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Latin America

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Note on "Our Political Gap in Latin America":  
The Midwest Quarterly editors did their own proof-reading.

Therefore, I feel at liberty to disclaim responsibility, but to express regrets, for the omission of all Spanish pronunciation marks on p. 220, the mix-up in quotation marks on p. 221, line 5, and the incorrect spelling of President Alessandri's name, p. 227, line 25.

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## Our Political Gap in Latin America

JAMES L. BUSEY

LATIN AMERICA is exploding with demands for social revolution. It was Columbus himself who planted the seeds of upheaval. When he and his lieutenants parceled out the lands and Indians of Hispaniola as booty of conquest, they made it inevitable that there would ultimately be a social eruption of volcanic proportions. Now, after more than four centuries of deprivation of the many for the enrichment of the few, the depressed people of Latin America are awakening. Millions of Latin American people are becoming aware that they need not be hungry and diseased, that they need not live in wretched squalor, that their babies need not die of privation and filth, that they need no longer be oppressed and abused like beasts.

Latin Americans may not understand *why* they are miserable, *why* they are not wealthy like the non-productive parasites who live in ornate palaces with lily ponds and retinues of fawning servants and high walls topped with broken glass to keep out the poverty-stricken rabble. What the Latin American masses are coming to understand is that such conditions need not be permanent, that they can be changed. And millions of under-privileged Latin American people are determined that changes will occur.

One could speculate about the reasons for this awakening Latin American social consciousness. In the big cities, such as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Mexico City, middle-class commercial and professional elements are emerging, and capitalism is nibbling around the edges of medievalism. The dark ages are giving

ground to something like an introduction to a preface to the class fluidity and productivity of modern free enterprise. Social change is upsetting Latin American acceptance of feudalism and quasi-slavery. Education, increased trade, better transportation, and more effective mass communications are playing their roles in stirring the people of Latin America.

Politicians share responsibility for the new sense of urgency about social change. During this generation, Latin American political leaders have discovered "the people," *el pueblo*. Of course there is no particular time or place where this spark of humane concern first struck fire. One thinks of some of the participants—Madero, Carranza, Zapata, and others—in the Mexican revolution of 1910-1917. There were student leaders, such as Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, and Luis Alberto Sanchez, in the early days of the Peruvian *aprista* movement (from APRA, or Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana). These men were attracted by the Russian revolution and unsure of their own future political orientation. One recalls earlier figures, such as the great Jose Batlle y Ordonez of Uruguay and Ricardo Jimenez and Cleto Gonzalez Viquez of Costa Rica.

Today, at least three types of individuals or political groups make it their business to be concerned about the squalor in which masses of Latin-American peasants and workers have been vegetating and suffering for centuries. First, there are the demagogues. Self-serving, often debauched and always unstable, they have seized upon the notion that one must attend to, or pretend to attend to, the needs of *el pueblo*. They have sensed that one may appeal to *el pueblo*, and thereby secure political power. One thinks of Juan Domingo Peron, who shrieked, "You're dirty! I'm dirty! We're all dirty together!" There was the Colombian demagogue whose slogan was, "Charge!" Mussolini and his balcony were a preface to Castro and his in-

terminable harangues to the assembled mobs. "Do you need elections?" he screams. "No! No!" they roar back, in approved Fascist-Communist style, and one is terrified by echoes of "Il Duce! Il Duce! Il Duce!" or "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!" One is reminded of the corrupt General Marcos Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela who substituted ornate buildings and high-sounding slogans about the "new Venezuela" for more fundamental improvements in the lot of the Venezuelan people; or even of the dean of all tyrants, the late Rafael Leónidas Trujillo of the so-called Dominican Republic, who in the last months of his reign dressed up *el pueblo* in proletarian-looking uniforms and got them into mass demonstrations of support for *El Benefactor*—complete with clanking machetes, à la Castro.

Secondly, there is a whole set of western-style democratic parties which are playing an increasingly important role in Latin America. Many of these are democratic-socialist, in the Scandinavian or British sense. Others would transform quasi-medieval Latin American social and political structures into modern systems of distributed proprietorship. Still others are more conservative but determined to encourage the development of democratic, constitutional norms. These parties are indigenous to the Americas, thoroughly non-Communist, and entirely determined to preserve their countries from external intervention or imperialism of either the Soviet or the U. S. varieties.

In Brazil, the União Democrática Nacional is an important, western-democratic party of rather indefinable but generally moderate persuasion. In Peru, the most dramatic and famous reformist party of all is the Partido Aprista under the leadership of Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre. Peru's Partido Demócrata Cristiano, while not so reformist as APRA, is to be counted among the friends of human liberty. In Venezuela, President Rómulo Betancourt and his Acción Democrática are waging an uphill battle for social reform

and the realization of constitutional, representative democracy before Communists or other authoritarians can again throw the republic into the abyss of tyranny. In Bolivia, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario has been the government party since 1952. Leaders such as courageous ex-President Hernán Siles Suazo and the current President, Victor Paz Estenssoro, are striving to extricate Bolivia from feudalism and to introduce meaningful reforms in land distribution, industrialization, education, and governmental processes.

In Central America, the famous ex-President José Figueres leads the dynamic Costa Rican Partido Liberación Nacional, which is highly reformist, quasi-socialist, and determined upon the preservation of democratic norms. Liberación Nacional is the largest of three important parties in Costa Rica, and is a focal point for a great deal of inter-American democratic political activity. Francisco J. Orlich, candidate of Liberación Nacional, won the elections of last February 4, and will assume the office of President next May 8. Also in Costa Rica, the conservative but equally democratic-oriented Unión Nacional is an important political force. In Guatemala, the leading western-oriented reformist party is the Revolucionario, which is led by dynamic Mario Méndez Montenegro and by Luis F. Galich, mayor of Guatemala City. President Ydígoras of Guatemala is more conservative, and of the military profession, but he and his supporters in Partido Redención Nacional are not to be discounted in the struggle against tyranny.

In Honduras, President Ramón Villeda Morales leads the non-socialist Partido Liberal in a dramatic movement to distribute the property and create a new class of numerous farmer-proprietors, educate the Honduran people, and rescue the country from the grip of feudalism before the Communists seize the imaginations of a harassed and exasperated people. In Tegucigalpa, school children are to

be seen everywhere, and some schools are operating on a 24-hour basis. After darkness, when everything else is closed down, it is thrilling to see the lights of the secondary schools blazing through the night.

In Nicaragua, the Partido Liberal Independiente and Partido Conservador struggle against the interminable Somoza dynasty, and can be counted among the friends of western democracy.

In the Dominican Republic, at least two pro-democratic, non-Communist political parties have emerged out of the shambles of the Trujillo tyranny: Unión Cívica Nacional, of which Rafael Bonelly, provisional president, is a member; and Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, moderate and insistent upon free elections and meaningful democracy.

This leaves out of account the several pro-democratic conservative or liberal parties of El Salvador, Panama, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, and Ecuador; or the restive groups now in exile from Cuba and Paraguay. All of the above political groups are aware of the inevitability of social change and are determined to achieve it within the framework of western-type democracy.

Thirdly, there are the Communists. Whether knowingly or not, they are the agents of a foreign power, and they are doing their part to remind *el pueblo* of its plight. They are using uninformed, naive students who often have neither libraries nor books, hordes of urban unemployed, and illiterate peasants and workers, to stir social chaos in the interests of the U. S. S. R. In Cuba, they have succeeded in extending the borders of Soviet tyranny into the heart of the Americas and to the back door of the United States. From Cuba, they are now emboldened to move for even bigger stakes. These agents of Soviet imperialism are particularly interested in Venezuela, whose oil, whose location almost athwart the entrance to the Panama Canal, and whose pivotal position near North America but in South

America, could provide a wedge to assure Soviet victory in this hemisphere. The Andean countries of Ecuador and Peru are not so vital to the strategic interests of the U. S. S. R., but their oppressed Indian populations and mountainous conditions offer fertile field for Communist propaganda and guerrilla activities. As one disturbed writer recently put it, "When the Andes have become the Sierra Maestra of the Americas, the Soviet Union will have won the Cold War."

In Brazil, the dynamic deputy and political leader, Francisco Julião, has brought thousands of poverty-stricken northeastern peasants into his Peasant Leagues, and over to the side of their idolized deities, Fidel, Mao, Ché, and Lenin. In Mexico, Communists are successfully using the name and prestige of the distinguished but naive ex-President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) to promote social chaos in that important republic. Their activities in the so-called Movimiento Liberación Nacional are posing serious threats to the stability of the regime, and during the past two years several Mexican states have at one time or another suffered periods of virtual social anarchy, wherein all authority disappeared and rioting and chaos prevailed.

We hear a great deal about the missile gap, the education gap, and other alleged gaps in our competitive position relative to that of the Soviet Union. Little has been said about our political gap, and it is to that subject that our discussion will now turn.

The Communist parties of Latin America collaborate closely with the Communist party of the U. S. S. R. The U. S. S. R. thus has at its disposal, in Latin America as elsewhere, a weapon which is simply not in the arsenal of the United States. Whenever it suits the expansionist interests of the Soviet Union to do so, it can call on the Communist parties in Latin America to promote riots, embarrass and harass visiting U. S. officials, bring pressure on governments

to adopt foreign policies which will help the U. S. S. R. and hurt the U. S. A., and so on. As a most recent example, one need only cite the bitter riots and violence which broke out in Venezuela during the January OAS conference on Cuba at Punta del Este, Uruguay. The timing was so well suited to Soviet-Cuban purposes that one would be gullible indeed to suppose that the demonstrations erupted by spontaneous combustion. More openly and more well known to everyone, the strident Communist elements of Latin America persistently carry on an interminable propaganda campaign of vilification of the U. S. A. and praise of the U. S. S. R. and its Cuban satellite.

What is not so well understood is that all the attempts by the United States at improving its official contacts and at creating good will for itself in Latin America simply do not meet the problem which is posed by the Communist parties. The United States government may improve the calibre of its diplomatic personnel. It may multiply its radio transmissions to Latin America. It may develop more meaningful culture-exchange programs. It may step up its economic aid programs, as through the Alliance for Progress. It may reduce or eliminate tariff barriers to importation of Latin American products. It may assume a particularly warm and friendly attitude toward the democracies and a more formal, coolly correct attitude toward the tyrannies. It may de-emphasize the military aspects of assistance. It may even induce the CIA and the Department of State to take a modern view toward social revolutions, subversion, and guerrilla warfare. The Kennedy administration seems determined to accomplish all these things. As is well known, in little over a year President Kennedy and his government have already made some striking improvements in these areas of governmental or official conduct.

Such reforms are still confined to the realm of overt diplomatic and economic relations. The Soviet Union has

long been adept at the utilization of entirely acceptable, correct, and quite able techniques at those official levels. The United States is taking large strides to come abreast of the Soviet Union in this field. There still remains a great area of extra-official political action which neither the U. S. nor the Soviet governments can officially enter, but which the Soviet Communist party can employ through the services of local Communist parties.

The remarkable discrepancy between Soviet proficiency and U. S. ineptitude in this arena may in fact lie at the very center of the U. S. disadvantage *vis à vis* the Soviet Union. It constitutes as serious a gap in the political sphere as our alleged missile weakness does in the military realm. The Soviets have at their disposal a virtual political international, which goes quite beyond anything available to the United States. This goes entirely outside the Embassy gates, and has nothing to do with the improvement of official policy or conduct, programs of aid, cultural exchange, and the like. The United States would achieve a similar objective if our own major parties were to enter into mutual collaboration with the Latin American pro-western political parties.

What I propose, therefore, is that the leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties of the United States cooperate with their Latin American counterparts in endeavors for social reform and achievement of stable democracy throughout the hemisphere. It may be that our two parties will differ as to the Latin American groups with which they can best collaborate. This is of no importance. The Republican party can enter into league with those that it favors, and the Democratic with those that are more to its tastes. There are several—such as the Liberal parties of Honduras, Colombia, and elsewhere—with which both of our parties would find themselves quite in harmony.

There can be mutual collaboration and assistance in

publication of newspapers and journals, in radio and TV transmissions, in exchange of political leaders, in the holding of specialized conferences, in common propaganda efforts against tyranny in all forms and for popular freedoms, in the organization and stimulation of students and workers, professionals, farmers and business people, in the organization of mass demonstrations and parades, and in the whole gamut of political forms of action as appropriate in each instance. One can even imagine international political conventions, in which platforms and programs of action would be established.

There must be no hint of U. S. governmental participation in such a common political effort. The enterprise must be entirely and scrupulously unofficial. Nor can there be a trace of domination by our major parties, for this would alienate the cooperating Latin American leaders and parties. The collaboration, the common effort for freedom, must be significantly mutual and freely cooperative on the part of all concerned. Finally, there should be no suggestion that the program is designed only for achievement of U. S. goals in Latin America. There is much that political leaders and thinkers such as liberal Villeda of Honduras, semi-socialist Figueres of Costa Rica, liberal Lleras of Colombia, socialist Betancourt of Venezuela, indigenous-socialist Haya of Peru, conservative Alessandria of Chile, the good-humored, conservative, but steadfastly democratic Ydígoras of Guatemala, and innumerable others, can teach us about freedom and tyranny. Finally, the parties would of course continue to differ with each other internally, both in the U. S. and Latin America—but on the international front they would present a solid phalanx against tyranny. It need hardly be added that reference to hemispheric political collaboration implies inclusion of the Canadian Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic (old CCF) parties, if this can be arranged.

The hemispheric political cooperation which I envision would have the merit of competing with the sort of non-official support which the Soviets have enjoyed among Latin American Communist and pro-Communist groups. It would have the additional merit and huge advantage, not enjoyed among pro-Soviet parties, of embodying the reality of genuine, free collaboration without domination by any one power.

The pro-democratic, anti-Soviet Latin American parties have long practiced a loose sort of collaboration of their own. They carry on correspondence, and there are visits and conferences among leaders. They produce journals such as *Combate* of Costa Rica, and pro-democratic newspapers. They hold international political conferences, such as the Primera Conferencia de Partidos Populares de América Latina, in Lima, Peru, during August of 1960. They sponsor the new Instituto de Educación Política which trains promising young political leaders for future work in their countries. The Instituto, which is in Costa Rica, is directed by the Rev. Benjamín Núñez, a leader of Liberación Nacional of that country. The school brings together professors and students from all the pro-democratic parties of Latin America. In these patterns of collaboration, the roles of Costa Rica's Liberación Nacional, Venezuela's Acción Democrática and Peru's APRA, are quite marked.

The point is that the demagogues, the Communists, and the sincere, dedicated reformers have aroused the people of Latin America. There is no chance that the people will soon become de-aroused. Their awakening has only begun. They will topple governments. Their leaders will seize power. The United States must become known as the champion, not the enemy, of the exploding Latin American revolution.

It must be borne in mind that by comparison with either Latin American medievalism or its collectivist cousin, the

concepts of individual liberty, rule of law, popular government, and distributed proprietorship, can constitute a tremendously revolutionary force. A pluralist society of self-propelling, non-monopolized and liberated human beings can unleash forces of production and of cultural explosion which can shake a feudal society to its foundations. State monopoly of the means of production, and imposition of absolutist political tyranny, create no equivalent social change. In the context of Latin American medievalism, even a Barry Goldwater—to say nothing of an Adlai Stevenson or a Chester Bowles—represents an extremely revolutionary position. The Western liberal movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be a far more revolutionary force in Latin America than can any collectivist or other tyrannical doctrine.

Communist parties are working vigorously to secure Soviet advantage from the volcanic upheaval that is brewing in Latin America. Adequate response to the Soviet challenge will occur when U. S. political parties recognize their revolutionary mission and make direct contact with the genuine, pro-democratic parties of Latin America. We of the Americas must develop the political weapons which would be improper as official acts but which *are* proper as non-official political party endeavors and probably essential to the survival of the free world.

We must undertake to forge a "freedom-international" for all the Americas.