

# Making South America safe for U.S. tourists

by James Petras

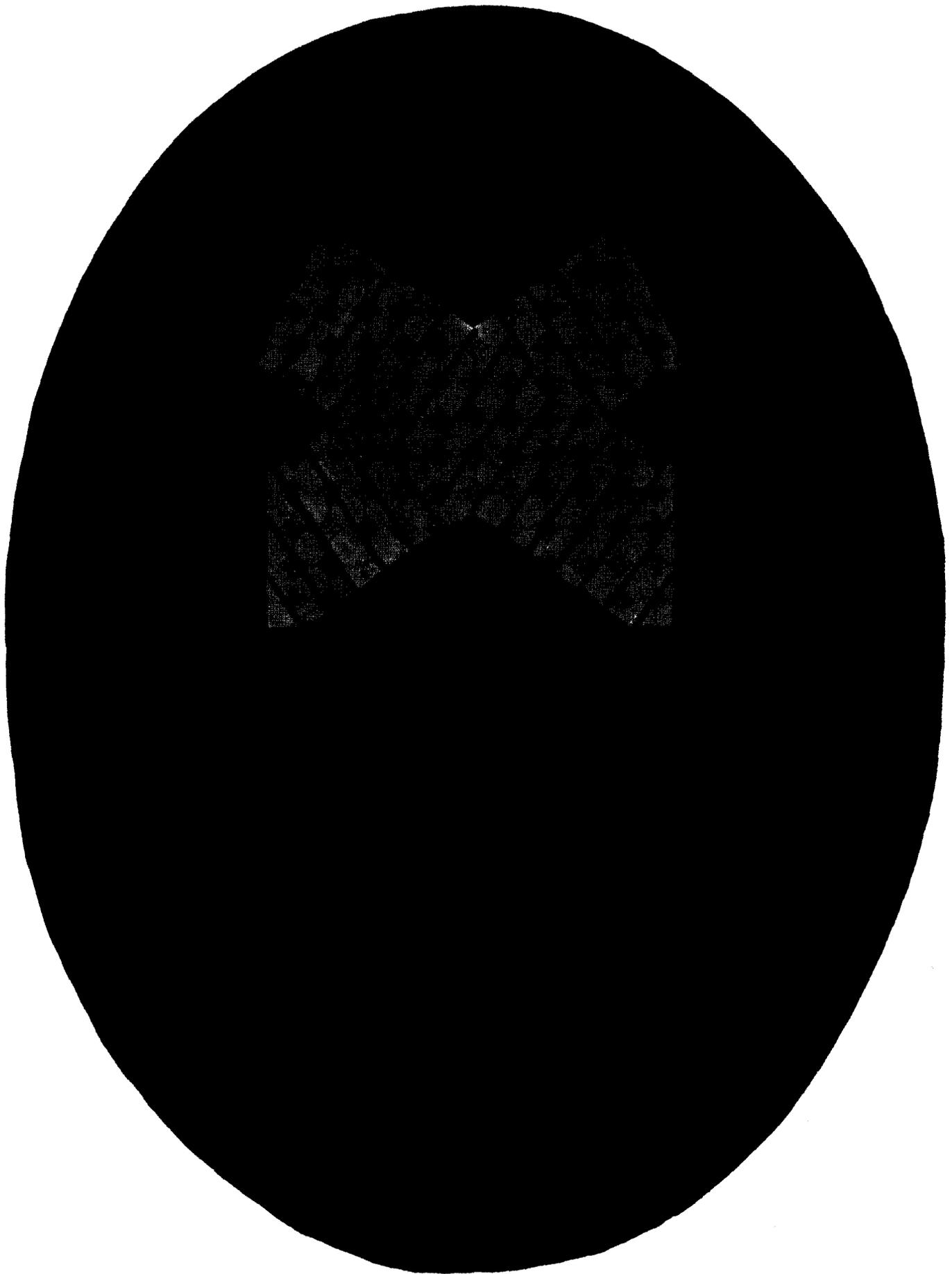
**T**HE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION is containing Latin American radicalism—just like it is doing with the home grown version—by combining a seductive ability to co-opt indigenous leaders into the establishment with a coercive repression whenever that becomes necessary. During a year of postgraduate study in Latin America recently, I was amazed by the victories that LBJ is scoring. All around me I saw the effects of the American presence. The Latin American revolutionary movement is profoundly demoralized. Its leadership is in disarray, hunted down by the U.S. supported and trained counter-insurgency forces, or as is more usually the case, bought out by the lure of middle class careerism.

Despite the growing economic stagnation of Latin America, there is greater opportunity today for middle class individuals than ever before, especially if they are university educated. As the social distance between the middle and bottom has widened, the older “popular front” reform alliances are becoming less feasible—the old partners no longer share common interests and outlooks. Many of the former revolutionary middle class intellectuals, because of recent openings in the new international institutions, the research foundations or the new U.S. sponsored planning agencies, have become inactive or have cut themselves off from radical political movements. They aspire to achieve a successful professional career—just as many of their counterparts in the U.S.

Not infrequently I visited with accommodated middle class families. Many of the leaders of the Chilean left, for example, live in the affluent *Las Condes* area. One afternoon a spokesman for the “insurrectionary” wing of the Chilean left invited me to dinner. Walking to his place I noted all the streets were named after the States: Virginia, California, etc. This whole area was financed by a joint U.S. private and governmental group. The sequel of course was that we had a barbecue cook-out in a patio not much different from those in U.S. suburbs. Yet within five minutes riding distance is a shanty-town where there is neither electricity, potable water nor a paved road. This contrast in life style is matched by the “insularity” of the middle class intellectuals.

While in Peru I met with an intellectual who had been a leader in the recent armed revolutionary ferment. He discussed the perspectives of his group: the question of guerrilla warfare, the problems of creating cadres, etc. He spoke as one who had been involved with considerable personal risk in a number of “actions.” He seemed to be a committed revolutionary. One month later I received word that he had a scholarship and was off to Europe for two years, leaving the organization and the members disoriented by his sudden departure.

In Argentina I met an economist whom I knew quite well as a graduate student in Berkeley. We spent considerable time discussing and criticizing the current state of



affairs. He presented himself as a kind of Catholic-democratic-socialist: someone committed to basic reforms and deeply troubled by the upcoming coup (everybody expected it). One week before the coup I received a letter from him which ended with a standard joke about “the boom is over, the crisis is coming; workers of the world unite.” Two weeks after the coup; an Argentine sociologist (who was in the process of losing his job) wrote and mentioned that our economist friend was now the top economic advisor to the economic minister of the military dictatorship. The opportunity came and . . .

Probably the most ironic case of political opportunism occurred with the Chilean sociologist who took credit for exposing the Pentagon-financed Camelot Project (a study whose purpose was to study civil warfare in order to destroy Latin American popular insurgency). This fellow who was so vehement in his denunciation of U.S. academicians as tools of the Pentagon, six months later became the official pollster of the Frei government. His questionnaires contained questions that left little doubt about his objectivity: one, loaded to elicit a positive response to a government authorized massacre of 38 copper miners, asked if the interviewee preferred a government which wheeled and dealt or one which was firm in its dealings.

#### [\$1,000 A MONTH FOR EX-REVOLUTIONARIES]

**T**HE EX-REVOLUTIONARY INTELLECTUAL drawing close to \$1,000 a month from international agencies is producing studies that are seldom read and even more rarely implemented. Over coffee he still engages in conversations over real issues: U.S. imperialism and the indigenous ruling class; but it is easier to walk under the shady trees back to the office and pretty secretaries than to try to organize the mushrooming slums and toothless raggickers against the violence of the Latin American oligarchies. The moral dilemma and personal tragedies that confront the Latin American intellectual can be best illustrated by the different careers chosen by two former student activists at the University of San Marcos. One chose the path of upward mobility and personal opportunity; he became a highly successful professional in the existing society. The other was killed after a desperate attempt to implement his university ideals by choosing the road of revolutionary struggle.

Guillermo Lobatón, the Peruvian guerrilla leader was recently killed and his body mutilated. The official in charge of directing the expeditionary force was, during his student days, a close friend of Lobatón. More than that, both were active in the leftist student movement. After a clash with police both men were arrested and spent time together in jail. Upon graduation Lobatón, one of the

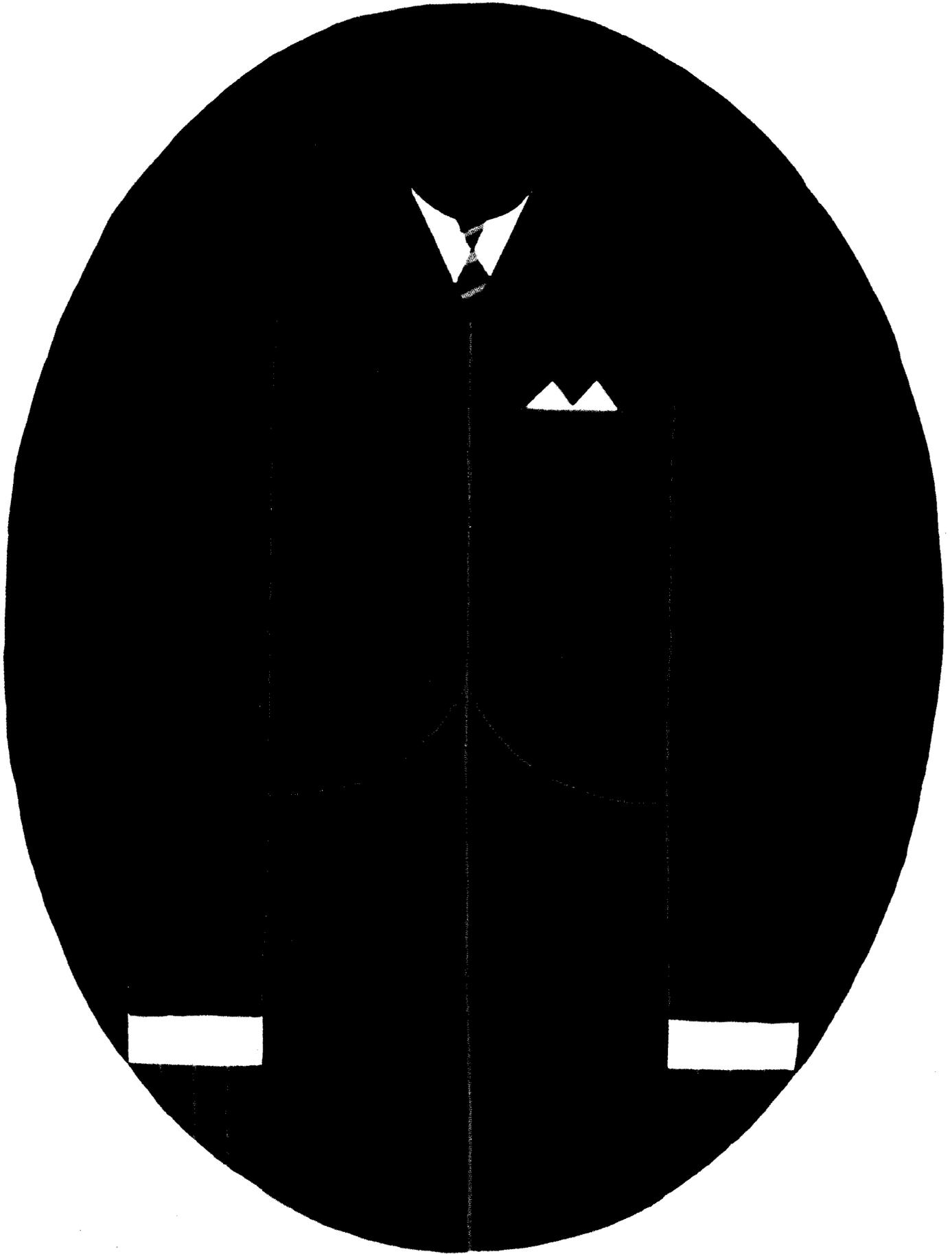
most brilliant students of his class, went to study in Europe. He returned to Peru convinced that only a revolution would end the misery of the poor and the spoilation of national resources. In the meantime his friend had accommodated himself to the elite and had advanced to a high position in the government. This set the stage for the confrontation which resulted in Lobatón's death.

It is a mistake, then, to see U.S. policy as purely repressive: the carrot exists along with the stick. Along with the military repression are opportunities for ambitious middle class individuals. But for those intellectuals, who resist the seduction of a professional career and remain steadfast in their commitment to social democracy and national dignity—there awaits the violence of the state and a prefabricated grave. Since the early 1960's there has hardly been a single guerrilla leader who has neither been taken prisoner nor committed “suicide” once captured. Perhaps John Hopkins Professor Phillip Taylor's recommendation at a seminar on “Democratic Thought” casts some light: “The violence and subversion in Venezuela will only end when the government decides to commit a score of homicides, thus putting an end to the directing heads of the wave of terrorism that affects this country.”

#### [CARE AND FEEDING OF THE MILITARY]

**O**N ANOTHER FRONT, U.S. policy is geared to professionalizing, disciplining, and indoctrinating the military. An authoritative account of U.S. influence over the Venezuelan army appears in *Venezuela: U.S. Army Area Handbook*, prepared by American University's Foreign Areas Studies Division SORO (Special Operations Research Office). It discloses that the U.S. military mission numbering several hundred individuals is the largest in Latin America and is indispensable to even the procedural functioning of the Venezuelan navy. The U.S. Air Force mission has personnel stationed with each tactical unit, in all schools except the cadet school, and at Air Force headquarters. All the services use U.S. military doctrine, most texts used in the schools are direct translations; command and staff of each of the services are similar to those in the U.S.; also large numbers of officers of all services have attended service schools in the U.S. and others have received special counter-insurgency training in the Canal Zone.

The extent to which the U.S. military assistance program has “integrated” professionalized and intimidated the Latin Army is shown in the Dominican events. After the initial popular uprising, when troops of General Wessin y Wessin were in retreat, about seven or eight thousand Dominican regulars defected and went over to the



popular revolutionary forces. The day after the U.S. marines landed, these same "Dominican" soldiers made a general exodus toward the U.S. side leaving only 1000 regular troops remaining with the Constitutionalists. The conclusion is that the bulk of the military has a first loyalty to the U.S. Marines and a secondary one to the defense of their own country.

[JOHNSON'S PAX LATIN AMERICANA]

**B**YOND THESE FACTS LIES AN ANOMALY—there is in Latin America, for now, "stability," of sorts—and the U.S. is on the winning side.

For a number of years liberal critics of U.S. policy have argued that the military and interventionist policy of the U.S. in Latin America would not be successful and would cause other "Cuban disasters." These critics pointed to the necessity of developing a dialogue with the new revolutionary forces emerging in Latin America and of breaking ties with the decaying oligarchical groups. The Kennedy Administration had to some extent heeded this warning. The Johnson Administration did not. Today, President Johnson openly boasts of his policy's success: "Well, what can they say?" challenges LBJ. "We're winning militarily in Vietnam and a year ago our men were in danger of getting kicked out. The Indonesian problem has turned around. And we seem to be doing all right in the Dominican Republic. We've had no Bay of Pigs in Latin America and in Europe it's 14-1 against the French position (in NATO)." (Newsweek, Sept. 26, 1966.)

To be sure this "success" is not measured by stable democratic political systems, nor by dynamic economic growth or greater social equality. The last three years have seen socio-economic deterioration and the rise of new authoritarian, military-dominated civilian dictatorships.

But Johnson's "success" can be measured in the growing number of down the line pro-U.S. governments, and the willingness of these governments to subordinate national sovereignty and economic independence with U.S. strategic and diplomatic needs. This success of the Johnson Administration was achieved by creating new centers of power within the old social structure. The new U.S. commitment to the use of force to subdue revolutionary or reform mass movements has worked.

Washington strategists are applying a complex system calculated to determine not only how much military hardware or how many advisors to send, but how to allocate U.S. weaponry and military personnel according to the types of struggles going on. In February 1966, Secretary of Defense McNamara gave a clear statement of this calculus of violence before a joint session of the Senate

Armed Services Committee and the Senate Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations.

"U.S. trained units of their (Venezuela) armed forces and police have spearheaded a government campaign both in the cities and in the countryside. In Peru . . . U.S. trained and supported Peruvian army and air force units have played prominent roles in this counter-guerrilla campaign. In Colombia, U.S. training, support and equipment, including several medium helicopters have materially aided the Colombian armed forces to establish government control in the rural insurgent areas.

"Violence in the mining areas and in the cities of Bolivia has continued . . . and we are assisting this country to improve the training and equipping of its military force.

". . . We are supporting a small Guatemalan counter-insurgency force with weapons, vehicles, communications, equipment and training.

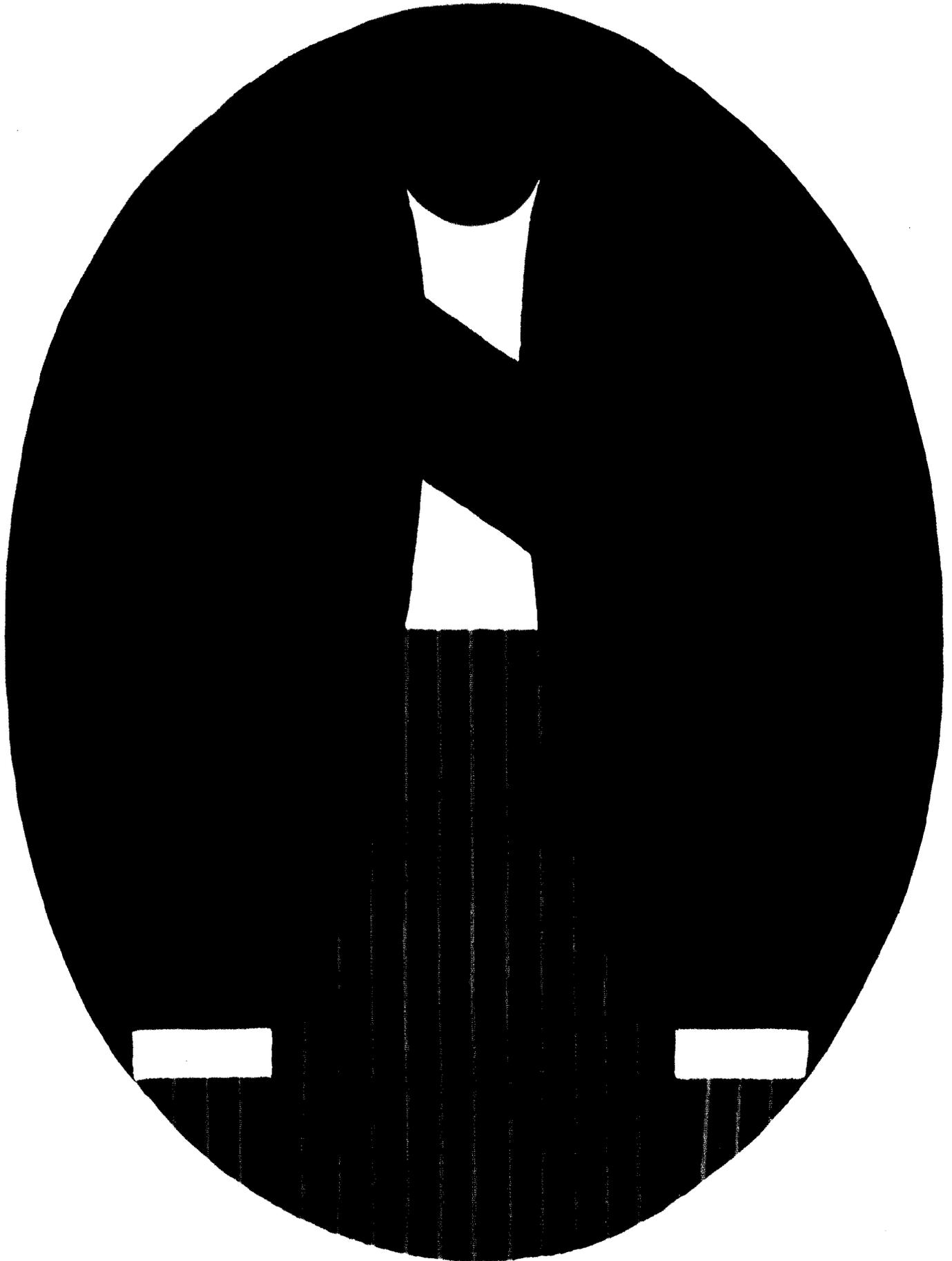
"In Uruguay protracted economic stagnation has contributed to popular unrest which recently culminated in a serious wave of strikes throughout the country. Our military assistance to Uruguay is oriented toward improving the small arms, ammunition, communications and transportation equipment of its security forces."

This military strategy has paid off and today more than two-thirds of the Latin American people live under pro-U.S. military dictators or their appointees. In several other countries the "civilian" presidents are elected by permission or agreement of the military or are the products of elections where popular opposition has been under severe attack or violently excluded.

[ACCOMMODATING THE MIDDLE CLASS]

**T**HE HIDDEN SIDE OF THE JOHNSON SUCCESS story is that the military-political victory in Latin America by establishment of pro-U.S. governments and isolation of the Cuban revolution and the Fidelista movements is matched by the continuation of the traditional patterns of land tenure (5 per cent of the landowners own 65 per cent of the arable land), and the rigid segregation of social classes in which the wealth of the elite is matched by the misery of the poor. This short-run success which is deepening the subordination of Latin America to the U.S. is increasing the disparities in income between the social classes and between the two regions, thus preparing the way for later, perhaps more violent, confrontations.

In reality U.S. policy—including the Alliance for Progress—was primarily a plan to stabilize a region in which the U.S. exercised hegemony. Alliance operations were not geared toward structural changes but toward neutralizing or integrating the politically important but socially



amorphous “middle class” (professionals, businessmen, public and private employees) into society as a counterweight to lower class pressure for more basic reforms. U.S. policy oriented itself toward “accommodating” this middle class through financing housing construction (for employees), providing credits (for commercial people), and research and foundation grants (for professionals).

Latin America has had “development in stagnation”; expansion of middle class opportunity amidst growing mass poverty—and the co-opting of former rebels into the American-oriented establishment is a particularly Johnsonian manifestation of this trend.

While the slums of Lima are growing and in some cases worsening there is a building fever of new modern middle class apartments; domestic servants are in increasing demand and trips abroad are no longer the prerogative of the “oligarchy.” This combination of opportunity and degrading poverty characteristic of underdeveloped capitalist societies is today much more the reality in Latin America than the older image of a traditional two class rural society. In countries like Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay where this condition has been present for years, chronic economic stagnation has set in along with a growing dependence on U.S. loans to pay for recurring debts. The “middle classes” unable to push their countries into sustained economic growth have opted for military hegemony in a desperate attempt to maintain their status and class positions against the restless and growing mass of the poor. It was to prevent a sure victory of the mainly working class based Peronist movement that General Onganía seized power in Argentina—with the televised blessing of Cardinal Caggiano. In Brazil, behind their banner “God and Country,” the urban middle class marched against Goulart and against suffrage for the illiterate people, and backed the military coup.

U.S. officials in Latin America wield enormous influence especially on the level of political police intelligence. A Brazilian exile in Chile told of FBI agents present during his interrogation and torture in Rio. A Peace Corpsman told me how he was asked by Chilean embassy personnel to provide information about the leftist students in the university while another Corpsman who worked in a library was asked to toss out “commie” books that came in. Likewise, two U.S. graduate students in Chile who spoke out on Vietnam were invited to the embassy where they were advised that it would be made very hard for them to continue to stay in the country if they persisted. In a seminar I attended a couple of years ago, Edwin Martin, the former under-secretary for Latin American affairs, was asked why Latin American leftists were not allowed more often into the U.S. He replied, “We’ve got their party number.” And they have.

A leader of the Peruvian APRA (a fanatical anti-communist group) who had previously been a member of a revolutionary group, told me that when he visited the embassy to apply for a scholarship to go to the United States, they pulled out a dossier in which all the information—including the day he entered and left the revolutionary group—was entered—down to his reasons for leaving.

[MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR U.S. TOURISTS]

**U.S.** PERSONNEL in Latin America can be divided into two types: those who worship U.S. power and do their jobs; and those who privately oppose or hold reservations but who do their job anyway. In both cases the result is the same—the difference only comes out at cocktail parties very late at night.

A number of ex-radicals—who still consider themselves “men of the left”—work out of the embassies. One labor attachee in Chile who, during the '30s was a left wing socialist, told a Chilean socialist friend of mine that he was still a State Department socialist.

I met a young embassy official in Peru who was a Fidelista sympathizer not too many years ago and is now a hard-nosed Johnson supporter. He came from a lower middle class Jewish family and he got through college on scholarships and hard work. He became the representative of the Greatest Power in the World in a poverty-stricken provincial Latin capital. In discussing the violent repression of Indians and peasants organizing unions to carry out an agrarian reform he declared that the natives weren't ready for democracy. “As soon as they get a little freedom,” he said, “there is anarchy and the Communists take over. The military told the government to do something and the President gave them a blank check. And they went in and cleaned up the mess. Now the area is stable and the tourists are returning in flocks.”

The story all over Latin America is the same. LBJ is winning and the people are losing. The popular movements are everywhere demoralized by the enormity of the task before them and by the seductive powers and enormous military potential of the U.S. presence.

Someday the widening gap between rich and poor in Latin America will lead to another Vietnam. But, for now Johnson is succeeding in making that miserable land safe for United States tourists.

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# Ephemera



BOOKS ART CINEMA THEATRE MISCELLANY

## Dance:



### STAMPING OUT OPTIMISM

by Jack Anderson

FOR APPROXIMATELY a decade, a little company known, after its founder, as the Robert Joffrey Ballet has been regarded as a company "on its way up." Surviving grueling tours and financial crises, its fortitude has finally been rewarded. This year, under the new title of City Center Joffrey Ballet, it has been named a constituent company of the New York City Center of Music and Drama. The only other ballet group ever to have received such an appointment is the prestigious New York City Ballet itself.

The fall season at City Center demonstrated that the Joffrey Ballet possesses some of the best-trained and most appealing dancers in America. However, a closer look revealed that the repertoire is rather flimsy and, in general, the dancers are more interesting than the ballets they dance. A particular disappointment was the world premiere of "These Three," a ballet which, despite its use of topical material, already looked dated on opening night and exhibited a good number of the clichés which plague contemporary American dance.

Its choreographer was Eugene Loring, who in the 1930's made dance history by creating such works as "Billy

the Kid" and "Yankee Clipper," which proved to the skeptics of the day that classical ballet technique, although European in origin, could nevertheless express native American themes. "These Three" was Loring's first ballet for a New York company since 1953, and was awaited with interest.

It is based upon the 1964 murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi. Loring did not wish to present literal danced biographies of the young men. Rather, he transformed them into quasi-symbolic figures, shown leaving friends and family to work for their cause, despite the jeers of a hostile crowd. The crowd eventually murders them. Yet at the end of the ballet, not three, but four new civil rights workers detach themselves from the crowd to take the place of the martyrs. They link hands, face offstage into the future, and the curtain falls on the implication that justice will prevail and that mankind will march ahead along the road of moral progress.

Loring's intentions and sympathies are irreproachable. Nevertheless, his ballet is sentimental and vague—so vague that the three heroes could almost as easily be delegates to a Ku Klux Klan convention. It is impossible to imagine this work as a challenge or inspiration to anybody, although its subject is one of the urgent issues of our time. Loring's simplistic approach reduces the whole problem to platitudes.

Of course, the New York dance audience believes in civil rights. In such generalized terms, everybody does. But what if Loring had grappled with more specific issues? What if he had decided to choreograph a ballet about inter-marriage? Or a ballet lauding black power? Or a tribute to Malcolm X? Or, preserving the subject he did choose, why did Loring not show *why* his three heroes decided to dedicate their lives to their

cause, *why* they were greeted with hostility, and *why* he is so sure their cause will triumph? Granted that ballet, being non-verbal, is seldom able to express intellectual debate and that there are no choreographic equivalents of Shaw or Brecht; nevertheless, the sheer physicality of ballet makes it able to express the emotional realities of a situation with extraordinary eloquence.

THE ONLY EMOTION "These Three" conveys is in the nebulous optimism of its finale. This sort of optimism has been part of American dance for a long time, at least since the 1930's, when Loring began his choreographic career. It is certainly present, and in context justified, at the conclusion of his 1938 ballet, "Billy the Kid," where an impressive human frieze suggests that, despite the disruptions of the lawless, the American pioneers will succeed in taming the Wild West.

This optimism, with its dogged faith in the future, is very American in nature. At this point in our history, it may also be pernicious, something we had best stamp out for the good of our psychic and artistic health. In a recent symposium on American dance (*The Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief*, ed. by Selma Jeanne Cohen) dancer Pauline Koner sums up the optimism of her distinguished choreographic mentor, the late Doris Humphrey: "She never resolved her pieces on a negative note... No matter how desperate the material was, the resolution was positive."

What an amazing statements this is: *no matter how desperate the material*, there is a positive resolution to be found! It is disconcertingly close to such familiar slogans as "The power of positive thinking," "Never say die" and, if pushed to one possible extreme,