

2 April 1956

COMMUNIST PARTY REACTIONS
TO 20TH CPSU CONGRESS

Reaction of Latin American CPs to the Denigration of Stalin
(March 1956) .

1. The denigration of Stalin is clearly a severe shock for the CPs in Latin America. The fact that the shock came in two "waves" (open and secret sessions) intensified the confusion. The Parties which reacted immediately to the first wave were less well off than those which remained silent.
2. CP Brazil, whose voice on line matters has been accepted as authoritative by other CPs in Latin America, has been silent. Past emphasis on Prestes' personal friendship with Stalin may be an especially troublesome factor.
3. CP Colombia and CP Panama are confused and are awaiting authoritative clarification. A leader of CP Bolivia reportedly stated that that Party has accepted the criticism "in view of current Soviet foreign policy." He claims that no division has occurred in the Party over the Stalin issue. At the same time, this must be a particularly distressing matter for CP Bolivia. It is one of the few CPs in Latin America which has been engaged in active competition, on a "Stalin vs. Trotsky" basis, with an organized Trotskyite party. It must be small consolation that Trotsky is still denigrated to the extreme.
4. CP Cuba reacted swiftly to the first wave of denigration. On 25 and 29 February and again on 3 March it minimized the scope of the criticism and its effect on Stalin's stature. It praised him very highly, while admitting he made some mistakes. However, as for the error of "cult of personality", CP Cuba attributed this error to CPSU and expressed the expectation that CPSU would explain how this error came to be made. CP Cuba also strove to defend Stalin's works which had been criticized by Mikoyan. Clearly this Party, which was so far out on a limb at the time of the Browder denigration, was out there again.

5. CP Chile staggered through the two waves, between 29 February and 29 March. The Party paper manifested a cautious approach to the Stalin question and apparent lack of guidance. The first article on 6 March concentrated on the violation of collective leadership and on the evils of cult of personality, without directly accusing Stalin. Subsequent articles on 9 and 13 March discussed the XXth Congress but ignored the Stalin issue entirely.

Harassed by the "bourgeois press" on 20 March, the Party paper quoted British Communist Harry Pollit to the effect that Stalin made mistakes in connection with collective leadership but made enduring contributions -- development of industry, construction of socialism and the defeat of Hitler. The following day a delegate of CP Chile to the XXth Congress stated that the Congress had corrected Stalin's mistakes regarding collective leadership and particularly with respect to the inevitability of war.

On 29 March severe criticism of Stalin was expressed in obvious reaction to the second wave. The Party paper declared that in the 1930's Stalin began to place himself above the Party, imposed his will over that of the Party, made unilateral decisions and finally liquidated collective leadership. This caused grave damage to the CPSU and the international workers' movement. The criticism was modified somewhat by praise of Stalin for his struggle against Trotskyite and Bukharinites, for his work in connection with the construction of socialism and the creation of a powerful socialist industry which was instrumental in the defeat of Hitler.

Like CP Cuba, CP Chile pointed out that the drive to restore collective leadership was initiated at the XIXth Congress when Stalin was still alive.

One of CP Chile's delegates to the XXth Congress repeatedly met with top Party leaders immediately upon his return to Chile on 16 March.

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