

6-2015

Tracking the Tupamaros: The Role of Uruguay's Movimiento de Liberacion-Tupamaros in the Electoral Success of the Frente Amplio, 1958-Present

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TRACKING THE TUPAMAROS:
THE ROLE OF URUGUAY'S MOVIMIENTO DE LIBERACIÓN-TUPAMAROS IN THE
ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF THE FRENTE AMPLIO, 1958 – PRESENT

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Latin American and Caribbean Studies

UNION COLLEGE

May, 2015

ABSTRACT

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This project examines the role of the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros* (Movement of National Liberation-Tupamaros, MLN-T) guerrilla movement, often referred to simply as the Tupamaros, as it relates to the electoral success of the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front, FA), Uruguay's largest non-traditional coalition of political parties, from 1958 to the present. The Tupamaros officially emerged in 1963 in response to a period of deepening political and economic stagnation during which Uruguay's ostensible tradition of two-party dominance proved incapable of addressing widespread socio-economic concerns. Throughout the 1960s into the 1970s, the Tupamaros used guerrilla tactics to expose the inefficiencies of the government and undermine the Uruguayan political system.

Despite the government's steadfast repression of the Tupamaros, culminating in the onset of the civic-military dictatorship from 1973 to 1985, this paper argues that the movement was successful in influencing the legal left to organize into a broad opposition front—the Frente Amplio—in 1971. The thesis goes further, claiming that, upon Uruguay's return to democracy in 1985, the Tupamaros further legitimized the FA by abandoning arms and joining the coalition in 1989 through the *Movimiento de Participación Popular* (Movement of Popular Participation, MPP). In addition, since the Tupamaros began participating in elections in 1994, the MPP has become the single largest party within the FA, and,

since 2004, the FA has won each successive presidential election, most notably that of José “Pepe” Mujica, a former Tupamaro, in 2009.

This thesis draws on research conducted in Montevideo, Uruguay during March 2015. The use of personal testimonies, such as those by Clara Aldrighi and María Esther Gilio, and primary documents, along with the many contributions of authors across a variety of disciplines, provides this investigation with an authentic look inside the relationship between the Tupamaros’ ideology and practice in promoting revolutionary change in Uruguay. Overall, the MLN-T's transition from guerrilla movement to political party highlights a pragmatic departure from the movement’s fundamental ideology insomuch that the Tupamaros seized a political opening in Uruguay's history of two-party dominance and successfully adapted to the political arena.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzes the transition of the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros* (Movement of National Liberation-Tupamaros, MLN-T), otherwise more simply known as the Tupamaros, from its foundations as a guerrilla movement in Uruguay in the early 1960s to the successful consolidation of many of the movement's fundamental members into the *Movimiento de Participación Popular* (Movement of Popular Participation, MPP), within the left-wing coalition of political parties—the Frente Amplio (Broad Front)—in 1989, following Uruguay's return to democracy, after which the Frente Amplio successfully rose to prominence with the presidential election of Tabaré Vázquez in 2004 and the eventual presidential election of José Mujica, a former leader of the Tupamaros and member of the MPP, in 2009.

Any study addressing the periodic transition of such a movement must review the political, economic, social, and cultural influences that generated these changes over time. Studies on the twentieth century left in Latin America abound, including those on the foundation and history of the Tupamaros. However, few studies on the transition of many of the movement's members into the political arena exist, and those that do come primarily from those in Uruguay or its neighbors, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. This thesis aims to expand upon the body of work that already exists in order to assess the importance of the Tupamaros in the vitality and success of the Frente Amplio. Nonetheless, first it is important to review the body of literature from which the Tupamaros framed their revolutionary

ideology, as without such analysis, it is impossible to track and assess the movement's transition into party politics; such a review also provides us with an important starting point from which to compare the implementation of an ideology into practice, thus permitting a critical exploration of the Tupamaros' transition with respect to its fundamental ideology.

The theoretical foundations of guerrilla warfare are, perhaps, credited to the Communist leaders Mao Zedong in China and Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam, who provided a framework within which many guerrilla movements were formed internationally. However, within Latin America, these foundations were second to the ideological works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and, later, Vladimir Lenin. Those like Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, considered insurrection primarily as an idea that played a central role in the European revolutionary doctrine of the nineteenth century, but little did they consider it a revolutionary technique. In fact, guerrilla warfare rarely preoccupied them; many doubted whether guerrilla warfare, effective under specific conditions in the preceding fifty years, had much of a future, at least in Europe. Nonetheless, Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, indoctrinated guerrillas not only in Latin America, but also across parts of Africa and Asia, with a political ideology that combined the scientific socialist concepts of Marxism with the anti-imperialist, democratic centralist and vanguardist party-building principles of Leninism that contributed to the overarching dialect of the class struggle.

It was actually the likes of Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh who expanded upon the ideas of guerrilla warfare into a revolutionary technique that influenced the

likes of Fidel Castro and, more importantly, Che Guevara, whose writings on the Cuban Revolution served as a lesson to guerrilla groups that would emerge in Latin America later in the 1960s. But perhaps most important to the ideology of guerrilla groups in Latin America was Régis Debray, whose experience in Cuba and Bolivia influenced the publication of the seminal *Revolution in the Revolution* (1967).

Although he, like Castro and Guevara, focused on rural guerrilla warfare, his idea of *foquismo* (focalism), whose central principle is that vanguardism by cadres of small, fast-moving paramilitary groups can provide a *foco* (focus) for popular discontent against a sitting regime and thereby lead to a general insurrection, became the focal point for urban guerrillas like the Tupamaros. Along with the likes of Carlos Marighella (1969) and Abraham Guillen (1969), urban guerrilla groups like the Tupamaros were provided with both the ideology and technique with which to create such a *foco* in Latin American cities like Montevideo.

Beyond the ideological and technical framework of guerrilla warfare, there is also a theoretical framework that instigated the proliferation of the Latin American left in the twentieth century. These theorists include Hans Singer and Raúl Prebisch (1949), who advocated for more protectionist policies, in particular, import substitution industrialization, not a trade-export orientation, as a strategy to combat worsening terms of trade for underdeveloped countries in the region. Paul A. Baran, along with Paul Sweezy and Andre Gunder Frank, developed the theory from a Marxian perspective in 1957 with the publication of his *The Political Economy of Economic Growth*; Marxists like Baran spoke of the international division of labor—skilled workers in the center, unskilled in the periphery—that necessitated more

radical change than did structuralists like Prebisch. In addition to dependency theory, liberation theology, which began as a movement within the Catholic Church between the 1950s and 1960s, emerged as a moral reaction to the poverty caused by social injustice in the region, whose exponents Gustavo Gutiérrez (1971), Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, Óscar Romero, and Uruguayan Juan Luis Segundo interpreted the teachings of Jesus Christ in relation to a liberation from unjust political, economic, or social conditions.

As explained by academics, most notably Greg Grandin, but also Hal Brands, Jorge Castañeda, and others alike, these theories emerged among changes in the political, economic, and social dynamic of the Cold War in Latin America. In *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (2010), Greg Grandin defines the Cold War in Latin America as a series of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies propelled by “the clash between the old and the new, heightened by the contingency of politics and aggravated by the fervent defense of interests, status, and values” that occurred in two realms of power—national and international—and inflamed each other; the clash between concurrent forces produced violent actions and reactions at the local, state, and international level—burgeoning movements of national liberation at the local level, increasing state repression and the implementation of the National Security doctrine at the state and international level—provide a sociologically and historically nuanced view of the ideological hardening and accelerated polarization that marked twentieth century Latin America.

Most academics agree, as do Grandin, Brands, and Castañeda, but also the likes of Stephen G. Rabe, Thomas C. Wright, Aviva Chominsky, and Michelle Chase, that the Cuban Revolution, its ideals along with it, incited an increase in these insurgencies and counterinsurgencies that rocked most of Latin America during the later half of the twentieth century. In his book, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (1999), Stephen G. Rabe examines the, arguably most salient, response to the Cuban Revolution, claiming the creation of John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, a nearly \$20 billion pursuit dedicated to creating prosperous, socially just, democratic societies in Latin America following the U.S.'s failure to thwart the Cuban Revolution, exacerbated conditions in Latin America in an intense crusade to eradicate communism in the region. Alternatively, in his book, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution: Revised Edition*, Thomas C. Wright examines the regional response to the Cuban Revolution, claiming the radical social and economic transformation of Cuba and Castro's efforts to actively promote insurrection against established governments and bourgeois power throughout Latin America instigated the simultaneous violent responses on behalf of both insurgent groups that sought to dismantle the government and internationally-backed military apparatuses that sought to thwart such efforts. These concomitant arguments provide an important perspective from which to view those forces that catalyzed the emergence of guerrilla movements like the Tupamaros in Uruguay.

Although studies on the forces that influenced the emergence of guerrilla movements in Latin America abound, few exist that deal specifically with those

forces in Uruguay or how the Tupamaros interpreted them in the formation of a revolutionary ideology with which to dismantle the government. Additionally, the majority of those that do were published around the same time that did formerly emerge the civic-military dictatorship in Uruguay (1973). Nonetheless, a small body of work does exist within which to analyze the conditions in Uruguay that propelled the Tupamaros to seek revolutionary change, including the works of Arturo Porzecanski (1973), Carlos Wilson (1974), Martin Weinstein (1975), Juan Rial (1986) and, more recently, Lindsey Blake Churchill (2010), Peter Waldmann (2011), and Pablo Brum (2014). Fortunately, these studies emphasize different factors—political, economic, social, and cultural forces—that influenced the ideology and adaptations of the movement over the years. Arturo C. Porzecanski, an Uruguayan himself, identifies three components that contributed to the Tupamaros' ideology and practice in his book *Uruguay's Tupamaros: The Urban Guerrilla*: their view of the present, their view of their future, and their strategy or means to go from the present into the future. According to him, the political-economic conditions of the present necessitated a stark ideological change in the future; the inability of the traditional, inflexible two-party system to address growing stagnation in the country's livestock and industrial sectors amid ever-growing foreign debt, the flight of domestic savings, and balance of payments problems in general, influenced those like Raúl Sendic, an agricultural law student from Montevideo, and some colleagues to round up and unionize poverty-stricken sugarcane and sugar beet cutters in Salto & Artigas to make a 350 mile march into Montevideo that ended in a violent clash between protesters and police. Sendic and his following's subsequent loss of faith in

the power of public opinion led, in Porzecanski's opinion, to the foundation of the Tupamaros, whose nationalistic view of the of the future—a movement away from political and economic dependence and toward both a national and regional cultural identity, influenced by the work of Marxists but not entrenched in any monolithic ideological bloc—would revolutionize Uruguay.

Other studies on the Tupamaros, such as that of Churchill, pose a different hypothesis. In her book *Becoming the Tupamaros: Solidarity and Transnational Revolutionaries in Uruguay and the United States*, she explores an alternative narrative of US-Latin American relations by challenging long-held assumptions about the nature of revolutionary movements like the Tupamaros. She argues that the Tupamaros were a violent and innovative organization that created a homegrown and unique form of revolution that made transnational connections and disdained traditional constructions of femininity for female combatants. Her study highlights the unique role women played in the MLN-T, exalting the movement as a uniquely homegrown experiment to enact revolutionary change.

Although authors like Porzecanski and Churchill, contest the nature of the Tupamaros' ideology, both agree on the nature of their demise as a guerrilla movement: political repression at the hands of an increasingly authoritarian and then dictatorial government. However, Martin Weinstein, a historian who has devoted much of his study to Uruguay, makes a curious argument that belies conventional answers to the Tupamaros' failure to incite revolution; he argues that the Tupamaros' failure was in their electoral support of the Frente Amplio, a political coalition of left-wing parties, in the 1971 elections, claiming such support

detracted from the political ideology upon which the Tupamaros were founded and allowed the tactical advantages they had already achieved to wane. Nonetheless, these studies bring into question the theoretical framework the Tupamaros employed in their revolutionary practice, a central pillar to this study of their transition into the political arena.

Inevitably, many studies on the Tupamaros conclude with the Uruguayan civic-military dictatorship, officially the period from 1973 to 1985, during which the MLN-T was outlawed. Although this study does not focus on the Uruguayan civic-military dictatorship itself, it is crucial to the understanding of the concurrent political changes experienced by the Tupamaros in the same time. During that time period, the MLN-T was outlawed, its members pursued, detained, and tortured, while the state of Uruguay fell into increased political repression. In addition to Weinstein, Juan Rial (1986) and Peter Waldmann (2010) emphasize the role of military in both the demise of the Tupamaros and their reemergence as an entirely new political force during the redemocratization of Uruguay in 1986. In his article "How Terrorism Ceases: The Tupamaros in Uruguay," he argues that a "socialist revolution," according to the likes of even Raul Sendic himself, "could only be realized by force." Thus, the movement's failure to instigate such a revolution was structural; the Tupamaros could not overcome the might of the dictatorship. These arguments provide this study with insight into the Tupamaros' ideological and pragmatic transition into the political arena following the dictatorship, during which the role of the military in Uruguay also changed dramatically; the subsequent fall of

the dictatorship condemned the use of violence as method to enact change in Uruguay.

Thus, some brief analysis of the cultural impact of the civic-military dictatorship on the Tupamaros' transition into party politics is salient. A varied body of works exists that focuses on the Uruguay's peculiar transition from parliamentary democracy to authoritarian presidency to dictatorship to presidential democracy following the dictatorship. This body includes government publications, histories, and essays dedicated to understanding Uruguay's unique political transformation. These studies provide not only an important political perspective, but also a cultural one, as the impacts of dictatorship undoubtedly influence the nature of politics in a nation. In his book, *Negotiating Democracy: Politicians and Generals in Uruguay*, Charles Guy Gillespie describes how, after the military stepped down from power, the issue of whether to make concessions to the military divided the country's three major parties—the Blancos, the Colorados, and the left. The eventual pact reached by the latter two parties in July 1984, to not prosecute military offenders in exchange for their retreat to the barracks, had an implicit impact on the culture of politics in Uruguay's return to democracy in 1985, allowing the left to emerge as a legitimate political contender. Similarly, in her book *Human Rights and Democratization in Latin America: Uruguay and Chile*, Alexandra Barahona de Brito discusses how negotiating truth and justice in the transition to democracy in Uruguay, a long and torturous path that eventually led to the referendum granting the military amnesty in 1984, despite obvious challenges to

the public, resulted in the country sacrificing legal punishment for human rights violations committed during the dictatorship for democratic peace.

Consequently, the left, including the Tupamaros, emerged—as in other parts of Latin America, decidedly different than they had during the early 1960s—into the political arena. Many have examined the reemergence of the left during this time period, most notably Jorge Castañeda. In his book *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*, he contests that the Latin American left, although markedly different, is not dead but experiencing temporary lulls in an ongoing revolution that may yet transform the hemisphere. He argues this new left has evolved, reforming the revolution and incorporating intellectuals in grass roots campaigns that have perhaps abandoned their socialist ideals but are still based in such ideology. Although, as mentioned before, some consider these changes as failures, many consider them merely as pragmatic changes. Specifically, many have examined these changes in the Tupamaros, including Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier (1991), Stephen Gregory (2009), Adolfo Garcé (2009), and Pablo Brum (2014). Both Gregory and Garcé conclude that the Tupamaros successfully adapted to party politics by pragmatically adopting more moderate ideologies. In turn, they formed the left-wing MPP, within the larger coalition of left-wing political parties the Frente Amplio, which coincidentally moved from democratic socialism to social democracy and from opposition to government in 2004, with the election of Tabaré Vázquez as the first candidate from the Frente Amplio to win the presidency. Gregory, in line with Castañeda, emphasizes the role of the intellectual left in this ideological shift.

Besides these authors, very few have analyzed more recent developments in the movement. Pablo Brum, in his recent book, *The Robin hood Guerrillas: The Epic Journey of Uruguay's Tupamaros*, histories the Tupamaros from their foundation in the 1960s to the election of the country's first Tupamaro president, José Mujica, in 2009. He argues, more emphatically than do those aforementioned authors, that this history is inextricably tied to the Jose Mujica's success as President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

Nonetheless, so few studies specifically examine this recent history that more investigation is necessary to properly place the history of the Tupamaros in an analysis trajectory of the left's success in Uruguay. Thus, beyond the scholarly contributions of those political scientists, economists, historians, anthropologists, and others who have contributed to an academic body of work, it is necessary to analyze this political transition firsthand. Beyond archival research, it is necessary to interview those politicians, professors, former Tupamaros, and citizens alike, whose perspectives as Uruguayans illuminate the lived experience of this transition. The inclusion of personal interviews collected not only in the United States, but also in different locations in Uruguay, will help illustrate the personal reactions and perceptions of Uruguayans who experienced this history firsthand, and will support archival research with individual, oral histories that would otherwise be lost in this thesis. The following chapters examine the ever-changing MLN-T by first examining their foundations in Uruguay with respect to the conditions in which the movement emerged, and then examines how these conditions changed alongside the

movement itself, resulting in a unique case-study of a former guerrilla member-turned-president within an even more dynamic movement.

THE GROWTH AND DECAY OF THE TWO PARTY SYSTEM, 1825 – 1958

Uruguay is the second-smallest country in South America (after Suriname), and is slightly smaller than the state of Washington. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that, by the end of 2015, the population of Uruguay will be approximately 3.430 million people. According to the CIA World Fact Book, nearly 90 percent of that population is ethnically white, descendants of immigrants primarily from Spain and Italy who arrived at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth through the capital and industrial port center of Montevideo. Since then, the population has been divided between Montevideo and the surrounding area and the countryside. Incidentally, Montevideo is also the political, economic, and cultural hub of the country, as well as its main artery to the outside world. Over 90 percent of the country is urbanized, or employed in areas other than agriculture. Having said that, Uruguay's geographic terrain, constituted almost entirely by the rolling plains and low hills known as the *pampas*, has established it as a traditional producer and exporter of agricultural commodities—namely beef, soy, cellulose, rice, wheat, dairy products, and wool.¹ According to the World Bank, agricultural exports accounted for 10 percent of gross value added (GVA) to GDP in 2014.² In addition, Uruguay boasts a well-educated workforce and high levels of social spending.

¹ CIA World Fact Book. *Uruguay*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uy.html>.

² World Bank. *Uruguay*. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/uruguay>.

Today, Uruguayan politics are defined in the 1966 constitution (to which there have been many amendments, most recently in 2004), which established a presidential representative republic maintained by separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The executive branch is defined by a chief of state, who is also the head of government, and his cabinet of appointed ministers approved by the parliament. Both the president and vice president are elected by popular vote for one, non-consecutive five-year term. The legislative branch is defined by the bicameral General Assembly, which consists of the Chamber of Senators and the Chamber of Representatives, each of which are elected by proportional representation for five-year terms. The judiciary branch is defined by the Supreme Court of Justices, which consists of five judges, each of which is nominated by the president and appointed in joint conference with the General Assembly. Judges are appointed for ten-year terms, with re-election after a lapse of five years following the previous term.

Although this demography bears some similarity among its neighbors Argentina to the west, the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul to the north, and Chile on the Pacific coast of the Southern Cone, Uruguay is distinct within Latin America for, among other things, a thriving democratic history. By the time Uruguay officially declared democracy in the 1918 constitution, its political elites had already competed for four decades using parliamentary practices. According to Charles Guy Gillespie, a foremost historian on Uruguay, "Unlike Chile, Uruguay's progress toward mass democracy was early, and unlike Argentina it was built on a competitive parliamentary tradition rather than representing a discontinuous leap. Nor did it

lead to the electoral annihilation of the conservative opposition, as occurred in Argentina about the same time.”³ In fact, despite the militarist dictatorship of Lorenzo Latorre from 1876 to 1880 and the civic-military dictatorship from 1973 to 1985, the military has been a relatively tame institution in Uruguay.

This tradition has contributed to Uruguay’s reputation as the most democratic nation in Latin America. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, Uruguay currently ranks more democratic than Costa Rica, as well as the United States.⁴ Even so, politics were, for nearly 170 years, apportioned between two parties—the *Colorados* (Red Party) and the *Blancos* (National, or White Party). Between 1865 and 1958 alone, the Colorados dominated the presidency. It was not until the 2004 national elections that a candidate from a non-traditional party was elected president since the official establishment of the Republic in 1828. On 31 October 2004, Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas was elected from the *Partido Socialista* (Socialist Party) within the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) coalition of political parties, effectively ending two-party dominance in Uruguay. Since then, the Frente has dominated presidential politics, with the election of former Tupamaro José Alberto “Pepe” Mujica in 2009 and the reelection of Vázquez following a runoff election against opposition candidate Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou of the Blancos on 20 November 2014.

³ Adult males were granted universal suffrage in 1918. Total suffrage was granted in 1932. See Charles Gillespie, “Democratic Consolidation in Uruguay” in *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 179-80.

⁴ Including an overall score, the EIU measures the democracy index using five criteria: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. See Economist Intelligence Unit. http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=Democracy0814.

The election of Tabaré Vázquez in 2004 marks a historic change in the Uruguayan political tradition. The Frente Amplio was founded as a coalition of more than a dozen fractured leftist parties (many of which separated from the Colorados) and movements in 1971, during period defined by increased governmental authoritarianism. It was during this time that the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros* (Movement of National Liberation-Tupamaros, MLN-T), was all but eliminated as a guerrilla movement. By the end of 1972, its entire membership was either captured, killed or in exile. Finally, in 1973, Juan María Bordaberry Arocena closed parliament and imposed direct rule from a military junta. The newly established civic-military dictatorship outlawed trade unions and political parties and embarked on a campaign of intense government repression that lasted throughout the 1970s. Political parties began to reorganize in the 1980s, following the rejection of a constitutional referendum to legitimize the civic-military dictatorship, and, following the 1984 national elections, the dictatorship officially ended. In 1989, the Tupamaros were admitted to the Frente Amplio as part of the *Movimiento de Participación Popular* (Movement of Popular Participation, MPP) political party. Since the beginning of their participation in national elections in 1994, the Frente Amplio has grown into Uruguay's most potent political force.

In his book, *Negotiating Democracy: Politicians and Generals in Uruguay*, Gillespie identifies three gaps in the literature that examines these periods of democratic transition in Latin America:

- 1 overemphasis on the onset of bureaucratic authoritarianism, which led to neglect of the subsequent problems of institutionalization,

- 2 the downplaying of political institutions, and especially parties, and a tendency to reduce political phenomena to economic causes, and
- 3 lack of attention to the Uruguayan case, which, because of the weight of political institutions and democratic political culture, shows the inadequacy of a focus on the alliance between the state and fractions of the bourgeoisie.⁵

This investigation examines the role of the Tupamaros as it relates to the growth of the Frente Amplio into Uruguay's political structure from the founding of the MLN-T through the reelection of Tabaré Vázquez in 2014. Since their admission to the Frente Amplio in 1989, the MPP has become the largest faction within the coalition and has elected one president—José Mujica—a former guerrilla member. In order to understand how the Tupamaros contributed to the success of the Frente Amplio, it is necessary to outline the history of the Uruguayan political structure, including the tradition of two-party dominance alongside the development of an institutional framework, as well as the economic and cultural factors that led to the fractionalization of the traditional parties in the 1960s. Therefore, this chapter chronicles the formation of Uruguay's two so-called "traditional" parties, the Colorados and the Blancos, until 1958, when the Blancos seized power from the Colorados for the first time since 1865.

La República Oriental de Uruguay officially declared its independence from the Brazilian Empire on 25 August 1825 in response to the annexation of Brazil from the Portuguese in 1822. However, Uruguay as an independent state did not emerge until 1828, after the British mediated a negotiation between the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata (present-day Argentina) and the Brazilian Empire to

⁵ Charles Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy: Politicians and Generals in Uruguay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.

recognize the Republic's independence, and, in 1830, the nation adopted its first constitution. The early years of the Republic posed challenges for the newly independent nation. Uruguay's ostensible tradition of political bipartisanship emerged during this post-independent period, which was defined by a series of civil wars that forged political alliances in the nascent nation-state. According to Uruguayan political scientist Luis E. González, the Uruguayan Civil War (1839 – 1851) established “political organizations with mass following—and even armies—and they survived uninterruptedly into the present. These parties, also called “traditional” parties, were born out of the following of the leading caudillos in the post-independence years.”⁶ The *Guerra Grande*, then, as it is known in Spanish, was a decisive moment in the development of Uruguay's two traditional parties, the Colorados and the Blancos.⁷ The “Colorado cupula included a predominance of urban notables, a fair number of families descended from Italian and other immigrants, many lawyers (known in Uruguay as *doctores*), intellectuals, and people engaged in commerce,” while “Such strata tended to be less well represented in the Blanco party, where traditional (*criollo*) elites, especially large landowners, retained a stronger position.”⁸ The final defeat of the Blancos in 1851 ushered in a near-century of Colorado rule, and, despite a series of nonconsecutive dictatorships in the

⁶ The war had the participation of the Argentinians and Brazilians, the former's whose more liberal, urban-centered and antichurch interests conflicted with the latter's landed interests, giving rise to the respective party lines of the Colorados and the Blancos. See Luis González, *Political Structures and Democracy in Uruguay* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 13.

⁷ The names Colorado and Blanco mean red and white and refer purely to headbands worn by the combatants in the civil wars, not the colors of revolution and reaction. See Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

nineteenth century, the Colorados maintained relative control of the national government between 1865 and 1958. During that time, “The National party survived as a party of protest, defending the periphery against the center (Montevideo), tending to side with export-oriented ranching interests against the increasing pressure of the urban industrial sector that grew under state protection.”⁹

In his book, *Political Structures and Democracy in Uruguay*, González defines the significance of Uruguay’s two traditional parties within the nation’s political structure. Regardless of interpretations that define Uruguay’s political structure as a predominant party system within a two party format or a disguised multiparty system, González explains that “Uruguay has had two major *parties*, Blancos and Colorados, since the nineteenth century; these parties competed within a two-party *format* until the mid-sixties, and under democratic governments they defined a two-party *system* most of the time.”¹⁰ Moreover, González argues that two main features have characterized this institutional setting: the quasi-presidentialism of Uruguayan constitutional tradition and a few, key principles of Uruguayan electoral law, namely proportional representation in the election of both chambers; closed and rigid lists; double simultaneous vote; and simple plurality to decide which party wins the presidency. In addition, in 1934 another law was implemented stipulating that all elections occur together at once every four years. That law was modified to once every five years in 1966, and has been maintained in all elections since then—

⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰ González, 19.

excluding the period of civic-military dictatorship.¹¹ While on one hand these features explain the historic stability of the Uruguayan political structure, they also provide this investigation with insight into the institutional setting that facilitated the eventual fractionalization of the traditional parties in the 1960s, in addition to the economic and cultural changes that occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth.

These features were largely consolidated during a political period known as *Batllismo*. Coined after Colorado President José Pablo Torcuato Batlle y Ordóñez (1903-07, 1911-15), *Batllismo* was “an ideology that would transform and dominate Uruguayan politics and political institutions for thirty years, color it until the present, but ultimately fail” when constitutional reforms and the expansion of social policies could no longer prevent the overextension of bureaucratic power.¹² To begin with, the Blancos staged another insurrection following Batlle’s inauguration in 1903. However, their military defeat in 1904 signified “the triumph of Montevideo over the caudillos of the interior oligarchy” and brought an end to a political period characterized by the parceling out of power between the two traditional parties.¹³

Batlle was born in Montevideo to a politically active family affiliated with the Colorado Party. In fact, his father, Lorenzo Cristóbal Manuel Batlle y Grau, was a

¹¹ González, 19-23.

¹² Martin Weinstein, *Uruguay: The Politics of Failure* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 20.

¹³ The ultimate defeat of the Blancos also signified the victory for the rural enclosures over their displaced victims. The “oligarchy” was irrevocably weakened and forced to share the ship of state with the sizable rural “middle class” and the urban bourgeoisie. See Gillespie, “Democratic Consolidation in Uruguay,” 180.

general of the army and president of the Republic from 1868 to 1872, when a military uprising overthrew him. Unsurprisingly, Batlle was politically involved from an early age; in particular, he was committed to social progress. During his time as a student at the *Universidad de la República*, he led a student group rallying for social reform. However, the onset of Uruguay's first true military dictatorship in 1876 discouraged him, and in 1879 he left school to travel in Europe. Upon his return to Uruguay in 1881, Batlle recommitted himself to achieving social progress in Uruguay. In 1886, he founded the leftist publication *El Día*, and in 1890 he joined the Colorado Party. Eventually, after ascending many political positions, Batlle was elected president in 1902.

Two factors were especially important to the formation of Batlle's government policy. First, the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth saw a huge influx of immigrants, primarily from Latin Europe, into the port of Montevideo and surrounding agricultural region. "The influx of Spaniards and Italians saw an increasing labor militancy which borrowed much of its ideological strength from syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist theories imported from Europe."¹⁴ Second, the end of the civil war marked the beginning of a period of economic growth—sometimes referred to as a period of economic "boom"—driven primarily by both the increased demand for and export of wool on the world market. These two factors transformed Uruguayan society; Montevideo developed

¹⁴ Between 1860 and 1904, the population grew from some 200,000 to over 1 million. In the years following, *sociedades de resistencia* were formed. In 1905 the first nationwide syndicate (FORU-Workers Federation of the Republic of Uruguay) was established, and in 1910 the Socialist Party of Uruguay was formed. See Weinstein, 21.

into the industrial center of the Uruguayan supply chain. Given this period of rapid industrialization, “the challenge for Batlle and his lieutenants within the *Colorado* party was to integrate this new and overwhelmingly urban mass into society at large and the *Colorado* party in particular.”¹⁵

Consequently, Batlle implemented a pro-labor government policy that had strong roots in an ideological framework “that accepted state intervention as a means to control conflict within the society.”¹⁶ However, according to International Monetary Fund economist Alex Segura-Ubiergo in his book, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State in Latin America: Globalization, Democracy, and Development*, “In Uruguay, the welfare state emerged as part of a broader “nation-building” strategy,” rather than “as a response to bottom-up pressures exerted from increasingly better organized and powerful groups of civil society – especially the labor movement,” as it had in Chile.¹⁷ In addition to the implementation of regulatory legislation, Batlle created industrial state units (*entes autónomos*) with the purpose of carrying out “the necessary economic activities of the state.”¹⁸ According to Gillespie, these circumstances “enabled the Colorados to transform what had been a patrician party into a powerful mass political machine, and it was on this basis that the Colorados’ hegemony was reconstructed.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Weinstein, 21.

¹⁶ During his first administration, he began to propose the legislation of hours, safety, and retirement that slowly but surely became the backbone of labor legislation in Uruguay over the next fifteen years. See Weinstein, 21.

¹⁷ Alex Segura-Ubiergo, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State in Latin America: Globalization, Democracy, and Development* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58.

¹⁸ Weinstein, 24.

¹⁹ Gillespie, “Democratic Consolidation in Uruguay,” 180.

Batlle's principles became the dominant ideology of the Colorados and continued to dominate Uruguayan politics long after his death in 1929. One of his principal beliefs concerned the overconcentration of state power. However, despite Batlle's effort to implement power-sharing practices by implementing electoral and constitutional reform, internal conflict and factionalism increased between the Colorados and the Blancos throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The first was the implementation of the double simultaneous vote (DSV) in 1910.

Under the system of the double simultaneous vote, citizens must choose among many competing lists of candidates in their favored party (technically known as a *lema*). Each list corresponds to a different faction, and this allows the various Blanco and Colorado factions to persist side by side without splitting the parties. In fact, winning elections requires that they not split, however artificial their unity.²⁰

The implementation of the double simultaneous vote encouraged the development of factions within the Colorados and the Blancos, because it expanded the opportunity for them to gain proportional representation in the lower house while still promoting a single presidential candidate. The second reform was the adoption of the 1918 constitution. In addition to officially declaring democracy in Uruguay, the reform established a "nine-member National Council of Administration, alongside the presidency, to handle domestic affairs; three of those seats in what

²⁰ Uruguay combines its double simultaneous vote with strict proportional representation. Therefore, in order to maximize their representation in legislative elections (held at the same time as the presidential election), several factional lists in a given party may form alliances known as *sublemas*. These support a single candidate for president and usually have the same list of names for the Senate, but each has a different candidate list for the Chamber of Deputies. As in the presidential race, the votes for all the lists in a *sublema* are pooled. Several small factions may in this way manage to win one seat in the lower house that they might otherwise not have won. Two or more larger fractions may also win an extra congressional seat by forming a *sublema*. See Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 21.

was often called the *colegiado* were reserved for the opposition – in practice, the Blancos.”²¹ Although these electoral and constitutional reforms promoted the idea of *coparticipación* (co-participation), in reality they exacerbated increasing factionalism, especially within the Colorados.

The viability of the two-party system declined in the 1930s. At the end of the 1920s, two major events occurred that raised concern within the *Batllista* faction of the Colorados. In 1929, the famed leader of the Batllistas, José Batlle y Ordóñez, died, signaling uncertainty for the leadership of the faction. Only weeks later, the New York Stock Market crashed, precipitating a period of profound economic downturn. In 1930, following this period of confusion, Dr. Gabriel Terra Leivas, a heterodox member of the Batllistas, was elected president, and, in 1933, he staged a coup d'état that had the support of both the *Riverista* faction of the Colorados and Luis Alberto de Herrera y Quevado and the *Herrerista* faction of the Blancos. Terra suspended congress, disbanded the National Council of Administration, and implemented a constitutional reform that merged states powers with the president.

Even so, Terra largely continued along the path of social reform implemented by his predecessors within the Colorado Party. According to Gillespie:

As in other nations of Latin America, the disastrous short-term impact of the Great Depression was more than compensated for by the long-run boost to industrialization of the domestic economy necessitated by the sudden lack of foreign exchange to purchase manufactured imports. During the 1930s, the state took the initiative in developing basic industries such as oil refining and cement production. The

²¹ The president controlled foreign relations, national security, and agriculture, while the National Council of Administration administered all other executive governmental functions including industrial relations, health, public works, industry and labor, livestock and agriculture, education, and the preparation of the budget. *Ibid.*, 20.

decade after World War II, which saw rapid progress in import-substituting industrialization under the influence of the ideas of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, represented the farthest logical development of the *Batllista* model. That period of prosperity concluded shortly after the adoption of a fully collegial executive, instead of the presidency, in 1951.²²²³

By this time, the Batllista model of economic growth had exhausted itself; industrial-oriented growth could not support the economy in the face of decreased global demand for Uruguay's agricultural exports. In addition, economic crisis exacerbated growing concerns among increasingly organized interest groups. The formation of the full *colegiado* all but guaranteed the demise of the two-party system in Uruguay, as it diluted the executive powers of the president, increasing factionalism between the two parties. This combination of forces would lead to a Blanco victory in the 1958 elections, which initiated a period of profound democratic transition in Uruguay that would ultimately result in the founding of the Tupamaros and the fragmentation of Uruguay's two traditional parties.

²² Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 22.

²³ The 1952 Constitution produced the weakest chiefs of state since 1918. It would have been far more difficult for a member of the *colegiado* to head a coup like that of President Terra in 1933; according to Batlle y Ordóñez this was, in fact, one of the most interesting virtues of the *colegiado*. From the point of the voters, however, they were still voting for president—only that this time there were four, one for each year—and the candidates were the most important leaders of the competing parties and fractions. See González, 22.

THE TUPAMAROS: THEORY VS PRACTICE, 1958 – 1973

The theoretical framework of guerrilla warfare in Latin America has roots in the relationship between socialism and the armed struggle popularized by theorists like Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung, to name a few.²⁴ However, the revolutionary process in Latin America and, by consequence, Uruguay, broke with traditional theory. We have already discussed the importance of the Cuban Revolution as a turning point in the development of the Tupamaros. However, now we must examine the theoretical framework upon which the Tupamaros built their own revolutionary ideology. After all, the Cuban Revolution was, in large part, fought in the lush and mountainous Cuban countryside, whereas the Tupamaros almost exclusively operated within the urban areas like Montevideo. Even so, it is necessary to examine the inextricable theoretical link between the Cuban Revolution and the Uruguayan experience.

According to Che Guevara, guerrilla action was necessary in order to obtain political power in Latin America, and the rural *foco* (“focus” or “nucleus”), or cadres of revolutionaries based in the countryside, would develop popular support for the revolutionary movement toward such power. Although influenced by Marxism-Leninism, Guevara’s emphasis on the *foco* challenged the traditional Marxist-Leninist conception about the necessity to organize around a vanguard party (organizations of class-conscious and politically advanced sections of the proletariat or working class) in order to begin the revolutionary process. Instead, *foquismo*

²⁴ See Karl Marx (1854), Friedrich Engels (1870), Vladimir Lenin (1906), and Mao Tse-tung (1936).

("foco theory") posited that, since the objective conditions for revolution already existed in most Latin American countries, it was possible for a foco to initiate the revolutionary process. Overall, Guevara believed the Cuban Revolution made three important contributions to this movement in Latin America. In "Guerilla warfare: A method" he states:

First, people's forces can win a war against the army. Second, it is not always necessary to wait for all conditions favorable to revolution to be present; the insurrection itself can create them, Third, in the underdeveloped parts of America, the battleground for armed struggle should in the main be the countryside. (Ernesto Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*)²⁵

Although Guevara hypothesized that the rural foco best served the revolutionary process in Latin America, such conditions did not exist, or were at least less apparent, in other parts of the region like Chile and Uruguay.²⁶ For example, by the 1960s, nearly half the population of Uruguay lived in Montevideo, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the city's urban classes had long been organizing themselves politically before rural demonstrations entered the public sphere. Even then, the most successful demonstrations took place in Montevideo. Even so, other philosophers like Régis Debray, a Cuban Revolution sympathizer who joined Guevara's efforts in Bolivia and was later detained as a result, began to

²⁵ Che Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method" in *Che Guevara Reader: Writings on Politics & Revolution*, ed. David Deutschmann (Ocean Press, 2003).

²⁶ At a speech at Montevideo's Universidad de la República on 17 August 1961, Guevara commended Uruguay for its democratic freedom within Latin America. In addition, he advised the Uruguayan left to use all available democratic tactics to enact change before resorting to violence. Ironically, counterrevolutionaries sprayed the auditorium with stink bombs before Che Guevara delivered his speech. In addition, an assassin attempted to take his life following the speech, but ended up killing educator. Papers. See Che Guevara, "El "Che" Guevara habla en la Universidad de la República (Montevideo, 17 August 1961). <http://medios.elpais.com.uy/downloads/2007/HistoriaReciente/19.pdf>.

popularize and adapt foquismo to an urban setting. In his two seminal works, *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America* and *Strategy for Revolution*, Debray expanded upon Guevara's revolutionary ideology, arguing that foco did not necessarily best operate in the countryside. Debray even went on later to say that the Tupamaros were "the only armed revolutionary movement in Latin America who knew how, or was able, to attack on all front (and not only at one point or one side) and to neutralize the bourgeois and anti-national dictatorship, questioning its very survival."²⁷

As urban guerrilla movements began to propagate across Latin America, it was apparent that such ideology alone failed to explain the success of such groups as the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Movement of the Revolutionary Left, MIR) in Chile and the Tupamaros in Uruguay. Richard Gillespie writes about the Tupamaros, "Originally Cuban influenced, their subsequent expertise in urban guerrilla warfare owed more to collaboration with Argentine Peronist guerrillas, the strategic thinking of Spanish Civil War veteran Abraham Guillén and the study of the Algerian guerrilla," and, later, to some extent, Carlos Marighella, founder of the *Ação Libertadora Nacional* (Action for National Liberation, ALN) in Brazil, among others.²⁸ The work of Abraham Guillén is particularly potent. Guillén was a passionate advocate of urban guerrilla strategy. According to him, "If 70 percent of a country's population is urban the demography and the economy must dictate the specific rules of the strategy of revolutionary combat. The center of operations

²⁷ Régis Debray, "Apprendre d'eux," in *Noux les Tupamaros* (Paris: François Maspéro, 1971), 209-210.

²⁸ Richard Gillespie, "A Critique of the Urban Guerrilla: Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil," in *Journal of Conflict Studies* 1, no. 2 (1980), 39-53.

should never in the mountains or in the villages, but in the largest cities where the population suffices to form the army of the revolution.”²⁹ Although later Guillén would criticize the Tupamaros’ revolutionary strategy, he provided them with an important ideological framework upon which to rationalize their actions.

Executing the Revolution: Theory vs. Practice

As discussed in previous chapters, Uruguay’s rapid economic decline exacerbated labor disputes in both the city and countryside, as well as highlighted the inadequacy of the Uruguayan political system. By the 1960s, it was clear that neither the Colorados nor the governing Blancos were capable of properly amending Uruguay’s failing economic policies. “At the time of the 1962 elections inflation was running at 35 percent a year, a high figure for a country whose currency had been as stable as the dollar throughout the 1940s and early 1950s and for an economy which had not experienced an inflation greater than 15 to 18 percent in decades.”³⁰ Even so, Uruguay’s tired out political system still prevented opposition parties from attaining the presidency, despite growing divisions within the party (Incorporate González text). According to Assistant Professor of History at the University of Central Oklahoma Lindsey Churchill in her book, *Becoming the Tupamaros: Solidarity and Transnational Revolutionaries in Uruguay and the United States*, “in the 1962 national elections, the Uruguayan Communist Party received 3.6

²⁹ Abraham Guillen, *Estrategia de la guerrilla urbana* (1971), translated in Donald C. Hodges, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla* (New York, 1973).

³⁰ Weinstein, 114.

percent of the vote, and the socialist-led Unión Popular only 2.3 percent,” despite worsening economic conditions.³¹

Therefore, as certain divisions of the left became increasingly disenchanted with the political system, they sought armed struggle as the only means through which to incite widespread political change in Uruguay. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Tupamaros were founded by Raúl Sendic and were initially comprised of members of the Coordinador. Tupamaros also absorbed members from various other organizations, including activists from groups such as UTAA, the *Movimiento Revolucionario Oriental* (Oriental Revolutionary Movement, MRO), disillusioned young people in the Socialist Party, communists who formed the MIR, Trotskyites, Christians, and Independents, as well as recalcitrant students, members of labor unions, and intellectuals in both the city and countryside.³² For example, according to Churchill, “Activists specifically broke with the MRO and joined the Tupamaros after the MRO promised to use its funds to help with the UTAA’s land occupation but instead funneled resources to electoral campaigns.”³³ In general, the Tupamaros’ membership consisted of a wide variety of disillusioned Uruguayans representing an equally as diverse range of political ideologies.

³¹ Lindsey Churchill, *Becoming the Tupamaros: Solidarity and Transnational Revolutionaries in Uruguay and the United States*. (Vanderbilt: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014) 10.

³² The MRO, founded in 1962, consisted of young Uruguayans who studied guerrilla warfare and rejected the tactics of traditional Uruguayan left. Inspired by both the Cuban Revolution and their country’s dire economic situation, the group offered solidarity in the form of people and arms to radicalized labor movements. Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro was a former member of the MRO who joined the Tupamaros. *Ibid.*, 12-16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 15.

Overall, the Tupamaros sought to break with Uruguay's traditional electoral left and enact their own political change through urban guerrilla warfare. While on one hand the group consisted of various and diverse ideological backgrounds, on the other they attempted to rely less on theory and focus more on *action*. In 1964, in "one of the MLN-T's first known documents, the group condemned the alleged inaction of the left by titling their paper "No Lamb Ever Saved Itself by Bleating." In this document, the Tupamaros asserted the importance of armed struggle in Uruguay, particularly because of the political and economic crisis."³⁴ In addition, "they characterized their armed struggle as predominately urban and part of a continental strategy of revolution. The MLN-T also claimed that they operated only within the unique context of Uruguay."³⁵ As a result, the Tupamaros distinguished themselves among other revolutionary groups in Uruguay and within Latin America in general. Although they criticized the traditional left and suggested their goal of achieving both national liberation and socialism, the Tupamaros purported a tactical strategy more than ideological one.

At the same time, the Tupamaros' transition from armed propaganda to overt acts of violence highlights the group's firm ideological contempt for what it considered an ineffective political system; the Tupamaros expanded the scope of their operations in response to severe economic stagnation and ineffective government policies to correct it, as well as increased government pressure to mitigate the guerrilla movement's revolutionary efforts. This series of increasingly violent actions and reactions—insurgencies and counterinsurgencies—on behalf of

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

³⁵ Ibid., 15

the Tupamaros and the government throughout the 1960s into the 1970s eventually culminated in the onset of the civic-military dictatorship in 1973. As longstanding labor disputes persisted in the city (in Montevideo, in particular) and, to some extent, the countryside, the Tupamaros became a potent political force that instigated a government response to its actions while at the same time attempted to overthrow it. According to Ernest A. Duff, John F. McCamant, and Waltraud Q. Morales in their book, *Violence and Repression in Latin America: a Quantitative and Historical Analysis*, in 1969 the Uruguayan government experienced more armed violence against it than any other government in Latin America, while, during the 1950s, it experienced the least, among the 20 countries examined. Moreover, an Uruguayan Gallup poll taken in 1972 identified that the Tupamaros still “won widespread sympathy, and support, especially among youth on the Left,” in Uruguay, even if the majority totally rejected armed revolution as a means of political change and instead preferred that the government negotiate with the guerrilla movement’s leaders.³⁶ In turn, this evidence suggests that, despite ideological cleavages, the Tupamaros, to some degree, highlighted inherent problems in Uruguay’s political system.

Throughout this period, as the Tupamaros’ became increasingly sophisticated and successful in, among other things, outwitting the Uruguayan police, and the political-economic system continued to decline, the military’s role in Uruguay expanded (largely with the help of U.S. Government agencies like USAID). According to Gillespie,

³⁶ Gallup Uruguay, *Informe de Opinión Pública*, no. 186-7, February 1972, Table 20.

The armed forces had previously been unprestigious and apolitical, but the crisis of the 1960s coincided with exposure to national-security doctrines taught by U.S. advisers and teachers at the Army School of the Americas in Panama. Those doctrines made a fetish out of the need to contain Soviet expansionism in the Third World following the Cuban Revolution.³⁷

Consequently, the United States began to offer its assistance in the form of military aid to the Uruguayan government throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s throughout the civic-military dictatorship. Although the United States initially provided military aid in order to squish the Tupamaros, eventually it provided aid in order to suppress the left in general. For example, the Uruguayan government first declared a “state of siege” (government limitation on personal freedom) in 1963 following a workers strike at an electric company in Montevideo and thereafter in 1965, 1967, 1968, and 1969 in response to various protests organized by laborers or insurgent activities perpetrated by the Tupamaros. Such governmental decrees intensified conflicts among laborers, guerrilla movements like the Tupamaros, and the increasingly authoritarian government.

Moreover, following the 1966 elections, Uruguay re-abandoned the *colegiado* and reinstated the presidential system, which reinforced executive power. Following the death of the newly elected Colorado President and military General Óscar Diego Gestido Pose’s a year later, Gestido’s Vice President Jorge Pacheco Areco assumed the presidency and used his executive power to pursue and defeat the Tupamaros. In 1971, he “decreed that the armed forces would intervene in the battle against the guerrilla movements, using his status as commander in chief to bypass Parliament” and create the *Estado Mayor Conjunto* (Joint Chiefs of Staff,

³⁷ Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 42.

ESMACO)³⁸ Overall, increased military aid and the reinstatement of the presidential system in Uruguay promoted a technocratic, managerial form of executive administration that allowed Pacheco to pursue an increasingly authoritarian campaign to suppress the Tupamaros.

As a result, between their official founding in 1963 and their demise in 1972, the Tupamaros became increasingly violent in order to resist the breakdown of democracy in Uruguay and incite revolutionary change. As stated before, political-economic decline and the onset of authoritarianism forced the Tupamaros to take extreme measures in order to overthrow the government. Therefore, when examining the movement's revolutionary strategy, it is important to understand that, for the Tupamaros, tactics more often than not superseded ideological dictum, and that this transformation was necessary for what I argue contributed to the movement's overall success through today. Although the Tupamaros maintained a relatively uniform organizational structure, their operations often deviated from one accepted ideology or even theory.

Then, by the same token that we have examined how the conditions upon which the Tupamaros built their revolutionary theory changed, we must also explore how these changes manifested themselves in armed struggle. Examples of the Tupamaros' guerrilla operations throughout the 1960s into the 1970s abound. However, in order to express how the guerrilla movement successfully adapted, it is important to provide a brief introduction of the Tupamaros' organizational structure and operations and examine a few, key operations within the Tupamaros'

³⁸ Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 42.

history. According to Professor Emeritus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in his book, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, during their infancy, the Tupamaros remained underground in order to prepare and avoid confrontations with superior government forces. Gradually, they escalated their actions, “from break-ins to bank robberies to bombings, but always eschewing fights with police and troops and avoiding any killings.”³⁹ For example, initially the Tupamaros were considered restrained revolutionaries, executing such operations as a Christmas Eve “Hunger Commando,” during which they hijacked a food truck and distributed its contents in the slums. In some instances, popular literature even referred to the Tupamaros as “Robin Hood” guerrillas.

However, as membership comprehensively grew as a result of society’s increased dissatisfaction with Uruguay’s current political-economic system, as well as with the onset of authoritarian tendencies, the Tupamaros were able to establish an infrastructure in order to sustain the armed struggle, including “supply networks, safe houses, even underground clinics equipped for emergency surgery as well as long-term recuperative care.”⁴⁰ Consequently, “the Tupamaros developed an elaborate organization designed to maximize fighting potential while insulating the movement against detection and destruction.⁴¹” They established a central executive committee and columns of 30 to 50 people, each of which contained between 5 and 10 members. Although most operations were coordinated from above, each column was organized in order to be able to sustain itself in the incident

³⁹ Thomas Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 105.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

of trouble at the top. In addition, columns were capable of gathering intelligence, maintaining supplies, and undertaking armed or propaganda action independently. This structure made it possible for one surviving column to reproduce the movement in the event that another column should collapse, for instance.⁴²

Following the government's transition from the plural executive to a presidential, and consequently more authoritative, executive in 1967, the Tupamaros were forced to change their revolutionary strategy. For example, according to economics and public policy analyst Cameron I. Crouch in his book, *Managing Terrorism and Insurgency: Regeneration, Recruitment and Attrition*, on 22 December 1966 during a clash between police in a patrol and Tupamaros in a stolen vehicle, the police fatally shot Carlos Flores, whose death marked the first Tupamaro to be officially killed in action. Moreover, during the subsequent investigation the next day, the police discovered a number of hideouts, forced a number of Tupamaros underground, arrested and tortured others, and killed Mario Robaina, another Tupamaro, in a shootout.⁴³ While on one hand the Tupamaros suffered a major setback as a result of these events, on the other they motivated them to escalate their pressure by more aggressively and directly challenging government authority.

⁴² Ibid., 105.

⁴³ Cameron Crouch, *Managing Terrorism and Insurgency: Regeneration, Recruitment and Attrition*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 67.

“Operation Pando”

During the late 1960s, the Tupamaros began to engage in armed conflict with police and kidnap high profile figures for ransom, among other operations.

Academics often consider *Operación Pando* (Operation Pando) the Tupamaros’ official debut into the public eye. In her book, *La Guerrilla Tupamara*, former journalist, writer, biographer, lawyer, and ex-Tupamara María Esther Gilio (1928 – 2011) recounts the Tupamaro occupation of Pando, a city of roughly 60,000 inhabitants located outside Montevideo in Canelones department. During the occupation, which took place on 8 October 1969 in commemoration of Che Guevara’s death two years earlier, the Tupamaros arrived, either individually or in small groups by private and public transportation, to the city of Pando. Disguised as a funeral procession, the Tupamaros infiltrated and occupied the city for several hours, severing its communications, attacking its police and fire departments, capturing its main buildings, and robbing a total of 81,000 pesos from its banks.

Despite their apparent success, a band of 1000 troops intercepted one of the operation’s columns as it was fleeing the city and kills three of its members—Jorge Salerno, Ricardo Zabala, and Alfredo Cultelli—as well as captures and tortures 16 others.⁴⁴ On one hand, the Tupamaros suffered a tragic, as a number of its core operatives were either killed or detained. On the other, the occupation’s audacity posed a sobering challenge to government authority. Moreover, Operation Pando reveals how, in many instances, women were just as involved in guerrilla operations

⁴⁴ María Esther Gilio, *La Guerrilla Tupamara*, (Buenos Aires, Ediciones de la Flor, 1970).

as men were, suggesting that the Tupamaros valued women as an integral component to the revolutionary movement.

The Dan Mitrione Case

By mid-1970, the Tupamaros and the government were testing the limit of each other's insurgent and counterinsurgent activity. Perhaps the Tupamaros' most striking operation was the abduction of an instructor in USAID's Office of Public Safety police counterinsurgency training program in Uruguay, Dan Mitrione, and Brazilian consul, Aloysio Dias Gomide, on 31 July. The Tupamaros successfully kidnapped the two men and detained them in the *Cárcel del Pueblo* (People's Prison) in exchange for the release of 150 political prisoners that had themselves been detained by the government.

However, the Tupamaros' plan backfired; instead of releasing the prisoners, President Pacheco refused to negotiate, declared a state of siege, and later dispatched 12,000 police and troops to search Montevideo, sector by sector, for the People's Prison. During the search, the police apprehended a number of high-ranking Tupamaros, including Raúl Sendic, among others, and subsequently suspended all negotiations with the Tupamaros. Finally, in retaliation, the Tupamaros executed Mitrione on 9 August, accusing him of teaching torture methods to the armed forces.⁴⁵

Dan Mitrione's assassination represents perhaps one of the most significant operations of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros' revolutionary

⁴⁵ Wright, 106.

strategy. First, the Tupamaros' decision to abduct and subsequently assassinate Dan Mitrione circumvented the revolutionary conditions as they existed in Uruguay and instead confronted them directly as they were imposed upon the country by imperial powers like the United States. At the same time, Mitrione's abduction and assassination represent the tenuous relationship among the United States, the Uruguayan government, and the Tupamaros (and the Uruguayan left in general) preceding the onset of the civic-military dictatorship; as a representative of the United States and, subsequently, its foreign policy in the region, Dan Mitrione aided in exacerbating the revolutionary conditions that existed between both Uruguay's ruling political class and its marginalized labor classes. The Tupamaros intentionally antagonized the United States and denounced its foreign policy by undermining the Uruguayan government's authority and in turn publicizing the society's desire for governmental change. Obviously, their actions were impressive, or at least audacious, within the context of MLN-T, even if they cast doubt the viability of the guerrilla movement by precipitating harsh government repression.

And the guerrilla movement did dissipate preceding the onset of the civic-military dictatorship in 1973. Despite a short period during which "the Tupamaros' fortunes fluctuated between spectacular successes and severe setbacks,"⁴⁶ the democratic election of socialist President Salvador Allende in Chile in September 1970 influenced the Tupamaros to briefly suspend armed conflict and call a truce with the Uruguayan government in order to support the efforts of the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front, FA) coalition of leftist political parties in the 1971 general elections.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

Although the Tupamaros broke the truce and attempted to return to the revolutionary movement in December 1971, following the FA's loss to conservative Colorado Juan María Bordaberry Arocena in the general elections, by then the Uruguayan government's counterinsurgency program, aided and advised by U.S. officials, had begun to tolerate and even sponsor such efforts as paramilitary death squads to repress and suppress leftist organization like the Tupamaros. In September 1971, President Pacheco appointed the military in charge of all guerrilla activity, and, on 15 April 1972, President Bordaberry declared a "state of internal war" that legitimized the government's efforts to eliminate the Tupamaros. By mid-1972, the Bordaberry government "had captured over 600 Tupamaros, killed 100, and located 70 of their safe houses in the past three months."⁴⁷ Counterinsurgents even recaptured Raúl Sendic, who had escaped prison the previous year.⁴⁸ Finally, President Bordaberry acceded to the gradual militarization of the government in June 1973, "when he closed congress and municipal governments and began to rule by decree with a military-civilian cabinet."⁴⁹ The civic-military dictatorship pursued leftist groups like the Tupamaros both swiftly and decisively, detaining, torturing, disappearing, or forcing them into exile.

Overall, the Tupamaros' decision to suspend the guerrilla operation and support the Frente Amplio in the 1971 general elections, as well as the onset of the civic-military dictatorship, thwarted their ability to continue along the same trajectory along the movement grew before the dictatorship. At the same time, their

⁴⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 107.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107-8.

decision to support the FA suggests that the Tupamaros anticipated the country's impending democratic deterioration and were perhaps considering alternative methods to enact political change in Uruguay.

CONCLUSION: THE TUPAMAROS AND THE RISE OF THE FRETE AMPLIO: 1973 -
PRESENT

Between the brief period of 1963 and 1971, the Tupamaros had irreversibly contested the longevity of Uruguay's ostensible tradition of two-party rule. According to Luis E. González, their impact was profound in two ways. "First, although in retrospect it seems clear that they never had any chance of success, they conveyed the image—as a minimum—that the police alone were no match for them.⁵⁰" The Tupamaros challenged the state's capacity and willingness to implement substantial government policy by overtly undermining its authority through the use of guerrilla tactics in order to instigate such change. However astoundingly swift and repressive the state's efforts to repress such actions were, its obstinate refusal to implement policy change and instead rely on the state security apparatus to reestablish order within Uruguayan society anticipated its breakdown. "Second, the Tupamaros were the immediate, true revolutionary option; as such they were the left opposition to the legal left, which was thus caught between opposite forces upon which in the short run it had no influence at all."⁵¹ Therefore, the Tupamaros represented the only force impelling and *compelling* political change in Uruguay.

As we have discussed, the legal left (the leftist groups that sought political change through elections) had, up to this point, proven incapable of taking advantage of the traditional parties' failures, at least inasmuch that they had yet to

⁵⁰ González, 40.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

organize a cohesive front through which to strengthen their electoral position against the established order. However, following the 1967 elections and, along with them, the onset of overt authoritarianism (imposed in large part to combat the Tupamaros), the legal left adopted a more unified position in order to establish an electoral foothold in Uruguayan elections. As such, this chapter will explain how the legal left finally organized itself into a comprehensive coalition of political parties—the Frente Amplio—in 1971, and how, with the pivotal support of the Tupamaros, it used this front to popularly mobilize disaffected elements of the left, including members of the country’s traditional parties, and permanently dissolve Uruguay’s tradition of two-party rule. In effect, the Tupamaros exposed longstanding inadequacies within the Uruguayan political structure, which, in its hard-pressed attempt to preserve itself, anticipated its eventual breakdown.

Founding the Frente Amplio

In her book, *Left in Transformation: Uruguayan Exiles and the Latin American Human Rights Networks, 1967-1984*, Uruguayan historian Vania Markarian discusses how the results of the 1967 elections instigated the electoral left to found the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front, FA) in January 1971. As discussed in the previous chapter, in 1959, the Colorados transferred power to the Blancos for the first time in nearly one hundred years following the election of President Martín Echegoyen. However, Blanco rule was short-lived. Like the Colorados that had preceded them, the Blancos were unable to implement effective government policies to combat deepening economic stagnation. In addition, during that period the Tupamaro guerrilla

movement emerged, and, by 1967, had become a potent opposition force against the established order. As a result, 1967 marked the end of the brief period of Blanco rule following the election of President Óscar Diego Gestido Pose who, upon his death a year later, was replaced by his vice president, Jorge Pacheco Areco. President Pacheco's inconsequential rise to power initiated a period of increasingly severe government repression imposed primarily to combat what the state had declared as a threat to national security—the Tupamaros. According to Markarian, “Starting in 1968, the bare authoritarianism of the government and its harsh stabilization programs led the majority of the left to engage in yet another attempt to unify efforts and find a way out of the crisis.”⁵² As the space for open opposition against Pacheco's policies shrank, members of the legal left began to break with the traditional elite in order to devise an alternative course of action that would prevent the onset of authoritarian rule.

By then, an umbrella labor organization, the *Convención Nacional de Trabajadores* (National Convention of Workers, CNT), had already existed for more than a year, establishing (if it had not been already) the labor movement's legitimacy against and disputes with the government and its policies. In addition, members who already belonged to left-leaning factions, not only those within the Colorado and Blanco parties, but also within the armed forces, were becoming increasingly disaffected with Pacheco's austere government policies, further justifying the formation of a third party. For example, Colorado minister and Senator Zelmar Michelini, “appalled by the growth of governmental repression,” resigned

⁵² Vania Markarian, *Left in Transformation: Uruguayan Exiles and the Latin American Human Rights Network, 1967-1984* (London: Routledge, 2013), 37.

from office in October 1967.⁵³ A year later, a group of high-ranking military officers, including General Líber Seregni, commander of one of Uruguay's most important military regions, defected from the armed forces for similar reasons. Michelini and Seregni were close friends and became prominent figures in the unified opposition against Pacheco. Their decisions to sever ties with the Colorados "showed that well beyond the limits of the old left there was a remarkable uneasiness with the current political situation, a sense of the breakdown of the formerly consensual rules of politics" that influenced figures like Michelini and Seregni to renounce Pacheco's government—and the traditional parties in general—and organize a broad opposition front.⁵⁴ Overall, the Pacheco government's increasingly authoritarian tendencies made clear that there was no space for disagreement within the traditional parties, and thus it was necessary to form an opposition front in order to challenge them.

Although before 1971 the left had made two attempts to build a coalition of political parties—the *Unión Popular* (Popular Union, UP), formed by the Partido Socialista and small groups from the traditional parties, and the *Frente Izquierda de Liberación* (Leftist Liberation Front, FIDEL), led by the Partido Comunista, neither had achieved electoral success. Moreover, attempts since then continued to flounder as a result of discrepancies among all sides of the left about which courses of political action to pursue. For instance, in June 1968 Uruguay's *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Christian Democrat Party, PDC) formally proposed the foundation of a broad opposition party following a gathering of left representatives at the

⁵³ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 39.

Movimiento Nacional para la Defensa de Libertades Democráticas (National Movement for the Defense of Democratic Liberties, MNDLD) three months earlier, but withdrew from the coalition due to a disagreement over the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia.⁵⁵

Along with dissidents from the traditional parties, representatives from radical parties, workers, and others, the intellectual community aided in formulating a political alternative to two-party rule that was beforehand stalled by ideological and practical stalemate. Newspapers like *Marcha*, founded in 1939 by Carlos Quijano as a "tribune for independent journalism, unregimented politics, and fresh cultural critique," not only influenced "many independent activists and prominent intellectuals to join the legal left against the increasing authoritarianism of the government," but also served as an intellectual forum for, among other things, the debate on founding this broad opposition front.⁵⁶ For example, while at first one of *Marcha's* columnists critiqued the PDCs proposal to form a unified front as too "idealistic," in October 1968 the same columnist admitted that a "third party" might be the only solution to Uruguay's dire political deterioration.⁵⁷ In 1970, *Marcha*

⁵⁵ The PDCs participation in building a coalition shows how widespread the left's dissatisfaction with the traditional parties was during this period. In fact, the PDC, a center-left fraction of the Colorados, was an important leader in the foundation of the Frente Amplio, despite (and perhaps *because of*) its relatively moderate political leanings. See *Marcha*, 26 June 1968, 8-9.

⁵⁶ Markarian, 39.

⁵⁷ See Carlos M. Gutiérrez, "La illusion frentista," *Marcha*, 28 June 1968, 8-9, and "¿Hacia un tercer partido?," *Marcha*, 18 October 1968, 11.

became the main forum for this debate and, toward the end of the year, even “offered its headquarters for a series of meetings to discuss these issues.”⁵⁸

Finally, in January 1971, the PDC and the group led by Michelini made a bilateral agreement establishing the Frente Amplio, and, in February, “they signed the “constitutive declaration” of the new coalition, as did the rest of the legal left—including the PCU and its allies in FIDEL, the socialists, the recently legalized MRO, factions of the traditional parties, and some other minor groups.”⁵⁹ According to González, the Frente Amplio was unlike any other coalition that had existed before it:

The Frente Amplio unified the whole legal left: the socialistas and the Comunistas, the Partido Demócrata Cristiano, a fraction from the Colorados led by Zelmar Michelini and Hugo Batalla (the Lista 99), and a rather heterogeneous group—which in 1971 used the *sub-lemma* Patria Grande (Great Fatherland)—including Blanco dissidents led by former Minister Enrique Erro and enjoying some support from the radical left.

The Frente Amplio differed from the “large, fractionalized, pragmatic catch-all parties that had always governed the country,” in that it was a coalition of “small, highly ideological and militant parties” that organized themselves in order to *challenge* and *undermine* the tradition of two-party rule rather than violently provoke the government.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The *Unidad Popular's* (Popular Unity, UP) experience in Chile surely influenced this debate as well. In September 1970, the UP coalition of political parties elected Marxist president Salvador Allende, representing the potential for an electoral alternative in other countries like Uruguay. See Markarian, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁶⁰ González, 40.

The Tupamaros and the Frente Amplio

The Tupamaros had by this point proven to be the most provocative of the forces that emerged from the left. As discussed in the previous chapter, the movement's ostentatious guerrilla tactics exposed longstanding problems within Uruguayan society, making a mockery of the government's incapacity to address both economic and social concerns and beckoning for revolutionary change. However, forging ahead proved difficult. As much as the government continued to fail in its efforts to enact effective policies (ostensible efforts, at that), it increased the state security apparatus in order to reestablish and maintain order within society. At first, these efforts were made primarily to combat the Tupamaros, whose use of violence escalated as the standard of living for the majority of Uruguayans declined. As former Tupamara Clara Aldrighi describes in her book, *La izquierda armada (The Armed Left)*, the Tupamaros transitioned from "armed propaganda" to "revolutionary justice" in order to decide the fate their targets and undermine the government's growing efforts to eliminate them.⁶¹ As the government proved obstinate to the Tupamaros' demands, it extended its use of security measures to the rest of Uruguayan society in order to decisively quell the movement. For example, President Pacheco declared a "state of siege" (suspension of civil liberties) for twenty days in August 1970 following the assassination of U.S. security official Dan Mitrione and for forty days in January 1971 following the kidnapping of British Ambassador Geoffrey Jackson in order to pursue, detain, and eventually imprison any and all Tupamaros. Failure seemed inevitable when, in September 1971,

⁶¹ Clara Aldrighi, *La izquierda armada: ideología, ética e identidad en el MLN-Tupamaros* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2001), 82-3.

Pacheco placed all counter-insurgent operations under the army's direct authority following the escape of over one hundred Tupamaros from prison.⁶² While on one hand this decision all but doomed the Tupamaros to failure, on the other it forced them to consider an alternative—the Frente Amplio.

Certainly the Frente Amplio hotly debated the role of the Tupamaros' leading up to the 1971 elections. The elections forced the group "to define its position against two extremely confrontational understandings of politics"—the purportedly authoritarian regime and the Tupamaros.⁶³ On one hand, the Frente was founded on its members' fundamental opposition against increased government repression. On the other, the Tupamaros had also become increasingly violent, apparent in their growing recourse to frequent abductions and assassinations of police and other high-profile figures—most notably, Dan Mitrione. However, according to González, "The forces to their right appeared as maintaining a status quo the left was denouncing as deeply unjust; those forces were represented by parties whose organization and ways of doing politics were the polar opposite to those of the left."⁶⁴ The Tupamaros were among these forces to the left. In fact, "The Comunistas in particular had repeatedly asserted that the only basic disagreement they had with the guerrillas was a procedural one. Some smaller groups were so radical in their language that it was not clear what disagreements, if any, they had with the Tupamaros."⁶⁵ Therefore, the Frente Amplio welcomed the support of the Tupamaros, especially as the government became overtly more authoritarian in its

⁶² Markarian, 41-2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁴ González, 40.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

practices against the guerrilla movement, and even if the guerrillas did not fully endorse its participation in electoral politics. After all, the Tupamaros could not ignore and understood the importance of the 1971 elections as an opportunity to further mobilize the left against the traditional elite. “Thus, they ended up applauding the creation of the FA as a step forward in the direction of true popular mobilization, but regretting its penchant for elections and legal politics.”⁶⁶

In 1971 the Tupamaros formed the *Movimiento 26 de Marzo* (March 26 Movement, 26M), which formally declared its support for the Frente Amplio. In October of the same year, a month before the elections, the Tupamaros also established a unilateral truce with the government in an attempt to alleviate tension and bolster the Frente’s electoral position against the traditional parties. As a result, the 1971 elections represented the first time that the left was able to cohesively organize an electoral front within Uruguay’s institutional setting. The Frente campaigned in support of the general public, maintaining the opinion that the government (Pacheco’s in particular) ignored economic problems by implementing policies designed to defend the status quo and used the state apparatus to repress the social upheaval that resulted from it. Overall, “the FA regarded the radicalization of the youth, both in student demonstrations and guerrilla organizations, as an understandable, if regrettable, reaction to the lack of economic opportunities, the inactivity of the political system, and the experience of direct repression.”⁶⁷ In addition, the Frente argued, “a truly democratic government with a strong social agenda would end guerrilla activities, allowing the Armed Forces to return to their

⁶⁶ Markarian, 43.

⁶⁷ See Speech by Seregni on 26 March 1971, in Líber Seregni, *Discursos*. Ibid., 43.

barracks” and permitting the government to tackle the country’s outdated political-economic structure.⁶⁸ However, throughout the campaign, the Frente only vaguely cited the importance of agrarian reform, a longstanding issue in Uruguay as in the rest of Latin America.

Either way, the Frente Amplio presented a substantial argument against the traditional parties and the institutional setting that supported them as they had until that point developed, and the Tupamaros, beyond expressing their support for the party through the formation of the 26M, humbled themselves in order to further strengthen the Frente’s electoral position. Amid rumors of a military coup, for example, the Tupamaros participated with former members of the armed forces and other members of the security apparatus in “*Plan Contragolpe*,” a movement intended to prevent the onset of authoritarian dictatorship.⁶⁹ However, despite such efforts, the Frente Amplio failed to gain the support needed to topple the traditional parties. According to Markarian, “However credible its written program and general principles might have been for a large sector of the citizenry, the support of the MLN-T positioned the FA as an extremist option.”⁷⁰ As a result, it was especially difficult for the Frente to win the support of voters on the countryside, and even that of voters outside Montevideo.

Nonetheless, the results of the elections were surprising. First, although he received the most votes, the constitution prevented President Pacheco from serving a second term, and the electoral effort to amend that law was disapproved. As a

⁶⁸Ibid., 44.

⁶⁹ Aldrighi, 103-104.

⁷⁰ Markarian, 46.

result, Pacheco's handpicked successor, Juan María Bordaberry Arocena, won the presidency. Second, although it only won 18 percent of the vote, the Frente Amplio won 30 percent of the vote in Montevideo. In other words, nearly a fifth of the total population, and a third of the population of Montevideo, was disaffected with the current political system. Although the other four-fifths of the population voted for the traditional parties, this figure represents the first time in Uruguay's electoral history that a non-traditional party garnered considerable support from a significant portion of the population, suggesting that, at least in the city, the Tupamaros' armed propaganda campaign had been successful in influencing all sides of the left to challenge the established order (even if it were through the polls).⁷¹

More importantly, the 1971 elections marked the decisive end to Uruguay's ostensible tradition of two-party rule. Whereas for some time the measures initiated by Batllismo in the early twentieth century to support the principle of coparticipación—including the Ley de Lemas (double simultaneous voting, DSV), for instance—held the traditional parties together, they also, as a consequence, permitted members within them to form and join factions that encouraged individual promotion rather than the party's promotion as a whole. For example, while on one hand members of the Colorados competed under the same *lema*, its factional members competed among one another within different *sub-lemas*. Although the number of votes for each candidate within a sub-lema contributed to the overall number of votes for the party as a whole, it was quite possible to win a

⁷¹ González, 39.

government seat even if the party had a poor showing in an election. In addition, the constitutional reform to return to the presidential system in 1967, during a period of profound economic stagnation and potent guerrilla activity, expanded executive powers and further mitigated factional members' devotion to the party. After all, it was possible to achieve political power through enough self-promotion. Therefore, by 1971, many members of the legal left renounced their allegiance to the traditional elite and joined the Frente Amplio. In effect, while on one hand the formation of the Frente Amplio helped consolidate the now overtly authoritarian Colorado party by recruiting its disaffected members and thus strengthening its position against the left, by the same token its foundation substantiated a legitimate left-wing force that would continue to transform as it challenged the right and reemerged following the dictatorship to compete once again in electoral politics.

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