

Castroism Emerges As New Red Force

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HAVANA, Aug. 12—Fidel Castro's ideological spectacular—the just-ended Latin American Solidarity Organization conference—was something like a circus whose audience showed more interest in the side-shows than in the main performance.

The meeting attracted lots of attention, but much of it was reserved for such diversions as a parade of captive "CIA agents," the unexpected arrival of a hijacked Colombian airliner and the provocative "black power" statements of the American Negro militant, Stokely Carmichael.

All these added attractions

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tended to overshadow the main event. Yet, it could some day be remembered as a departure point in the evolution of world communism almost as important as the Sino-Soviet split.

It was here that Castro made clear that he no longer would be content with the role of a Soviet satellite and that he aspires instead to be the final arbiter of Communist theory and practice within Latin America.

His chosen instrument is LASO, a confederation of 27

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Latin Communist and "progressive movements through which Castro hopes to outflank the influence of the Hemisphere's established, Moscow-oriented Communist Parties. And, despite some scattered pockets of resistance, LASO has revealed itself here as an organization that looks to Havana rather than Moscow for ideological leadership.

Whether LASO's individual members have sufficient strength within their respective countries to make Castro's control of the organization tantamount to control of Latin communism is an open question. So, too, is the question of whether the Soviet Union, which could bring powerful economic pressures to bear on Castro, will hold still for the pupil's attempt to supplant the master.

Denies Any Rifts

What is clear is that Castro has every intention of answering both questions affirmatively. In addressing LASO's closing session, he did make some feints at a conciliatory stance—denying he ever said that the Cuban way was the only road for Latin communism and dismissing talk of ideological rifts as "misinterpretations by the foreign press."

A moment later, however, he was showering bitter abuse on those who disagreed with his vision of what Latin American communism should be. And by the end of his 3¼-hour speech, Castro had left no doubts that the spreading of this vision is a crusade from

which he will not easily be deterred.

In its essentials, this Cuban theory of Communist revolution is based on the inevitability of violent armed struggle—an idea that brings it into immediate conflict with the Soviet line of political activity within a framework of coexistence. The theory is neither native to Cuba nor without its parallels in other parts of the underdeveloped world.

But, as refined by Castro, it has taken on characteristics of a peculiarly Latin American nature. Indeed, some observers at the LASO conference, inspired by Carmichael's presence here, have concluded that what the Cubans are talking about is not so much communism as it is "Latin power."

For an international meeting of Communists, the LASO conference was remarkably lacking in the normal invocations of Marx and Lenin. Instead, the gigantic photographic blowups dominating the conference halls were of two men whose names do not appear in the lexicons of traditional European communism: Simon Bolivar and Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Each in his way reveals how deeply the roots of Castro-style communism are buried in the Latin American character. For Castroism is a phenomenon that draws its basic inspiration less from classical Marxist dialectics than from Latin nationalism and romanticism.

The figure of Bolivar, revered throughout Latin America as "the Liberator,"

personifies the fundamental Castroite premise that Latin America won its freedom from Europe only to be enslaved anew by an unholy alliance of reactionary rulers and United States imperialism. Its corollary is the demand for guerrilla wars of "liberation" to rid Latin America of "Yankee" domination and make it an important united force in the world.

'Missionary' Role

This intense anti-Americanism, which exists independently of the movement's Marxist characteristics, is potentially its greatest strength as a missionary force. Even among Latins who do not follow him, Castro will long be remembered as the man who fulfilled their Mittyesque dream of spitting in the face of the United States and getting away with it.

Similarly, "Che" Guevara, who mysteriously disappeared two years ago, reveals Castroism's inherently romantic view of revolution. In a part of the world that places a high premium on "machismo" (manliness), the beards, fatigue uniforms and other trappings of guerrilla warfare strike a responsive chord.

To a degree unmatched even by Castro himself, Guevara, the theoretician with the machine gun, typifies the ideal of armed struggle to young leftist-inclined Latin intellectuals. It was not without reason that a LASO conference opened its deliberations by making "Che" its honorary chairman and closed them by de-

claring him the "Citizen of Latin America."

To show that these elements are capable of unification into a successful movement, there is the example of Castro's historic campaign in the Sierra Maestra mountains of Cuba—the legend of the seven guerrillas who were able to rule a peasant population and overthrow a hated, U.S.-backed dictator.

Among Latin America's young leftists, all this is heady stuff. As Guevara once noted, Castroism has the advantage of "speaking to Latins in the language of their own experiences." And the result is to invest Castro with far more glamor than the older generation of Latin Communist leaders with their adherence to the influence of Europe.

But sheer charisma is not enough to flood Latin America with the guerrilla movements that Castro insists must be "the vanguard of the revolution." If Castro is to translate the emotional appeal he projects into practical control of Latin communism, he must overcome

a formidable list of obstacles.

In many places, the orthodox, Moscow-Line Communist Parties are still more powerful than the competing "young Turk" groups that dominate LASO. In others, he is confronted by strong regional chieftains who pay lip service to the concept of armed struggle but who are unwilling to jeopardize their own fiefdoms by actually putting the idea to the test.