance of some 28 leading communists and labour activists - including Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez and

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126 Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 15.4.66.
127 General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez, interview, Guatemala City, 4.11.94.
128 DDRS WH 001052, Bowdler to Komer, Memorandum, 15.3.66; see also DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66; DDRS DOS 003252, Ambassador Mein to Sayre and Burrows, Incoming Telegram 594, 24.2.66.
Leonardo Castillo Flores - in the weeks preceding the elections cast an uneasy shadow over the proceedings. The fate of the '28' - execution followed by secret burial or maritime disposal - was viewed by many as emblematic both of the ultimate violence of the Peralta Azurdia regime and of the counter-terror which was to crystallise under the Méndez Montenegro government. Equally however, Peralta Azurdia's own role in the deed remains in question and several respondents have argued that the Chief of State was presented with a fait accompli, carried out by high-ranking subordinates in league with the civilian security forces and acting on information provided by US intelligence:

Es probable que algunas listas de líderes de la izquierda encubiertos las hayan proporcionado la CIA ... quienes estuvieron la iniciativa de desaparecer a los 28 del PGT... es mi opinión personal, pero en ese entonces el miedo, la sicosis, el ambiente dentro el ejército los hizo comentar: que bueno que han matado a esos

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129 Both had been key labour organisers during the Arbenz government.

130 The Association of University Students (AEU), El Imparcial, 16.7.66, 20.7.66, announced that the '28' had been murdered by the judicial police and ordered three days of mourning; The 'Guatemalan Committee for the Defence of Human Rights', 'La Violencia en Guatemala', n.d., reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala. La Violencia, Dossier No.21, pp.5/4-5/27, named high-ranking officers including Peralta Azurdia and Arriaga Bosque as the intellectual authors of the crime, p.5/11; the latter was also named by El Gráfico, 17.7.66, cited in Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.199.

131 According to César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94, the sweep was a CIA-led operation which narrowly missed himself and Turcios Lima; see also, Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras, interview, Guatemala City, 14.11.94; Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, 30.9.94; General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94; DDRS DOS 003158, Hughes to The Secretary, Intelligence Note 290, 11.5.66. DDGRS WH 003442, Bowdler to The President, Memorandum, 5.3.66, and DOS 003254, Rusk to Mein, Outgoing Telegram 460, 11.3.66, hint at US involvement in these events.
While the Cuban Revolution may have been foremost in the thinking of those who planned and executed this action, it is also significant that two of the victims were key labour organisers during the reformist decade. The removal of these 'enemies' apparently did little to quell hardline resistance to Méndez Montenegro. In the face of mounting opposition to the prospect of a PR government, a deal had to be struck to enable the former to take office.\(^{133}\)

Eventually signed on 4 May 1966 by the army high command on the one hand and Méndez Montenegro, Marroquin Rojas and Méndez Martínez on the other,\(^{134}\) the terms of this 'secret pact' had been agreed in March and guaranteed the transfer of power on certain conditions.\(^{135}\) In one sense the pact was a means by which to force formal subscription to the principles of anticomunismo, a position which Méndez Montenegro and Marroquin Rojas had been careful to avoid during the election campaign.

Article Two of the document explicitly referred to Articles 27, 49, and 64 of the 1965 Constitution each of

\(^{132}\) Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 10.9.94.

\(^{133}\) Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras, interview, Guatemala City, 14.11.94, has speculated that it may have been the 'fallout' from the crime itself which drove Méndez Montenegro to compromise with the military in this way.

\(^{134}\) President-elect, Vice-President-elect, and PR Secretary General respectively.

\(^{135}\) Two different versions of the pact exist and vary slightly in their content: the final document is reproduced in original form in, 'El Pacto Secreto de 1966', Polémica (March-June, 1984) pp.80-82; an earlier version, negotiated immediately following the March elections is given in Gramajo Morales, De La Guerra, pp.462-64; see also, Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.418-35.
which underlined the proscription of Communism. Article Three dealt with concerns which had been generated regarding the possibility of an agreement with the guerrillas and expressly forbade any understanding other than one based on their total surrender. In the absence of the latter, the government was to offer the military all possible collaboration in their elimination. The new president and vice-president were expected to constitute a government of national unity, including elements from outside the PR, but expressly excluding Communists. In addition, the families, rights and property of ex-functionaries of the military regime were to be protected. None would be subject to repressive actions related to their deeds while in office. This guarantee was extended to the candidates and leaderships of the losing parties. Article Six established the organisational autonomy of the military institution and the means by which key military personnel were appointed. The reinstatement of retired officers was prohibited. Article Seven reiterated and elaborated on the central principle of military political neutrality as enshrined in the 1965 Constitution. The initial agreement in March also included an article committing the new Congress to an amnesty for repressive actions by members of the army and the police against 'subversive activities'.136 However, the amnesty subsequently passed by the Constituent Assembly on 28 April and covering the whole period from 3 July 1954, indicates that the military did not trust a PR-dominated Congress to be able or willing to promulgate such legislation, and the undertaking was omitted from the final version of the pact.137

136 'Pacto Político entre el Presidente Electo y la Jerarquía Militar', in Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.464.

137 Villagrá n Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.411-12.
This final version no longer incorporated the PID representatives, Juan de Dios Aguilar de León, Gustavo Mirón Porras or Héctor Menéndez de la Riva. While Colonel Aguilar de León has claimed that he refused to sign the agreement, Méndez Montenegro was unwilling to compromise his victory with the losing party.\textsuperscript{138} But if the PID was not formally included in the pact, it is nonetheless clear that it obtained concessions. Article Five provided an undertaking to protect civilian as well as military functionaries of the previous regime, and a government of national unity was promised, with the PID later receiving control of three congressional committees.\textsuperscript{139} Indeed, the US State Department noted that relations between Peralta Azurdia and the PID on the one hand and Méndez Montenegro and the PR on the other, improved significantly during the transition period leading up to the presidential inauguration.\textsuperscript{140} In response to the kidnappings of the government Secretary for Information and the president of the Supreme Court by FAR guerrillas in May, the PR-dominated Congress ratified a new State of Siege, while Peralta Azurdia reciprocated with a supplementary decree committing the regime to installing the new government according to schedule.\textsuperscript{141}

Significantly, the MLN was entirely excluded from the

\textsuperscript{138} DDRS DOS 003256, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 702, 18.3.66; Colonel Juan de Dios Aguilar de León, interview, Guatemala City, 4.4.94.

\textsuperscript{139} New York Times, 29.6.66.

\textsuperscript{140} DDRS DOS 003518, Hughes to The Secretary, Intelligence Note 290, 11.5.66.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.; DDRS DOS 003258, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 866, 11.5.66. The FAR had kidnapped Baltazar Morales de la Cruz and Augusto de León in retaliation for the arrest and disappearance of the 28 PGT and labour activists. Héctor Menéndez de la Riva was also kidnapped but managed to escape and later left the country in fear of his life.
post-electoral negotiations, and it appears that a 'gentlemen's agreement' was reached between the PR and the PID to deny the MLN a place on any congressional committee. Initial suggestions that the MLN would join forces with the PID to prevent the second-round election of Méndez Montenegro in the Constituyente came to nothing. Relying on old tactics, the MLN continued to push for a coup with hardline officers still averse to a PR victory. Under pressure either to annul the elections or to stand down and allow a successor to do so, it appears that Peralta Azurdia's determination to respect the election results was decisive in the eventual outcome. In a key meeting with the capital's base commanders, the Chief of State insisted that the proposed autogolpe would merely strengthen the guerrilla and create 'problems of an international character'. The latter point was emphasised with a letter from Ambassador Mein which stated that the US government would not recognise a government that was the product of a coup. At a further meeting of

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142 In April 1968, PID deputy Mauro Monterroso called for an end to this 'pacto de caballeros' so that MLN deputy Blanca Luz Rodriguez could be included on the congressional committee dealing with social reform: Prensa Libre, 19.4.68.

143 El Imparcial, 9.3.66, 11.3.66. Méndez Montenegro and Marroquin Rojas were confirmed as electoral victors by the newly-installed Congress on 10 May by 35 votes to 19: La Hora, 10.5.66.

144 LBJL WH, Bowdler to the President, Memorandum, 10.3.66; Colonel Ricardo Alberto Pinto Recinos, 'Autogolpe que evitó el Coronel Peralta Azurdia con la ayuda de un embajador', La Hora, 23.4.91.

145 Pinto Recinos, 'Autogolpe', La Hora, 23.4.91; General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez, interview, Guatemala City, 4.11.94.

146 Pinto Recinos, 'Autogolpe', La Hora, 23.4.91. In his memorandum of 10 March, LBJL WH, Bowdler to The President, 10.3.66, Bowdler had suggested to President Johnson that it would strengthen Mein's efforts to 'prop up Peralta's determination to stay in power...if he were able to convey to Peralta that the 'WH' would like to see the
all military commanders it was reportedly established by a majority vote that Colonel Rafael Arriaga Bosque would succeed Peralta Azurdia as Minister of Defence. This did not prevent a further attempt to stage a coup. Headed by the then-commander of the presidential guard, Colonel Callejas Soto - backed by 'an agro-industrial millionaire' - the plotters planned to annul the elections and to ban the PID.

René Poitevin has suggested that at this stage, the alternative to the pact was civil war. While the PR and its representatives continued to hint at the violence that would be unleashed if the 'popular will' was not respected, Marroquin Rojas launched a campaign through La Hora insisting that the army transfer power. However, the precise circumstances of the pact remain open to dispute, principally as to whether it was instigated by the military

results fully respected and power tranferred peacefully...' However, this message was intended to be oral, while the suggested text did not refer to possible US responses to a coup: DDRS DOS 003254, Rusk to Mein, Outgoing Telegram 460, 11.3.66.

Pinto Recinos, 'Autogolpe', La Hora, 23.4.91. This account is somewhat at variance with that of General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94, who asserts that Arriaga Bosque was selected by Méndez Montenegro from a list of three presented to him by the military high command and that Peralta Azurdia's preferred successor was Colonel Carlos Vielman.

Alerted by military intelligence and supported by the three other base commanders in the capital, Peralta moved Callejas Soto to the post of Vice-Minister of Defence: Pinto Recinos, 'Autogolpe', La Hora, 23.4.91; see also DDRS DOS 003256, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 702, 18.3.66.

Poitevin, 'Presentación' in Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.II.

Méndez Montenegro, Prensa Libre, 5.3.66; 'Secretaría de Publicidad y Propaganda del PR a los Honorables Miembros del Ejército Nacional', Prensa Libre, 10.3.66; New York Times, 9.3.66; Pinto Recinos, Autogolpe, La Hora, 23.4.91.
or the PR leadership. Peralta Azurdia subsequently claimed the latter in 1973, an assertion which Christian Democrat René de León Schlotter has also argued to have been the case.\textsuperscript{151} For his part, Méndez Montenegro simply maintained that he could not have received the presidency without the pact, while the newly-instated PR president of congress, Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, recalls being sent to negotiate directly with Peralta Azurdia after learning of an MLN plot to annul the elections.\textsuperscript{152}

According to US Embassy reports, Peralta Azurdia's struggle to contain ultramontane military elements occurred simultaneously with his negotiations with the PR leadership which had been under way for several days.\textsuperscript{153} With regard to the latter, it appears that Colonel Guillermo Méndez Montenegro - brother of the President-elect and director of the military hospital - played a central role in the arbitration process.\textsuperscript{154} At the same time, Julio César Méndez Montenegro was also reportedly having meetings with

\textsuperscript{151} 'Peralta: Fue el PR el que pidió el Pacto Militar', Diario la Tarde, 24.8.73; René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94.

\textsuperscript{152} Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; idem., El Gráfico, 15.12.85; Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94; see also Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 20.2.70; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, pp.418-35.

\textsuperscript{153} DDRS DOS 003256, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 702, 18.3.66.

\textsuperscript{154} Colonel and Doctor Guillermo 'Pino' Méndez Montenegro subsequently occupied the position of Presidential Chief of Staff for some time before returning to the Directorship of the Military Hospital: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes, interview, Guatemala City, 4.11.94; Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94; Héctor Mansilla Pinto, interview, Guatemala City, 9.3.94; Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 16.11.93; Danilo Roca Barillas, interview, Guatemala City, 17.10.94; Villagrán Kramer, Biografía Política, p.411.
Guatemalan businessmen 'to reassure them'.

If not decisive, the role of the US State Department and Embassy appears to have been significant in securing recognition of the PR victory. Even before the elections, the need for some kind of deal had already been recognised by the State Department:

...we wonder whether the confidence gap between MM and military-conservatives cannot be bridged. We wonder, for example, whether MM could not reassure business community on how far he proposes to go in economic and social reforms and military establishment on future status their programs and control of communist activities.

Following the elections, Ambassador Mein and Embassy staff visited party candidates, business and military leaders, and Colonel Peralta, 'to convey to them our strong desire to see the results of the elections fully respected and our extreme distaste with any effort to alter or annul them'. In response to the attempted coup by Callejas Soto and claims by the MLN of US Embassy backing, the latter issued a categorical denial. While Pinto Recinos has underlined the importance of US support in enabling Peralta Azurdia to withstand pressure to annul the elections, General Cifuentes Méndez has stated that it was the last-minute agreement reached after a series of talks with Méndez Montenegro that were decisive in reaching a

155 DDRS DOS 003256, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 702, 18.3.66.
156 DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66.
157 LBJL WH, Bowdler to the President, Memorandum, 10.3.66.
158 Prensa Libre, 15.3.66.
resolution to the situation.\textsuperscript{159}

Clearly the two positions are not mutually exclusive, since the State Department had encouraged the 'meeting of minds' that the latter represented.\textsuperscript{160} However, it is not clear from the - admittedly scanty - evidence that the US actually 'brokered' the pact, nor that negotiations took place on the 'neutral ground' of the US Embassy as some have claimed.\textsuperscript{161} Indeed, the State Department was anxious not appear as the 'go-between' in efforts to 'bridge the confidence gap' between Méndez Montenegro and those suspicious of the PR.\textsuperscript{162} It seems further significant that the outspoken and nationalistic Marroquin Rojas made no mention of US involvement in his public disavowal of the pact in 1973, as might otherwise have been expected.\textsuperscript{163} At the same time however, the US government was clearly satisfied with the outcome of its efforts to effect a 'modus operandi between [Méndez Montenegro] and the military':\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{159} General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez, interview, Guatemala City, 4.11.94.

\textsuperscript{160} DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66; DDRS DOS 003255, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 675, 12.3.66.

\textsuperscript{161} Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala, p.60; George A. Bowdler and Patrick Cotter, Voter Participation in Central America 1954-1981: an Explanation (Washington, 1982) p.130. Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94, has denied any US involvement in the pact and Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 16.11.93, also believes this to be the case.

\textsuperscript{162} DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Ambassador Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66.

\textsuperscript{163} Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 25.8.73, 26.11.73.

\textsuperscript{164} LBJL WH, Bowdler to Komer, Memorandum, 22.3.66; see also LBJL WH, Bowdler to Komer, Memorandum, 14.3.66.
The assumption of power by Méndez will represent an impressive victory for democracy in this hemisphere. The formula of civilian, reform-minded presidents with the political knack for reaching practical working relationships with the military and other conservative elements, is one which I hope will continue to prosper in this hemisphere. It is a formula for short-term political stability which allows the government to concentrate on development and reform.\(^{165}\)

Much of the recent literature on democratisation places significant weight on the role of elite agreements and pacts in the process of democratic transition and consolidation. However, the series of conditions to which the Méndez Montenegro put his name represented 'an explicit... agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define... rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the "vital interests" of those entering into it' only in its most narrow sense.\(^{166}\) The pact was a primarily a quid pro quo between the leadership of the PR and the military with the 'vital interests' of the civilian signatories amounting to their being allowed access to office for a constitutional term. Their military counterparts were guaranteed organisational autonomy, as well as the retention of certain 'tutelary powers' and 'reserved domains', specifically in the area of counterinsurgency.\(^{167}\) While it seems clear that a transition could not have been effected without such an agreement, the transition process itself was to be fundamentally flawed by the failure to subordinate the military to civilian rule that the secret pact represented.

\(^{165}\) DDRS WH 00472, Memorandum from Rostow to the President, 5.4.66.

\(^{166}\) O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, p.37.

However, it is also important to stress that this was not the first time that the Guatemalan military had required that its autonomy be underwritten before endorsing an elected civilian government. Nor was it the last. In addition, in many respects the pact simply reiterated principles enshrined in the 1965 Constitution, itself a legacy of the military government. This is the position subsequently maintained by Méndez Montenegro in his defence. According to the ex-president, his only point of compromise - that of agreeing to appoint the Minister of Defence and Chief of Military Staff from a list of three presented by the high command - was abrogated in March 1968 with the removal of several key military figures.

It is worth also considering the more recent cases of democratisation in South America in which militaries have usually been able to retain considerable institutional autonomy and oversight over key areas of government. The depth and resilience of the transition is subsequently tested by the willingness and capacity of the civilian regime to 'claw back' control over these areas, often through a series of precedent-setting confrontations on such issues as military impunity or tax reforms. The following two chapters will address these questions through an examination of aspects of socio-economic policy and the

168 In 1945, Arévalo was forced to concede to certain military demands before he became president. Similarly, while Vinicio Cerezo (1986-1990) insisted that he would never make concessions to the army, it was clear that he did: see Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.514, n.163.

169 However, he has acknowledged that before March 1968 the Executive had little control over the army: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala city, 31.1.94; Méndez Montenegro, letter to La Hora, 6.12.78; 'Confesiones de un expresidente', El Gráfico, 15.12.85; 'No me manejó el Ejército', Prensa Libre, 12.12.85.

170 It is significant - if exaggerated - that Mario Fuentes Pieruccini compared the Méndez Montenegro government with that of Aylwin in Chile with respect to military constraints: interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94.
government response to the guerrilla challenge.
CHAPTER FIVE
REFORMISM WITHOUT REFORM: THE POLITICS OF DISENCHANTMENT

La asunción del poder del presidente Julio César Méndez Montenegro abriría una esperanza de que era posible retomar el camino de la democracia social participativa y egalitaria de la revolución de 1944-54, a pesar de que el licenciado Julio César Méndez Montenegro nunca fue un revolucionario radical.¹

El Presidente y Vicepresidente electos...se han comprometido públicamente a no permitir la intromisión del comunismo en el gobierno...debe confiarse en que harán honor a la palabra empeñada y cuidarán de que la justicia social se realice sin desatar la venganza social; de que la Reforma Agraria no conlleve el irrespeto a la Propiedad Privada...en fin, de que los elementos de reconocida filiación marxista no ocupen cargos en la administración pública.²

Introduction

In the days following the inauguration of Julio César Méndez Montenegro on 1 July 1966, 'Guatemala was almost euphoric', according to US observers.³ Few had believed that the military and the extreme right would accept defeat and permit the PR and its candidate to take office yet 'once this was done, most sectors of the country were willing to try this experiment in democracy'.⁴ While there is good reason to doubt such a democratic commitment on the part of elements within both the armed forces and the MLN

¹ Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras, interview, Guatemala City, 14.11.94.
² Colonel Guillermo Flores Avendaño, 'Mi Mensaje al Ejército', La Hora, 11.4.66.
³ DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.11.66.
⁴ Ibid.
even at this early stage, the extent to which the Méndez Montenegro government was constrained in its ability to deliver a 'return to democracy' is perhaps clear only in retrospect.

In many ways, the inauguration appeared to represent an historic opportunity for Guatemala. Not only did it mark the transition from a de facto military regime to constitutional rule, but also the return to office of declared representatives of the 1944-54 reformist decade. Holding 30 of the 55 seats in the congress, the PR claimed to be 'a genuine creation of the Glorious Revolution of 20 October'. The new President had personally taken part in the Guardia de Honor uprising which had driven the last vestiges of ubiquismo from power. The PR's appeal to the memory of the 1944 'revolution' undoubtedly struck a popular chord.

It was precisely this appeal which set the military and the right on edge. Whilst the agreement signed between the elected candidates of the PR and the military high command was primarily a guarantee of military autonomy and an assurance that there would be no accommodation with the guerrillas, it also reflected deeper concerns associated with a possible resurgence of the 'revolutionary' current so decisively suppressed by the liberación in 1954. The consensus reached by the left in favour of the Méndez Montenegro candidacy - and the popular support that this implied - raised the spectre of the social mobilisation which had accompanied the reforms of 1944-54. Similarly,

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5 'La IV convención Extraordinaria del Partido Revolucionario', p.25.


7 Paradoxically, it was this image that Méndez Montenegro played upon when he suggested that it might not be possible to control his supporters if the election
powerful sectors in the economic elite continued to be profoundly suspicious of the PR and its candidate and the prospect of socio-economic reform. In particular, the agro-export sector - claiming to represent 70 per cent of the working population - set out its pre-electoral demands and warned of the deleterious effects in terms of 'political agitation and explosions' which always accompanied attempts at agrarian reform. This campo pagado elicited public assurances from all three presidential candidates, and there are indications that Méndez Montenegro went to further lengths to reassure these groups before his inauguration, a 'meeting of minds' encouraged by the US State Department.

There is little evidence to support Jim Handy's claim that the 'new domestic manufacturing bourgeoisie' backed the Méndez Montenegro candidacy. While this sector has occasionally allied itself with reformist projects in Central America - most notably during the Honduran military experiment between 1972 and 1978 - in Guatemala elements of local manufacturing capital had been incorporated into the governing coalition under Peralta Azurdia and were more results were not properly recognised: New York Times, 6.3.66, 9.3.66.

8 'La Iniciativa Privada Agropecuaria Se Dirige al Pueblo y Gobierno de Guatemala', El Imparcial, 4.2.66. While coffee remained the dominant export, the agro-export sector had undergone considerable diversification since the 1950s and now included cotton, sugar and to a lesser degree, beef: Bulmer-Thomas, The Political Economy of Central America, pp.156-60.

9 El Imparcial, 28.2.66; Prensa Libre, 5.3.66, 24.3.66; DDRS DOS 003157, Rusk to Mein, Outgoing Telegram 390, 14.2.66; DDRS DOS 003256, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 702, 18.3.66; DDRS DOS 003257, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 808, 22.4.66.

10 Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.192.
likely to have supported the PID than the PR.\textsuperscript{11} Despite growing industrialisation promoted by the CACM, the development of a modernising 'national bourgeoisie' was impeded both by the close links maintained between traditional agro-export interests and local manufacturing, and strong ties between the latter and North American capital.\textsuperscript{12} Méndez Montenegro's base of support lay primarily in an expanding urban middle class deprived of any other channel of democratic representation, and sectors of the campesinado and the organised working class hoping to recoup the gains of the reformist decade.

While Guatemala had experienced rapid growth since the 1950s, with an average increase in GDP of 4.4 per cent between 1950-52 and 1964-66, its effects were highly uneven.\textsuperscript{13} The 1964 figure of $369 GDP per capita (1970 prices) did not reflect the reality for the bulk of the population, whose share of wages as a percentage of national income declined between 1960 and 1971.\textsuperscript{14} This deterioration was particularly acute in the rural Guatemala where 66 per cent of the country's inhabitants still lived and worked. The regressive pattern of land tenure had hardly improved since 1950, while non-traditional exports and especially cattle raising were placing new pressure on subsistence land hitherto considered unsuitable for agricultural purposes. According to the 1964 agrarian


\textsuperscript{13} Handy, \textit{Gift of the Devil}, p.192.

\textsuperscript{14} Bulmer-Thomas, \textit{Political Economy of Central America}, pp.196, 312, Table A-3.
census, 2.1 per cent of agricultural units controlled 62.6 per cent of farmland while 87.4 per cent of farms had access to just 18.6 per cent of cultivable land.\textsuperscript{15}

Officially calculated at 63 per cent in 1964 (for the national population aged over seven years), the illiteracy rate reached 90.7 per cent in some departments of the central and western highlands.\textsuperscript{16}

By early 1966, the PR and its candidate were seen by US officials as offering the best possibility for 'a program of moderate reform within [a] democratic framework which Guatemala so desperately needs' under the Alliance for Progress.\textsuperscript{17} The expulsion of 'most of [the PR's] extremist elements, some of whom were Communists', and its move 'toward the political centre of Guatemalan politics', had made the party politically acceptable to Washington - although Ambassador Mein continued to express doubts about some PR elements and 'specially regarding some PR congressional candidates'.\textsuperscript{18} Central to this State Department strategy was the increasing guerrilla activity and the recognition that concessions to reform needed to be made in order to stall the radicalisation of the 'moderate left'. It was also hoped that the Méndez Montenegro government would be less prone to the 'petulant nationalism' shown by Peralta Azuría's administration towards certain US counterinsurgency and socio-economic

\textsuperscript{15} Mario Solórzano Martínez, Guatemala. Autoritarismo y Democracia (San José, 1987), p.149.

\textsuperscript{16} Vinicio J. Aguilar, 'La Educación', in Amaro, El Reto de Desarrollo, p.334, Table 2.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} DDRS CIA 003057, National Intelligence Estimate, 24.6.66; DDRS DOS 003252, Mein for Sayre and Burrows, Incoming Telegram 594, 24.2.66; see also Ambassador Sparks' similar comments, DDRS DOS R-496, Telegram 163, 26.10.57, made in respect of the PR almost a decade earlier.
[Méndez Montenegro] expects govt to devote major effort to construction new roads, electrification, and agricultural reform with emphasis on cooperatives. He expects seek foreign financial assistance...Major objectives his govt will be strengthening democratic forces and social and economic development of country. He will not permit communist infiltration of govt and will devote major effort to elimination of conditions which give communists a platform...for their operations.  

Taxation and the Limits of Reform

Outlining its minimum plan of government, the new administration emphasised its commitment to education, social security and infrastructural improvements, together with agrarian reform and protection of labour rights. Particular attention was to be given to rural Guatemala and to the campesinos who remained 'virtually abandoned'. Whilst modest in their detail, the proposals appeared to

20 DDRS DOS 003257, Ambassador Mein to Secretary of State, Incoming Telegram 808, 22.4.66.
21 Alberto Fuentes Mohr, Secuestro y Prisión – dos caras de la violencia en Guatemala (San José, 1971) p.15.
22 El Imparcial, 2.7.66, 4.7.66, 8.7.66.
23 Julio César Méndez Montenegro, press conference, El Imparcial, 2.7.66.
confirm the reformist credentials of the new government and
gave weight to the popular belief that the PR was indeed
'the heir to the popular October Revolution of 1944...and
its still unrealised goals'. At the same time, Méndez
Montenegro pointed to financial and economic constraints
together with the question of internal security as the most
serious challenges facing the new administration.

Méndez Montenegro had already expressed his concerns to
Ambassador Mein before taking office regarding the poor
state of the government's coffers and his hopes for foreign
assistance to finance his development programme. While
the Guatemalan economy had grown at around 8 per cent
annually between 1963 and 1965 and the agro-export sector
was booming, the balance of payments deficit had been
gradually increasing since 1960 and began to lurch upwards
in 1966. At 31 December 1965 the total public debt stood
at Q136,800,000 (1 Quetzal = 1 US Dollar). The fiscal
deficit had increased since the formation of the Central
American Common Market (CACM) in 1960. In common with
other Central American republics, Guatemala was
disproportionately dependent on import duties for public

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24 New York Times, 26.6.66; DDRS CIA 003057, 'National
Intelligence Estimate', 24.6.66.
25 Julio César Méndez Montenegro, inaugural address,
El Imparcial, 1.7.66.
26 DDRS DOS 0003257, Mein to Secretary of State,
Incoming Telegram 808, 22.4.66.
27 DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.10.66
emphasises the exceptional harvest experienced in 1966: see
also Bulmer-Thomas, Political Economy of Central America,
pp.175-6; Prensa Libre, 27.6.66, El Gráfico, 19.6.66, cited
in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.317.
28 Impacto, 20.5.66, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años,
p.317.
29 The General Treaty of Central American Integration
was signed by all the republics except for Costa Rica in
Duty exemptions on almost all intra-regional trade, together with the skewed application of duties on extra-regional imports and generous incentives for new industries, threatened serious revenue shortfalls. Guatemala's tax system was particularly regressive. While tax revenue in Guatemala in 1964 remained the lowest in Central America at 7.1 per cent of GNP, direct taxes accounted for 10.8 per cent of this total, again the lowest in the region.

Following the inauguration of the new government, Finance Minister Alberto Fuentes Mohr underlined the extent of the fiscal crisis and promised a policy of 'absolute austerity' in the management of public funds. As a first step in this direction he reaffirmed his prohibition on the purchase of any new cars for government officials. Such displays of administrative thrift were inevitably more popular than other measures aimed at raising tax revenue.

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30 Ibid., p.181.
33 The minister stated that claims by the outgoing government that Q40 million remained in the treasury were misleading since all but Q160,752.45 of this amount had already been allocated: El Imparcial, 4.7.66.
34 This declaration elicited an immediate response from the new Secretary of Information, Doctor Chavarría Flores, who protested that the vehicle pertaining to his office had been abducted by the FAR, along with the previous postholder, Baltasar Morales de la Cruz: Ibid.
While these included undertakings to improve the collection and administration of existing taxes, a central bone of contention became the attempts by the government to reform the tax system itself. This was argued to be necessary not only to counter the dependence on 'international commerce', but also to bring 'an element of fiscal justice to the system'.

Another key consideration was the capacity of the government to provide counterpart funds in order to qualify for Alliance for Progress development aid for public investment. While the contraction of foreign loans was criticised by both the left and the right, the ability of the government to draw on these continued to be restricted by its failure to raise the necessary matching funds.

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36 Jonas, Plan Piloto, p.288: see also LaFeber, Inevitable Revolutions, p.150. The government's access to loans was improved by its settlement of the 'sterling debt', incurred in the 1820s. The debt had continued to be a point of conflict with the British Government which had blocked a series of multilateral loans to Guatemala, including those negotiated with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The Guatemalan left condemned the settlement: Bauer Paiz, 'The "Third Government of the Revolution" and Imperialism in Guatemala', Science and Society, pp.146-165; DDRS CIA 003062, Intelligence Memorandum, May 1968; Oscar Casteñeda Fernández, interview, Guatemala City, 14.3.94.

37 DDRS CIA 003062, Intelligence Memorandum, May 1968; Alfonso Bauer Paiz, 'The "Third Government of the Revolution" pp.153-154, 158-165; Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 22.3.67, 1.4.67, 2.8.67; Fuentes Mohr, 'Los Créditos Externos no Hipotecar al País', La Hora, 29.3.67.
traducirá en una inversión de tres quetzales con la asistencia financiera del exterior... 38

Together with agrarian reform, the question of taxation in Guatemala has traditionally been one of great political sensitivity. Although it is generally given less prominence in the literature, moves by the Arbenz government to legislate the country's first income tax at the end of 1953 had provoked fierce protests. 39 The Ydígoras Fuentes regime had also faced staunch opposition to its attempts to pass income tax legislation, its eventual success coinciding suggestively with the Air Force rebellion in November 1962. 40 On 14 October 1966 the PR presented a draft tax reform bill to Congress. The first in a series of annual confrontations on the issue - from which the administration invariably withdrew - the measures aimed to augment government revenue by Q10 million. 41 Covering a variety of taxes including those on income, inheritance, air travel, vehicles and salt production, the main element in this reform package was a proposed increase in property taxes. 42 The progressive character of the

38 Government communiqué, Prensa Libre, 12.11.66.

39 Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, pp.169-70: Congress had approved the draft bill in the first of three readings on 28 May 1954 and was on the way to passing the income tax in June when events intervened.

40 Prensa Libre, 11.1.68, claimed that prominent members of the PR government had opposed this legislation. The Peralta Azurdia regime initially made a series of changes to the Income Tax Law before replacing it entirely.

41 Prensa Libre, 15.10.66; New York Times, 14.11.66. In his 1967 address to Congress, Méndez Montenegro stated that the amount raised would have been around Q15 million: Informe del Presidente...del 10 de Julio de 1966 al 15 de Junio de 1967, p.154.

42 The flat rate of property tax was to be abolished and replaced by progressively increasing rates ranging from 3 per 1000 to 2 per cent according to property value bands. Thus, for example, taxes on a farm valued at Q100,000 would increase from Q300 to Q1,415: Prensa Libre, 15.10.66,
latter involved sharp increases for larger property owners and became the immediate focus of elite opposition. While the government defended the measures in terms of the dual need to guarantee public security and raise loans for socio-economic development projects, the indignant clamour against the tax increases recalled the protests against the 1947 Labour Code.

Estamos viviendo los días aquellos, previos al primero de mayo de 1947, durante los cuales el código de trabajo fue objeto de la más grande crítica...En estos momentos...se repite la historia; la misma crítica, los mismos gritos y las mismas injurias se confabulan para detener la aprobación de la ley de reforma tributaria, en igual forma que ayer se amalgamaron desesperadamente para detener la marcha del código de trabajo y el régimen de seguridad social...son los mismos grupos, los mismos sectores, para quienes el tercer gobierno revolucionario constituye un valladar a su fácil y creciente enriquecimiento.

17.10.66; Goulden, 'Guatemala: A Democracy Falters', unpublished manuscript for The Alicia Patterson Fund (Guatemala City, November 1966), p.22; New York Times, 14.11.66.

43 New York Times, 14.11.66; Isidoro Zarco, 'Tergiversación de los postulados de la Carta de Punta del Este', Prensa Libre, 3.11.66, and 'La Riposta del Doctor Fuentes Mohr', ibid., 8.11.66; 'Cámara de Industria de Guatemala', ibid., 7.11.66; 'CACIF - La Iniciativa Privada no está en contra de una reforma tributaria', ibid., 8.11.66; Asociación Nacional de Constructores de Viviendas, ibid., 12.11.66; ibid., 10.11.66, 11.11.66, 3.12.66.

44 Prensa Libre, 15.10.66, 18.10.66; Fuentes Mohr, interview, El Gráfico, 23.10.66-25.10.66.

Together with the amnesty for political crimes declared on 26 June and the announcement of a limited agrarian reform programme, the attempts to reform the tax system provided the right with another opportunity to present the Méndez Montenegro government as infiltrated by communists. CACIF immediately condemned the reforms as misconceived. The private sector was not against tax reform per se it claimed: what was needed was 'a proper tax reform...based on national reality'. The construction industry complained that one hundred large-scale building projects had been halted in the uncertainty caused by the government proposals, and journalist Isidoro Zarco reported associated problems in the agricultural property market. Joining the fray, Vice-President Marroquin Rojas condemned taxes whose only purpose was to maintain 'a caste of bureaucrats' and pay interest on unnecessary foreign loans. The strongest criticisms were directed against Finance Minister Alberto Fuentes Mohr. The phantom Comité de Defensa Cuidadana de los Intereses Nacionales published purported extracts from The Communist Manifesto alongside the minister's declarations, while Zarco went so far as to compare the measures unfavourably

46 New York Times, 14.11.66.

47 'CACIF - La Iniciativa Privada no está en contra de una reforma tributaria', Prensa Libre, 8.11.66; Asociación Nacional de Constructores de Viviendas, ibid., 12.11.66.

48 Zarco, Prensa Libre, 9.11.66.

49 Open letter from Marroquin Rojas (as Acting President) to Fuentes Mohr, La Hora, 22.3.67; Prensa Libre, 1.4.67; Don Canuto Ocaña (pseud. Marroquin Rojas), La Hora, 2.8.67. See also reply by Fuentes Mohr, 'Los Créditos Externos no Hipotecan al País', Prensa Libre, 29.3.67.

50 Goulden, 'A Democracy Falters', p.2, has suggested that by targeting Fuentes Mohr, opponents of the tax reform were both avoiding a direct clash with Méndez Montenegro and providing him with an escape route.
with Arbenz's 'more gentlemanly' Decree 900:51

Por lo menos aquél...fué un ataque frontal a la propiedad privada. En cambio, el que se propone el ministro de hacienda, es un golpe bajo, no sólo contra el capital, sino contra el progreso total de la nación.52

Others were more explicit about the consequences for the government if Fuentes Mohr was not dismissed from his post:

Todos los propietarios tiemblan. Ante el proyecto del economista Alberto F Mohr. Un hombre comunista poniendo en jaque a miles de personas de poder financiero y a la vez en peligro también al Presidente de la República que se encuentra en la disyuntiva de destituir a Mohr o sufrir las consecuencias del desastre que esto traerá.53

The protests did not reach the extremes of 1947 when opponents of the Labour Code took to the streets on Sundays - they did not need to.54 Meetings between the congressional finance committee and representatives of the private sector, and between the latter and Méndez Montenegro, quickly set in motion a face-saving exercise whereby the draft bill was withdrawn and a 'high-level

51 Zarco, 'La Riposta del Doctor Fuentes Mohr', Prensa Libre, 8.11.66; 'Comité de Defensa Ciudadana de los Intereses Nacionales', ibid., 5.11.66. Government propaganda enlisted the support of the 'Asociación de Obreros de Guatemala' rejected as a phantom organisation by the right: CACIF, ibid., 14.11.66.

52 Zarco, 'Tergiversación de los postulados de la Carta De Punta del Este', Prensa Libre, 3.11.66.

53 Prensa Libre, 18.11.66. One of a series of campos pagados on this subject signed by Alfonso Alejos - 'un finquero'. Following his 'Si Yo Fuer Presidente de la República' on 22.11.66, Interior Minister Mansilla Pinto requested him to refrain from further public comment on the matter: ibid., 19.11.66, 21.11.66, 22.11.66, 23.11.66.

54 Galich, Por Qué Lucha Guatemala, p.133; Villagrán Kramer, Biografia Política, pp.57-8.
mixed committee' established to consider an 'integral' tax reform. In its place, an interim package was agreed for one year and was expected to raise around Q8 million towards the 1967 budget. It is notable that Congressional Decree 1627 in fact increased several taxes - including those on income and property - although the increases were spread more widely and affected the very wealthy far less sharply than had the previous proposals.

Aguilera Peralta and De León Schlotter have both commented on the ease with which the PR leadership gave way to the economic elites on the issue of reform. While the political space for socio-economic reforms was limited, critics argue that the government could have used its room for manoeuvre more effectively than it did. However, this particular struggle over taxation must be set against the wider background of a serious campaign to destabilise

55 Prensa Libre, 12.11.66, 14.11.66, 18.11.66; New York Times, 13.11.66. Consisting of representatives from the Congress, the Executive and the private sector, the committee's 6-month mandate was extended on several occasions. In December 1968 a new committee was established to undertake yet another study, this time on the collection, control and administration of taxes: Prensa Libre, 30.6.67, 11.7.67, 9.1.68, 19.12.68.

56 Instead of the Q15 million the original proposals were supposed to have raised: Informe del Presidente...del 1o de Julio de 1966 al 15 de Junio de 1967, p.154; Congressional Decree 1627 'Impuestos para el Año 1967', 30.11.66, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.86, p.35.

57 In terms of property tax this meant that a $100,000 finca would now pay $600 per annum, instead of the projected $1,415: Goulden, 'A Democracy Falters', p.24; Prensa Libre, 25.11.66, 1.12.66.

58 Both were active in the DCG at the time: Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 16.11.93; René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94; see also Aguilera Peralta et al, Dialéctica del Terror en Guatemala, pp.95-6.

59 De Leon Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94.
the government. What limited political will there had been on the issue rapidly evaporated with the campaign against the measures. In addition to a right-wing bombing campaign in Guatemala City — against which the 3 November State of Siege was at least in part directed — troops began to move towards the capital from the interior on the weekend of 12-13 November 1966. Coinciding with the uproar over taxation and coordinated by Colonel Callejas Soto and the commander of the Quezaltenango military base in conjunction with extreme right-wing elements, the plot apparently foundered on lack of unified military support.

Having weathered a coup attempt, the government climbdown on taxation nevertheless set the scene for subsequent confrontations on the issue. A year later, in December 1967, a similarly negative response on the part of most of the private sector and the press followed congressional approval of a two-tier tax on goods and services as part of the budget for 1968. In force from 1 January 1968, the

60 Several high-ranking members of the MLN — including Manuel Villacorta Vielmann and the brother of Mario Sandoval Alarcón — were subsequently arrested in connection with terrorist offences. Most were released a month later after discussions between Sandoval Alarcón and Méndez Montenegro: Mario Sandoval Alarcón, interview, Guatemala City, 31.8.94; New York Times, 4.11.66; Prensa Libre, 4.11.66, 2.12.66.

61 Callejas Soto was arrested and exiled together with Base Commander Colonel Félix Estrada and other unnamed officers: Prensa Libre, 14.11.66; New York Times, 13.11.66, 15.1.67; Goulden, 'A Democracy Falters', p.18; DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.10.66; Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.244.

62 While Fuentes Mohr claimed the support of most members of the Chamber of Commerce and part of the Chamber of Industry for the new tax, CACIF was quick to disavow these dissenters: Prensa Libre, 15.12.67; New York Times, 18.12.67.

63 Congressional Decree 1729, 'Presupuesto de Ingresos y Egresos del Estado...', Recopilación de Leyes, 13.12.67, Vol.87, p.47. A flat rate five per cent tax was imposed on all goods and services, excluding exports and specified
new taxes caused confusion and then chaos as some businesses used the opportunity for commercial speculation, and it was widely suspected that such actions were part of a strategy by the opposition to undermine the measures. The Guatemalan press remained restrained in its reporting of the extent of the popular protests against the price rises, although *Prensa Libre* reported 'rumours' that a group of people had tried to demonstrate against the new taxes. Right-wing resistance was epitomised in a renewed press campaign against the government by its dedicated critic Alfonso Alejos. Recalling the weekly protests outside the National Palace 'al sistema minuto de silencia' following the assassination of Colonel Francisco Arana in 1949, he threatened similar demonstrations in Sixth Avenue - the central commercial street in the capital - together with bicycles 'riding up and down' and strikes if Méndez Montenegro did not act. At the same time bus company owners in the capital went ahead with a long sought after price rise and doubled fares from five to 10 centavos, a move which reportedly resulted in several buses being

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articles and services deemed of basic need and goods subject to the new 20 per cent luxury sales tax. Stamp tax was reduced from 1.5 per cent to one per cent: *Prensa Libre*, 14.12.67, 27.12.67.

Méndez Montenegro issued a presidential acuerdo on 4 January 1968, introducing fine of between Q5 and Q500 and the prospect of cancellation of business licences for those raising prices on articles of basic need: *Prensa Libre*, 4.1.68, 5.1.68, 6.1.68.

Judicial Police Chief Stuardo García Gómez insisted that any illegal demonstration would be broken up by the security forces - a position supported by Interior Minister Mansilla Pinto: *Prensa Libre*, 5.1.68; *New York Times*, 22.1.68.

The threats were classified as subversive by the Interior Minister. Alfonso Alejos was assassinated less than a fortnight later: *Prensa Libre*, 5.1.68, 18.1.68.
At this stage the loss of public order in the capital would almost certainly have prompted military intervention. While the counterinsurgency campaign had been largely successful in driving the guerrillas from their rural stronghold in the north-eastern sierra by the end of 1967, the FAR was beginning to focus its actions on urban centres instead. In addition, there were reports that the bus attacks had been fomented by 'Communist underground groups'. Barely a week after their introduction the new taxes were suspended by the Executive pending further consideration and the Judicial Police Chief warned of the 'drastic sanctions' awaiting those who raised the price of goods in their establishments. Two days later Congress restored the stamp tax to 1.5 per cent and extended the provisions made for taxation under Congressional Decree 1627 for a further year. The issue momentarily split the PR leadership - with President of Congress Prem Betata calling from his sickbed for Fuentes Mohr's interpelación before Congress. Party discipline apparently forced the

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67 New York Times, 22.1.68. This issue came to a head once more in April 1969 when Guatemala City bus companies stopped services in response to the continuing municipal refusal to permit a fare rise from five to 10 centavos. On the seventh day of the paro patronal and amidst growing unrest, the municipality took over the bus companies. A subsequent agreement retained fares at 5 centavos while the bus companies received further concessions on import duties: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.342-345.

68 New York Times, 22.1.68.

69 Prensa Libre, 6.1.68.

70 Decreto del Congreso 1731, 8.1.68, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.87, p.54.

71 The President of Congress - who had been injured when the private plane he was piloting crashed - had been a co-signatory to an electoral manifesto for the Central District planilla of PR deputies, promising not to approve any increase in taxes: La Hora, 4.3.66.
former to withdraw his list of questions prepared for the occasion and the finance minister survived this particular challenge without a vote of no-confidence from the legislature.72 His reprieve was shortlived. Long the target of the right, a cabinet reshuffle on 1 March replaced Fuentes Mohr with ex-president of congress, PR veteran Mario Fuentes Pieruccini.73

The full impact of government's second major retreat on the tax question was felt with the announcement that the current budget was being slashed by some Q20 million of which more than half represented cuts in public investment.74 As a result, the planned social security programme to provide general sickness cover was to be delayed for a year,75 while the budget for the Instituto Nacional de Transformacion Agraria (INTA) was more than halved to Q500,000.76 The remaining amount represented

72 PID and MLN members complained that during the interpelación, the public gallery was filled exclusively with PR supporters who waved placards in support of Fuentes Mohr and shouted down opposition deputies trying to question the Finance Minister: Prensa Libre, 6.1.68, 8.1.68, 9.1.68, 10.1.68, 12.1.68.

73 Méndez Montenegro has declined to comment on the significance of this event, except to maintain that such changes in government are normal and to point out that Fuentes Mohr was later appointed foreign minister: Méndez Montenegro, written reply, Guatemala City, 31.1.94, and interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94; see also Fuentes Mohr, Secuestro y Prisión, p.15.

74 Prensa Libre, 24.1.68.

75 The programa de enfermedad común was eventually inaugurated in October 1968: Méndez Montenegro, Informe al Honorable Congreso de la República, 15.6.69. There was an increase in social security provision throughout the Central American region during the 1960s and 27 per cent of the labour force in Guatemala were covered by the end of the decade. Bulmer-Thomas, Political Economy, p.198.

76 It was later partially reinstated: Prensa Libre, 24.1.68, 1.2.68. Other parastatal organisations affected were the Instituto Nacional de Vivienda (INVI), the Instituto Nacional de Electrificación (INDE) and the
reductions in the salaries of public employees - five per cent for those earning between Q300 and Q500 per year and 10 per cent for those earning over Q500. In the light of advice emanating from the extreme right-wing organisation MANO, it is unsurprising that most congressmen interviewed by Prensa Libre some days earlier had stated they would not oppose a reduction in their earnings. Arguing that Guatemala was a poor country and that Guatemalans must live accordingly, MANO had suggested that deputies balance the budget by reducing 'useless expenditure', including their own salaries and those of the Executive:

De no proceder como indica se les tratará como traidores a la patria y recibirán lo que han recibido los comunistas y los picaros, pues para el pueblo es preferible pagar una pensión a una viuda que tener que mantener a un traidor.

The failure of this latest attempt to raise government revenue appeared to signal the end of any serious reformist initiative, as those counselling political prudence won out over partisans of socio-economic reform. The right had retained their political leverage in a continued game of 'coup poker' which undermined the democratic transition and further entrenched the military as the principal political

Instituto de Fomento y Desarrollo del Petén (FYDEP).

Ibid.

Prensa Libre, 20.1.68. The Movimiento Anticomunista Nacional Organizado (MANO or Mano Blanca) was the first of several right-wing terrorist organisations to appear following Méndez Montenegro's inauguration: see Chapter Six for further discussion.

MANO advice to congressmen, Prensa Libre, 9.1.68.

A cartoon in Prensa Libre 6.1.68, following the withdrawal of the sales tax depicted the stark choice facing the government. Featuring a funeral procession and a coffin labelled 'impuestos', an Indian man remarks to his neighbour, 'Comadre, better this funeral than that of the government...'. 
arbiter in Guatemalan politics. From now on, the principal objective for the Méndez Montenegro government was to reach its end of term constitutionally intact.

United States officials had apparently reached the same conclusion, and Jonas has emphasised the lack of concerted pressure from the United States to force through changes in taxation.\(^81\) According to Jonas and Tobis, such a scenario had been debated and rejected by State Department and USAID officials.\(^82\) The question of whether to tie a 'program loan'\(^83\) to Guatemala to effective tax reform had been postponed indefinitely, after advice from 'more pragmatic US officials' - including Ambassador Mein - that such pressure risked bringing down the Méndez Montenegro government.\(^84\) Instead, US aid resources went towards improving and restructuring the administration and collection of taxes and in particular to the establishment of a systematic property survey aimed at eliminating property tax evasion.\(^85\)

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\(^81\) In contrast to Bauer Paiz, who maintained that 'US advisers have been very insistent on promoting the issue of fiscal reform' since Méndez Montenegro's accession: Bauer Paiz, 'The "Third Government of the Revolution", p.161; Jonas Bodenheimer, Plan Piloto, pp.292-3; Jonas and Tobis, Guatemala, p.106.

\(^82\) Ibid.

\(^83\) A large multi-purpose loan for general commodity imports from the United States, based on negotiated agreements with the recipient country on specific fiscal and other policies, which are then closely monitored by USAID: Ibid.

\(^84\) Ibid.

\(^85\) Ibid.; Prensa Libre, 11.2.69.
Agrarian Reform: Rhetoric and Reality

Al anunciar su decisión de entregar en propiedad las fincas nacionales y las de los bancos estatales a los trabajadores del campo que los han laborado y habitado, el gobierno constitucional da un primer paso decisivo, dentro del marco de la constitución en materia de reforma agraria...

...la llamada Reforma Agraria, del reparto de las Fincas Nacionales; solución que no es ni la acertada ni la definitiva, del problema agrario en nuestro país. Sin embargo, alrededor de esta medida Reformista, se ha hecho todo una campaña demágógica para demostrar lo bondadoso del actual régimen y darle una falsa apariencia revolucionaria.

Agrarian reform as a principle had been included on the PR agenda since the party's inception in 1957. In one sense it could be argued that such inclusion was obligatory, given its centrality to the experience of the reformist decade and the PR's claims to be the genuine political heir to that period. Indeed, the force of the land question in Guatemala - brought into sharp focus by Decree 900 in 1952 - was such that subsequent governments were unable to ignore it completely. While the Castillo Armas regime proceeded to dismantle Arbenz's agrarian reform in practice, land legislation enacted under this government continued to pay lip service to the idea of reform.

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86 Government bulletin, Prensa Libre, 5.8.66.
87 Turcios Lima, 'Nuestras Tareas Fundamentales en la Actual Situación Política y Nuestra Preparación para su Inminente Cambio Futuro', INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios en Latino América, p.96.
89 For example, the 'fundamental principles' of Decree 31 recognised the right of each Guatemalan to the land necessary to ensure his own and his family's subsistence
Similarly, in October 1962, Ydígoras Fuentes declared that his new Ley de Transformación Agraria was the anti-communist and Christian answer to Decree 900.  

Both the 1956 and the 1965 constitutions theoretically allowed for the expropriation of idle lands for the purposes of redistribution. Both also permitted private property to be expropriated for the collective good - duly proven and with appropriate compensation. In practice, however, expropriation was politically impossible. Taxation of idle lands remained the preferred and largely ineffective alternative for freeing-up land for redistribution, together with colonisation and the resettlement of government lands. Achievements in terms of numbers of beneficiaries and area of land distributed were dismal by comparison to those of the Arbenz era.  

and promised a colonisation programme to achieve this. The Agrarian Statute (Congressional Decree 559) of February 1956 committed the government to distribute public and private lands, emphasising a tax on idle lands rather than expropriation: Whetten, Guatemala, pp.166-173; Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.115-140.  

Its sudden passage - after three years of heated debate was said to be linked to the desire for Alliance for Progress funds: El Imparcial, 29.9.62, 17.10.62, cited in Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.148; Congressional Decree 1551, 'Ley de Transformación Agraria', 11.10.62, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.81, p.39.  

Whetten, Guatemala, p.167; Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.128-130; Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.214.  

The PR had never challenged this post-intervention tradition. Appealing to the principle of agrarian reform, the party had been careful to reiterate its commitment to private property, concentrating instead on the question of the national fincas for redistribution. Yet, even this measure was historically more controversial than it at first appears. Acquired by the Guatemalan state under Ubico through the expropriation of the German-owned coffee farms during the Second World War, the national fincas had constituted a considerable proportion of the land distributed to peasants as part of the 1952 Agrarian Reform. According to Whetten and based on figures from the Dirección General de Asuntos Agrarios (DGAA), more than a quarter of the land distributed under Decree 900 belonged to national fincas. Following the Castillo Armas invasion, Decree 57 of 20 August 1954 returned this land to the state and cancelled the legal basis (personaria juridica) of the cooperatives. The fate of many of the national fincas later became a national scandal under Ydigoras Fuentes. Designating a dozen for land distribution, the government proceeded to return, sell and otherwise dispose of 115 state-owned plantations in deals

93 See for example, 'Acta Notarial de Fundación del Partido. Testimonio de Juricidad', in Cartilla del Segundo Congreso de la Juventud Revolucionaria, p.17; 'La Ideología del Partido', in ibid., p.22.

94 Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.215.

95 Whetten, Guatemala, p.163, Table 24.

96 Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.119-120, allege that the government was trying to recoup the ten to 15 per cent of revenue that these national plantations had represented in 1950. The Departamento de Fomento De Cooperativas was reinstated in February 1956 with certain modifications: Maria Guadalupe Navas Alvarez, El Movimiento Sindical Como Manifestación de la Lucha de Clases (Guatemala, 1979) p.107.

97 Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.149.
that often smacked of fraud and corruption.\textsuperscript{98}

On 4 August 1966, the government announced its plans to transfer the national fincas to the mozos-colonos (resident workers who rented land in exchange for employment) and permanent labourers who worked them.\textsuperscript{99} The land would be distributed in cooperative form in order to retain economic unity and avoid losses in production\textsuperscript{100} - problems INTA president Leopoldo Sandoval explicitly associated with Decree 900 and the system of land-parcelling (parcelamiento) which subsequent governments had continued to pursue.\textsuperscript{101} Further aspects of the new agrarian policy were unveiled two weeks later when the Cabinet declared the agrarian development of the north-eastern department of Izabal to be of 'national urgency'.\textsuperscript{102} This measure was later incorporated into the so-called 'pilot plan' for the

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\item \textsuperscript{98} Ibid., pp.149-157. As part of Peralta Azurdia's 'operación honestidad', Decree-Law 52, 19.6.63, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.82, p.62, declared to be void all transactions of state property considered either to have been conducted fraudulently or which seriously damaged national interests.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Prensa Libre, 5.8.66. Farms owned by state-run banks were also to be included. According to the president of the Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria (INTA), there were 24 national fincas with a total land area of 1,001 caballerías (1 caballería = 109.8 acres). Of these, 12.5 per cent were under cultivation (coffee, cardamon, sugar cane, honey, lemon tea and maize), 14.3 per cent could be cultivated, and 73 per cent were usable only for grazing purposes. 4,666 families (15,000) lived on national finca land. Another 12,000 families (50,000 people) lived on 17 farms belonging to the Banco Nacional Agrario, Crédito Hipotecario Nacional, and Instituto de Fomento de la Producción: Prensa Libre, 6.8.66.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Prensa Libre, 5.8.66; Julio César Méndez Montenegro, interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Leopoldo Sandoval, press conference, 'El Fracaso del Agro', Prensa Libre, 23.8.66. In fact, land had been distributed in the form of cooperatives as well as in lots under Decree 900.
\item \textsuperscript{102} El Imparcial, 20.8.66; Prensa Libre, 20.8.66.
\end{itemize}
socio-economic development of the north-east announced by the government in early 1967 - the 'hearts and minds' element of the counterinsurgency operations taking place in the area. Additional measures of Méndez Montenegro's 'agrarian reform' included the restructuring of existing agrarian parcelamientos and the colonisation of territories to the north of Alta Verapaz, Quiché and Huehuetenango - an area later to become infamously known as the Northern Transverse Strip - and the Petén.

Reports of increased agricultural unrest and a series of land invasions followed these pronouncements, and in October 1966, INTA announced an 'agrarian explosion' on the Pacific coast where it had received some 20,000 requests for land. Reminiscent of the alarm accompanying the implementation of Decree 900 in 1952, the issue exposed divisions within the ranks of the governing party. Earlier land invasions in mid-March had been condemned by the PR as actions promoted by official agents provocateurs to undermine the election results and alienate the right. However, Vice-President Marroquin Rojas now named three PR deputies as responsible for the 'brotes anarquizantes' taking place in the countryside. The stability of the PR government, he argued, was being put at risk by its own agitators. Such accusations were bound to fan right-wing suspicion of the government as were the vice-president's warnings regarding the recrudescent ligas campesinas and

103 Gott, Rural Guerrillas, p.129.
104 El Imparcial, 10.10.66; Prensa Libre, 27.8.66, 8.9.66; Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.220-21.
105 'En algunas oficinas públicas se está llamando a campesinos y se le dice: El PR manda, así es que ya pueden uds comenzar a invadir tierras y expulsar a los propietarios. Esto es para predisponer al sector derechista contra el PR': PR, La Hora, 16.3.66.
106 The three were deputies for Santa Rosa, El Tumbador and Escuintla: Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 22.8.66.
the political organisation of those who in his view, had not yet attained the cultural level to act independently: 107

...hay en el país muchos de estos revolucionarios que han creído que retornaran, en todo vigor, los días de Jacobo Arbenz...Y ellos deben comprender que no ha triunfado una revolución marxista sino un partido revolucionaria moderado...Si el sindicalismo [en el campo] prospera vendrá un terrible anarquía: no habrá cosecha de café en septiembre y octubre...Nuestro sindicalismo siempre será una organización política, disfrazada... 108

It is probable that the promise of land reform inspired some campesinos with an enthusiasm which at times spilled over into invasions of privately-owned and cultivated property. However, it is also likely that the extent of these invasions was exaggerated to undermine the government. 109 For many campesinos there was considerable unease concerning the fate of existing parcels in established agrarian development zones. 110 While the Méndez Montenegro regime never entirely abandoned the land

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107 At the same time as warning the PR to keep its members in order, Marroquín Rojas reminded the finqueros that the regrowth of rural unionism had begun under the previous military government: ibid.; El Imparcial, 5.9.66, cited in Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.121; see also, Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organizations', p.450.

108 Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 22.8.66.

109 Similarly, Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, p.162, suggested that reports of land invasions following Arbenz's agrarian reform were overplayed by the opposition press.

110 Méndez Montenegro, Informe del Presidente Constitucional de la República al Honorable Congreso, 15.6.67, 15.6.68, 15.6.69, 15.6.70, pp.189-91, 201-204, 171-178, 242-254, respectively.
parcelling system, official statements continued to be critical of the policy of parcelamientos in favour of cooperatives. Nevertheless, the head of INTA had felt obliged in July 1966 to reassure campesinos that those who continued to be legal recipients under the terms of the 1962 Agrarian Transformation Law (Congressional Decree 1551) had nothing to fear. The sense of precariousness felt by many beneficiaries of successive 'land reforms' in Guatemala is well-illustrated by the views expressed by campesinos on the national finca 'El Cacahuito' - the first state farm to be turned over to its workers. Fearful that a future government would divest them of their newly-acquired lands 'and give them to new supporters', many expressed a desire to be able to buy their parcels in the belief this would bring greater security of tenure.

On 15 July 1967, national finca 'El Cacahuito' became the first to be distributed to its 203 resident families. It was followed by that of 'Las Cabezas' in Oratorio, Santa

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111 Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, pp.216-270, provide a critique of this process and of the whole agrarian programme under Méndez Montenegro. As Maryknoll missionaries, Thomas and Marjorie Melville worked among peasants in the department of Huehuetenango. Together with two other Maryknoll priests they were expelled from Guatemala in December 1967 for guerrilla involvement and were subsequently suspended from the Maryknoll order: LBBL WH, Note for Rostow from Bowdler, 28.12.67; LBBL WH, Note for Rostow from Bowdler, 9.3.68; Prensa Libre, 18.1.68; Reverend Blase Bonpane, 'Guatemala is the Next "Vietnam", Priest Says', The Sunday Star Bulletin and Advertiser 11.2.68; New York Times, 19.1.68, 21.1.68, 22.1.68, 23.1.68, 26.1.68.

112 El Imparcial, 25.7.66; Prensa Libre, 23.8.66.

113 Leopoldo Sandoval, El Imparcial, 16.7.66.

114 Prensa Libre, 8.7.67, 18.7.67.

115 Héctor Luna Troccoli, 'Como Piensan los Campesinos sobre el Nuevo Plan de la Reforma Agraria', El Imparcial, 12.10.66.
Rosa, to 173 colonos on 18 October.\textsuperscript{116} One year later, the new INTA president Antonio Colón Argueta announced that 571 resident families on five national fincas in Cobán, Alta Verapaz would receive land in honour of the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution.\textsuperscript{117} While this transfer did not take place until mid-January 1969, it is interesting to note that Alta Verapaz was the only 'Indian' department that the PR won outright in the 1970 elections. At the end of Méndez Montenegro's term, only seven of these 42 state-owned plantations had been transferred to their workers in cooperative form as promised.\textsuperscript{118}

Melville and Melville have commented that the distribution of the national fincas was the least controversial aspect of the government's three-pronged agrarian programme. However, such relative inoffensiveness was clearly no guarantee of success.\textsuperscript{119} In contrast to the campaign waged against attempts to increase taxation, there had been little overt opposition from the right regarding the transfer of the national fincas or to other aspects of the government's agrarian programme. Nevertheless, the agro-export sector had already made their views on the question known and commentators noted that the rhetoric of agrarian reform - together with the guerrilla 'amnesty' - had served to deepen right-wing suspicion of the

\textsuperscript{116} INTA, Cooperativa Agrícola "El Cacahuito": Información General, (Guatemala, n.d.); Prensa Libre, 8.7.66, 18.7.66, 13.10.67, 23.10.67, 25.10.67; Méndez Montenegro, Presidente Constitucional de la República Informe al Honorable Congreso, 15.6.68, pp.201-3.

\textsuperscript{117} Prensa Libre, 10.10.68, 15.1.69; Méndez Montenegro, Presidente Constitucional de la República Informe al Honorable Congreso, 15.6.69, pp.171-73.

\textsuperscript{118} This overall figure apparently includes the seventeen farms belonging to state-run banks, and two others - the long-running legal battle over which was eventually resolved in the government's favour: Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam, p.219.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p.218.
government. Underlying hostility to the measures is also suggested by the fact that administration officials continued to feel it necessary to publicly defend the cooperative system against accusations of communism. Méndez Montenegro himself repeatedly emphasised the non-confiscatory character of his agrarian reform and argued that while the constitution permitted the expropriation of private lands, the government had deliberately not exercised this right so as 'to give confidence to the capitalist class'. On the other side of the political spectrum, the FAR was openly critical of the government's 'demagogic' manipulation of the agrarian reform issue and particularly of the plans to redistribute state-owned land:

Lo que nosotros nos proponemos es terminar con la propiedad privada de los terratenientes sobre la tierra. Al contrario, el PR teme, como al fuego, tocar esa propiedad. Prefiere destruir la propiedad estatal, anarquizarla y hacer una "reforma agraria" publicitaria. No es reforma agraria revolucionaria repartir la propiedad del Estado...para que menos de 4 mil familias empiecen y concluyan la "reforma agraria".

An obvious obstacle to the distribution of national finca land remained lack of resources and this was itself related

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120 'La Iniciativa Privada Agropecuaria Se Dirige al Pueblo y Gobierno de Guatemala', El Imparcial, 4.2.66; New York Times, 15.10.66, 13.11.66.

121 Prensa Libre, 18.7.67; New York Times, 13.11.66, 16.6.68.

122 New York Times, 13.11.66. However the President also admitted that the government lacked the necessary funds to compensate expropriated land according to the constitutional requirements.

123 Turcios Lima, 'Nuestras Tareas Fundamentales', p.96; Gabriel Salazar, 'Vocero de las FAR responde a problemas y soluciones', Prensa Libre, 10.8.66.

124 Ibid.
to governmental inability increase revenue through tax reforms. The quality of the available land may also have been a factor. While 12.5 per cent of national finca lands were under cultivation, only 14.3 per cent could be cultivated, the remaining 73 per cent being suitable for grazing purposes only. Bureaucracy was a further problem. The initial transfer of the properties to INTA from the liquidation committee of the ex-department of national fincas was delayed due to 'red tape' and it is likely that the measure would have been unpopular with functionaries faced with unemployment. Indeed, the 'Usumacinta' land colonisation cooperative in the Petén was apparently established with precisely such ex-national finca bureaucrats in mind.

As a result of the withdrawal of the luxury sales tax in January 1968, INTA's budget was cut by 66 per cent. The cuts prompted telegrams of protest from colonos on plantations scheduled for distribution, as well as from those who already owned plots of land as a result of earlier distribution programmes concerned at the possible loss of INTA-sponsored development projects in their areas. The financial crisis - accompanied by some personal animosity between Treasury Minister Fuentes Mohr

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125 Some 1,600 INTA employees were laid off in September 1967 because of lack of funds: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.330.

126 Sandoval, Prensa Libre, 6.8.66.

127 El Gráfico, 7.3.67; Prensa Libre, 3.3.67, 8.7.67.

128 INTA's budget was cut from Q1,186,532 to Q500,000. Prensa Libre, 1.2.68, 6.2.68, 7.2.68; see also Carmen Escribano de Leon, 'Irregularidades en las Fincas Nacionales', El Gráfico, 6.3.68, and Sandoval's response, ibid., 13.3.68.
and INTA director Leopoldo Sandoval \textsuperscript{129} - led to the latter's resignation and his replacement by Antonio Colom Argueta.\textsuperscript{130}

The Confederación de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CONTRAGUA) followed up a vote of confidence in the new INTA president in September 1968 with a call for increased government support for the institution.\textsuperscript{131} A petition to Méndez Montenegro the following January expressed concern at the stagnation of INTA programmes due to lack of funds which was affecting some 40,000 campesinos.\textsuperscript{132} An increase in the INTA budget for 1969 was announced a few days later.\textsuperscript{133} Overall however, the results of the government's agrarian programme stood in stark contrast to the rhetoric and remained poor even by post-intervention standards.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{129} INTA's announcement that it had recuperated land parcel 38-1 - registered in the name of Alberto Fuentes Mohr and located in the agrarian development zone of Santo Tomás de Castilla, Izabal - in lieu of payments due, was interpreted by the Finance Minister as Sandoval's personal reprisal for INTA's budget cut. The latter complained that a 'guerra fría' had been waged against him: Prensa Libre, 1.2.68, 2.2.68; El Gráfico, 6.3.68.

\textsuperscript{130} Prensa Libre, 1.3.68. Fuentes Mohr also resigned at this time.

\textsuperscript{131} Prensa Libre, 10.9.68, 15.10.68, 21.10.68.

\textsuperscript{132} Prensa Libre, 10.1.69.

\textsuperscript{133} Prensa Libre, 15.1.69.

\textsuperscript{134} According to the administration's own figures, the combined number of families benefitting from INTA's various land titling, parcelling, colonisation and national finca programmes between 1966 and 1970 barely 7,000 with the settlement of a further 13,000 planned through colonisation of the area known as the Northern Transverse Zone: Méndez Montenegro, Presidente Constitucional de la República Informe al Honorable Congreso 15.6.67, 15.6.68, 15.6.69, 15.6.70, pp.189-91, 201-4, 173, 249-254 respectively.
Labour: From Illusion to Disenchantment

In Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, O'Donnell and Schmitter discuss the resurgence of civil society as an integral part of the transition process. Including trade unions, grass-roots movements and human rights organisations, this sector converges under certain conditions to push the limits of liberalisation towards a more genuine transition to political democracy. O'Donnell and Schmitter add that this 'popular upsurge' is less likely to occur where the transition is firmly controlled over an extended period of time. In this case the form of democracy achieved is likely 'to contain more oligarchic elements, more "islands" of institutionalised inequality in participation and accountability...'. In Guatemala in early 1966, there was little evidence of such popular mobilisation. Yet the prospect of a popular upsurge under a PR government was feared by the elites and the armed forces, while Méndez Montenegro and the PR used the threat of a popular explosion to press for recognition of the election results.

It is unclear whether the PR could have carried out this threat, although the brief and ultimately fruitless outbursts of popular discontent in 1957 and in 1962 provided possible precedents for such a scenario. Civil society in terms of organised labour had been undergoing a gradual recomposition since the 1954 liberación, with the carefully circumscribed boundaries for union activity giving rise to two distinct currents within the movement. On the one hand, 'sindicalismo libre'

135 O'Donnell and Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, pp.44-56.
136 Ibid., p.55.
137 Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.1-43.
defended the minimum conquests of the reformist period under American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) guidance; on the other, 'sindicalismo socialcristiano' sought to establish a more humane and just relationship between employers and employees within a Catholic and anticommunist framework.\textsuperscript{138}

While the latter originated with the Federación Autónoma Sindical (FAS) which had close ties to the liberación government, FASGUA - as it later became known - was appropriated from below by communists and their sympathisers and by the late 1950s was firmly on the left of the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{139} FASGUA played a central part in coordinating the jornadas cívicas in March and April 1962 against Ydígoras Fuentes, as did the important railway workers' union, the Sindicato de Acción y Mejoramiento Ferroviario (SAMF).\textsuperscript{140} In contrast, most of the unions in the ORIT-affiliated Confederación Sindical de Guatemala (CSG) refused to take part in the actions.\textsuperscript{141} In comparison with the situation under Arbenz, however, the labour movement remained small and fragmented and 'characterised by fear'.\textsuperscript{142} According to Ministry of Labour figures, in 1964 just two per cent of the 1,223,723 economically active population were unionised, of which

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.; Levenson-Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror, pp.29-36; Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94.

\textsuperscript{139} Levenson-Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror, pp.36-38.

\textsuperscript{140} ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.223-228.

\textsuperscript{141} Prensa Libre, 23.4.62, cited in ibid., p.228.

\textsuperscript{142} Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94.
only 0.2 per cent were campesinos.\textsuperscript{143}

Although it rejected the 'politics of class', the PR confirmed its populist pretensions in pledges to defend the interests of labour and 'the most needy sectors'.\textsuperscript{144} Such promises were routine in the rhetoric of Guatemalan politics - Peralta's address to mark May Day 1963 had contained similar undertakings - yet the PR's roots in the 1944 revolution appeared to offer new hope for their fulfillment.\textsuperscript{145} Méndez Montenegro had been a labour lawyer and had acted in the 1950s in representation of SAMF - the strongest single affiliate of CONTRAGUA.\textsuperscript{146} The unusually large turnout for the traditional May Day parade in 1966 suggests that expectations were high of a return to the pro-labour policies and political freedoms of the reformist decade.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{143} Department of Statistics, Ministry of Labour, July 1964, cited in López Larrave, Breve Historia del Movimiento Sindical Guatemalteco, p.56. In 1968, the Department of Labour and Social Welfare recorded a national total of 23,073 unionised workers: Nelson Amaro and Mauro Cuevas, 'Intensidad del Movimiento Sindical y Cooperativo en el País', in Amaro, El Reto de Desarrollo, pp.386-405, Table 1, p.398.

\textsuperscript{144} 'Acta Notarial de Fundaci6n del Partido: Testimonio de Juridicidad', reproduced in Cartilla del Segundo Congreso de la Juventud Revolucionaria, pp.16-17.

\textsuperscript{145} Prensa Libre, 3.1.63.

\textsuperscript{146} CONTRAGUA was established in November 1965, apparently in response to the creation of the Confederación Sindical de Guatemala (CONSIGUA) in November 1964. Both represented rival factions in the leadership of the CSG which was itself a founding member of CONTRAGUA: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.255-259; Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', pp.457-471.

\textsuperscript{147} El Gráfico, 1.5.66, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.291; Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94. The tailors' union recorded in the minutes of a meeting the hope that under the 'Third Government of the Revolution... more activities can be developed: Levenson-Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror, p.41.
The limits to the new government's ability to act independently on labour issues became apparent almost immediately after Méndez Montenegro had taken office. A motion to reform the Labour Code - proposed by PR deputy Julio Leiva on behalf of the United Fruit Company workers' union, SETUFCO - was swiftly withdrawn by its sponsor. While President of Congress Fuentes Pieruccini clarified the procedure for the presentation of all motions to Congress in the future, Leiva explained the reasons for his change of heart.\textsuperscript{148} Having been informed by the PR's political committee that an integral series of reforms to the Labour Code was already under consideration, he now believed his proposals were unnecessary.\textsuperscript{149}

What is particularly notable about this incident is the manner in which the upper echelons of the PR closed ranks to minimise the consequences of Leiva's action - and the unambiguous message that this delivered to any other idealists sitting on the party bench in Congress.\textsuperscript{150} It is also clear that the private sector brought considerable pressure to bear on the matter.\textsuperscript{151} Following a meeting with CACIF, Labour Minister Barillas Izaguirre requested that Congress take account of the private sector's objections to the SETUFCO proposals.\textsuperscript{152} After the motion was withdrawn, the minister continued to reassure the private sector on the scope of any future reforms:

Las reformas que se introduzcan al código de trabajo, de acuerdo con la constitución de la república se ajustarán a la realidad nacional y buscarán la conciliación nacional. De ninguna

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 18.8.66; 26.8.66.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 18.8.66.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{El Imparcial}, 17.8.66; Zarco, 'Peligrosas Reformas Laborales', \textit{Prensa Libre}, 17.8.66.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
This early experience set the pattern for the Méndez Montenegro government's approach to the labour question. As with other politically difficult issues, 'national reality' became a coded term for what was acceptable to the economic elites and the military. Relatively 'safe' options such as the aguinaldo and the gradual introduction of minimum wages in various productive categories, simply continued policies initiated under the military regime.¹⁵⁴

According to the government's own propaganda, a principal achievement for labour during this administration was the programa de enfermedad común which eventually went into operation in January 1969 under the auspices of the

¹⁵³ Barillas Izaguirre, Prensa Libre, 18.8.66. CONTRAGUA was still awaiting discussion of these reforms in May 1969: El Gráfico, 3.5.69.


¹⁵⁵ Méndez Montenegro, speech during inauguration of the programa de enfermedad común and IGSS General Hospital, 20.10.68, 'IGSS Cubre Enfermedad y Maternidad', reproduced in Trabajo y Honestidad 1968-1970, (Guatemala, n.d.)
Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social (IGSS).\footnote{156}

Originally envisaged under legislation which established the IGSS as an autonomous institution in 1946, the new provisions provided medical care and benefits to those workers who contributed to the social security system.\footnote{157} A further presidential \textit{acuerdo} in April 1969 granted sick leave on full salary for up to two months for public sector workers not covered by the IGSS.\footnote{158} The new programme - which effectively ended the \textit{limites médicos} by which IGSS doctors attended higher wage earners privately and charged their fees to the IGSS - provoked a doctors' strike.\footnote{159} Presented by government officials as part of an anti-labour campaign to sabotage the social security system, the strike was vigorously opposed by several union bodies including the pro-government CONTRAGUA, but also the far more independent \textit{Frente Nacional Sindical} (FNS).\footnote{160}

Overall however, advances in social security remained

\footnote{156} \textit{En un Régimen de Trabajo y Libertad: Dinámica Realización en Menos de 4 Años de Gobierno Revolucionario} (Guatemala, 1969), p.14; 'Gobierno Cubre Programa de Enfermedad Común a Trabajadores', \textit{Prensa Libre}, 1.5.68; \textit{El Gráfico}, 5.5.68.

\footnote{157} The IGSS was funded by joint contributions from the state, employers and employees for a variety of different programmes including accidents at work, general accident, neo-natal and from 1 January 1969 general sickness: see Carlos Gehlert Mata, 'Salud y Seguridad Social', in Amaro, \textit{El Reto de Desarrollo}, pp.339-350.

\footnote{158} Julio César Méndez Montenegro, \textit{Informe al Honorable Congreso} (Guatemala, 1969) p.124.

\footnote{159} According to IGSS director Dr Ricardo Asturias Valenzuela, cited in ASIES, \textit{Más de 100 Años}, p.309, the system of \textit{limites médicos} had been 'prostituted' and was causing huge financial losses; see also remarks by Health Minister Dr Emilio Poitevin, \textit{Prensa Libre}, 8.9.67, on his efforts to combat the practice by which doctors in public hospitals referred patients to their own private clinics rather than treat them at hospital.

\footnote{160} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 26.10.68, 28.10.68, 29.10.68, 30.10.68; ASIES, \textit{Más de 100 Años}, p.309.
limited, certainly in terms of the kind of protection outlined in the original IGSS mandate. According to Carlos Gehlert Mata, the application of the new IGSS sickness benefits was restricted to the central department of Guatemala, while IGSS programmes in general continued to exclude both the marginalised populations in the urban centres and the considerable numbers engaged in subsistence agriculture.

In terms of PR promises on the right to unionise, there was a perceptible increase in the rate of union recognition during this administration, with a particular emphasis on rural organisation. The Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales Guatemalteca records that 230 new union organisations were recognised between July 1966 and June 1970, of which only 56 were urban. Of the remainder, 147 were ligas campesinas - associations of independent campesinos - and 27 were unions organised on fincas. Guatemalan trade unionist Miguel Angel Albizures has suggested that the surge in campesino organisation was primarily directed at the cooptation of this rural constituency while Brian Murphy noted that the initial flurry of rural organisation had slowed

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161 Gehlert Mata, 'Saldud y Seguridad Social', p.343.
162 Ibid., p.346.
164 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.296. Details of the urban unions only are given on pp.674-680.
165 Under Peralta, 25 new unions were granted personaria juridica, of which six were rural: ibid., pp.259-6.
considerably by late 1967.\textsuperscript{166}

Whether or not an organisation had official sanction appeared to influence its chances of success. Writing in *El Gráfico* in May 1968, journalist Carmén Escribano de León commented on the police harassment being suffered by campesinos attempting to organise in Tecpán, Chimaltenango, and more generally about discriminatory practices against independent union organisation.\textsuperscript{167} According to Escribano de León, peasants and workers organising under the auspices of government-sponsored entities were able to do so without difficulty:\textsuperscript{168}

\begin{quote}
        Pero si los campesinos y los trabajadores quieren organizarse por su cuenta en sindicatos libres y en ligas campesinas independientes, entonces cualquier alcaldito de pueblo puede deshacer el físico de los dirigentes que han osado ser libres e independientes del poder central.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{166} Murphy's figures, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', p.470, are difficult to reconcile with those given by ASIES: of more than 50 rural organisations in process in July 1967, he claims that only eight had succeeded in gaining legal recognition by February 1968. Using data from the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, Amaro and Cuevas, 'Intensidad del Movimiento Sindical y Cooperativo en el País', Table 2, p.399, give the following figures for unionisation up to 1968 but do not distinguish between urban and rural unions: 43 unions requesting personaria jurídica; 58 unions registered with personaria jurídica.

\textsuperscript{167} Escribano de León, *El Gráfico*, 23.5.68; see also, ibid., 21.5.68, 9.5.69; *La Hora*, 20.3.70.

\textsuperscript{168} Escribano de León, *El Gráfico*, 23.5.68. Murphy suggests that it was deliberate government policy to obstruct FASGUA-sponsored applications. By contrast, CONTRAGUA/CONSIGUA's expedient renaissance as the Central de Trabajadores Federados (CTF) following the 1970 elections was processed in less than a month: Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', p.471; Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94.

\textsuperscript{169} Escribano de León, *El Gráfico*, 23.5.68.
Nevertheless, membership of an oficialista union was neither a guarantee of immunity from official harassment, nor of physical integrity in the context of the death squad activity which characterised this period. Indeed, it became extremely dangerous to be a union activist during the Méndez Montenegro government and many were 'disappeared' or found murdered. Notwithstanding its close links with the President, even the traditionally militant but determinedly anti-communist SAMF was subjected to official and extra-legal intimidation. Eighteen samfistas were detained for the possession of subversive propaganda under the Ley de Defensa de las Leyes Democráticas in May 1967, while the union protested that three of its leaders had received death threats from the Consejo Anticomunista de Guatemala (CADEG). A month later, FASGUA, SAMF and CONTRAGUA were amongst groups accused by CADEG of planning acts of communist sabotage to celebrate the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Jaime Monge Donis - then second secretary of CONTRAGUA - appeared on a separate CADEG list described as an 'emergent collaborator of the PGT'. In November 1967, telegrams demanding effective protection for CONTRAGUA and FASGUA leaders amongst others were sent to Méndez Montenegro, the interior and defence ministers, as well as to the chiefs of the various police forces. CONTRAGUA leaders were again threatened the following June and leaders of the Frente

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170 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.314-316.

171 Prensa Libre, 3.5.67; El Gráfico, 12.5.67. CADEG was one of the several extreme right-wing organisations or death squads linked to the security forces which emerged after Méndez Montenegro had taken office.


173 CADEG, 'Junio Rojo, Comunistas de Guatemala! Pueblo de Guatemala!', reproduced in ibid., p.4/308.

174 La Hora, 3.11.67.
Cristiano de Trabajadores de Guatemala (FECETRAG) also requested military protection after receiving death threats in March 1968.\textsuperscript{175}

Declining to celebrate May Day 1968 with the traditional procession, FASGUA's executive committee declared it to be a day of mourning and banners inscribed to this effect were hung from bridges throughout the capital.\textsuperscript{176} In contrast, CONTRAGUA went ahead with their rally in the Olympic Gymnasium on 1 May 1968, with Méndez Montenegro and other high-ranking government officials in attendance. Subsequent government publicity focused in particular on the speech by CONTRAGUA's Second Secretary, Jaime Monge Donis, which endorsed moves taken by the President against the military high command in March and April 1968:\textsuperscript{177}

\begin{quote}
...hace un año planteamos categóricamente que...debia romper las cadenas y disponerse a gobernar con sentido exclusivo de ese mismo pueblo que lo había electo. Y ese aspecto dificil que requería valor pragmático, firme habilidad, integridad y consecuencia...ha sido por fin cumplido cuando con motivo de los sucesos trascendentales...el Presidente decidió consolidar el régimen de Derecho...y a fianzar la paz y la institucionalidad del país...Esta decisión exigida y esperada por los trabajores, ha merecido el respaldo absoluto y total...
\end{quote}

The close links nurtured with CONTRAGUA - the 'brazo obrero' of the PR - continued to permit the government a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[175] Prensa Libre, 30.3.68, 19.6.68.
\item[176] Prensa Libre, 25.4.68; Zarco, \textit{ibid.}, 3.5.68.
\item[177] Méndez Montenegro removed from office his Defence Minister, Colonel Arriaga Bosque, the Commander of the Zacapa military base, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio and Police Chief Colonel Manuel Sosa Avila: see Chapter Six for further discussion.
\item[178] Jaime Monge Donis quoted in publicity from the presidential public relations office, \textit{El Gráfico}, 5.5.68.
\end{footnotes}
substantial measure of support from organised labour.\textsuperscript{179} Méndez Montenegro routinely presided over annual CONTRAGUA congresses and the confederation regularly expressed its support for the 'presidente amigo' and his administration.\textsuperscript{180} The key position of the railway workers' union within CONTRAGUA and its earlier relationship with Méndez Montenegro was probably influential in this, as was the fact that the alternative ORIT-affiliate - CONSIGUA - had received support from the military regime.\textsuperscript{181}

Attempts to organise a counterweight to CONTRAGUA in 1969 reflected the increasing importance of the Christian Democrats - belatedly permitted to register as a political party for the August 1968 municipal elections. In November 1968 the three 'socialcristiano' federations\textsuperscript{182} unified in the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT), despite misgivings in some FCG base organisations.\textsuperscript{183} This oppositionist trend in the union movement was reinforced with the emergence of the Frente Nacional Sindical (FNS) in 1969 and its staging of an independent May Day demonstration in competition with that of CONTRAGUA. Comprising FASGUA and the organisations within the CNT - CONSIGUA defected to the CONTRAGUA march at the last minute - the 2,000-strong FNS demonstration included the AEU and

\textsuperscript{179} El Gráfico, 1.5.69.

\textsuperscript{180} Prensa Libre, 16.10.67, 28.1.69, 12.5.69; 20.10.69; El Gráfico, 5.5.68.

\textsuperscript{181} Murphy, 'The Stunted Growth of Campesino Organisations', p.471; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.259, 295.

\textsuperscript{182} FECETRAG, Federación Campesina de Guatemala (FCG) and Federación Nacional de Obreros del Transporte (FENOT).

\textsuperscript{183} According to Albizures, many in the FCG viewed such a union as detrimental to campesino interests: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.301-2.
the Juventud Obrera Cristiana (JOC).\textsuperscript{184}

The political content and significance of this event was underlined by the presence of veteran Christian Democrat René de León Schlotter and the DCG presidential candidate Jorge Lucas Caballeros at the head of the march, and contrasted with the heavy representation of PR officials at the far larger CONTRAGUA/CONSIGUA rally.\textsuperscript{185} However, the press detected a more critical stance at this gathering also, as speakers called for action to reform the Labour Code and demanded the dismissal of officials who were failing to enforce labour legislation in the labour courts.\textsuperscript{186} Denunciations from the platform of outrages committed by military commissioners against finca workers subsequently became the focus of a bitter exchange between the military's public relations office and the CONTRAGUA leadership, and Marroquín Rojas noted the deepening hostility between labour and the military establishment.\textsuperscript{187}

At this point, the events leading to the effective nationalisation of IRCA operations in December 1968 should be briefly outlined. Given the historical implications of such actions against US interests in third countries, the muted US response to this takeover was particularly notable and can be understood in terms of IRCA's evident wish to divest itself of its Guatemalan operations. Since the late 1950s there had been continuous conflict between IRCA and the railway workers' union, SAMF, due to the company's

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{184} El Gráfico, 1.5.69; La Hora, 2.5.69; Prensa Libre, 3.5.69.
\item \textsuperscript{185} In contrast to CONTRAGUA's claims of more than 35,000, El Gráfico estimated 12-13,000 participants on this march: El Gráfico, 3.5.69; Prensa Libre, 12.5.69; La Hora, 2.5.69.
\item \textsuperscript{186} El Gráfico, 3.5.69; Prensa Libre, 3.5.69.
\item \textsuperscript{187} El Gráfico, 3.5.69; Prensa Libre, 3.5.69, 5.5.69, 7.5.69, Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 6.5.69.
\end{itemize}
dismissal of some 1,500 workers between 1958 and 1966 and its continued resistance to union attempts to improve wages and conditions. IRCA's traditional monopoly over freight transport - originating in a series of concessions granted to US interests in the late 19th and early 20th century - had been undermined following the completion of the Transatlantic Highway in 1956, a project begun by the Arbenz administration in 1951 following the recommendations of a 1951 World Bank mission to Guatemala. The closure of UFCo operations at Tiquisate in 1964 had further depleted IRCA's profits, and the company's financial problems were compounded by legislation enacted under Peralta Azurdia which forced duty-free exports to be transported by national carriers.

IRCA's December 1966 declaration that it was on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to pay the end-of-year aguinaldo exacerbated friction between the company and SAMF. The first of several temporary government takeovers of IRCA resolved matters in the short-term, but a pattern of unpaid wages and other benefits during the following year provoked renewed union protests and culminated in a 67-day national strike between January and March 1968. Declared legal by the Labour Courts, the strike was a rare example of union militancy and generated considerable support. By

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188 Rafael Piedra-Santi Arandi, Introducción a los Problemas Económicos de Guatemala (Guatemala, 1971), p.123.

189 IRCA's income had more than halved from Q12.9 million between 1955 and 1957 to Q6.1 million in 1966: ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.273; see also Piedra-Santa Arandi, Introducción a los Problemas Económicos, p.100-101.

190 Ibid., p.94. The close relations between UFCo and IRCA were exemplified by the preferential tariffs charged for the transportation of the former's bananas from its plantations on the Pacific coast to Puerto Barrios.

contrast, company claims of financial difficulties were met with widespread skepticism in Guatemala and there was speculation that this was a strategy on the part of its US shareholders to force the government to nationalise the operation.\footnote{Prensa Libre, 19.1.67, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.347.} In this regard, it is significant that, by the time of the nationalisation in December 1968, the Guatemalan state was IRCA's major creditor. The Méndez Montenegro government had underwritten loans totalling Q6.3 million to cover the company's bill for overdue payments to and on behalf of its employees.\footnote{Piedra-Santa Arandi, Introducción a los Problemas Económicos, pp.97, 101-5; Mario Fuentes Pierrucini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94, stated that the government paid Q5m for the company.}

Desde el punto de vista del ejercicio de la soberanía nacional, la culminación del asunto de los ferrocarriles no acepta la menor discusión. Guatemala, por prima vez en más de 90 años, pone fin a una serie de consecuencias onerosas e injustas para nuestras intereses.\footnote{Oscar de León Aragón, El Gráfico, 5.1.69: De León Aragón had been appointed by Arbenz as IRCA auditor in 1953.}

Hemos rescatado para la patria un muerto.\footnote{Marroquín Rojas cited by Piedra-Santa Arandi, Introducción a los Problemas Económicos, p.105.}

One of the few examples of concerted trade union militancy during the Méndez Montenegro government, the nationalist dimensions of SAMF's dispute with IRCA can be assumed to have been important in generating sympathy for the railway workers. Equally, the 'special relationship' between the union and Méndez Montenegro enabled the former to exert particular pressure on the government. As has already been noted, however, samfistas were not exempt from right-wing death threats and MLN leader Sandoval Alarcón
commented that the union was as much to blame as the company for the conflict. The final takeover was precipitated by IRCA's failure to abide by the terms of a Q4 million loan to the company in March 1968 and a further 6-day strike by SAMF in September. Endorsed by the Faculty of Economy at the University of San Carlos and greeted with jubilation by SAMF and CONTRAGUA, this symbolic victory for national sovereignty and for labour in general was tempered by the recognition that the government's hand had been forced by IRCA itself. In the opinion of many, the company represented a 'moribund' liability for the state, while SAMF began to express dissatisfaction with the new management as early as March 1969.

Entonces nosotros decimos, si no se van a poder hacer reformas estructurales en el orden social, porque se ve que no es el momento para hacerles, por lo menos démosle a ésta gente casas, démosle carreteras, démosle escuelas. Entonces fue cuatro años de una intensa actividad de trabajo.

In his closing address to the Fourth CONTRAGUA Congress in October 1969, Méndez Montenegro included the

196 El Gráfico, 12.5.67; Prensa Libre, 24.5.67.
197 Congressional Decree 1736, 'Autoriza la emisión de Notas del Tesoro hasta por la cantidad de Q4,000,000.00...', 7.3.68, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.87, p.57; La Hora, 23.9.68; El Gráfico, 28.9.68,
198 Prensa Libre, 28.12.68, 11.1.69; 'La Facultad de Economía ante la Nacionalización de la IRCA', Prensa Libre, 3.1.69.
199 Zarco, Prensa Libre, 5.8.67; De León Aragón, El Gráfico, 5.1.69; Piedra-Santa Arandi, Introducción a los Problemas Económicas, p.; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.355-6; Levenson Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror, p.33.
200 Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94.
nationalisation of the rail network as one of the government's achievements on behalf of Guatemalan labour.\textsuperscript{201} In addition, he signalled advances in the areas of education, low-cost housing and minimum salaries together with the establishment of sickness benefits for the labouring classes.\textsuperscript{202} His 'vast' programme of public works had provided jobs and a living for thousands of workers and their families.\textsuperscript{203}

Yet the results of the March 1970 elections revealed considerable popular disenchantment with the 'Third Government of the Revolution' and there is little evidence that the combined support of the CONTRAGUA and CONSIGUA leadership translated into votes for the PR at the grassroots. In the department of Guatemala - where the highest proportion of unionised workers were located - the

\textsuperscript{201} Julio César Méndez Montenegro, 'Discurso pronunciado por el Ciudadano Presidente Constitucional de la República, en el acto de Clausura del IV Congreso Nacional de Organizaciones Sindicales, convocado por la Confederación de Trabajadores de Guatemala - CONTRAGUA', pamphlet (Guatemala, n.d.).

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid. At the end of its term the government claimed to have built almost 1,300 new schools and some 6,000 low-cost homes - 'one school...[and] eight homes for the people every 24 hours': 'Mensaje de Navidad. Texto del Mensaje de Navidad que el Presidente Constitucional de la República, Licenciado Julio César Méndez Montenegro, dirigió al Pueblo de Guatemala el 23 de diciembre de 1969, a través del sistema nacional de radio y televisión', pamphlet (Guatemala, n.d.); and speech to Congress, 15.6.70, mimeo, pp.4-8.

\textsuperscript{203} Major infrastructural developments included the extension of the Transatlantic Highway into the Petén, the conclusion of the hydro-electric plant at Jurún-Marinalá, Escuintla and the expansion of the port of Matías de Gálvez at Santo Tomás on the Caribbean Coast. Road capacity had been increased by almost 300 per cent: 1966-1970: Ministerio de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas; Oscar Castañeda Fernández, interview, Guatemala City, 14.3.94; Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94, Méndez Montenegro, speech to Congress, 15.6.70, mimeo, pp.4-8.
PR vote was more than halved in favour of the DCG. In four of the five departments it had won outright in 1966, the PR lost votes to the DCG in 1970. Perhaps most significantly, only one of the ten union members selected to stand as candidates for the PR won a seat in the congressional elections in 1970, notwithstanding CONTRAGUA/CONSIGUA claims that together they represented over 65 per cent of organised labour. While this was indicative of the lack of genuine participation in the decision-making structures of the major bodies of organised labour - and the susceptibility of the union leadership to regime cooptation - overt support for the PR had potentially dangerous consequences. Following Colonel Arana Osorio's victory at the polls in March 1970, CONTRAGUA and CONSIGUA were rapidly dissolved and the Central de Trabajadores Federados (CTF) came into being, in an effort to avoid persecution by the new regime.

During its four years in office, the Méndez Montenegro government had failed to live up its rhetoric as the genuine heir of the October 1944 Revolution. Indeed, the 'Third Government of the Revolution' had proved largely unable to carry through its own modest proposals for reform and development. Despite certain advances for labour in terms of social security benefits and minimum wage

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204 Of 23,073 unionised workers in 1968, 44 per cent were located in the department of Guatemala: Amaro and Cuevas, 'Intensidad del Movimiento Sindical', in Amaro, El Reto de Desarrollo, Table 1, p.398; ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.357.

205 ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.357. It should be noted that the union members were all CONTRAGUA affiliates.

206 In this regard, Miguel Angel Albizures has pointed to problems of participation and elitism in explaining the later demise of the FNS: Albizures, cited in ASIES, Más de 100 Años, p.309.

207 Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94.
legislation, it was clear that the hoped-for return to the favourable conditions experienced between 1944 and 1954 had not materialised. In the rural sector, almost all of the national fincas remained in the hands of the state, and budgetary deficits severely restricted other aspects of the government's agrarian transformation policies.

While the problem of revenue remained a central obstacle, the inability of the government to push through tax reforms revealed a more fundamental problem which had serious implications for the democratisation process. This process had been severely circumscribed by the limited nature of the competition in the 1966 elections and the pact that Méndez Montenegro had signed with the military before taking power. It was further undermined by the continuing game of 'coup poker' played by the right in response to unwelcome government policies. The threat of a coup made the administration pull away from politically difficult measures and reinforced the position of the military as the ultimate arbiter in the political process. In the context of a guerrilla insurgency and increasing political polarisation, the central question remains as to the viability of any reformist project at this stage.
A la pregunta, qué pasa en Guatemala?...cabe responder: la quiebra del derecho. La inseguridad es la tónica angustiosa del país. Ante la acción de las corrientes delictivas, se ha marcado una total ineficacia para frenarlas.

Una fracción de la guerrilla intentó apoyarlo e iniciar negociaciones en la dirección [de la revolución de 1944-54]...pero eso no cuajó. Ya era muy tarde. La guerrilla tenía cuatro años de existir y el ejército se había endurecido en línea obediente a los mandatos de la estrategia anticomunista y contrarevolucionaria de los Estados Unidos.

Introduction

The political and military effectiveness of the first generation of Guatemalan guerrillas was at its height when Méndez Montenegro took office on 1 July 1966. A leading issue in the electoral campaign had been the question of how to bring an end to the insurgency. In contrast to the hardline stance of Ponciano and the MLN, the PR's electoral platform had remained sufficiently vague as to suggest the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the guerrillas. Indeed, there is some indication that discussions to this end did take place between certain elements within each group. Given the narrow base of support for such

1 Julio César Méndez Montenegro, 'Mensaje de Lucha: Discurso pronunciado por el Licenciado Julio César Méndez Montenegro al ser proclamado candidato a la Presidencia de la República por el Partido Revolucionario, Guatemala, 14.11.65', pamphlet. (Guatemala, n.p., n.d.).

2 Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras, interview, Guatemala City, 14.11.94.
negotiations even within these two sectors, and the highly polarised political situation within the country at large, the prospects for a satisfactory outcome along these lines were at best slim. Within months of his inauguration, Méndez Montenegro had launched a counterinsurgency campaign.

The Guerrilla Challenge: Origins and Development

In July 1966, there were two distinct guerrilla organisations in existence - the Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre (MR-13) and the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, the former led by Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and the latter by Luis Turcios Lima. Based mainly in the north-eastern departments of Zacapa and Izabal, but with varying influence in several other regions, their combined numbers

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4 César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94, has claimed that the guerrillas were also active in the eastern departments of El Progreso, Chiquimula and parts of Jalapa as well as in the capital, and that they had some influence in Santa Rosa, Escuintla and Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu, San Marcos and Quezaltenango with a strong contingent in Baja Verapaz. An anonymous document, probably MLN, 'La guerrilla y anti-guerrilla en Guatemala (Guatemala, May 1967) mimeo, reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala. La Violencia,
were estimated at around 500 in the field at any one time, with a reserve force of up to 5,000. The FAR was the more significant in terms of numbers and actions and was viewed as the greatest political and military threat. Its intimate if difficult relationship with the PGT, together with Castro's outspoken rejection of the MR-13 in its favour at the 1966 Tricontinental in Havana, attracted the particular attention of the Guatemalan security forces and United States officials. Yon Sosa's MR-13 was viewed as a secondary target. Both organisations owed their origins to the failed military uprising of November 1960, some participants of which had returned to Guatemala from exile in early 1961 and regrouped in the first MR-13. Lacking any clear political direction at that stage and seeking primarily to re enact the original revolt to overthrow Ydígoras Fuentes - 'without making the same mistakes'.

Dossier No.21, pp.4/2-4/19, p.4/3, adds Jutiapa to this list; see also, Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, pp.104-6, for a more modest assessment of guerrilla activity outside Izabal and Zacapa.

5 DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.10.66. While the latter figure is roughly in line with Debray and Ramírez's breakdown, their estimated 'kernel' of full-time cadres was some 300, with potential fighters on the periphery who could not be mobilised due to lack of weapons and training facilities: Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.307. Debray's section on Guatemala was co-authored by Ricardo Ramírez alias Rolando Morán, current leader of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) section of the Unión Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).


7 A United States official commented on the split between Turcios Lima and Yon Sosa that the latter had not 'sold out to the Communists; he's his own boy': New York Times, 26.6.66.

8 Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.320.


10 Ibid., p.105.
discussions had been initiated with various political groupings, including the MLN and the PR, 'to find out what they stood for'. In the event only the PGT proved receptive, although the alliance between the latter and MR-13 was not formalised until December 1962.

Coinciding with their return from Havana – where the experience of direct contact with the Cuban Revolution had been critical in producing 'an evident change' in the 'trecistas' – Yon Sosa, Turcios Lima and Luis Trejo Esquivel presented the PGT with a concrete proposal for combined military action under joint command. As a result, the PGT and MR-13 agreed to establish the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes – a politico-military organisation in which the PGT would retain control of political organisation, while MR-13 would take charge of the military operations. The political nub of the FAR was to be the Frente Unido de Resistencia (FUR), organised by the PGT and other opposition groups. Without representation in the FUR, the guerrilla leadership was effectively excluded from political decision-making. While the logic of this

11 Turcios Lima, cited by Gott, Rural Guerrillas in Latin America, p.75; 'Breves Apuntes Históricos', pp.104-107; César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94.

12 'Breves Apuntes Históricos', p.106. It was during this visit that César Montes – then a student in Havana – first came into contact with the MR-13 leaders: César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94.


arrangement stemmed in part from the primary concern of the trecistas with military operations, it was principally structured to allow the PGT to incorporate armed struggle as a tactic within an overall strategy seeking a return to political legality and the peaceful road to socialism.

Since 1959 the PGT had come under increasing pressure from its younger cadres to follow the Cuban example. The Cuban Revolution had served to sharpen criticism of the policy of 'national conciliation' adopted by the party towards the Ydigoras Fuentes administration and had revived memories of the party's inability to defend the gains of the 1944 Revolution during and after Arbenz's overthrow in 1954. In response, at its Third Party Congress in May 1960 the PGT recognised the validity of the armed struggle alongside other forms of struggle in the quest for a 'democratic, revolutionary and patriotic government' of the working class, campesinos, petty and national bourgeoisie - the 'indispensable condition' for the democratic revolution

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15 Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', pp.178-9. Crain notes Eduardo Galeano's observation that young PGT radicals had a great deal more influence on party policy than was generally the case in most Latin American Communist parties: Eduardo Galeano, Guatemala, Clave de Latinoamérica (Montevideo, 1967), p.27, n.2.

16 The perceived 'petty bourgeois' failings of the PGT in this earlier period were once again thrown into sharp relief in January 1968 when the FAR announced its definitive separation from the PGT: 'Declaración de las FAR de Guatemala: el PGT Ha Capitulado, Las FAR Rompen con una Corriente Política Oportunista', reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios de Latino América, pp.78-82; see also the 'self criticism' by the PGT's Comisión Política, 'La Intervención norte-americano en Guatemala y el Derrocamiento del regimen democrático', reproduced in Michael Lowy, Le Marxisme en Amérique Latine: anthologie (Paris, 1980) pp.200-11, in which the PGT recognised a number of errors committed by the party between 1949 and 1954 and in particular in its relationship with the 'national bourgeoisie'. 
which would open the road towards socialism.\textsuperscript{17} A May 1961 document went further by defining armed struggle as the principal revolutionary tactic and the party sponsored its own short-lived foco in March 1962.\textsuperscript{18}

While Debray has suggested that this move identified PGT militants as the first foquistas in Guatemala, in many ways the party remained an orthodox, urban Communist party whose accommodation of the armed struggle was far from total commitment. At the same time, however, it is important to note that even this partial accommodation signalled a departure from traditional forms of Communist party organisation in Latin America. Nevertheless, the propensity of the leadership to switch from armed struggle to politiquería became an increasing source of tension internally and between the party and the guerrillas and was central to the acrimonious break with the latter in 1968.

By 1964, two guerrilla focos had been established in the north-east of the country: the Frente Guerrillero 'Alejandro de León' (also known as MR-13) commanded by Yon Sosa in Izabal and the Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra (FGEI) under Turcios Lima in the Sierra de las Minas in Zacapa. This was an area predominantly inhabited by poor ladino peasant farmers and the failure to incorporate the Indian population into the struggle was subsequently identified as a central flaw in the early revolutionary movement.\textsuperscript{19} An early example of this type of criticism was the FAR's January 1968 attack on the PGT's 'false

\textsuperscript{17} PGT, 'Plataforma Política Aprobado por el III Congreso del PGT', May 1960, mimeo, p.14; Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez, 'Las elecciones deben realizarse', La Hora, 3.1.66.

\textsuperscript{18} Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', p.180; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.280.

\textsuperscript{19} Mario Roberto Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 12.7.94; Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.453; Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala, pp.68-9.
thesis' that indigenous campesinos were 'reserves of reaction', and Turcios Lima had hinted at this problem two years earlier in his speech at the Tricontinental meeting in Havana:\footnote{20}

El campesinado guatemalteco está formado en su enorme mayoría por las masas indígenas...Por largo tiempo se consideró a los indios como seres inferiores, como pueblos atrasados incapaces de asimilar el progreso y la técnica. No pocos revolucionarios en el pasado fueron presa de esta ideología y consideraron a las masas indígenas como peso muerto para la revolución. La experiencia de la lucha guerrillera ha demostrado que el campesino indígena lejos de ser un obstáculo para la revolución, es su fuerza decisiva.\footnote{21}

It is indicative that there had been several unsuccessful attempts during 1962 to establish guerrilla fronts in Indian-populated areas, the earliest example of which was the PGT-sponsored foco in the mountains of Concuaú in Baja Verapaz.\footnote{22} Details are scarce, but a principal problem appears to have been the insurgents' lack of linguistic


\footnote{21} Turcios Lima, 'Discurso en la Conferencia Tricontinental', reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios de América Latina, p.55.

\footnote{22} In November 1962, another guerrilla foco in San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehtenango, was quickly defeated, while Turcios Lima abandoned his attempts to establish a front in San Marcos and moved operations to the Sierra de las Minas: Debray, The Revolution on Trial, pp.280-2; interview with Turcios Lima in Le Monde, 7.2.66, cited in Gott, Rural Guerrillas, pp.81-2; 'Breves Apuntes Históricos', p.106.
ability and local suspicion of outsiders. Yet, at least while Turcios Lima was alive, the guerrilla was not pursued in total isolation from the Indian population. Of particular salience is the FGEI's occupation of the river port of Panzós in Alta Verapaz in October 1964, given that the Panzós massacre in 1978 is generally accepted as marking the beginning of the Indian uprising of the late 1970s. Finally, it appears that there was a significant level of guerrilla contact with indigenous peasants in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, where the Cakchiquel leader Emilio Román López (Comandante Pascual) operated until his death in October 1966.

At the same time however, it is easy to underestimate the political potential of the ladino north-east, an area in which a poor peasantry was coming under increasing pressure from cattle ranching and where foreign companies did have a significant presence. These factors, and particularly the return of expropriated land to UFCo following the 1954 liberación, lend some weight to the thesis of the peasant 'moral economy' in defining local support for the

23 This was not a problem unique to the Guatemalan guerrillas as the cases of Peru and Bolivia demonstrate. On the slow process of rebuilding the Guatemalan guerrilla movement amongst the Indian population in the early 1970s, see Mario Payeras, Los días de la selva, 8th edition (Mexico, 1989).

24 Dunkerley, Power in the Isthmus, p.453; see also, César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94; Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution.

25 César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94, argues that this amounted to an indigenous foco; see also, Mario Roberto Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 12.7.94; Orlando Fernández, Turcios Lima (Havana, 1970); Galeano, Clave de Latinoamérica (Montevideo, 1967), p.36; Mario Roberto Morales, La Ideología y la Lirica de la Lucha Armada (Guatemala, 1994), pp.173-4. 'Pascual' was shot dead in Guatemala City on 23 October 1966 just weeks after Turcios Lima's death in a car crash.
guerrillas. Wickham-Crowley has also argued that the relatively high percentage of farm tenancy and sharecropping in the core area of guerrilla activity supports Jeffery Paige's structural theory of peasant revolution. FAR commander César Montes' observed at the time that their peasant supporters in Zacapa and Izabal were medieros (sharecroppers), rather than seasonal labourers - won over to the revolutionary cause through 'armed propaganda'. Yet, even in Zacapa, only 19.8 per cent of the 7,216 farm units were rented, and the rapid loss of this peasant base once the counterinsurgency campaign began has been attributed to a local population of 'small landowners' who lacked 'political consciousness' and who switched sides when the guerrilla forces appeared to be losing the battle.

The area did have a recent history of radicalism, however. Peasant/worker militias in Zacapa and Puerto Barrios had fought to defend the revolution against

26 Some 40 per cent of farmland was expropriated in Izabal under Arbenz's Agrarian Reform Law: Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, pp.121-3; on the peasant moral economy see esp. James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant (New Haven, 1976); and Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (New York, 1969); for an overview of theories of peasant rebellion see Ian Roxborough, Theories of Underdevelopment (Basingstoke and London, 1979), pp.91-106; Theda Skocpol, 'What Makes Peasants Revolutionary?', Comparative Politics, 14 (April 1982).

27 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, pp.103-6, esp. Table 6.6, p.104; Jeffery M. Paige, Agrarian Revolution (New York, 1975); on the different systems of agriculture in the eastern highlands as opposed to the 'Indian' altiplano, see Whetten, Guatemala, pp.150-1.

28 César Montes quoted in Galeano, Clave de Centroamérica, p.22.

29 Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 16.11.93; Mario Roberto Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 12.7.94; Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.105, Table 6.7.
liberación forces in June 1954. In November 1960, 800 peasants reportedly arrived at the Zacapa barracks to offer their support to the rebels in the wake of the military uprising. The PGT's organisational links with the workers on the Izabal banana plantations are also said to have provided an important base for the guerrillas. Strategically, the region was crucial, traversed by the Transatlantic Highway and the railway link between Guatemala City and the key Caribbean port of Puerto Barrios. As the centre of UFCo operations the port was the symbolic heart of US imperialism. However, the economic importance of the area - and its relatively efficient communications network - differentiated the region from the Cuban Sierra Maestra and rendered the guerrillas particularly vulnerable to military attack.

The main ideological differences between MR-13 and the FGEI/FAR developed out of the PGT's reluctance to fully embrace armed struggle. Yon Sosa's frustration with the PGT's politiqueria led him first to negotiate unsuccessfully with Villagrán Kramer's URD, and then into

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30 Worker/peasant militias had also fought in Chiquimula, Santa Rosa and Escuintla: see Cardoza y Aragón, La Revolución Guatemalteca, p.176. In an effort to explain paramilitarism in the eastern departments of Zacapa and Chiquimula, Caesar D. Sereseres, 'Guatemalan Paramilitary Forces, Internal Security, and Politics', unpublished paper, University of California, Irvine, pp.19-25, has asserted a distinctive political culture in this region based on clans and clientelist structures; see also, Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, 'Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala', Latin American Perspectives, 25/26 (Spring and Summer 1980), p.97.


32 FAR commander Pablo Monsanto cited in Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.147.

33 César Montes, cited in Galeano, Guatemala, clave, p.17.
a temporary association with Mexican Trotskyism. The extent of Trotskyist infiltration within MR-13 became clear with the first publication of Revolución Socialista in July 1964, in which MR-13 advocated a socialist revolution to be achieved through a generalised mass uprising of politically conscious peasants supported in the cities by organised workers and students.34

The FGEI both rejected Trotskyism and was critical of the PGT's vacillation on the issue of the armed struggle.35 In October 1964, the organisation delivered a letter to the PGT and the MR-13 outlining its position and calling for the reorganisation of the FAR.36 Shortly afterwards in December, Turcios Lima met with Yon Sosa over several days as part of MR-13's 'National Directorate', at 'Las Orquideas' - a guerrilla encampment in the Sierra de Las Minas. According to Debray, Turcios Lima was persuaded by Trotskyists Amado Granados and Adolfo Gilly to agree in principle to a common declaration of goals more radical than those outlined in the earlier FGEI letter, but did not sign the document.37 The fact that its subsequent publication bore his name precipitated Turcios Lima's resignation from MR-13 in March 1965.38

35 Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', p.184.
36 Ibid.
37 Debray, 'The Revolution on Trial', p.291.
38 Ibid.; 'Primera Declaración de la Sierra de las Minas, 20.12.64', Revolución Socialista (January 1965), reproduced in Edición del Comité Bancario de Lucha Antiimperialista (Uruguay, 1965), pp.15.46; 'Turcios Renuncia del 13; Carta Abierta a la Dirección Nacional del Movimiento 13 de Noviembre', 6.3.65, reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios en Latinoamérica, pp.48-53; Gott, Rural Guerrillas, p.93.
The 'First Declaration of the Sierra de las Minas' — published in Revolución Socialista in January 1965 — called for worldwide socialist revolution of the masses against capitalism and imperialism, rejecting both the 'peaceful road' to socialism and 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism.\(^{39}\) It was also a damning indictment of the PGT and the latter's defence of the 'national democratic revolution [which] means putting the guerrillas at the service of a bourgeois objective':\(^{40}\)

...las FAR...han expresado que luchan por la revolución democrática nacional, para instaurar un gobierno de las cuatro clases, en que están representados los obreros, los campesinos, la pequeña burguesía y la burguesía nacional. Nosotros, por el contrario, no queremos nada con la burguesía, sea cual sea.\(^{41}\)

The effect of this split was to push the FGEI back into the arms of the PGT, and Crain has suggested that the spectre of Trotskyism actually prevented the total breakdown of the FAR-PGT alliance at this stage.\(^{42}\) At the same time, recognising the danger of a pro-Cuban secession, the PGT went some way to meeting the demands laid out in the FGEI's letter.\(^{43}\) In January 1965, the Centro Provisional de Dirección Revolucionaria (CPDR) was established as a single politico-military command. Its founding document rejected electoralism and legalism as ploys of the military dictatorship which were bound to fail and made clear its orientation towards a prolonged people's

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\(^{39}\) 'Primera Declaración de la Sierra de las Minas', pp.15-17.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., pp.27-30.

\(^{41}\) Yon Sosa, interview in Prensa Libre, 19.7.66.

\(^{42}\) Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', p.184.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., pp.184-5.
revolutionary war.\footnote{Ibid.} The FAR was subsequently reconstituted without Yon Sosa and MR-13 in March 1965.

The PGT's trend towards a more substantial commitment to the armed struggle appeared to be confirmed in its 'Ten Theses of Organisation'.\footnote{Diez tesis sobre organización', reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala La Violencia, Dossier No.21, pp.4/228-4/250; Crain, 'Guatemalan Revolutionaries', pp.184-5.} Ratified by the Central Committee in May 1965, this document effectively integrated the PGT structure into the armed movement. However, with the approach of the March 1966 elections and the renewed possibility of winning back the gains of the reformist decade, the PGT began to apply pressure within the FAR to support the Méndez Montenegro candidacy.

The ideological differences between the two guerrilla organisations had operational implications. In particular, the FGEI/FAR was critical MR-13's subordination of military action to social organisation and in their different application of 'armed propaganda'. While the FGEI/FAR emphasised clandestinity - 'a fundamental component of the Popular War' - in the organisation of local cells of resistance in the villages it worked with, MR-13's practice of publicly appointing 'peasant committees' in addition to clandestine cells was criticised for creating easy targets for repression.\footnote{'Turcios Renuncia del 13', pp.48-53; César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94; Galeano, Guatemala, pp.21-2; Gilly, 'The Guerrilla Movement in Guatemala', Monthly Review (May, 1965), pp.20-6; Gott, Rural Guerrillas, pp.95-103.} In his rejection of the 'First Declaration of the Sierra de las Minas', Turcios Lima made similar criticisms of the call to the Association of University Students (AEU) and other student bodies to be
the 'expression of the guerrilla movement'. With regard to this debate, it is worth noting Havana's reservations on the whole question of armed propaganda. While Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* had warned of the multiple dangers associated with this practice if parallel military action was not also underway, Castro also reportedly questioned its value:

> en alguna oportunidad él dijo: 'qué era eso de andar dando discursitos parado en un banquito con las armas?' Incluso usaba una cita del Che que decía que la propaganda armada de los combates, no la propaganda armada de discursos...se triunfa...Nosotros partíamos más bien de una asimilación de la experiencia vietnamita que había logrado un gran apoyo...sobre la base de campañas de propaganda armada.

Despite their ideological and operational divergences, relations between the FGEI/FAR and MR-13 were more fluid than some of the invective implied. Indeed, César Montes has claimed that the latter continued to receive financial support from the proceeds of FAR operations. By the time of Méndez Montenegro's inauguration, Yon Sosa was dissociating MR-13 from Trotskyist influence and relations

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47 'Turcios Renuncia del 13', pp.48-53.


49 César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94, cites this as proof that the Guatemalan guerrillas were less influenced by the Cuban Revolution than by the struggle taking place in Vietnam. He also suggests that Debray's analysis of the Guatemalan situation was incorrect and based on information from compañeros - 'like Rolando Morán and others', who had been absent from Guatemalan struggle for some time.

with the FAR began to improve.\textsuperscript{51} Turcios Lima's death in a car accident in October 1966 temporarily stalled moves towards an official reconciliation between the two organisations while his second-in-command and successor César Montes struggled to impose his authority over the disparate groups within the FGEI/FAR. The formal unification between them did not take place until early 1968 and was in any case shortlived, with Yon Sosa withdrawing a few months later. He was finally killed by Mexican forces in June 1970 having apparently strayed across the Guatemalan-Mexican border.\textsuperscript{52}

Amnesties and Ultimatums

En lo tocante a los grupos descontentos que expresan violentamente su inconformidad y traten de hacerse justicia por su propia cuenta, desde este estado civil y en este instante memorable, les hacemos un llamamiento a la paz y a la concordia; si este gesto franco, empero, hecho por un guatemalteco que habla a sus conciudadanos, por un presidente que dialoga con el pueblo; si esta actitud abierto y espontaneo, se interpretara como debilidad y se respondiera con arrogancia, la mano cordial que hoy se tiende se cerraria en puño fuerte...\textsuperscript{53}

Together with the lifting of the state of siege - in place since May 1966 - Méndez Montenegro's inaugural offer of reconciliation with the guerrillas appeared as tangible evidence that a political transition was indeed taking place. This impression was reinforced by the public debate

\textsuperscript{51} Prensa Libre, 29.7.66; Gott, \textit{Rural Guerrillas}, p,107; Debray, \textit{The Revolution on Trial}, pp.322-3.

\textsuperscript{52} The exact circumstances of Yon Sosa's death remain unclear: see Debray, \textit{The Revolution on Trial}, p.342-3.

\textsuperscript{53} Méndez Montenegro, inaugural speech, \textit{El Imparcial}, 1.7.66.
that developed around the question of a political amnesty for the guerrillas, and by the repeal of Decree Law 10 that followed on 5 August.\(^5^4\) Repeated promises of press freedom were accompanied by criticisms of the Peralta regime and its excesses - although it is notable that the police were the focus of this attention rather than the military.\(^5^5\) Although the left criticised the new government's lack of action on the case of the 28 missing revolutionaries,\(^5^6\) it appears that some moves were made in this direction, as a CIA document somewhat disparagingly confirmed:

The police forces have been disrupted by investigations dealing with charges of murdering Communists; police officials have been removed and replaced by even less competent, if more humane, individuals...\(^5^7\)

Yet even at this stage, the true limits to civilian authority vis-à-vis the military had been publicly established. In a forthright response to the Interior Minister's promise to incinerate lists of 'subversives' compiled under Peralta's Decree Law 9, Defence Minister Arriaga Bosque flatly refused to follow suit:

Las listas que el decreto ley...manda que estén en poder del ministerio de la defensa, no serán incineradas. Esto es lo que tengo que decir, en cuanto a las listas que el ministerio de

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\(^{5^4}\) Issued by Peralta on 10 April 1963, Decree Law 10 had established excessive sentences for common crimes which were adjudicated by military courts: Prensa Libre, 3.8.66, 6.8.66.

\(^{5^5}\) See for example, statement by Interior Minister Mansilla Pinto, El Imparcial, 22.7.66.


\(^{5^7}\) DDRS CIA 003059, Office of National Estimates, Special Memorandum, 'The Danger of a Military Coup in Guatemala', 28.9.66.
On 26 July 1966, Congress passed an amnesty for political crimes. The support of the revolutionary left for the PR had been premised on the expectation of precisely this kind of conciliatory gesture, yet the terms of the amnesty were considered totally unacceptable. Covering the period from 1 November 1960 - but specifically excluding anyone implicated in the death of Mario Méndez Montenegro - all illicit weapons were to be surrendered within an eight-day period. A further stipulation was the immediate release of FGEI/FAR hostages Baltazar Morales de la Cruz and Augusto de León held since March. Both conditions were categorically rejected by Turcios Lima as a 'ridiculous ultimatum', while Yon Sosa had repudiated the whole concept in similar terms, even before the amnesty had been proffered:

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58 Prensa Libre, 14.7.66; see also, ibid., 16.7.66, 20.7.66.

59 Congressional Decree 1605, 'concede AMNISTIA por delitos politicos y comunes conexos, cometidos desde el 10 de noviembre de 1960, hasta el 26 de julio de 1966', 26.7.66. Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.86, p.10; El Imparcial, 27.7.66.

60 A separate Presidential acuerdo described how the weapons should be deposited: 'en cualquiera de las Alcaldías Municipales de las cabeceras departmentales donde se le vantará una acta simple para acreditar la entrega, sin llevar formalidades de ninguna clase...las autoridades no harán investigación alguna sobre su procedencia o adquisición...'. The weapons would be immediately transferred to the nearest military base: El Imparcial, 28.7.66.

61 Respectively the Secretary for Information and the President of the Supreme Court under Peralta Azurdia, the two had been kidnapped to pressure for information as to the fate of the 28 missing PGT and labour activists. Both were released in early September in exchange for FAR member Ortiz Vides: New York Times, 2.9.66.
nosotros no aceptamos que nadie nos mande...Nuestra meta es conquistar el poder y formar un gobierno nacional, que estaría formado por los obreros, los campesinos y también por el propio pueblo...Es notorio en realidad la presión que ejerce el ejército con el gobierno del licenciado Julio César Méndez Montenegro...De la noche a la mañana, el ejército no puede nunca cambiar.\textsuperscript{62}

Dejemos bien claro que a nosotros no nos interesa, en ningún momento, amnistía, indulto, ni promesas, ni componendas, ni nada por el estilo. De aceptarlas sería una traición a las masas explotadas...nuestro objetivo es la toma del poder.\textsuperscript{63}

As we have seen, the terms of the agreement signed between Méndez Montenegro and the military high command effectively ruled out any possibility of a peaceful resolution to the guerrilla challenge, except under conditions of total surrender. Given these limitations, it would be easy to dismiss Méndez Montenegro's amnesty as no more than a disingenuous manœuvre, designed both to placate those calling for negotiation and to isolate the guerrillas in the public eye as intransigent.\textsuperscript{64} Yet it is worth noting that Congress had been 'bombarded' with several different amnesty bills - and that the bill selected had suffered a number of amendments before being finally passed.\textsuperscript{65} According to Fortuny - a founding member of the PGT - right-wing congresistas, including those from 'the more reactionary wing' of the PR, had blocked the


\textsuperscript{64} See, for example, Debray, \textit{The Revolution on Trial}, p.300.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{El Imparcial}, 26.7.66; Fortuny, 'Political Situation', p.32.
original proposal submitted by the government which was 'far more interested in an amnesty than the revolutionaries for whom it was intended'. Moreover, it appears that Méndez Montenegro continued to resist pressure for an all-out counterinsurgency campaign even after the amnesty had been rejected by the guerrillas.

At the same time however, the public debate on the issue had the effect of weakening the position of the revolutionary movement as a whole. The media engagement with the guerrillas - interviews with Yon Sosa and Turcios Lima in their mountain hideouts and lengthy debates in print between newspaper columnists and members of the PGT Central Committee - served to strengthen the impression of tolerant and democratic government. In addition, the publicity given to the guerrillas' radical demands in terms of their Marxist ideology and socialist goals may have alienated sympathisers, who had previously opposed the military regime but now believed in the possibility of reform under Méndez Montenegro.

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66 Ibid.
67 DDRS CIA 003059, Office of National Estimates, Special Memorandum, 'The Danger of a Military Coup in Guatemala', 28.9.66.
68 See especially the debate that took place between columnist Isidoro Zarco and PGT ideologue Gabriel Salazar over several weeks in 15 articles in Prensa Libre, 26.8.66-19.9.66; see also ibid., 19.7.66, 29.7.66; El Imparcial, 5.7.66, 20.7.66, 27.7.66; Judy Hicks, 'FAR and MR-13 Compared', Monthly Review (February 1967), pp.30-31.
69 In contrast, Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.178, has pointed to the moderate media image that Fidel Castro sought to maintain throughout the Cuban guerrilla struggle; see also, Aguilera Peralta et al, Dialéctica del Terror, p.113; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.296; Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.233; URD member Adolfo Mijangos, cited by Norman Lewis, 'Guatemala: Banana Republic on the Brink of Doomsday', in The Sunday Times Magazine, 14.3.71.
Within the revolutionary movement itself the new situation produced confusion and disagreement. While Turcios Lima and the PGT's José Manuel Fortuny separately warned that the rhetoric of social justice was a demagogic manoeuvre to take 'the edge off the popular discontent...alienating the peoples...from the revolution', the PGT's commitment to the armed struggle continued to be qualified.  

As Fortuny put it, the new situation demanded 'the proper combination of political, armed, economic and social struggle':

The Party sees its main task in all-round utilisation of the possibilities afforded by the present situation for improving the organisation of the revolutionary struggle in the three basic areas - the masses, the Rebel Armed Forces and the Party itself. But work in this direction and the steady development of revolutionary action...in no way detracts from the Party's efforts to build alliances or to achieve unity of action with the remainder of the Left and with all groups and organisations having influence among the masses. In particular, the Party of Labour is determined not to allow the Revolutionary Party to capitalise on our sectarian mistakes to win support among these groups and to isolate the Communists in the Rebel Armed Forces.

The FAR offer to suspend military operations in September 1966 should also be seen in this light. It was subsequently argued to have been a mistaken strategy which threw the organisation into considerable disarray.

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70 Fortuny, 'Political Situation'; Turcios Lima, 'Nuestras Tareas Fundamentales en la Actual Situación Política y Nuestra Preparación para su Inminente Cambio Futuro' (n.d.) reproduced in INDAL, Movimientos Revolucionarios de América Latina, pp.96-100.

71 Fortuny, 'Political Situation, p.33, citing PGT Central Committee resolution of 10 June 1966.

72 Ibid.

73 Fernández, Turcios Lima, pp.60-62; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, pp.294-301.
response to Méndez Montenegro's 7 September 'final call' for peace, Turcios Lima and PGT Central Committee member, Bernardo Alvarado Monzón issued a joint statement which also highlighted concerns about MLN activities in the north-east and the recruitment of mercenaries for a liberación-style invasion:

Las FAR, concientes de su rol histórico de vanguardia política del pueblo, adopta en este momento la siguiente decisión: Suspender acciones de tipo militar, condicionando esto a que el aparato represivo del gobierno no provoque o persiga al pueblo; en la medida que el gobierno denuncie, reprimia y exterminie la conspiración liberacionista y que el ejército no opere en contra de la población campesina y sectores democráticos. Las FAR agotar en esta forma sus recursos para dar lugar a que el gobierno demuestre si va a combatir a los enemigos del pueblo, realice reformas democráticas de fondo, rechace y denuncie la presión de que es objeto por parte del ejército.

In a subsequent internal document, Turcios Lima argued that the military truce was necessary for the guerrillas to avoid retaliatory attacks during a period of planning and reorganisation. Whether or not these plans would have been successful under his leadership is now a moot point, but critics of the PGT strategy have since argued that Turcios Lima was the victim of a 'tacit conspiracy' which kept him unnecessarily in the capital where he was killed in a car crash less than a month later. The problems

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74 Méndez Montenegro, 'Ultima Llamada', Prensa Libre, 8.9.66.
75 Prensa Libre, 10.9.66.
76 Turcios Lima, 'Nuestros Tareas Fundamentales', p.97.
77 Fernández, Turcios Lima, p.63; Prensa Libre, 3.10.66. Mario Roberto Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 12.7.94, has suggested that a bomb, 'probably set by some member of the Party [PGT] that was linked to the army or the police', was the cause of the accident, but accusations
encountered by César Montes in applying Turcios Lima's plan of resistance to the disparate guerrilla forces were attributed by one participant to its strategic insufficiencies, which had overestimated the strength and unity of the FAR as a whole.  

From Liberalisation to Repression: 'A Counterinsurgency Running Wild'

El III Gobierno de la Revolución está gobernando al país dentro del estricto marco de la Constitución y la Ley. Aún en momentos difíciles en que la violencia ha oscurido el cielo patrio, ha mantenido con firmeza esta actitud democrática porque no quiere, ni puede, ni debe violar la ley para combatir a quienes la transgresen. Esta conducta...es el único camino para consolidar la INSTITUCIONALIDAD, sin la cual Guatemala nunca progresará...

Que no le extrañe al Gobierno de la república que, ante la incuria y tolerancia de las autoridades, la ciudadanía se organice para su autodefensa o se haga justicia pro sus propias manos.

of foul play are notably absent from most accounts of this event. Similarly, an announcement by the clandestine anti-communist terror organisation MANO that it was responsible seems to have been widely disregarded: Prensa Libre, 7.10.66.

78 Fernández [alias Ricardo Ramirez and Rolando Morán, current commander of the Ejército Guatemalteco de los Pobres (EGP)], Turcios Lima, p.63, argues this was partly due to the 'exaggerated and false information' on the internal situation of the FAR given to Turcios Lima by the CPDR.

79 Presidential public relations office, Prensa Libre, 26.2.69.

80 MLN leader, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, El Imparcial, 27.8.66.
For most analysts of this period, the Méndez Montenegro regime provided a democratic veneer for a carefully conceived counterinsurgency campaign which combined a full-scale military offensive with extensive clandestine terror.\footnote{Aguilera Peralta et al, Dialéctica del Terror en Guatemala, pp.181-182; Jonas Bodenheimer, Guatemala: Plan Piloto, p.288; Gleijeses, 'Guatemala: Crisis and Response', in SAIS Report on Guatemala (Boulder and London, 1985) pp.51-74; McClintock, The American Connection, pp.79-98; see also, Carlos Rafael Soto, 'No le da verguenza expresidente?', El Gráfico, 4.2.94; and Nineth Montenegro quoted in Nancy Arroyave, 'El juicio de la historia. Julio César Méndez M.', Crónica, 10.5.96, p.55.} Launched in November 1966, the counterinsurgency campaign employed scorched earth tactics and involved the eradication of whole villages in the northeast.\footnote{Statement by Norman Diamond to Committee of Returned Volunteers/New York Latin America Committee, Guatemala Perspective (New York, 1968), p.5; see also 'Exhortación pastoral del Episcopado Guatemalteco', reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala La Violencia, Dossier No.21, pp.5/75-5/83 and Prensa Libre, 10.5.67. Unusually, this latter document emphasises the violence taking place in the 'north-west' of the country; DDRS DOS 003260, Airgram A193, 'First 100 days Mendez Regime - assessment', 16.11.66, which notes that security activity was increased in October, 'following a period of internal planning'.} The campaign increasingly took on the character of a 'dirty war', which extended rapidly to other parts of the country and left up to 8,000 dead.\footnote{Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala, p.63. McClintock, The American Connection, p.85, gives this figure for the oriente region between November 1966 and March 1967, while in November 1968 the 'Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos', La Violencia en Guatemala. Dramática y Documentada Denuncia sobre "El Tercer Gobierno de la Revolución" (Mexico, 1969) p.181, claimed the violence had taken 6,000 lives since the campaign began. The Latin America Studies Association, Ad Hoc Committee on Guatemala Report, 15.4.73, reported estimates of deaths as a result of the violence ranged from 3,000 to 8,000 for the period 1966-1968, and 7,000 for the period 1968-70. The US State Department, DDRS DOS 003236, 'Guatemala: A Counter-Insurgency Running Wild?', Intelligence Note 843, 23.10.67, estimated 500-600 victims of counter-terrorism in the year since October 1966, acknowledging that the inclusion of 'missing' persons could double the figure.}
continued to affirm its democratic credentials largely on the basis of its constitutional status, such a claim was severely tested by the repeated suspension of individual guarantees and the imposition of media restrictions under various states of exception. Reports of men and women being taken away by the ubiquitous 'groups of unknown armed men' appeared daily in the national press, together with seemingly unrelated reports of tortured corpses found on roadsides. Public appeals for the exhibición personal (habeus corpus) of missing persons were printed in newspapers alongside faded photographs. The Third Government of the Revolution seemed patently incapable of upholding even the most basic rights of the individual enshrined in the Constitution.

Méndez Montenegro insisted that his government was the innocent victim of extremismos to its left and its right, but for many the President was simply a hostage to military designs, if not thoroughly complicit in their unfolding. Central to this analysis is the question of the agreement reached with the military in March 1966 and the limits it set for the exercise of full civilian government. In

84 Guatemala was under states of exception of varying grades of severity for some 17 months during Méndez Montenegro's government. While responsibility for civilian security forces devolved to the Ministry of Defence under a State of Siege, it remained in the remit of the Ministry of the Interior under the lesser State of Alarm and State of Prevention.

- State of Siege: 2.11.66-27.2.67; 18.3.68-16.4.68; 28.8.68-26.10.68; 2.4.70-1.5.70.
- State of Alarm: 28.2.67-1.5.67; 16.1.68-17.3.68; 17.4.68-16.6.68; 27.10.68-26.11.68.

85 In 1967, murders were being estimated at 100 per month, Prensa Libre, 5.4.67, cited in Melville and Melville, Another Vietnam?, p.269. The Supreme Court reported that in the period immediately preceding April 1968 at least five writs for habeus corpus were presented each day: Prensa Libre, 4.4.68; see also list of recorded disappearances and murders between July 1966 and October 1968 in La Violencia en Guatemala, pp.46-175.
addition, powerful elements within the armed forces had remained opposed to Peralta's solution to the electoral impasse in March. Méndez Montenegro's careful references to the military's constitutional role in his inaugural address - and in his regular Saturday visits to principal military bases in the following months - were an implicit recognition of the continuing fragility of this uneasy modus vivendi.86

Yet there is also some evidence to suggest that Méndez Montenegro resisted pressure from the military and the right - as well as the PR leadership - to launch an offensive against the guerrillas in the early months of his presidency.87 Moreover, while the terms of the amnesty law can be seen to correspond to the military's condition of total surrender, the FAR's suspension of action against military targets closely followed the release of their hostages and suggests that - in some circles at least - a negotiated settlement was still believed possible.

The sharp revival of the post-1954 enmities as a result of the PR's arrival in office can also be identified at this stage. The governing party's proposal in August to replace the liberación motto 'Dios Patria Libertad' in the parliamentary chamber was accompanied by a bitter exchange with the MLN. The latter's response was to declare

86 Méndez Montenegro, inaugural address, El Imparcial, 1.7.66; ibid., 30.7.66; DDRS CIA 003057, National Intelligence Estimate, 24.6.66; DDRS CIA 003058, Intelligence Memorandum, 30.6.66; DDRS CIA 003059, Office of National Estimates, Special Memorandum, 'The Danger of a Military Coup in Guatemala', 28.9.66.

87 DDRS CIA 003059, Special Memorandum, 'The Danger of a Military Coup in Guatemala', 28.9.66. If Irma Flaquer, 'Facultades Al Ejército para Combatir a las Guerrillas', La Hora, 30.8.66, is to be believed, however, the President succumbed to such pressure somewhat earlier on. At a meeting on 23 August with the entire high command, Méndez Montenegro reportedly gave his approval for action to begin against the guerrillas.
'political war' on the PR 'in reply to the attacks and accusations that party has made against the MLN' and to reveal details of the 1960 pact between the PR, MLN and DCG. However, this political theatre masked a deeper concern on the part of the liberacionistas. With only five deputies and exluded from Méndez Montenegro's 'government of national unity', the MLN's influence seemed decidedly on the wane. As a CIA document noted, 'It is not lost on the MLN that the PR...will be an unbeatable political organization by 1970 if it controls the government for a term.'

Far from the 'party of democratic opposition' promised by MLN leader Sandoval Alarcón at the tomb of Castillo Armas in June 1966, the MLN publicly accused the government of being in league with the FAR and continued to press military sympathisers to stage a coup. At the same time, there was compelling evidence to suggest that the party was involved in the organisation of right-wing terrorist groups. In addition, the FAR claimed that the MLN was recruiting mercenaries in the north-east and planning to stage a new liberación from Honduras.

By September 1966, the CIA was reporting that many senior officers were 'approaching the point of no return with the

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89 DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala - A Current Appraisal', 8.10.66.

90 Ibid.; Prensa Libre, 20.8.66.

91 See, for example, Turciós Lima, 'Nuestras Tareas Fundamentales', p.97; Gabriel Salazar, 'Nueva carta de las FAR; alude a problemas y soluciones y al MLN', Prensa Libre, 15.9.66.
The appointment of exiled Communist novelist and Nobel prize winner, Miguel Angel Asturias, to the post of Ambassador to France had fuelled suspicions of Méndez Montenegro and the PR, while prominent officer Colonel Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez argued that former guerrillas were securing high-level positions in the government. To some extent the threat of a coup reflected the level of dissatisfaction within the military institution itself. It has been suggested that Arriaga Bosque's appointment as Minister of Defence had not been universally popular within the military institution. According to General Gramajo Morales, the new Defence Minister had been selected over Peralta's preferred successor - Colonel Carlos Vielman. While this interpretation implies that Méndez Montenegro had some choice in the matter - in contrast to the standard version of events - it seems that this appointment had sparked resentment among other influential high-ranking officers who coveted the position. In addition, Arriaga Bosque's

92 DDRS CIA 003059, Special Memorandum, 'The Danger of a Military Coup in Guatemala', 28.9.66. Two officers and a colonel had been arrested for conspiracy against the government on 13 September: Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.243.

93 Elian Dario Acuña, Treasurer General of the Nation, was reportedly a member of the communist youth group, JPT. Carlos Toledo, Secretary General of the FASGUA-affiliated Guatemala City Bus Drivers' Union (SPAS), had been appointed alternate to the labour representative on the Council of State: DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala - A Current Appraisal', 8.10.66.

94 General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94.

95 DDRS CIA 003061, 'Guatemala - a Current Appraisal', Intelligence Memorandum, notes that 'Mendez mollified opponents by appointing Col. Arriaga, a highly respected officer...'; see also, McClintock, The American Connection, p.79.

96 Including Colonels Callejas Soto and Sosa Avila. Vice-Minister of Defence and Second vice-Minister of Defence respectively, Callejas coordinated an abortive
subsequent personnel changes and his attempts to remain within the military budget had increased unease amongst younger military officers and contributed to a sense that their career prospects were no longer guaranteed.97

In the context of an intensification of guerrilla attacks against liberacionista and military targets during August—and urged on by MLN complotistas—this 'young turk' element became increasingly frustrated with the lack of high command action against the insurgents.98 Finally, the characteristically provocative writings of Marroquin Rojas in *La Hora* should also be considered. While the Vice-President had alarmed right-wing elements in the run-up to the March elections by suggesting that there should be negotiations with the guerrillas, he continued to berate the military for its failure to defeat the insurgency and implied a split between officers planning counterinsurgency operations in the capital and those actually involved in

attempt to remove Méndez Montenegro in November 1966, while Sosa Avila had been strategically deprived of direct troop command with his 'promotion' from Navy Commander in an effort to neutralise him. *Ibid.;* Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94; Gramajo Morales, *De la Guerra,* p.243.

97 General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94; Gramajo Morales, *De la Guerra,* pp.242-244; DDRS CIA 003059, Office of National Estimates, Special Memorandum, 28.9.66. Measures included cutting allowances of officers and certain offices and units, including their operational funds. The latter document notes that the military budget 'had been depleted by use of half a million dollars for additional security forces in the tense pre-inaugural period'. Several officers were also forced into retirement as a result of Peralta Azurdia's measures to weed out remaining line officers: Decree Law 55, 'Ley de Jubilaciones, Pensiones y Montepios en el Ejército', 26.6.63, *Recopilación de Leyes,* p.65, Vol.82.

98 A nascent plan to have Arriaga Bosque removed from office led to the arrest of three officers in mid-September 1966 and the dismissal of another three. DDRS CIA 0030661, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala - A Current Appraisal', 8.10.66; Gramajo Morales, *De la Guerra,* p.243.
the fighting in the mountains. Playing upon military anxieties, Marroquin Rojas' references to the traditional cleavage between line and academy officers also revived an older but enduring military crisis of identity.

Pero he aquí una confesión mia, como Vicepresidente de la República: Confieso que sospecho que el Ejército de Guatemala no quiere pelear; que no ha querido pelear desde hace tres años. De lo contrario, las FAR ya no existieran...Yo, de gobernante, ya habría dado un plazo de tres meses al ejército para que dilucidara la situación: o hay paz en el país con la victoria del Ejército, o hay comunismo con la victoria de las FAR; pero no admitiría este gallo gallina en que vivimos...Y aseguro que si el Ejército actual, todo de escuela, no peleaba, lo disolvería y formaría uno nuevo con oficiales y soldados de caite, para ver si éste realizaba lo que no se ha querido realizar...

The declaration of a State of Siege on 3 November 1966 confirmed that if there had ever been a real possibility of a negotiated end to the guerrilla challenge, it had

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99 General Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94, has argued that Marroquin Rojas was the ideologue behind the fictitious 'Oficiales de la Montaña' who were in reality right-wing civilians attempting to discredit the new government: see also, Gramajo Morales, De la Guerra, p.244.

100 The confrontation between Arbenz and Francisco Arana has been characterised as deriving from tensions between academy and line officers. In August 1954, the uprising of Escuela Politécnica cadets resulted in the temporary closure of that institution by Castillo Armas. Following the November 1960 military rebellion, Ydigoras Fuentes was said to distrust academy officers to such an extent that he sent line officers in command of senior politécnica graduates in actions against the early guerrilla focos: Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94.

101 Marroquin Rojas, 'Es inexplicable el proceso de nuestra politica', La Hora, 14.9.66; see also Marroquin Rojas, 'La Falta de Armonia entre Dos Funcionarios!', La Hora, 10.12.73.
passed. Apparently a response to the FAR's attack on the United States-owned electricity plant at Amatitlán, it was also directed at right-wing terrorists responsible for a wave of bombings in the capital during the previous six weeks. In addition to the seizure of the printing press of the left-wing publication *El Estudiante*, several prominent members of the MLN were arrested.

The following months saw a fierce counter-insurgency campaign in the north-east of the country in which the commander of the Zacapa military base, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio, played a crucial part. Local campesinos were corralled into anti-guerrilla demonstrations and bore the brunt of army manoeuvres and death squad operations. A targeted programme of military civic action in tandem with the much-heralded 'Pilot plan for the socio-economic development of the north-east' drilled wells and fed schoolchildren. Peasant support for the insurgents fell away. By the end of 1967, the guerrillas had been all but

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103 *New York Times*, 4.11.66; *Prensa Libre*, 3.11.66: MLN deputies had failed in their attempt to amend the wording of the decree ratifying the state of siege to specify seditious groups 'of communist tendency': ibid., 4.11.66.

104 Most were released a month later after talks with the President: Mario Sandoval Alarcón, interview, Guatemala City, 31.8.94; *Prensa Libre*, 4.11.66; *New York Times*, 4.11.66; Fortuny, *Political Situation*, p.32.

105 Colonel Arana stood for president on the joint MLN-PID ticket in 1970 and won a plurality.

106 A series of these 'demonstrations' in support of the government and the military and repudiating 'subversive elements' took place in the north-east and in parts of the 'Indian' highlands between the end of 1966 and early 1967. Mario Fuentes Pierrucini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94, argued that they were a means to reassure the military that the government had popular support; see also, *Prensa Libre*, 24.11.66, 25.11.66, 20.12.66, 24.1.67; *El Gráfico*, 20.12.66, 16.2.67.
destroyed at their rural base:

[T]he success of President MM in dealing with rural and urban insurgency in Guatemala during the past 8 months...shows what a democratic, popular government can do when it is determined to take firm action...the attitude of MM has facilitated our providing equipment, training [blank] to the military and police which has helped them ferret out the guerrillas and terrorists. 107

Michael McClintock has argued that United States security assistance was central in shaping the war against insurgency in Guatemala. 108 Bearing the hallmarks of similar US-directed projects, claims that United States personnel were directly involved in counterinsurgency were commonplace. Most frequently cited is the assertion that up to 1,000 Green Berets were operating on Guatemalan territory during this period, 109 together with claims by Marroquin Rojas that United States pilots flew on roundtrips from the Panama Canal Zone to drop napalm on suspected guerrilla encampments. 110 Both the US Embassy

107 LBJL WH, Memorandum to President from W Rostow, 11.7.67.

108 McClintock, The American Connection, pp.102-109. Prensa Libre, 10.11.67, gives an indication of the kind of aid the Guatemalan military was receiving openly via the US Military Aid Program (MAP): 3 UH-IH helicopters, 5 M113 armoured cars, 4 jeeps, 2 troop carriers; see also Revista Militar, Oct.-Dic., Vol.58, p.77-80; Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, 'Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala', Latin American Perspectives, 25/26 (Spring and Summer 1980), p.98.

109 This figure appears to originate in an article by Georgie Ann Geyer in the Chicago Daily News, 12.1.66, and is regularly quoted in the literature: see also, Prensa Libre, 14.12.66; Galeano, Guatemala, pp.82-93. In October 1968, bombs were dismantled in two cinemas showing the film 'Green Berets' starring John Wayne: Prensa Libre, 31.10.68.

110 Galeano, Guatemala: Clave, p.81; see also, testimony by guerrilla Leónidas Reyes, in Cáceres, Aproximación a Guatemala, p.168; editorial, 'Ante la más Negra Encrucijada', No Nos Tientes (1969), reproduced in
and the Guatemalan government were quick to deny the former allegation, with the Interior Minister adding that the government would never accept such foreign intervention in national issues and the Defence Minister arguing that the Guatemalan military was perfectly capable of fighting subversion without external aid.\footnote{111}

The involvement and exact numbers of United States personnel in direct combat remain difficult to verify - and have always been officially denied.\footnote{112} However, mobile training teams were sent to Guatemala for counterinsurgency purposes - advisory or otherwise - and the US Military Mission in Guatemala is known to have comprised more than 30 members.\footnote{113} The 'hearts and minds'-style strategy of infrastructural and socio-economic programmes in the core area of guerrilla activity which accompanied the military offensive has been seen as further evidence of United States involvement.\footnote{114} The origins of the death squads

\footnote{111} The US Embassy issued an official denial regarding the allegations in the Chicago Daily News, 14.12.66: Prensa Libre, 14.12.66. Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94, also denies this aspect of US aid; equally predictably ex-guerrilla leader César Montes, interview, San Salvador, insists on the veracity of the story. Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94, refused to comment apart from to say that his government had received no special aid from the US government itself.

\footnote{112} McClintock, The American Connection, pp.102-106.

\footnote{113} United States Air Force Operations Advisor Major Bernard Westfall died when he crashed the Guatemalan Air Force T-33 jet he was piloting on a 'trial flight' to Escuintla - one of 28 deaths of North American officials in Guatemala between 1966 and 1972: ibid.; New York Times, 16.6.68; Prensa Libre, 27.9.67.

\footnote{114} LASA, Ad Hoc Committee on Guatemala Report, 15.4.73, p.7; Jonas and Tobis, Guatemala, p.118. Méndez Montenegro's announcement of the 'pilot plan for the socio-economic development of the north-east' in December 1966 was followed by USAID's counterpart loan to finance the
that appeared during this period have similarly attributed to United States guidance and support, and the January 1968 assassination of two members of the US Military Mission was justified by the FAR on these grounds.

Había...una misión norteamericana, un grupo militar muy fuerte, muy poderoso aquí en Guatemala y algunas de las políticas contrainsurgentes que se llevaron a cabo estaban inspiradas o estimuladas por este grupo militar...de operaciones, de logística, de lo que después fue asuntos civiles que en ese entonces era acción cívica, los norteamericanos nos dieron los indicativos, cómo actuar...la Constitución prohibía la existencia de grupos armados que no fueran del ejército. Entonces creo yo que estos grupos fueron, por lo menos, estimulados por los norteamericanos.

Clandestine counterinsurgency operations during the Méndez Montenegro regime were both urban and rural and involved a complex coalition of military and civilian project: Prensa Libre, 16.12.66, 7.4.67. The Plan Piloto involved the participation of several state ministries and agencies under the coordination of the Military Public Relations Chief and the Commander of the Zacapa military base, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio. The Guatemalan Government was to provide Q257,400; USAID, Q280,000: ibid.

Agiulera Peralta et al, Dialéctica del Terror en Guatemala, p.115; 'Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos', La Violencia en Guatemala, p.33; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.311; Jonas Bodenheimer, Plan Piloto, p.348; McClintock, The American Connection, p.86.

Col. John D. Webber Jr., Commander of the US Military Advisory Group, and Lt-Cmdr Ernest A. Munro, Head of U.S Naval Section, were assassinated on 16 January 1968, apparently in revenge for the death squad killing of ex-beauty queen Rogelia Cruz Martínez. The former official had reportedly claimed to have suggested the establishment of death squads as part of the counter-terror operations: Time, 26.1.68; Prensa Libre, 17.1.68; New York Times, 17.1.68.

Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94.
elements.\(^{118}\) Many of the groups which announced their existence through the publication of death lists and 'advice' to government policy makers were in fact phantom creations of the military, but this was not exclusively the case.\(^{119}\) In particular, the Movimiento anticomunista nacional organizado (MANO)\(^{120}\) - the first such group to appear - is generally agreed to have been formed by civilian extremists with close links to both the MLN and the military.\(^{121}\) During 1967, MANO leaders 'fell into [military] disfavor', after having worked for a time in league with the army's 'Special Commando Unit' in the

\(^{118}\) Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94, claimed he did not believe that the 'armed groups' were linked to the military; Aguilera Peralta, 'Terror and Violence', pp.98, 112-3, argues that at the height of the violence some 23 paramilitary organisations were operating, some of them linked to state security forces and others by the right.

\(^{119}\) DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counterinsurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67: this document identified NOA, CADEG, CRAG and RAYO, as examples of 'anti-communist front organisations' for clandestine army counter-insurgency activities. MANO leader, Raul Lorenzana, claimed that together with MANO, Nueva Organización Comunista (NOA) was a genuine organisation: El Gráfico, 23.3.68; see also, Aguilera Peralta et al, Dialéctica del Terror, pp.123-147; 'Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos', La Violencia en Guatemala.

\(^{120}\) Also known as Mano Blanca, the organisation's symbol was a white hand against a red circle outlined in black.

\(^{121}\) PR Secretary General Alberto Méndez Martinez described MANO as a terrorist organisation in which liberacionista elements operated: Prensa Libre, 15.11.66. According to the CIA in October 1966, the MLN organised MANO as well as CRAG and the National Resistance Front. A later document stated MANO was 'taken over by the military': DDRS CIA 003061, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.10.66; DDRS CIA 003023, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.11.68; see also, DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counterinsurgency Running Wild?' 23.10.67; Goulden, 'Guatemala: Terror in Silence', The Nation, 22.3.71, p.366; Goulden, 'Guatemala: A Democracy Falters'; Jonas, Battle For Guatemala, p.62; McClintock, The American Connection, p.85.
capital.\textsuperscript{122} An April 1967 communique from MANO indicated competition between itself and the Nueva Organisación Anticomunista (NOA).\textsuperscript{123} In addition, members of the Fourth Corps of the National Police were reportedly responsible for the murder of Jorge 'huevo loco' Córdova Molina, one of MANO's principal leaders and ex-chief of judicial police under Ydigoras Fuentes.\textsuperscript{124} MANO was also intimately involved in the kidnapping of Archbishop Casariego in March 1968, a conspiracy which precipitated the removal from office of the Defense Minister and other high-ranking military officers.

In addition to its links with the urban counter-terror network, the MLN was also deeply implicated in the organisation of civilian armed groups in the north-east.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122} DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counterinsurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67. The 'Special Commando Unit' - the centre of the army's clandestine urban counter-terrorist apparatus - was headed by Colonel Máximo Zepeda, acting under orders from Defence Minister Arriaga Bosque. The unit also collaborated with the Fourth Corps of the National Police: \textit{ibid.} According to the 'Comité de Defensa de Derechos Humanos', \textit{La Violencia en Guatemala}, pp.44-5, Colonel Zepeda headed NOA.

\textsuperscript{123} MANO accused NOA of 'altaneria y bravuconeria' in claiming responsibility for the killing of three 'bandidos guerrilleros': MANO bulletin, 2.4.67, reproduced in CIDOC, \textit{Guatemala La Violencia}, Dossier No.21, p.4/282.

\textsuperscript{124} DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counterinsurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67.

\textsuperscript{125} DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counter-insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67. Edelberto Torres Rivas, 'Authoritarian Transition to Democracy in Central America', in Jan Flora and Edelberto Torres Rivas (eds.), \textit{Sociology of 'Developing Societies: Central America} (London, 1989), p.197, argues that paramilitarism has historically had a peasant base in Central America beginning with the Nicaraguan jueces de mesta and the Guatemalan military commissioner system both established in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the 1960s in El Salvador with the formation of the mass peasant organisation ORDEN under the auspices of the National Guard; see also, Jenny Pearce, \textit{Promised Land. Peasant Rebellion in Chalatenango El Salvador} (London, 1986) pp.89-
El movimiento antiguerrillero adopta este sistema. La lucha armada en la zona nor-oriente del país entra en una fase de suma violencia. Se empieza a combatir la violencia con violencia y el terror con terror. Ahora, ya que se sabe quienes son los colaboradores de la guerrilla, se los busca directamente y se los liquida implacablemente.126

Initially believed to be preparations for a new liberación-style invasion, in September 1966 the FAR had denounced MLN activities in the region and accused the party of seeking logistical and financial support from Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.127 These groups became part of the rural counterinsurgency apparatus, armed and organised in large part by the Zacapa military commander, Arana Osorio. Its backbone was the local military commissioner network - most of whom belonged to the MLN and recruited amongst its supporters.128 In 1967, the army claimed to have some 1,800 armed civilians under its control, although the State Department observed that other groups were also known to operate 'semi-independently' in the region.129


126 'La guerrilla y anti-guerrilla en Guatemala', May 1967, mimeo, reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala La Violencia, pp.4/2-4/19, p.4/16. This document was said to be the work of the MLN: 'Comité Guatemalteco de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos', 'Terror en Guatemala!', 31.7.67, mimeo, reproduced in ibid., pp.5/2-5/27, p.5/23.

127 This threat was apparently taken seriously by the government and there were diplomatic consultations on the matter with Presidents Rivera and López Arellano: Prensa Libre, 26.8.66, 12.9.66; New York Times, 9.11.66, 13.11.66; see also, Goulden, 'Guatemala: a Democracy Falters', p.18.

128 DDRS CIA 003023, Intelligence Memorandum 2051/68, 8.11.68; DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counter-insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67.

129 DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counter-insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67.
Noting the success of 'a combination of overt and covert operations by the Guatemalan security forces and right-wing civilian associates and auxiliaries to stamp out the insurgents' in October 1967, the State Department also expressed its concern that 'the counter-insurgency machine is out of control'.\textsuperscript{130} Victims of the counter-terror during the previous twelve months were 'roughly' estimated at between 1,000 to 1,200:\textsuperscript{131}

In addition to "known" communists and communist sympathisers, the clandestine counter-insurgency groups (both urban and rural) have threatened and acted against an alarmingly broad range of Guatemalans of all social sectors and political persuasions. Labor leaders, businessmen, students and intellectuals, government officials, and politicians have all been included at various times on the "target lists" of the clandestine "anti-communist organisations".\textsuperscript{132}

The vulnerability of PR militants to death squad activities underlined the partisan quality of the violence and complicated any easy characterisation of the phenomenon. As a result, the counterinsurgency question became an increasingly divisive issue within the governing party itself. In January 1967, PR deputy Ed mundo López Durán declared that military commissioners in his Chiquimula constituency were acting in collusion with MANO against members of the governing party under the protection of State of Siege regulations.\textsuperscript{133} He was expelled from the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\bibitem{130} Ibid.
\bibitem{131} Ibid.
\bibitem{132} DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counter-Insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67.
\bibitem{133} El Gráfico, 3.2.67, 4.2.67, 7.2.67; La Hora, 3.2.67.
\end{thebibliography}
party in April for 'indiscipline'.\textsuperscript{134} In March, ten members of the local PR organisation in Sanarate, El Progreso, were dragged from their homes at gunpoint.\textsuperscript{135} PR deputy Marco Antonio Soto Betata was assassinated days after five PR deputies received death threats in May 1967, while the President of Congress privately admitted to US Embassy officials that all PR deputies had received threats.\textsuperscript{136}

The debate intensified in August 1967, when the PR leadership revealed that it had secretly approved the arming of civilians in the counterinsurgency war - 'but only in the north-eastern zone of the country, where it was necessary to combat the guerrillas'.\textsuperscript{137} With tortuous logic, Interior Minister Mansilla Pinto argued that this was not a question of arming individuals in their own right since they had been incorporated into the security forces - thus they were not really civilians at all, but militares 'dressed as civilians'.\textsuperscript{138} As Marroquin Rojas observed, this was a disturbing admission with serious implications for the PR and the government:

\textsuperscript{134} As a member of the Congressional Committee required to ratify a further extension to the State of Siege, López Durán had refused to put his name to the decree: \textit{Prensa Libre}, 6.4.67.

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 1.4.67. Interior Minister Mansilla Pinto confirmed that of eleven disappeared in Sansarate, four were PR activists and claimed that either MANO or NOA were responsible. MANO denied responsibility and accused the police: \textit{Prensa Libre}, 4.4.67.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 24.5.67, 31.5.67; DDRS DOS 003262, Hughes to The Secretary, 'Guatemala: A Counter-insurgency Running Wild?', Intelligence Note 843, 23.10.67.

\textsuperscript{137} Professor Rafael Pantoja, Director PR political training, Mansilla Pinto, Interior Minister, \textit{Prensa Libre}, 26.8.67. The latter had previously denied rumours of such groups, as had the military's public relations office: \textit{Prensa Libre}, 12.7.67.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Prensa Libre}, 26.8.67, 30.8.67.
Decir esto, es aceptar que los muertos que han aparecido en los caminos, comidos de los perros y de los zopilotes, son obra de esos grupos...la afirmación es gravísima...ya que no sólo se acusa al Ejército de esa práctica, sino que se hace solidario de ella al PR, precisamente, cuando la mayoría de los caídos son gente del PR.  

The united front which had been tenuously achieved within the PR leadership around the question of armed civilians began to fragment in early March 1968. In terms almost identical to López Durán's previous denuncia, PR Secretary-General Alberto Méndez Martínez declared that clandestine groups were using the continuing State of Alarm to kidnap and murder elements of the PR. The potential confrontation between the PR and the Executive was halted by the FAR's rocket attack on two security forces targets in Guatemala City, but may have contributed to Méndez Montenegro's move against members of the military high command at the end of March.

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139 Clemente Marroquin Rojas, 'Las Declaraciones del PR', La Hora, 26.8.67. Ever eager to embarrass Méndez Montenegro and the government, it is also worth noting that the vice-President was rumoured to be a MANO supporter: see, for example La Hora, 29.11.67.

140 Prensa Libre, 6.3.68; El Gráfico, 6.3.68; New York Times, 9.3.68. Interestingly, MLN deputies also opposed the extension of the State of Alarm, arguing that it restricted political activities: Prensa Libre, 18.3.68.

141 Prensa Libre, 14.3.68.
The Civilian 'Golpe' of March 1968

Whether dismayed by his poor public image, or driven to political courage by the desperate need to end the bloodshed, or angered by some specific outrage such as the kidnapping of the archbishop, Mendez acted without warning and 'exiled' those responsible for the counterterrorism by sending them to posts abroad.142

...hace un año planteamos categoricamente que...el ciudadano presidente de la republica...debia romper las cadenas y disponerse a gobernar con sentido exclusivo de ese mismo pueblo que le habia elegido. Y ese aspecto dificil que requeria valor pragmático, firme habilidad, integridad y consecuencia...ha sido por fin cumplido...decidió consolidar el régimen de Derecho emperante, y a fianzar la paz y la institucionalidad del país de conformidad con los fundamentos constitucionales...143

In an unprecedented move with potentially explosive implications, on 28 March 1968 Méndez Montenegro dismissed his Defence Minister Colonel Rafael Arriaga Bosque, together with the Commander of the Zacapa military base, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio and the Director of National Police, Colonel Manuel Sosa Avila.144 Explained as routine

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142 DDRS CIA 003063, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala after the Military Shakeup', 13.5.68.

143 Jaime Monge Donis, Second Secretary of CONTRAGUA, El Gráfico, 5.5.68.

144 Méndez Montenegro's later accounts name 'Chief' of Army General Staff Colonel Kjell Laugerud (in fact he was 2nd-Chief of Army General Staff) - and not Sosa Avila - as the third key figure removed. According to the ex-President, Laugerud's name does not appear in contemporaneous reports of the changes because he was moved a few days later: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94; Prensa Libre, 29.3.68; El Gráfico, 29.3.68, 15.12.85; New York Times, 30.3.68. Arriaga Bosque was designated Consul General in Miami, Arana Osorio, Ambassador to Nicaragua, and Sosa Avila, military attaché to the Guatemalan Embassy in Spain. Laugerud was sent to Washington as military attaché:
democratic practice, the immediate context for these military changes was the kidnapping of Archbishop Casariego on 16 March. An abortive attempt by the extreme right to force Méndez Montenegro’s resignation, the kidnappers threatened to kill the Archbishop if the President did not stand down.

Any intention to present the outrage as the work of the guerrillas was thwarted by rapid denials from both the PGT and the FAR, while the expected protests and unrest failed to materialise. Speculation as to the extent of police and military involvement was heightened by a MANO communique giving details of the affair and appeared to be confirmed by subsequent events. In addition, the deed unleashed a series of scandals. A warrant was issued for the arrest of ex-President Ydígoras Fuentes’ crony, landowner Roberto Alejos Arzú, for his alleged involvement in the conspiracy, and there were also allegations about the role in the affair played by Vice-President Marroquin

Prensa Libre, 4.4.68; El Gráfico, 15.12.85; McClintock, The American Connection, p.95.

145 Méndez Montenegro address to nation, Prensa Libre, 6.4.68; Prensa Libre, 8.4.68.

146 This ultimatum was not made public at the time: Prensa Libre, 25.3.68; Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written response, 31.1.94.

147 Handy, Gift of the Devil, p.163; McClintock, The American Connection, p.95. Prensa Libre, 18.3.68, reported receiving separate denials from the PGT and the FAR.

148 La Hora, 22.3.68.

149 El Gráfico, 27.3.68. General Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94, has stated that the kidnapping was carried out by the extreme right with the consent of the military hierarchy and the connivance of the Archbishop himself.
Rojas himself. 150

It is possible that plans for a military overhaul were already underway before Casariego's abduction and that the action represented a preemptive strike. In particular, a document purporting to be the transcript of a conversation between the Archbishop and his principal kidnapper, MANO leader Raúl Lorenzana, suggests that the prelate had been party to a scheme to remove Arriaga Bosque and Arana Osorio from office. 151 While McClintock has emphasised Casariego's 'extremely conservative views', it is worth noting that the Archbishop had infuriated ultramontane elements with his calls for a civic dialogue to end the violence and his clear condemnation of death squad activity. 152

150 Formally censured by PR deputies in Congress for his 'reprehensible behaviour' during the affair - the question of his actual involvement was avoided - the Vice-President washed his hands of the PR and went on to promote MLN presidential candidate Colonel Arana Osorio for the 1970 elections: Prensa Libre, 27.3.68; El Gráfico, 28.3.68; Mario Fuentes Pierrucini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94; Isidoro Zarco, Prensa Libre, 26.3.68; Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 26.3.68. Méndez Montenegro refused to discuss any aspect of his uncomfortable relationship with Marroquin Rojas: Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written response, 31.1.94; interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94.

151 Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, La Violencia en Guatemala, pp.187-194. This account contradicts suggestions that Casariego conspired in his own abduction, it is interesting to note the publication in Prensa Libre, 22.3.68, of a photograph in which the Archbishop appears in friendly conversation with one Roberto Alejos Arzú - at the time supposedly facing a warrant for arrest for his involvement in the conspiracy. The photographer responsible was dismissed from the Presidential Public Relations Office: Prensa Libre, 29.3.68; General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94; Marroquin Rojas, La Hora, 23.3.68; McClintock, The American Connection, p.95.

152 Archbishop Casariego, Prensa Libre, 10,5.67, 20.2.68; Raúl Lorenzana, interview, El Gráfico, 13.5.67; ibid., 23.3.68; Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, La Violencia en Guatemala, pp.187-194; New York Times, 22.3.68; McClintock, The American Connection, p.95.
With regard to United States involvement in any such plan, documents show that there was considerable concern within the State Department about the levels of counterinsurgency violence in Guatemala at this stage and suggest that there would have been at least tacit support for Méndez Montenegro's actions.\textsuperscript{153} Whether or not plans had already been laid for the military reshuffle, the sequence of events moved very swiftly following the Archbishop's release on 20 March. The reappearance of some half a dozen missing students - abducted from the University of San Carlos campus on 21 March - coincided with the announcement of the military changes and tended to confirm the impression that the President had finally decided to act to curb death squad activities.\textsuperscript{154}

Given Méndez Montenegro's weakness in relation to the armed forces, his action appears particularly impressive. Moreover, he was directly challenging the terms of the 'secret pact' of March 1966.\textsuperscript{155} At the same time, however, CIA sources noted that the 'exiled' commanders had resisted pressure from their followers to retaliate - 'unwilling to risk an open split in the armed forces',\textsuperscript{156} - and it seems

\textsuperscript{153} DDRS DOS 003262, 'Guatemala: A Counter-insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67. The CIA remained uncertain as to what exactly had prompted Méndez Montenegro's move: DDRS CIA 003023, Intelligence Memorandum, 'The Military and the Right in Guatemala', 8.11.66.

\textsuperscript{154} Prensa Libre, 25.3.68, 26.3.68, 27.3.68, 29.3.68; El Gráfico, 26.3.68, 27.3.68; La Hora, 29.3.68: Casariego subsequently refused to speak publicly about his ordeal apart from to say that he forgave his kidnappers.

\textsuperscript{155} His later claims that this move definitively ended his compact with the military have been tempered more recently by his acknowledgement that executive control over the institution remained incomplete: 'Confesiones de un expresidente', El Gráfico, 15.12.85; Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written communication, 31.1.94; interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94.

\textsuperscript{156} DDRS CIA 003063, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala after the Military Shakeup', 13.5.68.
clear that the President required the considerable support of other powerful senior officers in order to remain in office. According to respondents, these figures included Colonel Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez -Commander of the important Mariscal Zavala army base in the capital and an erstwhile opponent of the Méndez Montenegro succession in March 1966 - together with Air Force Commander Colonel Doroteo Monterroso Miranda and Colonel Guillermo Méndez Montenegro. The 'civilian golpe' therefore suggested less a shift in the military-civilian balance of forces than shifting alliances within the military establishment itself.

Unravelling the internal workings of the Guatemalan military is a notoriously difficult task and the precise details of these events remain opaque. However, in considering possible motives for continued military support for the President at this stage, institutional concerns can be assumed to have played an important part. In the first place - as has already been noted - Arriaga Bosque was not a popular officer. According to General Gramajo Morales, his appointment as Defence Minister had generated tensions within the institution which had been suppressed rather than resolved. In addition, Arriaga Bosque, Arana Osorio and Sosa Avila had become clearly associated in the public consciousness with the clandestine terror network.

157 General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94; Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94; Julio César Méndez Montenegro, interview, Guatemala City, 18.11.94. General Cifuentes Méndez refused to confirm his role in the events. General Enrique Daniel Cifuentes Méndez, interview, 4.11.94.

158 General Héctor Gramajo Morales, interview, Guatemala City, 31.10.94.

159 New York Times, 30.3.68; Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 3.8.68; DDRS DOS 003262, Intelligence Note 843, 'Guatemala: A Counter-Insurgency Running Wild?', 23.10.67; Comité de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, La Violencia en Guatemala,
There is also some suggestion that the Defense Minister and the Zacapa commander were competing between themselves for control of the dirty war. While this kind of conflict would have generated alarm signals within the military establishment, the attempt to unseat Méndez Montenegro with the abduction of Archbishop Casariego may have proved one outrage too many for the military 'institutionalists'.

A further consideration was the military defeat of the guerrillas in the north-east and the perception that there was little inherent risk in moving against Arana at this stage. In this respect, the public unification of the MR-13 and FAR in February 1968 signalled the movement's weakness rather than its strength and coincided with the separation of the latter from the PGT in a rupture which had been pending since 1964. The separate declarations issued on behalf of the FAR by Pablo Monsanto and Camilo Sánchez on the one hand, and by César Montes on the other, indicated the extent of disarray within the guerrilla leadership itself.

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160 Comité Central del Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT), 'Orientaciones para impulsar la lucha revolucionaria en la actual situación política', 2.7.67, reproduced in CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia, Dossier No.21, pp.4/266-4/267.


Finally, Méndez Montenegro's restoration of the military rank of General in September 1968 should also be noted. Unofficially discarded since the October 1944 as a punitive measure against senior officers who had supported Ubico, the rank of General was again bestowed on five colonels in a ceremony that also marked the new Ley Constitutiva del Ejército de Guatemala of 5 September 1968. 163

Significantly, the beneficiaries of what the President termed 'an act of justice for the armed institution' 164 included the new Defence Minister Rolando Chinchilla Aguilar, together with Colonels Cifuentes Méndez and Monterroso Miranda - central figures in upholding the President's earlier actions against Arriaga Bosque, Arana Osorio and Sosa Avila. 165

A period of relative calm followed the events of March 1968, although the State of Alarm was not lifted until June. Sources at the Supreme Court recorded a reduction in 'subversive acts' immediately following the kidnapping of

For an outline of the 'fractionalist intrigue' within the revolutionary movement which eventually led to the expulsion of César Montes from the FAR see Debray, The Revolution on Trial, pp.320-36.

163 A copy of which was presented by the President to the newly-promoted Defence Minister, General Rolando Chinchilla Aguilar: Prensa Libre, 16.9.68; 'Ley Constitutiva del Ejército de Guatemala', Congressional Decree 1782, 5.9.68, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.88, p.159.

164 Méndez Montenegro cited in Prensa Libre, 16.9.68.

165 The other recipients were Doroteo Reyes Santa Cruz - who later became Minister of Defence - and Manuel Arturo Girón Natareno: Congressional Decree 1789, 12.9.68, Recopilación de Leyes, Vol.88, p.77; Prensa Libre, 16.9.68, 17.9.68; Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94; Gramajo Morales, Liderazgo Militar y el Futuro del Ejército de Guatemala, (Guatemala, 1990), pp.53-54.
the Archbishop.\textsuperscript{166} This respite gave added weight to the already considerable evidence against the officers in question and their involvement in coordinating the counter-terror, yet the longer-term benefits of their removal from office were limited. Colonel Sosa Avila returned to Guatemala in June 1969 to the post of Interior Minister, while Arana Osorio emerged as the winning candidate for the MLN/PID coalition in the March 1970 presidential elections.\textsuperscript{167} Moreover, the right reportedly viewed new Defence Minister Chinchilla Aguilar with suspicion, interpreting his call to all Guatemalans to lay down their arms as 'an unwarranted - perhaps traitorous - accommodation of the left'.\textsuperscript{168} By May 1968, junior officers were expressing a similar lack of confidence in the revised military command structure.\textsuperscript{169}

President Mendez' sudden dismissal of 3 key military officers...has given the Guatemalan people a president in fact as well as in name...Guatemalans of all political shades have interpreted Mendez' assertion of authority as the end of the armed forces' constriction on civilian rule.\textsuperscript{170}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{footnote}{166} In contrast to the daily minimum of five writs of habeus corpus issued by those seeking missing relatives, 3 April was the second consecutive day without a single writ being presented: \textit{Prensa Libre}, 4.4.68. \end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}{167} Colonel Kjell Laugerud became President in 1974 after blatant fraud and military pressure stole the elections from the Christian Democrats and convinced their candidate, Colonel Efrain Rios Montt to accept the Guatemalan Ambassadorship to Spain. Significantly, Colonel Arriaga Bosque was not rehabilitated. He was assassinated on 7 September 1977. Colonel Sosa Avila was assassinated on 1 April 1985. \end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}{168} DDRS CIA 003063, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala after the Military Shakeup', 13.5.68; Chinchilla Aguilar, address to nation, \textit{Prensa Libre}, 30.3.68. \end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}{169} DDRS CIA 003063, Intelligence Memorandum, 'Guatemala after the Military Shakeup', 13.5.68. \end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}{170} Ibid. \end{footnote}
\end{footnotesize}
Expectations that Méndez Montenegro's assertion of civilian power would allow him to move forward on the socio-economic remained unfulfilled, while recrudescent violence in the north-east in the second half of 1968 revived the unresolved issue of the civilian militias in this region. In the context of municipal elections in August, Alberto Méndez Martínez again claimed that PR sympathisers in particular were suffering harassment and death at the hands of paramilitary forces, and accused the military of exerting pressure on voters in the region.171 A central factor underlying this pressure was the realisation that the MLN's power-base in the north-east represented a significant threat to the chances of a PR victory in the 1970 elections:172

El PR demanda del gobierno la desaparición de los grupos clandestinos que operan en el noroeste de la república, pues se han convertido en bandas de asesinos... Tomando en cuenta que el propio gobierno ha declarado que ya no existen guerrilleros en aquel sector del país y que la constitución de la república prohíbe el funcionamiento de milicias ajenas a la institución armada, el PR demanda de los autoridades civiles y militares la desaparición de tales grupos.173

The assassination of United States Ambassador John Gordon


172 The MLN was also estimated to have the support of most of the 3,000-5,000 regional military commissioners, DDRS CIA 003023, Intelligence Memorandum, 8.11.68.

173 Alberto Méndez Martínez, Prensa Libre, 17.8.68. The militias were quietly disbanded in October 1968, while a subsequent newspaper report noted that finqueros were now permitted to run their own private armies to protect their property: DDRS CIA 003023, Intelligence Memorandum, 'The Military and the Right in Guatemala', 8.11.68; La Hora, 2.4.69.
Mein by FAR forces on 28 August 1968 effectively ended any remaining appearance of tranquility. Decimated at their rural base and retreating to the relative safety of the city, the displaced guerrillas demonstrated their continuing capacity for spectacular assaults in the capital. However, Mein's assassination did not appear to be part of an overall strategy to regain lost ground. Indeed, as the FAR subsequently admitted, the attack was an abortive kidnap attempt - an improvised response to the arrest of guerrilla leader Camilo Sánchez intended to pressure for his release. In fact, he had already been executed.

Effectively in command of FAR operations since the end of 1967, Camilo Sánchez had been the prime instigator of the split with the PGT and the rejection of political negotiation for a purely military strategy:

...unos pequeñoburgueses...nos han empujado a probar si la lucha revolucionaria puede vencer, sin que ellos se quemen los dedos, abandonándonos a nuestra suerte bajo el fuego enemigo, bajo las bombas norteamericanas, bajo la guaðana imperialista del exterminio, de la massacre, como lo hicieron en 1954 y como lo hacen en el presente cuando creen ver amenazada la supervivencia de su llamado Partido Guatemalteco

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174 Prensa Libre, 29.8.68, 30.8.68, 31.8.68. CACIF offered a Q10,000 reward for information leading the arrest of the assassins: La Hora, 6.9.68. Available US Government documents throw little light on the US response to the assassination, and comments are mainly confined to details available in the Guatemalan press. Mein was replaced as US Ambassador by Nathaniel Davis who was later US Ambassador to Chile at the time of the 1973 coup.

175 These included the kidnap of the Foreign Minister, Alberto Fuentes Mohr, was kidnapped on the eve of the March 1970 elections and the assassination of the German Ambassador, Count Von Spreti on 5 May 1970.

At the time of his death, his plan to open a new rural front in Alta Verapaz was disintegrating and the repression which followed Ambassador Mein's murder dealt a further blow to the organisation.\textsuperscript{178} A subsequent overhaul of the guerrilla leadership placed Pablo Monsanto at the head of the command structure, together with Androcles Hernández, Ramiro Díaz and Feliciano Argüeta.\textsuperscript{179} In September 1968, it was announced that César Montes had been demoted to the rank of 'private' for being an 'antirevolutionary opportunist', while Yon Sosa was reportedly removed from his position as Commander-in-Chief for 'treasonous and subversive' behaviour.\textsuperscript{180} Yon Sosa's open letter to El Imparcial in January 1969 confirmed his resignation from the FAR command and declared the latter dissolved.\textsuperscript{181}

To all intents and purposes, the first attempt to establish a rural guerrilla in Guatemala had been decisively defeated by the end of 1967. Fortified by US security assistance, the severity of the counterinsurgency offensive in the north-east of the country had been central to this collapse. The role played by the military-sponsored right-wing militias in the region had been particularly effective in this regard. Other factors must

\textsuperscript{177} 'Declaración de las FAR de Guatemala: el PGT ha Capitulado', p.78.
\textsuperscript{178} Debray, The Revolution on Trial, pp.332-4.
\textsuperscript{179} Yearbook on International Communist Affairs, (1969), p.398. Pablo Monsanto remains Commander of the FAR within the present URNG guerrilla alliance.
\textsuperscript{181} El Imparcial, 28.1.69, cited in ibid. MR-13 was resurrected and returned to the Izabal region led by Yon Sosa in alliance with Gabriel Salazar until his death in June 1970: Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.323.
also be taken into consideration in explaining the decline of the guerrillas at this stage. Not least of these was the palpable failure of the *foquista* assumption that a small and dedicated band of revolutionaries could create the conditions for revolution without first engaging in extensive political work among the local population. Associated with this problem was the fact that, notwithstanding claims of widespread support, the guerrillas were unable to sustain or defend their popular base from the devastating effects of the combined counterinsurgency effort ranged against them from the end of 1966.\(^\text{182}\) In addition, the revolutionary movement was constantly beset by ideological disputes, proved prone to infiltration and defections and continued to lack effective and coherent leadership.\(^\text{183}\)

A final consideration in the defeat of this first generation of Guatemalan guerrillas must be the challenge presented by the transition from *de facto* military rule to constitutional civilian government in July 1966. The existence of popularly-elected regimes in many Latin

\(^{182}\) While the FGEI/FAR had in fact begun to move away from a strict application of *foquismo* as early as 1965 and increasingly emphasised the Vietnamese model of prolonged popular war, the strategy was explicitly criticised by the second generation of Guatemalan revolutionaries which emerged in the 1970s. Nevertheless, guerrilla leader Mario Payeras identified an underlying adhesion to the foco theory as a continuing flaw which continued to undermine the guerrilla campaign of the 1980s: Mario Payeras, *Los Fusiles de Octubre*, pp.89-100; see also, Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, pp.452-3; 'Turcios Renuncia del 13', pp.49-50; César Montes, interview, San Salvador, 6.9.94.

\(^{183}\) The most notorious of these defectors were Salvador Orellana alias 'Gallo Giro' and Oliverio Castañeda, who later became an MLN deputy during the Arana government and was reportedly leader of the *Ojo por Ojo* death squad: Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 16.11.93; Debray, *The Revolution on Trial*, p.341; 'Un bosquejo histórico: Leónidas Reyes' in Cáceres, *Aproximación a Guatemala*, pp.166-7; see also PR election publicity, 'Pacto con las guerrillas! De Quién?', *Prensa Libre*, 14.8.69; *ibid*, 20.3.70.
American countries in the 1960s were an important factor in the failure of their rural guerrilla movements to seize power and contrasted sharply with the situation in Cuba in 1959.\(^{184}\) While the Méndez Montenegro regime did not have the kind of mass support of the Betancourt and Leoni governments in Venezuela, nor even that of Belaunde in Peru, there is no doubt that it had a certain popular legitimacy in its early stages.\(^{185}\) By the time that the limits to reform had become clear, the guerrillas were no longer a viable military force.

\(^{184}\) Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, p.178, has also pointed to the radicalism of the guerrilla movements in Guatemala and Venezuela in comparison to Castro's 'bourgeois-democratic' ideology and his emphasis on the illegality of the Batista dictatorship.

\(^{185}\) It is perhaps worth noting here Che Guevara's 1960 'democratic corollary' to his theory of guerrilla warfare, in which he argued that armed struggle should not be undertaken against a government that has come to power through some form of popular vote and maintains 'at least the appearance of constitutional legality', even though by 1963 this corollary had been discarded to incorporate Venezuela into the revolution: Ernesto Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1985) and 'Guerra de Guerrillas: Un Método, Cuba Socialista (Sept. 1963), both cited in Matt D. Childs enlightening article, 'An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory', Journal of Latin American Studies (27, 1995); see also, Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution, pp.166-70.
La sucesión presidencial fue absolutamente normal, al punto de que el Coronel Arana fue a despedirme al aeropuerto.

Introduction

The debate on the legacy of the Méndez Montenegro government was recently rekindled by the death of the ex-president on 28 April 1996. Thirty years after the 'Third Government of the Revolution' took office, the collective memory remains one of frustrated expectations and the 'betrayal' embodied in the pact with the military.2

Several factors combined to bring about the defeat of the Partido Revolucionario in the elections of 1 March 1970.3 In the first place, the party was faced with the new challenge of the Christian Democrats to its left, standing in coalition with the still unregistered Unidad Revolucionaria Democrática. While circumstances in 1966 had coalesced to permit a broad centre-left constituency for the PR, in 1970 this window of opportunity remained decisively closed. The violence which had accompanied Méndez Montenegro's term in office was evidently of central importance. Moreover, the reformist platform offered by the DCG (Frente nacional) after four years of PR administration, served to expose the empty rhetoric of the 'Third Government of the Revolution'.

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1 Julio César Méndez Montenegro, written response, Guatemala City, 31.1.94.

2 See, for example, Nancy Arroyave, 'El juicio de la historia. Julio César Méndez M.', Crónica, 10.5.96.

3 MLN-PID, 43.4 per cent; PR, 34.9 per cent; DCG (Frente nacional), 21.7 per cent: see Table 2, p.278.
Similarly, the PR was faced with a new situation to its right. In 1966, the MLN and the PID had been unable to form an alliance, largely because of differences over candidates and because the MLN had been reluctant to become part of a coalition in which peraltista elements would have predominated. The debate had also reflected differences within the military establishment, between reformist and hardline groupings, as well as the personal animosity between Peralta Azurdia and his erstwhile Chief of General Staff, Ponciano. While the events of March 1968 indicated that divisions remained, by 1970 there was little inclination to repeat the experience of 1966.

For the MLN, with a small but substantial base, unity on the right represented the only access to political power through constitutional means. Indeed, the fact that this experiment in limited democracy between 1966 and 1970 ended with a constitutional transfer of government rather than a coup is significant. The MLN and the PID closed ranks in a coalition which further isolated the PR and its attempts at reelection. This final, short chapter outlines the campaign preceding these elections and presents a brief analysis of their results.

The Election Campaign

Méndez Montenegro's removal of key members of his military high command in March 1968 had appeared to signal a change in the military balance of forces and to offer the prospect of a more assertive civilian politics. As we have seen, however, this move provided only a momentary hiatus in a pattern of partisan and military violence with little evidence of the expected revival of the reformist project. The military group which had supported the President in his unprecedented action proved itself to be less democratic than institutional in motivation and unwilling to risk
military unity for a dramatic shift in orientation.

The replacement of Defence Minister General Chinchilla Aguilar on 20 February 1969 was interpreted by the weekly report *Latin America* as signalling the 'thorough ouster' of the military group which had acquired a dominant position just one year earlier.⁴ Arana Osorio's fêted return to Guatemala from Nicaragua in April to campaign for the presidency appeared to confirm this trend⁵ - as did Sosa Avila's rehabilitation as Interior Minister in June.⁶ However, matters were not quite so clear cut. Chinchilla Aguilar's successor - General Doroteo Reyes Santa Cruz - had been one of five colonels promoted by the President in September 1968, suggesting that he too had been an element of support in the civilian *golpe* of March 1968.⁷ The simultaneous appointment of General Cifuentes Méndez to the powerful post of Army Chief of General Staff adds to the impression that these changes represented less a decisive settling of accounts within the military establishment than

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⁴ *Latin America*, 7.3.69.

⁵ *New York Times*, 29.4.69. Nicaragua had given the colonel an ideal base from which to nurture his presidential ambitions with the friendly support of Somoza: *El Gráfico*, 15.1.69; *La Hora*, 16.1.69; René de León Schlotter, interview, Guatemala City, 8.2.94.

⁶ *Prensa Libre*, 14.6.69, 20.6.69; *La Hora*, 14.6.69; see also, AEU protest in *La Hora*, 17.6.69. Sosa Avila's stint as Interior Minister lasted only six months. He was transferred in January 1970 to the Command of the Poptún military base, and from there to the Quiché military base in February 1970: *Prensa Libre*, 17.1.70, 20.2.70.

⁷ That Chinchilla Aguilar and Reyes Santa Cruz were of the same *promoción* lends some weight to this thesis, although it should also be noted that this military bond is prone to disintegration higher up the promotional ladder as officers begin to vie for top positions: Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94.
another realignment of forces. Moreover, Chinchilla Aguilar's own 'diplomatic exile' in Spain proved to be temporary and he returned in February 1970 to take up the post of Interior Minister.

Chinchilla Aguilar's resignation should be viewed in the context of failed negotiations with the PR to establish his candidacy for the 1970 presidential elections. Selection procedures for presidential candidates for the PR and the PID sparked a series of intra-party conflicts and indicated the continuing tendency of party leaderships to act as exclusive cliques and without proper consultation of the base. As in 1965, nominated candidates were presented to party conventions for ratification purposes only and dissenters were either ignored or intimidated. Yet the fact that both parties engaged in such public disputes over the selection of candidates also suggested a serious lack of internal cohesion at executive level.

The debate within the PR had begun with the pointed endorsement of the 'democratic and revolutionary-thinking' Foreign Minister, Fuentes Mohr, by Juventud Revolucionaria at its Third Congress in January 1969. Given the implacable hostility of the right towards Fuentes Mohr - matched by a definite ambivalence towards him from some members of his own party - his bid for nomination was

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8 Prensa Libre, 21.2.69. Cifuentes Méndez was replaced by Colonel Efrain Ríos Montt as Commander of the Guatemala City Mariscal Zavala Brigade: Prensa Libre, 1.3.69.

9 La Hora, 6.2.70.

10 Marroquín Rojas, La Hora, 7.1.69, 10.2.69; Prensa Libre, 20.2.69; open letter from Sagastume Pérez to PR Secretary General Méndez Martínez (21.2.69), La Hora, 12.3.69.

11 La Hora, 22.1.69, 25.1.69; Prensa Libre, 24.1.69.
hardly likely to prosper. Instead, the prospect of Arana Osorio's candidacy for the MLN prompted elements of the PR leadership to seek a similar military candidate in Chinchilla Aguilar. Such a scheme ran counter to civilista traditions within the PR which reached back the reformist decade when the FPL had split on the question of support for Colonel Francisco Arana, although it appears that objections were fuelled more by personal ambition than anti-military sentiment per se.

Had the negotiations between Chinchilla Aguilar and the PR leadership been successful, it is possible that military divisions might have been more clearly defined along the lines of the Ponciano/Aguilar de León fractions of March 1966. However, attempts by more cautious elements to impose a list of conditions on the prospective military candidate - in an interesting variation on the 1966 'secret pact' - and Chinchilla Aguilar's refusal to accept them, resulted in his resignation and a rapid posting to the Ambassadorship in Spain.

Veteran PR leader Carlos Sagastume Pérez was a main objector to the Defence Minister's nomination - on the grounds that the selection process was not taking place according to 'established democratic party principles'. His own bid for the candidacy - which he believed settled

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12 Fuentes Mohr withdrew from the nomination race in early March: ibid., 3.3.69.

13 Johnson, 'The 1966 and 1970 Elections', pp.39-40, has argued, somewhat implausibly, that the failure to nominate Chinchilla Aguilar seriously damaged the PR with many pro-military members abstaining in the 1970 poll.

14 Danilo Roca Barrillas, interview, Guatemala City, 17.10.94; Marroquín Rojas, 'La Tragedia del PR', La Hora, 10.2.69; Prensa Libre, 20.2.69.

15 Sagastume Pérez to Méndez Martínez (21.2.69), La Hora, 12.3.69; ibid., 13.3.69, 11.2.70; Prensa Libre, 20.3.69, 23.3.69, 28.3.69.
after a 'long meeting' with Méndez Montenegro - came to nothing, and is also suggestive of the tenuous links that the President maintained with the party which had brought him to office.16 The Sixth Party Convention - called at the end of March 1969 to decide the nomination and attended by some 580 local PR affiliates - voted 'unanimously' for Treasury Minister Mario Fuentes Pieruccini:17

Solamente, cuando el representante de la filial de un municipio emitió su voto, se oyó confusamente el nombre del licenciado Carlos Sagastume Pérez; pero rectificó y los miembros de la directiva indicaron que el voto era por el licenciado Fuentes Pieruccini.18

Similar divisions within the PID had serious implications for the right and appeared to threaten the prospect of a single candidate considered imperative for a right-wing victory in 1970. It was widely understood that the failure to form an electoral alliance in 1966 had permitted the PR to take office, and it was a repeat of this outcome that the MLN in particular was determined to avoid. Winning almost 25 per cent of the poll in 1966, but with only five deputies, the MLN had seen itself marginalised in the political process and from the spoils of office. In this regard, it should be remembered that the MLN had been excluded from the post-electoral negotiations which not only resulted in the military pact, but also in a 'gentleman's agreement' between the PR and the PID which ensured that their deputies had sole control of

16 Marroquín Rojas, 'Se me hace que sacrificarán a Fuentes Pieruccini', La Hora, 13.3.69; Danilo Roca Barrillas, interview, Guatemala City, 17.10.94.

17 The PR's National Executive Council had already presented Fuentes Pieruccini to the press as the party's candidate on 10 March 1969: Prensa Libre, 11.3.69.

18 Prensa Libre, 28.3.69: The process lasted almost three hours with each delegate being called upon by name to deliver his vote - so as to avoid charges of fraud (sic).
congressional committees.

Given his close relationship with the MLN during his command of the Zacapa military zone, it was evident that Colonel Arana Osorio would be that party's choice for presidential candidate:

el clima de desorden, inmoralidad, anarquía y violencia...hace volver la mirada del pueblo hacia la figura de un verdadero Caudillo...\[19\]

However, the joint MLN-PID candidacy offered him in the so-called 'Pact of Managua' two days after the parties' formal alliance on 10 January 1969, was challenged by a faction within the PID which backed Roberto Alejos Arzú.\[20\] Led by founding PID member, Mauro Monterroso, the dissenters argued that Arana's candidacy had not been approved by the PID's General Assembly and that other possible candidates for the nomination existed, including Alejos Arzú.\[21\] The debate split the PID with the dissident faction eventually emerging as the stronger. Monterroso survived a suspicious car accident and an expulsion attempt to become the new Director General of the PID in May 1969.\[22\] At the same

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19 Open letter from MLN Director General Sandoval Alarcón to Colonel Arana Osorio, offering him the MLN presidential nomination, La Hora, 24.1.69.

20 Alejos Arzú had previously lost to Arana Osorio in a vote taken at executive level within each of the parties: Prensa Libre, 29.11.68, 11.1.69; Política y Sociedad, número extraordinario (April 1978), p.51.

21 Latin America, 14.3.69, p.88. Mauro Monterroso was a member of the electrical workers' union Luz y Fuerza and long-time Secretary General of the Confederación Sindical de Guatemala (CSG). Co-opted by the Peralta government and elected to the 1964 Constituent Assembly -together with three other labour representatives - he was elected as a deputy for the PID in the 1966-70 Congress: Levenson-Estrada, Trade Unionists against Terror, p.32; see also, ASIES, Más de 100 Años, pp.254-5, 275-280.

22 Prensa Libre, 15.1.69, 24.1.69, 22.2.69, 24.2.69, 10.4.69; Latin America, 28.3.69, p.99.
time, however, it was evident that a compromise had been reached. Arana was nominated PID presidential candidate at the party Convention in June, after Alejos Arzú stood down in his favour.23

In many ways, the election campaign resembled that of 1966, with an equal number of candidates and the choice for president remaining that between two military officers and one civilian. It should be noted, however, that the DCG candidate, Major Lucas Caballeros, stood clearly to the left of his PR civilian counterpart. The level of campaign invective was heated and characterised by familiar accusations and counter-accusations of communism, electoral fraud and pacts with the guerrillas.24 While this political animosity had been largely confined to aggressive rhetoric in 1966, the 1970 campaign was accompanied by intensified levels of violence, much of it of a directly partisan nature.

Partisan violence centred on clashes between youth groups belonging to the MLN and the PR.25 Known as 'los Centuriones', elements of the PR's youth wing were accused of being 'shock troops' for the official party, engaging in acts of intimidation and violence against political opponents.26 While 'los Centuriones' were officially

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23 Prensa Libre, 17.4.69, 21.4.69, 3.5.69, 30.6.69; Latin America, 25.7.69, p.240.


25 One of the most serious incidents took place in Barbarena, Santa Rosa, in April 1969: Prensa Libre, 18.4.69, 21.4.69, 22.4.69; La Hora, 18.4.69, 23.4.69.

26 Prensa Libre, 5.2.70; Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94; idem., 'De los centuriones a los campesinos justicieros y de éstos a los acarreados', Siglo Veintiuno, 23.11.93; Colonel Juan Fernando Cifuentes Herrera, interview, Guatemala City,
disbanded by the party in October 1969, complaints about their activities continued into 1970,\(^\text{27}\) and Miguel Angel Albizures has further argued that the group - led by PR youth leader Danilo Roca Barrillas - press-ganged peasants into voting for the party in the 1970 elections.\(^\text{28}\) Press reports of robbery, murder and cattle rustling in the eastern provinces during 1969 and 1970, added to the heightened tensions, and there are indications that the gangs operating in this area had extreme right-wing connections.\(^\text{29}\) Of particular salience in this regard, was the recent move by the government to disband the controversial armed militias based around Zacapa.\(^\text{30}\)

As in 1965-6, guerrilla activity was a central point of reference for the extreme right and an important factor in the electoral campaign as a whole. Although considerably weakened, the FAR remained able to carry out sporadic actions in Guatemala City, and in September 1969 the military crushed an attempt to establish a new guerrilla front in Alta Verapaz.\(^\text{31}\) The assassination of leading

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\(^{27}\) Lucas Caballeros, *Prensa Libre*, 5.2.70; Frente Juvenil Aranista, ibid., 26.2.70; Central Aranista Feminista, ibid., 27.2.70.

\(^{28}\) Needless to say the Roca Barrillas denies these allegations: Danilo Roca Barrillas, interview, Guatemala City, 17.10.94; Miguel Angel Albizures, interview, Guatemala City, 15.2.94. Colonel Cifuentes, interview, Guatemala City, 30.9.94, suggested that the group was led by the sons of Julio and Méndez Montenegro; see also, *Prensa Libre*, 5.2.70 and 23.2.70 on involvement of PR leader and propagandist, Rafael Pantoja.

\(^{29}\) *Prensa Libre*, 5.5.69, 11.12.69, 12.12.69, 6.1.70; Marroquin Rojas, *La Hora*, 27.11.69.

\(^{30}\) DDRS CIA 003023, *Intelligence Memorandum, 'The Military and the Right in Guatemala'*, 8.11.68; Arana Osorio in *El Gráfico*, 15.1.69; and *La Hora*, 27.1.69.

\(^{31}\) *Prensa Libre*, 18.10.69.
liberacionistas during 1969 - including MLN leader, Mario López Villatoro, and the party's candidate for Guatemala City Mayor, Dr David Guerra Guzmán - added to right-wing perceptions of the continuing subversive threat.\textsuperscript{32}

Following Guzmán's murder, the government declared a 'State of Prevention' in order to counter what was termed 'a resurgence of extreme left-wing subversion'.\textsuperscript{33}

Immediately before and after the March 1970 elections, the FAR engaged in a series of kidnappings reminiscent of its campaign four years earlier. The objective this time, however, was the release of guerrilla suspects from prison in exchange for the high-ranking government and foreign officials held hostage. While the release of Foreign Minister Fuentes Mohr and US Embassy official Sean Holly were successfully negotiated in this manner, the failure of the Guatemalan government to agree to free 17 political prisoners in exchange for the German Ambassador Count Von Spreti culminated with his murder on 5 April 1970.\textsuperscript{34}

The legal participation of the Christian Democrats represented a new phenomenon in the political process, and one which split the centre-left vote. The absence of a party to its left in 1966 had been central to the PR's ability to garner the bulk of that constituency, and the DCG's continuing problems in gaining registration after

\textsuperscript{32} Prensa Libre, 2.6.69, 12.6.69, 18.12.69; Impacto, 4.8.69 reported that the FAR had claimed responsibility for López Villatoro's assassination in Guerrillero, No.9 (July 1969) and for the murder of liberacionista, Hugo Byron Sagastume Calderón on 30 May 1969.

\textsuperscript{33} Prensa Libre, 18.12.69.

\textsuperscript{34} Prensa Libre, 28.2.70; La Hora, 3.3.70, 7.3.70; New York Times, 28.2.70, 7.3.70, 1.4.70, 6.4.70; see also, Fuentes Mohr, Secuestro y Prisión.
July 1966 should be understood in this light. In 1970, the DCG headed a 'National front' of the democratic left which incorporated the still illegal URD, whose representative, ex-PR deputy Edmundo López Durán, stood as the coalition's vice-presidential candidate. By this stage, according to Villagrán Kramer, the URD was experiencing an internal debate between its younger cadres who were leaning towards support for the armed struggle and those who still favoured a reformist solution. In contrast to 1966, however, there was no evidence of a tacit alliance between the reformist coalition and the revolutionary movement, while the PGT called for a boycott of the electoral proceedings.

Claiming to be 'the candidate with clean hands', Lucas Caballeros outlined a four-point plan of government promising structural reforms in administration, agriculture, education and fiscal policy. Decisively reformist in tone and far more radical than the PR's platform in 1966, it is also interesting to note the coincidence with the right on the matter of foreign loans viewed by government critics on both sides to be 'mortgaging the country' - principally to the United States.

35 The DCG finally achieved registration in August 1968: Prensa Libre, 26.6.68; 'Documento Constitutivo del Frente Nacional', ibid., 2.8.69; Impacto, 2.8.69; see also, Comisión del Colegio de abogados de Guatemala, denunciation of the Electoral Register's refusal to grant DCG recognition in December 1967: Prensa Libre, 23.12.67.

36 Francisco Villagrán Kramer, interview, Guatemala City, 22.10.93.

37 Prensa Libre, 11.2.70.

38 MLN press conference, Prensa Libre, 29.11.68; Lucas Caballeros, ibid, 11.2.70; Finance Minister Fuentes Pieruccini, ibid, 25.2.69 argued that the 20 international loans contracted by the government since 1 July 1966 and amounting to $84,712,000 were essential for national development. He emphasised the multi-lateral nature of the
While the DCG candidate was a retired military officer, his radicalism, and the perceived anti-militarism of the DCG, added to speculation that the military as an institution backed Arana Osorio's candidacy. In an effort to counter this assumption and reassure the nation of its firm intention to remain impartial and respect the popular will, the entire military high command made an unprecedented television appearance in February. Yet the question of military preference remained an issue, and the PR's losing candidate has since argued - somewhat implausibly - that it was the military's superior resources in terms of communications and transport which ensured Arana Osorio his victory.

Underlining its own pro-military stance, the MLN sought to expose the PR as anti-military and accused it of ingratitude towards the armed institution 'which has kept it in government'. MLN leader Mario López Villatoro forcefully condemned Fuentes Pierrucini's 'extremist civilianism' and his failure to pay adequate attention to the role of the armed forces during his campaigning:

funding. See also, Bauer Paíz, 'The "Third Government of the Revolution"; Jonas, Plan Piloto, p.305.

39 For a definitive statement on DCG's traditional position towards the military and its decision to alter this and support Colonel Ríos Montt in the 1974 elections see, Danilo Barillas, 'La Democracia Cristiana y su Posición ante el Ejército Hoy en Guatemala (llamado a un compromiso histórico)', mimeo, (Guatemala, n.d.).

40 Prensa Libre, 14.2.70; see also, Lucas Caballeros' response, ibid., 26.2.70.

41 Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, interview, Guatemala City, 2.2.94.

42 López Villatoro, post-humous article, La Hora, 2.6.69; ibid., 11.2.70; MLN publicity, Prensa Libre, 19.2.70.
La forma abultada como Fuentes Pieruccini silenció al Ejército y su obra no es producto del olvido ni de la ligereza. Es producto de profundas reflexiones y de la discusión colgada del PR, que lleva implícita una posición política frente al Ejército. Es la manifestación de un civilismo a ultranza? Es la marginación del Ejército de la vida nacional y las principales determinaciones de la política?...

For its part, the PR pointed to the existence of ex-guerrillas in the ranks of the MLN and referred to Sandoval Alarcón's notorious 1956 declaration that the MLN was 'the party of organised violence'.

While this kind of rhetoric was to be expected, the hostility between the DCG and the PR was especially striking. The invective reached its apogee in Lucas Caballeros' televised declaration that the PR and MLN were equally responsible for the 'genocide' in which more than 6,000 guatemalans had died in two years:

Desde hace muchos años se han venido identificando esos partidos, representando de las pequeñas minorías... Es así como se implantó en el país una nueva modalidad de gobierno: el gobernador con el apoyo de fuerzas de bandoleros promovidas, apadrinadas y encubiertas por el poder oficial... En los últimos cuatro años de gobierno... el Partido Oficial, haciéndose llamar todavía revolucionario, ha hecho un gobierno de

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43 Post-humous publication of article by MLN leader, Mario López Villatoro, La Hora, 2.6.69.

44 MLN militants Salvador Orellana ('Gallo Giro') and Olivierio Casteñeda had defected from the ranks of the guerrillas to the extreme-right: PR publicity, 'Pacto con las guerrillas! De Quién?', Prensa Libre, 14.8.69; see also, Aguilera Peralta, interview, Guatemala City, 30.11.93; Prensa Libre, 20.3.70; Debray, The Revolution on Trial, p.341, 345.

45 'Mensaje Pronunciado Por El Licenciado Lucas Caballeros Al Pueblo de Guatemala, el 17 de febrero de 1970', Prensa Libre, 18.2.70; see also, ibid., 6.12.69, 17.1.70, 19.1.70, 17.2.70, 26.2.70; La Hora, 13.11.69; Política y Sociedad (April 1978) p.51.
Unsurprisingly, and reflecting Ponciano's campaign four years earlier, Arana Osorio focused on the paramount question of security and emphasised his previous successes in Zacapa against 'subversion'. Stating his intention to impose order on Guatemala, 'at the cost of whatever sacrifice and surmounting whatever obstacle', the MLN candidate accused the Méndez Montenegro government of stopping short of pacification at a national level and the PR for backtracking on its previous support for the civilian militias in the north-east. Nevertheless, while his programme stressed security and order, he also made the, by now, obligatory promises of 'social development' to be brought about 'with decisiveness and firmness without demagogy' and even utilised the politically-charged term 'the realisation of justice'.

In contrast to the tough-talking caudillo style of Arana Osorio, and the reformism of Lucas Caballeros, Mario Fuentes Pieruccini's campaign appeared lacklustre. The PR candidate and his running-mate - the ex-Minister of Communications, Oscar Casteñeda Fernández - promised more infrastructural development and 'peace', but 'without the use of terror, persecution and the submachine gun'. Legal measures would be taken to secure the lives and property of Guatemalans - and to make private ownership of handguns illegal. In a belated effort to enhance the party's appeal to the indigenous population, Fuentes

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46 Ibid.
47 Colonel Arana Osorio, campaign speech in Zacapa, Prensa Libre, 23.2.70.
48 El Gráfico, 15.1.69; La Hora, 27.1.69.
49 Prensa Libre, 7.11.69.
50 Mario Fuentes Pieruccini, campaign speech in Zacapa, Prensa Libre, 1.12.69.
Pieruccini pledged to establish an Office of Indian Affairs and to abolish use of the mecapal - the harness worn by campesinos around the forehead to carry heavy loads.\(^{51}\) These promises, together with others of shoes instead of sandals and free schoolbooks, were the focus of particular derision from his Christian Democrat rival.\(^{52}\)

**The 1970 Elections**

Arana Osorio won a plurality in the elections of 1 March 1970 and was declared victor by the Guatemalan Congress on 6 March after Fuentes Pieruccini declined to fight a second-round election. The effect was almost immediate, leaving Méndez Montenegro unable to negotiate the release of the German Ambassador in April. Von Spreti's murder sparked a diplomatic incident and was followed by the imposition of a particularly harsh State of Siege.

However, far from the decisive victory for militarism that Johnson has claimed the election represented, careful scrutiny of the results reveals a more complex picture.\(^{53}\) There is little evidence that 'Guatemala's voters had shifted on the issue of guerrilla violence from soft-line tolerance and pacification to hard-line extermination', even if this was the character of the regime that Arana Osorio eventually headed.\(^{54}\) Indeed, had a political alliance of the centre-left forces been possible at this stage, the indications are that it would have defeated the right-wing coalition.

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\(^{51}\) Prensa Libre, 14.2.70; Política y Sociedad, número extraordinario (April 1970), p.51.

\(^{52}\) Ibid; Prensa Libre, 14.2.70.


\(^{54}\) Ibid.
What is particularly striking about these results is that in most cases, support for the MLN-PID coalition was substantially lower than that suggested by the combined totals of their votes in 1966. In only one province - Jalapa - did the right-wing alliance improve on its aggregate vote of four years earlier. These losses can be explained in a number of ways and one implication is that fraud was more widely practiced by the official parties in 1966 and 1970 than is generally recognised. In this regard, Thesing has claimed that almost 60,000 false identity cards were issued by the PR for the 1970 elections, and that local officials frequently tampered with votes to increase the showing for the official party. While it is likely that the PID vote in 1966 was similarly artificially inflated, it is also possible that many PID voters objected to Arana Osorio and either switched parties or abstained altogether.

An additional factor was the participation of the DCG in the 1970 elections. Although it seems less plausible that the right-wing supporters would cross the political spectrum to vote for what was an overtly reformist party, in several cases it appears that the Christian Democrats picked up votes from the right as well as from the PR. Such an assertion must remain largely impressionistic since it is not possible to verify to what extent the configuration of the electorate had changed between the two polls. This caveat is all the more important given the fact that only 26.7 per cent of the electorally-qualified population registered to vote in 1970, actually did so.

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55 Thesing, 'Elecciones y Cambio Politico', p.21.

56 49.6 per cent of the electorally-qualified population were registered to vote in 1970 as compared with 44.9 per cent in 1966, when the abstention rate was 25.3 per cent: Thesing, 'Elecciones y Cambio Politico', Table 2, p.31. Thesing, ibid., gives the figures for spoiled ballots in the 1966 and 1970 elections as 12.4 per cent and 9.6 per cent respectively.
### Table 2
Presidential Election Results: 1 March 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>MLN-PID</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>DCG (Frente nacional)</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
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<td>42.1</td>
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<td>21.7</td>
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<td>49.8</td>
<td>4,650</td>
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<td>2,018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totonicapán</td>
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<td>53.9</td>
<td>4,664</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>3,360</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>51.7</td>
<td>5,288</td>
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<td>3,999</td>
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<td>Suchitepéquez</td>
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<td>35.9</td>
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<td>17.4</td>
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<td>5,745</td>
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<td>45.0</td>
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<td>202,331</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>126,218</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Diario de Centroamérica, 19.3.70

The PR registered an overall reduction of just under ten per cent in its national vote and generally did better in areas where its support had been weakest in 1966. This was
particularly true of the 'Indian' highlands where the party managed to win a clear majority in Alta Verapaz - the department where five national fincas had been distributed to peasants a year earlier. The party's most serious losses were in four of the five provinces where it had won an overall majority in the 1966 election. In the department of Guatemala, its vote was more than halved to just under 22 per cent, with slightly less dramatic reductions in Escuintla, Retalhuleu and Suchitepequez. In each case the Christian Democrats were the clear beneficiaries, and this trend confirms the tendency of these departments to vote for more radical alternatives. At the same time, it indicated a repudiation of the PR and its performance in government during the preceding four years. San Marcos was the signal exception to this rule, with the PR retaining its overall majority, and Amaro has suggested that the region's anti-clerical tradition made it less permeable to Christian Democratic reformism. 57

The DCG's increasing political importance was to be confirmed in 1974 when, backing the candidacy of Colonel Rios Montt, the party's evident majority was averted by massive electoral fraud. In 1970, the political balance of forces did not require such a tactic. The irony of the reversion to authoritarian rule was that it took place under constitutional conditions in which the scope for electoral competition had actually been expanded since 1966.

57 Amaro, 'Factores Influyentes de la Votación', pp.269-70.
In their introduction to Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter emphasise the uncertainty of the transition process in terms of its end result. The outcome of a transition from a 'certain' authoritarian regime can be the inauguration of political democracy. Alternatively, the process may culminate in the restoration of a new and perhaps more severe form of authoritarian rule, or simply a confusing sequence of governments which prove incapable of providing a lasting resolution to the problem of institutionalising political power. It is unarguably the case that in Guatemala, the transition which began under the military regime of Peralta Azurdia in 1964 and which led to the restoration of constitutional civilian rule between 1966 and 1970 did not result in establishment of political democracy in that country. Indeed, the irony of the ostensibly free and fair elections of March 1970 was that they confirmed the transition to a distinct form of authoritarian government in which the trappings of liberal democracy were routinely ignored.

While the Guatemalan experiment of the 1960s quite clearly did not produce political democracy, its failure can be examined in the light of later theoretical debates on transition from authoritarian rule in Latin America. It has already been observed of the Peralta Azurdia regime that it did not achieve the level of institutionalisation of its South American counterparts, and this was clearly an important factor in its relatively short period of absolute control. Yet the regime was Guatemala's first experience
of prolonged military rule in which the armed forces governed as an institution and made considerable efforts to restructure the parameters of political competition.

As the contemporary transitions literature suggests is usually the case, the impetus for liberalisation came from within the regime itself. The decision to return to constitutional government was influenced by a number of factors including internal and external political pressure and concerns about legitimacy and institutional unity. With regard to this last point, there are clear indications that tensions existed between so-called 'hard-line' and 'soft-line' elements within the regime on questions of policy, tensions which increased with the struggle over the candidacy for the official party. Similarly, there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction amongst civilian groups which had supported the coup.

The US government constituted an additional source of pressure, and external factors must be given greater weight in this case than the transitions literature generally allows. The support of US State Department and Embassy officials was critical in enabling Peralta Azurdia to withstand ultramontane opposition to the transfer of government. Overall however, the wider international environment in the mid-1960s was far less favourable to democratisation than that of the mid-1980s.

There was little evidence of the upsurge in popular mobilisation which is often associated with regime liberalisation. This absence can be largely explained by the tightly-controlled nature of the liberalisation itself, and might also be viewed in the context of the failure of just such an upsurge in March and April 1962. Significantly, it was this earlier movement which brought the military into the Cabinet - prior to its full takeover of power a year later - and signalled the end of what can
be interpreted as an earlier attempt at limited democracy.

Between 1964 and 1966, the authoritarian regime was able to negotiate the terms of the transition from a position of considerable strength. The evident perception was that the liberalisation process could be controlled and involved little inherent risk. It is at this point that the notion of uncertainty is important, since, even in such a carefully circumscribed contest as the 1966 elections, it seems clear that the expected result was a plurality for the officially-sponsored party. The paradoxical outcome of the limits to political competition imposed by the regime was the temporary coalescence of excluded interests around an opposition party which claimed its roots in the reformist decade.

Contemporary theories of democracy stress the need for party elites and professional politicians to reach a 'democratic bargain' in which the rules of the political game are agreed and underpinned by contingent consent. There is evidence that a series of implicit and explicit agreements were reached to ensure the Guatemalan transition in 1966 - between political elites, socio-economic elites, and the military establishment. However, these were exclusionary in the extreme and highly conditional, and were far from the kind of 'foundational pact' which marks instances of 'elite democratic convergence'.

Of particular salience is the secret pact signed between the military high command and the elected representatives of the PR, to which the weakness of the Méndez Montenegro regime vis-à-vis the military is usually traced. In its readiness to engage in such an agreement, the PR might be seen as an example of O'Donnell's 'opportunistic opposition', prepared to reach power at any cost.² At the

² O'Donnell, 'Transitions to Democracy', pp.64-5.
same time, however, it seems clear that without the pact there could have been no transition.

The pact was not exceptional in terms of its guarantees of institutional autonomy and freedom from prosecution for 'acts carried out in the line of duty'. The condition regarding counterinsurgency was more problematic. It subordinated civilian rule to military decision-making in this area and implied considerable military oversight of government affairs. More generally, the pact represented a further constraint on the civilian government already bound by a military-enacted constitution. The military retention of tutelary powers and reserved domains gave rise to the kind of perverse institutions that J. Samuel Valenzuela has described in respect of Chile.\(^3\) The effect was one of a hybrid dictablanda/democradura in which limited democracy coexisted with increasing militarisation.\(^4\)

A central problem remained the lack of a normative commitment to democracy on the part of key political actors. In particular, the MLN's proclivity towards 'other ways of doing politics' on behalf of the reactionary elites led to a game of 'coup poker', in which the threat of a coup was as effective as a coup itself in obstructing socio-economic reform. In this situation, democratisation 'on the installment plan' could not take place. Attempts at the kind of precedent-setting political confrontations on such questions as tax reform - proposed by Valenzuela as a means to undermine the power of economic elites and ultimately the military - was dissipated in the face of concerted opposition and overt threats of political

\(^3\) J. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings', pp.58-70.

\(^4\) On dictablandas and democraduras see O'Donnell and Schmitter, Tentative Conclusions, pp.40-5.
violence.\footnote{Ibid., p.63.}

In this sense, it is worth taking up the criticisms that some scholars have made of the emphasis in much of the recent literature on the contingent nature of the transition process and the autonomy of political factors.\footnote{Karl, 'Dilemmas', p.6; Remmer, 'The Study of Latin American Democracy', pp.483-5; Smith, 'On Democracy', pp.304-5.} As Terry Lynn Karl in particular has argued, the nature of the agrarian structure in such countries as Guatemala has been crucial to the absence of an elite democratic political culture. Politics has been traditionally viewed by the Guatemalan elites as a zero sum game in which the 'least concession is tantamount to defeat'.\footnote{Torres Rivas, Crisis del Poder en Centroamérica, p.72.}

The 1944-54 reformist decade was clearly a formative political experience in terms of this elite intransigence. Indeed, it represented a Rubicon in the political memory of the left as well as the right. The defeat of the revolution in 1954 set the tone for the political polarisation which became the overriding feature of Guatemalan politics. As the dominant ideology of the counter-revolution, anticomunismo provided the prism for interpreting even the most modest reforms. Yet anticomunismo provided a poor substitute for a hegemonic project and the decade after 1954 was characterised by acute political instability within the dominant bloc.

The question of institutionalised military oversight of the Guatemalan political process can also be traced back to the 1944-54 period. While this experiment remains the yardstick by which Guatemalan efforts at democratisation
continue to be measured, the 1945 constitutional provisions with regard to the role of the armed forces signalled what was to become an enduring military influence in the political system.

The military coup of 1963 marked the end of a period of erratic political opening initially sponsored by the military establishment itself. The proximate cause of the coup was the return of ex-President Arévalo and the prospect of his reelection with all that implied for a resurgence of the radical forces so decisively suppressed a decade before. Supported by the established political parties, and in the context of an incipient guerrilla challenge, the military government strengthened the rural security apparatus and redefined the parameters for political competition.

A central point of debate in the 1966 election campaign was how to deal with the insurgency. Méndez Montenegro's reformist credentials contrasted with Ponciano's hardline posture and appeared to suggest the possibility of a negotiated solution to the guerrilla conflict. Support for the PR candidacy from the revolutionary movement was premised on this notion. Equally, popular expectations of the PR's reformist rhetoric were important in the party's ability to win in certain key areas.

Fears of an entente between the PR and the guerrillas, and of a return to the radicalism of 1944-54, spurred right-wing and military resistance to recognition of the election results. Underlining the anti-democratic character of these forces, the threatened coup was only contained with US support and the pact between the Méndez Montenegro and the military high command. This early capitulation to hardline interests had far-reaching consequences and ensured that the military remained outside civilian control.
The failure of the 'Third Government of the Revolution' to put its reformist rhetoric into practice caused considerable disillusion. Popular disenchantment was an important factor in the PR's poor 1970 electoral performance in areas where it had done well in 1966. A lack of political will was compounded by fiscal problems and, most importantly, a serious campaign to destabilise the government. The inability of the regime to push through new legislation on taxation signalled the limits to this democratic experiment.

Extensive political violence became the leitmotif of the Méndez Montenegro administration. Ostensibly a clash between extremist elements, the violence was clearly associated with the counterinsurgency campaign and as such implicated not only the security forces, but also the US military mission and the government itself. The regime's failure to protect the basic rights of the individual severely tested its democratic credentials, as did the frequent suspension of constitutional guarantees. At the same time, activists within the official party and reformist elements in general also became targets of the counter-terror and suggested an extreme right-wing strategy to undermine the government and eliminate the opposition.

The transition to civilian government caused confusion within the revolutionary movement, and exacerbated existing tensions over strategy and tactics. These disagreements eventually led to an acrimonious split in 1968. Confronted by concerted military action and clandestine terror, the guerrillas proved unable to sustain their rural base in the ladino north-east.

The defeat of the rural guerrilla and unease with the excesses of the counterinsurgency campaign provided Méndez Montenegro with significant military and US support in his impressive move against key members of his high command.
The suggestion of a more assertive civilian politics proved to be shortlived. Its overall effect was less a demilitarisation of politics than a realignment of military forces. The possibility of an open military split in the 1970 elections was forestalled with Chinchilla Aguilar's refusal to be bound by PR conditions on his candidacy.

The assassination of the US Ambassador by urban guerrilla elements terminated the fragile balance of forces and facilitated the rehabilitation of those deposed by the 1968 civilian 'coup'. As in 1966, security became the dominant issue in the 1970 election campaign which was accompanied by heightened levels of political violence of a particularly partisan quality. Yet the victory of the extreme right-wing candidate did not indicate the desire of the Guatemalan electorate for a 'final solution'. Indeed, the reduced number of votes for the combined MLN-PID slate since 1966 suggested an evident distaste for such hardline tactics.

The results of the 1970 elections were a function of a breakdown of the tactical alliance which had brought the PR to office in 1966, together with right-wing determination to avoid a reformist victory in 1970. Party-political antagonisms on the centre/left, combined with popular disillusion with the PR's performance in office were central to the victory of Arana Osorio. The significance of his plurality was the constitutional reversion to authoritarian rule under a hardline military officer who governed in league with extreme right-wing elements.

Expectations of the PR's ability to return Guatemala to the democratic achievements of the 1944-54 decade were always misplaced and bound to bring disenchantment. Indeed, the party's participation in the elections of 1966 was premised on its rejection of the radicalism of that period. Yet, it was less the conservative character of the
government *per se*, than the refusal of the extreme right to accept even the most moderate of reformist solutions which ensured the failure of this experiment. The readiness to resort to extra-legal options signalled the continuing absence of a liberal democratic consensus. Moreover, the tightly-controlled transition process did not bring about military subordination to civilian rule. On the contrary, the government was dependent throughout on the goodwill of the military establishment to remain in office. In the context of a guerrilla war, this question was particularly acute and encouraged further militarisation.
Guatemala - Select Chronology 1960-1970

1960

May
PGT Third Party Congress recognises the validity of all forms of struggle in the quest for a democratic and representative government.

November
Military revolt at barracks in Guatemala City, Zacapa and Puerto Barrios involving some 120 officers on 13 November. Rebels withdraw to Puerto Barrios. Defeated within three days.

1961

March

April
First gun battle between MR-13 elements and judicial police in the capital.
MR-13 makes contact with PGT and with peasants in Morales, Izabal.

1962

February
MR-13 elements attack military posts at Mariscos and Bananera in Izabal and police stations in Morales, Izabal. Simultaneous clashes with military patrols in Entre Ríos and Km 80 on the Transatlantic Highway.

March

September
MR-13 delegation goes to Havana. Contact with ex-Guatemalan president Colonel Arbenz.

November
Elections for Guatemala City Mayor.
Montenegro Sierra wins, closely followed by Villagrán Kramer. PGT supports Jorge Toriello who comes last. Arévalo declares his candidacy for president from Mexico.

Decree 1559 imposes first income tax. Guatemalan Air Force rebels.

December

Politico-military front Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) established. Incorporates MR-13, PGT, student-based Movimiento 12 de Abril and remains of Movimiento 20 de Octubre. Guerrilla excluded from political command over which PGT retains control.

1963

March

Arévalo returns to Guatemala. Ydigoras Fuentes removed in military coup three days later. Col. Peralta Azurdia installed as Chief of State.

1964

February

New electoral law imposes minimum 50,000 members for political party registration of whom 20 per cent must be literate.

May

Controlled elections for Constituent Assembly.

Yon Sosa breaks off negotiations with Villagrán Kramer's URD.

June

New income tax law

Two distinct guerrilla fronts emerge in north-east: Frente Alejandro de León MR-13 led by Yon Sosa based in Izabal, and Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra (FGEI) based in Zacapa and led by Turcios Lima.

July

Publication of MR-13's Revolución Socialista reveals Trotskyist influence on Yon Sosa.

September

Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra (FGEI) occupies river port of Panzos, Alta Verapaz, and town of Rio Hondo, Zacapa.
October Letter from FGEI signals political differences with both MR-13 and PGT.

December MR-13 makes public its 'First Declaration of the Sierra de las Minas' having apparently forged Turcios Lima's signature.

1965


April PR leaves Constituent Assembly on question of eligibility of coup participants for presidential election.

September New constitution promulgated but suspended until May 1966.

October PR leader Mario Méndez Montenegro found shot dead. Julio César Méndez Montenegro assumes candidacy.

1966


PGT endorse support for PR and Méndez Montenegro. Turcios Limas accepts this position. MR-13 begins to distance itself from Trotskyism.

March PR and Méndez Montenegro win plurality in elections 6 March. Results not recognised for several days.

First rumours begin to emerge about disappearance and murder of 28 union and PGT activists including veteran labour leaders Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez and Leonardo Castillo Flores.

April Constitutional Assembly passes amnesty for security forces for actions in the line of duty between 3 July 1954 and 28 April 1966.

May Secret agreement between Méndez Montenegro and military high command grants armed forces autonomy and free
reign with counterinsurgency in exchange for military guarantees for civilian government.

Legislature installed. PR has 30 of 55 seats. 1965 Constitution takes effect. Méndez Montenegro and Marroquin Rojas declared president-elect and vice-president-elect.

FAR kidnap government officials Baltazar Morales de la Cruz and Romeo Augusto de León in response to abduction by security forces of '28'.

Zunapote ambush changes pace of counterinsurgency operations.

**June**

Congress ratifies State of Siege.

**July**


Congress passes amnesty for political crimes committed between 1 November 1970 and 26 July 1966. Turcios Lima and Yon Sosa reject amnesty.

MANO makes its appearance with a 5-point manifesto.

MLN declares 'political war' on PR and warns of the impending organisation of vigilante groups. Reveals details of 1961 'tripartite pact'.

Labour Code reforms withdrawn after pressure from CACIF.

**September**

Morales de la Cruz and De León released in exchange for guerrilla Ortiz Vides. Méndez Montenegro makes last call for harmony. FAR offer to suspend actions against military targets.

Army colonel and 2 officers dismissed for plotting against Defence Minister Arriaga Bosque.

**October**

Turcios Lima killed in car crash. Funeral attended by several hundred mourners. Second-in-command, César Montes struggles to impose his
authority over FAR regional groups.

Income Tax reforms presented to Congress. CACIF starts protest campaign.

November


Guarantees received from Honduras and El Salvador that MLN will receive no help in organising mercenary force. Coup attempt by Vice-Minister of Defence Callejas Soto thwarted.

State of siege extended 30 days.

December


Presidential acuerdo exempts finqueros and their administrators from general prohibition on weapon possession. State of Siege extended 30 days.

1967

January

State of Siege extended 30 days.

February

State of Alarm replaces State of Siege.

López Durán denounces actions of military commissioners in Chiquimula. Refuses to sign extension to State of Alarm. NOA announces its existence.

March

PR officials abducted in Sanarate.

Second Vice-Minister of Defence, Col. Sosa Avila appointed head of National Police. State of Alarm extended 30 days.

April

López Durán expelled from PR.

May

Guatemalan bishops issue pastoral
October


December

Congress passes sales tax. CACIF protest against measure.

Méndez Montenegro declares in his Christmas message to the nation that the north-east is completely pacified.

1968

January

Government withdraws sales tax.

FAR split from PGT. César Montes issues declaration confirming move ten days after Pablo Monsanto and Camilo Sánchez revealing tensions within FAR leadership.


February

State of Alarm extended 30 days.
FAR and MR-13 unification made public.
Archbishop Casariego's pastoral exhortation condemns violence from left and right.

Fuentes Mohr replaced as Finance Minister by Fuentes Pieruccini in cabinet reshuffle.

March

State of Alarm extended 30 days.
PR Secretary General claims clandestine groups persecuting PR sympathisers under protection of State of Alarm.

Archbishop Casariego kidnapped. Released four days later. State of
Siege declared. Congress censures Marroquin Rojas for remarks about Casariego - only PR deputies present.


April
State of Alarm replaces State of Siege. MANO activist and principal Casariego kidnapper Raul Lorenzana assassinated.

May
State of Alarm extended 30 days.

August
Municipal elections. PR claims overwhelming victory. PRs demand dismantling civilian militias in northeast and accuse military of putting pressure on voters in this region.


FAR Commander Camilo Sánchez executed. Replaced by Pablo Monsanto.

September
Méndez Montenegro promotes five officers to rank of General. New Army Constitution.

FAR Command demotes César Montes to rank of Private. Yon Sosa removed as FAR 'Commander-in-Chief.

State of Siege extended 30 days.

October
State of Siege replaced by State of Alarm.

1969
January
Ex-President Arévalo appointed Ambassador to Chile.

Yon Sosa resigns FAR Command and 'dissolves' Command Headquarters.

MLN invite Coronel Arana Osorio to be presidential candidate.

February
Chinchilla Aguilar resigns from Defence Ministry and becomes Ambassador to Spain.
March


April

Arana Osorio returns to Guatemala from Nicaragua to lead MLN campaign as presidential candidate.

Foreign Minister Arenales Catalán dies. Replaced by Fuentes Mohr.

June

Key MLN militant Mario López Villatoro assassinated. FAR claim responsibility. PGT leader Huberto Alverado captured and released after intense international and domestic pressure.

Sosa Avila returns to Guatemala from Spain and is appointed Interior Minister. AEU protests.

October

Appearance of guerrillas at 'Las Tortugas' mining camp in Alta Verapaz confirms rumours of new FAR front in Cobán.

PR declares dissolution of youth group 'Los Centuriones'.

December

MLN leader David Guerra Guzman shot dead.

State of Prevention 15 days. Renewed.

1970

January

Casteñeda Morgan replaces Col. Sosa Avila as Interior Minister.

Journalist Isidoro Zarco assassinated by FAR.

State of Prevention 15 days.

February

Chinchilla Aguilar returns from Spain and appointed Interior Minister.

Military hierarchy make unprecedented appearance on national television to guarantee no political interference in elections.

President of the Electoral Tribunal is shot and wounded. PR Congressional candidate shot dead with two
Foreign Minister Fuentes Mohr is kidnapped by FAR and released one day later in exchange for student and guerrilla suspect Girón Calvillo.

March


US official Sean Holly kidnapped by FAR. Released two days later in exchange for three prisoners. German Ambassador Von Spreti, kidnapped at end of month and killed 5 April when government refuses FAR demand for release of 17 prisoners.

June

Yon Sosa killed by Mexican Forces on border.

July

Col. Arana Osorio inaugurated as President. Méndez Montenegro leaves Guatemala for Spain.
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