
TOPICAL REVIEW

FOREWORD

Political violence in Latin America is no new phenomenon, but in recent years it has acquired some novel aspects. The image of Fidel Castro's successful insurrection in Cuba in the 1950s bedeviled the minds of the next decade's theoreticians and practitioners of revolutionary violence. The "lessons of Cuba" were applied elsewhere in the Hemisphere by revolutionaries who, in most cases, had little basis for understanding the Cuban insurrectionary process. Indeed, as Andrés Suárez points out in the following article, Castro's "road to power" has yet to be adequately charted. Until this is done, all analyses of the Cuban experience must be considered tenuous at best. Though imperfectly perceived, Castro's triumph galvanized elements in Latin American society which had long been prone to political violence. University and secondary-school students were conspicuous, if not predominant, in most Castro-inspired revolutionary movements of the 1960s. In the second article in this issue Jaime Suchlicki provides some guides for research on student violence in Latin America. The next issue of *LARR* will conclude this series on political violence with bibliographical essays on the recent internal armed conflicts in Colombia, by Russell W. Ramsey, and in Peru, by Leon G. Campbell. The collaborators on this series hope that their efforts will point the way to some fruitful research on this social phenomenon that traumatized the 1960s and is unlikely to disappear in the 1970s.

Neill Macaulay
University of Florida

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION: THE ROAD TO POWER

State of the Research

Andrés Suárez, University of Florida

THE PREVALENT THEORY OF REVOLUTION—AFTER RESTRICTING THE DIMENSIONS of the phenomenon under study to only one aspect, that ending with the seizure of power—distinguishes between preconditions and precipitants. Preconditions are "the crucial concern of men of affairs. . . ." Precipitants, "by their very nature," are ephemeral phenomena and cannot be anticipated.¹ The conservative bias of this elaboration is obvious. By definition revolution is subsumed into the category of "civil strife,"² thus eliminating all those phases of the process potentially as creative as the one following the seizure of power. Theoretical relevance, then, is assigned only to those elements of the phenomenon susceptible of preventive treatment—the preconditions. Finally, the events able to unleash the revolutionary process are relegated to the conditions of accidents—"they only happen"³—and, consequently, are disregarded.