

By James LeMoine

# THE GUERRILLA NETWORK

## A REGION IN CONFLICT

**I**T IS A WORLD THAT HAS ITS OWN CODES AND knows no national borders. It has stopping points in Nicaragua, Cuba, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as well as in the theaters of war in El Salvador and Guatemala. Almost all its leaders are Marxists of one persuasion or another who believe that capitalism and imperialism are the causes of their countries' problems. Far from being a passing political fashion, their movement is deeply rooted in the troubled societies of Central America and can be traced to leftist uprisings more than 50 years ago. They are the armed left — the generation that spent the 1970's preparing for revolution and is spending the 1980's fighting it.

In one of the most volatile and closely watched areas of the world, the actions of these guerrilla leaders and their allies in Managua and Havana have an enormous international impact. The role of the Sandinista commanders in the area's conflicts, in particular, has long been the subject of intense debate in the United States. Late last month, as the controversy over aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels — known as *contras* — raged in Congress, reports of attacks by Nicaraguan Army units on *contra* bases within Honduras resulted in an immediate Presidential order of \$20 million in emergency military aid to Honduras.

Today, leftist guerrilla movements are active in El Salvador and Guatemala, and far smaller leftist groups can be found in Honduras and Costa Rica. Virtually every study of the region, including that of the Kissinger commission appointed in mid-1983 by President Reagan to make policy recommendations on Central America, has concluded that the revolutions of Central America primarily have been caused by decades of poverty, bloody repression and frustrated efforts at bringing about political reform.

Consequently, those who fight do not need great numbers of combatants to have a substantial impact, since public discontent runs deep. In El Salvador, the umbrella organization of the rebels, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, probably has no more than 4,000 fighters, but it can count on several thousand unarmed supporters to help them wage a debilitating war against the Government. In Guatemala, where the guerrillas are battered by a ruthless army counterinsurgency campaign, they are fielding about 1,500 fighters organized in four main groups.

The key commanders of these movements probably number in the hundreds. A few are of peasant origin, but most are members of the urban middle and lower-middle classes. Many appear to be idealists who were frustrated by the overwhelming problems facing their countries. Until the last year or so, however, little was known about the lives of these leaders, how they were trained, or the alliances between them.

Revealing information came to light a year ago with the capture of Nidia Díaz, a commander of the Marxist Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (a Salvadoran guerrilla faction). Miss Díaz had with her a diary that indicated Salvadoran guerrillas had been sent to training courses in Vietnam, Bulgaria, East Germany and the Soviet Union.

Recent months have also seen an increasing willingness of former guerrilla officials to divulge details of their shadowy past. Several high-level Sandinistas have left the Nicaraguan Government because of what they describe as their unhappiness with the Sandinistas' dependence on the Cubans and the Russians and their failure to establish a pluralistic society. In the case of the Salvadorans, a few commanders have been captured and been persuaded to give up the fight; others have been ousted over differences on how the revolution is to proceed.

From interviews with these current and former guerrillas (conducted separately over a six-month period), a clearer picture emerges of the connections between the various leftist Central American rebel factions — a picture that reveals a guerrilla movement that is anything but monolithic. Details were offered, for instance, on the arms shipments from Nicaragua to El Salvador, on the role of Cuba in the planning of the abortive "final offensive" in El Salvador in 1981, and on the events leading up to the almost Shakespearean murder-suicide of two prominent leaders of the Salvadoran guerrilla movement three years ago.

The story behind the brutal killing of Melida Anaya Montes and the suicide of the man implicated in her murder, Salvador Cayetano Carpio, offers a rare glimpse of the frequently fractious society of revolutionary leaders in Central America. In this instance, Mr. Carpio's fiercely Stalinist stance pitted him against many within his own group who sought greater unity among rebel factions as well as a negotiated end to the fighting, a position that was strongly supported by Cuba and Nicaragua.

Although Cuba appears to remain the chief adviser and patron of Central American leftist guerrilla leaders, the Soviet Union is seen by many rebels to have abrogated its revolutionary role. "Revolutions are like people," says a Honduran leftist. "They lose passion. Russia is old, bureaucratic and corrupt."

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## RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

**J**UST AS THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO ENTER the world of the armed left of Central America, there are many reasons for men and women becoming guerrillas. Often, these reasons are highly personal.

Salvador Samayoa, a former Minister of Education in El Salvador, is now one of the leading officials of the rebel Popular Liberation Forces, the largest Salvadoran guerrilla group. He began thinking of taking up arms, he says, after watching the Salvadoran Army open fire on a demonstration in 1975. "That marked me," he says. "It was grotesque to see students shot like dogs in the streets." Mr. Samayoa is unlikely to have been the only one affected by such violence. Since the 1970's, Salvadoran Government security forces have killed thousands of civilians in an effort to wipe out leftist sympathizers.

Other guerrilla leaders almost appear to have been raised to join rebel ranks. Plutarco Hernández Sancho, who now runs a small farm in Costa Rica, is not well known today, but until he lost an internal power struggle in 1979, he was one of

the top Sandinista military commanders in the revolt against the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Mr. Hernández's family was active in the Communist Party in Costa Rica — his father was a Congressman — and Mr. Hernández remembers a childhood filled with political meetings and demonstrations. "I never had any doubt that I would be a revolutionary fighter," he says. His cousin, Eduardo Sancho Castaneda (better known by his nom de guerre, Fermán Cienfuegos), is the leader of a guerrilla faction, the Armed Forces of National Resistance, in El Salvador.

Salvadoran rebels interviewed recently said they entered guerrilla organizations through student or trade-union front groups. Peasants were recruited directly from their villages. Those who demonstrated their commitment to the revolution and a capacity to lead rose to become senior commanders.

Guerrillas with leadership potential were first offered basic military training (rifle use, squad tactics, indoctrination techniques) at hidden camps in their own countries. Most of them later appeared to receive more specialized training abroad — in Cuba, various Eastern European countries and Vietnam. According to a number of former Sandinistas, some San-

dinista commanders went to North Korea for officer training in the early 1970's and a few went to Palestine Liberation Organization camps in Beirut in 1969.

The Soviet Union seems to play a limited role in the region. In the past, it has counseled orthodox Communist parties to avoid military action and to assume power through alliances with "progressive" political parties. With the Russians becoming a major supplier of weapons and other aid to Nicaragua, and with the Communist parties in El Salvador and Guatemala joining in the fight against Government forces, that policy may have changed. But many rebels do not appear to have forgiven the Russians for their past reticence.

Cuba is still a revolutionary icon. For older guerrilla leaders, Cuba offered the first evidence that it was possible to fight the United States and win. "For the first time, young Communists could see a revolution triumph, a revolution that spoke Spanish," explains a Honduran leftist who fought with the Sandinistas. A young former Sandinista official was overcome with emotion when he went to Cuba three years ago to discuss relations between the Sandinista Government and the Cuban Communist Party. "It's a question of soul, of myth," he says. "Cuba symbolized the success of socialism and the defeat of the Yankees."

Rebels say that Cuban embassies serve as refuges and bankers for Central American leftists traveling abroad. In addition, say several former rebels, almost all the top Sandinista commanders and most of the very senior rebel officials in El Salvador and Guatemala have received advanced guerrilla training in Cuba. The courses given

range from intelligence gathering to instructions in rural and urban guerrilla warfare.

The training there is overseen by the Department of Special Operations of the Cuban Army and the Department of the Americas, headed by Manuel Pineiro. A close confidant of Fidel Castro, Mr. Pineiro (whose nickname is Barba Roja, or Red Beard) draws on two decades of revolutionary experience in the region and probably has had a profound influence on a whole generation of guerrilla commanders, many of whom he knows personally.

How senior commanders are selected for training abroad is still a mystery. But there are telling examples of such training in the recent past and some indications of how it continues today. A year ago, Salvadoran Army commandos captured the senior rebel official Nidia Díaz after intercepting a guerrilla patrol. The diary found in her backpack listed 33 Salvadoran guerrillas who had been sent to training courses in Vietnam, Bulgaria, East Germany and the Soviet Union in 1984 and 1985. Miss Díaz herself was slated to go to Vietnam for training.

Asked to comment on the diary, a current senior Salvadoran guerrilla official said, "It is true that we have sent some small groups to various countries for training. Most of them are socialist countries because they are the ones willing to help."

It is likely that the training offered rebel leaders today is similar to that given to top Sandinista guerrillas, like

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Mr. Hernández, in the late 1960's and 70's. A promising young Communist Party activist in Costa Rica in 1965, Mr. Hernández was selected by party leaders to attend Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University, which was established in 1960 to offer free higher education to third-world students as well as Soviet students. Most of those who attend, says Mr. Hernández, are chosen by their local Communist Party. But only a few of those third-world students become guerrillas. The vast majority complete their college courses and return home to find jobs.

Mr. Hernández and a group of fellow students from Central America were different. They decided to form a study group in Moscow and to spend the long winter evenings discussing ways of bringing about revolution in their homelands. (Thirty of the Latin students, recalls Mr. Hernández, were expelled in 1968 when they led a demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.) The years at Patrice Lumumba let the future revolutionaries form friendships with other young leftists, says a Honduran who studied with Mr. Hernández and who was formerly a leading Sandinista. "It let us see the state of the revolutionary movement around the world with students from 82 countries."

A number of the Central American students returned home to join the still-fledgling Sandinista National Liberation Front because they believed the Somoza dictatorship could be beaten. The Cubans offered to help by training a handful of rebels.

At a seven-month intelligence seminar in Cuba, the Honduran learned how to recruit spies, to maintain security, to establish secret communications and to interrogate prisoners. Plutarco Hernández went through basic military training in Cuba and, in 1971, took a grueling officer command and staff course in North Korea, where he met Kim Il Sung. He returned to Central America to become one of the chief Sandinista military commanders inside Nicara-

gua, receiving radio instructions from Havana that, he says, took him all night to decode. His Honduran classmate became the Sandinistas' chief of counterintelligence. Two other students from Patrice Lumumba, Henry Ruiz and José Valdivia, also became Sandinista commanders and are senior officials in Nicaragua today.

## DAILY LIFE OF A GUERRILLA

**A**FTER COMPLETING their training, rebel leaders begin the arduous and dangerous work of organizing a rebellion. Their tasks include setting up political platforms and arranging arms shipments. It is a grim life.

"The brush strokes with which clandestine life has been painted, this *aura* of romanticism, do not correspond to reality," says Tomás Borge Martínez, one of the most hard-line and also one of the most eloquent Sandinista commanders, in the course of a long conversation in Managua. "In Nicaragua ... a man in the underground lived in very inhospitable places, in very poor houses, suffering diarrhea, with all you owned beside you."

A weeklong stay with El Salvador's Popular Liberation Forces guerrillas in the heart of their operational zone in Chalatenango Department offered a close look at the continuing hard-scrabble life of rebels in the field. The guerrillas lived on beans, salt and corn tortillas. They slept in hammocks, if they were lucky enough to own one, and bathed in rivers. Most were covered with scars from innumerable fly, flea and mosquito bites. A rebel doctor said that during his four years working with rebel combat units, he had been immobilized several times with chronic infections of intestinal parasites. He said he was 35, but he looked past 40, and he knew it. "War ages you," he said, running his hand through prematurely graying hair.

Guerrilla commanders sleep with a pistol beside them. They say they expect to be tortured if they are caught by Government security forces and, if they survive, they expect to spend years in jail. Many say they have had friends and relatives killed by the army or police.

Paranoia is an inescapable part of life. A Honduran leftist who lived underground for

several years describes his morning ritual: "Each day when I got up, I went to the window and checked the street. I remembered everything going on there and I noted anything abnormal. After I bathed, I checked the street again and after I finished breakfast I checked it again. When I left the house, I put a towel in the window to tell comrades I was not home. After walking a block, I stopped to tie my shoes and see if anyone was following me. I had previously studied every shop and cafe along the street and I knew which ones had a rear exit, which ones had a bathroom window I could jump through if I had to." Despite these precautions, the Honduran was captured by Somoza's National Guard while working for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Over time, such a life leads many rebels to develop an us-versus-them view of the world that is defined by fear of discovery and a belief that they are making a supreme sacrifice for the common good. A former Sandinista recalls his feelings during the years he spent carrying a hand grenade 24 hours a day while he organized clandestine cells in Managua. "We hated people with normal lives because we were morally superior," he remembers. "We risked our lives and we knew we had the power of life and death." Even after the war was won, he found it almost impossible to adjust. "It was two years before I could make love to a woman. Fearing human con-

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tact, I cut off that kind of emotion."

A deep commitment to the revolution is necessary to endure such physical and emotional hardships. The guerrillas in Chalatenango spoke of *la mística* — a combination of esprit, élan and absolute belief that is their inspiration. It is no easier to explain that devotion than it is to analyze other human commitments based on faith.

Perhaps because their commitment is reinforced by years of struggle, few veteran rebel commanders have defected or voluntarily quit the fight. A few have been captured and then coerced or convinced to give up the fight. Several have been ousted or have chosen to leave after losing power struggles, and some of the bitterest critics of their past comrades are from this group. Many "retired" guerrillas, now in civilian life, refuse to discuss their past for fear of compromising their friends or aiding opponents of revolutionary change, which they still support.

## INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

**W**HEN REVOLUTION in Central America became not just possible but probable in the late 1970's, Fidel Castro offered stepped-up assistance, but he first demanded that the rebel factions in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala put aside their differences and become unified guerrilla movements.

This insistence led to the forming of rebel fronts in these countries between 1979 and 1980.

A number of leftist rebels, however, criticize the Cubans for being overbearing and for their reluctance to back a revolution decisively until they believe it stands a good chance of success. They point out that the Cubans never offered the level of aid to the Guatemalan rebel movement that they gave to the Salvadorans and the Sandinistas.

In Nicaragua, the Cubans were willing to risk a major

increase in assistance in 1979 when it became obvious that a popular insurrection was under way and the United States would not intervene. As the Sandinistas were about to make their final push on Managua, Mr. Hernández says he helped two Cuban military advisers slip into Nicaragua. Two other Cubans stayed in Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border, where, with the acquiescence of Government officials, they oversaw the unloading of weapons flown in every night from Cuba.

Several senior Sandinista officials have admitted they offered to help the Salvadoran rebels with their revolution soon after Anastasio Somoza was ousted. According to a number of former Sandinista guerrilla commanders, the Nicaraguans were paying off a debt they had incurred in 1978. At that time, the Salvadorans had managed to amass a remarkable war chest estimated at more than \$80 million from kidnappings, and they decided to invest \$10 million in the Sandinista revolution. The money was handed over in Costa Rica, in cash.

After the Sandinistas came to power, they allowed the five rebel groups in the Salvadoran guerrilla front to set up their propaganda, communications, financial and logistics offices in Managua. Men who had worked for three leading Sandinistas — Julio López, chief of the Sandinista Directorate of International Relations; Bayardo Arce Castano, then the head of the political commission of the National Directorate, and Tomás Borge — say that these officials helped oversee several arms shipments to the Salvadorans. Mr. Borge denies playing such a role. (Several former Sandinistas say that Mr. López's directorate, which is modeled after Cuba's Department of the Americas, serves as the foreign ministry of the Sandinista Front, charged with maintaining ties to other guerrilla groups.)

The Sandinistas offered other assistance as well. According to two former Sandinista officials, a Central American — who had previously

worked in the United States as a Cuban agent specializing in the workings of Congress and the American press — moved to Managua where he carried out the same task for the Sandinistas. He briefed at least one high-level Salvadoran rebel delegation that was sent to lobby in the United States. "He told them how to approach a particular Congressman, what illusions to appeal to, what his likes and dislikes were," says one of the former Sandinistas. "He also advised them on how to talk to the American press."

There was also cooperation closer to home. A Sandinista official who worked in the Nicaraguan Embassy in Honduras in the early 1980's says he secretly met Salvadoran rebels there to exchange intelligence about the Honduran and Salvadoran armies and to arrange arms shipments to El Salvador. The Salvadorans, he says, bribed Honduran Army officers to let the weapons pass overland to El Salvador.

As El Salvador slid to the edge of full-scale revolt, Cuba became an important source of weapons and advice. According to a number of former senior Salvadoran and Sandinista officials, Cuba helped arrange for the supply of at least 60 percent of the weapons that enabled the Salvadoran guerrillas to equip an army in record time. American military officials, who say they have checked the serial numbers of captured rifles, report that many are guns the United States left behind in Vietnam.

Few of the arms shipments to El Salvador by way of Nicaragua have been intercepted by Salvadoran or Honduran troops. A former Sandinista official who says he helped arrange such shipments describes one method of eluding detection. Rebel accomplices in Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua placed guns in sealed trucks with a manifest describing the cargo as industrial goods bound for Mexico or Guatemala. When the truck crossed into El Salvador, rebel units there "hijacked" the cargo by previous arrangement and removed the hidden weapons.

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ripe for the "final offensive," recall two former Sandinista officials, top Cuban officials — including Fidel Castro and Manuel Pineiro — took part in strategy sessions with Sandinista and Salvadoran commanders. The Cubans and most of the Nicaraguans and the Salvadoran rebel command believed that the Sandinista-style insurrection could be repeated in El Salvador, and that it was important to act before Ronald Reagan became President. Edén Pastora Gómez, then the Sandinista Deputy Minister of Defense, disagreed.

He argued that conditions in El Salvador were very different from those in Nicaragua. In a manner that has since been duplicated in the Philippines, the Sandinistas had led a largely middle-class insurrection against a family dictatorship. In El Salvador, however, not only were the guerrillas waging a war against a military dictatorship and having to reckon with a potent Salvadoran Army, but they could not count on the support of the middle class. Mr. Pastora predicted disaster. The offensive was launched in January 1981. Mr. Pastora proved correct.

### THE CARPIO INCIDENT

**T**HE COSTLY MIS-judgment increased the resistance of some key Salvadoran rebel leaders, especially Salvador Cayetano Carpio, to a heavy reliance on the Cubans and Sandinistas. According to a close aide, Mr. Carpio set up his own con-

tacts with Vietnam, Algeria and Libya. In 1981, during a meeting in Havana, he reportedly told Fidel Castro to go to hell because he felt the Cuban leader was meddling too much with Salvadoran affairs.

Another rebel who resisted Cuban and Sandinista influence was Dr. Fabio Castillo, founder of the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party faction. The most prominent leftist in Salvadoran electoral politics, Dr.

Castillo had been a member of the leftist junta that ruled El Salvador in 1961 and had run for president in 1966. Frustrated by the ferocious attacks on his party, he became a guerrilla organizer in 1972. "The Cubans are arrogant," says Dr. Castillo, who now lives in retirement in Costa Rica. "Why should we fight United States domination only to accept Cuban domination?"

The growing dispute among the Salvadoran guerrilla commanders on the future course of the revolution and who should lead it ignited old enmities within the Central American left. The Salvadoran rebel movement was born from a schism in the Communist Party in the late 1960's over whether to follow Cuba's example and begin an armed rebellion. The Communists, following the line laid down in Moscow, called for a "peaceful transition to socialism." The leader of the dissidents — who believed that a revolution could be waged and won in El Salvador — was Mr. Carpio, who happened to be the party's general secretary.

In 1969, he resigned, excoriating his fellow party members as "bourgeois reformists." Within a decade, he appeared to have proved his point by surfacing as Comandante Marcial, the leader of the Marxist Popular Liberation Forces and what was becoming a broad-based revolution. In late 1979, the Communist Party belatedly joined the revolt when it appeared close to success, but Mr. Carpio reportedly treated his newest ally with disdain.

Over the next few years, the United States bolstered the Salvadoran Army, insisted on elections and called for some reforms. Had it not been for this intervention, the guerrillas might well be running El Salvador today. American pressure on the Salvadoran Government not only blunted the rebellion, but, say several rebels, caused Cuba and Nicaragua to become concerned that the Reagan Administration was on the verge of retaliating against them. They counseled that it was time to consider a negotiated end to the fighting.

Mr. Carpio and Dr. Castillo resisted the counsel. In late 1982, at the age of age 62, Mr. Carpio was the most respected guerrilla leader in Central America, a formidable man who had been fighting Salvadoran dictators for 40 years. Both he and Dr. Castillo suspected that the Salvadoran Communist Party was lobbying for negotiations. Mr. Carpio's reaction, recalls a senior rebel official, verged on the irrational. His dislike of Jorge Shafik Handal, the Communist Party leader, was intense.

But demand for greater unity and negotiations found wide support among most of the Salvadoran rebel commanders. As the debate intensified, Dr. Castillo was ousted from the Central American Workers Party. In January 1983, Cayetano Carpio was stunned to find that the central committee of his group had agreed, almost unanimously, that his views had also become obsolete. "The truth is, Cayetano had the concept of an orthodox Stalinist party that he would lead," says Salvador Samayoa, a senior official of Mr. Carpio's faction who knew the aging rebel leader well.

Mr. Carpio apparently believed his chief opponent was Melida Montes, the second-highest-ranking official in his group. A 54-year-old former schoolteacher with a keen mind for politics, she had come to support the demands for new tactics. On April 6, 1983, she was found brutally murdered in her safe house in Managua, stabbed 83 times with an ice pick by unknown assailants. (Miss Montes had just returned from a visit to Cuba, en route to a party congress in El Salvador and a final showdown with Mr. Carpio.)

Mr. Pineiro flew from Havana to help handle the crisis. Mr. Carpio was, at the time, in Libya, preparing to cover his tracks for a clandestine return to El Salvador. In-

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formed of the killing, he also flew to Managua, apparently grieving, to join Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega Saavedra and Tomás Borge in a final military salute as the casket holding Miss Montes's body was lowered into her grave.

But within days, convincing evidence was found — according to senior Sandinista and Salvadoran rebel officials — showing that one of Mr. Carpio's closest followers, Rogelio Bazzaglia, aided by a handful of accomplices, had committed the murder. There was also evidence that Mr. Carpio had either ordered Miss Montes's assassination, or had strongly suggested it. Mr. Borge and senior Salvadoran rebels deny that the Cubans played a key role in the showdown that followed. But they concede that they ordered Mr. Carpio to take an extended rest in Cuba.

Mr. Carpio's aides say he was also ordered to divulge information on the independent support network he had built for his rebel group. It was too much for the fiercely independent guerrilla leader. "They said he should go to Cuba to take a rest, but he knew people had been jailed in Cuba," says one of Mr.

Carpio's followers. "For us, the independence of the revolution was vital, vital. We thought this was the triumph of the Cuban-Communist line." Rather than comply, Mr. Carpio went home and shot himself in the heart.

Mr. Carpio — a rebel leader who was known as the "Ho Chi Minh of Central America" — was summarily buried inside a Sandinista Army base. "I felt profoundly moved at how this man with such a striking revolutionary history was being buried practically in silence, in secret, granted nothing more than the tears of those closest to him," says Mr. Borge, recalling his former friend.

Mr. Carpio's followers were purged from the rebel movement. Several were taken to Cuba, where they were interrogated by Cuban and Salvadoran rebel officials. As many as 300 guerrillas left the movement. Most now lead civilian lives in Mexico, Europe and Nicaragua. A few, invoking Mr. Carpio's name, have formed a small splinter group that still operates in San Salvador.

As his critics had predicted, the removal of Mr. Carpio allowed the rebels to rapidly improve their military coordination and to maul the Salvadoran Army on the battlefield. The guerrillas also agreed on a comprehensive peace proposal to end the fighting, and began forging closer political ties. They even declared their intention to form a single Marxist-Leninist party.

Those triumphs have now faded in El Salvador. After the United States invaded Grenada in late 1983, the Sandinistas asked most Salvadoran rebels to leave Managua. These rebels have now been allowed to return, but the Sandinistas also outraged the Salvadorans by temporarily cutting arms supplies to them, according to captured rebel documents.

On the battlefield, the war in El Salvador has become a long test of endurance between the guerrillas and the American-backed army.

## A GUERRILLA'S VOICE

**L**EONEL GONZALEZ, who looks to be in his 40's, is a softspoken guerrilla leader who chooses his words with care. Like Melida Montes, the murdered Salvadoran rebel official whom he supported, he is a former schoolteacher, and, he says, he was politicized by the despair and poverty he saw among the children he taught. Mr. Gonzalez played a key role in the discussions that led to Mr. Carpio's downfall and is now supreme commander of the ousted leader's group.

For the moment, Mr. Gonzalez's guerrilla unit is in a Salvadoran peasant village on the edge of guerrilla territory. It is a forbidding land — harsh and rocky, the trees and brush in various shades of brown now that the rainy season has ended. Resting against a stone wall, an M-16 automatic rifle beside him and surrounded by the central committee of his guerrilla group — all seasoned guerrilla commanders — Mr. Gonzalez talks of the long war that lies ahead.

"We will take advantage of the discontent here," he says quietly, "and offer the alternative of the F.M.L.N.," referring to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. "The roots of this crisis have not disappeared." ■

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