

WAR WITHOUT END

AMERICAN
PLANNING
FOR THE NEXT
VIETNAM

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FOREWORD BY GABRIEL KOLLER

bean and Central American countries.³⁹ It was only in the early 1960's, however, that civic action was elevated to its present status as one of the principal elements of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Latin America.

The Pentagon's counterinsurgency experts freely acknowledge that "the armed forces of some developing countries have been a major political force separate and apart from the people."⁴⁰ This condition is particularly pronounced in rural and wilderness areas, where government expenditures for education, health, and economic development are usually lowest. In Latin America, moreover, these areas are often characterized by great poverty and a highly unequal pattern of landownership, and so it is natural to expect that guerrilla movements will find it easy to take root here. The United States has learned in Vietnam that a guerrilla force is not easily crushed once it has secured widespread popular support, and that the use of indigenous troops for counterguerrilla operations in the countryside will more often than not inspire increased local resistance to the central government. Since Washington had already elected the Latin American military as the chosen instrument of U.S. policy in the hemisphere, it became imperative, in the Pentagon's view, that these armies extend the central government's authority to remote areas, and there engage in socially constructive projects designed to win the loyalty of the population.

Civic action is considered an appropriate use of Third World troops since "the most stable and modern organization in many developing nations is its military force." In remote and inaccessible areas, "the military forces are often the only governmental agency equipped and prepared to perform a much needed program in the socioeconomic field."⁴¹ This hypothesis is clearly traceable to Lucian Pye's argument that the "armies created by colonial administration and by the newly emergent countries have consistently been among the most modernized institutions in their society," and that "the peculiar advantage of ex-

were in danger of becoming counterproductive: American support of the military establishment incurred the antagonism of those Latin Americans who viewed the military as a major obstacle to social and economic progress. The Kennedy Administration, struggling with this problem in the early months of its incumbency, sought a solution in the arena of public relations: rather than curtail U.S. assistance to Latin American armies, we would seek to change public attitudes by refurbishing the image of the armed forces. If the military establishment could be converted, in the popular imagination, into an instrument of modernization and economic development, the contradiction in U.S. policy presumably would be resolved. The mechanism that could achieve this goal, Kennedy's advisers believed, was military civic action.

CIVIC ACTION

Military civic action is defined by the Department of Defense as "the use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others contributing to economic and social development which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population."³⁸ The use of the military for internal development is not, of course, a new concept, as there are many precedents for such activity both in the United States and Latin America. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for instance, has traditionally been active in the field of flood control and harbor design, while in many Latin American nations the armed forces are frequently employed in road-construction projects in frontier regions. The United States itself sponsored such activities in Latin America at the beginning of the century, during its sporadic military occupations of Carib-

PLICIT lines of authority does give the military considerable advantages in becoming an effective organization in otherwise disorganized societies."⁴² By treating some of the most obvious symptoms of rural poverty and neglect, civic action could reduce the discontent of the peasantry and at the same time project a more favorable image of the military.

The civic action concept, as it is presently understood, was first practiced in 1950 in the Philippines as part of Secretary of Defense (later President) Ramón Magsaysay's counter guerrilla campaign against the Huk movement (Hukbong Magpalaya Nang Bayan, or People's Liberation Army). In order to undercut the Huk's popular support, Magsaysay put an end to indiscriminate military terrorism and put much of the army to work on social projects—building schools and markets, repairing roads and bridges—while training small counter guerrilla units that fanned out into the countryside.⁴³ This effort, labeled Civic Action by the Philippine military, was closely observed by U.S. strategists, who employed the technique during the Korean War. Under the Armed Forces Assistance to Korea Program (AFAK), hundreds of schools, churches, medical facilities, orphanages, and the like were constructed by U.S. troops in South Korea.⁴⁴

President Kennedy and other high-ranking members of his Administration eagerly embraced the civic action concept and incorporated it into their early policy statements. Kennedy's leading military adviser, General Maxwell Taylor, had launched the AFAK program while commanding the Eighth Army in Korea, and had become a strong proponent of the idea of using the military in development projects in underdeveloped areas. Taylor had seen many years of service in the Army Corps of Engineers, and his influence can be detected in Kennedy's many references to this organization as a model for the civic action program. Thus in his "Urgent National Needs" message to Congress on May 25, 1961, Kennedy stated: "Military assistance can,

in addition to its military purposes, make a contribution to economic progress. The domestic works of our own Army Engineers are an example of the role which military forces in the emerging countries can play in village development, sanitation, and road building."⁴⁵ This argument was carried to an audience of Latin American military officers by Secretary of State Dean Rusk in 1962: "The United States Government would like to see Latin American armed forces increase their part in modernizing the basic facilities of all the American Republics. We believe they could borrow profitably from the long and honorable record of our own U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in strengthening the civilian economy."⁴⁶

The Defense Department had officially embraced the civic action concept as early as May 1960—but on the basis that any costs incurred by the program (other than training and advisory activities performed by U.S. personnel) would be borne by the host country. The first Civic Action Mobile Training Teams sent to Latin America reported, however, that in many countries no funds would be available for civic action. Consequently, on February 12, 1962, the President approved a funding formula which would release Department of Defense and Agency for International Development (AID) funds for such programs.⁴⁷

In fiscal 1962, the first year in which U.S. funds were made available for civic action programs in Latin America, the Pentagon allocated \$5.7 million for this purpose and the Agency for International Development another \$3.3 million; most of this money went to Bolivia (\$1.7 million), Brazil (\$2.5 million), Ecuador (\$1.8 million), and Peru (\$1.2 million). The present tendency is for civic action funds to be distributed in smaller grants to a greater number of countries—in 1970, all but three of the Latin American nations received some funds for this purpose. Total Pentagon spending on the civic action program in Latin America since 1962 is enumerated in Table 8.

In addition to providing monetary assistance, the United

Table 8
U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EXPENDITURES
ON CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Fiscal Years 1962-70

(Dollars in thousands)

Country	Expenditures	Country	Expenditures
Argentina	2,140	Honduras	792
Bolivia	2,918	Mexico	27
Brazil	11,266	Nicaragua	67
Chile	5,706	Panama	104
Colombia	5,728	Paraguay	4,394
Costa Rica	26	Peru	11,057
Dominican Republic	1,121	Uruguay	1,327
Ecuador	3,166	Venezuela	129
El Salvador	844	Regional	13
Guatemala	2,668	Total	53,493

Source: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee, Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations For 1971, Hearings, 91st Congress, 2d Session, 1970, Part 1, p. 420.

States helps initiate civic action projects by dispatching Civic Action Mobile Training Teams (CAMTT's) to the host country. Each team is composed of specialists in governmental administration, engineering, public health, sanitation, agriculture, and education. These teams tour the countryside in order to select target areas for civic action, and then draw up a country program that is within the capacity of the local armed forces. The CAMTT's also provide training and guidance for native military personnel, and in some instances provide technical assistance on actual projects. By 1965, such teams had visited most Latin American nations.⁴⁸

A survey of civic action programs in Latin America by two North Americans associated with Ohio State University's Mershon Center for Education in National Security, Willard F. Barber and C. Neale Ronning, disclosed that in most countries the military favored "high-impact"

projects intended to secure a rapid improvement in the public's opinion of the armed forces, rather than less visible projects that might have a long-range effect on the rural economy.⁴⁹ (Examples of the former are school construction and maintenance, literacy training, school hot-lunch programs, and medical and health programs, while the latter would include swamp drainage, forestry operations, and improvement of inland waterways.) At the Fourth Conference of the American Armies, held in July 1963, representatives of the Latin American military establishment reported that in ten countries the armed forces were building schools and churches, in eight they were conducting adult literacy campaigns, and in six they were engaged in housing construction.⁵⁰

From what is known of the civic action program, it is not surprising that Barber and Ronning found that local populations did not express a sense of participation. They describe one study in which "it was found that the program in Bolivia had engineered no particular gratitude on the part of the civilian beneficiaries. Most of the civilians interviewed expressed suspicion as to the army's motives in engaging in civic action projects, especially when it was working under contract."⁵¹ When, in 1966, the Center for Research in Social Systems began a study of "Criteria to Assess Military Civic Action Programs," it pointed out that "Supposedly these programs contribute to the social and economic development of the countries and improve the attitudes of the people toward their national governments and military forces. To date, there is no available scientific evidence that these civic action programs in fact achieve these ends."⁵²

Although there is no evidence that the civic action program has actually contributed to the economic health of the countryside, the Pentagon's public relations officers have nevertheless used the program to justify their claims that the Latin American military has become committed to the long-range socioeconomic development of their

countries. For instance, General Porter, in his 1967 testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, complained that "Reference to the Latin American military still conjures up images of pompous, benedaled men—'caudillos' with little interest in or understanding of their peoples' problems and aspirations." Porter then quoted David Rockefeller to the effect that "this false concept does a disservice to many members of the armed forces in Latin America. The current generation of military leaders includes men of considerable sophistication in economic and social matters, and a sincere desire to improve the lot of the poor and quicken the pace of economic growth."⁵³

The U.S. public-relations effort on behalf of the Latin American armed forces has been particularly well received in those nations ruled by military juntas. Many of the military officers who have seized state power in recent years are particularly enthusiastic supporters of the civic action program (the late René Barrientos of Bolivia is an outstanding example). Barber and Ronning discovered that in countries where the military traditionally plays a decisive political role, "The experienced observer of Latin America can detect in the speeches of its leaders and the publications issued by its defense departments the ideas and arguments advanced by United States spokesmen for civic action. The same ideology and the same phrases are utilized."⁵⁴ Thus the National Defense Minister of Colombia, General Alberto Ruiz Novoa, told an audience of Latin American military officers in 1963:

Besides accomplishing an effective program of assistance to the people, military civic action gains the support of the populace for the legitimate and rightful regime and for its armed forces. It also helps to prove the usefulness of the army and to counter the attacks of those who see in military expenditures only a useless drain of public funds.⁵⁵

Many Latin American armies have launched well-publicized civic action programs in the interior of their country; but despite lavish subsidies provided by the United States, these programs do not seem to have had any significant effect on the miserable conditions in which most people of these regions live. In practice, many of the civic action projects backed by the United States are oriented more toward facilitating military operations in rural areas than to the improvement of social and economic conditions. The construction of roads and highways, for instance, is one of the most common forms of civic action activity. Ostensibly, such work is designed to improve integration of the countryside with the cities by extending government services to remote villages while allowing peasants to sell their products to a wider market. In reality, many road-building projects are intended to expedite government surveillance of potentially rebellious areas, and to enhance the mobility of military and paramilitary forces during actual outbreaks of guerrilla warfare.

TRAINING

Other than the supply of arms and equipment, the most important function of the U.S. military apparatus in Latin America is to provide training to indigenous military personnel. In fiscal 1971, \$10 million or 62 percent of the MAP grant aid program was devoted to this purpose.⁵⁶ Training also constitutes the principal day-to-day activity of officers assigned to the seventeen U.S. military missions in Latin America. The high priority given to training activities was underscored by Defense Secretary McNamara in a 1962 appearance before the House Appropriations Committee:

Probably the greatest return on our military assistance investment comes from the training of selected officers and key