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COMMUNIST INFILTRATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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introduction

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As the Soviet leaders prepared their followers in the Thirties for a total war against Hitler, they are today laying down the psychological strategy for a total war with "reactionary imperialism"-- meaning the Western Powers, and mainly the United States. Should war come, every single Communist will be a soldier and defender of his true and only fatherland, Russia, and of his true and only ideal, the "people's democracy."

Latin America is no exception to this psychological, and sometimes brutal, war of "encirclement." Agents from Russia, its satellites, and the local red groups are bent on spreading political, economic and social ideas which will in time pave the way for things to come--either by military action or plain fifth-column infiltration. This political or psychological warfare is for the Communist leaders perhaps their most important plan, since it might save them a costly, dubious war. Victory hangs on this preparation of the consciences of peoples, and it is on this field that the challenge has to be met.

The Soviet is already waging a cultural war in Latin America; it is aiming at the heart of these peoples, at their very soul. It is their human values, their conception of life as a whole, that is put at stake.

What is the reaction of the United States as a government and as a public, toward the Latin American factor in this warfare?

The reaction has been a timid one. There is a great ignorance of the values involved. Some grave mistakes had been made already. Further-

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more, the Slavic soul of the peoples of Central Europe basically finds a more sympathetic understanding and affinity among the Latin American peoples, than does the soul of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The upshot of this warfare will be a growth toward "neutralism" in Latin America. Whether it will have time to consolidate itself is a matter of wider scope than can be discussed here. As a whole, Latin America may reject Communism, but it is also trying to get on a firmer footing, on an equal basis, with the greater powers, especially Great Britain and the United States. Reds are using nationalism now for their purpose, but should Moscow lose its grip, probably socialist, autonomous states will emerge in place of the present liberal structures in Latin America. There are signs of "titoism" in some red circles, and this may prove another outcome. At any rate, a profound, fast-moving change in the social thinking of these peoples is taking place, and Red agents are doing all they can, with abundant means, to channel that trend along the pattern set by the Kremlin.

Many authors have pointed to the similarities between the Russian country folk and the Latin American peasant. There was also a parallel traced with the Chinese farmer. They all possess a mystic attachment to the land and a deep craving for a better world; they are rebellious about the unjust conditions imposed by wealth monopoly. The Russian revolution of 1917 found a tremendous echo among idealistic leaders in Latin America. Many of them later became the pioneers of the red movement. Their strongest ties with Communism were not its positive teachings, but the common urge for a rebellion against oppression. More could be said about this spiritual affinity, but it is enough to register this fact here.

More immediate factors press upon the relations of these countries with the United States. They are ignorance and error. Perhaps if one wished to make a deeper study of the matter, these factors could turn out to be only symptoms of two different, when not opposing, ways of

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^{thinking} thinking and acting. As a whole, United States policy seems to be a pragmatic one in the sense that seeks to meet a situation now and here, while the Latin mind, being of a more humanistic character, embraces more universal values and has a deep sense of history and of international bonds. However, this account could not expand on this point without becoming too involved.

It is a fact that the average United States citizen, and most of the leaders in the multifold life of the nation, know very little about Latin America; or what is even worse, many entertain some curious mixture of ideas about those countries, mainly the products of oversimplification and overgeneralization, when not straight prejudice. It is not a national sin peculiar to this country; the Latins have as many or more preconceived, unwarranted ideas about the Yankees.

Of all the public media of communication and education, perhaps the most important one is the press. Yet here are the findings of a panel discussion held last month (march 1953) at the University of Miami:

1. Latin America cannot compete with Europe or the Far East in the world news market by usual standards; but usual standards are short of today's needs.
2. The coverage of Latin American news is not adequate; this very inadequacy makes it spotty, inconclusive and fragmentary. Unfairness and inaccuracy follow, not so much out of specific errors, but out of the haphazard, irregular handling of Latin American news.
3. In this general ignorance, a few hot-footed transients spend a month in Latin-America and come back with a book written on the subject.
4. News agencies avoid "hot" stories that might flick, goad or infuriate a government or a business concern. Often they slant some so as to leave everybody happy, at the price of blurring the picture.

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5. Latin officials themselves make it hard for the U.S. public to know their lands better. They either clamp rigid censorship on their own press and sources, or follow a changing, unpredictable course on vital matters.

6. The "sensational" has taken over the sensible: revolutions, rumbas and earthquakes come first on an editor's desk who knows that his readers expect precisely that.

The only corrective method for such a situation is to dress the bare facts with background, explanation and other information that will make the U.S. public understand any story coming, say, from Bolivia, as if it had happened in their own State.

Occasionally some reports on Communist infiltration in Latin America reach the reader. Yet only the expert could measure the extent of the Red conspiracy in those lands, because he has a picture of the whole situation. This report is precisely trying to put together several stories, or rather the story of a plan in several stages and places.

Out of ignorance, perhaps more than of ill-will, the United States has made serious mistakes in its relations with Latin America. Privilege and also obligation go with the preponderance reached by this country in international affairs. The following are the mistakes that give some ground to the otherwise unfair accusations that the Red psychological warfare unleashes against this country:

A) ~~Wherever~~ U.S. citizens or authorities have come into positions of authority among Latin Americans, discrimination followed, particularly concerning jobs, housing, wage scales, social matters: in the Panama Canal Zone, in oil concessions in Colombia and Venezuela; in banana plantations in tropical lands; in Puerto Rico; among the Mexican minorities in the Southwest; among the Latin American (mainly Puerto Ricans) soldiers fighting in Korea.

B) Some businessmen for many decades have made enemies with

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their practices. Many of these practices are downright illegal and punishable in the United States, but down South--many times with the connivance of local politicians--they can get away with them. Of course, the trend is changing, and there were always exceptions, but the damage is done. American enterprise, skilfull and ingenious, may have quickened some groups' economy, and in fact whole towns and regions have benefited from the American investment. But many times these businessmen, failing to recognize their tremendous influence, have sent other groups along the path of despair and misery, or held back the natural development of a country's resources. The nationalization of Bolivia's tin mines started when W. Stuart Symington forced down the price of tin from \$1.82 to \$1.12, as Administrator of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and indirectly had the Indian miners working twelve hours a day for one dollar.

C) Marketing of American products is proving another misused channel. In terms of pesos, goods manufactured by high-standard-of-living workers in the United States are only within reach of the richest groups in Latin America. The poor are envious. Luxury items strain the dollar stock, and what could be a source of farm machinery and roads and other common welfare projects, turns into a thing to widen the class cleavage in Latin America. Many movies are also stirring the hunger of the masses by presenting an unattainable world. Russia and their satellites are exploiting all this both in their propaganda and in their trade.

The value of an account of Red penetration in Latin America resides mainly in the fact that it brings out in unsuspected manner the multifold variations of the Red conspiracy. The Cominform all-embracing order seems to be: use anything if it avails the Party.

This fifth column is not invincible. Particularly in Latin America, Red leaders never could feel they were standing on firm ground, because as a rule the picture has many intangible factors. For them it has been a painful process of doing and undoing, of learning by trial and error.

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But with time, experience, and above all, with the continuation of the present-day gross injustices, the Red conspiracy can assuredly succeed.

This account is by no means complete. It cannot claim to bring to light the discovery of secret documents or underground movements. It is gathered from already published information that comes to an editor's desk in news reports, periodicals, magazines and a few books, and particularly letters, often confidential, from numerous correspondents. It is chiefly an effort at joining together the otherwise meaningless pieces of a puzzle.

Except from some occasional remarks, there is no mention of the social reform movement undertaken with promising success by the Church and the Catholics, as there is no mention of other less genuinely anti-Communist forces. The Catholic effort alone would take a series as long, if not longer, as this account devoted to the Red infiltration in Latin America.

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