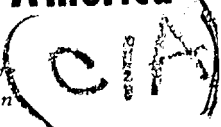


A Report On The "Left" In Latin America

By Leopoldo Aragón

CPYRGHT

(The following is a chapter from a book in progress. The author is Washington's only fulltime Latin American correspondent.)



In January, in Havana, coinciding with the beginning of the 8th year of the Cuban Revolution and the holding of the Tricontinental Congress of Friendship among the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, members of the Chilean delegation invited Fidel Castro to send some representatives to the 40th anniversary-celebrations of the founding of the Chilean Communist Party.

"There isn't much to celebrate in 40 years out of power," replied Fidel. "I'll personally come when you celebrate some anniversary in power."

The chances of Fidel going to Chile or to any other Latin American country to celebrate any anniversary of a Communist government, are very remote indeed. The CIA agrees. In a report written by Agent Willard Matthias and counter-signed by Sherman Kent, Chairman of the Board of National Estimates of the CIA, and recently seen by this writer it is stated that: "The Communist parties in Latin America are in their greater part under Moscow-oriented leaders incapable of overthrowing any regime or to influence them strongly and have proven largely incapable of gaining mass support."

The Matthias Report is realistic in most of its estimates of the "Communist danger" in Latin America, largely in the sense that it fails to find the kind of danger drummed up in public speeches by Administration officials and the neurasthenic pronouncements of the Organization of American States.

A reading of the periodic reports of the Special Consultative Committee on Security of the OAS, for example, clearly shows to what extreme, a group of men (mostly Latin American military), dedicated, as they say, "to eradicate Communism from the Americas," ensnare themselves in their own peculiar ghost.

"The political elements that offer the most serious danger to the existing regimes, being of the traditionalist or progressive character," says the Matthias Report, "are not those that call themselves Communist or Castroites, but those of nationalist left that blame their own difficulties and those of their countries on what they believe is an alliance between foreign capitalism—particularly American—and the landowners, military leaders and native political adventurers."

Nonetheless, Carlos Angulo Rueda, one of the original lights in the Security Committee of the OAS, expressed to this writer the following guideline: "To us, it does not matter whether the elements that advocate a radical change in the Latin American structures call themselves Communists, Marxists, nationalists of the left, or any other label they militate under. All of them threaten constituted authorities and our Christian way of life. All of them must be dealt with vigorously as Communists."

The bitter attacks on the "nationalists of the Left" were started, as I recall, during the latter part of Mr. Edwin Martin's tenure as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs during President



dent Kennedy's Administration, and continued by Mr. Thomas C. Mann while he held that position, and beyond.

"These forces (says the CIA report), are represented, for instance, by the Peronist tradition in Argentina and Brizola group in Brazil; their program is strongly anti-US, leftist in its ideology and demagogic in method."

To any one following the development of the "hemispheric defenses against the Communist threat," it appears that, no matter the origin or character of the threat, if it is a threat, it is labeled "Communist" under the assumption that it will give the existing regimes a free hand to suppress it by any conceivable means, and have their consciences at ease.

Their rationalization is not very different from that of certain segregationists who mark as "Communist inspired" or "Communist dupes" anyone and any measure taken to change the status quo in the U.S. South.

Juan Bautista de Lavalle, the chairman of the so-called "Lavalle Committee" that created the Special Security Committee of the OAS, recommended a series of truly monstrous articles for a draft Inter-

justified in that document by stating: "TO REMIND the government that, it should particularly make known to public opinion that the restrictive measures recommended herewith to be adopted against Communist infiltration, imply a minimum of sacrifices to the civic, political and human rights of their citizens."

That there is a danger to the *status quo* in Latin America nobody can deny. In fact, the US has encouraged that danger, to a degree (Kennedy Administration), in order to help canalize it. What's more, the danger is increasing, if by no other means than the phenomenal population growth.

You cannot have butter and cakes for a few and virtually nothing for the rest, indefinitely. And, as things stand, it is more likely that the *status quo* will collapse under the weight of hundreds of millions of empty stomachs (estimate population for Latin America in 44 years: 600 million), than by any other fashion, including the dreaded "Communist takeover." The Soviet Union and other Socialist countries would be out of their minds to be foster parents to that kind of a problem. And they do not seem to be in that mental stage should one take Chile as an example.

Whether this is "Monday morning quarter-backing" or not, higher-ups in the Socialist side of the FRAP (Socialist-Communist popular front), blamed the Communists for their joint defeat in the September 1964 elections at the hands of President Frei's Christian Democrats. According to them, the Communists purposely scared the voters, mainly the women voters, with their wild campaign propaganda directed to a large extent against the Catholic Church, and their promises to convert Chile into another Cuba.

Juanita Castro, Fidel's sister, who had recently left Cuba under clouded circumstances, showed up describing life in her homeland in the most tragic colors. Some Socialist and even some Christian Democratic leaders (Salvador Allende and President Frei) privately are reported to have said that the Communists were instructed to defeat their own chances, "because the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries do not want to see another Cuba in the Western Hemisphere at this time."

The thesis seems to be not without foundation, hearing a Communist diplomat here in Washington explain it to this writer: "We are now going through a very deep and far-reaching economic reorganization. In fifteen or twenty years we expect to be able to face up commitments we cannot now afford. One Cuba is enough for the time being."

If that is the case with Chile (population, 8.5 million), with one of the most enlightened, well organized and strongest Communist and Socialist parties in Latin America—and with two very desirable exports: copper and nitrates—one can understand the behavior of other parties "under Moscow-oriented leaders."

More graphically still, if according to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the State Department (Intelligence Report No. 4489 R-15), Chile's party has an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 members, what kind of a threat is it to Brazil (population upwards 80 million), that the Communists have 25,000 to 35,000 party members? Add the 1,000 dissidents of the pro-

Matarazzo industrial empire, once told me a remarkable tradition of revolts and *coups* in the and Argentina, what it does have is a re-Union was to have Brazil go Communist, rulers. What is obviously going on now is "but Prestes (Luis Carlos Prestes, the old Communist party chief), is more afraid of that happening than I am."

This writer, for one, has found during his recent travels that, the orthodox Communist leadership in Latin America is as theoretical and ineffective as ever and more concerned with "theological" argumentations than with practical politics. It struck him that they, together with other groups that call themselves Marxists, were very deft in pyramiding concepts upon concepts in brilliant expositions. But they lack practicality. That is, they seem unable to draw concepts from reality that would lead to the logical purpose of any political movement or party to attain power. Strange as it might sound, not in a single instance did I detect among them a trace of power appetite in the real political sense, that is, a concerted determination to gain power. Were they, on the other hand, being realistic?

Gomulka, the Polish Communist leader, once said that, "the intellectual is an 'ace' in finding excellent reasons for not acting." That might be the plight of the Communist and non-Communist Left leadership in Latin America. Recent events in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina, seem to prove it.

In Brazil, the Left was given a God sent opportunity for action when the Military staged their uprising against President Goulart. It floundered, and in the case of Prestes, it just froze. Prestes, not too surprisingly, has sought, and apparently got, a *modus vivendi* with the Castelo Branco dictatorship: a "you don't bother me, I don't bother you," sort of understanding.

In Uruguay, a frightening total strike paralyzed the country early this year. It had all the "objective" conditions for a revolutionary strike. The brains of the entire Left concluded it was not so and held back.

In Argentina, while a massive revolutionary-type of strike was going on in the Province of Tucumán at the end of the sugar cutting season (they had not been paid in four months), the leaders reached the same conclusion: "objective conditions are not present," and went about their Christmas and New Year's holidays. The Peronist leadership was the only one to show up in Tucumán, but they too are in no revolutionary mood. Peronism is still seeking power through elections, not by revolution.

For the time being at least, it appears that only in three Latin American countries could conceivable mass revolutions take place, and none of them, Marxist propelled. These are: Perú, Bolivia and Argentina. In Peru, by the APRA movement: an impossibility under its present morally and physically decrepit leadership; in Bolivia, by the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario): unlikely in the face of its fractured and corrupt state; and, in Argentina, by the Peronists: a very bourgeois party.

Contrary to belief, Latin America does not have a significant revolutionary tradition—Mexico and Cuba being the notable exceptions, and, to an extent, Bolivia

The CIA report notes that, "The promise of a quick victory through force and terror has proven to hold more attraction than the more rational and deliberate course adopted by the Communists," thus pointing out a difference in approach between those inspired by traditional Latin American methods and the trained Communists." At the same time, it shows that one does not have to be a Communist to desire and do something in the direction of a forceful change in the archaic Latin American structure.

The Left chrysalis is being spawned by many fathers into the volcanic womb of Latin America—Christianity and what some call, "a Christian heresy," Marxism, being the strongest progenitors. Confronted with a death struggle by vexing and obdurate foes, the chrysalis is further developing the ire and viciousness of the persecuted.

The Matthias Report makes the following projection: "Latin America as a whole will be characterized by civil disturbances, plots and counter plots, political warfare and terrorism. Some of the leftist nationalist force may, in some cases, reach power; military leaders of marked traditional character will try to thwart the leftist nationalist and Castroite groups by setting up military regimes; in consequence the moderate revolutionaries could be compelled to the radical camp."

This projection is being proven in *extremis*. In Brazil a movement among workers is being fostered by the "Catholic Bolshevism" of the Dominican Friars and some Jesuits. A Priest, Father Laje, was expelled from the country as a "Communist agitator."

In Argentina Father Roberto of the Beriso working district, is considered a "Red" and an "irresponsible" by the Rightist press, together with Fr. Benitez and others. In Perú, Fr. Bolo is jailed as an "extremist." In Chile Fr. Vekemans accuses Christia Democrat Frei of having "sold out to the reactionaries." In Panamá, Fr. Carlos Pérez Herrera is marked by the oligarchy as a "crypto-Communist." In Columbia, Fr. Camilo Torres, until he was killed in an ambush last month, was a "Moscow agent" to the Right.

In the Dominican Republic, the words "COMMUNIST Embassy" are scrawled on the walls of the Apostolic Nunciature of Mnsgr. Clarizzio.