Despite communism's decline, Marxists gear up.

Colombia is ripe for revolution

By Gwynne Dyer

It's over 40 years since Fidel Castro swept down from the Sierra Maestre and captured Havana, but the conquest of Cuba by an army of left-wing guerillas still shapes policy and attitudes throughout Latin America. Colombia has four times Cuba's population, and it is not an island. If it fell to Marxist guerrillas, the impact would be huge.

It is bizarre to be talking about a possible Marxist takeover in Latin America's third most populous country 10 years after the fall of communism in Europe, but Latin America moves to its own rhythms — and even in the Latin context, Colombia is odd man out. It's quite fitting that the best-known historical novel about Colombia is Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

There was a time in the early 1990s when Colombia seemed to be rejoining the world. The economy was growing at 5 percent a year, and the endless guerrilla war in the backlands was finally winding down. But then came the narrow 1995 election victory of Ernesto Samper, a president who was clearly in the pocket of the drug cartels. Samper spent his entire term fighting drugs-related corruption charges, economic growth dropped to 1.5 percent and the guerrillas came roaring back.

By the time Andres Pastrana won the presidency in July 1998, the guerillas controlled about 40 percent of the country. He immediately launched "peace negotiations" with the biggest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), but there was no cease-fire.

Last month, FARC announced that preparations for the "first great offensive" against Bogota were continuing despite sporadic peace talks, and a guerrilla spectacular in the heart of the capital may be anticipated at any moment.

U.S. officials are now showing up almost weekly to promise support for Pastrana's government — and to question publicly whether it is wise for him to continue with the peace initiative. "The Colombians ... believe that there's life in the process," said U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs James Pickering on a lightning visit to Bogota last week. "The question is, has there been sufficient action to make the process worthwhile? I think we're on the borderline here."

As soon as Pickering finished speaking, rumors swept the country that the United States was about to intervene militarily in Colombia to forestall a rebel victory. "Totally false, totally crazy, totally irrelevant," said Pickering.

But while it would indeed be crazy for the United States to put combat troops into Colombia, Washington's obsession with the "war on drugs" is such that it cannot be totally excluded.

Washington could really help Pastrana by ending drug prohibition tomorrow, thus depriving the Colombian guerrillas of both cash flow and nationalist credibility. (It could have the further benefit of halving the U.S. crime rate and prison population at a stroke.) But since the American political context makes it impossible to apply rationality to the laws on psychoactive drugs, the situation in Colombia is likely to get worse, not better. It is already very bad.



TAYLOR JONES
Colombian President Andres Pastrana

Last January, Pastrana ceded the FARC a Switzerland-sized "demilitarized zone" as an inducement to start peace talks, but FARC leader Manuel "Sure-Shot" Marulanda, sensing that time is on his side, has repeatedly stood Pastrana up at key meetings. The National Liberation Army, a smaller, rival guerrilla group, has taken to mass kidnappings to extort its own demilitarized zone and equal representation at the negotiations. Meanwhile, ordinary Colombians are nearing despair.

Bogota certainly won't fall this year, but Colombia is rapidly sliding out of control. As Raul Reyes, a FARC commander, told the Guardian last month: "You must remember that the FARC is fighting for power. Not just to address the Senate in Bogota, but to govern Colombia."

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist.

Dulles brothers combined skills to reshape U.S. foreign policy

By Alvin S. Felzenberg

Dynasties are nothing new in American politics. Sets of brothers devising policy served in many administrations. John Foster Dulles and his younger brother, Allen, rank high among this century's most influential siblings.

At the height of the Cold War, when Foster was Secretary of State and Allen was director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the preservation of the peace appeared to rest on their shoulders. It often did. That is how President Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted it.

Couples

Standout pairs who embody the 20th century.

Ike usually followed advice the two foreign policy advisers he most respected gave him. Sometimes he used them as foils, with one brother playing the "hard-liner" to Eisenhower's "peacemaker." Occasionally, as in the time he refused to assist the French in Indochina, the President disregarded Foster's advice and Allen's data entirely.

Still, what the Dulles brothers achieved was significant, if not spectacular. They maintained and retooled the infrastructure that held together the Atlantic alliance and resisted the spread of communism. The passing of the Cold War has dimmed memories of how hard that was. The enemy they faced was real, its methods ruthless.

Actions the Dulles brothers took in the not-so-quiet 1950s made it possible for Ronald Reagan later to prevail over an "evil empire." Foster spoke of "rollbacks," "massive retaliation" and "brinkmanship" but sensed, from the information Allen gave him, that Stalinism's days were numbered.

The Dulleses shored up Western resolve, achieved short-term victories and held the line. Were they in power now — and had their successes not begot an overconfidence that led to recklessness — they might have found a neater way of handling the likes of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic than those George Bush, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair have tried.

The Dulles brothers were practically born into their assigned roles. Their grandfather, John W. Foster, had been Benjamin Harrison's secretary of state. An uncle, Robert Lansing, was Woodrow Wilson's.

At the age of 19, John Foster Dulles served as his grandfather's principal aide at an international conference. With America edging into World War I, Allen became mesmerized when he heard how his uncle's British colleagues kept abreast of German activities.

The Great War provided each Dulles an opportunity to hone his skills, Foster in diplomacy and Allen in espionage. Foster spent the war with Bernard Baruch's War Industries Board, directing shipments to neutral nations. Allen joined the American legation in Switzerland, a haven for spies.

Late one afternoon, Allen refused an emergency request to meet with an emigre named Lenin. The revolutionary departed for Russia that very night. Allen learned from his mistake. Through charm, wit and guile, he pried information from any source. He had a greater appreciation for nuance than his brother and was quicker to adjust.

Foster was more direct and confrontational. Churchill likened him to a "bull who carried around his own china shop." He was also all business. "Dull, Duller and Dulles," recalled Sir Winston.

The brothers left their mark at the Versailles conference of 1919. Foster worked on reparations, Allen on boundaries. Between the wars, they drew upon their familial and international network on behalf of legal clients. As Sullivan & Cromwell's senior partner, Foster became the highest-paid corporate lawyer in the United States.

In World War II, they returned to their country's service to do what they did best. Again in Switzerland, Allen arranged the Nazi surrender of Italy. Foster participated in the great international conferences and negotiated the peace treaty with Japan.

In Eisenhower's administration, the Dulles brothers became the great collaborators in American foreign policy and diplomacy. Foster was the plodding negotiator, Allen the plotter of covert operations. Under his brother's protective eye, Allen housed agents in U.S. enclaves throughout the world. Foster often went to the table armed with information his brother's operation furnished. Some of what Foster could not achieve in open negotiations, Allen accomplished surreptitiously.

Their methods had costs. Foster classified all nations into only two camps; both had an unwise tolerance for anti-communist dictatorships. Both of these foibles hampered American relations with developing countries. The facility with which Allen's minions toppled governments in Iran, Guatemala and the Congo led to disasters such as the U-2 spy-plane capture and the catastrophe of the Bay of Pigs.

But their careers in public service over more than four decades displayed an honor, integrity and courage that have become rare among statesmen. They helped set the course of a century.

Alvin S. Felzenberg, visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation, writes and lectures on the American presidency.

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Next president is likely to be from South

By Stephen Chapman

In 1974, Ted Kennedy made news by saying that the Democratic Party might be ready at last to nominate a Southerner for president, and Jimmy Carter soon proved him right. It was a harbinger of things to come.

By 1992, the presidential election featured not one but three Southern contenders: George Bush (Texas), Bill Clinton (Arkansas) and Ross Perot (Texas). Today, the question seems to be: Can anyone but a Southerner be nominated by either party?

Following the Iowa Republican Party straw poll, almost everyone remaining in the race has a Southern connection, and the stronger it is, the stronger the candidate. The two front-runners, George W. Bush and Al Gore, hail from Texas and Tennessee. Among Bush's GOP rivals are Elizabeth Dole, who grew up in North Carolina; Gary Bauer, a product of Newport, Ky., and Pat Buchanan, a Washington, D.C., native who brags of his Confederate forebears and does a respectable facsimile of a Southern accent.

Even Democratic challenger Bill Bradley, who represented New Jersey in the U.S. Senate, spent his childhood in Missouri, which is not always thought of as part of the South but was a slave state. In the whole field, only Steve Forbes, Dan Quayle and John McCain can't claim roots in Dixie.

What is more even more notable than the prevalence of Southerners in the race is that nobody cares — or even notices. Once upon a time, ties to the Confederacy were fatal. When Carter won in 1976, he became the first non-incumbent president from the South to be elected since Zachary Taylor 128 years earlier. The Republican Party had never nominated a Southerner for president until George Bush. But Bush was succeeded in the White House by an Arkansan, Bill Clinton. And the next president is likely to be another Southerner.

It used to be a handicap for a presidential candidate to sound like he would fit in at the Grand Ole Opry. Lyndon Johnson was widely ridiculed for a thick drawl that would be perfectly inconspicuous on the modern campaign trail. Gore, the St. Alban's graduate, sometimes sounds like he's auditioning to lead a tent revival. George W. Bush, who got his higher education at Yale and Harvard, makes no effort to soften his oil-field twang, even when he's speaking to New Yorkers or Californians.

Few are noticing the prevalence of Southerners among the presidential candidates.

New Yorkers and Californians used to be the ones who dominated national politics. Just to be elected governor or senator there was enough to get you considered for the presidential ticket. Richard Nixon, who claimed each as his home at different times, was on the GOP ticket in five of the six elections from 1952 to 1972.

Michael Barone, co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics*, notes that the 1944 election featured two presidential candidates, Franklin Roosevelt and Thomas Dewey, who had served as governor of New York and had homes that were seven blocks apart in Manhattan. Today, by contrast, the average American couldn't tell you the name of the governor of either New York or California if her life depended on it. (George Pataki and Gray Davis, if you must know.)

But the landscape is not what it was. Half a century ago, New York City alone cast one out of every 13 votes in the nation. Since then, the votes have migrated west and south, and power has moved as well. The GOP congressional leadership is overstocked with Southerners — Trent Lott, Dick Armey, Tom DeLay and, until recently, Newt Gingrich and Bob Livingston.

Cultural fashions have also changed. Nowadays, New Yorkers seem a bit alien to many Americans, and Californians tend to be regarded as a tad flaky. Bush and Gore appear far less parochial than Rudy Giuliani, Al D'Amato or Barbara Boxer. Once seen as the kinfolk of Bull Connor and Minnie Pearl, Southerners now come across as typically American — patriotic, friendly, outdoorsy and down-to-earth.

The region's overall image and substance have also evolved. Previously perceived as poor, backward, racist and obstinately wedded to outmoded ways, it is now seen as dynamic, relaxed and livable. The Northeast, by contrast, suffers from its image as a declining region of congestion, cultural elitism and high taxes.

In terms of popular image, New York is subways and limousines, California is Mercedes convertibles and the South is pickup trucks. So Dixie's rise to dominate national politics may be inevitable in a country where sales of light trucks have doubled in the last 20 years. When we choose a president, silly as it may sound, we prefer someone who would look comfortable behind the wheel of a pickup. And that's something Southerners are good at.

Steve Chapman is a syndicated columnist. His e-mail address is schapman@tribune.com.

Tomorrow: "The Urban Perspective" with Acel Moore; "Alarms and Diversions" with David Boldt.

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