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# A NEW STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN MODERN LATIN AMERICA

Edited by  
Pablo A. Baisotti



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## 6 Latin America and the Great Cold War Strategy

*Alejandro Cardozo Uzcátegui and  
Luis Ricardo Dávila*

### Introduction

#### *Latin America Is a Regional Bloc for the First Time*

The Cold War is the most global geopolitical, cultural, and ideological trance in history. It was not the first war involving ideological, economic, cultural, and social model crises – any international crisis from the Peace of Westphalia to World War II involved these factors. Nevertheless, that conflagration’s globality is unprecedented. So global that it even extended into outer space.

During the Cold War, Latin America’s role, as an area of influence of the United States, could be compared, not without risk, with Eastern Europe, however, only in geographical and historical proximity to one of the hegemons. Nonetheless, it was not of total acquiescence within the “great strategy” (Venkatshamy 2012) of the Soviet Union, as was Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union achieved ironclad control over its satellites through the Warsaw Pact (military and economic cooperation but endorsed by Moscow’s control over the signatory countries). In Latin America, the geopolitical paradigm will be the old Inter-American System, with unambiguous terms of self-determination and sovereignty of each member country through *soft balancing* mechanisms mediated by multilateral diplomacy (Russell and Tokatlian 2013, 165).

Once the system consolidated in the American States’ Organization in 1948, the signatory countries were free to choose up to what level they would commit to alliances with the hegemonic nation of the system, the United States. For example, not all members signed the military alliance (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance in 1948) or withdrew without consequences, a situation unthinkable in the Warsaw Pact area (except Albania in 1968). In any case, if it seems a forced comparison, it is only to underline the importance of the geopolitical scope of the zones of influence during the Cold War.

In that sense, Latin America is the United States’ influence in its natural zone. This fact grants notable comparative characterizations of the southern region’s role during this period (*circa* 1947–1991).

The background was a “closed hemisphere in an open world” (Green 1971, 156–162). Latin America’s history is subject to that of the United States in terms of its trade relationship, political alliances, and Washington’s willingness and intent toward each nation in the hemisphere, and vice versa. The US-Latin American inter-American relations have never been homogeneous, hegemonic, or in blocs. Never in 200 years, the southern region achieved political integration dealing with the United States as a regional bloc, nor has the United States engaged with Latin America as a single bloc. Most of the time, the dialogue has been unilateral of each country with the United States within a strategic game of autonomy and withdrawal (Russel and Tokatlian 2013).

Likewise, the United States’ relationship regionalized with the Caribbean, and it had a more interfering and geopolitically realistic foreign policy. The control of Caribbean navigation, the treatment of Puerto Rico as a strategic enclave, and its significant influence on the Caribbean and Central American countries describes a different foreign policy from that of South America. This reason responds to each country’s structures, its internal political system, its institutions, the density of its correspondence with Washington, and the economic conditions and potentialities of each area.

This regionalization of foreign policy and inter-American relations changes in the course of the Cold War toward some extent, the region enters into a logic of “superior strategy” to orient its resources toward the achievement of political objectives within the conflict (Liddell 1967, 322), objectives determined by the primary policy of the Cold War and the risks associated with Soviet interference in the area. Nor does it agree, entirely, on foreign policy with Latin America as a single bloc. The period is long enough, and overlaps, divergences, and different situations arise throughout the Cold War’s historical process.

However, the United States undertakes more or less consistent initiatives toward the whole region – as if it were a bloc – to curb “international communism” (the Inter-American Conference of Caracas in 1954), supporting investment and economic integration in the Americas (the Inter-American Development Bank in 1959) or mitigating economic chasms and social gaps – as communism motives – employing agrarian reforms and economic incentives (Alliance for Progress 1961–1970).

This rhythm is imposed by the evolution of local, inter-American, and international events of the Cold War, as well as in the United States itself: Democratic and Republican legislatures, militarization, then democratization, remilitarization, and counter-insurgency in different phases; thus, the converge within the United States and tactical changes intrinsic to the great Cold War strategy.

Latin America will also be seen as a single bloc in hemispheric security problems, creating the National Security Doctrine (NSD) in the 1950s. The implementation of concrete expressions of the NSD for Latin

America was tentatively placed around 1960. Faced with the Soviet Union's foreign policy and its Cuban satellite for ideology, propaganda, and guerrilla export, the NSD was sponsored from the United States, triangulating from the Southern Cone to Central America for the rest of the region. A single "counter-revolutionary transnational political space" was then created (Sala 2018, 140–169); the containment and offensive maneuver at any revolution sign were regional. The United States financed and directed the operations – through its intelligence services with the National Security Council and the State Department's permission –, Honduras provided the operational bases, and most of the instructors were from Argentina<sup>1</sup> (McSherry 2009, 271).

The regional response to "international communism" was more or less in bloc, unified (since 1954), understanding that the Cold War dynamics drove a relatively cooperative behavior. Although without ever overcoming the obstacles of regional integration, such as the NSD, initially favoring allied dictatorships; however, there were also local initiatives such as Venezuela's Betancourt Doctrine – widely supported by the United States – to foster greater democratic density in the inter-American forum. Since the presidency of John F. Kennedy, there was a shared interest with the United States, with a tactical turnaround on removing incentives for social revolutions by repairing historical debts with land reform, development credits, and support for emerging democracies.

### *A Proposal for the Periodization of the Cold War in Latin America*

Huntington warns that "history is a mixture of things, and political changes cannot be enclosed in absolute historical classifications" (1994, 26). In effect, the Cold War entails changes responding to different political imprints within all its actors, and periodization – as a sort of historical classification – carries the inevitable risk of overlapping and convergence of its phases. However, searching a particular phenomenological order, we dare to the Cold War in Latin America periodization in four stages: (i) The ideological dynamics' local containment walking slippery slopes against the United States' interests in Latin America, such as processes or nationalist rhetoric revolutions (that wander between socialism and communism with different actors, according to each case) challenging governments allied with the United States. This local contention can be journalized from 1947 to 1960. Cases such as the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru activate local containment devices to stop conspiracies against their regimes, which promote themselves as allies of the United States. A suggestive case happened after liberal candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination in 1948. President Mariano Ospina and the – only – candidate, Laureano Gómez, blamed the communists and broke with the Soviet Union relations.

This domestic dynamic (of dictatorships and conservative governments) gives rise to a Latin American coalition coupled with the United States' superior strategy to contain world sovietism.

The openly anti-communist policies of Venezuela's and Peru's military dictatorships, coupled with their liberal policies on their economies, lead to strong White House support for Odría Amoretti's "eighty years" in Peru and Pérez Jiménez's "military decade" in Venezuela. The latter enjoyed a very favorable press in the United States as a modernizing president and architect of the first regional economy (Cardozo 2009).

In parallel, to the extent managed by conservative Latin American governments (except for Argentina and two interregnum governments in Brazil) consolidating – by force or in elections – their domestic agendas. They are approaching the United States, entering into an acquiescence logic to obtain their support and thus “obtain material or symbolic dividends in exchange for deference; build a stable framework of coexistence with Washington [...] and count on its protection to sustain the coalition in power” (Russell and Tokatlian 2013, 162).

(ii) The local containment second stage is internationalized toward a United States intervention process, supported by allied military regimes – such as Pérez Jiménez and Anastasio Somoza – in local dynamics that could threaten its hemispheric security policy, such as the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 in Guatemala, with the help of Managua and Tegucigalpa, or the attempts against progressive governments such as Figueres in Costa Rica in 1955, with the help of Caracas. Later on, there will also be various plans to stop or discourage the Castro revolution in Cuba, worsening the situation.

This second stage can be called localized hemispheric containment: The United States uses other regional allies to verify and participate in a specific country's containment. The use of Nicaraguan and Honduran bases to assist a coup d'état in Guatemala, and later the use of allied governments such as that of Venezuela to activate heterogeneous strategies against the Cuban revolution, describe this moment of the grand strategy. This stage dates back to 1954–1962. For example, it is worth mentioning Venezuela's government's denunciations –now democratic – about its government interference and destabilization from Havana. These accusations achieved Cuba's expulsion from the Organization of American States (1962).

(iii) The third stage marks a notable difference from the previous ones since it deals with the Soviet Union's open intervention in Cuba. With Cuba, it begins the ideological, propagandistic, logistic, tactical, and military-guerrilla irradiation as a revolutionary and destabilizing strategy for all of Latin America. We can recognize this moment of the Cold War as the Cold War scenario in the region. It is the most delicate phase in hemispheric security terms because it includes incorporating the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) doctrine in a territory that was, until 1962, nuclear threat-free.

We will call this phase of the Cold War in Latin America the *Latin Americanization* of the Cold War: for the first time, the Cold War conflict epicenter moves from Berlin to Cuba (Tromly 2019, 105), and although the missile crisis is resolved in 13 days, Cuba's role – with a strong dissonance of status – is going to be the protagonist throughout Latin America. Periodizing this facet of the Cold War can be confusing since it begins in 1962 and should end with the Détente of Nixon-Kissinger and Brezhnev and the latter's doctrine. However, Cuba's interventionist actions did not cease until shortly before the particular period with the collapse of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, when the USSR was dismembered in 1991.

(iv) The fourth phase overlaps with the third. It is the *southernization*, and Central Americanization of the Cold War conflict is the intensified stage of the NSD in all its splendor with the Condor Plan, and the military coups against Joao Goulart in Brazil (1964) and Salvador Allende in Chile (1973), the revolutions and counter-revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1980s. This fourth phase's overlap also corresponds to the birth of the political-subversive formulas of different "national liberation fronts" in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, and Paraguay from 1960 to 1970 and in some cases, until the end of the Cold War (Cardozo-Dávila-Mondolfi 2019).

Guerrilla blocks largely assisted by Cuba (the cases of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR, in Venezuela between 1961 and 1968, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Colombia in 1980, as well as the Ejército Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional -FMLN- in El Salvador during the 1980s, are paradigmatic situations of Cuban support) are going to compromise several US administrations (from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan), the State Department and the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with different models of anti-subversive assistance within the framework of the NSD: logistical support, training, technology, and financing of anti-guerrilla programs.

This fourth stage can be divided into a phase of containment in South America from 1961 to 1980. Almost all Latin American guerrillas were defeated,<sup>2</sup> the third wave of Latin American democratization began. Different democracies such as Venezuela and Colombia were consolidated, becoming political references that helped the democratic density (González and Liendo 2017; Dávila 2019). Furthermore, the second phase of containment (1981–1984) was joined by the Central Americanization of the Cold War conflict during the 1980s, Jimmy Carter's failure in foreign policy, and Ronald Reagan's rise.

Carter's erratic position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union destroys the diplomatic apparatus of Nixon's Détente. It precipitates the fracture with the Soviet Politburo, which again gives the Soviet Union and Cuba license to sponsor and reinforce the revolutionary scene in Central America: the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Salvadoran guerrillas of

the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. Reagan's arrival, who ignored any diplomacy with the Soviet Union based on a balance of forces, unleashes another stage of the conflict in Central America and reinforces the NSD practices designed decades ago. This phase can be traced back to 1981 with the Salvadoran FMLN military reorganization up to the Contadora Group Peace Act in 1984, a multilateral roadmap for the follow-up of the peace and democratization negotiations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

The same Contadora Group is also a reactive phenomenon of the Cold War in Latin America since its formation went against the United States' paramilitary policy for Central America. The latter allows us to identify two differentiated treatments by region in the Reagan administration: *paramilitarization* in Central America and South America's democratization. Since 1983, divergences arose between Santiago de Chile and Washington, as the US Congress conditioned the lifting of the ban on arms sales to Chile until President Reagan managed to certify an improvement in human rights in the South American country. The diplomatic dissonance came from Jimmy Carter's government. When he banned the credits to Chile granted by the Eximbank, he also tried to extradite in 1979 the Chilean officers involved in the murder of former foreign minister Orlando Letelier (Ramos 2002, 73). Jimmy Carter was the idealistic parenthesis within the great American Cold War strategy. Carter's idealism was the longest road to the American national interest in his supreme Cold War strategy, which Reagan would achieve by disintegrating none other than the Warsaw Pact and breaking up the Soviet Union.

### *Local Containment and the Latin American Coalition*

It was Manuel Odría, who was the pilgrim general of Cold War rhetoric in Latin America. In his discourse, almost at the same time – according to the historical debate – of the birth of the Cold War, he justifies his coup d'état immersed in the handling of the rhetoric of the nascent global era:

The Provisional Government [...] will eliminate any communist and totalitarian outbreak to preserve Peru and America from the dangers derived from those dissolving doctrines that preach class hatred and that have disorder and agitation as their methods.

(Alcalde and Romero 2013, 7)

His speech is dated October 27, 1948, a little more than a year after H. Truman's speech (March 1947) before Congress. He inaugurated his doctrine, which was translated into military and economic aid for Greece Turkey, and announces the beginning of the Cold War. Likewise, Odría's Peruvians speech is situated three months after the Berlin

blockade. The general played with enviable political synchrony: he announced the communism's containment application as his provisional government backbone to shield his regime from domestic enemies to hasten the US recognition, through a connected argument to the Cold War's superior-American strategy.

Between 1948 and 1960, almost all countries in the region had US military missions. Another evidence of this Cold War coalition is the proposal – which does not prosper – of the United States, Colombia, and Brazil in the spring of 1951 during the meeting of Pan-American foreign ministers about creating a continental army (Torres 2010, 215). This proposal comes one year after Colombia sent the Colombia Battalion to the Korean War. In 1953, the United States had military agreements with eight Latin American nations. Ten had approved the US general military plan.

A similar phenomenon occurred with the dictatorships of Odría and Pérez Jiménez: their coups d'état were carried out against democratic and legitimate governments (Bustamante, and Gallegos), which is why Washington's recognition of both military juntas was long overdue. This situation forced the dictators to accelerate diplomacy of coupling with the United States to enter the "great strategy" of the Cold War and use it to guarantee their governability at the service of the conservation and improvement of their interests (Kennedy 1991).

In 1949, Luis Emilio Gómez Ruiz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Venezuelan military junta, received a "confidential bulletin" from the US Department of the Navy, in which one could read the distrust toward the military government. The foreign minister sent the document to the Miraflores Palace, the seat of government, on September 3, 1949, to create a plan to reassure the United States about the ideological, political, and economic commitment of the Venezuelan military (Cardozo 2009). The same happens with the Odría government in Peru, which sends Humberto Fernández Dávila as chargé d'affaires to Washington to manage the recognition of the new government (Alcalde and Romero 2013).

In 1950 (almost two years after the coup d'état against President Gallegos), the National Oil Convention was held in Caracas in September, where Oscar L. Chapman, the US Defence Petroleum Administrator, proclaimed in his speech:

This country [Venezuela] and mine [the United States] produced almost all the additional oil that the allied machinery needed. Of course, with its long tradition of production, the United States made the most significant contribution. However, if one judges the relative's contribution, Venezuela's effort was not surpassed by anyone. *Neither is it today when its contribution to the defense of the free world is more important than ever.*

(Cardozo 2014, 25)

As we read – the underlining in the quote is ours – the United States in 1950 recognized the Military Junta established in Venezuela as an ally (1948–1952, continued Pérez Jiménez between 1953–1958), just like the Peruvian dictatorship (1948–1956), they will be part, together with Rojas Pinilla in Colombia (1953–1957), Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay (1954–1989), of the leading countries of the hardcore of the great American Cold War strategy. In this first stage of local containment systems, it is up to these dictators to act within their borders against national movements of populist democratic ideology and/or of the left, such as Argentine Peronism, Venezuelan *Acción Democrática* social democracy, Brazilian Vargasismo, Peruvian aprismo, and the respective national Communist Parties.

In 1948, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), a project promoted by the Chilean Hernán Santa Cruz, also begins to operate in Santiago de Chile, a significant fact since President González Videla, under pressure from Washington, rectified in 1948 the political make-up of his first cabinet, in which the Communist Party participated. Local containment was activated: González Videla expelled the C.P. members from his government's public administration and outlawed the party in 1948, the same year that ECLAC took over the Chilean capital, an essential gesture of connection with the great American strategy of the Cold War.

### *The Inaugural Event of an Era*

In 1954, the United States participated in the 10th Inter-American Conference in Caracas to meet with all the Latin American delegations to commit the region to its great strategy. Taking advantage of the dimension of the conference, the last one in its style that brought together almost all the presidents of the region, John Foster Dulles, as Secretary of State of Eisenhower's presidency, traveled to Caracas in what seemed to be an expeditious itinerary, to agree with all the Latin American delegations on a continental condemnation of the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, for its possible links with international communism.

Dulles was looking for a regional ideological and political consensus based on legitimacy for a possible intervention in Guatemala that would contain a government with a reformist façade, but with a revolutionary background. Within the same calculations made about the Indochina situation, the "Guatemalan Spring" could become a revolution on a regional scale.

Dulles took into account the fact of the historical, cultural, and political neighborhood with his geopolitical allies in South America, associated by inter-Americanism, almost twinned by an ideological community where all these governments also saw in communism the threat to their political systems in particular and the inter-American system in general.

Their regional partners took advantage of the opportunity granted by the threat of international communism. They decided to negotiate with the US delegation the Declaration of Caracas, the fifth – substantial – point of the conference: “Intervention of International Communism in the American Republics” in exchange for a bilateral dialogue, from the interests of each Latin American government. Thus, each Latin American delegation discussed separately with Dulles and Holland (principal secretary of the US delegation) their economic agendas. Unlike the previous inter-American conference in 1948, they were able to take advantage of the Cold War context. Dulles had to stay longer than expected – two weeks – to achieve the “Declaration of Caracas,” which managed to be defined on the last day as a condemnation of the intervention of international communism (“Declaration of Solidarity for the Preservation of the Political Integrity of the American States Against International Communist Intervention,” March 28, 1954), a hard blow to the diplomatic game of Moscow’s international relations in the Western world. This is what Pravda will say in its edition before the “Declaration of Caracas,” where it protested the possibility of an anti-communist resolution for the entire region (*Diario de la X Conferencia Interamericana*, Dulles 1954, 96).

It was a resounding US victory in the Cold War in Latin America. Dulles guaranteed a strong political statement that sent a clear message to the Soviet Union about its global interference’s geopolitical limits. Furthermore, this fact proves that despite the achievement of the declaration demanded by Washington under the containment of communism, it was not an automatic diplomatic transaction, of simple compliance with a political and ideological line of the reigning power; there were negotiating tables, delegation by delegation, to achieve certain tariff agreements for the products that each Latin American country would sell in the US market. In other words, in the most North American terms possible of “business is business,” the United States agreed on a political and ideological declaration, which was transcendental in the geopolitical framework of the Cold War and urgent in the interest of intervening months later in Guatemala, as a measure of communist containment of the suspicious political process that was taking place in the government of Jacobo Arbenz.

### *Hemispheric Associative Containment*

In a telegram from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in June 1954, an agent reported that he had managed to meet for three hours with the Arbenz government’s senior officials. According to these officials, the president said that the army was indeed persuading him to get rid of his cabinet’s Communist members and try to change his government’s policy. Arbenz emphatically stated that “present policy his and unchangeable with or without Communists, added would, if necessary,

arm workers and peasants who would ‘fight to the last man’ against any attempted overthrow gov’t” (Central Intelligence Agency 1954).

According to the telegram, the meeting took place on June 11, three months after the Caracas Conference where remained on the table, in Dulles words:

This communist conspiracy is a serious matter. Its agents operate under the iron discipline of the Soviet Communist Party, which acts as the General Staff of the World Proletariat, as it calls itself. To obtain proselytes, the agents pretend to pose as reformers who wish to eliminate any society’s existing evils.

(Diario de la X Conferencia Interamericana Dulles 1954, 94)

The United States had been analyzing – at least – since the beginning of 1954, the political evolution of Guatemala. The CIA was aware of the Guatemalan army’s perception of the Arbenz government’s ideological shift:

Until now, the army’s anti-Communist sentiment has been balanced by officers’ loyalty to Arbenz as a fellow officer. However, officer’s reaction to Communist arms shipments, together with growing concern that Arbenz firmly committed to present pro-Communist policies, indicates the possibility major split in the army on whether to continue support to Arbenz.

(Central Intelligence Agency 1954)

Simultaneously, Dulles had already weighed up the diplomatic possibilities at the Caracas Conference in the face of a regional sentiment on this ideological basis of operations and laboratory testing developed in the Central American country. This is what the Dominican proposal at the Caracas Conference shows, with its ban on communism. The Dominican Republic, in agreement with the United States delegation, formulated a draft resolution entitled “Outlawing communism” with a single point that says:

That the subversive and undemocratic action of communism continues to preserve American solidarity in its attempts to destroy it; and that the American republics should adopt more effective measures to counteract communist action in America, as well as to coordinate such measures that the American republics should ban from their territory and, following their respective constitutional procedures, political parties.

(Diary of the Tenth Inter-American Conference 1954, 115)

The Guatemalan delegate, Foreign Minister, and loyal advisor to Arbenz, Guillermo Torrielo, defended his intervention during the conference,

arguing that the government's political and ideological principles he represented were not different from the inter-American system's spirit. The documents say the opposite. President Arbenz's declarations, among other events, place the arborist project more within the great Soviet strategy of the Cold War than the American one. In this phase of local contention and regional coalition, one could not walk in the middle of the ideological path. The political identity had to be clear and lacked any subjective nuance.

Ernesto Guevara, later recognized in revolutionary literature as Che, was in Guatemala during the Arbenz government. His political impressions of the Guatemalan president's performance and overthrow clarify that Dulles' suspicions were not based on conservative prejudices. Che Guevara lived in Guatemala for about nine months during the Arbenz era. There he met the Cuban survivors of guerrilla actions such as Bayamo (Armando Arencibia, Mario Dalmau, Antonio Nico López, and Antonio Darío López), comrades of Fidel Castro.

Che had his first combat experience during the invasion of Castillo. This experience also suggested his taste for the guerrilla insurgency. He would confess to his sister that although he felt sorry for what happened in Guatemala, he enjoyed "like a monkey" the warlike climate of the uprising and enlisted in some student defense brigades. Also, he made his first ideological contact with a subsidiary party of the Communist Party, the Democratic Youth Alliance, which would dictate his later political culture (García 2018). Harold White, professor at Columbia University, then living in Guatemala, spoke to him about dialectical historical materialism and interested Che Guevara in Marxism. Perhaps entrusting him with a translation of one of his books into Spanish made the Argentinian more familiar with the Marxist narrative (O'Donnell 2016).

Che Guevara will not be a decision-maker in almost any political and military processes (except his time in the Cuban revolutionary government) that he participated in throughout his experimental and certainly adventurous life. Much less in Guatemala neither he decided any military event during the events of the Castillo coup, nor in Arbenz's reformist aftermath. Nevertheless, the fact that therein Guatemala was exiled from the the American Popular Peruvian Alliance (APRA) – like his comrade Hilda –, an academic and Marxist adventurer like the American White, Cubans from the future Castro M-28, and himself, determines that the coordinates of the CIA and the State Department were not wrong. In fact, during Arbenz's government, a sort of revolutionary uproar was taking place, with the agrarian reform initiatives – against the interests of the United Fruit Company –, the nationalization of some essential services, and the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the official political discourses.

Thanks to the network he weaved in Arbenz's Guatemala, Che meets this Cuban political vanguard in Mexico. Through one of the Cubans in Guatemala, Antonio Nico López, he met Raúl Castro, who met with

Fidel. This dynamic of human maps amid the Cold War – which begins in Guatemala – weaves an ideological association with those who will move the Cold War’s vortex from Berlin to Latin America in less than a decade.

For the United States, the Guatemalan process in Arbenz’s hands was a “threat to inter-Americanism,” as Dulles indirectly expressed it in his speeches during the Caracas Conference in 1954. Another section of the CIA reported on Arbenz’s attempts to consolidate regional support through his Foreign Minister Toriello:

He was trying to send Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello to Salvador to talk with President Osorio but has been informed by Salvadorans that our minds made up, and we are not interested in becoming friends of Communist gov’t [...].

(Central Intelligence Agency 1954)

Besides, the Washington office stated that the hardening of El Salvador’s attitude toward Guatemala might be the result of the fact that “communist weapons” and orchestrated attacks “of communist inspiration in northern Honduras” have been sent from Guatemala (Central Intelligence Agency 1954).

According to US intelligence, the Arbenz government was amid a “labor unrest” climate leading to “a possible Sovietization of Guatemala,” so that different opposition groups hatched a conspiracies network against the elected government in 1951. Among the conspirators was army colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, exiled in Honduras. He was supported by Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua and the United Fruit Company.

The year 1952 began, and the CIA, concerned about President Arbenz’s growing operational dependence on the left, organized as the Communist Party, contacted the dissident Castillo Armas. However, the intelligence report confesses, the CIA stopped its assistance to Castillo Armas during October 1952, due to the leakage of information spread about US involvement in an alleged invasion of Guatemala.

Eisenhower regained interest in Guatemala. On August 12, 1953, the Arbenz government revealed its second expropriation of United Fruit Company land. That same day, the “Coordinating Board of Operations authorized” the CIA to take action “on a high priority basis” on the project that would become known as *PBSUCCESS*.

With a budget of \$3 million, the agency trained Castillo Armas’ forces and “expanded contacts with Guatemalan military officials in hopes of persuading them to overthrow the government from within”. Calculated suspicions that the Arbenz government would constitute an alliance with members of the Warsaw Pact were confirmed when a Swedish-flagged ship carrying Czechoslovakian weapons arrived in Guatemala during

the spring of 1954, a few months after the Caracas Conference. The US intelligence and the State Department used this event to dispel the mistrust within the Guatemalan army that its commander-in-chief intended to arm a people's militia, under party discipline, to nullify the role and power of the army.

Castillo Armas invaded Guatemala from Honduras on June 18, 1954. The invaders entered a spiral of unresolved skirmishes with the Guatemalan army. The US propaganda system was activated, coupled with intense diplomatic pressure and airstrikes by World War II veterans commanded by the CIA's pilots to finally bring about turmoil and crisis between Arbenz and his circle. In this event, we see how local allies (Honduras and Nicaragua) help the United States verify and participate in a specific country's containment, benefiting its great Cold War strategy.

While the clandestine network that the CIA wove with the Guatemalan regular army was taking effect, trusted government officials were given assurances to challenge Arbenz's power, leading to his resignation on June 27, 1954. Immediately, the US diplomats and intelligence officials favored negotiations between Castillo Armas and the officers. They carried out the military coup (Foreign Relations 1952–1954, Guatemala).

Operation *PBSUCCESS* would not have been possible without the diplomatic support, three months earlier, of almost the entire region through the "Declaration of Solidarity for the Preservation of the Political Integrity of the American States Against International Communist Intervention" at the closing of the Tenth Inter-American Conference, the last in regional history.

### *Revisionism to the Great American Cold War Strategy*

Not all of the South American bloc was homogeneously coupled to the grand strategy. The case of Argentina is suggestive as an executor of a revisionist and dissonant model of the Cold War's great American strategy. It was not an open alliance with the Soviet hegemony nor its satellites – as would have happened in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Cuba, Chile, or Brazil at different times – but they were acrimonious developments since the 1940s: Peronism's closeness to the Bolivian nationalist revolution of Paz Estenssoro, its dilettante attitude to the Nazi axis, the social policy of the unions, the anti-American rhetoric directed against the Rockefeller and then Braden ambassadors, the publication of the *Blue and White Book* (in response to the State Department's *Blue Book* against Perón) where there was open talk against US imperialism and the trade boycott of Argentina, which was sporadically activated and deactivated as a measure of pressure and punishment (Conell-Smith 1977).

These antecedents ended up being reaffirmed in the 1950s, the great moment of coupling and regional acquiescence with the United States.

Specifically, we can cite Argentina's revisionist and dissonant spirit for its positions during the 10th Inter-American Conference in Caracas in 1954. As we have argued, it was the inaugural event of the hemispheric Cold War era. Argentine Foreign Minister Jerónimo Remorino's speech gave explicit support to Arbenz Minister Guillermo Toriello. He set out the international principles that should ensure respect for Guatemala's sovereignty and prevent any intervention. The delegation that most hindered the final resolution's elaboration – Dulles' central purpose – which on the one hand sought to condemn the Arbenz government, as international communist intervention, to achieve a legitimate – inter-American bloc – basis for action against the Arbenz revolution. Remorino employed in his speeches defiant rhetoric along such as the following:

Enormous natural wealth owners, our peoples, with excellent work skills, in many cases, do not manage to achieve living standards compatible with every man's dignity is entitled in a justly organized community. Do not look for other reasons to explain how peoples, prisoners of misery, *can place their hopes in ideologies contrary to our formation.*

(Diary of the Tenth Inter-American Conference 1954, 140)

Remorino exhibits, with little tact, a reason for which some ideologies – alluding to the leftist arbencist progressiveness – can infiltrate in the peoples' political culture as a reaction to transnational capitalism's injustices. The underlining in the quote from the speech is ours.

Peronism was excluded from power between 1955 and 1973 and re-emerged in 1976, which meant a diplomatic truce for Washington after this history of stumbling with Argentina (Morgenfeld 2010, 75–97). Later, however, Buenos Aires became the United States' ally capital during the Condor era, in the NSD heat.

### *Latin Americanization of the Cold War*

The Latin American “Sovietization” was no longer a predictable risk that could be avoided only by localized containment measures within the very nations allied to the US great strategy. Historically, the region had been the natural zone of influence of the United States. From hemispheric security, Soviet incursion in any field – ideological, political, cultural, economic, or military – was unacceptable.

Before Castro's revolution, the Soviet Union only had three embassies in Latin America (Mexico, Uruguay, and Argentina). The area was responding to a thesis of coupling with the great American strategy of the Cold War. At the time of the revolution in Cuba, Moscow followed a certain skepticism that the Politburo was a mere reformist process. They still perceived it as far away from a Marxist-Leninist revolution.

The Cuban People's Socialist Party (PSP), in the early days of the change, sent political delegates to the Soviet Union. A member of the Cuban party in the spring of 1959 arranged a meeting with the chief of staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, Marshal V. Sokolovsky, to discuss possible operational alliances between the two armies (Farber 2010, 145).

Raúl Castro was indeed a convinced Marxist-Leninist. He commissioned a prominent PSP militant, Lázaro Peña, to approach some Spanish Republican exiles, graduates of the Soviet military academy residing in Moscow, to advise Cubans in constructing an intelligence system. The Soviets paid Spanish officers' salaries and invited Cuban pilots to train in the USSR (Farber 2010, 145). Several factors convinced the USSR (despite Fidel's statements in the United States) of the Cuban ideological turnaround. The Cuban President Manuel Urrutia's forced resignation in July 1959, precisely because he refused to implement the Marxist-Leninist model on the island; Castro's US tour in April of the same year, where the political elite branded him as a youth leader and where he failed to reach an economic understanding about private capital in Cuba and his government project's revolutionary needs. Finally, the radical agrarian reforms of May 1959 are facts that the Soviet Union interpreted as encouraging.

It is the PSP that twists the regional events of the Cold War with its approach to the Soviet nomenklatura since, first opinion leaders – such as the editor of *Pravda* – did not recommend an early rapprochement with Cuban revolutionaries, since that was “political ammunition” against Moscow in bipolar diplomacy (Farber 2010, 146). The *New Times*, a prominent Soviet propaganda newspaper, warned during the spring of 1959 that the Cuban revolution should go further in its agrarian reform, persecuting foreign monopolies and the local bourgeoisie. Most importantly, the newspaper insisted on the inclusion of the PSP in the Castro government.

Although the Soviets needed to analyze Cuba's political gestures establishing a geopolitical alliance with the island, there was little doubt about the Cuban government's foreseeable ideological turn in the United States. Ben Solomon Stephansky, who would later become John F. Kennedy's ambassador to Bolivia, sent a memorandum on Fidel Castro to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs on April 30, 1959:

[Fidel] did not want to say what he said here [on his tour of the United States] and that he is building, or allowing to be built in Cuba, an Arbenz type regime, but avoiding Arbenz's mistakes of establishing too open a relationship with communism, because of Cuba's problems.

(Stephansky 1959)

In this early phase of the revolution, Raúl Castro was marrying Cuba's diplomatic position with the Soviet Union, while Fidel Castro was trying

to mislead the American government. In other words, a well-thought-out plan was drawn regarding the geopolitical options of the island. Between the two antagonistic worlds of the Cold War, each brother opened up opportunities for the Cuban Revolution. For more than obvious reasons, Stephansky ignored the range that Raúl was trying to open up with the Soviets. At the same time, Fidel kept up the non-communist appearances of the revolution. A strategy to gain time, because as Stephansky saw it, Fidel was forced to keep up the ideological appearance of the geographical proximity [of Cuba] to the United States and its economic dependence. Suppose Fidel does not want you to put yourself in the position of showing your real colors shortly after you visit the United States. In that case, it is advisable to avoid an appearance at the kind of May 1st demonstration where you would have to say things that would contradict the things you said here (Stephansky 1959).

In any case, we have selected this episode, with official documentary backing, because it is one of the events recorded beyond Fidel's visit to the United States. That demonstrates Cuba's political appearances play, forgetting its final ideological transition. At the same time, here we prove how the United States, within the Cold War dynamics in Latin America, was ahead of the curve in its analyses of Cuba and assumed early on the geopolitical risk that the revolution's ideological turn implied the United States and the region.

### *The Epicenter of the Cold War Moves from Berlin to Cuba for 13 Days*

The most severe threat to hemispheric security in Latin American history occurred in October 1962, just 150 kilometers from the United States. It was the Soviet Union's boldest act sovietizing an area so far from its military and ideological action zones since Nikita Khrushchev conceived his deployment of missiles primarily as a start. However, unlikely it might seem, his action looked to spread the revolution in Latin America (Gaddis 2009, 68).

The Soviet premier wanted to compensate for the US missile bases' tactical imbalance in Turkey and West Berlin's strategic fragility, taking 42 intermediate-range nuclear missiles and 40,000 specialized Russian militaries to Cuba. Between Aleksandr Alexeyev (Soviet intelligence agency, KGB, agent in Cuba and later ambassador to the island), Andrei Gromyko (Minister of Foreign Affairs), and Khrushchev, the most dangerous international intervention bet of the great Soviet Cold War strategy was made, since never had it been so close to a nuclear war. The missiles designed for Cuba had a range up to the Canadian border. This implied an immediate US response with a destroyer's fleet mobilization imposing an artillery quarantine around the island, 24-hour military flights commissioned over Cuban airspace – they were already doing so –, and a national alert.

The atomic warheads had the power of the Hiroshima bomb. Two of them carried mega-tonic cargo, as reported years later by Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington. To equip Cuba with this weaponry, 85 ships were used. Almost 200 trips were made from different Eurasian ports, a secret operation against hemispheric security, never before recorded in Latin America (Dobrynin 1998, 82–107).

In terms of the tremendous Soviet strategy and global security, Moscow's diplomatic defeat after the resolution of the 1962 crisis authorized its military establishment to develop a large-scale nuclear program giving Cuba a sense of immunity from the United States to act – despite its dissonant status – as a significant player on the Cold War board, as much as it gave Castro to establish his small-scale strategy toward Latin America: the Cuban revolution intervened as a component of revolutionary ideological translation in Latin American countries in more than 11 operations (Benemelis 2002; Siekmeier 2011; Brown 2017). Sergei Pavlovich Pavlov, the then Komsomol's<sup>3</sup> leader from 1959 to 1968, said: “At any time, other Latin American countries can follow Cuba's footsteps. Americans are sitting on a powder keg in Latin America. Venezuela can blow it up at any time” (Zubok 2008, 274).

The Cuban experience in Latin Americanising the Cold War drags governments and political essays of a progressive nature into the spiral of hemispheric containment. In other words, Cuba's geopolitical success within Moscow's grand strategy paradoxically discouraged experiences such as that of Joao Goulart in Brazil (1961 and 1964). Getulio Vargas's political – and country – heir, a permanent member of all the government cabinets of a progressive, unionist, and left-wing reformer sign, made him a Cold War objective, an obstacle in the great American strategy, and a potential enemy of hemispheric security. Goulart sought industrial and commercial alliances with the Soviet Union, carried friendship symbolic gestures with Moscow, such as the Soviet cosmonauts' celebratory visit, with which he activated the containment devices – among them the NSD itself –, improved the salaries of the working class, strengthened the social and union organizations of workers, thus motivating local political and ideological elements for General Mourão Filho to carry out a military coup. Mourão Filho went so far as to forge documents linking Goulart to Operation Cohen, the alleged communist coalition to take power. Simultaneously, the Brazilian Institute for Democratic Action and the Institute for Social Research and Studies launched a vigorous campaign against Goulart and his alleged pro-communist ideological association (Ramirez 2012).

It is vital to take into account the fact of Goulart's varguist political heritage. What Vargas' return to power in 1950 had meant for the United States' great strategy: together with the revisionist government of Perón, both governments tried between 1952 and 1953 (together with Ibañez in Chile) a sort of sub-regional economic alliance, with a “strong

political intent” (Alcalde and Romero 2013, 10), this meant, among other things, the forced resignation of Vargas and his suicide accompanied by a famous letter denouncing the plundering of Brazil by foreign capital (Cockcroft 1989, 551).

### *The National Security Doctrine (NSD)*

During the Cold War, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, known as The School of the Americas (SOA), located from 1946 to 1984 in the Panama Canal Zone, was a crucial component in the containment and counter-revolutionary attack. If the revolution that Cuba exported – by ideological and operational transfer of the Warsaw Pact – was part of the great Soviet Cold War strategy, so was the anti-communist side’s response. However, with greater operational capacity due to a communist containment regionalized operation, response was very violent. At this point, we cannot speak of a liberal democratic side, because its objective, until the arrival of John F. Kennedy, was to contain rather than democratize. The SOA had been training Latin American officers since its foundation. After Castro’s revolution, it considerably increased (42%) its enrollment in military arts and sciences of counter-insurgency, state terrorism, persecution, assassination, repression, disappearance, and communist containment (Funes 2014, 241). The ideological (propaganda and cultural infiltration into university circuits) and operational (training of guerrillas, lightning, and logistics for the various “national liberation fronts”) radiation of Castro’s revolution awakened the beast of police and military repression contained in the NSD scheme.

Although this counter-insurgency struggle by the CIA and all the state – and para-statal – bodies of right-wing dictatorships in Central America and the Southern Cone was, in the US public opinion, a “form of war repugnant to the Americans” (Valentine 1990, 425), it was the United States’ hemispheric security response to the Soviet-Cuban ideological spread: in essence, neither side wanted the democratization of Latin America, the forms of revolutionary control or anti-revolutionary control explicitly required for their success guerrilla-proletarian-peasant dictatorships or oligarchic military dictatorships, as well as democratic-militarist grafts.

It is also true that during the civil war (1979–1992), El Salvador was also part of the NSD scheme. However, these were not dictatorial governments but a democratic-militarist graft, with fraudulent electoral acts. Likewise, Colombia, a formally democratic state during the Turbay Ayala administration and its Security Statute (1978–1982), also hosted the NSD elements. Not to mention Venezuela, which amid its democratic experience, approved the 1976 Organic Law on Security and Defense, articulated in the NSD’s integral terms, although with significant minor state violence, not very comparable with the rest of the region.

Within the great strategy framework, the NSD will be the hemispheric security doctrine (military, political, and ideological) shaped throughout the Cold War era. It alternates its continental scope and level of pressure as administrations and legislatures in the United States change. We will see how, for example, there is a paradigm change in the Democrat-Republican successions, while Republicans like Nixon will apply greater coercion through that doctrine but, simultaneously, they will manage to delimit by the diplomatic bilateral with Moscow, Soviet regional pretensions, which, paradoxically, achieves environments of détente that in the extended run benefits democratic processes as Latin American countries achieve certain stability levels, guerrilla struggles cessation, verification of democratic transitions and incentives. Nixon gets guarantees from Brezhnev to stay away from Latin America (Dobrynin 1998, 272) in exchange for US respect for the Warsaw Pact; Reagan gets Gorbachev to dismiss Central America completely (Zuvok 2008, 494) (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

*Table 6.1 Cuban Interventions in the Framework of the Great Soviet Cold War Strategy*

<i>Country and year</i>	<i>1. Contingent/event</i>	<i>2. Historical impact</i>	<i>3. Political corollary</i>
Panama, 1959	97 men leave Cuba (three Panamanians, a Puerto Rican, an Argentinian, and the rest Cubans) and land in San Blas (Panama)	300m US\$ of direct damages and millions in indirect damages. This is considered the most significant Cuban intervention regarding the Cuban contingent	The protagonists were repatriated to Cuba by plane. President Ernesto de la Guardia denounced the invasion at the OAS
Dominican Republic, 1959	December 1958 Dominican exiles train in Pinar del Río, to overthrow the dictator Rafael L. Trujillo. Two groups of Cubans and Dominican exiles invade the D.R. in June 1959 by plane and three ships with 150 guerrillas who are delayed by three days and ambushed near Puerto de Plata. The expedition takes off from Cuba in a C-46 painted with the signs of the Dominican Armed Forces	Trujillo's Army kills more than 100 Dominicans. There are only five survivors including two Cubans. One is the Commander Delio Gómez Ochoa, who returns to Havana when Trujillo is assassinated in 1961	Historiography recognizes this event as the Immortal Race expeditions. The pilot was Venezuelan and, on his return, Camilo Cienfuegos, the mastermind of the operations, apprehended him and denied any Cuban participation

*(Continued)*

<i>Country and year</i>	<i>1. Contingent/event</i>	<i>2. Historical impact</i>	<i>3. Political corollary</i>
Nicaragua, 1959	<b>60 men</b> (Cubans and Guatemalans) leave Cuba and land on the Honduran coast	<b>The Honduran army</b> kills six guerrillas, wounds 15 and captures the rest	<b>The aim was</b> to overthrow Nicaraguan dictator Luis Somoza Debayle. This would be the seed of <i>Sandinismo</i> , which continued to receive Cuban support until the 1980s
Haiti, 1959	<b>Thirty men</b> including Cubans, Haitians (trained in Cuba for three months), and two Venezuelans, set sail from Barbacoa (Cuba) to Haiti, to overthrow François Duvalier	<b>The expedition</b> is completely annihilated. Only four Cuban minors are saved, who are deported after a series of interrogations	<b>The plan was to add</b> a raised column of the Haitian army, but Haitian General Marcerón remained loyal to Duvalier
Guatemala, 1960	<b>On 3rd October 1960</b> Guatemalan President Ydígoras Fuentes reports that his Air Force has attacked a ship delivering Cuban weapons on the country's Atlantic coast. The Cuban Air Force becomes involved, assisting the insurgents, while Cuban officers lead a column seeking to help the Air Force. They are discovered in Honduras	<b>200 men</b> led by Augusto Charnaud (former minister of Jacobo Arbenz), seen in Havana, plan to invade Guatemala. The plan of Castro and Che Guevara is to reinstate Arbenz, overthrown years earlier	<b>The Guatemalan army</b> quickly suffocated the operation and denounced the attempt at the OAS
Peru, 1960	<b>200 young Peruvians</b> are trained in guerrilla combat in Cuba	<b>The response of the</b> government of Fernando Belaúnde is overwhelming, within a year the guerrilla groups from Cuba are finished	<b>The bulk of the guerrillas</b> came from the Peruvian APRA and formed the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (1962–1965). Members of this group later became the terrorist group the Shining Path ( <i>Sendero Luminoso</i> , 1980 to present)

- Colombia, 1962–1981 **Six Colombian students** with Cuban scholarships create, in Havana, the Pro-Liberation Brigade José Antonio Galán, breeding ground of the Colombian National Liberation Army
- In March 1981** Cuba supports the landing of M-19 guerrillas in the Chocó department on Colombia's Pacific coast
- Venezuela, 1966, 1967 **In 1966**, a group of guerrillas from the Venezuelan Communist Party, trained in Cuba with other Cuban combatants including Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, invade Venezuela
- Machurucuto Beach, 1967**, invasion by a mixed group of Venezuelan and Cuban guerrillas, with obsolete weapons and 10,000 US\$ provided by Castro
- Bolivia, 1966 **Che Guevara travels** with 25 Cubans. The operation involves the highest number of directly involved Cubans to date
- In 1964**, 18 guerrillas create the ELN, joined later by the famous priests of Liberation Theology
- The Colombian Army** quickly intercepts the guerrilla columns
- Fidel Castro** supports the expedition with 15 Cuban guerrillas, money, and weapons to join the local guerrillas. On 1st January 1967, the guerrilla column reunited near the Venezuelan Andes
- Twelve Cuban and Venezuelan** guerrilla landed with the objective of regrouping in the Venezuelan Andes with the guerrilla fronts operating in the west of the country
- The Bolivian army** and its elite group, emulation of the US Green Berets, defeat the group in less than a year
- In 1967 in Havana**, during the conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization, Castro promised the ELN military equipment for 500 peasants who had organized in Eastern Colombia
- Julio César Turbay** (1981) broke off relations with Havana, accusing Castro of these events in Colombia
- Arnaldo Ochoa** Sánchez, now a General, was shot in Cuba after a dark and controversial trial for narco-trafficking
- The toll of the operation** included eight killed guerrillas, two captures, one drowning, and one escapee
- The Cuban commanders** of Machurucuto (1967), Menéndez Tommasевич and Rosales del Toro, were decorated as heroes in Cuba
- The death of Che** Guevara was an imperceptible blow to the guerrilla fights but a symbolic triumph of the Cuban Revolution. His image was evolution 2.0 for socialist propaganda in the bourgeois urban centers of the western world

(Continued)

<i>Country and year</i>	<i>1. Contingent/event</i>	<i>2. Historical impact</i>	<i>3. Political corollary</i>
Nicaragua (1979–1990)	<b>Military and intelligence</b> support and advice from 1979, an “economic cooperation pact” from 1982	<b>The El Salvador-Nicaragua</b> revolutionary circuit commits, above all during the Reagan administration, to the emergence of the Contras, financed between 1985–1986 by arms sales to Iran and drug money from the Cali Cartel, laundered through the Iran-Norton-Contras triangle	<b>The Sandinista Revolution</b> was the regional axis of the “Second Cold War”
El Salvador, 1979	<b>Following the triumph of Sandinismo</b> , the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Army emerges. Cuban support translates only to advice and material support: 200 tons of weapons for the “general offensive” in 1981	<b>A civil war</b> is never officially declared, but this conflict, ending in 1992, is the axis of conflict in the “Second Cold War” in Central America	<b>A later report</b> by the US State Department, 1981, accused Castro of promoting the unification of the Salvadoran guerrilla at a meeting of their leaders in Havana

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

*Table 6.2 Dictatorships Established or Invigorated by the National Security Doctrine*

<i>Country</i>	<i>4. Coup d’etat</i>	<i>5. Dictatorship</i>	<i>6. Transition</i>
Venezuela	1952	Military decade of Pérez Jiménez	1958
Brazil	1964	Fifth Brazilian Republic	1985
Bolivia	1964	Eight military presidencies and a narco-dictatorship	1982
Argentina	1966	Process of National Reorganization (with a Peronist intermission between 1973–1976)	1983
Uruguay	1973	Civic-military dictatorship	1985
Chile	1973	Coup d’etat against the leftist government of Allende	1990
Paraguay	1951	Alfredo Stroessner	1989
Dominican Republic	1931	Rafael L. Trujillo	1961
Nicaragua	1934	Somoza dynasty	1979
Haiti	1957	Duvalier dynasty	1986

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

## Notes

- 1 In 1961, the First Pan-American Course on Counter-Revolutionary War was held in Argentina (Martorell 1999, 56–59).
- 2 In Venezuela the “Democratic Peace” is given as a definitive truce with the Armed Forces of National Liberation in 1969, in Argentina, between 1980 and 1981, the military government defeats the guerrilla movement “los montoneros”, as well as the dictatorship of Aparicio Méndez in Uruguay, practically ends with the National Liberation Movement-Tupamaros in 1981.
- 3 The Soviet Communist Youth Union.

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