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THE AMERICAS: Keeping Communists Out

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by TIME

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Few delegates to the Tenth Inter-American Conference in Caracas last week doubted that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles could put through the U.S. program against Communism in the Americas. But in pressing his cause, Dulles ran smack into the age-old Latin American feeling against the Colossus of the North. Though the Latin statesmen for the most part could see the intellectual force of Dulles' arguments, the fact was that deep in their hearts many of them resented such forceful U.S. leadership. Emotionally, they were prepared to cheer any David brash enough to give Goliath a symbolic kick in the pants.

In his opening address at Caracas, Dulles with cool logic coupled his case for joint anti-Communist measures ("There is not a single country in this hemisphere which has not been penetrated by the apparatus of international Communism operating under orders from Moscow") with the prospect of U.S. economic cooperation (more technical aid, continued Export-Import Bank loans, no price ceilings on coffee). The Secretary made no reference to Guatemala, the one country where Communists are gaining steadily in influence.

Appeal to Bolivar. Guatemala's Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello, showing no such restraint, delivered a fiery counterattack, directly naming the U.S., and made the biggest oratorical hit of the week with conference delegates. Rhetorically demanding: "What is international Communism?" he lashed out at "imperialism" and "foreign monopolies," then called the U.S. program "only a pretext to intervene in our internal affairs." Toriello went on to recall "the Big Stick, the tarnished 'dollar diplomacy' and the landing of the U.S. Marines in Latin American ports" that marked U.S.-Latin American relations in the old days before nonintervention became the U.S. doctrine. Having played his role of underdog to the hilt, Toriello wound up with a grandiloquent appeal to the Liberator Bolivar (who lies buried in

Caracas) and won the conference's first ovation. Argentina's Foreign Minister rushed up to wring his hand. Said another South American delegate: "Ke said many of the things some of the rest of us would like to say if we dared."

Recourse to Rio. This week, with tension eased by a long weekend adjournment after Toriello's blast, the U.S. put forward its anti-Communist resolution. The resolution provided that the republics agree that "domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international Communist movement . . . would constitute a threat . . . and call for appropriate action in accordance with existing treaties." Under the 1947 Rio treaty, the American Foreign Ministers may meet and take action if two-thirds of the members of the Organization of American States decide that the political independence of an American state is affected by "an aggression which is not an armed attack." This action could be anything from a reprimand to economic sanctions to the kind of put-out-the-fire measures that the United Nations took in Korea. But it would have to be a joint action, not a unilateral move by any country.

Secretary Dulles put his case to the delegates in a hard-punching rebuttal to Toriello. "I thought that by now every Foreign Minister of the world knew what international Communism is," he said. "It is disturbing if the foreign affairs of one of our American republics are conducted by one so innocent that he has to ask that question." Then Dulles defined international Communism in blistering terms as "that farflung, clandestine political organization which is operated by the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and which, since 1939, has brought 15 once-independent nations into a state of abject servitude."

Most of the Latin countries want U.S. economic cooperation and are reluctant to antagonize the U.S. on its No. 1 issue. The resolution seemed sure to pass whenever the U.S. felt that it could apply enough pressure without bruising traditional friendships. And even the pressure was more implied than apparent. As one delegate said: "You don't always see the sun, but you know it is there."

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