

LATIN AMERICAN RALLY

BREAD, LIBERTY or COMMUNISM



Seen above are some of the principle speakers featured at the Latin American Rally. They are l to r: Mr. Oscar Monteza, Mr. LaRusic, Fr. John McIvor, and Daniel O'Hanley, chairman of the day.

Sources Of Unrest Breed Problems

"The Economic Situation in Latin America"

"Bread and Liberty" is the slogan of Latin America today," stated Ignatius LaRusic of the Coady International Institute, in his address on Latin American economics. He marked low economy as the chief reason for the underdevelopment of the Latin American social structure.

Latin America, he said is a 70% agricultural continent divided into one-crop countries. This one-crop system and the policy of exporting all primary

products still raw for the benefit of foreign-owned companies makes the economy extremely sensitive to the fluctuation of the world market. He stated that in the past ten years inflation has grown immeasurably in most countries, injuring primarily the poor and the middle classes while enriching the wealthy. These conditions, Mr. LaRusic pointed out, establish fertile fields for communist infiltration. Although the South Americans themselves claim that Latin America will neither develop under a communist nor a capitalist system, the speaker declared that Communism in Latin America can only be defeated by removing the sources of poverty and illiteracy. The struggle he concluded can not be won by force but by constructive measures to eliminate these sources and to strengthen the bulwarks of society, the Church and Democratic Government.

Sham Democracies Often Prevalent

Colonialism, the Church and the social structure all affect the political system of Latin American countries to a great extent. Oscar Monteza, Panama native and student at the Coady International Institute presented the background to politics in Latin America today guided by these main points.

Mr. Monteza developed his points from five major topics, deftly cutting to the core of each problem generally concerning the political situation in Latin America. At the outset he impressed upon the audience the extremely diverse factors which separate the countries in Latin America. Geographically, historically, economically, and population-wise, each country of Latin America has had entirely separate development, and maintains this separatism today, as much because of topographical factors as for intrinsic narrowminded nationalism.

Having established that Latin America is definitely not an homogenous unit, Mr. Monteza proceeded to give a brief survey of the political background from colonial times. The aristocratic rule characterized by centralized power, and so indicative of Colonialism, still remains today. Families, no more than twelve in number, control politics and economics throughout Latin America, dividing society into a small controlling elite and a large illiterate majority of poverty-stricken people. The political struggles therefore are reduced to group fighting between these families for control of power, and not a revolution on the people. Mr. Monteza further emphasized that although the people have never known any other than this system, a sham democracy, they live with an intense desire for a true democracy, and are working hard to bring this about.

Another factor, as detrimental to political progress as the long history of Colonialism, Mr. Monteza pointed out, was the position and attitude of the Catholic Church in Latin America. He outlined the chief role of the Church as being a guide to instill the virtues necessary to good Catholic or

Christian politicians in the people, but decidedly stated the Church role should be indirect. The Church's failure to act in such a manner and her deep direct involvement in active politics has harmed rather than helped the people of Latin America. Mr. Monteza used the case in Puerto Rico, where the church tried to influence the vote, to illustrate this point.

From the sharp contrast of rich and poor constituting the social structure in Latin America, Mr. Monteza described the gradual emergence of a middle class composed of professional and business men, as well as teachers, bureaucrats, and secular clergy. Although in most places they comprise a minority group, their significance rests chiefly on their need to introduce reforms in order to gain the support of the poor. Argentina contains the largest group of these followed by Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay. They dwell mainly in large cities where they aim at industrialization to gain votes. Their chief drawback, Mr. Monteza felt, was their political parties, which although being energetic, tended toward sectional nationalism rather than attempting a unity of the country as a whole.

Mr. Monteza named one political movement active in most of Latin America as significant. This, the Christian Democratic movement, is actually a European idea which was introduced to Latin America after World War II.

As it controlled the Christian reconstruction of Europe, and rescued it from the clutches of Communism, so Latin America strives for a similar effect in the form of Pan American Union of the country. Although this movement comprises a majority of Catholics, it is not a Catholic movement, nor is it directly connected with the Catholic Church. Instead it hopes to embody and put into effect Christian social principles as outlined in the Encyclicals. The greatest to Christian Democracy comes from two diverse fields. The obvious Communist opposition is open and at times violent. Strangely enough the remaining opposition comes from Catholics who, having made their fortune on the sweat of illiterate peasants, keep them in bondage in their refusal to recognize the necessity for social changes.

In conclusion, Mr. Monteza felt that although political maturity did exist in parts of Latin America such as Costa Rica and Chile, this is not the

case elsewhere. And for this reason the strife and violence heard from Latin America today is the manifestation of a just cry for the revenge of Christian truths.

Cuba: Expensive Lesson Learned

The evening session of the Latin American Rally opened with a presentation by Sister Angela of the Sacred Heart dealing with the Church in Cuba. Sister Angela, who has recently returned from Cuba after thirteen years, was able to give a clear insight into the conditions which prevail in the tiny island republic.

She spoke of the terrible sufferings which the people endured under Batista and of how eager they were to welcome any change which would better their plight. This change came in the person of Fidel Castro who, backed by Communist aid and American misconceptions, gained the complete confidence of 90% of the population with the shrewd disguise he donned. When Cubans realized the mistake they had made in Castro,

pinned in desperation their last hopes being on the U.S. But these hopes were quickly dashed by Castro's monopoly of radio, T.V. and press. With these important media at his disposal the propaganda war against the U.S. was on.

The plight of the Cuban is desperate, stated Sister Angela. The outlook for the future is equally bleak since it has been made very evident by Castro that he is definitely a Marxist Communist follower supported by the Soviets.

After the presentation Sister Angela answered questions from the audience. The questions asked were mainly in regard to what the people were doing at the present time, how they felt toward the U.S. and Canada and how many were followers of Castro.

Editors Note

On February 11, the Canadian Federation of Catholic College Students sponsored a Latin America Day on the University Campus. Members of the clergy, delegates from the Newman Club, Young Christian Workers, Sodalitys, Youth Clubs and University students attended the talks given by Father John McIvor of the Scarborough Foreign Missions, Ignatius LaRusic and Oscar Monteza of the Coady International Institute, and Sister Angela of the Sacred Heart. The articles on this page are not meant as substitutes for the days' speeches; rather they are meant to illuminate and instruct us of the challenge which lies ahead.

Panel Discussion

At 8:00 p.m. on February 11, a panel discussion was presented as a part of the C.F.C.C.S. Latin America Day. Mr. Ignatius LaRusic, of the Coady International Institute; Rev. John McIvor, S.F.M., St. Francis Xavier Seminary, Scarborough; and Mr. Oscar Monteza, an undergraduate student at St. Francis Xavier University and a native of Panama served on the panel. Mr. John Eldon Green of S.D.U. officiated as chairman. The program served as a means of giving the audience an idea of the work which is being done today by the many Canadians and Americans in Latin America.

Mr. LaRusic stated that there are no plans for Canadians and Americans to work in Latin America, but rather, a program to train them to develop leaders for underdeveloped countries. The North American has not been trained particularly for doing the work which must be done, but primarily for developing the potential of the Latin American people.

Fr. John McIvor pointed out that, to be able to help these people, we must be able to understand their customs and their own particular way of living and thinking. Because of their situation they have a different philosophy of life than ours, and we must learn to appreciate their problems such as hunger and illiteracy. We must not be condescending—they do not need our pity. The main virtues we must strive for when dealing with these people are sympathetic understanding and patience. They must be allowed to do things in their particular way and at their own pace of learning.

Ignatius LaRusic stated that the main purpose of the Coady International Institute is to train the people of our culture to accept and appreciate the culture of the people that they are sent to help.

Commenting on the many problems facing North Americans in Latin America today, Mr. Monteza said that until a few years ago many went there with a condescending attitude and with a feeling of pity. Frequently they would not eat the food of the country, and would not make a genuine effort to learn the language. Their main mistake, he remarked, was in their basic attitude in trying to Americanize in all cases rather than attempting to preserve those customs of South America which were good and beneficial. Mr. Monteza went on to explain that in recent years it has been corrected in many cases. Many have learned the language and the customs of the particular countries they were to go to before they left North America.

Fr. McIvor developed this point further by saying that Latin America did not need imported workers to do its work, but that they needed teachers and adult educators so that, when they left after the work had been finished, the Latin American could say, "We have done it ourselves." The people must learn and be able to do things themselves; they do not need a teacher to do all the work for them.

The main advice given to teachers going to Latin America, however, is that they should develop civic responsibility among the people and allow them to develop and maintain their own political system. Fr. McIvor agreed with Mr. Green that we should always realize that we are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ and should learn to treat one another as brothers. He went on to explain that we should be Christ like in all our relations with the Latin American people. We must help them in such a way so as to enable them to help themselves. This is what the teacher must do; he must go about doing good and unlocking latent potentialities.

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