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15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

Claudio Orrego Vicuña
Director, Instituto de Estudios Políticos
Santiago, Chile

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ABSTRACT

Basic Human Rights and Political Development: 15 Years of Experience in Latin America

The paper examines political developments in Latin America during a period in which the concept of human rights was evolving from a mere rhetorical issue into a major political issue throughout the region. It argues that political legitimacy and respect for human rights are inseparable. Political legitimacy--the cornerstone of any political order and the primary political goal of any regime--cannot be achieved in an atmosphere in which human rights are being violated. Latin American politics during the last 15 years have frequently been characterized by armed political violence, which inevitably has implied violations of basic human rights. The two most common forms of armed political violence in Latin America--terrorism and state terrorism, by the revolutionary left and the counter-revolutionary right--have failed to achieve political legitimacy for their practitioners precisely because their patterns of operation violated human rights. By contrast, in those countries where moderation has prevailed and human rights were respected--as, for example, in Venezuela and Colombia--the process of constructing a legitimate political order has advanced.

The following thesis thus emerges. The existence of armed political violence is an indication that human rights are being violated. The forces practicing political violence will therefore be incapable of achieving political legitimacy. As a result, they will ultimately and inevitably experience political defeat.

The paper concludes with a survey of the principal actors in the Latin American human-rights movement and some predictions about the future of that movement in the decade of the 1980s.

BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:
15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

Claudio Orrego Vicuña
Instituto de Estudios Políticos
Santiago, Chile

Introduction

Observation as a member of a society under an authoritarian regime with an extensive record of human-rights violations gives the observer the clear impression that a deep division exists between what events look like on the surface and what they really are in the depths of peoples' minds and hearts. When one is personally acquainted with significant personalities in such a country, it is apparent that the impact of human-rights violations on those individuals is far more important and profound than they are willing to express in public. This is so for cardinals, bishops, priests, and nuns; for major intellectual figures; for people at the highest levels of deeply-rooted traditional political parties; for scholars and students; for groups of armed-forces officers; and for thousands of intelligent, honest, and compassionate people. For them it is inevitable that the effects of human-rights violations go far beyond mere philosophical or ethical questions. Human rights are related to a major political question: the degree of legitimacy achieved by those who seek power in the face of the people they intend to represent.

Human rights are a major political issue that frequently is perceived only as an intellectual dispute. This is the main hypothesis of this paper. It is a hypothesis that was developed in an as-yet-unpublished paper, written while the author was a Fellow at the Wilson Center, entitled "Terrorism, Torture, Human Rights, and Political Development." Its main points can be summarized as follows:

1. Achieving political legitimacy among the people they claim to represent is the most important goal for any person or group that pretends to exercise power. Why the ruler is supposed to rule and why the ruled are supposed to obey the ruler's authority is the fundamental political issue. All persons and groups who seek power are inevitably challenged by this issue.

2. Legitimacy is not an abstract or nominative principle, valid for all times and all peoples. It is very much related to the culture of each society and its main values and traditions. Thus each society will perceive its rulers to be legitimate or illegitimate in the light of how much they represent the main cultural traits--values and traditions--of that society.

3. In societies with long, deeply-rooted Christian and liberal traditions, a significant amount of cultural values may be identified with human rights, as described in the United Nations' Declaration of Universal Human Rights.

4. There are many types and levels of recognized human rights, but there also exists a general consensus that some of those rights are basic, and that violations of them are more appalling, more pervading in their effects, and easier to protect against and monitor. These basic human rights are fundamental civil and political rights and freedoms.

5. Violation of basic human rights implies the use of violence, normally armed violence. Thus, when political armed violence erupts in a society, it is a sign that respect for human rights is going to suffer. When rationality, persuasion, negotiation, and agreement are the primary means of achieving political support--and thus legitimacy--those basic human rights cannot be in a state of permanent violation.

6. Contemporary political violence is practiced by those who are in power and are trying to remain in power despite the opposition of the people, as well as by those who want to be in power without paying much attention to the popular support they enjoy. This differentiates between a generalized rebellion against authority on the one hand and terrorism and State terrorism on the other.

7. Terrorism and State terrorism are the two most common forms of armed political violence experienced by Latin America in the last few years. Both methods have failed, or are failing, in their effort to achieve political legitimacy at the expense of the people their practitioners pretend to represent. They fail because their methods, values, and patterns of action offend the basic values and cultural elements of society, values and elements which may be classified as basic human rights.

This paper will attempt to confirm these hypotheses by examining Latin American history during the last 15 years--not with detailed historical proof but through a political interpretation of some basic trends that have systematically appeared throughout that period. This will open a line of reflexion and work for human rights in the future. The variety of political phenomena during the last 15 years is sufficiently large to enable us to measure the consistency of these hypotheses against an overall view of the fast-changing experiences of the continent.

The past 15 years have witnessed a very impressive acceleration in the rate of change in Latin America. Economic development and the urbanization process have transformed the continent, as a whole, into something resembling a middle class among developing countries. The traditional stereotype of the poor and underdeveloped countries of the Third World no longer fits significant aspects of Latin American life. Societies have become more complex, political life more sophisticated; social and economic problems can no longer be dealt with by simplistic solutions or policies.

This decade and a half has also been rich in political events of major importance: the consolidation of the Cuban revolution and its

expanding international influence; the failure of the guerrilla movements; the appearance of the new military institutional dictatorships replacing the old "caudillo" military coup d'état; the disappearance of two of the most stable and long-lasting democracies in the continent: Chile and Uruguay; the widespread eruption of State terrorism with its sequence of torture, disappearances, death, and exile; the return to constitutional regimes in Ecuador and Peru, after the failure of military reformist experiments; the impact of Vatican II Concilium and the bishops' continental conferences of Medellín and Puebla; the wave of independence processes in the mini-countries of the Caribbean region; the turmoil in Central America, whose highlight was the overthrow of the Somoza regime; etc., etc., etc.

Many lessons can be learned from this surprisingly rapid process of change in an effort to create a more constructive and stable future in the decade of the 1980s. And some very important conclusions are available for people concerned with human rights in that region of the world.

In 1965, the subject of human rights received only rhetorical attention in Latin America. In 1969, a regional pact on the subject--known as the Pact of San Jose de Costa Rica--was signed (and finally went into effect in 1978). In 1980, an Argentine human-rights activist, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This sequence exemplifies the importance which the subject has progressively attained in the course of those years. As an issue, human rights evolved from a mere rhetorical consideration to a subject of major political concern and interest in the region.

1. Human Rights and Their Relation to Political Development

If we trace the origins of concern for human rights in Latin America, we will find that concern to be very much related to the role of ethics and values in the development of social relations. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the subject was widely debated in the Americas because of the Spanish conquerors' and colonizers' treatment of the Indians. Historically, the Catholic Church in colonial Latin America was a sensitive and belligerent activist for the rights of man and for respect of personal dignity. The Latin American pattern of violations of human rights, as well as their defense, is thus an old one that can be traced back several centuries.

Ethical considerations which aim at building a political order with total respect for human dignity have been present throughout history. Value-oriented policies have always been a matter for concern in the Americas and worldwide. But it can be said that it was only after World War II that human rights took on clear political connotations. The war against fascism and nazism was not only waged out of geopolitical or power considerations. In a very important sense, it was presented as a moral crusade in defense of high values, such as freedom, democracy, and full respect for human dignity against all forms of barbarism. In that sense, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be understood as the charter of ethics of the post-war world and the principle of legitimacy of the new political order that was to be born out of the ruins of Nazi totalitarianism.

In the light of historical evidence--for example, Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago--the sincerity of some of the Allied powers that signed the Paris Declaration of 1948 may be questionable. Events in the 30 years that followed the signing have shown that the proclaimed ideals and values of this post-war declaration were rarely respected in vast areas of the world. Nonetheless, the fact is that all of the countries which agreed to form the United Nations were bound to accept those values and moral principles as their official declaration of intentions as to the political order in which their citizens were to live.

Even if the Universal Declaration of the UN was to remain a dead letter and the subject of merely rhetorical manifestations of allegiance, it was able to develop a dynamism of its own that influenced the thought and actions of increasing numbers of people all over the world. Despite setbacks, the development of a worldwide moral consciousness continued to expand during these years. This explains why human rights easily became a major international issue after the emergence of dissidence in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, the shock provoked by the appearance of Latin American right-wing dictatorships, and developments following the Vietnam war in Southeast Asia.

Once a legitimacy principle has been officially acknowledged, its violation is bound to provoke significant political effects. Divorce between principles and actions in the behavior of any government will tend to generate conflict and tension. These certainly can be overwhelmed by physical power and violent repression, but this will not solve the perennial problem of mankind: whether or not the governed accept voluntarily and peacefully the right of their governors to command.

Legitimacy is the cornerstone of any political order, the base of its stability and of its capability to efficiently achieve the collective goals of society. There is not a single power on earth that can avoid the question of legitimacy, and not a single leader who will not do his best to achieve that goal. The cost of governing against the voluntary will of the ruled is too high and too weakening to be sustained in the long term.

Legitimacy cannot be confused with longevity. A political order may not attain legitimacy in the eyes of its people, but still remain in power through coercion for a significant period of time. The result will be the high political and economic cost of repression, and, in the end, the replacement of the governing group by dissident forces. The experience of the communist countries of Eastern Europe is quite impressive on the subject. Developments in the Soviet Union also show the uncertainties of such a political regime each time it opens some space for freedom. The cases of Iran and Nicaragua also show that a regime's long duration in power cannot be understood as a sign of legitimacy or long-lasting stability. When people do not accept as legitimate the right to rule of those who govern them, there will be an inescapable moment in which the regime will collapse. And the less legitimate it is, the more extreme the reaction will be against it and the less of its legacy that will survive it.

The question of legitimacy should be understood as the primary political issue for any regime. And each regime's capability to cope with that issue must be seen in combination with cultural traditions, historical circumstances, and the prevailing moral and spiritual values of its society.

The principal assumption of this work--ascertained by a great deal of historical evidence--is that no legitimate political order can be maintained through serious long-term violations of human rights, especially individual rights and some of the most significant political rights. In this sense, concern for human rights is not only a moral issue but primarily a political one. This obliges all people interested in politics to be aware of the importance of human rights, and not to disclaim them as an obsession of moralistic personalities or highly sensitive souls.

The focus of this work is on basic human rights, defined in the words of former U.S. secretary of state Cyrus Vance as "the right to be free from governmental violation of the integrity of the person. Such violations include torture; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; and arbitrary arrest or imprisonment. And they include denial of fair public trial and invasion of the home."¹ The author would add to that definition, as Vance did, some of the basic civil and political liberties: "freedom of thought, of religion, of assembly; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; freedom of movement both within and outside one's own country; freedom to take part in government."²

This definition does not pretend to identify these human rights with the development of democratic forms of government in the liberal tradition of the West. It only seeks the existence of a political order in which men can enjoy the right to live their lives in agreement with their cultural and spiritual values, and to participate creatively in the construction of society and their own surrounding community. This means acceptance of the possibility that humane and legitimate structures exist, even if not within a classical democracy (although the author very much prefers the democratic forms of government). Nor does this narrow definition mean that the satisfaction of basic human needs is unimportant. It is vital, but its treatment is coextensive to the subject of economic development with all its complexities and variations.

This clarification seems particularly significant in light of the Marxist tendency which equates the problem of human rights with that of accomplishing socialist revolution. This maximalist position proclaims that the only real way to protect human rights is by destroying the capitalist and bourgeois order and thus "liberating" people from their real chains and oppressions. From that point of view, defense of individual and political rights and freedoms is nothing more than a bourgeois hypocrisy diverting attention away from the main factor of an oppressive existing social and economic structure.

Many arguments could be given in response to that position, beyond the historical fact that socialist revolution still has to prove its success as a means of satisfying basic human needs and the economic aspirations of people; moreover, the word "liberation" has a particularly ambiguous sense in light of the deeds of modern totalitarianism. The main argument would differentiate between, on one hand, a poor peasant

who can scarcely make his daily living, and, on the other hand, that same peasant being murdered, after barbarous torture, by his landlord or a security agent. This difference seems clear enough to justify preoccupation with human rights, even in the limited scope chosen for this paper. Human rights cannot be treated as a synonym for economic development or political revolution without opening the door to the most barbarous and cruel forms of oppression and inhuman treatment of people. After the experience of nazism, and the experience of 60 years of communism, facts show that each time a single person is sacrificed on the altar of a "sacred" principle or to the promise of a "golden" future, the doors are opened to inhuman and barbarous situations. Thus, there is no question of trading "bourgeois human rights" of today for the glorious promise of tomorrow's "liberation."

Extending the argument further, it is possible to recognize a link between the violation of human rights and armed political violence. Where naked physical force is considered a valid political argument, human rights cannot be respected or protected. This assumption implies that human rights are violated not only by governments but by any group of persons which believes that its goals can be achieved through the use of violence. Human rights are threatened not only by terrorism "from above" but also by terrorism "from below." This consideration is particularly significant in Latin America, where several governments--generally those with the worst record of human-rights violations--claim that they are being treated unfairly when blamed for their repressive activities whereas no one seems to care very much about deeds of violence accomplished by the terrorist groups against which they proclaim to be at "war."

Human rights cannot be treated with a double standard without voiding them of all significance. Their main assumption and principle is that all men are born equal in dignity, and thus no exception can be made with respect to their rights because of racial, political, economic, or national considerations. In the same sense, a murder, a torture session, an imprisonment without a fair trial, or an abduction are equal violations of human rights whether they are committed by government security agents or by revolutionary militiamen.

Without digressing into how to define a "just war," it can be said that any form of political terrorism is radically incompatible with human-rights concerns. But without making a "double-standard" judgment, it is more unacceptable in the case of State terrorism in those countries that signed the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and whose governments proclaim that document as a major principal of their own legitimacy in ruling their nations.

The use of violence--whether by government forces or private groups--presumes the interweaving of military and political considerations, both of which are involved in achieving the political goals of conquest and maintenance of power. Maintaining an accurate balance between those two considerations has, historically, been politically difficult. Each time that military considerations have imposed themselves over political considerations--which has been quite often--the result has been political defeat. And normally, where military criteria predominate, little consideration is given to human rights. In the end, a rather tautological

conclusion imposes itself: political problems only have political solutions, and in the case where military considerations must be taken into account, these must be duly subordinated to political criteria.

Latin American politics, in the last 15 years, have been very much contaminated by military criteria and concepts. Adversaries were replaced by enemies, agreement replaced by confrontation, negotiation by strategy and tactics, and, in the end, political analysis was replaced by the black-board exercises of war games. Leftist forces inaugurated the trend, and right-wing forces pushed it to its very limit. Because of how bloody the trend proved to be, important lessons can be drawn from it.

Recapitulating, we may say that the use of political violence is a clear signal that human rights are being violated. Once military criteria supersede political criteria in the policies and attitudes of the forces using political violence, those forces will suffer political defeat after it becomes clear that they are unable to achieve legitimacy in their society.

There are classic examples of how military victories give way to appalling political defeats. The best known is that of the French army in Algeria. There, the nationalist guerrillas were militarily overpowered by the colonial army. But the methods employed by the French forces in achieving their victory violated human rights in such ways, through torture and general repression, that the political battle was lost because the war lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the public. France was obliged to grant independence to Algeria. The United States "defeat" in Vietnam can be explained in a similar way. There, it was not a problem of military might, but of a major political defeat that made the military solution unworkable. In both cases, war ceased to be perceived as legitimate by the public, and thus both governments lost the ability to continue the confrontation to final success.

Similar fate has come to a number of revolutionary or independence insurrections, particularly those which developed in Latin America in the late 1960s and mid-1970s. Heavy emphasis on military considerations led those insurrections into extensive violations of human rights, thus alienating potential popular support.

Empirical evidence seems to indicate that the need to legitimize the right to command obliges every political actor to respect human rights. This is obvious in a democratic society, in which people have free access to the news and are able to express their opinions freely. In autocratic or totalitarian regimes, the popular reaction may be less easily perceived, but it will nonetheless make itself felt, even if only by passivity and withdrawal of active support from the authorities. Despite the many different cultural values found around the world, they will rarely be indifferent to murder, cruelty, oppression, and what we generally understand as respect for basic human rights. Certainly there is no such indifference in Western cultures, and failure to understand this fact has proved to be a major political mistake on the part of both the extreme right and the extreme left in Latin American politics during the 15 years under study.

2. The Illusion of the 1960s:
The Belief in Imminent Revolution

The idea that Latin America's societies were ripe for general revolution, just waiting for the spark to ignite it, could be called the capital sin of the left in the last 15 years of Latin American history. Events proved that the situation was dramatically different.

The idea emerged with the Cuban revolution and the establishment of Fidel Castro's government. An ideological and military interpretation of the Cuban revolution led to an unrealistic diagnosis of the political situation of the entire continent.

The basic reasoning in that misleading interpretation was based on the assumption that Cuba demonstrated two major historical truths: first, the eagerness of Latin America to evolve from capitalistic societies into socialist ones, and second, the idea that political violence, of the insurrectional type, had proved to be a viable instrument for political revolution--that guerrillas could defeat professional armies. Both assumptions were false.

In fact, the interpretation of Fidel Castro's revolution as a major conquest for socialism and anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America was an ex-post-facto analysis of what had really happened in Cuba. To begin with, Castro did not promise a socialist experiment in Cuba until well after he had gained total control of power. His Sierra Maestra program was one designed to oust a corrupt dictatorship and re-establish liberal democracy. Not a single word about socialism was spoken, unless Castro's call for agrarian reform is interpreted in that sense, which would be an overstatement because of the broad consensus on the need for agrarian reform among moderate and reformist political forces throughout the continent.

On the contrary, in the early stages of the revolution, Cuban leaders tried to explain by all possible means that they were not Marxists, and that they did not intend to establish a communist regime. The same message was reiterated by early supporters of Castro's revolution throughout the Western world. The accusation of communism sounded like the typical reactionary response--in a Cold-War era--to any major transformation of the status quo affecting capitalistic interests around the world.

Among the first disillusionments to many early supporters of the Cuban revolution were the "paredón," the growing number of executions following "popular tribunals," and the consistent postponement of free elections. The extent of their disillusionment proves how remote the idea of a communist movement was to Castro's normal sympathetic followers in the struggle to overthrow Batista's dictatorship. In the early days, one of the principal responses to "imperialist propaganda" was the reminder that the Cuban Communist Party had been one of Batista's most faithful supporters until almost the very end.

The second false assumption was that Castro had won a major military victory against the regular Cuban army. The guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra and in the "second front" of the Escambray mountains never won a

major military victory throughout the confrontation. It is true that the Cuban army was unable to expel the guerrillas from the mountains, but it is also true that the guerrillas were unable to travel very far away from their hiding places except in hit-and-run operations until almost the very end. When Batista fled from Cuba on New Year's Eve of 1959, Castro was far from Havana, and it took him almost a week, in a victorious procession, to arrive and install himself in power.

Castro's success was a political success and not a military one. His ability to disembark on the island and elude capture was a major political event that gave confidence to the opposition, pushing them toward a united front of action and inspiring the general feeling that Batista's days were numbered. On the other side, the activation of the internal opposition--primarily the uprising of the urban middle class, students, and intellectuals--plus external solidarity and general sympathy towards them, caused the dictator to lose his temper. General repression was his answer to opposition activated by the hope represented by Castro's guerrillas in Sierra Maestra.

Batista made the mistake of trying to obtain a military victory in a political struggle. The result was accelerated antagonism among significant and influential social and political sectors, and the progressive loss of popular support. When the dictator decided to leave Cuba, he had not been militarily defeated. His army, although corrupt and demoralized, was quite intact and top officers were loyal to him. Batista had been politically defeated and had lost all significant support. The cost of massive general repression was growing higher each day. By the end, Batista had violated every legitimating principle he could invoke for continuing to rule Cuba. Fidel Castro had won a major political victory with modest military power.

If these facts had been correctly interpreted, subsequent Latin American history would probably have taken a very different direction. Instead, what resulted was an idealization of guerrilla warfare and the extrapolation of the Cuban situation to the whole continent. The United States' hostility to the newly born revolutionary experience, which culminated in the Bay of Pigs fiasco, was the romantic element that was missing from this "David vs. Goliath" struggle in a continent filled with resentment toward the rich and powerful United States, mainly because of the latent support which the latter had given to repressive regimes throughout the region. The Cuban revolution was seen not only as proof that insurgent violence could defeat regular armies, and that socialism was possible in Latin America, but also that any small country--no matter how near to, and dependent on, the United States--could liberate itself from imperialistic intervention.

These elements, as interpreted, were enough to trigger a major political upheaval in Latin America. More was to come, as if to confirm to the new ideologues that their theories were correct. The middle and late 1960s witnessed rebellions by youths and minorities in the Western world, and those rebellions were interpreted to signify that the capitalist and bourgeois order was not only being challenged from outside--by the Cuban revolution, by the independence movement in the colonial world, by the growing power of the socialist countries, and by the results of the Vietnam

war--but that it was being challenged from inside as well. The predominant mood of the moment was that a "paper tiger" was on the verge of collapse.

The civil-rights movement in the United States was followed by the radical black movement and the revolutionary movement born out of radicalization of the anti-Vietnam-war mobilization, soon followed in turn by the French student revolt of 1968. Berkeley, Paris, Nanterre, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Rome were the new signs that capitalism had entered the stage of decadence. The old order was being questioned in an unprecedented way.

These events nurtured a widespread mood that the world was on the brink of revolution. Socialism was near, and with it the promise of a new world of justice, freedom, and brotherhood. All the evils of humankind were going to be buried along with the old capitalistic and bourgeois monster. The only element missing was the methodology that would be the midwife of the inevitable revolution. And that methodology was discovered to be violent guerrilla warfare, which had proved its virtues in Cuba and was reaching new heights in Vietnam against the almighty imperialist power of the United States.

The concept of Latin American revolution soon received an adequate intellectual background. The admonition of Che Guevara that the continent would soon be converted into "one, two, three,... many Vietnams" became perfectly coherent with what seemed to be inevitable historical fate.

Misinterpretation of the Cuban revolution spread around the world, and even led to a questioning of Marxist orthodoxy by violent new theories. Guevara, Regis Debray, Carlos Marighela, Abraham Guillén, and others developed a complete ideology of armed struggle. Putting aside Leninist theory of the Party and Mao's and Ho Chi Minh's writings on rural guerrilla warfare, they shifted their attention from political struggle to construction of the "foco," which by its growing strength was to be the vital nucleus of revolutionary upheaval. They also shifted their attention from rural guerrilla warfare to the urban environment, "where people were."

Political violence was no longer a praxis but an ideology, and its contagion was very rapid throughout Latin America. Guerrilla movements were born in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Uruguay. In Chile in 1967, at a time when all civil and political liberties were available, the Socialist Party declared in its congress in the city of Chillan that the path toward peaceful revolution was closed and that violent struggle was the only path open to social reform.

The fate of these guerrilla movements was different in many aspects, but very similar in one: their total failure. In some countries, such as Venezuela, Uruguay, and Argentina, the political and military threat of the guerrillas was very serious and represented a major challenge to incumbent regimes. In countries such as Bolivia and Peru, guerrillas were never able to achieve even minimum support from the local populations they were supposed to be "liberating," and were wiped out by the military without much difficulty. Had it not been for the death of Che Guevara, the guerrillas in those two countries would have been unnoticed and had minimal political influence. In Colombia, they were so far away in the countryside that they received little attention and posed minimum threats.

The death of a priest, Camilo Torres, was the only significant, and symbolic, impact of that campaign. In Chile, no guerrilla warfare was ever launched, but the political impact of verbal propaganda calling for "votes no, guns yes" was very serious and became a significant element in the polarization of Chilean society that ended with the coup d'etat against President Allende. In Brazil, guerrillas gained some notoriety but were quickly crushed by the military government in a campaign of massive repression.

Some conclusions can be drawn from these experiences. The first is that rural guerrillas--the more orthodox ones of "foco" or Sierra Maestra model--proved to have no influence at all. The indifference, if not hostility, of the peasants was very clear. In some areas, the cultural and linguistic differences separating peasants, Indians, and middle-class revolutionaries were appalling. The continent was not ripe for revolution, and the poor rural masses were not eager to transform their countries into new Vietnams that would destroy capitalism and imperialism.

A second conclusion is that the theories of Marighela and Guillén, calling for urban rather than rural revolutionary movements, proved to be the most appropriate blueprints for Latin American revolution, given the process of modernization that Latin America was undergoing. Misinterpretation of the Cuban experience had led many other revolutionaries in the wrong direction. Urban guerrillas proved to be more effective and a major political influence in those countries that experienced them. They also demonstrated, incidentally, that guerrilla warfare in urban conditions inevitably ends in terrorism. Even the "Robin Hood" type of guerrilla, such as the Tupamaros of Uruguay, adopted the practice of widespread terrorism: killing randomly, abducting "nonbelligerent" personalities for propagandistic or economic reasons, maintaining "people's prisons," and spreading fear and insecurity throughout society.

This evolution of guerrilla warfare into terrorism leads to a third and most important conclusion: revolutionary movements were politically defeated long before they were crushed militarily. Popular reaction to widespread terror and crime is one of condemnation and repulsion. In Venezuela, the guerrillas were defeated by popular antagonism in the minds of the public long before they were extinguished by total lack of support. In Uruguay, the Tupamaros' popularity declined emphatically once they engaged in general terrorism, and particularly after the murder of a U.S. police advisor, Dan Mitrione. Public-opinion surveys showed empirically how quickly their popular support plummeted. In Argentina, the ERP and Montoneros were never able to generate great popular support. They antagonized the urban middle class and created a public mood which greeted the intervention of the armed forces with joy.

Theoreticians of the urban guerrilla movement were certainly correct in asserting that the news media assure the propaganda needed for the revolutionary movement: information about every revolutionary event is disseminated by journalists to large numbers of people. But they did not perceive that terrorism may be a two-edged sword, and that publicity could bring public repulsion instead of approval and support. This is in fact what happened in Latin America.

Terrorism and "armed propaganda" need publicity; without it they cannot succeed. The reverse is true of State terrorism (torture, in particular) which requires absolute secrecy and discretion. Revolutionary terrorism publicizes its victims; State terrorism hides and denies its.

But what are the common man's perceptions as a result of terrorism? Fear of going out on the streets and into public places. A permanent feeling of insecurity. Evidence of innocent people killed by bombs or street shootings. Dead policemen, whose personal and family lives are sympathetically described by the media, and who for very few people in a complex society are perceived as "symbols" of bourgeois repression and exploitation. Abducted diplomats and businessmen, whose drama is presented in detail to the public. Pathetic pictures of men in inhuman cells, called "people's prisons." A revolutionary language generally quite alien to common preoccupations and allegiances. In sum, the common man perceives a climate of shocking events that interrupt his normal search for progress and security.

Complex societies, with important and growing middle classes whose cultural traditions have a strong liberal and Christian influence, have demonstrated that they are very much opposed to terrorism. That particular form of violation of basic human rights has proved unacceptable to large segments of the population. And thus guerrillas were condemned to political isolation and very little popular support. Their goal of conquering power through arms was a major failure, and the cost in human lives which they paid in their attempt was tragic.

Misunderstanding of the Cuban revolution led revolutionary movements to the highly unrealistic conclusion that modern, professional armed forces could be easily defeated by irregular armed groups. Their disregard for human rights then proved to be a major mistake in their effort to create popular support and achieve the legitimacy necessary for gaining power and implementing social reform.

In most cases, revolutionary movements were defeated both militarily and politically. This shows that the theory of the "foco" was far from being the method that triggered revolution. The only two cases in which revolutionary movements have succeeded--Cuba and Nicaragua--were both cases of general popular opposition to the incumbent regimes in which it cannot be said that the guerrilla "foco" was the starting point. In spite of romantic rhetoric, or mere propaganda, neither in Cuba nor in Nicaragua were rural guerrillas the element which generated urban opposition or rallied the middle classes against the dictatorship, support which proved indispensable in both countries. Seen in that perspective, political armed violence has proven to be successful only in conditions where there is general opposition by the people against an order which they believe is illegitimate and unbearable. Under these conditions, all means are considered acceptable, and the actors who prove most effective in scaring or irritating the dictator are the ones who will rally the most support and cement the rest of the opposition.

The original idea that the "foco" was sufficient to create revolutionary conditions in society proved to be politically and militarily wrong. If people do not perceive their situation to be desperate and are not

already in some form of rebellion, the guerrilla appeal will not be listened to and will appear strange and useless. Furthermore, in the case of urban terrorism, revolutionary activities may provide a counter-productive impact. People are scared by revolution and preserve whatever order they have, so long as it is familiar and tolerable to them in relation to their traditional lifestyles and their expectations for the future.

The relationship between political legitimacy and respect for human rights has proved to be quite close. In addition to the tragic death toll of an entire revolutionary generation, the guerrillas failed to achieve their goal of triggering a socialist revolution, and instead aroused a reactionary counter-revolution that represented, in several countries, a major setback for previous social and political accomplishments in favor of the poor and the common man. Political violence proved to be a dramatically useless and sterile instrument. In the early 1980s, no one would think that revolution is imminent in Latin America. Certainly not in South America. And we will look more closely at the situation in Central America.

3. The Illusion of the 1970s: Nostalgia for the Cold War

The phenomenon of the installation of a communist government in Cuba affected not only the Cuban people. It also had important political consequences in the rest of the continent. Until then, the Cold War had been a theoretical problem for Latin America's armed forces, which were in close contact with the U.S. Pentagon, whose military assistance was highly valued and whose influence became increasingly greater through institutions such as the Inter-American Defense System, the Inter-American Defense College, and the School of the Americas in Panama. In the 1960s, the Cold War was brought to the American continent by what was seen as a major political and military threat--as the Cuban revolution proclaimed its intention to support "imminent revolution" in the rest of the region by creating "one, two, three, many Vietnams..." for the United States and its allies. The Cold War ceased to be a merely theoretical problem and came to be perceived as a major practical challenge for every country. The "enemy" was no longer in distant geographical places but was to be found within every country in the form of an internal ideological enemy supported by a continental power with links to the Soviet Union.

The death of Che Guevara in Bolivia did not put an end to that perception. On the contrary, it offered concrete proof that Cuba intended to "subvert" political order throughout the region. If there remained any doubt about the expansionist character of the Cuban revolution, Guevara's efforts in Bolivia finished it. The Latin American armed forces now saw themselves as major actors in the Cold War between the West and the communist East. They had an important role to play against a concrete and active foe. It mattered little that their enemies were citizens of their own countries, because the threat was an ideological one. On their own side, the revolutionary forces considered their foes to be the local armed forces and the bourgeois government "supported" by the United States.

Thus, it was not strange that the experiences of the French army in Algeria and the U.S. experience in South Vietnam became the major lessons to be studied in facing the new challenge. National-security doctrine emerged as an ideological framework for the Latin American armies, and the proposed theory of "ideological borders" in the continent became one of its most obvious corollaries.

One of the most surprising aspects of this evolution was the absolute lack of conscience that Latin America's civilian governments and political forces displayed in regard to what was going on in their national armed forces. Until the Brazilian military takeover in 1964 and the subsequent Argentine military coup, this major new element of political development in the region was not perceived at all. And it was only after the military institutional takeovers in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina (after the Peronist government) that the first analyses of the phenomenon began to appear. Traditional dictatorships such as Stroessner's in Paraguay and Somoza's in Nicaragua were the last remnants of a by-gone era. The era of national security had begun, with its basic perception that the entire world was at war against communism, and that that war must be fought in every country, with the same methods, ideas, and criteria of a conventional war. Later on, differences would appear in different countries.

Denunciations of the major violations of human rights that occurred under such regimes provided overwhelming evidence that something new was erupting in Latin American political life. First in Brazil (the success story of military institutional government), and then in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, and, lately, Bolivia, attention began to be focused on the human-rights movement.

State terrorism surfaced as an answer to the revolutionary guerrilla threat of the 1960-mid-1970s period. The armed forces felt themselves to be at war against communism and political violence, and determined that methods of war should be used in solving political conflicts in their societies. Social and political liberties were severely circumscribed, torture became a normal practice, illegal detentions and disappearances became a new nightmare, and a general deterioration of civic life was the final result of this new pattern, whose similarities in every country are striking. These processes produced a strong record of human-rights violations in each country, and these have been accurately reported by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches, and local groups of the Catholic Church and other humanitarian institutions.

That violations of human rights occurred under these military regimes is no longer an allegation but a firm empirical fact. It is not necessary to describe the horrors that occurred in those countries during the 1970s. There is enough documentation and proof about what happened, to whom it happened, and the way in which it happened. From the point of view of this paper, it is not the description of the human-rights violations that matters, but the political impact that those violations have had on the general development of the countries of the region.

The major goal of each of these military institutional governments is to create a stable and legitimate political order that will, in the future, guarantee the complete defeat of the communist threat. This is an avowed goal in some cases and an implicit one in others (for example, in Argentina, where no public attacks are directed against the communists).

The question, then, is how much of this stable and legitimate political order can be attained through policies that represent gross violations of human rights. By definition and by self-recognition, military institutional regimes are not permanent. In their various forms, their alleged pledge is a return to democracy, no matter how "protected" they want that democracy to be. But at the same time, they seek to establish the foundation of a radically new political order, one compatible with democracy and with anti-communist national security.

There is no empirical evidence as to how successful these types of regimes can be in attaining their goal, because all of them are still in power. The only way of analyzing this question is by analogy with similar experiences elsewhere in the world--specifically, in Greece, Spain, and Portugal. In those cases, despite the longevity of the authoritarian regimes, some common elements can be perceived.

Cultural resistance to change is one of the most striking elements in this comparative analysis. People do not voluntarily accept every value-oriented imposition made by a government. They may be obliged to remain silent, but they do not easily alter their values and their allegiances. This is shown mainly by the pattern of political preference which emerges once the authoritarian regime is ousted, the political parties for which the majority votes, and the political leaders who receive public confidence. Evidence shows that the propaganda and repression used by authoritarian regimes to erase those values and feelings were unsuccessful. A nation's past, its traditions, and its loyalties are not erased by decree.

Lack of resistance to an authoritarian regime cannot be interpreted as popular support. Once freedom is reestablished, the supporters of the former authoritarian regime receive little support from the people. In fact, the authoritarian regime is forgotten, along with its institutions, its laws, and its principles. In some cases, as in Greece, a spirit of revenge arises. Thus, under authoritarian regimes, it is perfectly understandable that although public order may be respected, although no violent signals are in the air, although everybody maintains silence and the controlled media proclaim the strength of the regime, the regime's primary goals are nevertheless far from being achieved.

To these efforts of authoritarian regimes, one can apply the well-known Spanish saying: "Sire, the dead men that you killed are enjoying good health." Once the authoritarian regime's tenure ends, everything it tried to eliminate returns to assume its old place in reality.

In this sense, it is important to perceive how much support the authoritarian regime achieves from the most deeply-rooted and permanent institutions in society: the churches, traditional political parties and leaders, intellectuals, and social, cultural, and regional movements.

When these institutions are in opposition to the regime, or maintain antagonistic relations with the incumbents, it may be assumed that the regime's long-range goals are not being achieved and that the governors are enjoying little social or political legitimacy. In the end, these are the forces which are going to prevail, because they interpret the most profound cultural values and allegiances of the people.

The more an authoritarian government must use repression and violation of human rights to remain in power and enhance its ideological project, the weaker it is. Government repression is proof of political dissidence or social unrest in the population, whether it is real or merely perceived as real by the authorities. A highly repressive government is almost a synonym for a highly unpopular one, and thus one that will be very unstable in the long run. It is a mistake to believe that political legitimacy can be acquired by force rather than by persuasion and conviction.

Here again appears the link between political development and human rights. If a government needs to use violence, and thus violates human rights, it is only because it lacks voluntary support from its people--thus, it has not achieved a sufficient level of legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Can there be a gradation of human-rights violations? Are there high, moderate, or low-ranking human-rights violations? The answer is no. In fact, occasional and random violations of human rights may occur under a regime--for example, police abuses, individual criminal actions, or outbreaks of uncontrolled anger. But no one can call such a regime a human-rights violator as long as these events do not respond to a definite and sustained pattern of action, officially known and approved. This is the major question to be put to a government which deliberately decides that it needs to use violence to maintain itself in power, crush the opposition, and implement its political goals. In such a case, the question of whether much, moderate, or little violation of human rights occurs is irrelevant from the point of view of the regime's ability to achieve legitimacy. It may be relevant only in the sense that a less brutal repression will take a longer time to trigger a social upheaval, but that factor will not change the regime's fate.

Human-rights violations cannot be ranked or graded by their level of "tolerability." One can only determine that human rights are being violated, without determining if 100 or 200 violations are tolerable. The threshold of toleration will vary according to the cultural traditions of each society. In a given society at a given historical moment, one murder committed by security agents will be enough to overthrow the government. Under other conditions, more tolerance toward the authorities will exist. But in neither case will a civilized society tolerate the violation of basic human rights as a natural basis for authorities to remain in power. The public may be misinformed or fooled for a while, but once the truth surfaces, the regime will not be able to achieve its goal of being accepted as a legitimate authority.

The inability to grade human-rights violations does not deny the differences that exist between a totalitarian regime and an authoritarian regime. In the former, control of power is total and there is no space

for individual freedom; in the latter, there are spaces for freedom where the power of the government does not intervene, even though the government secures all necessary means to remain in power. In that sense, an authoritarian regime tolerates defense of human rights more than a totalitarian one.

In Latin America with the exception of Cuba, there are no totalitarian regimes--only authoritarian regimes which permit relative freedom in some areas (such as religion), which accept the survival of some social or cultural institutions, and which tolerate some spaces for free opinion, trying to secure a certain traditional legitimacy that associates the regime with some of the country's long established traditions and institutions. Those spaces of freedom permit the monitoring of human-rights violations, within certain limits. At least the churches can speak out in denunciation, some of the media may transmit a certain amount of factual information, and some organizations can work on behalf of the victims of repression. This situation permits a quicker reaction against governmental actions, and certainly makes more difficult the achievement of legitimacy by the ruling forces. Society is not absolutely overwhelmed by the State, but this does not mean that the death toll, feelings of terror among the population, risks of dissidence, and massive repression are not still the main features of such a regime.

Differences between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are found in the degree of information which the populace--or certain sectors of it--may have concerning what is going on, and in the amount of spaces of action available for some degree of organized opposition with limited risks. But these differences say nothing about the willingness of those in power to use all available repressive methods to remain in power, or about their ability to violate as many human rights as are necessary for achieving that goal.

Once human-rights violations become a pattern of action under an authoritarian regime, some important political effects appear. The first is a clear signal that military criteria are predominating over political criteria in the management of the country. That is, political life is being treated as a generalized war in which "the enemy" must be totally defeated, and thus no efforts are being made to generate political consensus or to find a peaceful solution in the construction of a new political order. Imposition rather than negotiation is the law of war underlining every major violation of human rights. When this attitude is pushed too far, major political crises are to be expected in that society.

The second effect is that the pattern of human-rights violations produces deep antagonism among important institutions and groups that normally enjoy a high degree of social and political legitimacy in the country. Governments begin to grow politically isolated, and moderate forces, humanitarian and spiritual institutions begin to mobilize in more active, if not total, opposition. This process is particularly significant when the powerful and influential Catholic Church becomes the major opposition force to an authoritarian regime.

These two effects set in motion a vicious circle that becomes extremely costly to the authoritarian ruler. He must increasingly widen the circles of his foes, including not only the original communist enemy,

but moderate groups, religious groups, cultural institutions, and not infrequently the Church itself--which makes it increasingly difficult to obtain any significant degree of legitimacy among the people. Unable to generate political consent or support, the authoritarian regime must rely on the use of naked repressive power, a situation which only increases opposition and makes it more evident to wider sectors of the population that the government lacks real legitimacy to rule the country.

The case of Somoza in Nicaragua, because it was so extreme, shows in an exemplary way the function of this vicious circle. Somoza committed two basic political mistakes that were to result in his ultimate defeat: a clear primacy of military criteria over political criteria, and a pattern of human-rights violations that antagonized the whole society against his regime--with the moderates adding their support to the insurrectional movement.

The excesses of the dictator eventually began to be perceived as intolerable by increasingly larger sectors of Nicaraguan society. The Sandinista guerrillas were not perceived at the time as a threat that justified the levels of repression which the government was randomly applying to the insurrection's alleged supporters and sympathizers. In that general repression, many abuses were committed, an increasing number of victims being peaceful innocent citizens. The moderates began to protest in louder terms. The Church first expressed its concern, then its opposition, and finally its condemnation. The legitimacy of the Somoza family as the governing authority of Nicaragua was increasingly questioned. Somoza thus began to feel himself under increasing pressure to leave power, and he reacted against an increasingly larger number of individuals and social and political groups.

The murder of well-known journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro marked the turning point. The moderates mobilized against the dictatorship, which insisted on solving the crisis by military means. Thus, the repression increased, and so did the opposition. No political solution was possible because Somoza was convinced that he had enough force to cope with any opposition. He failed to perceive the increasing loss of legitimacy that was eroding his power.

Gross violations of human rights not only provoked the radicalization of the moderates inside Nicaragua, but generated a worldwide international reaction against Somoza. Soon, the dictatorship was politically isolated, internally and internationally. In the end, even though it remained militarily strong, it was defeated politically, and Somoza was forced to yield power to the insurrectionist movement.

The Nicaraguan situation runs the risk of being misinterpreted in the same way that the Cuban experience was misinterpreted 20 years ago. Somoza's defeat was not a military defeat but a political one. The Sandinistas gained power less on the success of their machine-guns than because of the general rebellion against a brutal repression that represented an extreme pattern of human-rights violations. Like Castro's guerrillas earlier, the Sandinista guerrillas did not defeat the Nicaraguan National Guard militarily; their strength was in being the political spark and symbol that cemented the opposition against Somoza and provoked the

repressive over-reaction of the dictator. Somoza committed the same mistakes and crimes that had led Batista to his total defeat.

A military analysis of the Nicaraguan revolution shows that the Sandinistas were not a major threat until after the murder of Chamorro. Until then, the moderates had not participated actively in the rebellion. Even then, had Somoza not been so stubborn in remaining in power and closing off any possible political solution, the Sandinistas would not have been the major political force that they are today. Their military was never a match for the regular army, and their survival was possible only because of the sanctuaries they were given in Costa Rica that permitted them to attack and retreat without committing themselves to permanent battle. When Somoza fled, the National Guard was still loyal and powerful enough to sustain the war for a much longer time. Not even international isolation could have destroyed the Guard's power, given the assistance it was receiving from some countries. Until the very last moment, Somoza had strength enough to massacre most of the Nicaraguan people; what he did not have was the political legitimacy to rule under peaceful terms.

The claim that the Nicaraguan revolution was a result of the Carter administration's human-rights policies is an overstatement. It was not the United States which initiated the process of insurrection or which radicalized it by means of general repression against Sandinistas and moderates alike. The main causes of the Nicaraguan insurrection can only be traced to Somoza himself. It is clear that an important political element in the situation was the fact that human-rights considerations caused the United States to withdraw its support of Somoza. It is also true that had that support been maintained, the crisis would have been longer and bloodier. Nevertheless, the final result would probably have been the same. U.S. efforts to shift power from a critically isolated Somoza to the opposition pointed toward the moderates rather than the Sandinistas as the best alternative. At the very end, when Somoza had closed every political solution, the United States tried to save the National Guard and keep it as an equilibrating force in the new Nicaraguan situation. But events had gone too far to permit any political solution short of the unconditional surrender of the Somoza dynasty. The U.S. government was a significant element in the Nicaraguan revolution, but certainly was not the decisive one.

The Carter administration's policy toward Nicaragua had at least two important consequences. First, the fall of Somoza was not interpreted anywhere in the region as a major political defeat for U.S. imperialism--not even by the new Sandinista rulers, who were particularly interested in making their experience the first left-wing political success in Latin America without the United States as its main foe. Second, the U.S. stand on human rights and its anti-Somoza position in the final stages contributed to the fact that very few excesses against human rights occurred in Nicaragua after the fall of the dictatorship. Moderate forces still have influence and respect in the country, and, at least until now, the Nicaraguan revolution is not on the totalitarian path of the Cuban revolution.

To what extent could Somoza's experience be similar to the situation of the military institutional regimes elsewhere in Latin America? Certainly the Nicaraguan extreme case has its own particularities which make it

unique in many respects. But with regard to the relationship between human rights and political development, some important analogies can be made between these situations.

We have suggested that a clear pattern of human-rights violations tends to alienate the support which authoritarian regimes receive from moderate political groups and influential institutions such as the Catholic Church. Different levels of repression certainly make a difference between the development of peaceful methods of opposition and a general insurrection such as that in Nicaragua. But repression has very similar effects in a regime's acquiring any significant level of legitimacy among its people.

Let us review the impact which human-rights violations have on the political legitimacy of an authoritarian regime. A pattern of gross human-rights violations cannot exist in a country unless the government has decided to use State terrorism as a major instrument. And because one of the main goals of terrorism is to produce widespread terror among the population, generalized fear becomes the main characteristic of the relationship between the authorities and the people. This means that whatever support such a regime may have is mainly passive rather than active support among wide sectors of the population. In the end, that is not the way to construct a legitimate and long-lasting political order. When fearful passivity takes the place of active and rational support, the stability of the regime will last only as long as it is able to enforce its repressive capability.

Even in those cases in which authoritarian regimes are a product of popular reaction against revolutionary warfare or terrorism, the initial support erodes quickly once the authorities are perceived to be practicing the same evils which they were supposed to be combatting. This process may not be rapid, but, as time goes by, past events tend to fade in peoples' memories, while the active pattern of repression remains a fact of the present, thus challenging the incumbent authority and the generally accepted legitimate principles of conducting public affairs.

State terrorism cannot legitimate itself very long in the name of the threat represented by revolutionary terrorism. Once news of what the government is doing reaches significant segments of population, important social and political consequences can be expected.

The most pervasive political consequences of a long-term violation of human rights were discussed by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his address to the Swedish Academy upon receipt of the Nobel Prize: violence and lies go hand-in-hand; they cannot exist separately. Violence cannot show its naked face, and needs lies to disguise itself under more respectable names. Lying cannot be done in a systematic way, unless enough force is available to impose lies and keep truth from the public. Thus, the entire society begins to be corrupted by the tragic alliance of lies and violence.

Few people would deny that the construction of a democratic political order takes time--enough time for institutions to become sufficiently solid, for democratic attitudes to become rooted in daily life, for democratic values and principles to become part of a culture and become widely

accepted by the people. But few people pay much attention to the pervasive impact of destroying civic virtues and moral principles through a general reign of lies. When lying becomes a regular attitude, the credibility of all major social and political institutions suffers. Explanations are not believed. Media arguments receive little attention, while rumor is generalized and foreign publications or radio programs become a widespread source of information. The judiciary system loses its respectability along with its reputation for being impartial in the administration of the law and independent from governmental influences and power. The police are perceived as a threat, not as a protective institution at the service of peaceful, unarmed citizens. And in the end, the authorities are isolated from the population because no one is willing to express his or her real thoughts and feelings, so that no one knows what is really going on in that society, until problems produce crises, and solutions become too late and too costly.

When lying becomes a general practice among groups in power, cynicism tends to be the general mood of the people: a loss of faith in civic and moral virtues, an internal retreat by people who feel that it is too risky to become involved in public or community matters--an outrageous reaction among those with a moral and value-oriented approach to public matters. And the longer such a situation lasts, the deeper the corruption it provokes, and the larger the number of people who are pushed into the vicious circle. The armed forces know what is happening but must deny it. Diplomats represent the "unjust and false" charges their governments are receiving abroad. Civil servants cannot tell what they know or are converted into accomplices of human-rights violations. In the end, a mass citizenry does not want to believe what is being said, and prefers to close its minds and hearts to the evidence, or simply becomes cynical about it and tries to justify it in the name of their own interests.

Particular reflection is needed in the case of torture. There are few empirical studies on the psychological effect it has on its victims. Nevertheless, some studies conducted on survivors of Nazi concentration camps and some partial investigations done by Amnesty International have found more or less permanent damage in people who have undergone torture. The "tortured syndrome" observed in the Southern Cone of Latin America--whereby individuals who have undergone torture absolutely refuse to refer to the experience, even in the most intimate circumstances--demonstrates the existence of serious emotional problems. Thus, the human emotional, psychological, and in many cases physical, damage resulting from torture can be presumed to be very serious. This creates a paradox: while, on one hand, governments foster institutions to protect the mental health of their population, on the other, their security forces are producing large-scale mental illness among the population.

Some evidence is available from the Nazi and communist experiences concerning how people react to massive violations of human rights, the feelings they develop toward their governments and ideological symbols, and (particularly in the German case) the long-lasting traumas which eventual disclosures of truth can provoke in an entire generation. There is little reason to believe that anything different will occur in Latin American countries under severe repressive conditions.

Another vicious circle characteristic of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is that the more repressive they have been, the more afraid they are of opening their political systems. They become the prisoners of their own guilty consciences, and prisoners of the fear of their own people's revenge. This leads the government to entrench itself in power and to create conditions that will guarantee its future security by retaining a decisive role as arbiter of any political order that comes after it. The new ideas about "protected democracies" and "national security powers" over elected authorities currently developing in the Southern Cone are efforts to cope with these concerns.

In societies with old and firm Christian and liberal traditions, authoritarian regimes can suppose that their successors in power will be, not their political and ideological heirs, but rather movements and parties opposed to their rule and methods. In such cases, the issue of human rights becomes a crucial one, and can explain many political situations in such countries.

It is impossible to be naïve about the human-rights issue. A large number of other issues influence people's behavior, and some of those issues are perhaps more important than the social and political freedom of the common man. The world is not inhabited only by idealistic and compassionate people. Other more earthly interests and elements motivate people. But it is nevertheless true that even those preoccupations need some form of superior legitimacy, in the name of the common good of all society. And it is for that reason that cultural, moral, and spiritual forces are very significant. Although idealists and moralists do not constitute all of social reality, still no society can work smoothly and peacefully without them. Power, wealth, and material interest can explain some aspects of social and political life, but they are not exhaustive explanations of reality or human existence. This is why, for the legitimation of any social, political, or economic order, the attitudes of churches, intellectuals, scholars, artists, and moral leaders are a decisive element.

In the case of the authoritarian regimes of Latin America, another significant element must be considered: anti-communism is their legitimating principle. Worldwide struggle against communism has historically been based--and could hardly have been otherwise, since the communist movement is a highly ideological one--on a strong emphasis on such values as democracy, freedom, and human dignity. The struggle is value-oriented, or it will have little chance of success. Its political motivation cannot be sustained--at least not in the Third World--merely in terms of economic freedom, geopolitical power struggle, primacy of U.S. or Western global interests, or defense of the rich in the face of increasing demands by the poor.

A clear weakness of the Western democracies in their Cold War confrontation with the USSR and the communist movement was the inconsistency that existed between the values and principles which the West invoked in legitimating the confrontation and the political behavior of many of the regimes that participated in the crusade for the "free world." The ideological double-standard of that policy, in terms of the true meaning of freedom, was one of the principal reasons for its failure to raise massive support throughout the world.

Authoritarian regimes in Latin America are guilty of that same inconsistency in a much more serious way, because human-rights consciousness has been sharply raised and levels of repression, torture, and disappearances have skyrocketed in contrast to more traditional types of dictatorships. The fact that dissidents in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil read the books and writings of Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, Pliutch, Bukovsky, and others in order to understand the logic of repression, not in the Soviet Union but in their own countries, shows the abyss of the contradiction. Anti-communism fought with the methods of the KGB, official censorship, and the repudiation of pluralism, is absurd per se, and when government-controlled or -tolerated media condemn violations of human rights in the East while keeping silent about what happens in their own countries, they are considered outrageously hypocritical by significant groups. The same is true when the media praise Lech Walesa's movement in Poland while actively justifying repression of local trade-union leaders, or denouncing Soviet behavior in the Madrid Conference as unacceptable while their own countries' ministers of foreign affairs behave similarly in the OAS General Assembly.

Latin American societies are more ideological than those of the capitalist West, so that the ideological component of any political struggle is more significant. A perceptible contradiction between a policy and the values it claims to be pursuing is an almost sure way of making it unacceptable to important segments of the population. Ideological consistency is a major element of stability and public respect for any government. Thus, when a Latin American nation is perceived by foreign powers to be an important ally in the world struggle against communism, it must not forget that--despite its geopolitical significance, its strength, size, or wealth--its internal stability is determined by much more complex and varied elements.

As an example, much recent writing in the United States about the fate of the Shah of Iran is useful. Some analysts apparently interpret the Shah's fall as a consequence of the Carter administration's foreign policy, and attach little significance to the internal factors that triggered his collapse. It is certainly possible to debate whether a collapsing regime may be helped and successfully supported by foreign aid, but that does not explain why a popular movement rebelled against the regime or its deep motivations for doing so. Nor does it explain why, after the Shah's collapse, the very principle of legitimacy by which he claimed his right to rule Iran was buried under tons of resentment and hatred. Even if the United States had been successful in supporting the Shah, it cannot erase the fact that his regime lacked any significant legitimacy in the eyes of the Iranian people. It is not possible to confuse "real-politik" or political wishful thinking with political stability and legitimacy. You can work out a temporary solution on the former basis, but not a long-term solution without the latter.

In Latin America, the armed forces have perceived themselves as stepping into political life with the general support of the people and for the sake of national survival in the face of a communist or a terrorist threat. Without discussing how accurate that perception is, it must at least be said that the methods they use are inconsistent with the goals they proclaim. The military goals of totally defeating their enemy are incompatible within the country. External foes may be defeated totally,

but internal foes must be incorporated into a new political order, unless genocide is seen as desirable or possible. When these incompatible goals and methods are mixed, it is impossible to expect political success.

In the same way, terrorism is unable to achieve significant popular support. State terrorism is unable to achieve political stability or legitimacy. People are not pushed toward agreement and consensus by cruelty or violence. From a political point of view--ignoring moral considerations--it makes no sense to face violence with violence, terrorism with terrorism, crime with crime, or your foe's evils by the multiplication of your own evils. Such a course is particularly devastating to governments whose claims of legitimacy and values are very different from those who use violence in the name of antagonistic principles and moral standards. A terrorist can claim--at his own expense--that murder is legitimate and violence a cathartic, liberating experience; a government official can never do so, without undermining everything for which he proclaims to stand.

All of these reasons, elements, and effects support the thesis that a pattern of human-rights violations is incompatible with the goal of creating a legitimate political order, one that will be stable in the long term and thus successful in achieving the goals which it proposed in response to an unsatisfactory previous situation. This argument does not imply that everything which follows an authoritarian regime will be inherently better. That will depend on many other elements, one of which is the capability of the moderate forces to play a significant role at the moment of the authoritarian regime's collapse. The thesis does, however, explain why repressive regimes fail to achieve their goal of creating permanent "new orders."

4. The Non-Utopian Way: The Experience of the Moderates

Accepting that politics is the art of the possible does not have the romantic appeal of voluntaristic experience. The administration of everyday life normally offers few emotional highlights, and that is why middle-of-the-road politicians and regimes are seldom the focus of public attention or become the subject of research or ideological analysis. Nonetheless, it is through moderate policies that success is frequently achieved and the well-being of the people improved.

It has long been held as an evident truth that in underdeveloped countries authoritarian regimes are more "efficient" than libertarian ones. In other words, the belief that democracy is a "luxury" of the rich has been stretched. Evidence does not support this idea, at least not in Latin America, where the more-developed countries, those with the best standards of living for their populations, enjoyed long-standing democracies, and where the most-underdeveloped countries have the longest tradition of dictatorship. Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica are considered Latin America's most-developed countries, and Haiti, Bolivia, and Paraguay among its poorest.

Cuba is a special case. Until 1958, its level of development was similar to that of Chile and Uruguay, and it ranked 9th in a study of 100

underdeveloped countries. The Cuban economy has not done well under the communist regime. Indeed, although the absence of official statistics makes it very difficult to evaluate the overall Cuban development performance, Fidel Castro's self-criticism and the testimony of exiles suggest that that performance has been disastrous.

Brazil under the military authoritarian regime experienced an economic peak moment spoken of as the Brazilian "miracle." Lately, however, Brazil has experienced economic difficulties, and general indicators of the well-being of its population still lag significantly behind those for the region's most-developed countries despite Brazil's size and amazing natural resources.

The fact is that without political fanfare or many exhilarating political experiences, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, with their traditional democratic institutions, were, until the 1970s, doing significantly better in economic development and social progress than those underdeveloped countries which did not enjoy political participation or civil liberties.

In regard to the connection between human rights and political violence, moderate governments provided some extremely interesting political experiences--particularly in Venezuela and Colombia, where, faced with threats of major political violence, moderate regimes were able to cope with that threat without turning to State terrorism or authoritarianism.

After the overthrow of the dictator Pérez Jiménez, the Venezuelan people elected as their president the Social Democrat Rómulo Betancourt. The election took place at a moment when the illusion of imminent revolution was spreading rapidly throughout the continent, and when a powerful guerrilla movement, with Castroist orientation and support, was emerging as a significant threat to democratic stability in Venezuela. Nevertheless, urban and rural guerrillas did not cause Betancourt to lose his nerve and opt for massive, indiscriminate repression. On the contrary, he chose democratic and constitutional means to face the crisis and appealed to popular support and public opinion to defeat the guerrillas. Terrorism was denounced as a threat to the common people and as a major violation of human rights. After their previous experience with dictatorship, the people appreciated this argument. In the end, constant official denunciation of murders, abductions, ambushes of security forces, and a final, particularly gruesome, terrorist bombing of a train full of vacationers, rallied public opinion and popular support around the government, enabling it to gain parliamentary approval of the laws needed to defeat the guerrillas. Lack of popular support for the guerrillas, demonstrated by electoral support for the principal democratic parties, left the terrorist movement internally fragmented as a result of political disagreements. In the end, before the guerrillas had been militarily defeated, they had suffered a major political defeat. They were deeply divided, and most of their factions accepted the reconciliation program offered by the government. Within a couple of years, violence had ceased to be a major threat to democratic stability, and most of the revolutionaries had accepted the path of peaceful political competition for power. Guerrilla warfare and urban terrorism had been defeated without violation of human rights and with complete respect for democratic legitimacy.

The police and armed forces had been able to cope with the military challenge without employing the same methods they were fighting against. Democracy in the Venezuelan case was not--as many affirm--defenseless in the face of the threat of violence or revolutionary upheaval; it only had to appeal to its own principles of legitimacy to achieve major political success.

The Colombian case has different features but also shows that there are political and democratic answers to violence and terrorism. Colombia had suffered a long, tragic wave of violence between the two traditional parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, the death toll from which had reached hundreds of thousands of casualties. The violence could not be stopped by a traditional dictator, General Rojas Pinilla, who seized power in the midst of the crisis, with the support of the armed forces. What was needed was negotiation and agreement by the two parties to end the violent struggle by assuming shared responsibilities in running the country. It has been said that Colombia is an aristocratic democracy with very little popular participation. There is some validity in that assertion, but the violence was certainly not aristocratic and its victims were to be found throughout the country and among all social classes. The political agreement demonstrated that it was possible to cope with the threat of undeclared, unending civil war despite the amount of blood that had been spilled. For over 20 years, democratic institutions have been able to function with considerable efficiency, and violence has not been a major political problem, despite spectacular events such as the recent seizure of the embassy of the Dominican Republic by guerrillas, and occasional airplane hijackings. In some cases where the Colombian security forces used torture against guerrillas, such as occurred in 1979, the evidence was enough to trigger a serious political crisis that threatened the stability and legitimacy of the government. A country that was in virtual civil war is today not on the verge of a social revolution, nor has it achieved political stability by means of gross violations of human rights. Colombia has achieved important economic successes, and, together with Venezuela, is today a leading international actor supporting the democratization process in the rest of Latin America.

In both cases, the fact that moderate governments were constitutionally legitimate and were able to create an overall agreement between the major forces in the political system explains, at least in part, their success in coping with violence while fully respecting human rights. Unhappily there are other very dramatic cases in which the role of the moderates has been made more difficult by complex political events.

The first case is that of El Salvador, which today is the major focus of attention in Central America, and where an extreme pattern of political violence and violation of human rights has alarmed and horrified the world. It is impossible to understand what is happening in El Salvador without reviewing that country's recent history. During the late 1960s, an important social movement developed seeking modernization, political democracy, and social justice. Its main force was the Christian Democratic Party, whose leader was the successful and progressive mayor of San Salvador, José Napoleon Duarte. In successive elections the CDP increased its strength, and in 1972 won the presidential election with Duarte as its candidate. However, right-wing forces--the 14 families--

and their traditional allies, the armed forces, seized power immediately after the election, stopping Duarte and the Christian Democrats from implementing the program for which a wide majority of the Salvadorean people had voted them into office. Instead of democracy and peaceful social reform, the right sought to maintain the highly unjust and inefficient status quo, employing widespread repression. Duarte was compelled to leave for 7 years of exile in Venezuela. The CDP was not allowed to function openly, losing organization and strength, and the country, without the prospect of peaceful change for a better future, began to radicalize, until a revolutionary guerrilla movement appeared and began to grow.

After the collapse of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, the situation in El Salvador seemed to be following the same pattern. Repression, intense violation of human rights, and extreme social injustice were not the formula for a stable political order in El Salvador—one that could rally popular support and successfully face the threat of political violence. As in Nicaragua, significant sectors of Salvadorean society were increasingly becoming opposed to the Romero military dictatorship, questioning its legitimacy to rule the country and remain in power. Political parties, trade unions, peasant organizations, and particularly the Catholic Church were highly mobilized and calling for major political change. At that moment, when the government clearly lacked any significant support outside the 14 families and when the military threat from the guerrillas was growing daily, a group of young army officers staged a military coup, calling for a process of social reform that could rally wide popular support. Duarte, as the most significant figure of the preceding democratic episode, was called back from exile to form part of the government. The military, in its search for a solution, thus turned to the man who had previously been their victim. Unfortunately, it was too late. The mood of the country had polarized, and the Christian Democrats could no longer attract sufficient and widespread popular support.

The right-wing dictatorship that had stopped democratic change in 1972 was, by 1979, responsible for general social radicalization, the emergence of widespread violence, discredit of the armed forces, and a weakening of the moderate forces which were an alternative to leftist revolution. Together with Nicaragua, El Salvador has become a laboratory case of the processes generated by authoritarianism, with its lack of social sensitivity and its conviction that violating human rights keeps the people quiet and passive. The incumbent government's situation is extremely difficult. It lacks total control of the armed forces, whose murderous security services and allied right-wing para-military groups are out of control. It is attempting to implement a program of social reforms opposed by the extreme left, which fears that such reforms will undermine its popular support and which now wants nothing less than the conquest of power. The government is morally torn by the murders of the right and the left. It is being called upon to defeat a Marxist revolution, create a democratic order, and reform an unjust society. Although the outcome is not yet clear, the odds in favor of a political solution are not very high. The alternatives likely in the face of a potential failure of the moderate effort are both of a military type: an authoritarian solution based on wild repression, or a Sandinista-type solution with an uncertain pluralistic and democratic future. Whichever alternative succeeds, the price paid by the Salvadorean people will be

tragic. as always happens when military solutions take precedence over political ones.

It seems useful to mention two other significant cases of the last 15 years, in which a moderate political solution failed to overcome the combined attack of the extreme right and extreme left: Chile and Argentina. In both cases, numerous analyses are available, many antagonistic interpretations exist, and the polemic they opened is not closed. Nevertheless, it is worth commenting on these two cases without pretending to contribute another interpretation of what happened in either.

Was Allende's fate in Chile inevitable? A retrospective answer to that question, in light of what followed, would be "no" in the minds of many people. There is significant evidence that moderate agreements were achieved between Unidad Popular and the Christian Democratic Party--for example, the pact of constitutional guarantees which secured Allende's designation as president by the parliament, and the unanimous approval of the nationalization of the copper mines. Even the final efforts to produce a legal agreement between the Allende government and the Christian Democratic opposition suggest that some dialogue was possible until the very end, when the country had polarized, the economy was in shambles, and socio-political conflict was extreme. Why then did moderation fail? There are many answers to that question, depending on one's perspective of the events. There is, however, one fundamental fact that explains much of what happened: each side had too little space in which to negotiate, because of the veto capacity of the extremists. Allende could not negotiate beyond a point at which the extreme left would accuse him of treason toward the socialist revolution, or of compromising with the bourgeoisie on the basic reform program. The Christian Democrats could not negotiate beyond a point at which the extreme right, and the media it controlled, would accuse them of giving the country away to communism and opening the way to a totalitarian regime that would bury the constitution and the democratic tradition. There was too little space for negotiation--the country was too polarized, events had been pushed too far, social violence and armed propaganda were running high, and traditional Chilean tolerance had eroded. Extremists on the left and the right were successful in impeding any viable political agreement, and thus plunged the country into a military solution, in which both sides thought they could get the upper hand.

The failure of the democratic government in Chile to stop a military solution is bound to have important and long-lasting consequences in Latin America. Some have concluded that it was proof that social revolution cannot be achieved without political violence. Others have concluded that it proved the inability of liberal democracy to face the threat of communism. I believe it proved that democracy has prerequisites, and that if these are not respected, democracy cannot work. Intolerance, extreme ideological contention, deep suspicion among political actors, cosmological political programs, social exclusions, and apocalyptic threats to the defeated are not the means for constructing consensus and implementing negotiation and agreement. When the dilemma becomes "us versus them," very little chance is left for democratic procedures and peaceful coexistence. Moderation, self-control, tolerance, and pragmatism are elements which any democracy needs to survive. The threats of

extremism can rapidly destroy such qualities. That is what happened in Chile. And something very similar happened in Argentina.

The failure of the Argentine military government to eliminate the Peronist movement and create a new political order by means of repression showed how naïve the idea is that legitimacy can be achieved by violence. After 20 years of efforts to erase Peronism from the minds and hearts of the Argentine people, General Perón returned to power with impressive popular support. The Argentine political class and all political parties reacted with exemplary moderation and responsibility. They wanted to preserve and consolidate their newly reacquired democracy and put an end to the political instability that two decades of military interventions had produced. Was it the extremist groups that defeated this effort?

From the left, the Trotskyists and young Peronists were calling for instant revolution and the elimination of the bourgeoisie. The establishment of socialism was their aim. They could wait no longer, but they were already too late. From the right, the old nationalist groups, in alliance with the extreme anti-communist right-wing of Peronism (which paradoxically included the powerful trade unions), opposed any move by Peronism toward the left or toward socialism. Out of the clash of the extremists emerged a tragic wave of terrorist activities and murders that terrorized the population and sterilized all political efforts to consolidate democracy and negotiate the future direction of the country. The death of Perón eliminated the last element that could restrain both extremes from declaring civil war. The sound of bombs and machine guns drowned the voices of moderation and self-restraint that were speaking from the political spectrum.

The military--which felt that it was professionally entitled to step in and wage "war" against the leftist terrorism that was threatening the very existence of the country--decided to put an end to the political way. The prospect for democracy was dead almost from the beginning. Nor had stability been achieved. Even worse, the prospect for stability in the future had been lost. The guerrillas did not have enough strength to take power, but they did have sufficient capability to destabilize the political system. Conversely, the military had the capability to win the war against the guerrillas, but their high rate of human-rights violations seriously undermined their capability of winning the political struggle. Argentina's human-rights record has provoked severe international humiliation--a humiliation that hurts national pride in a paradoxical way: the responsibility for that humiliation is ascribed to the military, whose primary function is defense of national honor and security. The most serious result, however, is that Argentina's population is bitterly divided over the subject of human rights, as are the citizens of Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. The military is fearful, as it is in the other countries, that too quick a return to its barracks would trigger civilian revenge against it. Thus the vicious circle is in operation: the military probably will not withdraw in time to assure a peaceful transition toward democracy. The guerrillas have been decimated, but the victorious generals find themselves far more isolated politically than they would have thought possible considering the reception which public opinion gave to their initial assumption of power.

Finally, there have recently been important political gains for moderates in Latin America. Respect for the ballot in the Dominican Republic, the free elections in Honduras, and the peaceful transition from military rule to democracy in Ecuador and Peru are positive signs. It is also important to note that these four countries, which have achieved a peaceful transition toward constitutional government, have not been listed, during their periods of military or civilian rule, as serious violators of human rights. At least they have not been of major concern to the international human-rights community, nor have they been questioned and accused by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. This suggests that regimes, even undemocratic ones, which do not engage in major violations of human rights and do not pervade their society with bitterness and moral corruption, can achieve negotiated political solutions--including withdrawal of the military to their barracks--before it is too late and popular upheaval has gone too far. As long as the violation of human rights is not a permanent policy of a given government, antagonism between that government and major political and spiritual forces will not be strong enough to sever the lines of communication between the two sides. This means that negotiation and agreement are available as political instruments in solving the country's crises.

The different experiences of moderate forces in Latin American politics in the last 15 years offer interesting insights into the relationship between human-rights violations and political development.

5. Some Significant Actors in the Defense of Human Rights

Among the many groups and institutions involved in Latin American human-rights issues in the last 15 years, several will maintain significant influence in the future. The human-rights movement will be a permanent aspect of Latin American reality from now on, at least as long as the extreme right and extreme left continue to violate human rights.

The most significant, powerful, and influential of these actors is the Catholic Church, spiritually renewed after the Vatican II Concilium, with its compromises with respect to the poor, social justice, freedom, and participation, and its unqualified stress on respect for human dignity. The sense and spirit of this profound conversion can be clearly seen in the final documents of Medellín and Puebla, and in the grassroots transformation of church institutions and practices in almost every country in the region.

Traditionally a conservative defender of the status quo, the Church has become a progressive force which advocates rapid and deep social reform. A traditionally Catholic culture, Latin America has Christian inspirations and values. What makes the moral, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual presence of the Church so important is that it is perceived as an internal influence rather than an external influence in each country. Despite its Catholicism, the Church is profoundly national in most Latin American countries, with roots that go deep into the values and habits of the people.

It is too early to judge how deep an influence the recent changes in the Catholic Church will have on the future of the continent, but they can already be considered to be among the major historical changes of the 20th century, and perhaps among the most radical and long-lasting since the colonial and independence eras. Certainly the traditional distribution of power in each country is rapidly changing, old alliances are being broken, and new ones constructed with very different groups and forces in society.

Nicaragua and El Salvador provide the most dramatic examples. But in less extreme circumstances and with less public visibility, similar trends are occurring in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Paraguay in terms of the relationship between the Church and authoritarian regimes. At the very center of this sometimes bitter confrontation is the idea of human dignity and the Church's decision to become the "voice of those without a voice" and face whatever threats the weak receive from the powerful. The depth of this change, and the popular support for the Church that results from this attitude, make the Church one of the most powerful and significant social factors in each country. This means that in the future, human rights will continue to be a major issue. As a powerful institution, the Church will make sure that her concern is heard, that her denunciations receive attention and obtain a response, and that her moral and spiritual teachings will have numerous and influential followers. As a result, no political order that systematically violates human rights will achieve much legitimacy in Latin America because it will be permanently confronted by the Church on the issue of its moral right to command. This situation is even more significant because the Church cannot be accused of seeking political power for itself or for its followers (although it is frequently accused of abandoning its spiritual role by mixing in earthly affairs). Thus the Church cannot be accused of being a subversive force or of constituting a threat to national security. On the other hand, the bases of the Church are so deeply rooted in society that any direct and strong repression against her from the authorities or political factions will have a high political cost because such measures will antagonize significant sectors of society.

In addition to the Church's role in the promotion and defense of human rights, there are other significant groups and institutions that have been able to mobilize national and international public opinion, generate solidarity for the victims of human-rights violations, and influence governments. These are mainly non-governmental organizations that have grown significantly in the last decade, acquiring worldwide respectability, audiences, and support. The best known of these is Amnesty International, followed by the International Union of Jurists, Freedom House, the International League for Human Rights, and many others around the world, including some Latin American regional organizations such as the Justice and Peace Service, whose leader, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel of Argentina, was recently awarded the Nobel Prize. These non-governmental organizations have become increasingly influential and have demonstrated their capability for mobilizing international public opinion against human-rights violations throughout the world, providing evidence of mistreatment and torture, saving people from prison or death sentences, and stimulating actions from international institutions on behalf of the victims. The reports which these organizations prepare on the human-rights situation in various countries have influence and impact not only in the

international community, but inside each country as well. Governments protest and become exasperated, dissidents feel protected by foreign solidarity, and public opinion receives information that is normally withheld by the media.

In Latin America, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have achieved an important role in the defense of human rights by focusing international attention on what was happening in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Bolivia. Thus, one after another these countries was obliged to focus on its record of human-rights violations and their governments were forced to address the accusations they were receiving. Systematic study of torture methods, practices, and consequences is another major contribution of the NGOs, particularly Amnesty International, as is the creation of concern about people disappearing after being arrested by security forces.

Public-opinion mobilization has been demonstrated to have an additional impact on international organizations such as the UN, the OAS, UNESCO, and others because governments are compelled to adapt their conduct to the international agreements and treaties they have signed. Even so, international organizations have shown little effective power in influencing events inside each country because, among other reasons, the international organizations include among their voting members the grossest violators of human rights--beginning with the powerful communist bloc headed by the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, they have demonstrated in some cases--for example, Chile, Argentina, and Nicaragua--that they can exert some influence, even if it is only the fact that no government wishes to be humiliated before the international community and public opinion.

In Latin America, the reports and activities of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights have been particularly important. This institution has grown in importance and effectiveness in the last decade, and its significance will probably increase once the Inter-American Court for Human Rights is installed and begins functioning.

Special mention must be made of the human-rights policy of the Carter administration. However bitter the debate has been about its success or failure around the world, its importance in making the human-rights issue a top political priority in Latin America must be recognized. Governments were obliged to understand that human rights were not a moral problem that affected only the churches, but were a major political issue that affected their relations with other powers. During this period, human rights became a major issue, and the new climate of general concern over the subject stimulated scholarship, the organization of new groups, and a public-opinion debate that cut across social classes and the entire political spectrum. Never before had such a widespread feeling of friendship and warmth for the United States been felt throughout Latin America, particularly in countries with patterns of serious human-rights violations. Never before had dictators been so preoccupied with washing their faces and putting democratic and humanitarian make-up on their activities in order to avoid being listed as gross violators of human rights.

Although it is too soon for a final evaluation, this period will certainly go down in history as one in which human dignity was a major

political concern--an infrequent phenomenon. Support for human rights, or for the violators, produced new patterns of political alignment that cut across traditional right-center-left barriers and afforded a worldwide approach to politics which can have a significant ideological impact in the future. The Communist International, directed from Moscow, was put on the defensive for the first time since World War II; Western governments were judged by their support for, or indifference to, this principle; and Third World countries were generally pushed into a very uncomfortable position that undermined their progressive or anti-communist rhetoric and credentials and obliged them to explain their own human-rights records.

Whatever political changes may have resulted from the Carter administration's human-rights policy, its influence will be difficult to erase from inter-American relations in the future. It brought forth new expectations about the U.S. approach to the region; and if this was not the general attitude of Latin America's governments, it was among important sectors of Latin American society, whose influence will probably be more permanent and decisive than that of any authoritarian regime. From many many influential sides of the hemispheric relationship there will presumably be pressure for a return to that type of value-oriented policy, and this will be echoed in the growing human-rights community in the United States. Despite failures in implementation, despite some inconsistencies, and despite the complexity of international relations and world power confrontations, Carter's human-rights policy opened a new path in international relations. There will probably be nostalgia to try it again and again until it can finally be functionally fitted into policy decision-making. There are several indications that once the human-rights issue was introduced into political life, it came to stay. Its potential is too powerful--morally and politically--for it to be abandoned without regret.

The human-rights issue has passed beyond governmental control in the sense that too many organizations and institutions with broad representation and influence have developed to monitor human rights and create political and moral pressure on the violators. Achieving political legitimacy and respectability, within each country and internationally, will from now on involve as a major ingredient the human-rights record of each government. No matter how large, rich, and powerful various countries may be, their human-rights record is a single standard for judging them all. They can also be efficiently monitored by their own people, who are the final arbiters in determining how legitimate a given political order is and how ready they are to accept voluntarily and permanently the right of their rulers to rule them.

6. Some Trends for the Decade of the 1980s

The terrible record of human-rights violations in Latin America during the decade of the 1970s inevitably produced some lessons for the future. Events have been too dramatic and too generalized to be disregarded as mere "bad luck." In a major part of South America, in much of Central America, and in Cuba, the human-rights issue will never again be seen as rhetorical. A strong network of juridical instruments and institutions is developing to provide efficient defense for individuals whose fundamental rights are violated, and to increase the political and international cost for

violators as an additional measure of dissuasion. Democratic constitutional regimes are coming to understand that their most precious legacy to their people is a set of binding juridical and diplomatic obligations in case they fail to assure political stability and traditional succession of constitutional and authoritarian regimes for the future. Some steps in that direction can be seen in the proposal for a new Inter-American Convention on the Use of Torture which has been prepared by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and is awaiting final approval. This is not only a juridical trend. Important circles within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church are discussing an excommunication decree against all those who participate in torture, as well as other sanctions for those who take part in policy-making that involves human-rights violations.

A second fundamental trend is one which makes human rights an issue beyond partisan or ideological tendencies, cutting across traditional divisions in the Latin American political spectrum. The struggle of these 15 years has pulled together people from many different political and ideological affiliations who have learned to cooperate in fundamental areas of social life. Respect for human dignity has proved to be not the sole monopoly of any single political tendency or creed. Experience has shown that victims of human-rights violations cover the whole ideological spectrum and that violators may come from opposite extremes.

Defense of human rights may well become the basis for a minimum common denominator constituting the basic consensus for any political order. No matter how different various political projects and programs may be, as long as they share a common respect for human rights as expressed in the Universal Declaration of the United Nations, a new and unexpected basis for agreement and peaceful social coexistence may be available to the Latin American countries. This fact could be the beginning of the end of the zero-sum situation that has characterized Latin American politics during the period studied.

Some important evidence suggests that a powerful new coalition may be created on the basis of respect of human rights--including all churches, political groups from the right, center and left, and various cultural, intellectual, social, and economic organizations. This potential coalition would be a major impulse for creating a new political consensus in every country and for making a substantial contribution to political stability and development in the region.

The Nicaraguan experience has been evolving in that direction. The revolution was the result of a political struggle which had a large human-rights component, and this background has limited the behavior of a government that invoked human rights as its legitimating principle as soon as it achieved victory. In a country that endured such brutal repression from the defeated dictator, terrible revenge could have been expected; instead, there was an impressively bloodless takeover of power by the revolutionary forces. Violating the human rights of the defeated Somozistas would have contradicted the fundamental legitimating principles of the Sandinistas and other moderate forces in their struggle against the old regime, and it would have alienated much of their internal and international support.

The overthrow of Somoza was achieved by a wide national and international coalition which, in the name of human rights, included political forces as different and antagonistic as Marxists, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, the Catholic Church, the governments of the United States, Venezuela, Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico, and multiple networks of media, humanitarian and cultural institutions. Each of them subsequently helped to keep the new regime in a moderate and pluralistic tendency and with a more-or-less clean human-rights record.

We have discussed the tremendous proliferation of non-governmental and international institutions that are promoting and monitoring human rights all over the world and in Latin America in particular. This seems to point to a stable and permanent pressure group whose existence should not be underrated by any government in the future.

In addition, the experience of the last 15 years has provided valuable experience to the Latin American and U.S. armed forces in facing the challenge of coping with political violence while fully respecting human rights. The high political cost they have paid in countries under authoritarian rule, in terms of their prestige among the people and the loss of international prestige and honor for their countries in the international community, has created concern about their previous methods and attitudes. Recently, the media publicized the U.S. army's program to train Salvadorean officers in coping with guerrilla warfare while fully respecting human rights--something quite new to the tradition of the School of the Americas in Panama. In Chile, serious dissension has arisen between the army and air force over the subject of repressive methods of security forces that violated human rights. Both signs represent stimulating news that a widespread violation of human rights by national security forces creates significant tensions and conflicts that will require new approaches in the future.

Moreover, institutional military authoritarian regimes will have to face the fact that their voluntaristic goals of founding new political orders cannot be achieved by means of human-rights violations. Goals and methods will need to be thoroughly revised in the future from the point of view of the armed forces' own vision of politics and national security. The recent fiasco of the Uruguayan authoritarian regime in conducting a plebiscite to give constitutional status to their political project is an experience that will not easily be forgotten whenever an authoritarian regime decides to measure its popular support.

In fact, as the Latin American countries increasingly become the middle class of developing nations, the challenge of achieving stable and legitimate political order will inevitably remain the main political issue in the near future. If their economic development is not to be jeopardized, the conditions necessary for constructing a legitimate political order must be considered in a much more serious way than in the past. No successful development process can be sustained without political stability. The zero-sum dilemma will continue to erode efforts to solve the serious problems which every country will face in trying to adapt itself to the complex and conflictive new civilization that is arising on the threshold of the 21st century.

It would be naïve to think that human rights are the only, or even principal, element in this emerging civilization. But it is quite realistic to assume that they will be a sine-qua-non condition for successfully coping with it. Respecting human rights will not solve all of the problems which humankind will face in the future; but violating human rights in a systematic way will make it very difficult to solve any of those problems in a long-term fashion.

The development of worldwide consciousness about moral issues has made human rights an important issue. Global interdependence makes it impossible for any nation to feel free to violate human rights in the name of internal affairs without cost. That freedom died with the signing of the U.N.'s Declaration of Universal Human Rights in Paris in 1948.

This new world civilization that is being born should also mean the death of the double standard in considering human-rights violations. It should no longer be possible to affirm the rights of people under communist regimes while the rights of those under anti-communist authoritarian regimes are silenced. Dissidents in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Cambodia, and Vietnam have the same rights as those in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, the Philippines, South Korea, and South Africa. Human rights are becoming a universal charter that unites people from different nationalities, cultures, nations, and ideological creeds in one common consideration: concern for the violation of human dignity by violence and cruelty.

As the decade of the 1980s emerges, there are indications that human rights will be an important issue in the construction of a new international and regional political order. This is no longer merely an issue of concern to idealists, but a challenge to pragmatists. Human rights as related to the construction of a politically legitimate and stable order are not only a matter of a moralistic approach to politics, but of "real-politik."

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