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EXCERPTS FROM SESSION  
ON  
LATIN AMERICA

SEPTEMBER 6, 1964

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## EXCERPTS FROM SESSION ON LATIN AMERICA -- SEPT. 6, 1964

Eduardo: This was supposed to be officially a report of Latin America, but we have had so many other discussions that we are going to make a small detour before we get to the Latin American question. Yesterday, we really did not make our point clear, so there was misunderstanding on both parts. The differences which there are between us are global differences. And they are hard to explain.

Latin America needs a Marxist explanation. And we came here to discuss with News & Letters what policy we have to develop there. But we think that the organization of Marxist groups in the industrial capitalistic countries like the United States is more important for the whole world consciousness. There are many problems in the situation, but we don't represent the real movement, the whole movement, and therefore our practical questions are not so important as yours. It is not so important to know your position on Latin America and the colonial question now, because we have already seen it in the pamphlet on the Afro-Asian Revolutions. That is why we think it is more important to discuss, or make clear, some points of your position rather than ours, because where we found confusion between us was in the Negro problem. We think that the Negro question is not important for the Convention, and for all the young militants who are in the room we think it is more important for them to see different kinds of view on this question.

To understand the Negro question, we have to analyze the totality of the historical movement and have an explanation of the Negro national liberation movement in the historical movement -- that is, get it as a whole. A movement is not understood by itself, but in the historical context -- as a participant of the whole world. You cannot understand a movement if you analyze it just from one side, one country, one class or one part. You have to analyze it in relation to the whole world economics, the whole world politics, and the whole world philosophic situation.

One of the arguments we can understand very much was the relation Marx made between the freedom of the working class in America and the freedom of the Negro in America. But we want to make something clear. There is a difference between the Civil War's Negro problem and the Negro problem today. And we disagree a little bit with Marx applied to today's Negro problem. First, Karl Marx says, speaking about the American Civil War, that it was impossible to have the workers' liberation with the liberation of the Negro slaves. He was right. It was impossible for the working class to make an effective economic and political fight because the existence of slaves meant the competition in production that the white worker could not defeat. All the Negroes could be used to break strikes. And slave labor means competition for the paid worker which is very hard to defeat. That was why labor was unable to be free until the slave was free himself.

But nobody could talk about a socialist revolution in that situation, because the conditions of the socialist revolution were not present in the American Civil War. Karl Marx said that Lincoln's position was progressive, and Marx had some discussion with the American Marxists, which was reported in American Civilization on Trial. When Marx said that, he was right too. He was right because in his time the work was, in general, to prepare the condi-

tions for a socialist revolution.

We cannot say now that the situation is basically the same. Now it is very different. This is why we don't accept Marx's position on the Civil War for now. When somebody says that the position of Marx is the right position to analyze the Negro Question today, he is wrong. He doesn't seem to understand the change between the position of the Negroes as slaves, and Negroes as paid laborers. Today the Negroes are not slave laborers, they are not unpaid workers, they do not have a special relation to production as a whole. It is true that the Negro is worse-paid than the white worker. But not only is the Negro position changed now, but many other changes have taken place that we cannot forget. The whole world situation has changed.

Capitalism as a global economic system is no longer an economic system that develops productive forces. It is no longer an economic system that has more historical work to do. Since the 1917 Russian Revolution, we think that capitalism is through as a possible economic system. It is no longer the time to prepare the condition for the socialist revolution, but the time to prepare the revolution itself. It is no longer necessary to do the bourgeoisie's work. It is no longer necessary to make a national revolution. When Marx said in 1848 that workers had to fight together with the bourgeoisie, he was right, but that is not necessary any more. Today the working class can go forward alone.

When Marx said that the workers were the builders of a new society, he didn't say it because he was a humanist, or because the workers were the victims of a system. Marx said it was because the workers were economically the only ones able to do it. That means that it was not a question of poverty or dignity, but a question of the relations that workers as a class have in production. Two hundred years ago, even if the workers were worse-paid than now, it was not possible to have a socialist revolution. Never before in history was it possible to have a classless society until now. Now we can have production for all, and it must be in the hands of the workers.

Spartacus had a nice movement of slaves, but it was not a revolutionary movement. It was an expression of an oppressed class, but it was not an expression of a historical way out. We must not mix up the oppressed class and the working class. The slaves in Rome were the most oppressed class, the most miserable class, but they were not a revolutionary class. The Indians, for another example, on the reservations in America are oppressed, but we do not say that they are historically destined to take the revolutionary role in America. It is not a question of minorities, but of relation to production. Even if workers were 5% of capitalistic society the workers are the only ones who can take the solution in their hands.

You have said many times that the Negroes are doubly oppressed, once as workers, a second time as Negroes. That is true, but oppression does not guarantee revolutionary actions. The oppression which is outside of production does not give any historical determination to their actions. The Negro woman is oppressed three times. That does not mean they are going to be the historical instrument of the new society.

As a mass movement the Negroes are an expression of the feelings of an oppressed group, and the rebellion of the fight for freedom. We support that -- not because we have pity for them, but because they are in accord with the world-wide fight for freedom. But it is one thing to support them, and another to say they are a movement toward socialism.

The masses were against Fascism in 1936. The movement was an expression of the fight for freedom, and the Nazi oppression was a little worse than racial oppression, I think. We supported that. But we also have a Marxist theory, and we said that the anti-fascist movement -- not the feelings, but the movement -- was the expression of a legitimate demand against totalitarianism, but when it became a political movement outside of a strictly class struggle, the anti-fascists went to a bourgeois movement that expressed, over the masses' blood, the bourgeois interests against fascism.

We said that the legitimate fight of workers and masses against fascism was going to be used by the bourgeoisie as a spontaneous expression and be transformed into a movement to confuse the workers. It happens all the time. It happened in Spain, and it happened in France. The Nazis invaded France, and the French bourgeoisie -- De Gaulle from England, and others -- organized a Resistance against the occupation. The Communist Party went into the Resistance, and so did the Trotskyists. They accused those who did not, of not hearing the masses and of wanting to rule the masses. They said if the masses were going to make a mistake they had to explain the mistake. Well, what happened? All the parties and all the workers were in that Resistance, and they fought well for Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill and everybody else against Hitler. On Liberation Day they said, let's fraternize with the Germans now and get a new society -- but no, what did they get? They got De Gaulle, and Thorez, and we can see what France is now and what a solution it was. It just shows how the mass movement can be used by the capitalists.

It is better sometimes to swim against the stream, to go against everybody. If the masses were always right, it would be unnecessary to bring them consciousness. What is the work of the intellectuals united with the workers? It is to give the masses a consciousness. In 1905 and 1908 Rosa Luxemburg was against everybody, even against Lenin.

Your position on the Negro question and the underdeveloped countries is the Leninist position, but we believe it is out of date. There have been many changes in capitalism. We have automation, electronic computers, many other things. And for the colonial and national questions we now must have a different position. We are not racists, we try to understand the feelings of those here -- but we didn't come here to exchange feelings, we came to discuss our positions.

Rays and we disagree on the market questions ...but it is impossible to explain these things in half an hour, and our time is all used up. To explain our position on Latin America, we have to explain our theory about the market, and we could not get to it...We were concerned about the Negro question because you have been saying things that have nothing to do with the class struggle, and it is really very, very dangerous.

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Raya: I want to limit my time to just Latin America. I will not say one single word on underconsumptionism, even though your facts were wrong, your theory is wrong, etc. Because if even Eduardo had two hours and knew English perfectly he couldn't possibly take up such a subject, nor could I, at this Convention. Hundred of thousands of books have been written on it for over 100 years. That was not the subject up for discussion here. You might want to take up one of the elements of underconsumptionism, or declining rate of profit, or something like that, as it affects a specific political position. But you never take up an abstract theoretical point; if you were Marx himself you wouldn't do it. Marx took it up in Capital, but when it came to a political position or a convention, he took up whatever concerned that political convention.

Now, another thing -- I'm not as brave as you, because I'm not as young as you. I would never have spoken on the Negro question if I were you. And I will never speak on Venezuela. Do you think this is because I think that you are the only ones who have a right to speak on Venezuela, because you are Venezuelans? And I am the only one who has the right to speak -- or all the people here because they are Negro -- on the Negro question? No, that is not the point. The point is when a direct question, dealing with the organization here, is up for discussion, unless you have presented a thesis and that is what we have discussed all the time, it is just ridiculous.

We did try to warn you, so to speak, about the topic that you chose, when we put in the Editorial Note before your thesis: "Our friends in Venezuela for some reason chose not to discuss what we agreed on -- state-capitalism -- but evaluate the national liberation movements." But you didn't take the hint. Let me say what the discussion should have been, and we would have had plenty of disagreements and plenty of fireworks, but they would have been in the right direction because they would have concerned this world, this period, and live people. We agree on the state-capitalist position. We agree that there is a difference between Russia and the United States. They are both imperialists. They are both trying to divide up the world between them. What flows from that position, that somehow you are on one side and we are over here? Why? You would have said that state-capitalism is not different from private capitalism, not only because both oppress the masses (that we all agree with), but because certain differences between private and state-capitalism have occurred which supposedly mean that instead of participating in the movements, whatever they are, we need something else.

Here is what I mean. You suddenly bring out the Sino-French bloc. It's ridiculous, but you have a right to your position, and I think it would have been a correct thing to discuss. But this is what I mean by "ridiculous." There is a break within state-capitalism. (I am talking of the actual state-capitalists, not the state-capitalist position.) And that break is between Mao and Russia. Part of it is national. Each one wants his own power. But all the capitalists go about saying how much territory each one wants from the other -- there is a difference here, because these people use Marxist language. They are not out to win France, De Gaulle France. They are interested in breaking up or winning the leadership of the Communist movement. Now why should Mao want to win leadership of the Communist movement if he simply wanted to change one bloc, the Sino-French for the Sino-Soviet. That's ridiculous. That's not the reason. As a matter of fact, his greatest interest in France is that he can get to the French Communist

Party and try to break that up. In other words, he keeps saying that he cares only about the East. Now why did that arise? Or any of the breaks?

Mao thinks that you do not have to go through all the troubles that either Russia or the others went through to industrialize. His Great Leap Forward was to show you can do it in two years, or two months, or something. All you have to have is state power and you order the workers to work. It proved a great flop. But in any case it is a theory. Mao thinks, and he is the only one in the whole world who does, "I don't care what the West does, let them blow themselves up in the Atomic Age. This is our chance." He thinks, "Whatever little civilization is left, we will rule it." And therefore he is quite haphazard on the question of atomic war or not atomic war. He is trying hard to convince the African world that they too have a chance, because they don't have nuclear power and the fight will finally kill both Russia and America, and to hell with the proletariat, it will kill them as well -- and the Africans will have a chance with Mao to build the world on an entirely different plane.

That means that the Sino-French bloc does not reach anywhere nearly the same level as the Sino-Soviet bloc. And then we have something to discuss.

The second point which was valid to discuss, and which was diverted, was the fact that you keep repeating what was the position of a certain faction which did not want to participate in the French Resistance movement. It was 1943-54. The Resistance Movement really got going then. It began earlier, but your position always pointed out that it didn't really get a mass base until they began taking slaves. In other words, that was one of the points that was supposed to convince me I was over-estimating the Nationalist Liberation Movement because they were not fighting fascism, only the deporting of French labor. That was 1943-45. Now we are almost into 1965 -- you can't merely repeat the same point -- unless you say it was proved in such-and-such an event.

When old politicians get together they talk about, in addition to the question of why did the Russian Revolution sour, the fact that after Stalinism and the horror of state-capitalism two million Italian workers, not peasants, joined the Italian Communist Party, one million joined the French Communist Party, and one million more the Social-Democrats. And I'll come to Latin America in a minute, too. You say it is because the National Resistance Movement was only national. I say it is because you were not in the National Resistance Movement, where everybody else was, and therefore there was no counter-position, so the Communists walked off with the whole thing. At the end of the war, the Communists were flying high. They could point out that they were in the National Resistance Movement. These are valid points for discussion, not because we would find an agreement -- we might find as many disagreements as on the Negro Question. But they are valid in the sense that these are what you can really global. In other words, you don't go into a party, and tell that party, the first time you hear a position that took them 20 years to work out, what they should do, and warn them of dangers, and so forth. You go to that party and you speak on what you know, or what is the property of the whole international movement.



I am not speaking about Venezuela today, but I cannot avoid speaking about Latin America. I wish you had taught me a great deal more, but since you didn't, I'll just have to say what I know. Why the devil should Latin America be a colony of the United States in the first place? The imperialists did not have any of the "reasons" which they gave for carving up Africa -- that they were black, and barbarians, and you had to bring them Christianity, etc. Latin America is mainly European, that is, white stock. It had a culture that was greater than any culture on this earth. The Conquistadores came and destroyed your land worse than any of the Mongols destroyed Russia, or the Huns the Roman Empire. And they destroyed a tremendous civilization, the highest in the world. And all the resources of Latin America! It is the richest in minerals, it is the richest in any base or precious metal you could mention. And it was even the richest in agriculture. You had a much more complex and complicated system of irrigation than any other civilization. And they just ruined you.

When they ruined you, you tried some sort of a national liberation. And you were sold out. You know the great Bolivar? He worked for Britain against the other imperialists, and then with the Spanish against the others. In other words, the so-called revolution to free itself from Spain was only to let someone else in. And the United States, being bigger, won with the Monroe Doctrine, which in effect said all of you belong to me.

But something new started in World War II. Instead of just the kind of military dictatorship that changed every Monday and Tuesday depending on whether the Bank of America or Morgan or somebody wanted this particular tyrant to rule the country, this time it was a mass base. What is wrong with the peasants wanting agricultural reform? It was the first time (and that's why Betancourt got a million members) that the masses said, "Well, now wait a minute -- what the devil are all these military dictatorships? Where am I getting anything? We are a feudal society, and I want at least some land, some reform."

Not only that, but even from the point of view of the proletariat -- do you know what hurt me the most in your thesis? To say about the Latin Americans that there is an absence of class-consciousness. Honestly, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. The Latin Americans have had every variety of political movement from the Trotskysists, to the Communists, long before the Maoists, that there were. You know when Munis came to Mexico (while I was there in '37) after the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, he said, "Holy mackerel, what is the matter with all these peasants? We made a revolution and are more backward than Latin America, but we in Spain made it." I'm not saying now who was correct, but just that for you to say there is an absence of class-consciousness when those people have had every political tendency there is, is fantastic.

I don't have anything against Fidel for giving agricultural reforms. I have something against Fidel for statifying instead of giving the land to the peasants. He was a liar, so to speak, when he said, "Ours will be a humanist revolution. It will go neither to capitalism nor to totalitarianism like Russia. Ours will really go to the people." Che Guevara revealed something in the only good thing he ever wrote. He said that the intellectuals landed in the

Sierra Maestra mountains. Now, they and they alone were going to make that revolution. They felt the Latin Americans were so backward, and of all the people they looked down upon, the one they looked down upon most was the poor peasant. How everyone looks down upon him, even though he makes so many revolutions! And Che Guevara says in passing (it takes only two sentences out of an entire pamphlet on guerrilla warfare), that when they came there, with the attitude they had, and Batista sent all those arms against them, they suddenly found that he could have crushed them in one second, if it had not been for those "dumb" peasants who protected them with their lives. So he says that they changed their opinion and instead of looking down on them, had a new high opinion of them. Of course, after he began taking the peasant cause, he began having fights on whether you need the proletariat in Havana, or don't need the proletariat in Havana in order to make a real revolution. The revolution was genuine, we were 100% for it, for one year. You know when we stood opposed to it? Not when Castro finally went for Russia. That was natural, inevitable, after he made his first bad step. We opposed him when he didn't want to listen to the workers, the Cuban workers, at the Trade Union Convention, and turned his back on the workers who had fought Batista and the Communists, who had been playing around with Batista and gave Batista the Trade Union movement for nothing. When Castro walked out of the convention which wanted to refuse to nominate Communists, and said of them, "This is a madhouse" -- that's when we opposed him. We said next he will have to choose one of the two imperialists, he can't live alone in Cuba. He can appeal to all of Latin America, to Africa, Asia, to the Western countries, that's the only way he'll live. He's too small against American capitalism, and he isn't going to appeal to his own workers, not after the first time he did not listen to the proletariat.

Now these are the kinds of subjects you should have brought us more information on than we have, because you are there. And instead of isolating yourselves as the only ones who have a "principled position" and you'll never go into anything else unless they have your full banner -- explain at least the facts so we can discuss them.

You are very young, and I still think there is an awful lot in common between us. I don't really care how sectarian you are, and you are the most sectarian group I have ever met, even more than Munis, and I used to think that he was the most sectarian person I ever knew. But he goes back and forth, and even though he may want only his program he doesn't say it must be tomorrow. He keeps crossing back and forth into Spain and lands in jail and comes out again -- in other words, he believes it is important to have a live movement and to see live forces, and that is the most important point. Because regardless of how sectarian one is, the very fact that he sees that there is no difference in the property form which exploits the worker, whether it is by private or by state capitalism, will compel you to be with us, when finally we who have not been so sectarian will have a real movement.

Finally, one word for Lenin. Everybody is now anti-Leninist. I don't know why, he made a very good revolution. Lenin said, not about the Social Democracy, not about Trotsky, not about anybody he disagreed with, but about his best colleagues, Zinoviev and Kamenev, that they were weak in character and publicized the date of the revolution in the press. Everybody wanted to expel them. He said: Look, expel them if you want to -- but only until we make the revolution, then take them right back the day after. There are some people who don't know how to do it on the day of revolution, but they are revolutionaries and want to help, so the day after, let's use their talents. Don't throw away the whole human potential because they might not agree with every dot and comma of your thesis.

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