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The Potential for Revolution in Latin America

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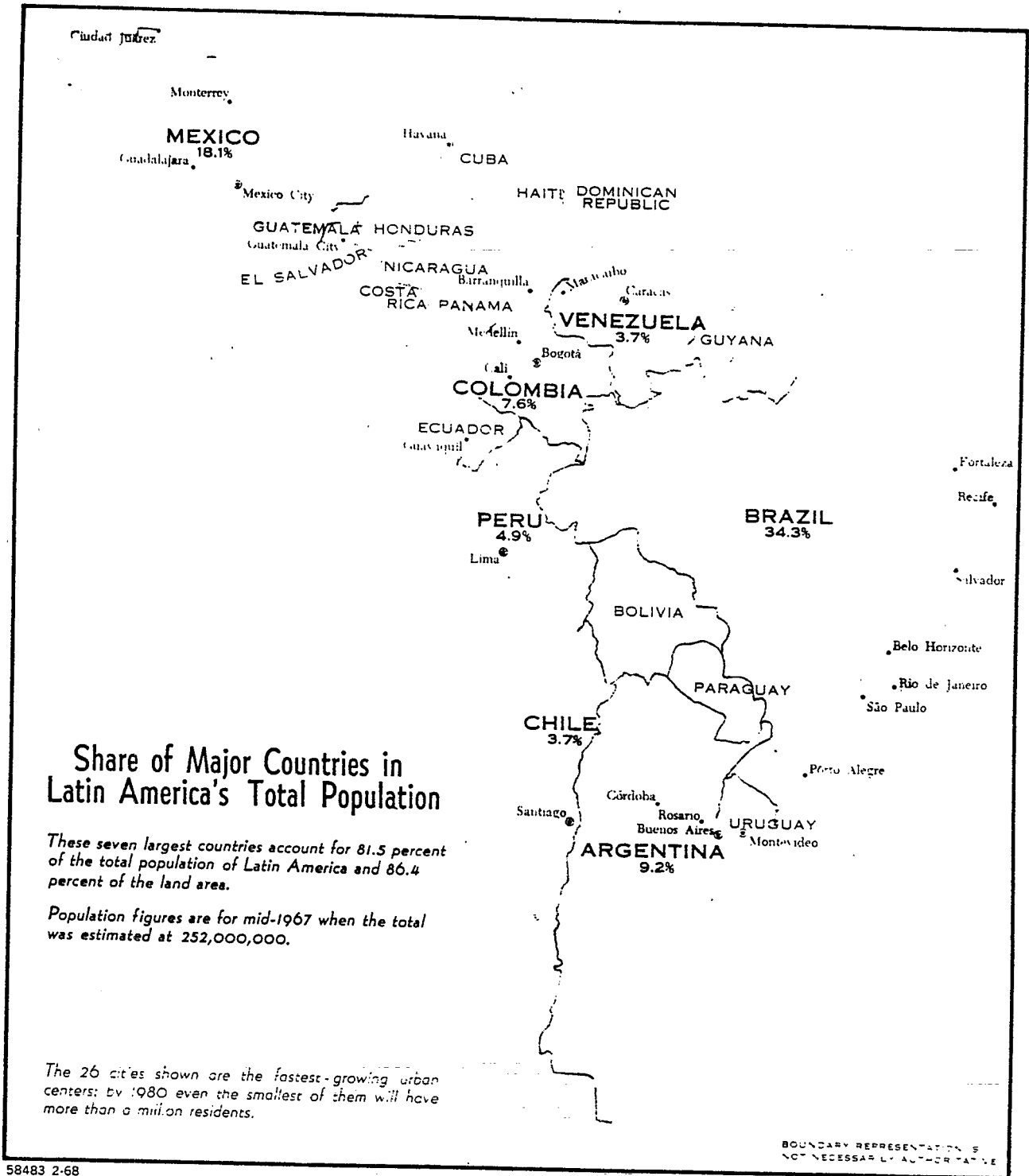
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THE POTENTIAL FOR REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

NOTE

This estimate treats the question of revolutionary development in Latin America more broadly and over a longer period of time than has been customary in previous estimates.

There are many defensible definitions of the word *revolution*, and many traditional applications of that word to events in Latin America, where in the past 40 years there have been more than a hundred successful *golpes*, insurrections, and other violent or irregular changes of government. Our subject here is not simply the sudden overthrow of regimes but the pressures in Latin America for fundamental change. In an effort to assess the potential effects of those pressures, we define revolution as *a series of developments which, in a relatively short time, produces profound and lasting change in a nation's political, economic, and social institutions*. Among other movements to bring about such change, we survey the current status and future prospects of the several Communist insurgencies.

Some of the judgments we reach in this paper are quite specific and apply to the next year or two. Some, considerably more general, pertain to the next four or five years. Still others describe emerging trends which will be felt in the area over more than a decade.

CONCLUSIONS

A. The focus of attention in most discussions of this subject has been on insurgency movements supported by Castro. Such movements are still active in three countries: Colombia, Guatemala, and Venezuela. In all three cases they are relatively small, have attracted little sympathy among the local populace, and are encountering strong responses by the security forces. In no case do insurgencies pose a

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serious shortrun threat to take over a government, though they are troublesome, difficult to deal with, and likely to remain an unsettling factor on the political scene.

B. Even over a much longer period, we do not believe that these, or similar insurgencies which may become active, will be the main engine of revolution in Latin America. The factors and forces which bring revolutions will be more complicated and will vary widely from country to country in form and character.

C. Because discontent has not yet become organized and acute, and because there is a lack of appealing radical leadership, revolution seems unlikely in most Latin American countries within the next few years. Over a longer period, however—certainly within the next decade—we see conditions developing throughout the area which will be much more conducive to revolution. Whether and when these conditions actually produce revolutionary changes will depend upon fortuitous combinations of factors within individual countries.

D. The establishments which now control the seven largest Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, and Chile) are much stronger than any proponents of revolutionary violence. Though the government of such a country might be displaced during the next year or two, the change almost certainly would not be revolutionary. In Chile, the government which comes to power in 1970 may follow revolutionary policies. In a number of the smaller countries, there is greater likelihood of a sudden overthrow of government and also more chance that a revolutionary government might come to power.

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E. Elements on the political left will be in the forefront of most future revolutionary movements, but we do not believe that the Communist organizations in Latin America have, or will develop, the strength to play the central role. We do not rule out the possibility that they might attempt on their own to seize power in one or more countries, but we think it far more likely that they would make common cause with other stronger revolutionary elements, settling temporarily for an influential voice in a new government and hoping to progress from there.

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F. While we do not conclude that Castro-style insurgency is of no importance, we do believe that the forces which undertake future revolutions will develop and operate primarily in the cities. They will require—or wish to have—mass support, and such support will be more readily obtainable in the cities than in the countryside. The influx of people from countryside to city in Latin America is striking, and most of it swells the population of the slums. In 1940, there were five Latin American metropolitan areas with more than one million residents; in 1960, there were nine. We estimate that in 1970 there will be 18, and in 1980, 26.

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H. Varied as they may be in other respects, we believe that revolutionary movements will have one important common feature: a nationalistic, independent attitude with strong overtones of anti-US sentiment.

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DISCUSSION

1. Latin America¹ has often been thought of as revolution-prone, and this is true enough simply in the sense of frequent changes in governments. But few of these changes have led to revolution in the broader sense of profound and lasting change; moreover, the Latin American Communists, outside Cuba, have not had much success in making revolution of any kind. The Castro takeover in Cuba led to predictions of a rash of revolutions elsewhere in the area. But such attempts as have been made—have failed.

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2. We propose in this paper to consider the revolutionary processes in Latin America in the recent past, as well as the kind of changes which may be conducive to revolutions in the future. We will discuss at the outset the Castro-supported insurgencies: their present status, and what relevance they have to the broader questions about revolution.

I. THE CURRENT INSURGENCIES

3. There are three active insurgencies in Latin America—in Colombia, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Other attempts to sustain insurgencies, in Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Peru for example, have not succeeded. Despite Castro's aid, training, and exhortations, and despite the propaganda of his Latin American Solidarity Organization, even the active—insurgency movements have, generally speaking, lost rather than gained ground over the past year.

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4. A basic reason why the insurgencies have not gained momentum has been the lack of backing for them among the very people they purport to champion—the impoverished peasants in the countryside.

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¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Omitted are British Honduras, French Guiana, and Surinam, as well as various islands in the Caribbean.

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5. [REDACTED]

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The ability of most of the countries to cope with problems of insurgency and guerrilla warfare has markedly improved over the past few years. And Castro's embrace of communism, his compulsive calls for revolution, and the knowledge that Cuba is continuing to train and aid insurgents, serves to keep other governments on their guard. At the same time, Castro's dependence on Soviet aid and the failure of his revolution in Cuba to show any dramatic economic progress have detracted from his potentially broad appeal in the area.

6. We do not conclude that Castro-style insurgency is of no importance. It is troublesome, difficult to deal with, and an unsettling factor on the political scene, and in one or another country is likely to remain so. In the case of a government badly weakened in some other way, an insurgency movement could be the straw which brought it down. And it is possible for a government and its security forces, by overreacting to an insurgency threat, to contribute to a breakdown of law and order and eventually to drive other elements of the population into making common cause with the insurgents.

[REDACTED]
In sum, we think that Castro-supported insurgency may be part of the broader revolutionary pattern in a few countries; but we do not believe that it will develop either the potency or the appeal to play a leading revolutionary role in the area as a whole.

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7. The Soviet Union and Communist China have been the other principal outside forces promoting the development of revolutionary movements in Latin America. The Soviets, however, have sought to discourage tactics of insurgency and to shift the emphasis of the Communist parties to peaceful, political means. This is an emphasis which we expect Moscow to continue; it seems to reflect a strong Soviet belief that the displacement of US influence and the extension of Soviet influence in Latin America can only be a gradual, long-term process—a process in which diplomatic ties, expanding economic relationships, and local Communist Party actions are all to play a role. The USSR may, at some future point, turn back to the encouragement of violent action, but we believe this is unlikely in the next few years. For their part, the Communist Chinese will do what they can to foster and assist insurgency movements [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] But because the parties and splinter groups they can work with in Latin America are few and weak, and because their efforts will be in sharp conflict with those of the Soviets—and often with those of the Cubans—we do not believe that the activities of the Chinese will add much to the overall potential for insurgency even over many years.

II. SOME GUIDELINES FROM THE PAST

8. A part of the misapprehension about imminent revolutionary danger has stemmed from a tendency to equate Latin American political turbulence with

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susceptibility to revolution. Of course, there can be no question that the region has had its full share of turbulence in recent decades. Coups, assassinations, putsches, barracks revolts, pronunciamientos, and assorted power grabs have been commonplace. Over the last 40 years, only in Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay have presidents normally succeeded one another by constitutional means. In Latin America as a whole there have been since 1929 more than a hundred irregular changes of government.

9. The surprising thing, however, given all these overthrows of government, is how little they have had to do with revolution.

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Some have made significant achievements, but, generally speaking, they have merely modified existing institutions or machinery.

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10. In this paper, we use the term revolution to mean *a series of developments which, in a relatively short time, produces profound and lasting change in a nation's political, economic, and social institutions.*³ Our interest is not in construing the definition very narrowly, but in considering those cases in Latin America's recent past where revolutions either actually took place or were so seriously attempted as to leave a lasting political/social imprint. Since the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, we find only six other cases which qualify:⁴

a. Vargas' establishment of full control in Brazil in the late 1930's and the broad changes under his administration;

b. Perón's assumption of one-man rule and the impact of his policies on Argentina after the mid-1940's;

³ Similarly, in her book, *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt emphasizes that revolutions are more than successful insurrections and that we are not justified in calling every coup d'état a revolution or even in detecting one in each civil war. And Alfred Meusel's classic definition in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* contains the following: "Thus, a recasting of the social order is, at least in modern times, a far more important characteristic of revolutions than a change of political constitution or the use of violence in the attainment of this end."

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c. Actions of the Arévalo and Arbenz regimes in Guatemala during 1944-1954, a decade in which revolutionary changes took place—rolled back in large part after the overthrow of Arbenz, but leaving a significant residual effect.

d. Revolt against dictatorial government in Venezuela in 1945 and the emergence of Betancourt as leader of the democratic forces which established a framework for representative government;

e. Victory of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement in Bolivia in 1952 and the improvement of the position of the masses, particularly during Paz Estenssoro's first term as president;

f. Takeover in Cuba by Fidel Castro in 1959 and the subsequent application of his version of Marxist-Leninist policies.

11. We see in this pattern a number of guidelines for thinking about revolutions of the future—guidelines always subject to factors and forces peculiar to each country. We are well aware of the problems of generalizing about a region as fundamentally diverse as Latin America; indeed we note in Annex B six small countries, mostly in the Caribbean area, which may, in one way or another, be exceptions to our best generalizations.

12. Here then are the key points which we derive from the experience of the recent past:

a. Revolutionary impetus has not been very strong in Latin America in relation to the prevailing inertia. The old ways and systems [REDACTED] have shown quite a lot of staying power.

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b. The revolutions which have occurred have differed sharply in character. This has been true of the situations they faced, the goals they were trying to attain, and the way they were carried out. Each was keyed closely to conditions in its own country; no two had the same ideology.

c. Each of these revolutions was internal to the country where it occurred. In no case did the revolutionary elements have significant outside assistance. (In the Cuban case, the local Communist Party "hid under the bed," as Castro has put it.)

d. The revolutionary movements tended to be highly personalistic, headed by a single leader with great popular appeal. [REDACTED]

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e. All these revolutions had a heavy content of nationalism.

f. All, in various fashions, aimed to improve the lot of one or another group among the lower or middle classes at the expense of one or another part of the upper class.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY CONDITIONS

13. Having these points in mind, let us consider the Latin American revolutionary climate at the present time. In most Latin American countries—and in all the major ones except possibly Chile—we judge that the factors impeding revolutions are appreciably stronger than the factors conducive to them. This we think is especially true of the immediate power factors (e.g., governments and

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security forces acting together), but will also be true for some time of the broader underlying conditions (e.g., popular dissatisfactions still at a tolerable level). Nor is it likely that any of the three insurgencies now active in Latin American countries will, within the next year or two, seriously threaten to overthrow a government.

14. The fact is that the establishments which now control the larger Latin American countries are much stronger than any proponents of revolutionary violence.

[REDACTED]

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15. We do not mean to imply that there will be no future revolutions in Latin American countries; only that the factors and forces likely to bring them about will be some time in developing. What we foresee is a period of little or no improvement in the basic economic conditions of many Latin American countries, and a gradual worsening in social conditions. Some unrest is already evident, and this lack of progress will add to it. Disappointment in expectations will play a part, but we think the unrest will center more on a growing conviction that the existing governments, systems, and institutions offer no hope of rapid forward movement, of achievements beneficial to most of the people. Economic advances in the next several years will, at best, be slow and painful in most countries of the area. The need to increase investment and the restraints imposed to curb inflation will severely limit any gains made by labor or the peasantry. The economic gap between Latin Americans and the advanced nations of the world will continue to widen, and more and more Latin Americans will recognize and resent this fact.

16. Continuing high rates of population growth and the massive movement of people from country to city will exacerbate the problems of unemployment and of slums. At least in some countries, animosities which stem from social and economic differences

[REDACTED] will take on increasingly strong racial overtones. The lower [REDACTED]

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classes, especially those in the big cities, will become gradually more conscious politically than they have been, and then more vocal and more active.

17. We would caution, at this point, that the development of conditions conducive to revolution does not mean that revolution will automatically follow. Some more or less *accidental combination* of broad dissatisfaction, specific rallying cause, bold leadership, and organized revolutionary force is likely to determine the precise when and how of any particular revolution.

IV. SOME PROPOSITIONS ABOUT FUTURE REVOLUTIONS

18. We cannot now identify the specific groups (or combinations of groups) and leaders who are likely to make revolutions in Latin American countries four years or seven years or ten years hence. Indeed one of the things that convinces us of the unlikelihood of revolutions soon is that forces and leaders capable of undertaking them are not yet in evidence. What we can do now is to put forward some propositions about the probable nature and shape of such forces.

19. Our first proposition is that *the Communist parties, the Castroist parties, and the splinter movements of similar genre will not play the central role in this revolutionary process.*—The fact is that the total capabilities of the Communist movement in Latin America are small, at the present time, and the movement itself is seriously fragmented. Moreover, we believe that many of the practical factors which have so far limited Communist accomplishments will continue to be operative for some years. There has been a strange dichotomy in Latin American attitudes toward the Communists: Marxist ideas, historical and economic, are widely taught in the universities and largely accepted by many non-Communists as well as party members; at the same time, the parties as organizations have generally been regarded with suspicion—and often with hostility. To some degree this has had to do with a feeling that the Communist movement is alien—controlled by orders from abroad. To some degree, it has resulted from the unattractive leadership and cadres the parties have had in many countries.⁶

20. The Communist movement might have compensated for some of these shortcomings had it been able to maintain a reasonable unity. But the reverse has been the case. Old men, including original founders, have held on to the leadership of a number of parties, and this has caused younger elements to split off into their own groups. Personal quarrels among leaders have led to further splintering. And finally, the influence of Castro, and his exhortations for immediate revolutionary action in the form of guerrilla warfare, have caused additional factions to break away.

21. Despite all their present weaknesses, we do not intend to rule out the possibility that Communist organizations might, particularly over a period of some years, attempt on their own to seize power in one or more Latin American countries. But we believe it far more likely that they would make common

⁶We would except from this generalization the regular Communist parties in Chile and Uruguay. In both these countries, the Communists have been reasonably well led and have been gradually gaining strength and respectability.

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cause with other stronger revolutionary elements, aiming to gain an influential, if not the major, voice in a new government. Such a strategy would embody their hope of a repeat performance of the developments in Cuba; it would also entail the risk for them that they might be squeezed out entirely—as happened in Venezuela in the late 1950's.

22. This brings us to our second proposition: that *the forces which undertake future revolutions will develop and operate primarily in the cities*. In general, we believe that the revolutionary forces will require—or in any event will wish to have—mass support, and such support will almost certainly be more readily obtainable in the cities than in the countryside. This is true partly because of the staggering influx of population from countryside to city. In 1940 there were five Latin American metropolitan areas with more than 1,000,000 residents; in 1960, there were nine. We estimate that in 1970 there will be 18, and in 1980, 26. (See table below.)

Growth of Large Cities in Latin America

1940 Estimate	1960 Estimate	1970 Projection	1980 Projection
Rio de Janeiro São Paulo	RIO DE JANEIRO SÃO PAULO	RIO DE JANEIRO SÃO PAULO	RIO DE JANEIRO SÃO PAULO
Mexico City	MEXICO CITY	Belo Horizonte Recife	Belo Horizonte Recife
Buenos Aires	BUENOS AIRES	Pôrto Alegre Salvador	Pôrto Alegre (Brazil) Salvador
Santiago	Bogotá Lima Caracas Santiago Montevideo	MEXICO CITY Guadalajara Monterrey BUENOS AIRES BOGOTÁ Medellín	Fortaleza MEXICO CITY GUADALAJARA (Mexico) Monterrey Ciudad Juárez BUENOS AIRES Córdoba (Argentina) Rosario
	Key	Lima CARACAS SANTIAGO Montevideo Havana Guayaquil	BOGOTÁ Medellín (Colombia) Cali Barranquilla (Peru) LIMA (Venezuela) CARACAS (Chile) Maracaibo (Uruguay) SANTIAGO (Cuba) MONTEVIDEO (Ecuador) Havana (Guatemala) Guayaquil Guatemala City
	BUENOS AIRES 5.0 million or more		
	BUENOS AIRES 2.5 to 4.9 million		
	Buenos Aires 1.0 to 2.4 million		
	<i>Projections and estimates based on average rates of growth during 1941-61 for Lima, 1948-60 for Argentine cities, 1951-64 for Guatemala City, 1952-64 for Colombian cities, 1954-64 for Havana, 1958-63 for Montevideo, 1961-65 for Santiago, 1961-66 for Brazilian and Mexican cities, 1962-66 for Venezuelan cities and 1963-65 for Guayaquil.</i>		

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23. This is not merely a matter of population growth and movement; it is also a matter of what is happening to the swelling populations of the city slums. Most of the new slum settlements are made up of people who brought with them from the countryside their own community ways of administering joint affairs. They do not participate much in the broader political affairs of the city and the nation except through the arrangements their leaders make with the officials of government—and these relate chiefly to basic needs like water supply. We cannot, however, expect that these people will hold indefinitely to their old ways; the very decision to leave all they knew in the country and to risk the new life of the city was a “revolutionary” act for many of them. Almost inevitably, they will be drawn gradually into wider community activities. We believe that of even greater potential significance will be the attitudes and the actions of their children—young people who were born and brought up in these urban slums and who lack other roots. Unlike their parents who remember the hovels and hunger of peasant life, the new generation will compare its unhappy surroundings with those of the more prosperous people in the cities.

24. The task of ameliorating the conditions of the slum dwellers rapidly is beyond the resources now available to Latin American governments. [REDACTED]

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With the rapid increase in population, the migration to the cities, and the relatively slow increase in per capita income, this situation is almost certain to become worse before it becomes better. Housing needs are running farther ahead of housing availabilities with every day that passes. Rates of economic growth are inadequate to alleviate the severe unemployment. Thus we expect revolutionary raw materials to develop in these slums.

25. It is possible that the slums will also provide the future revolutionary leaders, but we are inclined to think otherwise. Our third proposition is that *the source of leadership will vary from country to country; the personality, magnetism, courage, and machismo of individuals will be of much more importance than the class or profession they represent.* As in the recent past, we would expect to see the caudillo principle repeated—that is, one strong man clearly predominant in a revolutionary movement.

26. In some cases, the revolutionary leader will probably be a military man—perhaps someone who is now a younger officer, or even a noncommissioned officer. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Such a military figure might have the backing of part—or even most—of the military establishment, as well as support among the masses.⁷

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27. In other cases, we think revolutionary leadership might come from the Catholic priesthood. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] A number, feeling that they were circumscribed in these efforts by their superiors, have left the Church; in Colombia and in Guatemala, priests have gone to assist the insurgents, thus demonstrating their conviction that adequate change is impossible without resort to violence. [REDACTED]

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28. In still other cases, revolutionary leaders will probably come from one or another intellectual grouping. The upper social strata have in the past shown a remarkable ability to absorb and neutralize many of the brightest middle-class young people. We believe, however, that this is becoming much more difficult, and that there probably now are among university students some who will play important revolutionary roles in the future. Certainly there are a number of professors and artists who are willing to lend their names and prestige to revolutionary movements. Communist ideology continues to have considerable appeal for Latin American intellectuals; this appeal may constitute the Communists' best opportunity to exercise influence on a revolution.

29. It is likely, in some instances, that revolutionary leaders will come from existing political parties or from some new version of existing parties. One possibility here would be a figure from an extremist faction of a moderate leftist party. [REDACTED]

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30. Despite the amount of discussion we have given to that side of the subject, we do not believe that all future revolutions in Latin America will be the product of the political left. There might, for instance, be a charismatic revolutionary leader who preached goals of egalitarianism and social change, who attracted

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wide leftist support, but who then ran his revolutionary regime very much as a rightist dictatorship.

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31. As our last proposition, we believe that *there will be one common feature of these various future movements to achieve revolution that makes a particular difference to us: a nationalistic, independent attitude with strong overtones of anti-US sentiment.*

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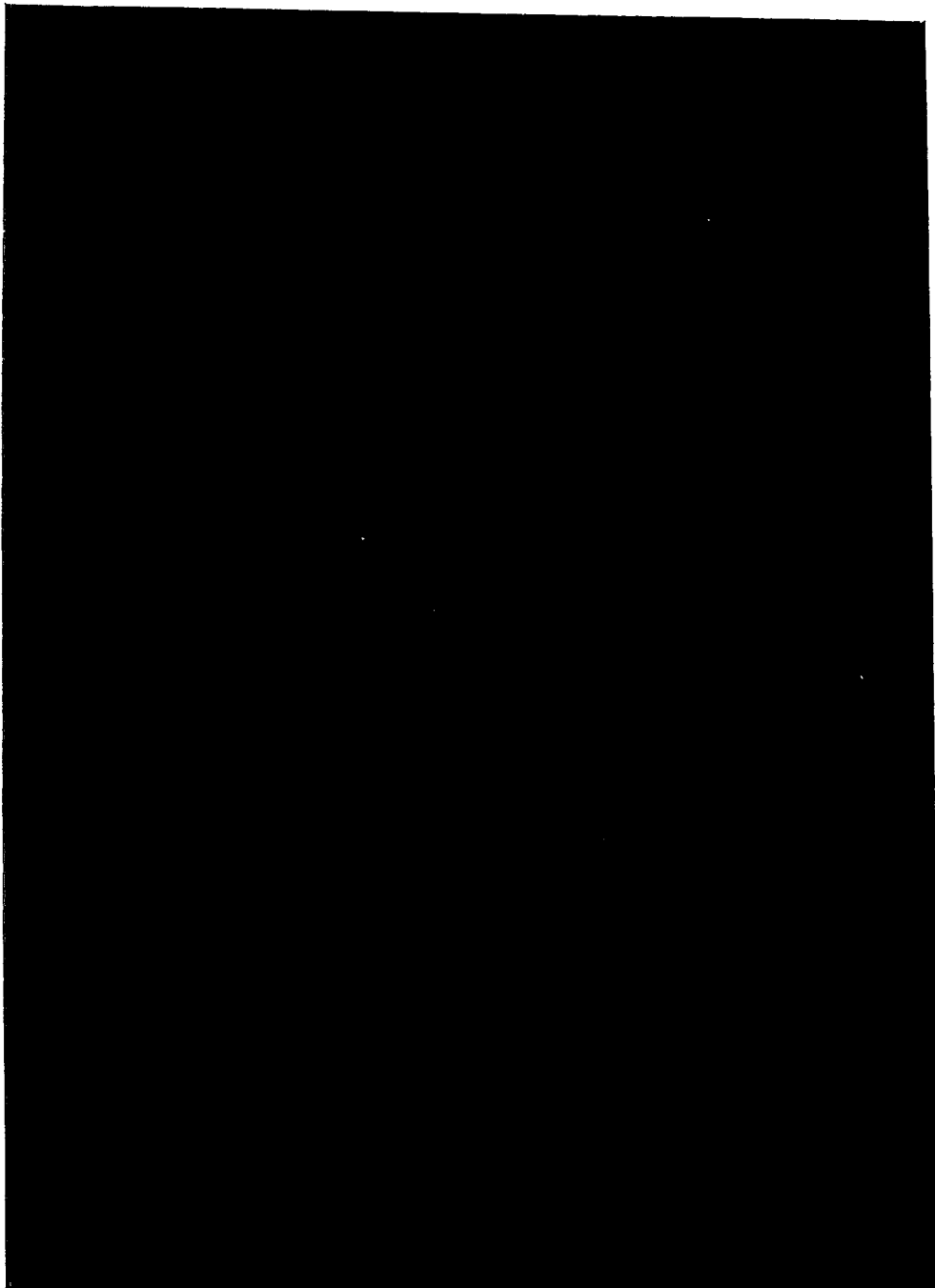
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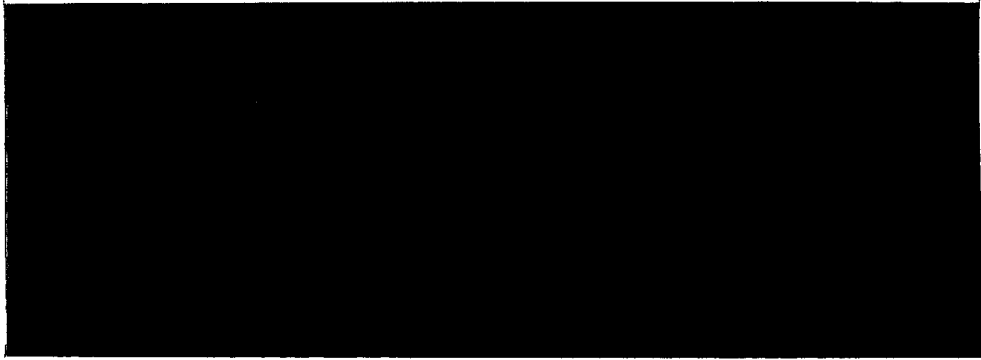
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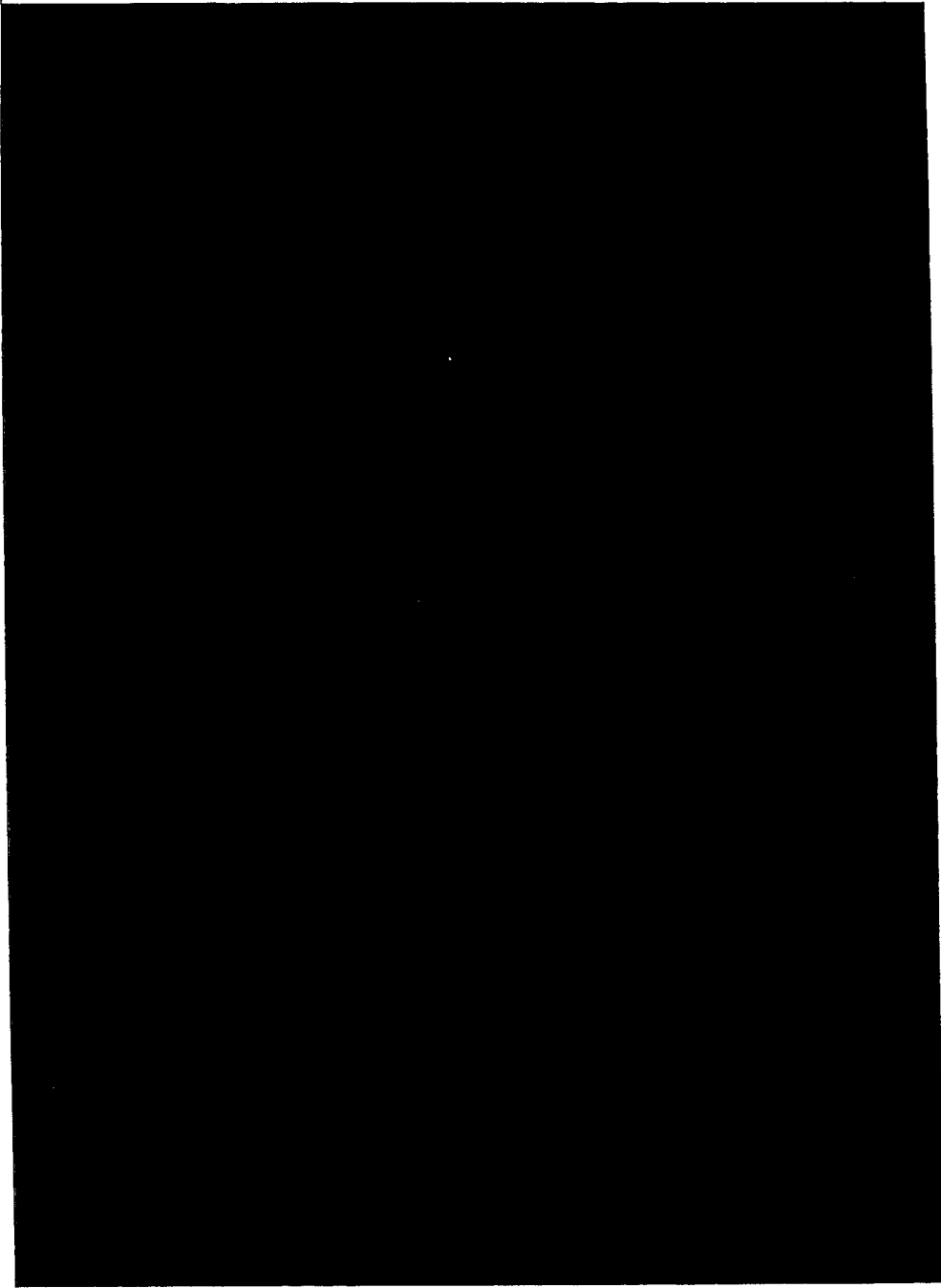
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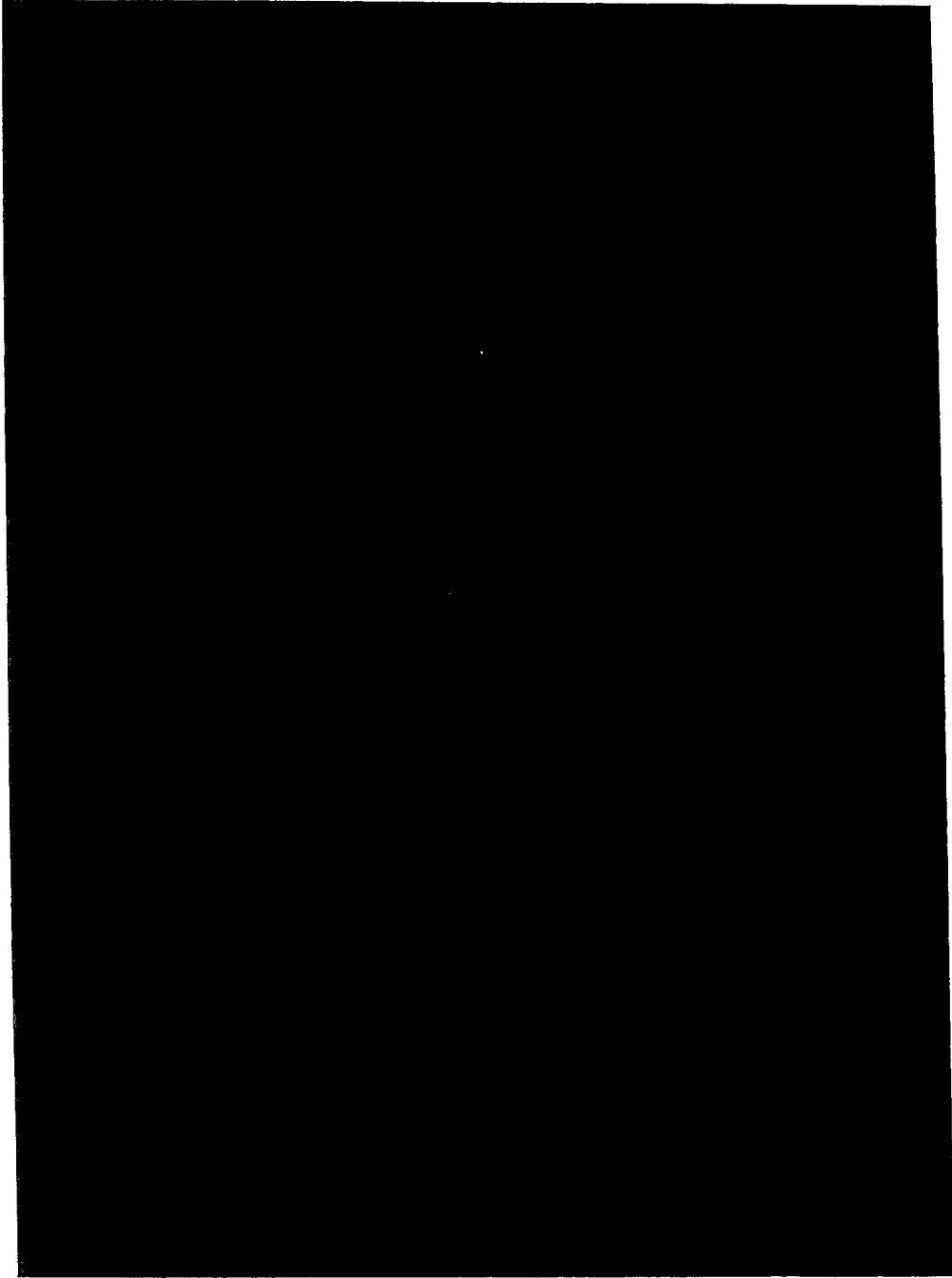
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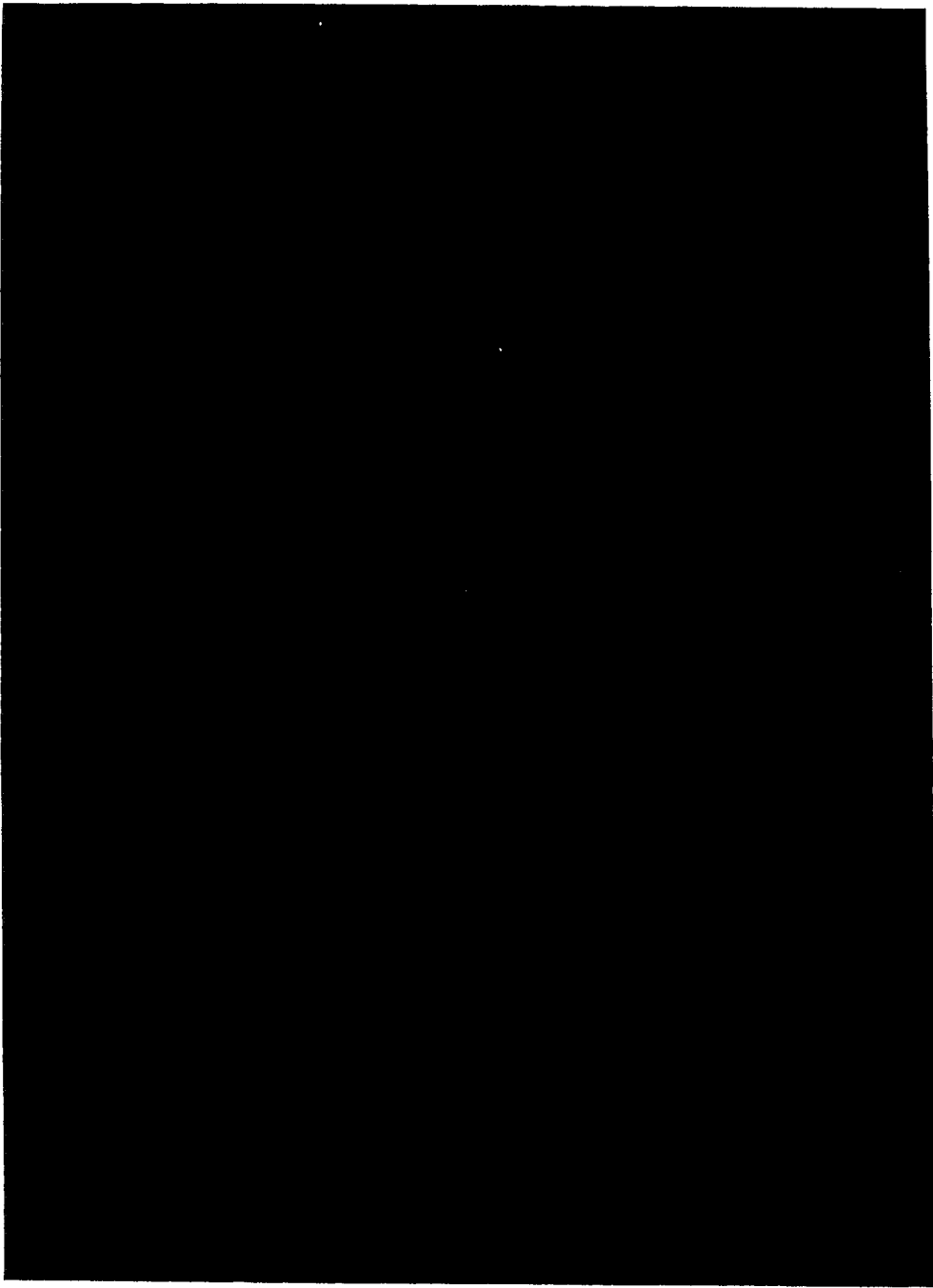
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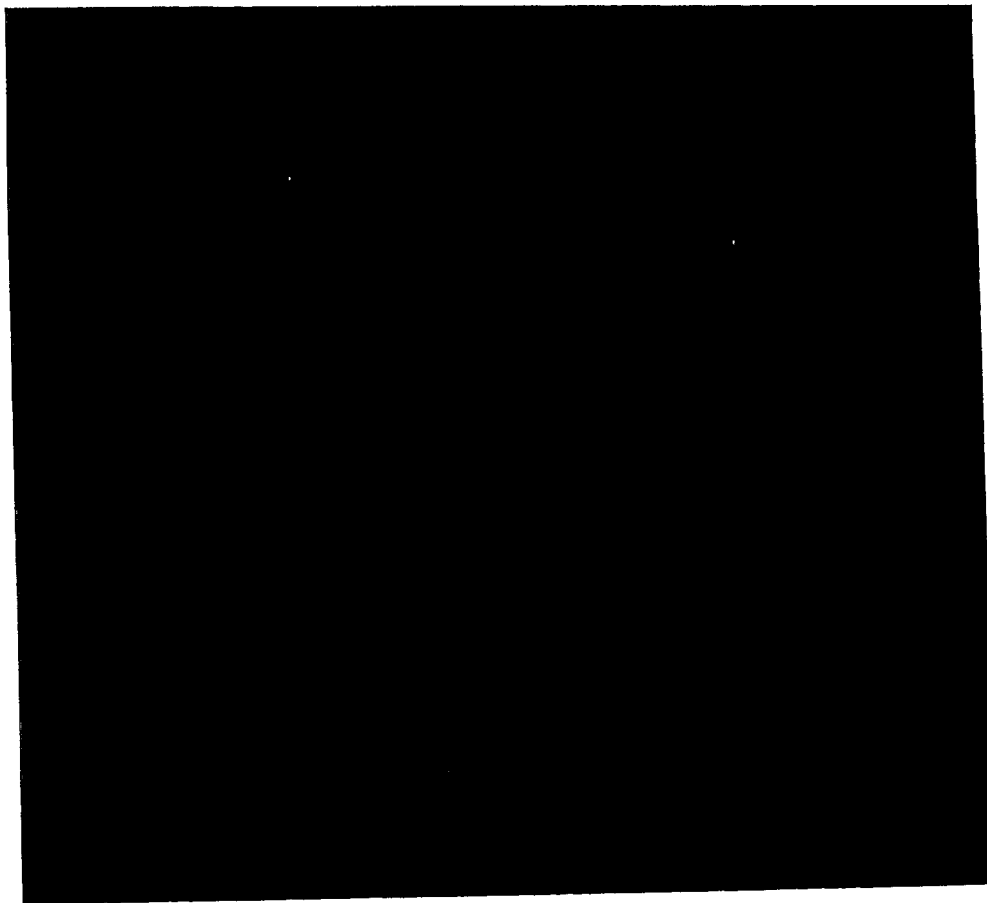
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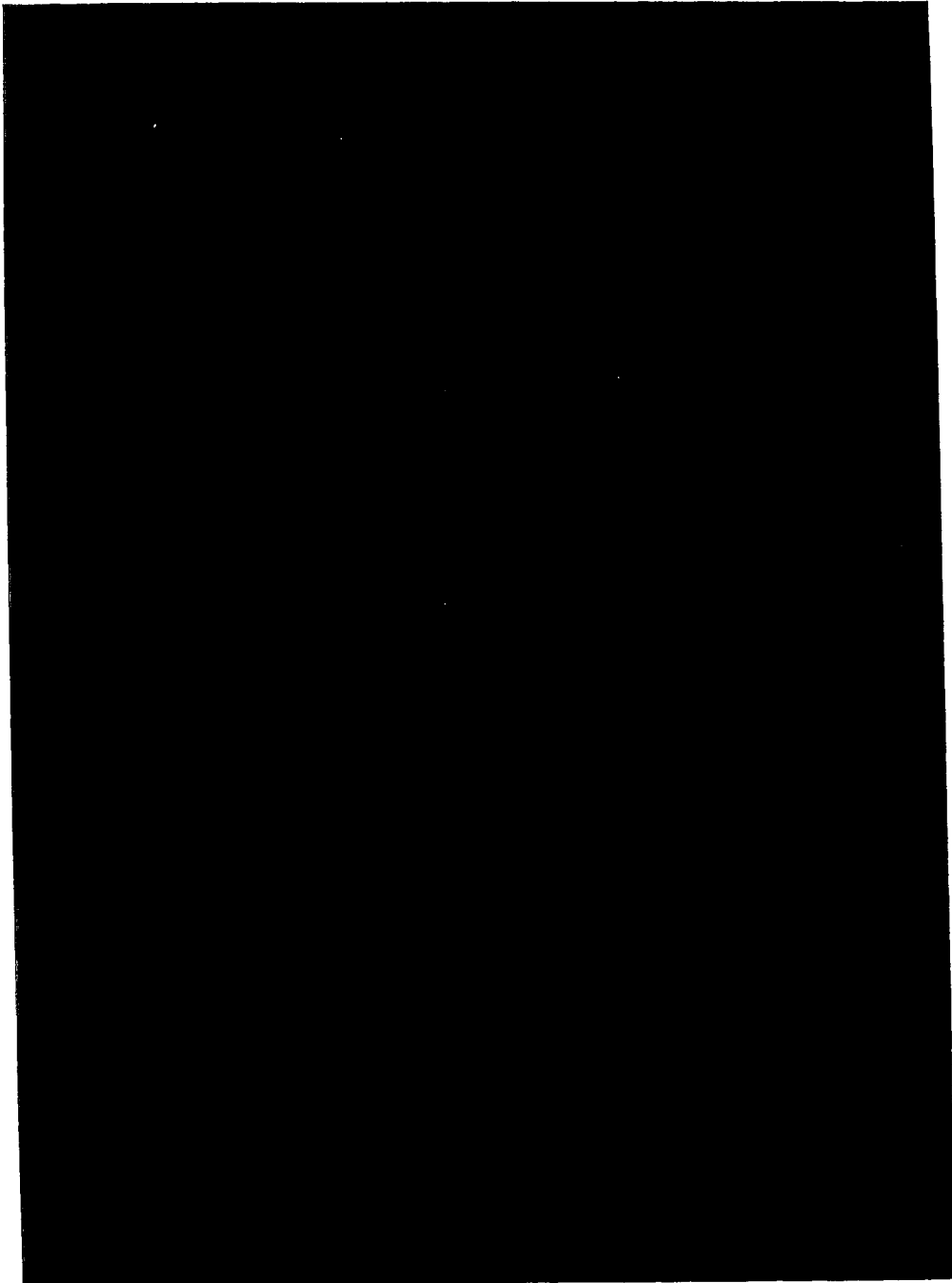
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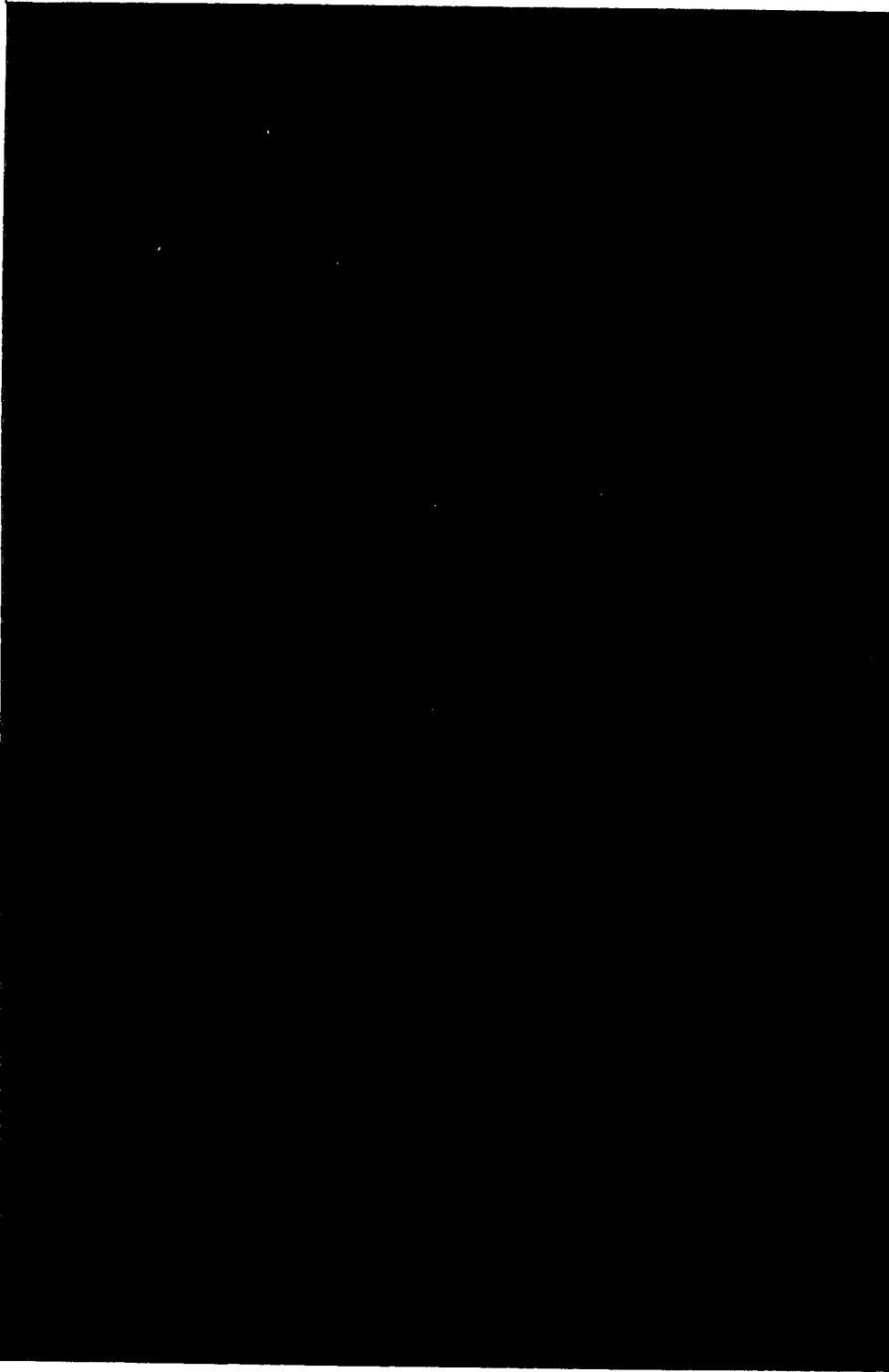
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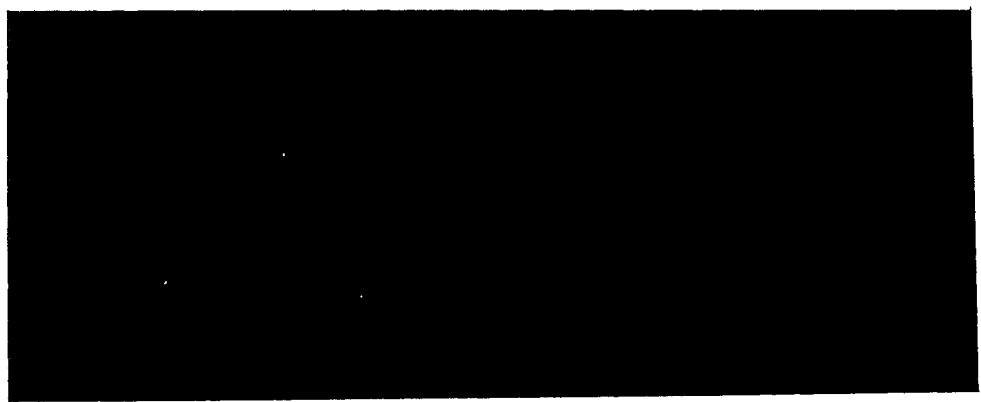
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