THE LAST COLONIAL MASSACRE

Latin America in the Cold War

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A VICTORY DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM A DEFEAT.

Jean-Paul Sartre

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Preface

SOON AFTER September 11, 2001, the novelist Ariel Dorfman penned a short essay comparing that day to the overthrow of Chilean president Salvador Allende, which took place on September 11, 1973, also a Tuesday. Dorfman, who served in Allende's government, made his point gently. Although the United States sponsored the military forces that ended Latin America's most stable democracy and killed thousands of Chileans, Dorfman took no pleasure in a retribution exacted by, as he put it, the "malignant gods of random history."[1] Instead he insisted that the twin tragedies offered a unique possibility for reparation. An author of works dedicated to the roughly one hundred thousand Latin Americans "disappeared" by Cold War terror, Dorfman recognized immediately the grief and uncertainty in the faces of the relatives walking about the streets of New York in search of their loved ones, carrying their photographs, not knowing whether their loved ones were alive or dead. That pain, broadcast to the nation, forced the whole United States "to look into the abyss of what it means to be desaparecido, with no certainty or funeral possible for those beloved men and women who are missing." In that confusion resided, Dorfman wrote, an opportunity to end the "famous exceptionalism" that has sheltered the United States from the storms of suffering and insecurity that lash at much of the earth, to nurture a new empathetic internationalism, to mend the many wounds, such as those inflicted on that first September 11, still festering in the wreckage of the Cold War. In catastrophe, he wanted to believe, lay a hope for a future that could escape the repetitions of the past that have made the present so shaken and fearful. Dorfman envisioned a response that, in recognizing a shared fate, a universal anguish, would bring about the humanization rather than the militarization of our world.

U.S. exceptionalism, however, is hard wrought. In the decade following the end of the Cold War, with the implosion and repudiation of Soviet totalitarianism, the idea that the United States has a unique mission in the world

flared even brighter than before. Liberal democracy was held to have triumphed absolutely, its fulfillment tightly bound to the history and destiny of the United States.

To be sure, there is no shortage of critiques of U.S. Cold War foreign policy, and many of them, such as investigations into its actions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, have seeped into popular consciousness. Latin America in particular has long been the Achilles' heel in the hard armor of U.S. virtue, and even the most triumphal of Cold War scholars have been forced into moral contortions to explain away U.S. actions that contributed to the torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of individuals.[2] Aside from making visibly disastrous and deadly interventions in Guatemala in 1954, the Dominican Republic in 1965, Chile in 1973, and El Salvador and Nicaragua during the 1980s, the United States has lent quiet and steady financial, material, and moral support for murderous counterinsurgent terror states, directly resulting in the kind of suffering so easily recognized by Dorfman. But the enormity of Stalin's crimes ensures that such sordid histories, no matter how compelling, thorough, or damning, do not disturb the foundation of a worldview committed to the exemplary role of the United States in defending what we now know as democracy.[3]

A post–Cold War redefinition of democracy has reinforced this fundamental faith. In the years following World War II, a widely held belief across the political spectrum understood democracy as entailing both individual liberty and some degree of equality.[4] Such a definition animated the popular front and the New Deal. Even Ho Chi Minh in 1945 and Fidel Castro in 1953 famously drew from the U.S. Declaration of Independence to make their cases for freedom and justice.[5] Yet today many political theorists, historians, and commentators dismiss as a basic philosophical error the notion that Jeffersonian democracy would lead to, and be fulfilled by, socialism.[6] The horrors of the Soviet Union, not to mention those of Vietnam and Cuba, proved to them that political liberalism with its emphasis on legal equality, procedural guarantees, and individual freedom, and socialism with its market regulations and critique of economic inequities, were not, as many had previously argued, mutually reinforcing. Although socialists and liberal democrats have advanced many of the same causes, the twentieth century, according to this new perspective, bloodily demonstrated that the desire for comprehensive equality, for the achievement of an absent unity, for historical meaning in a meaningless modern world will inevitably lead advocates of the socialist idea to elevate ends over means, reject pluralism, and trespass the legal limits set by constitutional protections and individual rights, especially the right to private property. Socialism today is seen not as a sincere and better variant of democracy but rather as a potentially treacherous ideological progeny that needs to be policed and contained.[7] The Cold War substituted the notion that individual freedom would require some form of economic equality and security with a more vigilant definition of democracy—a definition the United States both embodies and swears to defend. As the opening sentence of its 2002 National Security Strategy puts it, the "great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a *single* sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise."[8]

Along with the notion that democracy needs a firm hand comes a rehabilitation of empire. In the decade following the Cold War, Washington preached with evangelical optimism the belief that open markets combined with constitutional rule would produce a peaceful, prosperous world. Yet since September 11, 2001, that faith has given way to a more Napoleonic idealism, one that understands that free market democracy is not necessarily part of the "social order of nature" but requires strong institutional restraints—legal if possible, military if necessary.[9] Such opinions do not only emanate from the political right, although that is where they first gestated. They often receive their most impassioned advocacy from many on the liberal-left. In the face of genocide, social rot, terrorism, corruption, and failed states, it is the West's mission, moral obligation even, to finish the task initiated by the old imperialism, a task that national liberation movements were not up to completing. "Empire," as the human rights theorist Michael Ignatieff put it in his somewhat reluctant endorsement of war with Iraq in 2003, is now "the last hope for democracy and stability alike."[10] So the equation "democracy and socialism" gives way to the equation "democracy and empire" with little notice, at least by those who claim to care about social justice, that the definition of democracy today being exported is a shell of its former self.

Latin America, where this definitional transformation was most profound, plays a curious role in current geopolitical debates taking place in the United States. The right sees the region as a success story: following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the United States, facing an insurgent blend of Marxism and militant nationalism, responded with an effective mix of hard and soft power, neutralized the opposition, and transformed most of the continent's nations into free market allies and their populations into willing consumers of U.S. goods and technology. Emblematic of this success—and key to understanding Washington's current imperial resoluteness—is the 1981 presidential transition from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. Carter, the story goes, with his liberal hand-wringing, almost lost the Caribbean and Central

America, if not all of Latin America, until Reagan stepped in, brushed aside a chorus of doubters, and threw the full weight of U.S. power toward containing communism, thus liberating Nicaragua, saving El Salvador and Guatemala, and isolating Cuba. Liberals were wrong about Latin America in the 1980s, conservative strategist William Kristol states today in justifying Washington's new hard line.[11] The left of course draws a different lesson. For those who unequivocally oppose military interventions abroad, the sad history of U.S. hemispheric policy is a self-evident confirmation of their position. Others, however, who support some version of the "war on terror" in the name of progressive values, while admitting the base motives and baleful legacy of the United States in the region, argue that the past does not necessarily have to determine the future. And besides, according to this perspective, even if Washington is driven by less than noble purpose, it does not follow that its power could not achieve some good—to stem religious intolerance, for example, or to stop massive human rights abuses and overthrow indefensible dictatorships—in an increasingly volatile and dangerous world.[12]

But more than just providing a moral standard on which to test the sincerity of U.S. claims, the history the Cold War in Latin America, I believe, can help us understand how our world has become so inflamed. It corrects the myopia of those who decline to consider the toll of Cold War success, who refuse to make the connection between nearly a half century of unrelenting war on real or potential revolutionary threats and the militarization, violence, endemic hunger, chronic poverty, rising fundamentalism, and loss of modernist optimism that now grip much of the world.[13] Cold War triumphalists would of course respond by saying that the West's victory merely set the stage for a potential but by no means guaranteed extension of liberal democracy. This book argues the opposite for Latin America: Cold War terror—either executed, patronized, or excused by the United States—fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies, and broke the link between freedom and equality, thus greatly weakening the likelihood of such a fulfillment and making possible the reversal of the gains that had been achieved.

In Latin America, in country after country, the mass peasant and working-class movements that gained ground in the middle of the twentieth century were absolutely indispensable to the advancement of democracy. To the degree that Latin America today may be considered democratic, it was the left, including the Marxist left, that made it so. Empire, rather than fortifying democracy, weakened it. Launched first by domestic elites in the years after World War II and then quickly joined by the United States, the savage crusade, justified under the guise of the Cold War, against Latin American democratic movements had devastating human and political costs. In some countries, such as Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile, national security states carried out a focused, surgically precise repression. Other states, such as Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala, let loose a more scattershot horror. In all cases, terror had the effect of, first, radicalizing society to produce febrile political polarization and, second, destroying the more capacious, social understandings of democracy that prevailed in the years around World War II. One important consequence of this terror was the severance of the link between individual dignity and social solidarity, a combination that, as I will argue through the course of this book, was the wellspring of the old left's strength. During the transition to constitutional rule that occurred throughout Central and South America following the Cold War, democracy came to be defined strictly in the astringent terms of personal freedom rather than social security. This redefinition served as the qualification for the free market ideologies and policies that now reign throughout the continent and indeed most of the world. In other words, to make the point as crudely as possible, the conception of democracy now being prescribed as the most effective weapon in the war on terrorism is itself largely, at least in Latin America, a product of terror.

The Last Colonial Massacre

AT FIRST GLANCE, the defining feature of the May 29, 1978, Panzós massacre was its persistent ordinariness, its indistinguishability from the hundreds of other indigenous protests and elite reactions that had taken place throughout the course of colonial and republican rule in Guatemala to that day. Early on a Monday morning between five hundred and seven hundred Q'eqchi'-Mayan women, men, and children arrived in the center of Panzós, a languorous river town sitting low in the marshlands of the Polochic Valley. They gathered to present a letter to the mayor announcing an impending visit of a union delegation from the capital to discuss long-standing peasant complaints against local planters.[1] A military detachment that had set up camp in the central plaza three days earlier met the crowd. Survivors insist that the soldiers opened fire preemptively, even with premeditation. Some however say the protesters were the aggressors, banging their machetes together, throwing chili in the eyes of the troops, and demanding the installation of an "Indian king." Others simply report a more prosaic scuffle that led to a tragic overreaction by both sides. At least thirty-five Q'eqchi's, including a number of children, lay murdered and dozens were wounded by the time the shooting stopped. More died in flight, either in the mountains or swept away by the Polochic River. Guatemalans have debated the exact number of victims to this day. Forensic anthropologists exhumed thirty-four skeletal remains in 1997 from a mass grave, but survivors then and now insist that the dead numbered in the hundreds.[2]

Compare this killing with the bloodshed that led to the establishment of Panzós as a municipality over a hundred years earlier: In the early dawn of June 29, 1865, after months of petitions, the "octogenarian" Jorge Yat led hundreds of Q'eqchi'-Mayans into the center of San Pedro Carchá, an indigenous town above Panzós at the high end of the Polochic Valley. As in Panzós a century later, they protested the influence of Ladinos—the term used to identify

those Guatemalans not considered Mayan—on the village's administration and economy.[3] As in Panzós in 1978, Q'eqchi's in 1865 appealed to higher authorities to side with them against their enemies, in this case the newly arrived merchants, coffee planters, and priest. Mixing the millenarian with the mundane, they demanded both the expulsion of foreigners and a reduction of taxes. Ladinos, for their part, worked, as they did later in Panzós, to keep all but the most repressive elements of the state out of their jurisdiction. When Yat presented a "note" supposedly given to him by the president, Carchá's priest flew into a rage, yelling that "an insignificant man" like Yat could never have obtained an audience with the president. He struck Yat, which led the protesters to imprison the cleric and a handful of other Ladinos. In response, militiamen from the region's nearby capital marched on Carchá, laid siege to the square, and opened fire, killing eight Q'eqchi's. Others drowned trying to escape or died of injuries in flight. State violence against Q'eqchi's—no Ladinos were injured or killed—hastened an already established migration down the Polochic Valley to the areas that would soon become the municipality of Panzós.

Both killings have all the elementary characteristics of a run-of-the-mill peasant jacquerie or, as Spanish colonial administrators often described Native American dissent, a *motín de indios,* an Indian riot. Suffering the accumulated abuses of provincial elites, Indians appeal to faraway sovereigns. Upon word that the king or the president has ruled on their behalf, men and women gather in the plaza brandishing unspecified "papers" believed to sanction their cause to demand the application of distant dictates. Faced with an angry crowd, local elites or their militia protectors violently overreact, firing into the assembly, conjuring the riot they have long feared.[4]

Yet the 1978 Panzós massacre is distinct in that it represents the passing of such exhausted patterns of protest and reaction, prefiguring more deadly forms of counterinsurgent violence that were soon to come. Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the existence of an agricultural frontier muted many of the conflicts and disruptions created by the fast expansion of coffee capitalism, allowing for the settlement of sanctuaries such as Panzós. Yet by the 1970s, the possibility for flight or migration had greatly diminished, forcing peasants to engage more directly the promise of state-administered justice and to confront frontally the immediate agents of their misery. Likewise, the soldiers who guarded the plaza that Monday morning may have been called in by local planters, but they were no sleepy outland militia detachment occasionally roused into action. They were part of Guatemala's new army, steeped in anti-communism and flushed with counterinsurgent training and equipment, the front line in an escalating civil

war between a spreading rural insurgency and an increasingly repressive state. Often in the past, outbursts of protest and reaction would result in some sort of reformed reestablishment of the relations of rule, the expression of a kind of postbellum remorse by all involved. Yet in the wake of Panzós, following a brief period of national soul-searching and talk of reform, politics continued to rapidly decompose. Three years later, the military would launch a genocide the enormity of which would make events in Panzós on that May morning seem as ancient as Yat's protest.

Beginning in 1981, the army executed a scorched earth campaign that murdered over one hundred thousand Mayans and completely razed more than four hundred indigenous communities. Anti-communist zeal and racist hatred were refracted through counterinsurgent exactitude. The killings were brutal beyond imagination. Soldiers murdered children by beating them on rocks as their parents watched. They extracted organs and fetuses, amputated genitalia and limbs, committed mass and multiple rapes, and burned some victims alive. In the logic that equated indigenous culture with subversion, army units destroyed ceremonial sites and turned sacred places such as churches and caves into torture chambers. By the time the war ended in 1996, the state had killed two hundred thousand people, disappeared forty thousand, and tortured unknown thousands more.

It would be tempting to see the Panzós massacre as a third-world perversion of the fall of the Bastille, as ushering in not liberty, equality, and fraternity but a kind of postcolonial modernity based on subjugation, exclusion, and terror. According to a number of critical scholars, it is the Enlightenment, particularly its rationalization of repressive techniques, discourses of racial hierarchy, and terror justified in the name of competing ideologies and historical movement, that accounts for the kind of violence that took place in the wake of Panzós. Yet such arguments tend to turn in circles, blaming oppression on a uniformly oppressive modernity rather than on the outcomes of political struggles that shaped our modern world. Nor did the massacre signal the sudden and spontaneous eruption of peasants into the national arena. Guatemala's four-decade-long civil war, one of the bloodiest in twentieth-century American history, is composed of many stories, as many as there are individuals, families, and communities that lived through it, and each story has a different turning point and climax. Rather, this seemingly routine killing, taking place as it did in a remote outpost in a minor country, is emblematic of the power of the Cold War, which fused together multiple, long-evolving individual, national, and international experiences and conflicts.

This book documents the nearly century-long intermittent mobilization leading up to the Panzós massacre, focusing on the lives of a number of

Q'eqchi'-Mayans, mostly members of the Communist Party but not exclusively so. In Guatemala as in many other areas of Latin America, engagement with ideas and practices associated with the left was, for many, a profoundly disruptive, humanizing experience. To say so is not to ratify any claims regarding the essence of human nature but to underscore the oppressive stasis and brutality of a coercive plantation regime, even as the society as a whole found itself in the midst of rapid metamorphosis. Participation in mass politics to demand that the state administer justice provided for many a way to catapult out of daily traps of humiliation and savagery, fashioning a commonsensical understanding of democracy not as procedural constitutionalism but as the felt experience of individual sovereignty and social solidarity. While each chapter of this book highlights particular individuals, the lives are presented not as isolated portraits but rather as part of a wider social landscape that reflects much of what was fought over in the Cold War.

The Guatemalan civil war in all of its cruelty could understandably be considered history in extremis—singular in its viciousness and devastation—except that it so closely parallels and even propels much of the history of Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century. More even than Cuba, this Central American republic has served as a staging ground for the continental Cold War. In October 1944, a revolution sparked by urban protests brought to an end one of the Americas' longest and most repressive dictatorships, ushering in a decade of unprecedented reform, inluding an ambitious land reform. Invigorated by the Allies' impending victory in World War II, the October Revolution, as the newborn government soon came to be called, was one of the brightest stars in a larger, albeit fragile, democratic firmament that took shape throughout Latin America between 1944 and 1946. Ten years later, however, in 1954, Guatemala had the distinction of suffering the United States' first Latin American Cold War intervention, an ambitious operation that drew not just on traditional military, economic, and diplomatic pressure to unseat a freely elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, but on innovative techniques borrowed from mass psychology, media, and advertising as well. Yet although this operation enjoyed a quick success, the October Revolution's afterburn was not so easily put out. Aborted hopes and frustrated reforms created a social democratic vista that inspired successive generations of activists and revolutionaries. In opposition to them, however, stood Guatemala's newly fortified security and intelligence forces. After 1954, all political actions—in defense or defiance of the status quo—divided according to Cold War priorities. Politics quickly spun out of control as efforts to reestablish democratic rule gave way to a four decade civil war between leftist insurgents and the military.

The overthrow of Arbenz was a decisive step forward in the radicalization of continental politics, signaling as it did the destruction of one of the last, and arguably the most influential, democracies established in the 1944–46 reform cycle. It confirmed growing suspicions among many democrats and nationalists that the United States was less a model to be emulated than a danger to be feared and led to more militant tactics on both sides of the Cold War divide. Che Guevara, who witnessed firsthand the destruction of the October Revolution, repeatedly taunted the United States in his speeches that "Cuba will not be Guatemala." For its part, the United States would try to replicate its 1954 operation seven years later with the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion. Throughout the next three decades, the United States continued to provide Guatemalan security forces with a steady supply of equipment, training, and financing, even as political repression grew ferocious. Practices rehearsed in Guatemala—such as covert destabilization operations and death squad killings conducted by professionalized intelligence agencies—spread throughout the region in the coming decades. As Washington increasingly came to regret Vietnam as a failure, it continued to count Guatemala as a success. In the 1980s, the final escalation of the superpower conflict turned the country, along with Nicaragua and El Salvador, into one of the Cold War's last killing fields.

The Latin American Cold War began not in 1954, with the defeat of Arbenz, or in 1959, with the triumph of Castro, but in the years following World War II. In 1944, only five Latin American countries —Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, and Colombia—could nominally call themselves democracies. By 1946, only five—Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic—could not.[5] Dictators toppled throughout Latin America, and governments extended the franchise and legalized unions. To varying degrees in different countries, urbanization, industrialization, and population growth had created an emerging middle class and urban working class that joined with students, intellectuals, and in some cases a militant peasantry. Such coalitions generated both the demands for democratic restructuring and the social power needed to achieve it. Following the war, revitalized labor unions in Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile led strike waves of unparalleled belligerence. In a number of countries, populist reform parties, many of them organized in the 1920s, came to power, impelled by this increased mobilization. The more democratic

elements of liberalism, which since the mid-nineteenth century had functioned primarily as an elite justification of domination and economic modernization, now came to be advanced not just by urban political elites but by mass movements.[6]

While the masses radicalized democracy, a wartime alliance with "bourgeois" classes helped tame the Marxist left. Communist parties throughout the continent jettisoned their revolutionary and anti-imperialist rhetoric to join a larger electoral "popular front" against fascism, in some places serving as partners in ruling coalitions.[7] The domestication of the left, counterintuitively, contributed to the insurgency of the moment. Headed by a newly rehabilitated Stalinist leadership largely neglected by Moscow, Communists emerged during World War II as part of a broader egalitarian consensus that partly muted the fractional struggles, sectarian tactics, and class antagonisms of the prewar years. The sociology of development offered by Marxism, with its emphasis on advancing national capitalism by breaking the "feudal" power of the landed aristocracy, became an evident truth for a broad spectrum of reformers, Communist and non-Communist alike.[8] Throughout the region, governments enacted social welfare programs and sought to achieve economic development through state planning, regulation of capital, and other initiatives that favored the domestic manufacturing sector, while the left, broadly understood, grew in popularity and institutional strength.

This union of a socialized democracy and a democratized socialism produced a powerful threat to the power and privileges of the incumbent order. Democracy, as Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough put it in their survey of the postwar period, came to mean a "commitment to popular, more particularly working-class participation in politics, and social and economic improvements for the poorer sections of the population. Democracy increasingly became identified with development and welfare. This was a vision of the Latin American Left, both Communist and non-Communist."[9] The advance of this vision came not just from the power of persuasion but from the pragmatism of politics, as a wide array of reformers believed that the best way to weaken the oligarchy was to empower those under its thrall. The notion that it was the state's responsibility to provide a dignified life and economic justice was so widespread that it became for many synonymous with modernity, which some politicians felt had finally arrived in Latin America. "We are socialists," said Guatemalan president Juan José Arévalo in 1944, "because we live in the twentieth century."[10] Latin America even exported this vision of social citizenship, as a number of the continent's jurists pushed for economic rights to be included in the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[11] Inspired by the defeat of fascism yet spared the barbarism that their counterparts lived through in Europe and Asia, intellectuals, artists, and writers elaborated a buoyant cultural modernism that drew from and reinforced this political effervescence.

This is not to suggest that the reformist, nationalist, socialist, and Communist parties that spearheaded the postwar opening were unambiguous defenders of an Enlightenment tradition worth defending. Many of them succumbed to the corruptions and compromises of politics. Because of their allegiance to the Soviet Union, Communist parties, even while they were often the most ardent advocates of democratic reform at home, defended the indefensible abroad. Nationalists in Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil perilously flirted with fascism. All continued to exclude, subordinate, or not address the concerns of large segments of their national populations, especially women, indigenous peoples, and descendants of African slaves. And oftentimes, predictably, they fought each other with more passion than they fought the oligarchs. Yet in the years after World War II, a wide range of reformist parties and individuals, including Marxists, felt compelled, either because of their own specific vision of modernity or because of sustained pressure from below, to resolve the problem of mass politics and national development by attempting to socialize democracy. But more than this, politics became an immediate experience in the lives of many, and an increasing number of society's most excluded began to sense that the old entitlements no longer held. The meter of daily life quickened as global events came closer and the possibility of progress, previously depicted as lying in the abstract distance, seemed to draw nearer. No matter how moderate claims to social citizenship may appear in light of the militancy of the 1960s and 1970s, they in fact posed a serious threat to the comforts, conventions, and customs of the privileged order, unleashing a "heretical challenge," as historian Daniel James describes Peronism, not so easily contained.[12]

An emerging international political and economic regime greatly shortened the life expectancy of postwar democracies. Following World War II the world divided into contending camps represented by the United States and the Soviet Union, with Latin America clearly falling under the sway of the former. As this global order took shape with the creation of the United Nations, a series of military, cultural, political, and economic treaties, along with the newly created Organization of American States, bound the Americas together, forming a "closed hemisphere" in an increasingly open and interdependent world.[13] Desperate to attract capital investment, domestic elites, many of them committed reformers, offered little resistance to or dissent from the twin goals of U.S. Cold War foreign policy: to halt the spread of

Communism and not only advance capitalism but ensure U.S. dominance within that system.[14]

The years 1947–48 were bad ones for global democracy. The creation of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Truman Doctrine, Taft-Hartley and the National Security Act, the repudiation of Henry Wallace as the legitimate heir to the New Deal, the institutionalization of apartheid, the partition of colonial India, the ideological hardening of the Soviet Union, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, and Stalin's betrayal of the partisans in the Greek Civil War are just a few of the omens that dampened the hopes inspired by the defeat of fascism. No wonder Michael Harrington called 1948 the "last year of the 1930s."[15] Events in Latin America were no less ominous as 1947 marked the beginning of a continent-wide reaction. In Peru and Venezuela military coups overthrew elected governments. In countries that maintained the trappings of democracy there was a sharp veer to the right. In Chile in 1947, President Gabriel González Videla carried out a violent assault against striking coal miners and his erstwhile Communist allies, destroying a popular front coalition that had elected three presidents since 1938. Reform parties lost their dynamism, while governments intervened against work stoppages, passed legislation restricting the right to strike, and outlawed or repressed Communist parties. Unions purged militants from their ranks, while labor confederations either fractured or came under government control. By 1954, dictators once again ruled a majority of Latin American countries.

The emerging counterrevolutionary coalition took specific forms in different countries but in general was supported by the rural propertied classes, the military, church hierarchs, and manufacturing and industrial capitalists who previously may have been in favor of reform but now sought political quiescence in order to attract foreign investment.[16] The dual promises of democracy and development, which just a few short years earlier seemed to be intimately linked, were now practically incompatible. In order to create a stable investment climate and absent a Latin American Marshall Plan, local governments cracked down on labor unrest and other forms of popular mobilization, which in many countries had been on a sharp rise since the end of World War II. At the same time, closer political and military relations with the United States steadily strengthened the repressive capabilities of Latin American security forces. Even before the establishment of the CIA in 1947, the FBI began to turn its surveillance away from Nazi and fascist groups toward Communist parties, an abrupt shift from the U.S. wartime alliance with the left against the right. What was convenient in 1944 became unacceptable by 1947. U.S. embassies began to pressure governments to proscribe Communist parties, which, notwithstanding their internal authoritarianism, were often the most forceful advocates of political liberalization. Local interests took advantage of this sea change to launch a reaction aimed at restoring not just their economic authority but the cultures of compliance they presided over. The importance of the intersection between national and international interests to the containment of Latin American democracy cannot be overestimated. In Guatemala, for example, one of the reasons the October Revolution weathered the first years of the conservative counterthrust is that its Communist Party was not formed until 1949 and therefore could not serve as a lightning rod to join local and foreign opposition.

What Louis Pérez argues for Cuba is true for much of Latin America: pushed to their "logical conclusion," the democratic values represented by the United States created a crisis situation in nearly every country across the continent.[17] Castro's evocation of Thomas Paine in his 1953 "History Will Absolve Me" speech captures the inspiration the progressive currents of U.S. history held for Latin American intellectuals and politicians well into the Cold War. The widely reported anecdote that a fourteen-year-old Castro sent Franklin Delano Roosevelt a letter to congratulate him on his 1940 electoral victory (he also asked FDR for a dollar!) likewise highlights the importance the New Deal state held as a model to would-be Latin American reformers. Yet the increasingly heavy hand of the United States in hemispheric and world affairs reawakened anti-imperialist resentments that had lain dormant during the wartime popular front. Even before the overthrow of Arbenz, the exiled Dominican poet Pedro Mir in 1952 lamented the conscription of Walt Whitman's radical exuberance into a more martial campaign: "The ones who defiled his luminous beard and put a gun on his shoulders. . . . Those of you who do not want Walt Whitman, the democrat, but another Whitman, atomic and savage" (a decade later, Mir's poetics would prove prophetic when Walt Whitman Rostow, an advocate of military escalation in Vietnam, became a key advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson).[18] Many Latin American nationalists and democrats thought the United States was using the dawning Cold War as a pretext to roll back democracy and directly related the global chill to domestic repression within the United States. An impressive letter-writing campaign organized by left unions and parties throughout Latin America, for instance, pleaded for the lives of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and condemned their executions in harsh terms. "Your consent to the assassination of the Rosenbergs," Guatemala's national labor federation telegrammed Eisenhower in 1953, "makes clear the brutal imperialist policy of the United States. American democracy has been buried."[19]

In "Chronicle of 1948 (America)," Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, having recently abandoned his position as a Communist Party senator owing to government repression, surveyed the ruins of failed reform. From his exile in Mexico, he asked, "how will it end . . . this bleak year? . . . This bleak year of rage and rancor, you ask, you ask me how will it end?"

It ended badly. The Cold War unfolded in its own way in each country, yet in many Latin American nations political strategies radicalized and political visions polarized. Despite the setbacks suffered in the late forties, reformers and nationalists worked with some success to reestablish democracies. By 1961, there were again only a handful of Latin American nations that were not, at least nominally, democratic. And once again, many of these new governments attempted to enact tax, land, and political reforms to promote political and economic modernization, now backed up, verbally at least, by the Kennedy administration's Alliance for Progress, which aimed to create a prosperous, stable middle class inoculated against Castroism. Political scientist Victor Alba viewed the period with such hope that he gushed that Latin American militarism would soon wither away.[20] But it did not. At the same time as the United States was promoting modernization, it was also invigorating Latin American militaries and centralized intelligence agencies in an effort to counter real and perceived insurgent threats. Starting in Argentina in 1962, emboldened militaries toppled democratically elected administrations. Guatemala (again) in 1963. Brazil in 1964. Bolivia in 1971. Uruguay and Chile in 1973. When national actors proved insufficient to contain the threat of mass politics, the United States directly intervened, mostly through quiet encouragement and support as in the coups just mentioned, but occasionally with more fanfare, such as when it invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965. Once more the wheel had turned, and by 1976 there were only three nations that could be considered democratic.

While alternations between reform and reaction were nothing new to Latin America, this mid-century rotation was different. It marked a maturation of an evolution in the conditions governing domestic politics that had been under way since at least World War I. Realizing that a simple barracks revolt could not extinguish the seemingly inexhaustible threats to their powers and privileges, those who opposed change sought help. In Argentina and Chile for example, sectors of the oligarchy that had previously disdained mass action began to actively support and participate in fascist movements.[21] Yet in many countries, established institutions representing the landed elites and the Church had to different degrees lost their regenerative vitality. The fight would not be led by the upper classes but by insurgent counterinsurgents—radical Catholics, socially aspiring middle-class

soldiers, anti-communist students. Their affective attachment to yet sufficient distance from vested powers, traditions, and hierarchies allowed them to respond to challenges with efficiency and passion. In Guatemala, for example, the crusade against Arbenz was led not by the oligarchy, the military, or even, at least effectively, the Church but by young, militantly anti-communist students, many of them the professionalized urban sons of middling rural planters. They generated among the middle class, workers, peasants, men, and women a popular anti-communist authoritarianism designed to both assuage the insecurity caused by the liberalization of society and counter the expectations of fulfillment advanced by the left. A deepening cultural pessimism across the liberal-conservative spectrum regarding the deficits of democratic suffrage and self-rule reinforced this political and ideological assault, corroding institutional protections and facilitating the turn to state terror.

The state's increasingly beefed up and increasingly ideological repressive capacity greatly restricted the already cramped space for political negotiation, fueling the passing of Latin America's old left, led by socialist, nationalist, or otherwise reformist parties with working-class and at times peasant bases of support, and the development of a more insurgent new left, inspired by Cuba, Algeria, and Vietnam and rooted in the agrarian, and in many cases indigenous, countryside. One particular episode—the subject of chapter 3—encapsulates this transition. After the 1954 overthrow of Arbenz, the strategies of the left divided. A new generation of revolutionaries dismissed the attempts of Guatemala's Communist Party, the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT), which had served as Arbenz's principal advisor, to usher in progressive capitalism as misguided in light of U.S. intervention and irrelevant in the wake of the Cuban Revolution. By the early 1960s, these young leftists came together in a socialist insurgency that would continue for almost four decades. But the PGT, clandestine and persecuted, was still influential. While it allied with the rebels, it did so grudgingly, viewing armed resistance more as a pressure tactic than as a way of taking state power. Many within its leadership, along with other reformers and nationalists, continued to believe that the 1944 revolution could be remade. Responding to the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the United States actively pushed for the creation of a national and Central America–wide counterinsurgency network, upgrading the intelligence system with new weapons, vehicles, and telecommunication equipment. This revamped repressive apparatus was put to a lethal test with the arrival in Guatemala in November 1965 of U.S. security advisor John P. Longan. Summoned to help stem a rise in urban political unrest, Longan worked with an elite squad to quickly gather and coordinate intelligence, analyze

information, and conduct rapid raids on the homes and meeting places of suspected subversives. Throughout 1966, the squad conducted a series of captures and assassinations, scoring its most impressive success in March 1966 when, four months after Longan's training, it kidnapped, tortured, and executed as many as thirty people. This operation took place on the eve of the election of a civilian president who repeatedly evoked the legacy of the 1944 October Revolution. Some in the PGT and its allied guerrilla organization, especially those active during the Arbenz period, thought the imminent election of a civilian government provided the possibility to reenter the political arena, and they encouraged their rank and file to cast their vote in his favor. Opposing these plans stood the Guatemalan military and the CIA, which, declassified documents reveal, were nervous about a possible negotiated end to the insurgency and a return of the Communists to legal status and influence. The executions had a toxic effect on Guatemalan politics, shutting down the possibility of peaceful change by physically eliminating those who advocated a return to electoral politics and inaugurating three decades of institutionalized extrajudicial murder.

In a sense this operation—the first systematic wave of collective counterinsurgent "disappearances" in Latin America—offered in one act a repeat performance of Guatemala's democratic decade: reformers and revolutionaries hoping to create the kind of electoral coalitions that brought about the 1944 revolution now confronted a new set of international relations, put in place with the 1954 counterrevolution, that ensured that such alliances could never come to fruition. Following this collective execution, escalating repression destroyed any conceit that 1944 could be recreated. In the 1970s, the PGT passed into irrelevance, overshadowed by a growing Cuban-inspired insurgency intent on overthrowing, not reforming, the state. In one sense, Guatemala's October Revolution ended in 1966, not 1954.

Accelerating rhythms of reform, reaction, and foreign intervention proved to be potent radicalizing catalysts. Many activists, witnessing one democracy after another break on the rocks of an increasingly unyielding anti-Communist global order, chose militant paths.[22] In Guatemala, for example, a young medical doctor named Ernesto Guevara sought asylum in the Argentine embassy following the 1954 U.S.-backed coup. While he awaited safe conduct to Mexico (where he would meet Fidel Castro), he started a lifelong friendship with Ricardo Ramírez, who went on to lead Guatemala's most formidable insurgent movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Both men would cite their 1954 experience as central to their subsequent rejection of reform politics and embrace of armed revolution. Throughout the continent, increasingly virulent reaction forged among the generation of 1960 a "new ideological armour."[23] Young leftists inspired by the 1959 Cuban Revolution and frustrated by the inability of substantive democracy to take root broke with the electoral tactics of their nations' Communist parties and organized rural insurgencies in the hope of following Cuba's road to revolutionary sovereignty. At the same time, Latin American sociologists and economists began to work out a broad, new historical perspective on Latin American history. They argued against both mainstream theories of development and the gradualist goals of orthodox Latin American Communist parties. Their political passions varied, yet many *dependentistas* shared a belief that development would come not through collaboration with a "nationalist" bourgeoisie or through participation in a world system, as many postwar democrats had hoped, but rather through divorcing from that system and establishing autonomous forms of national development. Similar to their New Left counterparts in the United States who led withering attacks on New Deal corporate liberalism and Stalinism, intellectuals and activists of this generation dismissed or ignored the postwar democratic opening. At best the period was seen as a misguided failure; at worst as neutering potentially revolutionary popular movements and aspirations through incorporation into state welfare systems. By 1977 in Guatemala, after decades of government repression, labor leaders reinterpreted the postwar democratic period—the deepest and longest lasting in the hemisphere—to mean that workers must "not trust the state or the parties of the petty bourgeoisie."[24]

Yet government repression did more than just first militarize and then vanquish the left. By the mid-twentieth century, peasant and working-class movements had become the primary carriers of not only democratization—a project Latin American liberals had long since abandoned—but social democratization. They demanded that the state use its power to rein in the abuses of capital. Yet most governments in the years following World War II proved entirely unable to carry out such an undertaking with any consistency. Their sovereignty did not extend into the plantation or the factory. Lacking not only a monopoly of legitimate violence but the necessary capacity for illegitimate repression to counter seemingly inextinguishable mass mobilizations, security forces imported from the United States (as well as from South Africa, Israel, and France) new repressive technologies to nationalize violence. In Guatemala, this nationalized terror entailed the direct incorporation of independent death squads into military structures as well as an increasingly visible performance of what previously had been quotidian, private acts, such as rape, torture, and murder. The ever more ritualistic nature of repression served as a public display of the military's sovereignty, legitimate or otherwise. The 1981–83 genocidal campaign was designed to

counter what strategists deemed the "closed," castelike isolation of indigenous communities, identified as the reason for the supposed collective susceptibility of Mayans to communism.[25] As Héctor Gramajo, one of the young colonels who designed the genocide, put it, "we brought government to the village."[26] Government repression then in a way was both a backlash against the ongoing legacy of postwar democracy and its perverse fulfillment—the hope of a postwar social democratic state mutated into the grotesquerie of a counterinsurgent terror regime.

With a few important exceptions such as Costa Rica, Mexico, and Ecuador, state- and elite-orchestrated preventive and punitive terror was key to ushering in neoliberalism in Latin America.[27] The prerequisite for the rapid economic restructuring that took place throughout the Americas beginning full throttle in the 1980s—lowering tariffs, deregulating capital streams, reducing government social spending, weakening labor protections—had as much to do with the destruction of mass movements as it did with the rise of new financial elites invested in global markets. The threat of mid-century social movements was that they provided a venue in which self and solidarity could be imagined as existing in sustaining relation to one another through collective politics that looked toward the state to dispense justice. Latin American democracy as an ideal and a practice was always more participatory and egalitarian than it was procedural and individualistic. In many countries, Cold War terror changed that, imposing a more restrictive model, one that defined individualism as economic self-interest and advanced it through free market policies. While some regimes, such as Argentina and to a lesser extent Chile, deployed a more explicit antimodernist rhetoric than others—criticizing, for instance, the soullessness of liberalism—there was no attempt to dissolve a plurality of individuals into a totalitarian state or ideology. Instead, counterinsurgent governments installed a kind of mild Hobbesian authoritarianism. They redefined the state not as the fulfiller of individual aspirations but as an enforcer that made the pursuit of self-interest possible by policing the boundaries, defined now by the overlapping metaphors of religion, nation, and family, in which individualism operated. The Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, for example, was skilled at weaving together the enticements of individualism and the restraints of authority. He could condemn the spiritual bankruptcy of secular liberalism because it leaves humans alone in a meaningless world while at the same time affirming Chile's pride in being "one of the first countries in the world to abolish slavery."[28] The appeal of such a vision resonated, accounting for the popularity Pinochet enjoys among certain sectors of the Chilean population. As one of his supporters puts it, "I believe in freedom; I like freedom, and as a result, I think that the more freedom you have the more you grow to respect it. But sometimes democratic regimes suffer from too much freedom . . . we must preserve freedom, but with restrictions."[29]

Once security forces contained popular movements and established stability, governments furthered this "profound transformation of consciousness"—as the head of the Argentine junta Jorge Videla, mimicking language associated with the New Left, understood his mission—through consumerism and, for those who submitted, individual liberties.[30] New products flooded national markets, leading to an erosion of working-class, citizen, and other collective identities.[31] In Chile, according to sociologist Tomás Moulian, a society "in which solidarity and community were highly valued was transformed into a bourgeois culture based exclusively on competitive individualism. . . . Individual survival strategies completely absorb each person's energies, and there are no aspirations other than those based on individual interests."[32] During the return to constitutional rule of most Latin American countries in the 1980s and 1990s, political leaders and advisors dissuaded parties from mobilizing their supporters, encouraging them to adopt a more "modern" political style based on passive representation and elite negotiations.[33]

In the aftermath of failed revolutions and unimaginable government repression, some scholars now lament the rise of Latin America's Cuba-fired left, seeing it as interrupting an evolutionary social democracy. Their contrition is confirmed by the perversion of Peru's Shining Path, which embraced with a vengeance the New Left's "will to act" while disavowing its humanism, and by the increasingly pointless and ideologically bankrupt guerrilla war in Colombia. The militancy of Latin American politics in the years after 1960 often is presented as little more than a bad decision taken by a handful of romantic revolutionaries—a decision that provoked Latin American militaries to let loose their repression.[34] Now that the Cold War is over and the flames sparked by Cuba are doused, the left can get back "on the right track" as part of a general democratic renewal.[35] Such an interpretation reverberates with a more pervasive recoil from the extremes of the 1960s, even on the part of those who continue to advocate some form of wealth redistribution. Richard Rorty, for example, believes that the left, after the awfulness of the twentieth century, needs to purge incendiary language and visions from its lexicon, words such as "capitalism," "bourgeois culture," and "socialism."[36] Ignoring provocative social violence, critics condemn New Left radicalism as the meaningless spawn of a politics that, owing to its arrogance or absolutism, ran amuck.

Those who try to isolate democracy from conflict or to blame revolutionary violence on the utopian visions of the left usually underestimate the entrenched and intransigent nature of the forces allied against a more equitable distribution of resources and power. Geoff Eley's description of Europe's twentieth-century democratic achievement is perhaps even more true of Latin America's, considering that the economic situation in the Americas was far less propitious:

> Let there be no mistake: democracy is not "given" or "granted." It requires *conflict*, namely, courageous challenges to authority, risk-taking and reckless exemplary acts, ethical witnessing, violent confrontations, and general crises in which the given sociopolitical order breaks down. In Europe, democracy did not result from natural evolution or economic prosperity. It certainly did not emerge as an inevitable by-product of individualism or the market. It developed because masses of people organized collectively to demand it.[37]

In Latin America, obstacles toward the achievement of even the most minimal approximation of democratic reform persisted not only in the visible institutions of government bureaucracies, courts, militaries, land tenure, and labor relations but in the closed quarters of family, sex, and community. What is today understood as democracy was achieved by individuals engaged in a myriad of small yet pitched struggles that strained such hierarchical, private, and steadfastly obdurate relations of domination and control. Secular ideologies of nationalism, socialism, Marxism, and communism—those dangerous scions of liberalism—did motivate and give solace to people's lives. But this gift did not merely satisfy an abstract or innate desire for meaning in an increasingly uncertain world, as some theorists would now dismiss the appeal of socialism and communism. Rather, by providing the fuel and steel needed to contest the terms of nearly intolerable conditions, it combined the stuff of mundane survival with the more sublime advance of democracy. In the decades following World War II, the left in nearly every country lost its bid to take over the state and restructure the economy, but it did force a transformation of power relations that allowed broader participation in politics, culture, and society. Panzós was not a "colonial" massacre in the technical sense since it took place well into the second century of independent rule. Yet it was part of a larger epic assault on the private fiefdoms of social control that simultaneously came under siege and were emboldened with the spread of commodified social relations and the extension of state power throughout Latin America.

What follows is an attempt to understand how Q'eqchi'-Mayan activists

cultivated their sense of self-understanding in struggle for a fairer world and how the frustration and ultimate destruction of their ideals affected not only those few who survived but a wider post–World War II history. While successive chapters build a narrative starting in the late nineteenth century that culminates with the 1978 Panzós massacre, each explores in depth intimate, often physical dimensions of social transformation. While on one level the Cold War was a struggle over mass utopias—ideological visions of how to organize society and its accoutrements—what gave that struggle its transcendental force was the politicization and internationalization of everyday life and familiar encounters.[38] Politics took on a startling immanence, manifesting itself, as we shall see, in the internal realms of sexuality, faith, ethics, and exile.

All the lives under consideration here, despite providing a diversity of experiences, highlight the formative power of politics to shape human expectations. This, I think, should be a central element of any definition of the Cold War. It was not only an event (what diplomatic historians usually call superpower rivalry) or a cause (as in the Cold War did this or that to this or that country) but also an intensified phase of a larger conflict, an "international civil war" not only between the United States and the Soviet Union or between capitalism and communism but between different views of the shape that social citizenship would take.[39] The spread of capitalism in its raw version in the third world created a dramatic torsion between the anticipation of development and equality and the reality of exclusion and exploitation. This tension was acute in Latin America, where Catholic humanism, liberal nationalism, Native American conceptions of justice, conservative defense of collective rights, socialism, and in some countries the radicalism of militant working-class immigrants combined in different proportions to produce an extraordinarily insurgent twentieth century.

APPENDIX

List of the Dead from Operación Limpieza and the Panzós Massacre*

OPERACIÓN LIMPIEZA, 1966

Enrique Chacon
Fernando Arce Behrens
Francisco Macías Mayora
Leonardo Castillo Flores
Leonardo García Benavente
Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez Garbín
Víctor Manuel Palacios Maldonado
Yolanda Carvajal Mercado
Carlos Edmundo Barrillas
Roberto Augusto Valle Peña
Agustín Martínez
Antonio Poc Alvarado
Balbino Sosa
Carlos Enrique Galindo
César Augusto Salguero Gómez
David Aguilar Mora
Dionisio Alvarez
Emilio Márquez Coroy
Emilio Vásquez
Emma Judith Amezquita
Eunice Campirán de Aguilar Mora
Humberto Pineda Aldana
José León Meda
José de Jesús Alonzo Solís
Juan de Dios Castillo
Juan Estrada Alvarado
Julián Meza
Marco Tulio Molina Licona
Ricardo Berganza Bocaletti
Transito Monterroso Pérez
Iris Yon Cerna
Melvin Galeano Polanco
Francisco Amado Granados
Antonio Morales Zavaleta
José Vicente Guzmán Franco

PANZÓS MASSACRE, 29 MAY 1978

Abelardo Ac Caal
Adelina Caal Caal
Alfredo Choca
Andrés Chub
Andrés Rax
Antonio Sub
Apolonio Tux
Bartolomé Chub Chun
Bartolomé Chun Chub
Bartolomé Sacul Chun
Domingo Cac
Domingo Coc Pérez
Domingo Cuc
Félix Caal Seb
Félix Caal Xo
Francisco Choc
Francisco Coc
Francisco Seb Ché

* As listed in CEH, *Memoria del silencio*, 6:98, 6:22–23; both lists are incomplete.

Francisco Tzalam
Hilario Choc Pop
José Chen Ac
José Coc Pop
José Maquin
José Xol Coc
José Yat Chun
Juan Ché
Juan Cuz
Juan Meza
Lorenzo Choc Cuz
Manuel Cabral Tzí
Marcelino Cuz Choc
María Luisa Cabnal
Marcos Choc
Mena Chun
Miguel Cahuec
Miguel Quib
Norberto Chub Choc
Pablo Caal Chun
Pablo Cuz Mo
Pablo Rax
Paulino Cuz Mo
Pedro Caal
Pedro Maqui
Ricardo Bac Chub
Roberto Ical Choc
Sabina Tuc Xo
Sabino Cuz Coc
Santiago Choc
Santiago Ché
Santiago Seb Caal
Santiago Seb Ché
Tomás Chen Quib
Tomás Coc

Glossary

SPANISH TERMS

alcalde auxiliar: Local agent of municipal government.
campesino: Peasant.
cofradía: Religious brotherhood, or saint cult, members of which are called *cofrades.*
finca: Plantation.
finquero: Planter.
Ladino: The general term used to describe Guatemalans not considered Mayan, composing approximately half of the country's total population.
mozo, or mozo colono: Plantation resident worker, usually indentured but at times in a sharecropper arrangement.
Q'eqchi': One of the largest Mayan linguistic groups in Guatemala, occupying the northern highlands, principally in the department of Alta Verapaz, but also El Petén, Izabal, Baja Verapaz, and into Belize.

ACRONYMS AND POLITICAL FIGURES AND TERMS

Arbenz, Jacobo: Second president of the October Revolution (1951–54).
Arévalo, Juan José: First president of the October Revolution (1945–50).
CAL: Comité Agrario Local, the basic administrative structure of the Agrarian Reform.
CEUA: The Comité de Estudiantes Universitarios Anticomunistas, working with the CIA, led the campaign against Arbenz.
CGTG: Created in 1951 from existing federations, the Confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala, headed by Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez, was closely allied with the PGT.
CNCG: Organized in 1950 and led by Leonardo Castillo Flores, the peasant Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala often competed in the countryside with the CGTG.
Comunidad Agraria: Legalized after 1944, *comunidades agrarias,* at times referred to as *comunidades indígenas* or *comunidades campesinas,* served as a cross between peasant unions and mutual aid societies. After 1954, the term *"comunidad,"*

whether legally incorporated or not, often described a collective association of peasants joined together to pursue land or other claims.

CTG: Confederación de Trabajadores Guatemaltecos, an early labor federation during the October Revolution.

CUC: Formed in the mid-1970s, the Comité de Unidad Campesina was the first national peasant organization led by Mayans; closely allied with the EGP.

Decreto 900: Congressional legislation mandating Guatemala's 1952–54 land reform.

EGP: Established in the mid-1970s, the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, or Guerrilla Army of the Poor, became Guatemala's most formidable armed insurgent organization.

FAR: Nominally the armed wing of the PGT, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes was organized in the early 1960s by remnants of the 1960 military uprising and young PGT members. Impatient with the party's reform strategies, the FAR broke with the PGT in the mid-1960s. During its first incarnation, the FAR operated principally in Guatemala's east, along the Sierra de las Minas, the mountain range south of the Polochic Valley, but also in the western coffee region of San Marcos.

FASGUA: By the 1960s, the PGT had effectively taken control of the Federación Autónoma Sindical de Guatemala, an anti-communist labor federation permitted to function following the 1954 coup. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, FASGUA served as an important legal advisor to peasant communities in their land conflicts.

FPL: The Frente Popular Libertador was one of the first, cautiously moderate, political parties to emerge following the October Revolution.

INTA: Established in 1961 under the impetus of the Alliance for Progress with the stated goal of modernizing Guatemala's agrarian property structure, the Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria allowed individuals and collective entities to petition for title to unused land. INTA quickly became a military-controlled bureaucracy whose inefficiency and corruption catalyzed peasant militancy.

JPT: The Juventud Patriótica de Trabajo was the youth section of the PGT, from which many New Left dissidents emerged.

MLN: Organized by the anti-communist activists who led the domestic campaign against Arbenz, the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (called the Movimiento Democrático Nacionalista during its first years) starting in the 1960s became the principal organizer of death squads. It was closely allied with, and then brought under the control of, the military.

Operación Limpieza: Operación Limpieza, or Operation Cleanup, was carried out by the combined military and police unit headed by Guatemalan colonel Rafael Arriaga Bosque and trained by U.S. security advisor John Longan. Throughout 1966 it executed Latin America's first sustained campaign of counterinsurgent "disappearances," including the March 1966 capture and execution of over thirty activists affiliated with the PGT and the FAR.

PAR: Established during the early phase of the October Revolution, the Partido de Acción Revolucionaria became the most aggressive agent of reform; from within its ranks, activists organized the PGT, the Communist Party, in the late 1940s.

Partido Unionista: Bringing together artisans, laborers, intellectuals, and middle-class and provincial professionals, the Partido Unionista best represented the democratic and reformist impulse of the 1920s.

PGT: Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo, Guatemala's Communist Party.

PR: Founded in the late 1950s and led mostly by the non-PGT wing of Arbenz's coalition, the Partido Revolucionario, along with the Christian Democrats, was the only consequential reform party allowed to operate in the repressive climate of the 1960s. Although its leadership grew increasingly conservative and anti-communist, there continued to be great overlap at the grassroots level between the PR and the PGT.

Notes

THE FOLLOWING ABBREVIATIONS HAVE BEEN USED THROUGHOUT THE NOTES:

ACG: Archivo del Congreso de Guatemala, Guatemala City
AGCA: Archivo General de Centro América, Guatemala City
AEA: Archivo Eclesiástico de Arzobispado de Guatemala, Guatemala City
AH de CIRMA: Archivo Histórico del Centro de Investigaciones Regional de Mesoamérica, Antigua, Guatemala
AMG: Archives of the Ministerio de Gobernación, Ministerio de Gobernación, Guatemala City
DDRS-US: Declassified Documents Reference System. While most declassified U.S. material can be found at the National Security Archive at Georgetown University in Washington, when a document can also be found online at <www.ddrs.psmedia.com>, in the World Government Documents Archive's Declassified Documents Reference System, I used this citation to reference the source.
INTA: Archives of the defunct Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria
LC-GDC: Guatemalan Document Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
NSA: National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
PGT-USAC: Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo Collection of the Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Regionales, Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala City
PGT-Tulane: Collection of PGT manifestos, reports, and position papers dating from the late 1950s, Special Collections Division, Tulane University Library, New Orleans.
RP: Registro de Propiedad, Guatemala City
SPCMA: San Pedro Carchá Municipal Archives, San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala

PREFACE

1. "Americans Must Now Feel What the Rest of Us Have Known," *The Independent*, October 3, 2001.

2. For a few examples see Americas Watch, *With Friends Like These: The Americas Watch Report on Human Rights and U.S. Policy in Latin America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); John Gerassi, *The Great Fear: The Reconquest of Latin America* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Martha K. Huggins, *Political Policing: The United States and*

Latin America (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: New Press, 2004); Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

3. The preeminent Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis, in *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), condones the excesses of U.S. policy in the third world by emphasizing the misperceptions held by U.S. officials as to Soviet intentions and power: "It is easy now to sit back and say that the United States and its allies never had much to worry about in the 'third world,'" Gaddis writes; "But the failure of fears to materialize does not establish their immateriality. . . . Nightmares always seem real at the time—even if, in the clear light of dawn, a little ridiculous."

4. See, for instance, T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Concord, Mass.: Pluto Press, 1991); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon, 2001 [1944]); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

5. Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, vol. 3 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–62), pp. 17–21; Fidel Castro, *La historia me absolverá* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975).

6. One of the most important assaults on the belief that individual freedom and socialism were mutually reinforcing is of course Friedrich von Hayek's influential *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944). See also Milton Friedman (with Rose Friedman), *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). It is this urge to isolate liberalism from socialism that motivates many of the recent exposés of the espionage and authoritarian nature of the Communist Party, U.S.A. See for examples Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, eds., *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill Mikhailovich Anderson, eds., *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and John E. Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). See also the recent attack mounted by Ronald Radosh, Grigory Sevostianov, and Mary Habeck, eds., *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), on the last great bastion of popular-front mythology, the Spanish Civil War.

7. For examples see François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), and Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001).

8. http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssintro.html, emphasis mine.

9. The quote comes from Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994), p. 518. For a brief moment, the demise of Soviet Marxism was taken as proof that liberal capitalist democracy more closely corresponded to human nature and desire than did other forms of government and therefore required less violence to enforce. Gaddis, for example, in *We Now Know*, p. 285, argues that because the promise of liberal democracy had great resonance among women and men in Western Europe and Japan, the United States enjoyed a "strong base of popular support, confirmed repeatedly [by] free elections" that kept allies of the United States in power. The Soviet Union, he goes on, "never won such acceptance" and therefore resorted to bloody repression to maintain its empire. This tautology is overt in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). See also Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy and Free Markets in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002). In response to apparently growing global unrest and criticism directed at free market policies, a number of policy intellectuals are now elaborating a preemptive argument, blaming the instability of self-rule in third world countries for the failure of Western capital investment, thus justifying a renewed colonialism. Fareed Zakaria in *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), separates "freedom" (constitutional and institutional protections) from "democracy" (universal suffrage), arguing that when the United States intervenes to overthrow failed or rogue states, it needs to defer, as long as need be, implementation of multiparty elections.

10. Michael Ignatieff, "The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003, p. 54. See also Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

11. Interview on C-Span, *Washington Journal*, March 28, 2003, www.c-span.org.

12. This seems to be the default position of many liberal thinkers, such as Michael Walzer, who write for *Dissent* magazine toward U.S. global power. See Walzer's "Can There Be a Decent Left?" *Dissent*, Spring 2002. See also Jeffrey Isaac, "Hannah Arendt on Human Rights and the Limits of Exposure, or Why Noam Chomsky Is Wrong about the Meaning of Kosovo," *Social Research* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2002).

13. For one repentant Cold War warrior who now acknowledges the "costs and consequences" of U.S. foreign policy, see Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).

INTRODUCTION

1. The massacre and the history leading up to it are described in detail in chapter 5.

2. The UN-administered Guatemalan truth commission report, the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (hereafter CEH), *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio* (Guatemala City: United Nations Operating Projects Services, 1999), 6:18, estimates a total of fifty-three people died and forty-seven were wounded.

3. For Carchá's 1865 protest and reaction, see Archivo General de Central América (hereafter cited as AGCA) B 28500 75, B 28500 134, B 28576 147, B 28577 84, B 28601 151, B 28601 223, B 28601 226, B 28602 268, B 28602 275, B 28605 144, B 28576 147, B 28601

223, B 28606 117, B 28618 117, B 28743 638 (in citations, "A" indicates colonial and "B" postindependence holdings; the first number corresponds to *legajo*, or packet, and the second to *expediente*, or file. When relevant, a third number corresponds to folio). *El Norte*, January 10, 1935, provides an account seventy years after the event.

4. For patterns of indigenous resistance to colonial rule, see Severo Martínez Peláez, *Motines de Indios: La violencia colonial en Centroamérica y Chiapas* (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1985), and Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), chap. 2.

5. The following description of Latin America's postwar democratic opening owes greatly to Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, eds., *Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), as well as their essay "The Impact of the Cold War on Latin America," in *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, ed. Melvyn Leffler and David Painter (New York: Routledge, 1994).

6. Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), offers an extraordinary study on the socialization of liberal rights in Argentina. Emilia Viotti da Costa's "Liberalism: Theory and Practice," in her *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), is the classic analysis of the contradictory interpretations and consequences of Brazilian liberalism.

7. By "popular front" I am referring to both the specific policy emanating from Moscow directing Communist parties to align with liberals, democratic nationalists, and social democrats against Nazism and a more generalized antifascist wartime coalition stretching into the 1940s that transformed and invigorated the Left. See Geoff Eley, "International Communism in the Heyday of Stalin," *New Left Review*, May–June 1986, 157. Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1998) argues that the power of the U.S. popular front—defined both as an alliance between the Communist Party and democratic parties and as a broader, more general political and cultural consensus—resided in its combination of democracy and socialism.

8. Perry Anderson, *Conversation on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 37.

9. Bethell and Roxborough, "Conclusion: The Postwar Conjuncture in Latin America and Its Consequences," in their edited *Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War*, pp. 327–28.

10. Juan José Arévalo, *Escritos Políticos* (Guatemala City: Tipografía Nacional, 1945), p. 146.

11. See Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); Paolo Carozza, "From Conquest to Constitutions: Retrieving a Latin American Tradition of the Idea of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 25 (2003): 281–313.

12. James, *Resistance and Integration*, p. 34.

13. David Green, *The Containment of Latin America: A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), p. 291.

14. See David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 49–62, and Perry Anderson, "Force and Consent," *New Left Review* 17 (September–October 2002): 5–30.

15. In Bethell and Roxborough, "Conclusion: The Postwar Conjuncture in Latin America and its Consequences," p. 332.

16. Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davis, eds., *Politics of Anti-Politics: The Military in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), describes Latin American military officers' positioning of themselves as above politics and as a bulwark against divisive pluralism.

17. Louis Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 487.

18. Pedro Mir, *Countersong to Walt Whitman and other Poems*, trans. Jonathan Cohen and Donald D. Walsh (Washington, DC: Azul Editions, 1993), p. 97.

19. Library of Congress Guatemalan Document Collections (hereafter cited as LC-GDC), reel 5, frame 8004-P, June 23, 1953.

20. Victor Alba, "The Stages of Militarism in Latin America," in *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, ed. John Johnson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

21. For fascism in Chile and Argentina, see Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, 1890–1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 141–247.

22. This process of radicalization was complex and distinct according to country. James, *Resistance and Integration*, p. 210, describes the emergence of a Peronist armed left among activists frustrated by the "demobilisation of the mass movement in the early 1960s" and critical of an "accommodationist union bureaucracy."

23. George Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (New York: Penguin, 1962), p. 25, makes this point in relation to the restoration that took place after the French Revolution, when Enlightenment thought, in the face of strong reaction, took on the veneer of "historical necessity."

24. In Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954–1985* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 136.

25. See Capitán Leopoldo Pimental, "La integración del Indígena al desarrollo nacional," *Revista Militar* 3, no. 19 (January–March 1979): 51–62. One military analyst wrote in 1982 that "the existence of diverse ethnic groups, with different languages and dialects demonstrates the partial nature of national integration due to a lack of a common identity." Another counterinsurgent strategist wrote that same year that Mayans "have joined the guerrilla due to a lack of communication with the state." Both in CEH, *Memoria del silencio*, 3:322.

26. Jennifer Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 64.

27. Throughout Latin America, the transition to free market policies took place in a variety of manners. In some cases, as in Chile, military regimes imposed restructuring; in other cases, such as Brazil, military governments continued national

industrialization policies and neoliberalism was implemented by their civilian successors. For two classic studies of the rise of postwar authoritarianism, see Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1975), and Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). For three decades, O'Donnell's work has set the terms of the debate regarding the relationship of economic development and dictatorship. It argued that by the 1960s, the old import-substitution path to national development had exhausted itself, failing to attract or generate enough capital to move beyond the light industrialization stage. As a result, states increasingly found themselves incapable of containing popular mobilization, ensuring political stability, and protecting capital accumulation, thus leading to the authoritarian military regimes of the 1970s. Much subsequent social science literature has questioned the general applicability of O'Donnell's observations. If economic growth is correlated to dictatorships, some asked, then why have Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Colombia managed to maintain at least some form of democracy? Others noted that while Brazil and Argentina possibly had reached the limits of import-substitution development, Chile and Uruguay, which likewise suffered dictatorships, had not. Many of these questions, however, focus nearly exclusively on trying to isolate specific causal economic variables and ignore the larger historical context argued for here. See for examples Jaime Serra, "Three Mistaken Theses Regarding the Connection between Industrialization and Authoritarian Regimes," and Albert Hirschman, "The Turn to Authoritarianism in Latin America and the Search for Its Economic Determinants," both in *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*, ed. David Collier and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). See the discussion in Eduardo Silva, "Authoritarianism, Democracy, and Development," in *Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Robert Gwynne and Cristobal Kay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 42–43, 49.

28. From a 1975 speech reproduced in Loveman and Davis, *Politics of Anti-Politics*, pp. 244, 247. Cf. *El pensamiento conservador en Chile*, ed. Renato Cristo and Carlos Ruiz (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1992).

29. In Patricia Politzer, *Fear in Chile: Lives under Pinochet* (New York: New Press, 2001), p. 205. Many of the Pinochet supporters interviewed in Politzer's book combine a similar appreciation of both individual liberty and order.

30. In Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 19.

31. See Patricio Silva, "Modernization, Consumerism and Politics in Chile," in *Neo-liberalism with a Human Face? The Politics and Economics of the Chilean Model*, ed. David Hojman (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1995); and José Joaquín Brunner, *El espejo trizado* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1988).

32. Tomás Moulian, "A Time of Forgetting: The Myths of the Chilean Transition," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 32 (September/October 1998): 20. See also Moulian's *El consumo me consume*, Santiago: LOM, 1998.

33. Sidney Almond and Gabriel Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 343, and Samuel Huntington, Michael Crozier, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), are early views that a successful democratic transition needs to create a "relatively passive, uninvolved" and "deferential" citizenry. For a more recent prescription, see Gretchen Casper and Michelle Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996). Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), made a series of similar recommendations to help guide political elites in their transitions to democracy.

34. Jorge Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), is the most influential and comprehensively argued example of this position. A more vulgar version of this argument motivated David Stoll's exposé of Rigoberta Menchú's life story; see especially the counterfactual assertions made in the conclusion to *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder: Westview, 1999).

35. Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed*, p. 476.

36. Richard Rorty, "The End of Leninism: Havel and Social Hope," *Truth and Progress*, vol. 3: *Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Rorty's position notably echoes Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the 1950s* (New York: Free Press, 1962). Published on the eve of the political upheavals of the 1960s, Bell's book describes a dry, procedural liberalism that was thought to have dampened the ideological fires of the 1930s and 1940s.

37. Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 4.

38. See the discussion in Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

39. See Arno J. Mayer, *Dynamics of Counterrevolution in Europe, 1870–1956: An Analytical Framework* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 9, for the phrase "international civil war."

CHAPTER 1. A SEDITIOUS LIFE

1. San Pedro Carchá, municipal registry, Libro de Defunciones, no. 43, folio 203, November 15, 1950.

2. In addition to archival sources, most information on José Angel Icó's life, unless otherwise cited, comes from a series of interviews with his associates and members of his family in San Pedro Carchá and Guatemala City conducted June–July 2000, June–August 2001, and November 2001.

3. Parroquia San Pedro Carchá, Libro de Bautismos, no. 33, folio 17v, lists Icó's baptismal registry. *Compadrazgo* (godparenthood) was an important formal kin institution in Q'eqchi' culture, entailing a series of obligations and restrictions that would