The Presence of Maoism in Mexico
Florencio “el Güero” Medrano and the Proletarian Neighborhood

ABSTRACT During the Cold War, the influence of Maoism as a third way of establishing a new international order inspired several Latin American guerrilla groups, including some in Mexico. This article analyzes the influence of Maoism in Mexico in particular, and pays specific attention to how Florencio Medrano, a peasant leader, was motivated by Maoist thought to establish the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood, a self-governing neighborhood, and how this site was considered a critical factor for his development as a guerrilla. In the continuing debate over the relationship between agency and structure, the life and work of Florencio Medrano evidences how both social context and personal history influenced his aspirations and demands. By conducting an analysis of primary and secondary sources, this article analyzes some elements of Maoist thought and its diffusion in Latin America in the context of the Cold War. In addition, the article explains the political formation of Florencio Medrano in the Mexican post-revolutionary period, examines Maoist influences on his political formation and participation in pro-communist organizations, and reviews Maoist influence on the organization of the Rubén Jaramillo Neighborhood. Finally, the conclusions emphasize how the peasant origins of Medrano gave rise to his particular understanding of Maoism.

KEYWORDS Maoism, Mexico, proletarian neighborhood, guerrilla

MAOISM AND LATIN AMERICA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR

In the context of the Cold War, the principles of Maoism offered a program for the economic and social transformation of Latin America. Mao rejected the doctrine of peaceful coexistence and took a critical attitude to the revisionist approach adopted by the leaders of the Soviet Union (Hsü, 1999, p. 678). Maoist thought enjoyed an aura of prestige among the members of a new generation of young Latin Americans who found that his ideas answered their quest for new paradigms to solve the deep social problems of the region (Urrego, 2017, p. 111). The proponents of Maoism inspired different political and social movements that championed the principles of an anti-imperialist struggle and the construction of a new society. Mao’s transformation of China therefore became an example of a popular revolution that had overcome what was considered a false dichotomy between the “First World,” headed by the United States, and the “Second World,” led by the Soviet Union.¹ Maoism and the experience of the communist revolution in

¹ Beginning with the Bandung Conference in 1955, the communist government of the newly founded People’s Republic of China sought a place among the non-aligned nations, distinguishing itself from both the capitalist
China were presented as a hopeful path that would allow semi-colonized peoples to achieve true liberation from imperialist forces, regardless of whether these were capitalist or Soviet (Pinkoski, 2013, p. 232).

The historical experience of the Chinese communists, who took power after a long and exhausting civil war, created a strong link between the struggle for decolonization and liberation and the triumph of communism. Maoism therefore could be a fundamental ingredient in the double fight for colonial liberation and the setting up of a new economic and social order that would lead to communism. Motivated by its experience of 19th-century imperialist aggression (Jian, 2001, p. 4), China proclaimed itself a country allied with oppressed peoples, defying the United States and other imperialist or Western colonial powers. At that time, Chinese communist dogma maintained that the inevitable world victory of communism could only come through revolutionary struggle (Martínez, 1970, p. 90).

The example of the Chinese revolution showed that victory was unattainable without the mass participation of peasants, and Maoism was a way to social transformation. Mao’s vision inspired the formation of different pro-Chinese parties in Brazil (1962), Ecuador (1963), Chile and Peru (1964), and Bolivia and Colombia (1965) (Connelly, 1983, p. 215). Maoism exercised a special attractiveness for underdeveloped, colonized, or decolonized states, and the Chinese government encouraged these political organizations to abandon the pro-Soviet line and embrace the Maoist model of revolutionary struggle (Lovell, 2019, p. 16). Maoism also inspired political movements that believed taking up armed struggle was a legitimate way of transforming the economic, political, and social structures of Latin America. Some of these movements were the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, the Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army) in Colombia, and the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement) in Bolivia (Rothwell, 2017, pp. 1–4). In Mexico, peasant guerrillas reflected “an unexpected constellation of radical traditions crystallized in . . . insurrectionary movements” (Avín, 2014, p. 4). This was the context in which Florencio “el Güero” Medrano founded a political organization—Partido Proletario Unido de América (United Proletarian Party of America)—and established an urban territory that peasant guerrillas would use as a base for the beginning of the revolution.

This territory, the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood, reveals the singular interpretation of Maoism derived from the personal context of Medrano’s life. The foundation of the new urban settlement was in Temixco, in the Mexican state of Morelos, a region with a long tradition of agrarian struggles. In the 1960s and 1970s, the appropriation of unoccupied land for the founding of self-governing neighborhoods was seen as a solution to alleviate the pressing need for decent housing. Land appropriation helped to overcome the poverty and marginalization of thousands of new arrivals in

---

1. West” and the Soviet Union. The same distinction would emerge years later, in the so-called “theory of the three worlds,” when Mao placed China in the category of Third World nations, against the “capitalist imperialism” represented by the United States and the “social imperialism” of the Soviet Union (Dirlik, 2014, p. 235).

2. Güero is a word in Mexican colloquial language for a blonde person.
large Latin American cities. However, the experience of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood went a step beyond the attempt to guarantee the right to modest housing because the proposal behind the neighborhood was to establish an outpost from which the vanguard of social transformation would operate. Medrano imagined this site as a laboratory where his party could implement some principles of Maoist political thought within a “liberated” territory. He intended that the zones would constitute the base of popular support for the subsequent development of a guerrilla movement inspired by the experience of the Jiangxi Soviet in revolutionary China.3

I suggest that, although the Latin American historical and social context during the Cold War favored the establishment and expansion of political organizations and guerrilla movements based on Maoist thought, the personal history of Medrano was the principal factor that made the experience of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood so unique. In the debate between individual agency and social structure, this case shows how, although historical and social structures frame significant moments in history, the life and work of individuals does influence their particular destiny. The life of Medrano indicates that the will, vision, decisions, and actions of influential leaders put a distinctive stamp on historical development.4

With the aim of analyzing the influence of Maoist thought on the setting up and organization of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood, I have organized this article into four sections. First, I analyze Maoist thought and its impact on Latin America in the context of the Cold War. Second, I examine the life of Medrano in the framework of post-revolutionary Mexico, the Maoist influences on his political formation, and his participation in the Partido Proletario Unido de América. Third, I analyze the Maoist influences on the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood, considering how Medrano adopted some Maoist principles. Finally, I conclude by reviewing how his peasant roots forged the ideas and actions of his Maoist thought.

THE FASCINATION OF MAOIST THOUGHT IN LATIN AMERICA DURING THE COLD WAR

In many ways, Maoist thought created a counterpoint to the dominant Marxist ideas, giving it a special attraction to the peoples of the Third World (Lovell, 2019, p. 8). Mao’s theoretical assumptions about revolutionary struggle have their roots in classical

3. Between the years 1931 and 1934, the so-called Jiangxi Soviet was the independent government established by Mao Zedong and Zhu De in Jiangxi Province. From this small territory inside the Chinese state, Mao obtained experience in guerrilla warfare and the peasant organization that he later used to achieve the triumph of the communist revolution (Fairbank, 1987, p. 232).

4. The agent-structure problem has had many names in the annals of social theory, as well as being the main cause of a series of deep-seated disputes, ranging from the differentiation between individual and State to controversies in contemporary meta-theoretical debates within science, epistemology, and political philosophy. At the heart of this problem is a growing recognition that, rather than being antagonistic partners in a zero-sum relationship, human agents and social structures are, in a fundamental sense, interrelated entities and, therefore, we cannot fully explain one without invoking the other. The “problem” is that, although such views of reciprocal implication suggest the characteristics and properties of both agents and social structures, we still lack an obvious way of conceptualizing these entities and their relationship (Carlsnaes, 1992, pp. 245–246).
Marxism. However, Medrano reflected on how the particularities of Chinese history had influenced Marxism and believed he could adapt it by introducing realities beyond the Eurocentric vision of the world. Mao understood the “Sinicization” of Marxism as one that introduced peripheral voices and glances to classical Marxism (Dirlak, 2005, p. 64). These visions were reflected in the revolutionary strategy and practical applicability of Marxist ideas, particularly in Third World countries. These differences are referred to as “Voluntarism,” “The Permanent Revolution,” “The Mass Line,” and “Protracted People’s War.”

Maoism exerted a particular attraction and influence in Latin America due to its emphasis on solidarity toward the Third World and the struggle against any form of imperialism (Lovell, 2019, pp. 309–310). However, Maoism also had two fundamental differences when compared to other Marxist movements such as Leninism, Stalinism, and Trotskyism. The first difference was that the economic foundations of Maoism. Mao believed that the inherent contradictions in the economic base and its origins in the rural world would eventually produce the revolution. In other words, the revolution would be set in motion by the peasants, not by the workers. The second difference was the theoretical conceptualization of the revolution. Mao proposed that the revolution could be accelerated with the will of the masses; ergo, all the objective conditions of the revolution did not need to be present for revolution to be possible, but the will and courage of the masses was essential for it to succeed.

These two elements were fundamental in shaping the trends of Maoism and its expansion beyond the borders of China in the years after the triumph of the communist revolution. As Matthew Rothwell (2017, pp. 9–12) has argued, it is possible to establish in Latin America a basic division between those Maoist movements that were most interested in looking at China as a model for the development of a Third World country and those that found in communist China the model for the revolutionary wars.

At the same time, Maoism was also a utopian vision (Meisner, 1977, p. 247). During his political career, Mao fought for the ideal of universal justice and equality (Harris, 2015, pp. 167–186). This point of view was a consequence of the Sinicization of Karl Marx’s concept of a communist society; however, this ideal was also compatible with the old Confucian ideal of social harmony (Jian, 2005, p. 1336). Mao was a Marxist who also had deep intellectual roots in China’s traditional culture (Sun & Li, 2014, p. 51). Even though he agreed with the Marxist principle of the class struggle, Mao believed that the peasants more than the workers constituted the revolutionary vanguard (Hočevar, 2019, p. 254). Mao claimed that peasant revolt was entirely feasible, not because peasants were infused with proletarian consciousness, but because they were the poorest people (Gregor, 2019, pp. 81–91). Not only did Mao emphasize the role of the peasants in this struggle, but he also considered the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to be global peasants, who would surround and defeat imperialism in the context of the universal class struggle of the Cold War (Mark, 2012, p. 5).

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) believed Marxism to be the inevitable trajectory of the whole of humanity (Cornejo, 1990, p. 31). Although Mao’s theory divided the world into three, this division was not hierarchical and did not indicate that the first
world was superior. Mao strongly believed that the division of nations into hierarchical categories using economic development as a yardstick was unjust and immoral. This division placed China in the Third World, and inspired Mao’s determination to promote an extensive and united front to struggle against imperialism and colonialism on a global scale (Teng, 2019, pp. 281–283).

Mao believed that with the correct will and the true revolutionary spirit, men and women could conquer their material circumstances and reshape reality according to their ideals: this belief was a central part of this utopian vision. In other words, the revolution would take place despite the absence of the objective historical circumstances of material contradiction needed to generate great social transformations (Hutchings, 2001, p. 11). As a political ideology, Maoist thought maintained that both China in particular and the world in general should transform through revolution. Mao’s idea of revolution, drawn from other Marxist-Leninist theoretical traditions, had three different assumptions. First, Mao regarded revolution as a permanent process unlimited in time and space. According to Mao, the revolution should be perpetual not only in China but worldwide as well. Namely, the idea of revolution from Mao’s perspective refers to a movement that should continue after the triumph of Chinese Communist Party.

Mao’s notion of permanent revolution was by no means a simple repetition of, or minor deviation from, the earlier formulations of Marx, Lenin, or Trotsky. While Mao adopted the Marxist diagnosis of “law of historical development” to justify his revolution, he also used an idea from classical Chinese political thinking regarding the legitimacy of using violent means to overthrow a corrupt ruler. As Short (2011, pp. 38–39) has noted, the Confucian education that Mao received during his childhood profoundly marked his understanding of the world and his theoretical reinterpretation of Marxism, leading him to apply aspects of Confucianism in his doctrine, particularly those related to law, order, and the legitimacy of force to transform corrupt regimes.

Second, Mao believed in the idea that humans can act decisively to effect major historical change, and that certain subjective factors, including determination and perseverance, could overcome the objective conditions which have the potential to limit great historical transformations. According to Mao, the essential condition for revolution was the consciousness and will of the “great masses.” In his final analysis, the success or failure of the revolutionary endeavor would depend on whether it had created a new order in the consciousness of individuals (Wang, 2020, p. 130).

Third, the Maoist notion of revolution placed more emphasis on destruction than construction. In fact, Maoism was more willing to deal with the task of destroying the “old” than to face the mission of building the “new,” and, as a consequence, Mao’s revolution was one of the most violent and destructive in history (Jian, 2005, p. 1336). From his perspective, the Chinese revolution did not end in 1949. On the contrary, with the victory of communism, the revolution was just beginning. Mao maintained that the next task of the revolutionaries was to destroy all the institutions and imperialist influences inherited from the old regime, enabling China to be restored to the central position it previously enjoyed in the international system (Mark, 2012, p. 5).
Maoism also represented a series of strategies and tactics on how to make, improve, and sustain the revolution. In fact, all violent political revolutions begin with a group of people who are initially weak in number and strength; however, in contemporary history, no other group of revolutionaries faced less chance of success, fought such a long-armed struggle, and survived greater defeats than those experienced by Mao and his comrades. As Tsou and Halperin (1965, p. 80) have pointed out, on his tortuous path to final victory, Mao followed a pattern of action and adopted a set of principles that, on many occasions, helped him achieve political gains from a position of military weakness and that, for a period, allowed him to bridge the huge gap between his highly ambitious goal and his early political-military impotence. Ultimately, this experience inspired revolutionary movements throughout the world including the movement of Medrano.

The central objective of Maoist revolutionary strategies concerned the mobilization of the masses. Mao particularly emphasized the importance of the peasants becoming the critical force in the Chinese revolution. This force was highly politicized, educated in class consciousness, and practiced a code of behavior morally superior to that of the Kuomintang enemy army (Womack, 1982, p. 51). Based on the reality of China, Mao drew up his road map of the revolution, convinced that the conquest of the cities would originate from the countryside through tactic of encirclement. As a complement to the mass mobilization of peasants, Mao used the diffusion of ideological campaigns as a revolutionary strategy (Zhou, 2013, p. 185). After the victory, Mao reflected that the three critical factors that led to success of the revolutionary strategies he had employed were the armed struggle, the role of a united front, and the leadership of the Communist Party (Jian, 2005, p. 1336).

Mao dedicated a considerable part of his revolutionary life to developing strategies and tactics. He summarized the basic principle of the guerrilla, probably based on an adaptation of the thought of Sun Tzu, in the following words: “The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue” (Mao, 1968, p. 134). Mao also emphasized the importance of the entire population becoming soldiers in order to wage the “People’s War.” The idea of the People’s War was more than guerrilla warfare itself. In sum, from the perspective of Mao, its principal elements were a politically motivated and organized peasantry willing to suffer to obstruct both intelligence and supply to invading enemy columns, attrition by communist guerrilla units, and the ability to inflict resounding defeats at the hands of communist regular

5. A well-known example is Mao’s speech on US imperialism being a paper tiger. Mao pointed out: “Today US imperialism seems to be very powerful, [but] it is not really. Politically it is very weak because it is divorced from the great mass of the people; the whole world dislikes it; even the North American people do not like it. In appearance it is very powerful, but in fact it is not amazing; [it’s just] a paper tiger. On the surface it is a tiger, but it is made of paper and it cannot withstand wind and rain. . . . Only when imperialism has been destroyed can there be peace. This paper tiger will eventually be destroyed. However, it will not be destroyed by itself; it will have to [be exposed to] wind and rain [before it is destroyed]” (Mao, 1992, pp. 7–8). In this way, Mao generated expectations that despite the enormous inequalities between the military capabilities of the United States and China, these conditions would not influence the final result of the victory. An example is the participation of Chin in the Korean War. The young People’s Republic of China supported North Korea in a military conflict. The technological inequalities between the United States and its allies vis-à-vis the “voluntary” Chinese army were more than obvious.
forces (Dreyer, 1995, pp. 350–355). This strategy encouraged communists to unite with as many groups as possible with the intention of fighting against the most important and dangerous enemies of China. The traditional Chinese concept of “controlling one barbarian by taking forces from another” influenced the adoption of this strategy in international affair (Jian, 2005, p. 1336).

A fundamental element of the communist victory was military strategy. One of the most crucial elements was the ability to mobilize the rural population to support the revolution. The most transcendental element for the mobilization of the masses was the idea of class struggle, used both in areas of support for the revolution and in the guerrilla zones under its control. Mao specifically described the class struggle as being central to his revolutionary strategy. In the first instance, this struggle had to be fought in the realms of consciousness because he believed that the first step to making the revolution possible was creating a revolutionary subject. This was done by inculcating proletarian class consciousness in the minds of the peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals. Mao, therefore, understood the transformation of minds as a precondition for the revolution (Kang, 2015, p. 15); for example, in the war against Japan, the class struggle not only served to confront the foreign enemy but also justified the reduction of rents and taxes and allowed agrarian reform. The party sent task forces to the villages to mobilize the peasant associations to challenge the order imposed by landowners. The rise of peasant associations radically changed power relations in the countryside and won massive popular support for the Communist Party (Schoppa, 2014, p. 65). Among many other Latin American social leaders, for Medrano, a peasant-born social fighter, Mao’s thinking and revolutionary actions made sense and provided hope.

**FLORENCIO “EL GUÉRO” MEDRANO AND THE UNITED PROLETARIAN PARTY OF AMERICA**

As Rochelin (2003, p. 2) has pointed out, there is extensive literature that explains the motivations of guerrillas in Latin America. On the economic side, some factors include poverty, deep inequality, unemployment and underemployment, failed economic models, and economic crises. Among the political causes are the absence of adequate representation, exclusion and political repression, lack of any legal channels of protest, and the inability of states to understand the appeal of revolutionary movements in the Cold War context. All these elements were present in Mexico in the 1970s, while the political system inherited from the Mexican Revolution prevented meaningful democratic participation. Thus, although there were regular elections, the system operated to prevent...

---

6. In this regard, Mao (1968) reasoned as follows: “The Communist Party can push the revolution forward by degrees but cannot clear away all the evils in the country overnight. Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang have begun to change, but the accumulated filth of the past ten years will certainly not be rapidly removed without great effort on the part of the whole people. We maintain that the trend is towards peace, democracy and resistance, but this does not imply that the old evils—civil war, dictatorship and non-resistance—will be swept away without any effort. It is only through struggle and hard work, and over a long period too, that we can eliminate the old evils, the old filth, and prevent setbacks or even reversals in the revolution” (pp. 308–309).
a genuine democratic struggle, and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party) always won the elections. This inadequate representation meant that a broad sector of the population did not enjoy the social and economic benefits of postwar Mexico. This circumstance was especially cruel to the peasants of the south and southeast of Mexico, who never saw the promises of the revolution regarding better living conditions materialize, although the peasant movement had been a motivating factor in inspiring the revolution. Indigenous groups continued to be subjected to harsh conditions of exploitation and marginalization, perpetuating a structure that fostered exclusion and exploitation. A new political class drawn from the PRI monopolized all public offices and ensured hegemony through the appointment of regional caciques—political bosses—ensuring little recourse to fairness or justice for Indigenous people. Despite the revolution, this system of governing the countryside remained unchanged, increasing the poverty and the marginalization of Indigenous and peasant communities (Herrera Calderon & Cedillo, 2012, pp. 2–3).

A specific feature of the Mexican case included the presence of an authoritarian, undemocratic, and repressive political system, although this did not lead to military dictatorships as happened in South America. In Mexico, a new form of political domination arose as a direct consequence of the revolutionary movement of 1910, one based on the establishment of a state party system and military and political reform. According to a report prepared by the National Commission on Political Disappearances, the catalyst for the discontent that spread throughout the country and expressed through guerrilla action was that the authoritarianism of the State that, instead of solving popular demands, privileged political control by police and repressive means to silence the protest of those who used legal and peaceful resources to achieve their aims (Doyle, 2006). The massacre of students from different political groups on 2 October 1968, and the brutal repression of 10 June 1971, became a catalyst for the rise of diverse guerrilla movements. The government deliberately framed the mobilization of students as an international conspiracy promoted by the communist bloc, a mobilization aimed at destabilizing the Mexican political system immediately prior to the Olympic Games. This was done with the aim of discrediting student grievances in the eyes of the public.

However, an unintended consequence of the brutal repression was that some of those involved concluded the only way to transform the prevailing situation of social injustice in Mexico was armed struggle, leading to the formation of several urban guerrilla groups.7 As Pensado and Ochoa (2018, p. 4) have noted, a mix of Third World ideology and Marxist revolutionary ideas linked with local contracultural expressions inspired the social movements and insurrections during this period. The insurrection movements

---

7. These groups include Comando Lacandones (Lancandon Command), the Lacandon being one of the indigenous Mayan groups in the southeast of the country; Frente Urbano Zapatista (Zapatist Urban Front), Comandos Armados del Pueblo (People’s Armed Commands); Frente Revolucionario Urbano de Guadalajara (Revolutionary Student Front of Guadalajara); and Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria (Movement of Revolutionary Action). From the various splits of these groups emerged the most famous urban guerrilla movement in Mexico in the 1970s, the Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre (23rd of September Communist League) (Pedraza, 2008, pp. 97–105).
were an expression of the effort to eradicate a particularly violent and corrupt regime, and were seen as an act of self-defense in reaction to systematic violence from the State (Aviña, 2014, p. 2).

This context framed the life and political action of Florencio Medrano (“El Güero” to his followers). The ideals of direct action, popular justice, vengeance, solidarity, dignity, and the possibility of a more just existence influenced Mexican rural revolts in a confusing time (Aviña, 2014, p. 2). These aspirations impacted the life of Medrano, and Maoist thought also had a very specific influence on him. Medrano was born on 27 October 1945, one of the eight children of Angel Medrano and Joaquina Mederos. They were a peasant family from the Tierra Caliente region in the state of Guerrero, one of the poorest places in Mexico. Like many families in this region, the Medrano family eked out a living from growing various subsistence crops and selling firewood and grass.

In early 1960, probably due to the harsh circumstances in the Guerrero countryside, Medrano migrated first to the city of Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos and, later, to Mexico City. He undertook multiple jobs: a cane cutter in a sugar plantation, an assistant in a bicycle workshop, an agricultural worker picking roses, a bricklayer, a hotdog seller and a porter in the traditional market of La Merced in Mexico City. At that time a military card was important if one wished to be considered for employment, and so Medrano briefly joined the army; it was during this time that he learned to read and write.

The political development of Medrano began in the popular peasant organizations, later leading him to involvement in underground communist political parties, and ultimately guerrilla groups; he eventually became one of the first cadres of the Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria (National Revolutionary Civic Association). In the city of Cuernavaca, Medrano met Rafael Equihua Palomares, founder of the Morelos Peasant Revolutionary Federation. Equihua was one of the leaders who carried out land invasions, an example that would prove useful to Medrano when he was looking to establish the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood. In May 1966, Medrano was jailed by the

8. The sources consulted to write some aspects of the life of Florencio Medrano are: General Archive of the Nation, Federal Security Agency; Special Prosecutor’s Office for Political and Social Movements of the Past; Doyle, 2006; Poniatowska, 2004; Velázquez, 2016; Velázquez, 2018.

9. Rubén Jaramillo formed a self-defense movement that opposed the violence of the caciques (landowners and local political leaders) and the electoral imposition of the official party in the state of Morelos. He was a peasant leader who was assassinated in 1962 with his wife and three children in one of the most atrocious political crimes of the Mexican 20th century. Jaramillo joined the Liberation Army of the South headed by Emiliano Zapata, the most important peasant leader of the Mexican Revolution. He worked on various ranches and haciendas for years, leading a legal fight for agrarian reform and denouncing existing agrarian reform as just a political slogan and not a true government commitment. At the beginning of the 1930s, he was the best known and most respected social leader of the state of Morelos. In the 1940s, during the government of President Manuel Ávila Camacho, considering that the new government had definitively betrayed the ideals of the revolution, Jaramillo called on his comrades to use weapons to restart the fight for land and freedom, reviving the ideals and political demands of Zapatismo. When the government promised to effect real social change, Jaramillo abandoned his arms and continued with the struggle for the rights of the peasants, collaborating with various social movements. Disappointed with the corruption of politicians, threats to social fighters, and the impossibility of social transformation through political means, he planned a new armed uprising but was assassinated before it started (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, pp. 40–55). Jaramillo’s fight inspired other Mexican guerrillas, the most famous of them Lucio Cabanas.
Amatepec public prosecutor as a result of his participation in a land invasion in Palmar Grande, in Tlataya, a town in Mexico State.

The most important political influence on Medrano, however, was Javier Fuentes Gutiérrez, who he met in Mexico City. By this time, Fuentes had separated from the Mexican Communist Party and had established close contacts with the Chinese Communist Party. In 1965, Fuentes contacted emissaries from the People’s Republic of China in order to lobby for financial support for various armed groups. In his role as proprietor of the “El Primer Paso” bookstore, a hub for the distribution of Maoist literature and propaganda, Fuentes established study circles to analyze the different social, economic, and political aspects of Mexico. It is in this political context that Medrano first came into contact with Maoist thought. During these meetings, attendees decided to found the Partido Revolucionario del Proletariado Mexicano (PRPM, Revolutionary Party of the Mexican Proletariat), with Fuentes becoming head of the new political organization.

Fuentes asked Medrano to join the organization of the new party. His objective was that Medrano would encourage those peasant leaders with whom he had connections to join, bringing their comrades with them. However, before this took place, Medrano would form part of a small delegation traveling to the People’s Republic of China to train in political organization and guerrilla tactics.

In 1969, a group of ten PRPM comrades, including Medrano, traveled to the Nanjing Military Academy with the intention of learning more about guerrilla warfare and Maoist thought. One of those who participated in this trip was the guerrilla Rosalba Robles Vessi, who stated that the training consisted of study and discussion of the works of Mao Zedong and visits to factories, communes, hospitals, and historical sites. Like other future guerrillas trained in China, there were also discussions with workers and veterans of the revolution who shared their experiences and gave instruction on military strategies and tactics, in addition to weapons training (Lovell, 2019, pp. 309–310). Prime Minister Zhou Enlai invited Medrano and his comrades to attend a banquet organized for foreign delegations; it was here that Medrano had the opportunity to meet the prime minister in person (Rothwell, 2017, p. 6).

In a later statement to the authorities, Rafael Aristegui Ruiz, one of the founders of the Rubén Jaramillo self-governing area, stated that Medrano was “an accomplished Maoist” who believed Mexico to be a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country (AGN, Exp. 11-4-73. H 79. L-240). The truth of this statement was borne out several years later,

10. Javier Fuentes Gutiérrez had a very close relationship with China. He was the owner of the Inter-American Distributor of Chinese Publications in Mexico and periodically received significant amounts of books from the communist government free of charge. In a story published by the New York Times in 1969, Fuentes Gutiérrez was the leader of a military insurrection that was discovered, with some participants being arrested. According to a Mexican government source, this movement was financed by the Chinese Communist Party news agency, Xinhua, to the tune of 1,600 US dollars per month (Cohen & Chiu, 1974, pp. 192–193).

11. The objectives of this political movement were to organize the popular masses and overthrow the power of the ruling class, who were seen as “servants of Yankee imperialism.” This was to be achieved through armed force, and a new state would be established, based on a new democracy in which the interests of the revolutionary classes would be taken into account (AGN, Gallery 1, IPS, Lucio Cabañas, Documentary Group).
when Medrano was already a guerrilla fighter in the Oaxaca Highlands. According to a report by the Federal Security Agency, Medrano planned to carry out land expropriations and capture politicians or ranchers from the region, in addition to buying weapons for the guerrillas, and rallying supporters to their cause by distributing food to residents of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood. He believed all of this could be achieved by employing the knowledge of military strategy and popular uprisings that he had gained in China (AGN, Exp. 100-15-1-74. H 171. L-17). It is fair to say that Medrano not only adapted Chinese military tactics to a Mexican context but also employed a language and political vision of anti-imperialist struggle based on the training he had received in Nanjing.

According to a report by the Federal Security Agency, the fledgling guerrilla group returned to Mexico armed with the following ideals: first, under the aegis of a prolonged people’s war, they intended to gain recruits by establishing a political-military nucleus among the masses. Second, the group distanced themselves from urban guerrillas in order to focus on a strong rural guerrilla perspective, under the Maoist slogan of “fencing cities from the countryside.” Third, although most of the new guerrillas were drawn from Guerrero, the group believed that the state of Morelos offered more fertile conditions for the development of a guerrilla force as it was the cradle of agrarian leaders such as Emiliano Zapata and Rubén Jaramillo and had a strong tradition of peasant struggle (AGN, Exp. 100-15-1-73, H. 13. L-133).

In March 1970, just a few months after their return from China, the police arrested Javier Fuentes and the other leaders of the PRPM in Mexico City. After the imprisonment of the party leaders, Medrano became the leader of the emergent party, a significant step up for him. In 1972, he began to take the PRPM in a more social direction, and eventually went on to form the Asociación Nacional Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil (ANOCE, National Association of Student Peasant Workers). He was appointed head of the new organization, with one of its first actions being to appropriate land in Villa de las Flores with the intention of making the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood the “first liberated territory” in Mexico. In this way, the vision and efforts of Medrano, “the charismatic man in his thirties... passionate about Mao Tse-tung,” continued the revolutionary struggle begun by Emiliano Zapata and ensured that the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood would endure (Castellanos, 2007, p. 239).

THE RUBÉN JARAMILLO PROLETARIAN NEIGHBORHOOD

On 31 March 1973, Medrano led a group comprised of peasants, workers, housewives, and the unemployed, some of them affiliated with the Asociación Nacional Obrero Campesina Estudiantil (National Peasant Student Worker Association), in an invasion of land that was supposed to become a luxury district in the town of Temixco, Morelos. This propriety belonged to Luis Felipe Rivera, the son of the then governor of state of Morelos, Felipe Rivera Crespo (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 206). A few days after the invasion, there were 300 families settled on the territory, with the number of inhabitants eventually reaching close to 10,000 people (Castellanos, 2007, p. 238; Doyle, 2006,
Aquileo Mederos, one of those who participated in this action, remembered the desperate need for housing at that time. He said, “Because of my peasant roots, I was attracted to other peasants and we decided to take those lands. . . . We took the lands at midnight on March 31, 1973. We were only seven people, but at dawn, we were 622 people” (Moreno, 2011, p. 6).

In the early 1970s, a series of massive urban invasions took place in cities throughout Mexico. It was not the first time that illegal land grabs had occurred: the invasion of land was a generalized phenomenon in the region during the second half of the 20th century. The migration of rural populations to large cities created a demand for low-cost housing, leading to the illegal occupation of land. The rural poor, looking for a space to construct their own homes, created settlements on the outskirts of several large cities without access to basic public services. They were aware of the dangers and struggles that land appropriation represented, but were hopeful that one day they would be able to gain title to the territories if the government expropriated the previously empty lots. Some of these movements created spaces for authentic social struggle dedicated to improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable, whereas others just exploited the situation for the economic benefit of a few, or acted as proxies for politicians seeking to obtain political benefits (Ward, 1977, p. 102).

Invasions backed by ANOCE, however, were different. This was partly due to the fact that, although thousands of people were involved, their participation was organized by left-wing political and ideological leaders. These leaders distanced themselves from previous land invasion practices and had an agenda entirely independent from the power of the State. On previous occasions those directing the takeover were frequently corrupt officials or simply land traffickers, who sought to mobilize the masses with the ultimate aim of obtaining economic and political benefits for themselves (Perlo & Schteingart, 1984, pp. 105–125).

The original name of the neighborhood, Villa de las Flores, was changed to the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood. According to one of the first settlers, the reason for the name change was that “our neighborhood is proletarian and not a neighborhood of rich people; so we took away the Villa de las Flores and named it Rubén Jaramillo, who was another man who fought on behalf of the peasants, the downtrodden, as Medrano explained to us” (Ortíz Pinchetti, 1974, p. 23).

A little more than 80 hectares of land was divided into approximately 1,800 lots of 200 meters each (Castellanos, 2007, p. 239). A report prepared by the General Agency of Political Investigations stated that Medrano was against giving property titles to the settlers because he wanted to form a commune, possibly in the Maoist style (AGN, IPS, Exp. 2, 1194 B, 3). Elena Poniatowska (2004, p. 191) recounted in her memoir of the time that, when faced with the arrival of more people than the first settlers expected, Medrano decided that the area of land initially awarded to each family (400 meters) should be reduced to half. He was of the opinion that nobody needed more than 200 meters to live since what really mattered was that “more people have a place to live and that we treat ourselves as equals,” in accordance with Maoist principles. The first step for the settlers was to be awarded land on which they could build a modest home.
Although Medrano initially opposed the delivery of a document that officially granted a property title to the neighbors who settled in the neighborhood, each household did subsequently receive a piece of paper as a property title, and the organization of settlers aimed to ensure equal participation in all the activities necessary for the successful functioning of the community. One of the principal actions was the foundation of the General Assembly, which acted as the highest decision-making body. At these meetings, the neighbors proposed establishing a harmonious coexistence, with the rules of the neighborhood being decided democratically. The leaders established different commissions to deal with the problems that arose and affected the organization of the new popular neighborhood, as well as providing information about how different tasks were progressing (De Teresa, 2017, p. 13).

The relationship between the Mao-inspired ideas of Medrano and the establishment of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood had some distinctive features not previously seen in other urban movements. This settlement was the laboratory where Medrano was able to enact some Maoist principles reinterpreted to suit his own historical and social context. After all, he had traveled to China and received military-political training at the Nanjing Military School (Velázquez, 2016, p. 101). Other Third World leaders came to this school to witness the advance of Chinese communism and receive political indoctrination, such as the founder of Sendero Luminoso, Abimael Guzmán (Lovell, 2019, pp. 319–320). Here, the leaders of the future guerrillas learned about the history of communism in China, Maoist thought, and guerrilla tactics. The CCP propaganda machine had shown Medrano a vision of how the country had been able to develop (De Teresa, 2017, p. 13). It is therefore unsurprising that, like many other Third World leaders, he sympathized with a revolution where peasants formed the basis of the movement for change. However, Medrano had been introduced to Maoist thought by educated men from Mexico City (Velázquez, 2018, pp. 104–108), men who had little practical experience of the misery, hunger, and precariousness that the peasants of southern Mexico had experienced. For Medrano these urban intellectuals lacked understanding of the harsh conditions of life in the countryside, and, like Lucio Cabañas (the best-known peasant guerrilla in Mexico at that time), he distrusted theoretical discourses which lacked the practical ideas capable of transforming life for millions of peasants (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 191).

The idealized life of Mao, the experience of the triumphs of the communists against powerful adversaries, and the first attempts at communism in China in Jiangxi Soviet, collectively echoed in the history of Medrano (Rothwell, 2010, p. 186). He was determined that the new popular neighborhood would function in a similar way to the Jiangxi Soviet, replicating the Chinese communist revolutionary experience in two distinct ways. First, the community would form a guerrilla support base. His idea was for this territory to become a secure refuge after actions aimed at obtaining funds for the armed struggle, like robberies and kidnappings, had been undertaken (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 197). The community would also be a place where guerrillas and weapons could safely be hidden, and which would provide certain provisions for them. Finally, this site would be a refuge where guerrilla leaders could meet and plan military-political strategy as well as to
implement Maoist communist ideas in a Mexican context. It was not enough for the neighborhood to simply provide a refuge for the guerrillas. If a true transformation was to be guaranteed, as the Chinese experience had demonstrated, a revolution of consciousness was necessary among the dispossessed classes. All activities carried out in the neighborhood were intended not only to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants, but also, more importantly, to awaken in them a class consciousness empowering them to become authentic defenders and promoters of the movement founded by Medrano (Poniatowska, 2004, pp. 201–202).

Medrano intended following the Maoist line that the community should function as a support base for the guerrillas; that is, it should provide a way of instituting a military-political nucleus among the masses that allowed forces to be accumulated for a prolonged people’s war. In this way, the neighborhood would enable the formation of political cadres dedicated to the overthrow of the authoritarian government, and would facilitate the legal struggle through the Mexican Agrarian Council. The intention was that eventually these cadres would support the armed struggle when the right moment came (Velázquez, 2016, p. 96).

Medrano intended that the formation of the new urban settlement would become the beginning of the so-called protracted people’s war, and declared it to be the first socialist liberated territory in Mexico (Doyle, 2006, p. 440). For him, the objective of invading the land was not to settle there permanently; rather, it was to establish the first base of support to start the armed struggle and later continue the same tactics, from one town to another, from one neighborhood to another, founding different support bases for the guerrilla war (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 197). For this reason, neither the police nor the army were allowed to enter the neighborhood, and the security of the site would be the responsibility of the inhabitants. Initially, the nightly surveillance rounds were made up of groups of ten armed settlers, responsible for patrolling regularly between eight at night and five in the morning in order to prevent the entry of provocateurs and drunkards (Jaso, 2011, p. 64). Another important security group was comprised of 35 trusted neighbors, almost all relatives or people from the same state as Medrano. They constituted the “Red Guard,” and were tasked with detecting “stowaways” and “snoopers,” that is, infiltrators (Doyle, 2006, p. 440). The members of the so-called Red Guard were also responsible for designing defense strategies in case the authorities tried to recover the land by force, and they “received military and ideological training from ANOCE members who had gone to China” (Jaso, 2011, p. 67). Those belonging to the Red Guard received guerrilla training, studied Maoism, and some even participated in the Execution Brigade of the Party of the Poor.12

12. The social movement of Lucio Cabañas that crystallized into a political party—the Party of the Poor—and its armed wing—the Peasant Execution Brigade—was unique in the history of Mexican guerrillas. This movement was a hybrid, originating in the misery of the peasant families of the state of Guerrero, in southwestern Mexico. Cabañas refused to build a utopian model of society, instead imagining a socialist cooperative movement comprised of equals. Ideological debates were sterile for him because while conjecturing about an uncertain future, the poor continued to suffer the ravages of their condition. Cabañas wanted to solve practical and urgent questions, and not to speculate about a better world that had not yet arrived. He set out to fight injustices to transform the daily lives of
According to Federal Security Agency files, some recently “politicized” inhabitants of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood, led by Medrano, carried out multiple activities outside the popular neighborhood, such as robberies and incursions in the state of Guerrero (AGN, Exp. 100-15-1-73, H. 149. L-15). These actions, classified by the authorities as common crimes, reflected a more complex reality because they were the result of an incipient political consciousness. In other words, beyond the official interpretation, these acts were actually politically motivated and considered “revolutionary expropriations.” The purpose of these actions was not only to obtain arms, but also to show solidarity with the peasant guerrillas led by Lucio Cabañas, who were also operating in that region of Mexico (AGN, Exp. 100-15-1-73, H. 149. L-15). Some residents of the neighborhood were also part of a clandestine group of the Red Guard that specialized in shoplifting and kidnapping. The main objective of these activities was to obtain the necessary financial resources to purchase arms, along with a printing press dedicated to producing propaganda in support of the guerrillas. Little by little, the site began to transform itself into a center of radical political struggle and a support hub for the coming guerrilla war.

The implementation of some ideas that Medrano learned on his trip to Maoist China was another characteristic of the Jaramillo settlement. For example, the so-called Red Sundays followed a pattern similar to that of the commune system. Sundays became days dedicated to work benefiting the community, and those living in the neighborhood formed brigades dedicated to improving public services and streets. One of the founding members recalls those days in this way: “Every Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, all the settlers would open the streets with picks and shovels and the old men and children would remove stones and dirt while the women cooked and served water. They were voluntary gatherings that reached a total of eight thousand well-coordinated people, where each one had their own responsibilities” (Moreno, 2011, p. 3). Not only did the inhabitants participate in these works, but soon teachers, activists, and unionists joined them. Most notable, however, were the delegations of students, mainly from Mexico City, who shared the enthusiasm of being part of the first liberated territory in the nation and came forward to offer their services.

Another important task was popular education. In Latin America, popular education was an alternative political educational movement founded in the 1960s and fully developed in the 1970s and early 1980s. It had its roots in Latin American politics and developed a pedagogical discourse dedicated to finding alternative ways of doing politics

The horizontality of the internal organization of the Party of the Poor, founded by Cabañas in May 1969, challenged the authoritarian and bureaucratic logic not only of the Mexican Communist Party but also of the other clandestine organizations that operated in the country during these years. He was inspired by community logic to let the assembly decide most of the strategic decisions autonomously. For this reason, most of the decisions were made by consensus in the presence of everyone. This was a guerrilla group with a horizontal structure in which the leaders did not grant themselves the rank of commander or that of the supreme chief of the revolution. In the Brigade there were no military ranks; instead, responsibilities were evenly distributed (Castellanos, 2007, p. 120; Lutz, 2016, pp. 1–3).

Seemingly, this command did not participate in the organization of the community nor did it use the quotas that the settlers used to plan guerrilla activity (Jaso, 2011, p. 67).
and constructing meaning from popular culture, in addition to developing political consciousness from inside the political subject (Bruno-Jofré, 2015, pp. 429–451). For those who saw popular education as an important tool for social transformation, the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood was a fertile land in which they could sow their new practices and ideas. The classes were given by teachers and students from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the National Polytechnic Institute, and other university centers. All of them were able to put into practice novel teaching-learning techniques, based on a model that linked theoretical knowledge with practice, just as happened with the teaching of mathematics. Medrano himself also participated in these educational activities, demonstrating how to sow a small plot of land belonging to the school (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 244).

The General Assembly served as the highest authority in the neighborhood. It was responsible for appointing those who would participate in the Struggle Committee, the most important grouping in the community. The Struggle Committee was responsible for a large variety of decisions, which included authorizing the expansion of bus routes to and from the neighborhood, prohibiting the sale of alcohol (a women’s initiative), purchasing a corn grinder, deciding what should be planted by the community, and organizing night security. The committee also prioritized those community activities that should be carried out during Red Sundays and appointed a commission responsible for buying agricultural products directly from the peasants. This was done in order to obtain better prices and break the “state of siege” in which the authorities had plunged the settlers, with the intention of isolating them and thus forcing them to abandon the land (Velázquez, 2018, pp. 63–67). Regarding the strategic issues of the neighborhood, or the most delicate points, however, Medrano had the last word. On certain occasions, when people close to him contradicted one of his indications, he even threatened them with the possibility of carrying out Maoist-style purges. Finally, he set up a system of popular judges, “Honorable people who were in charge of sanctioning those who violated the rules of the neighborhood” (Jaso, 2011, p. 64).

This urban settlement was also the headquarters for the writing and distribution of two newspapers. One was *Lucha de Clases* (Class Struggle) and the other was *El Chingadazo*. The students, whose purpose was to educate the inhabitants of Jaramillo and other popular neighborhoods about the conditions of injustice and oppression, were the editors of these newspapers. In addition to including political cartoons of the time, these newspapers included articles on the rise in prices, the invasion of land, the cultivation of vegetables, and other topics of interest to the inhabitants of the autonomous areas (Poniatowska, 2004, pp. 201–201).

14. Poniatowska recalls that, in the meetings related to the formation of the guerrilla group, Medrano was the undisputed leader and nobody discussed his orders, since a single threatening phrase from him was enough to quash possible dissent. Medrano was able to achieve this by saying: “Remember Liu Shaoqi who was purged.” Liu Shaoqi was considered Mao Zedong’s apparent heir until he was purged in the late 1960s during the Cultural Revolution (Poniatowska, 2004, p. 264).

15. *Chingadazo* is a Mexican expression, marked for negativity, which means a very strong blow.
The social experiment based on establishing and developing the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood ended on 28 September 1973. In the early hours of the morning, 3,000 soldiers, 500 policemen, and 300 other police corps invaded the community in order to neutralize the guerrilla groups that had been quietly forming over the course of several months. The invading forces searched all the houses and discovered several clandestine caches of arms. The future guerrillas however, including Medrano, had fled hours earlier to the state of Oaxaca. The military presence in the Jaramillo Neighborhood lasted seven years, but the ideological leader of the community, along with some of his comrades, went underground, establishing a guerrilla base in the border lands in southern Mexico between the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz (Doyle, 2006, p. 440). It was here, several months later, that Medrano established the United Proletarian Party of America, devoting himself completely to guerrilla activities until his death. He was killed by a paramilitary group in March 1979 (Velázquez, 2018, p. 116).

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of the Cold War, Chinese foreign policy promoted the thought of Mao, with leaders such as Medrano showing how his ideas could be adapted to offer a third path to development for Third World countries. Maoist concepts of permanent revolution or the importance of will in the social transformation that shaped Chinese communism offered a different path to development, one that went beyond the capitalist model of the United States or the socialist-imperialism model of the Soviet Union. In addition, the same political, economic, and social problems present in China also affected Latin American societies. These conditions proved to be fertile ground for the emergence of peasant and urban guerrilla groups, offering the possibility of transforming the oppressive social order and overcoming the conditions of misery in which millions of people lived. Although Mexico did not experience a military dictatorship, conditions in the country provided fertile ground for multiple guerrilla groups to flourish. During the Cold War period, more than 30 of these cadres existed within national borders (Sierra, 2003, p. 19).

Like other guerrilla leaders in Latin America, Medrano’s interpretation of Maoism emphasized praxis over theory. His politicization resulted from the difficult conditions he experienced as a child, conditions characterized by the poverty of the rural world. As a result, he created a personal interpretation of Maoism that went beyond intellectual reflection. He was a peasant of humble origin, from one of the poorest regions of Mexico, and without the benefit of a university education. He had personal experience of the misery and abandonment of the Mexican countryside. He had worked at several different subsistence-level jobs before dedicating himself fully to being a social activist, but it was his trip to China that transformed him into a guerrilla fighter with Maoist leanings. In Maoism he found a way of reinterpreting the social conditions of Mexico, diagnosing the causes of poverty, imagining a community that would organize beyond the traditional margins of the state and choosing the models of revolutionary struggle that, according to his perspective, would allow true social transformation.
The singularity of the appropriation of Maoist thought and its implementation carried out by Medrano, was mainly reflected in the organization of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood. Medrano conceived the settlement as an autonomous territory, in which the people not only made decisions about the organization of the neighborhood through participatory assemblies, but also by preventing the entry of the authorities, maintained it effectively outside the power of the state. For the short time in which the community enjoyed autonomy before the army entered and reestablished government control, Medrano launched a series of projects that reflected his reading of reality through the Chinese road to communism. He promoted community work on Red Sundays, he established order through the use of the Red Guard, he promoted social awareness based on the promotion of a practical school for children with the help of teachers and university students, and he started small community-purchase and communal ownership projects, for example, buying a corn grinder.

An urban settlement that exceeded more than 10,000 inhabitants, that proclaimed itself the first free territory in America, and was so close to Mexico City, aroused a certain fascination among Mexican youth, who were attracted by the ideals of communism. It was inevitable that sooner or later the community would prove a security threat to the Mexican state that could not be ignored. For this reason, the government decided to tackle the problem through force. Even though the popular neighborhood did not become the base of support for the guerrillas that Medrano had once imagined, the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood was considered a thorn in the side of the Mexican government, to the extent that the army maintained a presence here for seven years, even after the death of Medrano.

The Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood was an experiment in building a popular neighborhood that gave land to the dispossessed and established alternative forms of social organization based on the principles of autonomy and independence. This autonomy offered new possibilities for creating an alternative social order that allowed for the creation of social justice and a different way of distributing both work and wealth, one challenging the model of modernization prevailing in 1970s Mexico. Traditionally dispossessed people were able to have a piece of land, while the residents of the neighborhood enjoyed both better living conditions and a strengthened sense of solidarity within their communities. Many people who lived outside the community, such as teachers, union leaders, doctors, and students, joined the efforts to establish a “liberated territory” in which they put their ideas of a better world into action. However, beyond these aspirations, from the vision of its founder, this place would constitute a base of support for the future armed struggle. This was a consequence of the enchantment that Maoism had for some social leaders of Third World countries due to its ideal of an anti-imperialist and anti-bourgeois revolution, as well as of the unique life of Medrano. Indeed, in the international context of the Cold War, Maoist thought, and the political, economic, and social structures of Latin America were indispensable conditions for guerrilla movements to emerge as a form of social transformation. How these aspirations crystallized into specific social struggles, under a unique perspective, is the result of this individual experience and not a mechanical consequence of prevailing social structures.
The life and struggle of Medrano influenced by his childhood and peasant family, the economic limitations that characterized his first years of life, his experiences as a young migrant in the city being subject to new forms of exploitation, his training in China, and his own cosmovision of social injustice, were the foundations for the unique social experiment that he imagined and launched in the form of the Rubén Jaramillo Proletarian Neighborhood.

Corresponding author email: dlemus@tec.mx

REFERENCES


