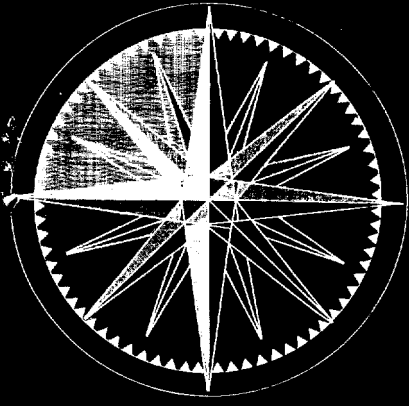


SECRET

Release 2006/05/24 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004600120002-9
6 November 1964

OCI No. 0356/64A
Copy No. 57



SPECIAL REPORT

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

25X1



SECRET

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

25X1

Approved For Release 2006/05/24 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004600120002-9

Approved For Release 2006/05/24 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004600120002-9

SECRET

6 November 1964

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

The decisive victory of Eduardo Frei in the 4 September Chilean presidential election could mark the emergence of the Christian Democratic (CD) movement as an important political force, not only in Chile but elsewhere in Latin America. The CD movement is a relatively recent political development there, coinciding with the efforts of the Catholic Church in the early 1950s to apply its stated objectives of moderate social reforms throughout the hemisphere. Where the church made such efforts and where leaders of good caliber emerged, the CD parties have become, or seem likely to become, the political benefactors of this new progressive church "image."

Background

Doctrinally, the Latin American CD movement is similar to Christian Democracy in Western Europe, but with a more left-of-center orientation. The CD movement rejects both Communism and capitalism, advocating a "third force" based on papal encyclicals which encourage social, economic, and political reforms without "dehumanizing" the person and family.

One of the fundamental appeals of the CD movement in Latin America is the fact that CD parties are based on an ideology. In this respect they differ from many Latin American political parties which have largely revolved around some personality or have been in the pay of the local oligarchy. The CD movement's commitment to basic social reform, combined with its opposition to Communism and "independence" of the US, makes it very attractive to Latin Ameri-

can student and middle class elements. Indeed, CD emphasis on the use of constitutional means to achieve major reforms creates a potentially vigorous competition for the Communists and other leftist-extremists.

The CD movement is strongest in Chile, Venezuela, Peru, and El Salvador. Frei's impressive victory in Chile attests to CD strength there. In Venezuela, the CD party is known as the Independent Political and Electoral Organization (COPEI). COPEI, lately a junior partner in the coalition led by former president Betancourt, made gains in the general election last December. It has, however, chosen to remain independent of Raul Leoni's government, and will probably act as the "loyal opposition" until the next election in 1968. The Peruvian CD party gained prominence in June 1963 when it joined an alliance with the reformist Popular Action party, and contributed

1

SECRET

SECRET

to President Fernando Belaunde Terry's margin of victory. The CD party in El Salvador has become the only active, legal opposition party in the country.

The Movement's Problems

The CD movement in Latin America has its failings, however. Chief among these is the tendency of some CD leaders to depreciate the Communist threat in Latin America. This is sometimes accompanied by a decidedly anti-American viewpoint. Both factors may well be attributable to lack of political experience among the leaders of this relatively young movement, as well as to the CD "third-position" ideology. Political expediency sometimes makes it tempting to capitalize on popular sentiments by being overly critical of "American imperialism" or overly tolerant of Communism and ultra-nationalism.

Chile and Argentina provide examples of CD political inexperience. CD labor leaders took their unions into Chile's most powerful, but Communist-dominated, labor confederation in 1962 in the mistaken view that they could work from within to take over the confederation. Instead, they have had to follow the lead of the Communists. Similarly, CD political leaders in Argentina have relentlessly courted the Peronists until they are now accused of advocating policies "more Peronist than Peron."

Alfredo Hoffman, president of the small CD labor federation in Honduras, is a good illustration of irresponsibility within the CD movement. Hoffman has maintained close ties with Honduran Communist Party members, and made trips to Cuba in 1959 and 1961. He is violently anti-US, pro-Castro, and pro-Communist. Similar misguided CD idealists are liberally scattered throughout CD youth and student organizations. These relatively small, but vocal and determined, elements could eventually discredit and ultimately destroy a dynamic force for progress in Latin America if the more moderate CD leaders refuse to act to check them.

CD Labor Connections

Organized labor could contribute substantially to the development of well-organized CD political parties in the hemisphere, but it also offers the best chance for CD extremists to cause harm to the movement. Some of the more radical CD personalities are leaders in the Confederation of Latin American Trade Unions (CLASC), the regional arm of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions. CLASC leaders generally stress their anti-Communism, but equally emphasize their opposition to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its Latin American associate, the Inter-American Regional Organization of Labor (ORIT). In some instances, such as at the

SECRET

SECRET

fourth CLASC congress held in Caracas in late 1962, ORIT has been attacked as a "tool of US capitalism." In mid-1963 an assistant secretary of CLASC declared that ORIT is "an agency of the US State Department and an apologist for imperialism." More recent statements by CLASC leaders have condemned "the maneuverings of ORIT and the American embassies in Latin America."

CD unions have not developed significant strength in Latin America outside of Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala. CD efforts among urban and rural labor contributed to the Frei victory in Chile, and strengthened the Romulo Betancourt administration in Venezuela. The CD labor confederation in the Dominican Republic is the second largest labor organization in the country with some 130 affiliated unions. The emergence in 1963 and 1964 of a dynamic, well-financed CD labor movement in Guatemala is considered by reliable observers there to be the most important recent development in the field of organized labor. In addition, the CD labor arm in Nicaragua recently was characterized as the most vital non-Communist labor organization in the country in terms of activity and effectiveness. Although labor is generally weak in Nicaragua under CD influence, it is seriously challenging the Communist-controlled General Confederation of Labor for the leadership of Nicaragua's labor movement.

National Appraisals

Argentina: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) has failed to attract a significant electoral following. It has never received more than five percent of the vote in any of the five post-Peron elections. The uniqueness of the Argentine political situation has forced the PDC to compete with the Peronists for the support of the country's labor movement. Its strategy of promoting Peronist-like causes has generally proved to be a failure, however. The PDC has also suffered from persistent party factionalism.

Brazil: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) is a relatively minor organization that has only limited influence on national politics. It is essentially a regional party, with its strength concentrated in two or three southern states. Nevertheless, the PDC has steadily increased its electoral strength. In 1962, eighteen PDC members won seats in the 409-seat Chamber of Deputies, compared with eight in the 1958 elections and only three in 1954. In addition, the first CD senator was elected in 1962. One cabinet member of the present government--Transport Minister Juarez Tavora--is an active PDC member. The party is disunited over basic policy, with the moderate leadership being challenged by an extreme left-wing faction. Although there is little chance that the PDC will become a major political party in the near future,

SECRET

SECRET

a few outstanding party leaders, such as Parana Governor Ney Braga, are likely to become prominent national leaders in the next few years.

Bolivia: The Social Christian Party (PSC) is a small, insignificant political organization without prospects for improving its position in the immediate future. It polled less than 20,000 votes out of a total of over a million cast in the 1962 congressional election.

Chile: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) was formed in 1957, and soon became a dominant force among student groups. President Frei is more moderate in his views than some of his close party associates. The PDC program, however, calls for far-reaching reforms leading to broad economic, educational, and social development of Chile and redistribution of national income. The program includes extensive policy changes relating to taxation, money and banking, foreign trade, industry, mining, and agriculture.

Colombia: The Christian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDC) has remained small and generally uninfluential. In some instances it has supported Communist causes. Notable among these was its July 1963 support for the First Meeting for the Rights of Colombian Youth--sponsored and controlled by the Communists--and for sending representatives to Havana in 1963 for Cuba's 26 July celebration. The PDC is expected, however, to join right-wing politi-

cal groups supporting Minister of War Ruiz if he decides to run for the presidency.

Costa Rica: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) is a small unregistered organization led by a professor at the University of Costa Rica. The party was founded in 1963.

Cuba: If the present Communist regime were forced out of Cuba, a Christian Democratic movement would probably emerge as one of the more significant and influential of the many political groups that would be vying for influence and control. The existing Christian Democratic Movement (MDC) of Cuba was founded in early 1960 or late 1959 by democratic-minded Cuban middle-class leaders who had been backing Fidel Castro, but who were becoming alarmed at Communist inroads. The original MDC leaders included some of the most capable business and professional people then in Cuba. In 1961 and 1962 the MDC retained some resistance forces inside Cuba, but these are no longer operational. The MDC as an organization is one of the larger and more militant of the several hundred Cuban exile factions based in the Miami area.

Dominican Republic: The Social Christian Revolutionary Party (PRSC)--which was formed in 1961--drew less than five percent of the total vote in the December 1962 elections, but the party has attracted many young and able members from its student organizations. The PRSC

SECRET

SECRET

professes to be anti-Communist, but its "anticapitalist" and "anti-Yankee" propaganda often rivals that of Communist and pro-Castro groups in the Dominican Republic. In February 1964 an insurgent self-styled "leftist revolutionary" group took over the PRSC national convention, forcing the party's more moderate leadership to resign.

Ecuador: Ecuador does not have a CD party or movement in the usual sense of the term. The so-called Ecuadorean Social Christian Movement (MSC) has asserted that its program is based on Christianity and on a desire for economic and social justice. Considered within the context of a nation of pronounced religious conservatism, however, this has generally meant a decidedly rightist orientation, out of step with the focus of the CD movement in the rest of Latin America.

El Salvador: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) was founded in 1960 and has become the only really active, legal opposition party in the country. It is the only non-Communist party based on a well-defined set of principles rather than formed around a political personality. In the elections last March the PDC picked up 14 of the 52 seats in the legislature and the mayoralty of the capital of San Salvador. The party polled almost 26 percent of the vote; its strength lies principally in urban Santa

Ana and San Salvador, but is growing rapidly in the rural areas.

Guatemala: The small Guatemalan Christian Democratic Party (DCG) appears to be the most active, determined, and well-motivated political group in the country. The Peralta government opposes the party, however, and may not permit it to participate in the next national elections. Despite the government's opposition, the appeal of the DCG's philosophy is strong in Guatemala. The party has an excellent potential to become an important political force with broad appeal. Its important assets are a vigorous leadership, backing from the international Christian Democratic movement, and its support in the politically important university and labor movements.

Haiti: An embryonic CD movement exists in Haiti but, like all other opposition groups, it is suppressed and operates clandestinely.

Honduras: There is no CD political party in Honduras. A small labor federation is affiliated with CLASC, and is led by pro-Communist Alfredo Hoffman.

Mexico: The ruling Institutionalized Revolutionary Party's (PRI) long-standing domination of politics and labor has prevented the development of any significant CD movement in Mexico.

SECRET

SECRET

Nicaragua: The Social Christian Party (PCS) is a minuscule political organization, offering no threat to the established political parties. The PCS is both anti-Communist and anti-Somoza (the dominant family in Nicaraguan politics). It displays little of the anti-US line followed by some CD adherents elsewhere in Latin America. The party is supported by Managua's leading opposition daily La Prensa.

Panama: The small Panamanian Christian Democratic Party (PDC) has been registered only four years. Its philosophy of social justice, however, makes it more soundly based than most Panamanian parties which are largely personalistic or tied to financial interests. The PDC has several capable leaders who are outspokenly anti-Communist.

Paraguay: The Christian Democratic Social Movement (MSDC), founded in 1960 with the passive blessing of President Stroessner, is of only minor significance in Paraguay. The party lacks competent leadership and, since 1962, has experienced harsh treatment from the government. Its strength lies with young professional people and students.

Peru: The Peruvian Christian Democrat Party (PDC) was founded in 1955, and gained political prominence by joining a coalition with the Popular Action (AP) party to help elect Fernando Belaunde Terry to the presidency in June 1963. Two

PDC members hold cabinet positions, and another is one of Peru's two vice presidents. PDC support for AP-PDC candidates in Peru's municipal elections in December 1963 contributed to the coalition's 60-percent nationwide vote total. A PDC member was elected mayor of Lima in that election.

Uruguay: The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) has only limited appeal in Uruguay. It is one of the few CD parties in Latin America which appears to be losing political strength. The party polled only 3 percent of the total votes cast in 1962 compared with 5 percent in 1954. The party is split by factionalism. Party moderates are being seriously challenged by a radical wing. Last August a group of disgruntled conservatives who had been unable to accept the PDC's increasingly militant public stands broke away to form a new group.

Venezuela: The Social Christian Party or Independent Political and Electoral Organization (COPEI) polled over 20 percent of the popular vote for its candidate, Rafael Caldera, in the December 1963 elections. This was a 4-percent increase over the 1958 election. The party also won 49 of the 229 congressional seats compared to 25 in 1958. COPEI was a coalition partner in the administration of former president Betancourt; it has chosen to remain independent of the Leoni administration.

25X1

* * *

SECRET

SECRET

Approved For Release 2006/05/24 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004600120002-9

SECRET

Approved For Release 2006/05/24 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004600120002-9