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University youth as social protagonist in Latin America

Henry Kirsch

In the last years of the 1960s it was common practice for students of social conditions in Latin America to present university youth as one of the key agents in the processes of change. The story of its demands and the results of its actions since the Córdoba movement form a very important element in the region's socio-political history. However, the systematic study of the condition of the university student movement has not been brought up to date and its role in the processes of change in the region is one of the least known areas of social analysis. And this is why at the present time, given the dizzying transformation of socio-economic and political structures which the region has undergone, it may be wondered to what extent such a capacity and potential exist.

Against this background, the article interprets Latin America's present crisis as a failure of hegemony and stresses the importance of the search for social agents to be the driving force of collective action in the future. It then examines some broad aspects of university youth: its social integration in the process of social change in the region, including the impact of the crisis on the employment of university graduates; the capacity of the intellectual to perform the role of intermediary between political leaders, State techno-bureaucrats and civil society in general; and, lastly, the possible modes of expression and the alliances available to university youth as it faces up to the challenge of the crisis.

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Today's crisis in Latin America: failure of hegemony and search for social agents to be the driving forces of collective action

The present crisis in Latin America is making it increasingly clear that its causes lie not only in external factors but also in other internal factors characteristic of a dependent capitalist type of development. The economic problems and indeed the socio-political contradictions inherent in such development have made it impossible to form a relatively stable social alliance capable of promoting development with equity and participation. The present time has been posited as one in which the old ruling groups and sectors are beginning to fall apart from within and at the same time are losing their legitimacy as society's ruling strata, without, so far, the necessary conditions emerging among the other groups for them to constitute an option. It has thus become current to speak of the lack of vision about the direction of change or the lack of specific development options which are both viable and desirable. In other words, the search for greater effective participation, for a broader democratization, in societies which are confronted at the same time with an economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude, has become increasingly associated with a feeling of exasperation with the present and with a desire to break free from today's oppressive conditions, rather than with a precise picture of a projected future.

To some extent, the situation in a large part of the region, making allowances for the diversity of national situations, might be defined in terms of different degrees of failure, according to the variety of situations found in the traditional, historical or structural categories, in the task of establishing and maintaining the hegemony needed to direct and control the different national development processes. To

put it another way, the bloc holding political power lacks the necessary leadership capacity to solve the problems of the community and exercise its controlling function, and the acceptance of its writ has declined to the point where it is no longer sufficient to ensure the united functioning of this historical bloc (Broccoli, 1977).

This idea of the constitutional failure of hegemony has been described differently by Brunner (1983) as what occurs at a moment in history when "A politico-cultural constellation loses its capacity to produce: i) the legitimacy required by the system of distribution of the means of cultural production; ii) the legitimacy required by the system of integration in the symbolic market". In the first of these cases, he is referring to a crisis of symbolic control in which the ruling class is deprived of its supremacy in the cultural field. This is a crisis of intellectual and moral authority which does not necessarily mean that this class ceases to occupy a dominant position. In the second case, the crisis of integration can occur as a result of significant changes in some of the fundamental factors which govern the production and consumption of the goods of the symbolic market. Such changes include many of the fundamental transformations which Latin American society has undergone at whirlwind speed during the last three decades. It is worth mentioning some of them: the expansion of the modern tertiary sector; the urbanization of the population; industrialization; the emergence of a massive critical capacity among the middle-range groups as a result of the expansion of higher education; the expansion of primary and secondary education, in conjunction with the urban literacy campaigns; the spread of the mass communication media in rural and urban areas; the displacement of the family as the central agent of social training, and others.

Many recent studies have argued that the present economic crisis has brought into the open the crises in the various social systems whose effects have been felt since a much earlier period. It must then be asked—assuming that the continuation of the current model with slight modifications is not an adequate response—as to how to formulate new visions of development that will lead to democratic and stable societies

and facilitate the integration of the large majorities of society at the same time as mastering the current economic situation.

This search implies an urgent need to identify the various groups, classes or movements in civil society which might provide the support for these new visions and leaders and for the political-social and economic-social process essential to the formulation and application of alternative policies.

In the last years of the 1960s it was common practice for students of social conditions in Latin America to present university youth as one of the key social agents in the processes of change. Today, given the dizzying transformation of socioeconomic and political structures which the region has undergone, it may be wondered to what degree such a potential capacity exists. It is true that the student movement organized the participation of young people not only in the universities but in society as well. The story of its demands and of the results of its action since the Córdoba movement are of great importance in the region's socio-political history. Significant differences of tone are found in the societies of individual countries and at different times, especially in view of the very long time which the profound transformation of the socioeconomic and political structures of the region has taken. The actions of university youth were important events in the past and they have shown great versatility, both in their subject-matter and in their forms of expression. However, the systematic study of the condition of the university student movement has not been brought up to date, and its role in the region's processes of change is one of the least known areas of social analysis.

There are both historical indications and concrete recent demonstrations in several countries of the effective capacity and remarkable potential of certain sectors of university youth, in specific conditions, to emerge as significant political and social protagonists. This paper does not seek to deal with this expectation in detail or to analyse it in various national and institutional situations, but rather to offer from this starting point some thoughts which may serve as a frame of reference for more detailed consideration at the

national level through study of specific cases. Four broad aspects of university youth will be discussed: the social integration of university youth in the context of the process of social transformation in the region; the effects of the crisis on the employment situation of university

youth and the relationship between it, the intellectuals and social change; and, lastly, the possible modes of expression and alliances available to university youth as it faces up to the challenge of the current crisis both in social and political matters and in economic affairs.

II

The social integration of university youth

With respect to the specific problem of the social integration of university students, there are several axes on which the analysis must be centered.

Firstly, there is the magnitude of the increase in the numbers of university graduates and the speed at which this increase came about. For example, in the space of the 20 years from 1960 to 1980, the number of young people with 13 or more years of education increased by three times in Brazil, nine times in Chile, almost 10 times in Panama, and 17 times in Peru. In the large majority of the countries of the region around 1980 more than 10% of the young people in the 20-24 age group were taking higher education courses, and in a large number of the countries (about a third) there was one student for every five or six young people aged 20 to 24. In countries such as Ecuador and Peru university students are as numerous as industrial manual workers. There are other equally eloquent figures: between five and six million students graduating from university in the region; two thousand university faculties in Brazil; and 170 university centres in Colombia. The number of women involved in this process is also remarkable; the increase in the number of women graduates was such that in about 1980 roughly two in five university students were young women.

It is useful to give closer attention to the figures on this vast expansion of higher education, for a more detailed analysis of them reveals internal disparities both between

countries and within the structure of higher education in each country. For example, it has recently been pointed out that: "the highest level of tertiary education is found in Ecuador, with one graduate for every three young people; the countries with one or more graduates for every five young people are, in descending order, Costa Rica, Argentina, Panama and Venezuela, while Cuba and Peru have almost that ratio; with one or more for every eight there are Uruguay, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chile; with one for every 10, Brazil and Colombia; the other countries have lower ratios. It is difficult to establish a link between university education and structural characteristics; the concept and quality of university education differ from country to country and within each country; the selection capacity of pre-university education also varies; the priority which the middle classes attach to higher education seems to be universal, but in some cases the power systems have responded positively to the demands, and in others they have upgraded the standard of education or, more simply, have established selective entry" (Rama, 1984).

The situation is certainly very complicated, especially in the light of the high degree of exclusion of marginal urban and rural youth found in a large number of countries, which leads to segmentation in education and social polarization of sizeable youth sectors (table 1; ECLAC, 1983; Kirsch, 1984). However, any study of the social integration of university youth must take into account the quantitative changes, for

Table 1

ILLITERACY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

	Gross rate of schooling up to 198C1"		Illiterates; pop. 15 and <over (percentages)		Illiterates 15-24 years
	Universities and similar	Tertiary level	1950	1980	1970
Rapid modernization countries					
Argentina	18.0	22.2	13.6	6.7	4.2
Chile	10.9	13.2	19.8	7.5	4.7
Uruguay	16.1	16.1*	9.5(1963)	6.1(1975)	
Costa Rica	21.5	25.8	20.6	7.0	5.2
Cuba	19.5	19.5	22.1	3.9	
Panama	22.2	22.2	30.0	15.3	12.4
Venezuela	17.9	20.2	50.5	17.7	12.0
Total	17.1	19.7^e	26.1	9.7	7.7
Big countries with rapid and unbalanced modernization					
Brazil	11.7	11.7	50.5	26.0	24.5
Mexico	12.2	14.0	43.2	16.0	16.4
Colombia	10.5	10.9	37.7	13.7	11.5
Total	11.7	12.3^e	43.8	18.6	17.5
Medium-sized and small countries with partial modernization					
Ecuador	36.6	36.6	44.3	18.7	14.2
Paraguay	6.7	6.8	34.2	14.3	9.6
Peru	15.4	19.2*	38.9(1961)	18.5	13.5
Dominican Republic	7.5	7.5	57.1	26.4	21.1
Total	18.0	19.9^e	45.2	19.8	14.6
Countries with incipient modernization					
Bolivia	9.3	9.3	67.9	36.7	17.3
El Salvador	2.9	3.9*	60.6	35.3	28.8
Guatemala	6.7	7.2	70.7	47.3	45.4
Haiti	0.8	0.8 ⁶	89.5	71.3	
Honduras	7.6	8.2	64.8	31.4	27.1
Nicaragua	13.7	14.1	61.6	33.5	35.1
Total	6.2	6.6^e	65.1	36.8	30.7

Source: Germán W. Rama, *La evolución social de América Latina, 1950-1980: transición y cambio estructural*, document presented to the seminar on development options in Latin America organized by the University of the Andes and the Joint Study Programme on the International Relations of Latin America (RIAL), Cali, August 1984.

"Calculated as the ratio of graduates to the population aged 20 to 24.

*These countries were excluded to establish the averages of the country categories.

⁶Simple arithmetical averages.

"in 1979 the figures for El Salvador were 7.4 and 8.1 per cent respectively.

they indicate an important qualitative change: the formerly élite levels have been transformed into mass levels. In view of the importance of the student movement in the past and the social changes which occurred at these times of crisis, it is necessary to determine in what terms university students can be seen as potential human resources with an innovative cultural capacity whose participation would have implications for the strengthening or establishment of democracy and the formation of alliances to co-ordinate the general interests of the various groups.

In Latin America the concrete expressions of this potential will be determined to a large extent by the relative importance of various other factors determining the integration of university graduates in society. Traditionally, it has been thought that there is a direct and positive correlation between the socio-political participation of university youth and the proportion of university students in the young population and in the total population. The prevailing assumption has been that the importance of young people from the universities as a collective social agent increases in direct proportion to their relative increase in the two population groups mentioned above. However, the evidence shows that the situation is much more complicated and diversified. The quantitative expansion of upper education has taken place in conjunction with all the other social changes mentioned earlier and with other political and cultural changes which have altered the participation parameters of all the social sectors. It is therefore important to take into account factors such as the consolidation of the political parties as focuses of the political struggle in some cases, the emergence of authoritarian rule and the restoration of democracy in others, the development of new axes of creativity and innovation in knowledge and culture (from enterprises themselves down to non-formal activity), and the "merchandizing" of cultural processes, etc. (Rama and Faletto, 1984). This set of factors calls for a relocation of the conditions and forms of participation by young people from the universities in the disposition of the region's political protagonists. This need appears even more urgent when the many internal changes in

higher education are also taken into consideration.

In some countries the increase in the number of university graduates indicates a remarkable process of democratization which, however, does not extend beyond the lower sectors of the middle classes, since social selection takes place at the lower levels of the education system. From the socio-political standpoint, this marks the beginning of a new relationship between the middle classes, the higher education system and the power structure (Rama and others, 1984).

This process is also linked with a change in the concept of the university. On the one hand, the expansion of university education and the consequent production of professionals on a large scale, unmatched by growth in jobs requiring university qualifications, have led to a professional proletarianization which is proceeding apace in many countries. On the other hand, after the attempts to modernize the universities in the 1960s through the inclusion of technical courses and changes in existing courses in accordance with the higher education models of the countries of the north, courses have steadily become more differentiated and specialized. Furthermore, from the beginning of the 1970s up to the present, the university expansion has been accompanied by a great proliferation of tertiary institutions of various kinds, such as professional institutes, academies and technical education centres.

This has frequently meant the acquisition of increasingly specialized knowledge, in particular on the part of the broadest and lowest segments of the middle classes. These people, with their educational credentials, make demands on and offer criticism of the prevailing social order, which is incapable of satisfying their expectations of mobility, job status and incomes.

The increase in the numbers of graduates and the changes in the social origins of the university population promoted a qualitative differentiation among the intellectual strata, which will assuredly have other roles and positions in the various future political situations. This raises the question of the role of universities in developing ideologies and legitimizing society's value system.

These processes led to the familiar phenomenon of segmentation and

establishment of hierarchies in higher education. Education has ceased to be an agent of cultural and social homogenization; education differs according to the type of establishment in which it is provided, and the top groups will thus have the distinctive value of their knowledge restored, pulling rank on the educational qualifications acquired by the great majority. In some countries this phenomenon has emerged in a higher-education system characterized by specialization and ranking of universities, by increasing privatization of the more prestigious higher courses and by the transfer of more specialized and strategic training for the perpetuation of the existing social order to academic centres and other extra-university bodies, which have some of the most effective mechanisms of selection for élite positions. There is therefore an increasing elitist trend in a small university sector which is gradually

gaining in independence and a parallel devaluation of higher education for the masses, with a clear decline in their functional importance and social prestige (ECLAC, 1983; Rodriguez, 1978; Parra, 1985; PUE, 1984).

Nevertheless, despite these contradictions and the consequent accentuation of the concentration of incomes, it cannot be denied that in step with the expansion of access to higher education there have been profound changes in the system of job stratification, especially in certain cases in connection with the expansion of the modern tertiary sector and of State services in particular. It was primarily in the periods of economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s that the process of social mobility permitted the incorporation of a large number of persons in the middle and upper parts of the pyramid, as a result of the expansion and specialization of the corresponding jobs.

III

Effects of the crisis on the employment of university graduates

In many senses it can be seen that the crisis of the 1980s is bringing into the open the unresolved contradictions and shortcomings of the post-war style of development. With respect to university students and their job expectations, it is clear that the social groups which recently acquired higher education are being passed over in the work markets, as the process of their incorporation in higher-ranking jobs has run out of steam.

The problems of the employment of young people with higher education, as in the case of their social integration and, as we shall see, their socio-political role, are extremely complex ones. The difficulties of finding work do not affect all the graduates from universities and other tertiary institutions in the same way: there is an internal differentiation among these young people, who generally come from the middle and

upper strata of society. Those from the middle strata who manage to find work in the most dynamic centres of the expanding tertiary sector acquire levels of income and status which assimilate them to the top strata of society. In contrast, other young people from some of the middle sectors are obliged to accept lower-status jobs. Given the abundance of the labour supply and the increasing tightness of the work market, there is a continual increase in the educational qualifications for jobs which do not in fact require them, such as some administrative or even manual jobs. Young people with university training, especially those from mass education institutions, have been compelled to compete in segments of the work market traditionally reserved for persons with secondary education, without succeeding thereby in reducing the alarming rates of open unemployment among

Table 2

**CHILE, PANAMA: OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN THE POPULATION AGED 15
TO 24, BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND SEX, 1960, 1970 AND 1980**

	1960			1970			1980		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
CHILE									
Educational level									
0 - 3	4.6	5.5	1.8	1.3	1.6	0.4	13.5	13.6	12.8
4 - 6	5.9	7.0	3.0	1.6	1.9	0.8	14.2	15.5	10.3
7 - 9	8.9	8.5	10.2	2.8	2.8	2.8	19.9	21.1	16.4
10 and over	10.4	10.9	9.4	6.1	7.0	4.7	25.3	24.8	26.0
Total	6A	7.5	4.4	2.5	2.6	2.0	20.6	20.7	20.5
PANAMA									
Educational level									
0 - 3	1.7	1.4	3.9	4.3	2.8	10.5	10.5	6.9	24.4
4 - 6	7.4	6.8	9.0	9.8	7.0	16.3	11.1	10.6	12.9
7 - 9	12.3	10.1	15.8	15.4	15.5	23.7	16.7	14.9	21.0
10 and over	10.6	9.0	12.1	9.6	8.5	10.8	19.2	18.6	19.9
Total	6.5	5.3	10.1	9.3	6.5	15.3	14.7	12.9	18.4

Source: CEPAL, *Situación y perspectivas de la juventud en América Latina*, (E/CEPAL/Conf.75/L.2), 1983.

young people with higher education, particularly women. Table 2 presents, by way of example, the figures for two countries of the region.

The dramatic reduction in the job options of a large part of the present university generation, when added to the abrupt frustration of the aspirations of other youth sectors, heralds fresh tensions and problems for university students.

In view of the historic activities of Latin American student movements in the vanguard of social change, especially in exceptional times, and given the spreading doubts about the real value of the existing models and the uncertainty about the future, this sector might be one of the key social agents in the identification of new policies.

IV

University youth, the intellectuals and the process of social change

As has been pointed out, there is general agreement about the historical importance of student movements as agents of cultural and university change, as forums for the selection of society's élites and contra-élites, or as forces which combine with broader political

movements. Students have taken an active part in social and political events; they have been the bearers of social change, and they have performed as political actors (ECLAC, 1983; Forrachi, 1972; Montiel, 1984). At the present time certain student groups constitute a kind of

ideological conscience of society, just as, despite the differences, intellectuals have been in other cultures and societies.

This has a special connection with the importance of the creative power of the intellectuals in the various university faculties, in particular in the social sciences and in literature, art and teacher-training courses, a power which can be measured by its capacity to intervene with the techno-bureaucratic political leaders and in the various strata of society.¹

It must be remembered that the harsh criticism of the ideology of the technocratic-society model began and developed in step with the importance acquired in the universities by social science studies. The scientific analysis of the social situation highlighted the ambiguities of social goals, the contradictory principles, the rigidity of the stratification, the concentration of income, and the power relationships and the way they work in the maintenance of social structures. Both the criticisms and their political consequences became more pointed when the social science faculties focussed their attention on the dependent status of Latin America and on the analysis of social problems as the offspring of the social structure.

It is true that as a result sometimes of repression and sometimes of the process of expansion itself, the universities lost a large part of their creative capacity. However, this was taken over by academic centres and independent research and teaching institutes in economics, sociology, anthropology and political science.

It must be remembered here that persons with a background in the social sciences and other intellectual areas are prominent at the present time among the leaders of democratic political movements in several countries of the region. In the light of this fact and taking into account the expansion of university education, especially among the middle sectors, the large numbers of graduates from universities and

¹It is not the intention here to obfuscate the role of intellectuals or university students in these processes by confusing their activities with those of people with the power of decision, but merely to recognize the influence exercised in the region at various historical points by those who have created and disseminated a critical awareness of society and new ideas which help to shape the future.

other forms of higher education among the young population of Latin America and the consequent massive growth of the intellectual outlook among the population, the consideration of the topic of university students now has to focus on the role of the intellectuals in the shaping of new types of society.

Three basic trends can be distinguished in the role of the intellectuals in society.² One trend is to attach greater significance to the "differential position of the intellectual in the culture"; the other emphasizes his relationship with power. The first trend takes education and employment as the framework for the analysis, the second deals basically with the function of the intellectual as producer and intermediary of ideologies and with his consequent involvement in the hegemony struggles in society. The first of these traditions has its roots in the thinking of Weber, followed by Parkin, Alwin Gouldner and Mannheim (Brunner and Flisfisch, 1983).

The second conceptual interpretation is based on the thinking of Gramsci. For him, the intellectuals perform a central function in achieving homogeneity in the social and political fields. They do not form a class but they act as intermediaries for the ruling group, both in civil society by promoting mass consensus, and in political society or the State through the State's apparatus of coercion.

In a crisis of hegemony, the ruling groups lose their leadership capacity and the subject groups succeed in criticizing the ruling culture and they seek to formulate an alternative culture in which they will obtain their own independence. In this crisis of authority, which is nothing less than a crisis of the whole State, a new power grouping is constituted which prepares what Gramsci calls a new historical bloc. The new element in the preparation of this alternative is that it is designed to put an end to exploitation, to bring the bureaucratic interest into line with the public interest, and to establish by means of a democratic option of electoral participation a pluralist interaction between civil society and the State, in order to resolve the

²There is also a third possibility, which is to consider intellectuals as a modernizing élite, e.g., Edward Shils; Parsons and John Friedman.

tensions between universalist and particularist tendencies. Here, the key role in Latin America in formulating and achieving the necessary consensus in society rests with the intellectuals. In this task great importance also attaches to certain student sectors, understood as social movements, since historically they have been very closely associated with the dissemination, the development and in some cases the elaboration of ideologies. The themes proposed by Latin American society as a whole (revolution, democracy, modernization, etc.) have always found in university youth a favourable forum for discussion and concerted action.

Touraine (1984) says of Latin America that "the production of ideologies does not take place primarily in the parties. It is consistently

associated with the universities. The first reason for this independence is the lack in recent decades of a strong and stable aristocratizing culture". This lack and its consequence are explained as follows: "in Latin America, the long cycle of conflicts preceding the State constitution and the succession of economic changes with the consequent partial or total renovation of the higher groups, prevented —with some exceptions— the persistence of a carrier group of a superior culture transmittable through the family. On the contrary, culture was a creation of the educational system, therefore theoretically accessible to all" (ECLAC, 1983). The university world is not dominated either by tradition or by a generation conflict and the search for independence by young people, but rather by producers of ideas and ideologies.

Forms of expression and alliances of youth with other forces against the present crisis and for the future

While it is true that at the present time confusion and uncertainty seem to abound and there is a general void of new and precise ideas about the future, some tentative observations can nevertheless be made about the potential role of university youth in a transition to other development styles. Recent studies of the condition of young people in Latin America agree on several basic topics which have held the attention of Latin American young people. These general problems include: the relationship with the democratic compromise, which is closely connected with an option for "alternative development"; the relationship with Latin American integration and co-operation as responses to the series of problems set by the current crisis; and the State-Nation debate at a time when it is being redefined.

In order to avoid confusion, it should be stressed that it is not a question of establishing a

directly proportional relationship between the socio-political participation of university youth and its quantitative weight in the young population and the total population. It is important to increase now the proportion of young people who can participate by reason of their higher education in the process of rationalizing modern society and can react to a language which has a greater intellectual content than "charismatic" speeches. It is also important to reiterate that the present situation is very complicated and that there are many differences between the countries of the region and within each of them. The reason for this is that the quantitative expansion of higher education has been accompanied by other profound social changes, some of which have significantly altered the structure of the socio-political participation of all the social groups. These changes include, in addition to those associated

with urbanization and the modernization of the economy and the urban socio-occupational structure, others directly related to the socio-political interaction of the university students: the organization of the means of cultural production, the evolution of the political parties and their relationships with youth, the existence and nature of the various authoritarian régimes, the different forms of democratic reconstitution, the differences in the prevailing attitude towards students' images of themselves and of society, which depend on the type of institution or faculty which they attend, etc. All this gives grounds for hope of different and dissenting modes of expression on the major topics mentioned above on the part of all the various groups which make up the generic category of "university youth", modes of expression further diversified by the particular features of each country.

This means that individual national cases must be examined if proper consideration is to be given to the topic of the role of university youth in shaping the new social organizations that will come into being after the current socio-political and economic crisis. However, for the moment, and taking duly into account the diversity of the actual situations, the possible responses of young people from the universities to the challenges of the future can be grouped around five basic positions.

The first of these may be called "particularist". It can be seen that in some specific cases certain sectors of young people from the middle class will seek, in the expansion of the role of the State as employer in the bureaucracy, an opportunity to create room for themselves and also to try to reassert their position as intermediary in political organizations, pressure groups, trade unions, etc. The ideological identification of these groups may be heterogeneous, as was the case in recent times in Argentina and Uruguay. An example has been given of the case of the identification of young people with the working-class sectors but not in specific national projects (Braslavsky, 1985; Franco, 1984).

The second position can be seen in some countries in the isolation of young people from the universities. Young people have a poor

image of the existing political parties, which in turn do not offer mechanisms of continuity (and not just for election purposes) by means of which young people can participate effectively, train for leadership positions and involve themselves in a more organic manner. As a result partly of the exhaustion of the urban industrial model and the modernization process, which had begun in several countries even before the current crisis, a feeling of political frustration will spread among university youth in some countries. The student movements which were at their peak in the 1960s and the first part of the 1970s have tended to break up into small parties of the Left or into groups which deviated towards guerrilla activity (Leal, 1981). The root causes of this phenomenon are profound and complex. In the case of Colombia, Rodrigo Parra points out that "the low level of political participation of Colombian youth seems to be determined by two types of factor and their interrelationship: the lack of a national goal, of a purpose investing the action of the State and the political parties with meaning and within which young people can see themselves as an integral part, and the lack of a plan to define the direction in which society is headed (similar to the idea of industrialization, urbanization and modernization in the 1950s and 1960s); and the consequent loss of educational power by the social institutions which exist for this purpose, such as the family, the school and the political parties" (Parra, 1985). Adopting a third posture, other groups of university students might opt for more radical methods, since they have been made more aware of the position of the working classes and other subordinate groups and are concerned about their participation in society. Their choice of an alternative style will seek to reject the completely pluralist solution and mobilize the masses to take power.

The fourth position, which is somewhat similar to the previous one, involves centres of revolutionary action in the universities during governmental crises or periods of recession, with a *sui generis* expression in countries with a high proportion of Indian population. An example of this position already exists in the form of Sendero Luminoso which had its origins among the students of the University of

Guamanga in Ayacucho, which is certainly one of the poorest Departments of Peru (Medianero, 1984) and which then went on to influence the Universities of Cuzco and Lima.

Lastly, other sectors of university youth, aware of the existing contradictions in exclusive forms of democracy, will probably try to form alliances and achieve consensus with various groups in society. Examples of such alliances with working-class or peasant sectors can be found in Central America. In other countries, the more recent tendency for proliferation of grassroots communities, co-operatives and other forms of "popular organization" may prove very significant with respect to the transformation of society. Given the state of continuous tension between civil society and the State, the groups of young university students who cherish ideas similar to the ones which Flisfisch (1983) has called "fundamental orientations" for a new democratic ideology might establish basic accords and alliances with the groups representing the mass sectors and the working class.

According to Flisfisch's outline, these alliances based on "fundamental orientations" will be formed around four ideological axes:

- a) the idea of the dissemination and consolidation of effective practices of self-government;
- b) the idea of expansion of the areas subject to personal control;
- c) the idea of the need for fragmentation or socialization of power; and
- d) the idea of restoration (which is tantamount to improvement) to the community of personal capacities and potentials which have been lost in the interplay of social structures which have become automatized in their relations with the women and men subject to them."

This last posture available to sectors of university youth finally seems to be the only option compatible with a serious intention to direct society towards a pluralist democracy and to end the alienation which up to now has been a feature of social relations in Latin America.

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