

A RAND NOTE

**Underground Voices: Insurgent Propaganda in
El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru**

Christina Meyer

RAND

The research described in this report was sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, Contract No. MDA903-90-C-0004.

The RAND Publication Series: The Report is the principal publication documenting and transmitting RAND's major research findings and final research results. The RAND Note reports other outputs of sponsored research for general distribution. Publications of RAND do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the sponsors of RAND research.

A RAND NOTE

N-3299-USDP

**Underground Voices: Insurgent Propaganda in
El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru**

Christina Meyer

**Prepared for the
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

RAND

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

PREFACE

The research reported here was sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. It was carried out under the International Security and Defense Strategy Program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. The research was conducted under the project "Low-Intensity Warfare in the Year 2000." The object of this project is to consider what types of low-intensity conflicts the U.S. military may be confronted with over the next 10 to 20 years and what preparations will be necessary to meet these challenges. In particular, it seeks to identify changes that have occurred in the nature of low-intensity warfare during the past decade and to determine how these changes will affect the conduct of low-intensity warfare in the future.

This Note examines some of the ways in which guerrilla groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru create and disseminate propaganda. The study approaches this subject from a variety of angles and, depending upon the information available, discusses each group's propaganda operations, including technical capabilities, choice of media, content, and strategies for reaching specific audiences.

Other publications from this project include N-3228-USDP, *Urbanization and Insurgency: The Turkish Case, 1976-1980*, by Sabri Sayari and Bruce Hoffman, 1991; and R-4042-USDP, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, by Benjamin C. Schwarz, 1991.

SUMMARY

This Note examines the methods that guerrillas in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru use to disseminate propaganda. Its observations are drawn mainly from clandestine radio broadcasts recorded by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and from a document written by the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP), a group within the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador.

The FMLN has developed a particularly extensive propaganda network to gather information and disseminate propaganda both internationally and domestically. The domestic audience is the group's principal focus, since its object is to win and maintain the support of the indigenous population. Recognizing that its propaganda network will be most effective if it has both breadth and depth, the FMLN has developed several methods of disseminating propaganda: conversations and letters, posters and leaflets, newspaper, radio, and video. The group employs all of these methods at once to saturate the population with its messages, while simultaneously matching specific propaganda campaigns to appropriate audiences.

The ERP's plan details methods by which propaganda can be put to work to "awaken the people's consciences" by promoting the view that class structure is the root of political as well as socioeconomic ills, to denounce the Salvadoran government and army, and to convince the people that the FMLN's plan is the solution to their specific woes. The ERP is noteworthy in its exhaustive and pragmatic approach to propaganda and its contention that those in the individual zones are better equipped than the central command to create propaganda appropriate for their populations.

While the U.S.-prepared manual for the Nicaraguan Contras proposed methods similar to those the ERP espoused for interacting directly with the population, the propaganda the Contras disseminated over radio was generally more subtle than that of the FMLN. Peru's Sendero Luminoso, on the other hand, has been more extreme than either of those groups. Although Sendero seeks converts, its target audiences have been quite specific, and much of its propaganda concentrates on those who already support its radical ideology. Also in Peru, Tupac Amaru stages attempts at propaganda that are violent and disorganized bids for attention.

The most organized guerrilla groups appear to operate under the assumption that the more sensitive propaganda can be to its audiences' specific grievances and fears, the more effective it will be as a mobilizing force. However, the types of media that are flexible enough to respond to individual concerns are also usually the most expensive, risky, and difficult to operate and will not replace radio as the core of most propaganda and communication networks.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Gabriel and Judith F. Marcella of the Department of National Security and Strategy at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, for making available their unpublished translations of Salvadoran insurgent propaganda. Thanks also to Lisa Schmeekle for initiating this research.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. INSURGENT PROPAGANDA IN EL SALVADOR	3
Types of Media	6
III. INSURGENT PROPAGANDA IN NICARAGUA AND PERU	20
Nicaragua	20
Peru	22
IV. CONCLUSION	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

I. INTRODUCTION

This Note examines some of the ways in which guerrilla groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru influence their supporters and potential supporters with propaganda. Depending upon the information available about each group's propaganda operations, the study discusses the guerrillas' technical capabilities and attempts to analyze their choice of media, the content of their propaganda, and the ways in which they tailor this propaganda to appeal to specific audiences. By examining these guerrillas' efforts to control their constituencies through propaganda, the study attempts to illuminate some of the media options the groups have devised for themselves, their attitudes toward and relationship with their supporters, and the concerns they believe are most important to clarify and disseminate.

Translations of clandestine radio broadcasts published in the Federal Broadcast Information Service's (FBIS) "Daily Reports" provided the bulk of our primary source material. We surveyed the four clandestine radio stations operated by guerrilla groups in our focus areas (as well as their use of legal radio stations) during 1988, that being the last full year of broadcasts available when the project began. As we examined the content of these broadcasts, a clear division presented itself between those items that concentrated on politics and those that reported military activity; the attention the groups paid to each aspect was compared whenever appropriate. A captured and translated document¹ outlining the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front's (FMLN) propaganda plan was the second major primary source of information on that group's propaganda effort. This document allowed for a thorough analysis of the FMLN's propaganda in terms of its intent.

As guerrillas struggle against governments, they must provoke not only their enemies, but those whom they wish to call their friends. To a revolutionary movement, a neutral population is at best useless and at worst a potential weapon for the enemy. Even if guerrillas achieve military victory without increasing the number of their recruits and

¹"Concerning Propaganda: Our Line of Propaganda," presented by the Popular Revolutionary Army at the meeting of the command of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, July 1984; translated and edited by Gabriel and Judith F. Marcella, Department of National Security and Strategy, U.S. Army War College, July 1986, unpublished paper.

building support among the populace, such success is likely to be short-lived without a loyal following. Recognizing the function of "the masses" in achieving their goals, the FMLN in El Salvador, the Contras in Nicaragua, and Sendero Luminoso in Peru have developed elaborate systems of propaganda to try to mobilize this force.

In the early stages of a guerrilla movement, propaganda is necessary because a group is largely unknown to those it considers to be its constituents. Later, a group may be known all too well as a source of political instability, economic turmoil, and a general lack of safety in a community. When this happens the guerrillas need to transform the havoc that the people perceive to be their fault into activity that is regarded as beneficial to the population. This does not necessarily mean that they change their actions, but rather that they publicize their particular interpretation of them. In other words, they must find a means to present themselves, their intentions, and their reasons for disrupting the very lives they claim to be helping in such a way as to compel their audiences to support them.

Propaganda grants authority to its makers. In the first place, simply by demonstrating its ability to disseminate information that the government has banned, a guerrilla group proves that it is a viable force. Second, once a group has the people's ears and eyes it can manipulate their minds, causing them to act as they might not otherwise; or if it does not work as effectively as this, its messages at least command the attention of those who read, hear, or see them. In words and pictures, those whose plans are hidden from public view can portray themselves any way they please. Furthermore, if appearing to play a particular role can win support, propaganda will help these guerrillas to become in fact the powerful forces that they claim to be.

II. INSURGENT PROPAGANDA IN EL SALVADOR

The FMLN, the strongest and best-organized guerrilla force ever to emerge in Latin America, has also created the most extensive and coordinated systems of propaganda. Publications such as *Revolutionary Strategy in El Salvador*, *Why Is the FMLN Fighting?* and *Women and War in El Salvador* are distributed worldwide;¹ foreign journalists are invited to witness their operations; a guerrilla-produced film has been screened at Joseph Papp's *Festival Latino en Nueva York*;² and a New York and Washington-based public relations firm has arranged press conferences for the rebel leaders and issued press releases favorable to them.³ While the FMLN obviously considers it essential to solicit worldwide—and especially American—public opinion, the meticulous attention the group has given to building and sustaining a propaganda network within El Salvador suggests that its most important audience is domestic. The report "Concerning Propaganda: Our Line of Propaganda," presented by the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) at the Meeting of the Command of the FMLN in July 1984, reveals the framework and intentions of this network. The ERP, commanded by Joaquin Villalobos, is only one of five main guerrilla groups under the FMLN umbrella, so one cannot assume that its report on propaganda presents the official opinions of the front as a whole, especially since the ERP is often at odds with other groups. Nevertheless, the ERP operates the FMLN's most influential mouthpiece, Radio Venceremos, and so it is the group most likely to be considered an authority on propaganda by all.

In the holistic manner of Marxist-Leninist strategy, this document equates propagandizing the people with organizing them and, in turn, with mobilizing them,⁴ so that propaganda, administered effectively, is at once a means and an end. As the

¹*Revolutionary Strategy in El Salvador*, Tricontinental Society, London, 1981 and 1983; *Why is the FMLN Fighting?* analysis presented in September 1983 by Joaquin Villalobos on Radio Venceremos, distributed by Casa El Salvador, Washington, D.C., January 1984; *Women and War in El Salvador*, Women's International Resource Exchange, New York, n.d. (all as listed in the Introduction to Marcella, p. 2.

²James Brooke, "Salvadorans Use Video In the Propaganda War," *New York Times*, August 27, 1984, p. C17.

³Tim Golden, "War for Minds Opens New Front in Salvador," *Miami Herald*, July 14, 1985, p. A1.

⁴Marcella, p. 1.

identification of propaganda with organization would suggest, the FMLN's "Concerning Propaganda" is itself remarkably well organized; it is both systematic and all-inclusive. The document describes a propaganda network that is divided into a variety of approaches and media. It discusses, for instance, propaganda concerning the military, economics, social stratification, and the country's history, all of which may be disseminated through newspapers, posters, letters, and videos. Although some of these approaches may be used exclusively, depending upon the audience and the resources available, the object is clearly to pursue all avenues at once so as to immerse the entire population, including the enemy forces, in an entirely new perception of the political environment and each person's role within it. An examination of this document, in conjunction with one branch of the propaganda system it delineates—broadcasts from the FMLN's clandestine radio stations, Farabundo Marti and Radio Venceremos⁵—will afford a glimpse of the FMLN's communication tactics and capabilities, as well as the group's perception of itself and of its potential constituency.

"Concerning Propaganda" first establishes the importance of popular support and the unsurpassed effectiveness of propaganda as a tool to activate consciences and thus harness that most powerful yet fickle "human force."⁶ The author's use of "consciences," rather than "consciousness," suggests that propaganda's function is not only to make people aware of their situation, but also to stir feelings of guilt about their own actions, thus creating an internal motivation for change, which the propagandizers can direct. Recognizing that propaganda's potency is measured by the concrete gains it helps to engender, the document closes the gap between mere words and symbols, on the one hand, and actual political achievements, on the other, by stipulating that messages "indicate clearly the concrete tasks of the masses and the expression of their principal aspirations, economic as well as political, short as well as long term."⁷

If the FMLN's propaganda does fulfill this requirement to offer specific tasks, it does not do so consistently. On the radio, for instance, it is far more common to hear vague and abstract calls for support and definitions of goals (at least in the broadcasts printed in FBIS), as exemplified, for instance, in some lines from a commentary by Jorge Melendez ("Commander Jonas") broadcast by Radio Venceremos on December 7, 1988:

⁵As monitored by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

⁶Marcella, p. 4.

⁷Ibid.

"We want the people to understand that our victory will depend on their commitment. The Salvadoran people's primary goal is to prepare a general violent struggle."⁸ The lack of radio directives to carry out concrete tasks could suggest that the FMLN is failing to implement its plan, but it is just as likely to indicate an appreciation of the diversity of radio's audience. The purpose behind providing "concrete guidance in accord with conditions in each zone"⁹ is not only to facilitate the accomplishment of specific tasks, but also to influence the community psychologically by appearing sensitive to the needs of each discrete region. This appearance would probably be undermined by zone-specific instructions broadcast by radio. A list of different goals would encourage a sense that the movement is fragmented, while presenting a single concrete goal would certainly alienate those listeners for whom that specific task was not appropriate.

The issue of whom the guerrillas can afford to alienate poses a somewhat tricky problem. In 1984 the ERP wanted to clarify the origins of the conflict as a means of establishing the FMLN's moral superiority, defining the group's grievances and goals as those with which their potential supporters could identify, and playing upon the nationalistic tendencies of those potential supporters. Aware of the psychological power of class consciousness, especially when reinforced by evident reality, the ERP document divides the country into two classes and focuses on the irreconcilable differences between them as the central theme of its propaganda. This affords the benefit of unifying the oppressed, inciting their wrath and focusing it upon the source of their misery, but it does so through exclusion—that is, creating an enemy class. The guerrillas' awareness that this approach must not be too inflexible, that the group they consider to be "us" must have extendable edges so as to include some of "them" who may reform, is evident in two instances: the paper's presentation of the role of class consciousness in the FMLN's propaganda and its discussion of directing propaganda toward the enemy army.

When the document first introduces the opposing groups, it describes them as "the imperialist North Americans and the millionaire oligarchs—the high expression of the dominant class, combined with their followers and defenders," and "the workers

⁸*FMLN Commander Jorge Melendez on "Solution,"* PA0912005688 (Clandestine) Radio Venceremos in Spanish to El Salvador, December 7, 1988, in FBIS-LAT-88-237, December 9, 1988, p. 20.

⁹Marcella, p. 9.

(laborers and peasants) and the people in general."¹⁰ The inclusion of "the people in general" allows anyone who is neither an imperialist North American nor a millionaire oligarch to consider himself or herself part of the guerrilla camp. In a more direct reference to this issue of inclusion, the document warns against the temptation to fall into "blind radicalism" when encouraging class consciousness. Such limited vision, the document points out, "denies the role of other political forces and social sectors in the struggle, and denies their participation in the revolutionary political program."¹¹ So although the FMLN is staunchly true to its ideology, pragmatism colors its propaganda.

This approach appears at the end of the document as well, in instructions for sending letters to enemy commanders, appealing to their humanity and patriotism. This final section, although it specifically dictates the content and tone of the letters, is written almost as an afterthought and sounds nearly wistful. It lacks the paper's characteristic step-by-step approach and analysis of purpose: "We should send letters to the local commands and companies, with names and grades in respectful tones and calling upon them to reflect about the situation. This must be done even with those officers who are considered repressive, by proposing alternatives for understanding and for searching for a patriotic solution."¹² These sentences indicate that their author wishes to be perceived as one who recognizes a commonality of cause and who values forgiveness and unity over condemnation and exclusion. Furthermore, although other pages of the document stress that effective propaganda will contrast the corruption, weakness, and cruelty of the enemy with the humanity and strength of the FMLN, evil intent is assigned only to the "Yankees," then-President Jose Napoleon Duarte, and the high command, while the officers and soldiers are described as merely misinformed. Clearly, "Concerning Propaganda" is itself a piece of propaganda directed at those who are already members of the group.

TYPES OF MEDIA

The FMLN can summon a great variety of clandestine media to inform enemy soldiers and the rest of its audience of what it perceives to be truth, or what it would like them to believe is truth. For the most part, these truths appear to coincide, although on

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹Ibid., p. 6.

¹²Ibid., p. 25.

occasion, especially with regard to military operations, the propaganda is clearly misleading, as will be discussed later. The variety of the guerrillas' approach suits the holistic nature of their propaganda campaign; for every audience and every situation, they have developed an appropriate message and have chosen the most effective medium.

Direct Propaganda with a Limited Audience

The FMLN appears to favor communicating with people directly, both for disseminating and gathering information, whenever possible. For instance, "Concerning Propaganda" urges guerrillas to "talk" to sympathetic people in order to teach them how to form "listening" groups for Radio Venceremos. The FMLN also interviews prisoners and deserters to discover the precise ills of barracks life and then exploits this information to encourage government troops to desert. One method of encouragement involves shouting proposals at night through loudspeakers, a practice that the ERP document lauds as "one of the forms that we must expand the most because it is the most direct of all."¹³ (This tactic deprives soldiers of sleep and so functions as a weapon of psychological warfare, as well.)

The document also recommends direct communication in terms of working with the soldiers' families to persuade them to make their sons desert from the army. Although it does not specify what form the "intense political work" with these families should take, the paper reinforces the idea that communication with potential supporters should not be coercive, but encouraging; it suggests that insurgents treat the soldiers' relatives with respect.¹⁴ Finally, the guerrillas send letters to the soldiers through their families, inciting them to desert; and they also send the letters to commanders mentioned above, asking them to rethink their positions. These letters constitute direct communication in that they are intended for and are received by a specific reader and as such must be quite powerful, especially those sent to the troops.

Simple Printed Documents

The ERP favors printed propaganda in many circumstances, even when it is not so direct, because it imparts a degree of permanence to the ideas it contains and can easily

¹³Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 24.

be disseminated throughout villages and thrust into the path of enemy troops.¹⁵ True to the significance the FMLN accords to propaganda as a tool of the revolution, distribution of printed propaganda is presented as a military action in Radio Venceremos broadcasts. On December 14, 1988, among reports of FMLN actions that included giving stolen coffee to the people, sabotaging transformers, and inflicting 14 enemy casualties, Radio Venceremos also carefully detailed the progress of the propaganda campaign:

Propaganda was distributed at Las Quebradas and Las Crucitas in Morazan; San Rafael, San Diego, Dos Quebradas, and Ochichilco in San Vicente; and several cantons in La Paz Department. Propaganda was also distributed in several Jucuapa, Usulután neighborhoods and near the Technological University and a bus terminal in San Salvador.¹⁶

This sort of general printed propaganda appears as signs, posters and pamphlets, which are created, according to "Concerning Propaganda," at the individual fronts and work zones. This method may be preferred to centralized production for a number of reasons, including the zones' different propaganda needs, the comparative safety afforded by scattered production sites, and the difficulties of distributing propaganda from a central location. In any case, the system indicates a great deal of trust in the leaders of each zone and a sensitivity to the different conditions in each area of the country. This willingness to spread responsibility throughout the organization, rather than concentrate it at the top, is repeated throughout "Concerning Propaganda." While the document is filled with specific instructions, including one about setting mimeograph machines at certain points in some zones to facilitate massive printing and distribution, it presents these instructions as mere suggestions and encourages independent propaganda work. "The zonal structures," the document urges, "must be clever and creative in creating and distributing the propaganda."¹⁷

The guerrillas also reveal a great respect for the aesthetic taste of their audience, particularly as they attempt to penetrate the cities, and an appreciation of the effect of the visually attractive in general:

¹⁵Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶Editorial Report, PA1412194588 (Clandestine) Radio Venceremos in Spanish to El Salvador, December 14, 1988, in FBIS-LAT-88-241, December 15, 1988, p. 9.

¹⁷Marcella, p. 19.

We must keep in mind that the highest quality propaganda is necessary to carry forward the expansion of political work into new and more densely populated zones, to establish contact with the urban and suburban masses having a more sophisticated political and cultural level. It is a mistake to content oneself with mediocre propaganda simply because resources are limited.

We must make its quality superior as well as appropriate to its place. We must make it attractive, accompanying it when possible with well made and expressive graphics, with clear and precise texts, with sharp and visible titles, with clean and attractive print.

This concern for superior quality doubtlessly stems not only from the value the guerrillas place on good propaganda, but also on the awareness that strong, clean graphics, regardless of their message, reflect good organization and prosperity.

Since these forms of printed propaganda are intended specifically for the masses and enemy patrols, "Concerning Propaganda" emphasizes that they must be not just attractive but also simple and clear enough to be understood by those with little ability or opportunity to study them. This aspect of the FMLN's approach to propaganda is influenced by the group's assumption that although its stated goals are desirable to the masses, the masses will not be motivated if they do not understand and then adopt these goals as the expression of their own wishes. The document offers a number of suggestions for rendering information clear and simple, such as reducing concepts to slogans and assigning labels laden with emotion to the FMLN and its opponents.

Newspaper

The ERP recognizes, however, that using exclusively a simplistic approach ignores that group of educated sympathizers who demand analysis and convincing arguments. It seems likely that this group would include some who might eventually produce and organize propaganda themselves, although the document does not even imply this idea. In any case, for this sort of thoughtful audience, the FMLN had developed by 1984 through "Salpress," Radio Venceremos's news service, the newspaper *Venceremos*.¹⁸ "Concerning Propaganda" stresses that the newspaper's distribution must be limited for two reasons: first, because of its "analytical and argumentative contents," the newspaper will be effective only when presented to what

¹⁸Radio Venceremos also publishes a magazine for its listeners, *Senal de Libertad* (Signal of Freedom), that prints the texts of notable speeches delivered on earlier broadcasts.

the author calls "middle sectors" and other "special sectors" and when used for the vague purpose of "public relations at different levels";¹⁹ and second, because of "limitations on the run." Such restrictions on the number of copies could be due to any number of causes, including the likelihood of attracting only a limited number of readers to purchase them. It seems that this newspaper is intended strictly to guide the political actions of committed FMLN supporters, since the copies must be recovered and guarded.²⁰ As in the case of the more simple printed propaganda, "Concerning Propaganda" delegates control of the newspaper's distribution, if not the writing, to the different zones. Again, the document suggests a couple of specific measures to make that distribution effective and profitable, but stresses the system's flexibility and sensitivity to an ever-changing environment: "These are simply ideas from which we can work in accord with the possibilities and conditions."²¹

Radio

The only propaganda instrument for which the FMLN does not in some way select a specific audience is the radio, and this makes the medium somewhat inflexible since it cannot respond to the demands of individual areas. Nevertheless, radio's ability to reach a large circle of listeners is, of course, one of its values. The radio, as a means of disseminating propaganda, has great advantages for insurgent groups in general. The radio transmitter is fairly easy to operate, requires relatively little equipment (compared to that needed to produce written communication), offers mobility, is inexpensive to purchase and operate, and can reach illiterate audiences—a significant sector of the populations in which low-intensity conflicts occur. Radio can reach widespread and diverse audience members simultaneously, making it especially crucial on momentous occasions, such as when a truce begins or ends.

Radio's extensive audience not only lends itself to efficient communication, it helps the medium to function as a psychological tool. When listening to broadcasts pitched toward masses of people, the listener, knowing that others are hearing the same message at the same time, senses solidarity with a grand, cohesive group. Such an awareness encourages a "mass mentality" in which "reactions are easier to provoke,"

¹⁹Marcella, p. 17.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

according to Jacques Ellul.²² As mentioned above, the ERP document suggests that the FMLN take even further advantage of the radio as a tool for solidarity by encouraging people to participate in the communication network by forming "listening groups . . . for Radio Venceremos."²³ This idea also demonstrates the ERP's commitment to recruiting followers and gathering information by every means and at all levels.

Occasionally FMLN guerrillas will make use of legal radio by anonymously telephoning a station to deliver a statement, which is taped and broadcast.²⁴ Most often, however, the guerrillas broadcast from their own, illegal, radio stations. FBIS monitors two of these,²⁵ operated by rival factions of the FMLN; Radio Venceremos ("We Will Win"), founded by the ERP, and Radio Farabundo Marti, founded by the Popular Liberation Forces. Radio Venceremos was born with the "Final Offensive" on January 10, 1981, as an offshoot of the People's Revolutionary Radio, also founded by the ERP. The ERP considers Venceremos to be the FMLN's principal instrument for political encounter with the government.²⁶ Presently, the station operates on the shortwave band, although the guerrillas made a short-lived attempt in 1982 to switch to FM. During that time it broadcast from atop the Guazapa volcano, but in this particularly dangerous location just outside San Salvador, its signals made it vulnerable to discovery and attack. In 1987 the radio was operated by approximately one hundred guerrillas who managed

²²Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, translated by Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965, p. 7.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁴See, for instance, FBIS-Latin America, December 7, 1988, p. 15. This single instance is hardly significant evidence, yet it may indicate the degree to which the FMLN is accepted as a legitimate army in El Salvador.

²⁵FBIS also monitors a third clandestine station in Nicaragua, Radio Miskus, organized by MISURA (the acronym for the guerrilla association composed of Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indians) in January 1983. The organization was once known as MISURASATA, the last four letters denoting "Sandinistas," but a militant faction of Indians broke with the Sandinistas and reformulated as MISURA. This change of name reflects the new group's goal, for it pledges to kill Sandinistas and destroy the revolutionary leadership in order to reassert the cultural autonomy of native populations. (Lawrence C. Soley and John S. Nichols, *Clandestine Radio Broadcasting: A Study of Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Electronic Communication*, Praeger, New York, 1987, pp. 241 and 243.) In one of Radio Miskus's first broadcasts, the announcer defined the station: "Radio Miskus is the voice against communist killers and broadcasts from somewhere in our national territory. . . . We trust in God that soon we will break the Marxist-Leninist chains that the Sandinistas have imposed on us." (FBIS-Latin America, February 4, 1983, p. 19).

²⁶Marcella, p. 20.

the station's protection as well as its programming, writing for three or four one-hour programs every day.²⁷ The station's audience includes the local peasantry and the poor urban citizens who tape-record the broadcasts to share with one another and with foreign correspondents.²⁸

Radio Venceremos's fare consists of Sunday masses celebrated by Catholic priests (in an effort to project a positive relationship between the FMLN and the Catholic Church), battle songs, cultural programs, guerrilla renderings of the news, and proclamations.²⁹ The news and proclamations can be divided roughly into political and military reports, and in 1988 the number of each was approximately equal. This balance may reflect the equal importance of, and the symbiotic relationship between, the political and military concerns of the ERP, or it may merely indicate that both approaches are equally useful as tools for propaganda. Since, however, the ERP's propaganda is painstakingly woven into the fabric of the campaign as a whole, it seems most likely that the group perceives a symbiotic relationship among all three concerns: the actual political and military issues and the way in which propaganda can manipulate them. As a Salvadoran filmmaker stated, "In the war, there is a military front, a political front and an informational front."³⁰

The political reports are rich and varied; they comment upon elections, call for local "campaigns" (e.g., transportation stoppages), interpret world events, interview guerrilla leaders about the progress of the revolution, vilify the Salvadoran government's leaders and United States policy, expose human rights violations, and propagate the history of El Salvador as interpreted by the FMLN. The ERP document's discussion of the latter is especially interesting, for it demonstrates once again the guerrillas' skill in harnessing every possible means of influencing their potential constituency and their pragmatism in rethinking and rejecting their movement's earlier approach.

²⁷Soley and Nichols, p. 249.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Linda Drucker, "Radio Venceremos: Static Over a Guerrilla Source," *Columbia Journalism Review*, March–April 1984, p. 44.

³⁰James Brooke, "Salvadorans Use Video In the Propaganda War," *New York Times*, August 27, 1984, p. C17.

Revising History

"Concerning Propaganda," in fact, proposes a revision of Salvadoran history. The author regrets that years of radicalism, arising from the class struggle, have encouraged those who follow the FMLN to despise national heroes, forefathers, and symbols as representatives of the dominant class. The document then recharacterizes this rejected Salvadoran history as a series of struggles either for social justice or in defense of the unity of the people of Central America. When history is perceived in this way, it becomes the precursor of the FMLN's struggle, which synthesizes the fight for social and national causes. By recognizing and propagating via radio the idea that the values, heroes, and symbols of Salvadoran history are on their side, that they "express sentiments of rebellion and national dignity that inspired important struggles in previous generations,"³¹ the guerrillas intend to harness the motivating power of national history and set it to work to influence the popular masses. But it may be that the ERP found, as it predicted, great resistance to this plan, for a review of Venceremos broadcasts in FBIS from October to December 1988 reveals only one ambiguous hint of Salvadoran history previous to the present civil war: "Only our revolutionary strength, *the product of our people's traditional struggles*, was able to give us the human, moral, and material reserves to continue advancing and to reach the point again where we can see possibilities for victory."³²

On the other hand, this sample of broadcasts did include several examples of what the ERP document proposes as a second, equally important use of history: the collection and dissemination of that which has happened since the war began, in other words, history's creation. According to the ERP plan, the FMLN has been gathering, interpreting, and broadcasting facts generated by the war, specifically items involving the "activities and development of popular power in the liberated zones"; the FMLN's relationship with the people, including Christian work, which the guerrillas pragmatically use as a tool to win and maintain popular support; repression and destruction by the enemy; the work of internal education, such as the revolutionary school and the technical preparation of the military force; and military activity in general.³³ The very stories Venceremos broadcasts as propaganda thus become history and as such can be recycled

³¹Marcella, p. 12.

³²FBIS-LAT-88-197, October 12, 1988, p. 16 (italics added).

³³Marcella, pp. 18-19.

as propaganda time and time again, as in an FMLN communiqué on the eighth anniversary of its founding.

The text of this communiqué is a review in general terms of the offenses of the Christian Democrats, then-President Duarte, and the United States, and the successes of the FMLN. Neatly, it reduces government victories to a vague notion that the Christian Democratic counterinsurgency plan was complex and difficult to defeat, the admission of this difficulty subtly emphasizing the opposition's bravery and endurance. To be ultimately stronger than the strong is more laudable than to be stronger than the weak. Even more cleverly, the broadcast stresses that the people, not the FMLN, are leading the way to ultimate victory and urging the guerrillas to respond: "The people themselves are demanding that the struggle be intensified."³⁴ The story also interprets the great length of the conflict in a positive light: "We have matured and learned to fight in every possible manner."³⁵ Overall, the war in 1988 is couched in terms of the culmination of an eight-year historic tradition, pulsing with building energy and purpose. The FMLN General Command is able to present its followers as historical heroes, whose past and present clearly indicate that they are moving toward victory.

Political and Military Broadcasts

Although sometimes a political broadcast may serve as an introduction or conclusion to a military report, the two are usually kept separate. Military reports tend to be dry, seemingly straightforward recitals of facts and figures. Lists of the installations that the guerrillas sabotaged, locations of attacks on government troops, and the number of casualties the enemy sustained make up the bulk of these broadcasts. According to the ERP document, consistently presenting enemy attrition as a result of the guerrillas' flexible and unconventional combat techniques is key to the military reports' utility as a propaganda tool.

The document presents very specific limitations on what may be included in a military propaganda report. This constitutes a change from Venceremos's approach when the station began broadcasting. At that time, reports detailed the magnitude and specialization involved in guerrilla operations. These detailed descriptions, the ERP maintains, won admiration and a consequent following for the FMLN forces, but they

³⁴FBIS-LAT-88-197, October 12, 1988, p. 16.

³⁵Ibid.

also gave the enemy information useful for its defense. "Now," the ERP stated in 1984, "our operations speak for themselves and don't need to be described to be of value." Therefore, "we will omit any information, any description that can help the enemy derive conclusions about the future plans or the state of our forces. We will be guided by the principle of 'letting the facts of our advance speak for themselves.'"³⁶ This, of course, implies that the "facts" of the FMLN's military operations are always favorable.

While the bias of interpretation in the political commentaries is quite obvious and is meant to be so, the "facts" in the military reports are a devious form of propaganda. In the first place, the document specifies that guerrilla casualties will never be made known over Radio Venceremos, but only through internal bulletin in code. Thus a series of military reports gives the impression that guerrillas are never killed and enemy soldiers die in significant numbers, since "all casualties caused to the enemy, however few they may be, even one or two, are important [to report]. The accumulation of casualties over periods of time become strong losses for the enemy." Ironically, the author adds "we must try to be as objective as possible."³⁷ This concern for objectivity may be merely a piece of propaganda produced by the document's author and directed toward the members of the FMLN, who would probably like to believe that their interpretation of events is completely objective. Nevertheless, since facts can increase propaganda's effectiveness,³⁸ the guerrillas certainly recognize that being objective will advance their cause. That there are limits to this approach suggests again the plasticity of the FMLN's propaganda. The guerrillas must be attuned to the degree of objectivity that will be useful in a given situation, and they must be flexible enough to respond accordingly; they must, in other words, "be as objective as possible." That objective truth in El Salvador is sometimes obscure is evident in a *New York Times* report of a guerrilla raid on a military outpost in January 1987 which gives equal credence to the military spokesman, who claims that four soldiers, two civilians, and twenty-two guerrillas were killed, and Radio Venceremos, which puts the toll at five soldiers dead, sixteen wounded, and two guerrillas slightly wounded.³⁹

³⁶Marcella, p. 15.

³⁷Ibid., p. 20.

³⁸Ellul, pp. 52-61.

³⁹*New York Times*, January 7, 1987, p. A11.

Just as the FMLN's military strength, by its own admission and in the assessment of U.S. analysts, is its ability to adjust its tactics to fit the situation,⁴⁰ so its strength in communicating with its constituency is its ability to manipulate information to create the desired effect—in other words, its ability to make propaganda. Although propaganda will not remain powerful if it is not based upon facts, neither will it be effective if it does not interpret those facts to its advantage. The FMLN's *chef d'oeuvre* in juggling these two considerations is its rendition of U.S. intervention. According to "Concerning Propaganda," foreign intervention and its own concomitant propaganda threatened to demoralize not only the masses, but the propaganda makers as well. It seems that certain sectors of the FMLN were adopting a "defeatist and tragic" attitude in the face of this challenge. But, in one logical twist, the ERP document reinterprets intervention and shapes it into propaganda, explaining that "if there is intervention it is precisely because we have advanced so far and if that intervention increases it is because our enemies must go further because of our firm advance to victory."⁴¹ This sentiment is repeated consistently in both political and military bulletins from Radio Venceremos.

The second clandestine station, Radio Farabundo Marti, was established by the Popular Liberation Forces to counter the broadcasts of the ERP, its rival. In 1988 FBIS did not begin printing transcripts from Radio Farabundo Marti until October, and from that month until the end of that year fewer than two dozen broadcasts appeared. These were composed of twice as many military reports as political commentaries, as compared with Venceremos's equal distribution, but this could simply be due to FBIS's selection. More telling than the stations' differences is the similarity of their tone and rhetorical devices.

Rhetoric

Despite the disadvantage of reading these radio transcripts in translation, a discussion of the way in which the guerrillas use language to strengthen the message of their propaganda will be valuable in that it indicates once again the thoroughness with which they pursue their campaign. They are careful to use concrete details and statistics whenever possible in their political commentaries, for instance in exposing human rights

⁴⁰*El Salvador, 1979–1989: A Briefing Book on U.S. Aid and the Situation in El Salvador*, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, April 28, 1989, p. 104.

⁴¹Marcella, pp. 10–11.

violations, and always to use figures in their military reports so as to lend credibility to their arguments. Adjectives and metaphors render the enemy not so much evil as ridiculous: "Flatfoot Ponce," "drunkard Blandon," "the naive 6th Brigade commander," and "the sausage-vendor Guzman Aguilar" lead troops under whose "very noses" the people continue to rebel. When guerrillas in "heroic Chalatenango" carry off a "bold operation" and deliver "accurate artillery fire," the enemy, "completely frightened," responds "as usual" with "crazy and useless shooting."⁴² Radio Venceremos also identifies military campaigns with long titles that function as slogans: "Combatant People and Guerrilla Army, One Single Fist Striking for Victory," "Death to Reagan's Policy, Yankee Get Out of El Salvador," "Our People's Organized and Combative Struggle Is the Alternative to the Electoral Maneuver."⁴³

The words of most of the commentaries are far more vague, increasing the propaganda's effectiveness by making it difficult for listeners to question its accuracy. In unspecific but powerful parallel phrases, Radio Venceremos suggests that the nation is unified and identifies the source of its listeners' misery:

The people themselves are demanding the struggle be intensified, spurred on by greater poverty than when the war began; frustrated by those who deceived and betrayed them by offering them changes and peace, and instead gave them massacres, war, and more hunger, and angered by those who speak of democracy while continuing the killing and repression.⁴⁴

Reports such as these that imply promises of peace, food, and liberty achieve their greatest effect when they remain in general terms. "Such sentiments correspond to the primary needs of all men: the need to eat, to be one's own master, to hate," writes Ellul,⁴⁵ and they "awaken such passions that they justify all sacrifices." Many of Radio Venceremos's broadcasts illustrate what Ellul terms "propaganda of agitation" at a fever pitch, a propaganda that "tries to stretch energies to the utmost" and which suggests to

⁴²Words taken from various broadcasts by Radio Venceremos and Radio Farabundo Marti from October to December 1988.

⁴³FBIS-Latin America, November 4, 1988, November 9, 1988, and November 28, 1988.

⁴⁴FBIS-Latin America, October 12, 1988, p. 16.

⁴⁵Ellul, p. 74.

the individual "extraordinary goals that nevertheless seem to him completely within reach."⁴⁶ Although these broadcasts are not spurring their listeners to focus their energies in specific acts, they are certainly attempting to mobilize their audience, to prepare it to participate in support of the guerrillas in whatever form of action the FMLN decides is most useful.

Film and Videotape

While radio, with its dependence upon well-chosen words, remains the centerpiece of FMLN propaganda, the guerrillas have also used Super 8 film and videotape to collect and disseminate selective images of the war. By 1984, the guerrillas had shot a variety of action useful for propaganda on film and tape, including evidence of the damage and victims of enemy bombing,⁴⁷ combat between FMLN fighters and government troops in which the Salvadoran Army capitulates, large numbers of insurgents marching, Roman Catholic priests blessing those who participated in the revolution, government troops joining the insurgents' ranks, and humane treatment of captured prisoners.

The "Radio Venceremos Film and Television Collective," which began in 1980 and was inspired by a similar film project the Sandinista guerrillas had started in Nicaragua,⁴⁸ maintain three camera teams⁴⁹ within guerrilla units to videotape the guerrillas at their best and the Salvadoran Army at its worst. To create an opportunity to show these tapes—which portray the insurgents as victorious, numerous, religious, and humane—in order to persuade the rural peasants to join the rebel cause, the guerrillas periodically capture towns for several hours. In part this is a show of force, but in large part it is done simply to disseminate propaganda. Military action, therefore, is used to strengthen propaganda as well as the other way around. In the squares of these towns,

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁷Marcella, p. 18.

⁴⁸A Salvadoran filmmaker explained that while the Nicaraguans gave them some advice, the groups argued over the merits of video over 16-millimeter film. One Nicaraguan said that video was only good for home movies and baptisms. Brooke, p. C17.

⁴⁹This information appeared in 1984. Today there are probably more cameramen and recorders in guerrilla units.

the guerrillas play their tapes and the curious people crowd around to watch them.⁵⁰ Videos and films can easily be geared toward very specific audiences, and the guerrillas take advantage of this. For example, the camera teams make technical videotapes to teach isolated guerrillas techniques such as camouflage, ambushes, silent infiltration, and resistance to interrogation.

Film and videotape are especially useful for influencing world opinion, since this form eliminates the need to subject the FMLN's messages to the interpretations of foreign journalists, and instead allows them to be witnessed in precisely the form the guerrillas intend. CBS and European television networks have bought copies of their footage, billing it as "film shot by independent filmmakers sympathetic to the guerrillas"; and the collective's film, "Time of Daring," was screened at Joseph Papp's *Festival Latino en Nueva York* as part of a campaign to sway the American public.

The FMLN's use of video and film, and the scope of their distribution, shows once again the creative lengths to which the guerrillas will go to take advantage of every possible form of and audience for propaganda. The taping of videos in the field by cameramen who are actually members of several military units demonstrates propaganda's incorporation into the military effort and enables those who create propaganda to use the specific and unique situations that occur in the field. This practice also responds to the ERP's contention that propaganda be decentralized, produced by everyone, everywhere. In terms of matching the content of the propaganda to its audience, however, the FMLN's use of video apparently does not measure up to the standards set by the ERP document and most of the guerrillas' other forms of propaganda. It seems that the films sent to America and Europe are not different from those shown to Salvadoran peasants, although the evidence is not detailed enough to be certain.

⁵⁰Brooke, p. C17.

III. INSURGENT PROPAGANDA IN NICARAGUA AND PERU

NICARAGUA

In Nicaragua, the manual *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare*¹ proposed to guide the Contras in their interactions with the people by detailing techniques that were sometimes quite similar to the motivational instructions outlined in "Concerning Propaganda." Nevertheless, the role of rebel print and radio in Nicaragua was quite different from that in El Salvador. Unlike the guarded and tightly circulated *Venceremos*, the Nicaraguan opposition newspaper *La Prensa* was not clandestine, was therefore openly critical of the Nicaraguan government, and was able to reach an audience roughly equivalent to that of both progovernment papers in the country.² However, since *La Prensa* was a legal organ, it was subject to the power of the Sandinista government, which closed the paper's operations in 1986 when it considered them to be threatening. Without a radio station equivalent to Radio Venceremos that could convince the people that closing the paper could be seen as a sign of government weakness rather than strength, the most influential line of communication for the anti-Sandinista movement simply became mute.

Until 1987, the only radio station that provided an alternative to government-controlled news was Radio Quince de Septiembre (Radio 15th of September), which reported battle casualties, predicted future military offensives, interviewed officials from the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN), and relayed encrypted messages to rebel troops.³ Radio Quince de Septiembre broadcast only on shortwave, which strictly limited its audience, and it was scorned for its amateurish and obviously biased reporting.⁴ In fact, a United States administration official in 1986 reported that his sources in Nicaragua considered the shortwave broadcasts to be a "joke."⁵ Whether the Nicaraguan audience objected more to the poor quality of the broadcasts or to their one-sided view might

¹Tayacan, *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare*, with essays by Joanne Omang and Aryeh Neier, Random House, Vintage Books, New York, 1985.

²Stephen Kinzer, "Sandinistas Feel Sting of an Unshackled Press," *New York Times*, January 28, 1988.

³Soley and Nichols, p. 243.

⁴Kinzer.

⁵Stephen Engelberg, "Contras to Start New Radio Station," *New York Times*, November 5, 1986, p. A11.

reveal a great deal about the difference between the Contra revolution and the civil war in El Salvador. Unfortunately, FBIS did not monitor Quince de Septiembre and so it is impossible even to compare the tone and the degree of bias of its broadcasts with those of Radio Venceremos.

According to a Washington-based rebel spokesman, the goal of the clandestine station that replaced Quince de Septiembre in January 1987, Radio Liberacion, was to present "the political message of the democratic resistance" while accurately reporting the news.⁶ The station's slogan was "We report what the Sandinista Government covers up."⁷ These are similar to the terms in which a Havana newscaster described the emerging Radio Venceremos in 1981, except that the newscaster's language demonstrates a much more obvious attempt at propaganda: "Guerrilla radio has been and will continue to be an efficient means for independence fighters to break the news blockade imposed by the dominant classes and imperialism."⁸

The aims of Radio Liberacion, which is financed with U.S. funds and run by the United Nicaraguan Opposition, were less pointed than those of Radio Venceremos. Radio Liberacion intended to please a broad audience and tried "to go easy on political propaganda."⁹ Sports and salsa music alternated with news reports about opposition party and government activities. The station's propaganda was more subtle than that on either Radio Venceremos or Quince de Septiembre. The sportscaster signed off with the message "Sports are better in freedom," for instance, and a Contra version of a popular soap opera nightly portrayed the injustice of the Sandinista government through the trials of good farmer and landowner Don Pancasio.¹⁰ Opposition Nicaragua's rejection of the militant Quince de Septiembre and its pleasure in Radio Liberacion may indicate that a good portion of the Contra audience preferred to agitate for change politically rather than militarily. (Of course, it is easy to make this observation in the light of the results of Nicaragua's March 1990 election.)

⁶Ibid.

⁷Kinzer.

⁸FBIS-Latin America, February 25, 1983, p. Q3.

⁹Marta Sacasa, spokeswoman for the United Nicaraguan Opposition, as quoted by Kinzer.

¹⁰Kinzer.

PERU

Peru's most active terrorist group, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), does not operate its own radio station, although occasionally it coerces a legitimate station into broadcasting its messages. The group's comparative lack of interest in this medium appears in part to be a function of its ideology and *modus operandi*.

Sendero, according to the plan of its founder and leader, Abimael Guzman, is currently strengthening its guerrilla army in preparation for full-fledged civil war.¹¹ Unlike the FMLN, which in the midst of war tries to bombard El Salvador with propaganda to muster sympathy from "the people in general,"¹² Sendero has focused for years on building a base of support in the slums surrounding Lima and especially in rural Peru among the Quechua-speaking villages.¹³ Because these villages are isolated¹⁴ and insular, they would probably have been immune to propaganda attacks in any medium. Peru's highland communities are not only physically remote from the country's cities, they are also culturally and psychologically unrelated to modern Peru and often equally unrelated to each other.¹⁵ Those who live in the mountains are therefore unlikely to respond to a propaganda campaign similar to the FMLN's in which they are addressed as part of the mass of people. On the other hand, loyalties among the members of a single village are extremely strong, in part because of their isolation. A village also provides a large enough audience to generate a mass mentality which, according to Ellul, assists propagandists by promoting "emotionalism, impulsiveness, excess."¹⁶ The villagers of Huaychao, for instance, demonstrated such a mass mentality when they massacred eight journalists even when they saw that the journalists were unarmed and in positions of surrender.¹⁷

Sendero exploits the villages' tight web of loyalties with very direct, personal propaganda. Sendero members return to the villages in which they grew up to prepare a

¹¹Gordon H. McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru*, RAND, R-3781-DOS/OSD, March 1990, p. 15.

¹²Marcella, p. 4.

¹³McCormick, p. 5.

¹⁴Mario Vargas Llosa, in an article describing the massacre of eight journalists in the mountains above Ayacucho, explains that information in that area of the high sierra is transmitted only orally. "Inquest in the Andes," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 31, 1983.

¹⁵McCormick, p. 18; and Llosa.

¹⁶Ellul, pp. 7-9.

¹⁷Llosa, pp. 49-50.

community to receive Guzman's teachings. As dictated by their long view of the revolutionary effort, these guerrillas focus especially on educating the children so that Sendero can depend on their participation in the future war toward which the group is working.¹⁸ Insofar as highland villagers trust Sendero's members, the group has the resources to penetrate and mobilize a resistant community. Once the first difficult foothold has been established, the limited scope of village life becomes an advantage, aiding the guerrillas in their attempt to surround the community with propaganda.¹⁹

Sendero does not rely on this method of influence alone, however. To reach those villages to which no Sendero members belong, to further permeate the lives of those they have prepared with education, and to publicize themselves throughout the country, the guerrillas supplement their teachings with "propaganda by the deed." Often this means rounding up those in a village who represent government authority and others that Sendero deems traitors, subjecting them to a "trial," and publicly executing them. Sendero may also demand that the villagers participate in this act by accusing those on trial or even performing the execution.²⁰ Thus the group intensifies the effect of its propaganda, since those who have acted have to some extent committed themselves to Sendero's cause. Propaganda by the deed also includes bombings in Lima, usually accompanied by blackouts to maximize the chaos.

In Lima, also, Sendero has since 1986 attempted to broaden its base of support by appealing to "youth, women, 'the leading proletariat,' 'the main peasantry,' intellectuals, and even the petit and 'medium' bourgeois."²¹ To this end, the guerrillas have associated themselves with various causes espoused by legal groups in Peru—such as organized labor, student activists, and neighborhood organizations—groups Sendero scorned throughout the first part of the decade for being "reformist" and irrelevant. This current tolerance, however, is only a means by which to penetrate these legal organizations. Once this is achieved, Sendero means to radicalize their movements, for the guerrillas continue to demand that supporters adhere strictly to Sendero's ideology. Unlike the

¹⁸McCormick, p. 13.

¹⁹Llosa's article, however, suggests that some villages have been for so long removed from the outside world that nothing could essentially alter their view of themselves. Nevertheless, as the massacre again shows, this does not mean that they cannot be mobilized.

²⁰See for instance an incident described in a translated interview in *Soldier of Fortune*, March 1987, p. 69.

²¹McCormick, p. 11.

FMLN, which has made deliberate attempts in its propaganda to keep from alienating segments of the population, Sendero's rhetoric remains strident²² and its symbols, including dead dogs hanging from lampposts, gruesome.

Sendero's principal method of communicating with its constituents is its national newspaper *El Diario*. This method of propaganda is consistent with Sendero's interest in only a select segment of the population. Since the paper takes an effort both to buy and read, it generally influences just those who have become sympathetic to Sendero through other means. The paper was a daily from 1985 to 1988, disappeared for several months when a law was passed making it illegal to "incite or encourage terrorism," and reappeared as a weekly in March 1989. To protect the paper's readers from being identified through a subscription list, *El Diario* is available only on newsstands.²³

El Diario may play a tactical role in signaling or coordinating Sendero's movements throughout the country. It also assists in the group's efforts to broaden its base of sympathizers by announcing the strikes, rallies, and protests to which it intends to lend its support. But more important than any specific information the paper may contain is its power to coalesce a group that must remain scattered and secret. Through *El Diario* Guzman's thought can become "institutionalized," while bonds between Sendero members are reinforced when they know they are privy to the same information. In early 1988, for example, the paper's accounts of the meetings of Sendero's first Party Congress fostered a sense of solidarity throughout the group by keeping all its members, from Ayacucho to Puno to San Martin, abreast of the Congress's discussions.²⁴

Sendero also periodically coerces radio stations into broadcasting its propaganda, a method of dissemination particularly favored by Peru's second most active guerrilla group, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). This group is far less organized and discriminating than Sendero in its attempts to create and spread propaganda. In June of 1985, one year after its emergence, the group preempted a television broadcast of the Peru-Venezuela playoff for the world soccer championship with five minutes of its views and intentions. Obviously, the guerrillas had chosen to interrupt that particular broadcast in order to reach an enormous audience, but apparently

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 9.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 9, 28.

because of technical failures, the transmission affected only the houses in three residential districts. This incident began a rash of Tupac Amaru propaganda.

At one point in July 1985, the group again interrupted a television show and claimed to be broadcasting from a clandestine radio station identified as its mouthpiece, Radio 4 November,²⁵ but if such a station ever existed the group could not sustain it. In four of the seven other cases of Tupac Amaru propaganda reported by FBIS over the ensuing three years and in one other case reported by Risk International, the group followed a pattern of forcing its way into legal radio stations, subduing the employees (often by locking them in the bathroom), broadcasting a prerecorded message several times, and painting slogans on the station's walls. This routine often occurred at several stations at once, presumably so that the guerrillas' message would get the greatest exposure.

The FBIS records two other incidents of MRTA propaganda dissemination. In the first, in August 1985, MRTA claimed in a recorded clandestine press conference broadcast by Lima television that it respected the majority opinion of Peru, and therefore proposed a truce with Alan Garcia's government, but would not stop fighting imperialist companies.²⁶ The second instance was similar to the guerrillas' seizure of radio stations, except that this takeover involved four news agencies, one of which was forced to interview the guerrillas and transmit the resulting document.²⁷

²⁵FBIS-Latin America, July 31, 1985, p. J4.

²⁶In the incident recorded by Risk International (Alexandria, VA) in April 1986, MRTA directed its message against a planned government contract with the Occidental Petroleum Company. Since FBIS does not report the subject of MRTA's other messages, it is difficult to discover whether these, too, were focused at specific businesses.

²⁷Perhaps inspired by MRTA, a more obscure group, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, occupied the United Press International news agency office in Lima, Peru for half an hour in November 1987.

IV. CONCLUSION

Not surprisingly, the characteristics of the guerrilla propaganda networks in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru correspond intimately with the features of the groups that originate them. The FMLN, in the midst of a civil war, wants to win as many supporters as it can as quickly as possible and so attempts to immerse the country in its propaganda from all angles. The Contras, who wanted to attract political support from nonfighting members of the middle class, were concerned with pleasing a broad and sophisticated audience. They thus sacrificed some explicit reporting bias and heavyhanded propaganda. They also underplayed the military effort in order to gain listeners who may have been uncomfortable with the idea of actively supporting the war effort and certainly were uncomfortable with the idea of propaganda disguised as news. Sendero Luminoso's propaganda is basically two-pronged, aiming to recruit some of the population as active members through both education and fear and to enlist the support of a broader segment without sacrificing the group's radical ideology. Sendero's newspaper, specifically, is not intended to persuade the general population to join the movement, but rather to inform its members and supporters and to reinforce their loyalty. MRTA appears to be struggling for recognition. It does not yet have the power, organization, or followers to create and sustain its own propaganda network, and so must steal the attention of those who are focused on other concerns.

While available means, ideology, and audience do much to shape the style of the propaganda disseminated by the FMLN, the Contras, Sendero, and MRTA, the purpose of that propaganda is the same in each case. The radio dramas in Nicaragua, the newspaper, teachings, and executions in Peru, and the various media campaigns in El Salvador all seek to move their audiences to view themselves in a particular way—as powerful and effective supporters of movements that will improve their lives. The FMLN and Sendero Luminoso especially have tried to surround their target audiences with propaganda, so as to allow them few opportunities to see themselves from a perspective other than that offered by the guerrillas. Ideally, this perception will encourage the population to act, which not only increases activity favorable to the guerrillas' cause, but also commits the population to that cause. When it is willingly following a group's instructions, the population does not just agree with a movement, it

becomes a part of it. The members of that population do not just act as supporters of the group, they perceive themselves to *be* supporters, which affects their activities beyond the specific instruction.

With the exception of MRTA, these guerrilla groups have apparently attempted to develop a network of propaganda that can appeal to a varied and changing audience from several directions. As the ERP asserts, the most effective way to encourage a particular group to act is to address its specific grievances. The more diverse a target population is, the more distinct groups and specific grievances it encompasses. The FMLN, for example, recognizes that grievances will be different in each section of the country. Certainly, the best way to discover these unique grievances is to interact with every part of the population whose support is desired and to encourage some members, as their first concrete action, to complain. At this point, direct communication is invaluable, and the FMLN considers itself flexible enough to listen to the people as well as talk to them.

Once a task appropriate for those who will be encouraged to perform it has been identified, the people must be instructed to act. This is most often done not with radio, but with a medium that can precisely select its audience: the letter addressed to a specific recipient, the leaflet spread throughout a specific town, the respected teacher in an isolated village, the guerrilla who threatens bodily harm, the video shot with a specific group of viewers in mind. When asking a discrete group to act in a way that responds to its own grievances, these guerrillas have chosen media that are sensitive enough to appeal to a particular audience.

Although these methods of propaganda may be the best way to inspire a response and recruit members, they are also the most expensive, risky, and difficult to employ. Insurgents cannot always afford to sacrifice their broad-based propaganda efforts in order to focus on specific audiences and problems. Therefore, even as reliance on underground newspapers, leaflets, videos, and fax machines grows among terrorist and guerrilla groups, these groups, with the exception of Sendero Luminoso, are still by far mostly dependent upon the radio. In the final analysis, radio reaches the largest audience in the most timely and cost-efficient manner and so is likely to remain at the core of propaganda and information networks, while the methods that demand more expense, technology, and time increase a network's effectiveness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brooke, James, "Salvadorans Use Video in Propaganda War," *New York Times*, August 27, 1984.
- Drucker, Linda, "Radio Venceremos: Static Over a Guerrilla Source," *Columbia Journalism Review*, March–April 1984.
- El Salvador, 1979–1989: A Briefing Book on U.S. Aid and the Situation in El Salvador*, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, April 28, 1989.
- Ellul, Jacques, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner (trs.), Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965.
- Engelberg, Stephen, "Contras to Start New Radio Station," *New York Times*, November 5, 1986.
- Executive Risk Assessment*, Risk International, Inc., Alexandria, VA (various issues).
- Foreign Broadcast Information Service (transcripts of various broadcasts from Latin America).
- Golden, Tim, "War for Minds Opens New Front in Salvador," *Miami Herald*, July 14, 1985.
- Kinzer, Stephen, "Sandinistas Feel Sting of an Unshackled Press," *New York Times*, January 28, 1988.
- Llosa, Mario Vargas, "Inquest in the Andes," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 31, 1983.
- Marcella, Gabriel and Judith F. (trs. and eds.), "Concerning Propaganda: Our Line of Propaganda," presented by the Popular Revolutionary Army at the meeting of the command of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, July 1984; Department of National Security and Strategy, U.S. Army War College, July 1986, unpublished paper.
- McCormick, Gordon H., *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru*, RAND, R-3781-DOS/OSD, March 1990.
- Soley, Lawrence C., and John S. Nichols, *Clandestine Radio Broadcasting: A Study of Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Electronic Communication*, Praeger, New York, 1987.
- Tayacan, *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare*, with essays by Joanne Omang and Aryeh Neier, Random House, Vintage Books, New York, 1985.

