

Sources for Latin American Research

At the International Institute of Social History

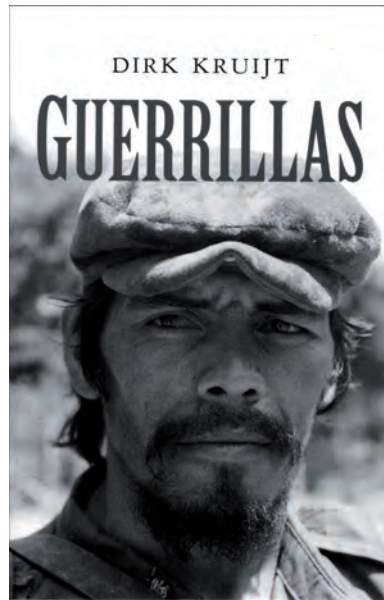
Collection ‘Dirk Kruijt’

Dirk Kruijt is one of the leading researchers on Latin America in the Netherlands. As Professor of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Utrecht (1968-2008) and visiting researcher at many other academic institutions, he studied the contradictory role of ‘armed actors’ – military and guerrillas – in Latin America in the last decades of the twentieth century. His academic trajectory began with a book on the socialist project in Peru under the government of Velasco Alvarado, *Revolution by Decree, Peru 1968-1975* (1994) which was translated in Spanish as *La Revolución por Decreto. El Perú durante el gobierno militar*. He continued to publish on similar topics in Central America and the Caribbean. With Kees Koonings, he published a number of books on armed actors, insecurity and violence in Latin America. His last widely acclaimed book, *Guerrillas: War and Peace in Central America* (2008), looks back at the role of guerrilla movements in recent Central American history.

Professor Dirk Kruijt donated the cassettes with the interviews he collected during his academic life to the IISH¹ – International Institute of Social History. They cover the broad field of political and social change in Latin America with a special emphasis on the analysis of military regimes and guerrilla movements in Peru and Central America (Salvador, Nicaragua). In total there are 135 magnetic tapes, with the following distribution by countries: 41 for Nicaragua, 36 for Guatemala, 29 for El Salvador, 25 for Peru and 3 for Costa Rica. The people who were interviewed are important members of the ‘guerrilla generation’ as well as military people in the countries of Central America.

The collection also contains documents and computer files. The documents on paper are the drafts of some transcripts of the mag-

netic tapes; the magnetic tapes of others have been lost, and the paper document draft is the only record. There are 85 transcriptions for Peru, and most of them were done in 1985-1986 in preparation for his book.



Peru: the military socialist regime

Dirk Kruijt conducted many oral history interviews for his research on the government of Velasco Alvarado, who led the ‘military socialist regime’ in Peru (1968-1980). He spoke with the most influential men of Velasco’s regime, such as General Aníbal Meza Cuadra, a personal friend and the founding president of the COAP – the Presidential Advisory Committee, and General José Graham Hurtado, his most trusted political advisor.

In the eighteenth century Tupac Amaru was leader of an indigenous uprising against the Spanish and became the central figure in the unsuccessful struggle for independence in Peru. When Velasco’s regime came to power, the president was portrayed as the heir of Tupac Amaru.



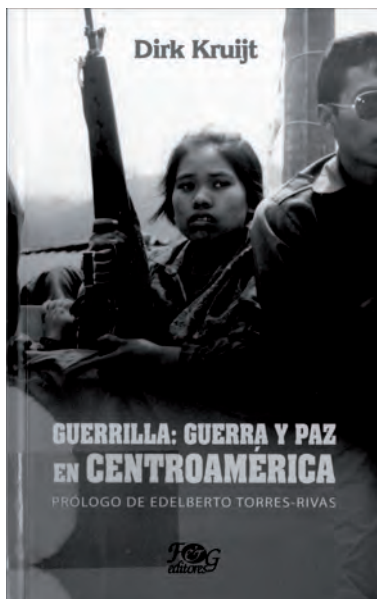
‘Tupac Amaru promised it, Velasco accomplished it’. Juan Velasco Alvarado, 1977.

Kruijt also interviewed Miguel Angel de la Flor Valle, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ramón Miranda Ampuero, Minister of Education who became the Chief of Staff of the Army and editor of Velasco’s Government Plan Inca; and Arturo Valdes, Cabinet Secretary and Velasco’s personal lawyer. Others in the army became important later on, such as General Robles who was forced into exile for denouncing, in 1993, a death squad known as the ‘Colina Group’ set up by Peru’s National Intelligence Service (SIN); and Spy Chief Montesinos, the security advisor of President Fujimori (1990-2000).

The Central American guerrilla *comandantes*

The Spanish translation of *Guerrillas: War and Peace in Central America* was published in 2009 as *Guerrilla: Guerra y Paz en Centroamérica*, by F & G in Guatemala and Series Antrazyt #308 in Barcelona. The guerrilla comandantes Kruijt

interviewed for the book now fill important roles in their society as members of government, teachers at universities and participants in civil society organizations.



Comandante Lola: 'The peace agreements meant for us that after 10, 20 or 30 years underground, we returned to the [social] class from which we had originally come. Someone who had been a poor campesino was once again a poor campesino. Many compañeros were left to their own devices: some searched the cemeteries for their dead relatives – the children and parents that had been massacred. Others tried to find out if they still had been left some plot of land. Men and women looked for their wives and husbands only to find that they had found other partners. This is a very profound human drama – a subject that was never discussed but that we carry in our hearts'.

This quote is by Alba Estela Maldonado (Comandante Lola), one of the very few Guatemalan female comandantes. She spent 36 years of her life in the clandestine underground movements and was, when she was interviewed, the parliamentary representative

of the URNG, the former guerrilla turned into political party. A very sensitive defender of her former compañeros, she symbolizes the challenges of the demobilization and reintegration process of the former guerrilla members.

Other interviews refer to the two Nicaraguan comandantes who, after twenty years of Che Guevara-like rural *foco*-warfare, decided to radically change the strategy of promoting urban insurrections: Humberto Ortega, who was minister of defence and army commander between 1979 and 1995, and Joaquín Cuadra Lacayo, the leader of the urban Frente Interno, who was chief-of-staff between 1989 and 1995 and the army commander who transformed the Sandinista Popular Army into the Nicaraguan Armed Forces between 1995 and 2000.

The collection 'Dirk Kruijt' is open to researchers at the IISH. The books and posters mentioned are also available in the IISH catalogue.

Note

1. The webpages at IISH of the Dirk Kruijt Collection can be found at: <http://socialhistory.org/en/collections/kruijt-collection-latin-america>. More about the cooperation between CEDLA and IISH can be found at: <http://socialhistory.org/en/region-desks/latin-america-and-caribbean-desk>. An overview of the Latin American Collections of the International Institute of Social History can be found on: <http://socialhistory.org/en/collections/latin-america-collection-guide>.