

BOOK REVIEWS

HOW NOT TO STRUGGLE FOR LATIN AMERICA

THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR LATIN AMERICA. By Carleton Beals, 401 pp., J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, \$3.00.

CARLETON BEALS is one of America's foremost writers on Latin American affairs, and one of the most prolific. But after reading the latest product of his pen, *The Coming Struggle for Latin America*, one regrets that his talents were not devoted to greater thoroughness rather than added volume.

The struggle for Latin America is not only coming—it is here. The central struggle which pervades the present world scene, the struggle between democracy and fascism, also dominates the Western Hemisphere and its Latin sector. This is proved graphically and convincingly, in the first chapters of Beals' book and then unceremoniously rejected, not so convincingly, in the later ones.

Beals the intrepid reporter has a natural gift for recording events. Beals the political interpreter, however, lacks the scientific world outlook and method of investigation. He does not possess, seemingly, the faculty for persistent, objective probing for the truth underlying the facts he gathers. In this he is not alone. He typifies a number of American foreign correspondents of the post-war period. Shocked by the sordidness of the bourgeois world, disgusted with its callousness and hypocrisy, but lacking the clear perspective of historical materialism, they become professional sceptics, concealing their own superficiality by assuming and assiduously cultivating an air of cynicism. Thus, people who even call themselves anti-fascists, sometimes become apologists for fascism and, in time, even tools of it.

THE FASCIST THREAT TO LATIN AMERICA

The first three chapters of Beals' book deal with fascist economic penetration, spy plots and political intrigues. In these, the best chapters, he shows a keen sense of observation coupled with an ability to draw pertinent deductions. Summarizing fascist activity in the hemisphere, he asks:

"What does all this add up to? Is the struggle for markets, for trade, a sufficient explanation? Is it merely the need for raw supplies, the need to dispose of war materials?"

"Why then the intensive effort not merely to add Germans abroad to the Reich's great 'spiritual' empire, but to convert native governments and peoples to Nazism?" (P. 82.)

And he answers:

"Obviously the stakes are much larger than mere commercial interests. Today international trade is the handmaiden of future war and conquest." (P. 82.)

"The whole Teutonic Latin American crusade, carried on in such grandiose scale and so successfully, apparently has for its goal an ambitious achievement of world power." (P. 83.)

Nor does he ignore the connection between fascist aggression in Europe and fascist penetration and activity in this hemisphere.

"And thus the battle by Germany and Italy to seat the puppet Franco in power in Spain has been also a battle to control the whole Latin world and its rich resources. It has been a battle for the American continent, not merely for Spain. Franco is merely the cheap tool of a scheme of imperial aggrandizement. That scheme casts its dark shadow across the Americans. It lies at our doorsteps." (P. 174.)

Well stated. But what are we to do about it? Here Beals is completely at a loss. Afraid to draw the only logical conclusion, namely, the need for combatting fascism as the main menace, he devotes the rest of his book, ironical though it may sound, to undermin-

ing his own premise. Startled by his own revelation, or rather, perhaps, by the implications of mass struggles that it implies, he discovers before long that the real danger is no longer fascism, but—the Roosevelt Good-Neighbor Policy!

To arrive at this profundity is certainly a feat of journalistic acrobatics. Let us follow the author through a few of his mental gyrations. In one place he calls upon the Roosevelt administration to end its farcical and false neutrality policy. He advises it to give unstinted aid to the Spanish republic, because this more than anything else "would checkmate Hitler and Mussolini in their designs on Latin America." (P. 168.) But a moment later he becomes morally indignant at the very idea of the United States answering fascist propaganda with democratic propaganda: "Our country should at once get out of the propaganda business in foreign lands." (P. 310.) As to the government's attempts to counteract fascist trade activities in the hemisphere, he asks: "... why should our State Department work itself up into such a lather to protect American business?" (P. 314.) On one page he ridicules the possibility of American isolation from the rest of the world; on another, he advocates American isolation from even the rest of the hemisphere!

Bitterly sarcastic, he refers to the Good-Neighbor Policy as "Hull-abaloo and grandiloquent blah-blah." He accuses it of serving the interests of the tyrants and dictators of Latin America: "We [the United States] are showing friendship to the governments, not to the people of Latin America." (P. 302.) Yet elsewhere, as has been shown, he condemns Roosevelt and Hull for interfering in Southern affairs with their "propaganda business" of advocating democracy! Is the preaching of democracy a sign of friendship to the tyrants or the peoples of Latin America? Beals knows the answer; for he himself admits that for the Southern dictators "the word 'democracy' is synonymous with rat-poison, Bolshevism, and atheism" (p. 62.); and that "for Latin America, democracy is still a revolutionary concept, capable of tumbling down governments." He adds: "To advocate it is propaganda. It is propaganda far more revolutionary there, far more an

alien doctrine than either totalitarianism or communism." (P. 294.) As you can see, Beals is a great man of principle. Come what may, he stands as the mighty bulwark opposed to all "propaganda," to all "alien" doctrines—even, or shall we say, especially—democracy!

But it is not our desire to heap ridicule on the head of Mr. Beals. It is he himself who has done so. We are only trying to follow him in his ramblings, in order to single out his central theme. To the extent that he has one at all, it can be stated as follows:

Growing fascist penetration of the hemisphere is bad—bad for Latin America, bad for the United States. But the influence of the United States is also bad—just as bad—for the people to the south of us. For them fascist influence means dictatorial rule. But the influence of the United States, even the influence of the Good-Neighbor Policy, also means super-exploitation and dictatorial rule. Hence, according to our author, it makes little difference to the peoples of these countries whether the influence of the Berlin-Rome-Tokio axis or that of the United States is predominant (!).

Of course, it does not mean that Mr. Beals presents this position in just so many words or with this ordered reasoning. But the serious student of the subject matter under discussion is entitled to look for the sum total and draw the full conclusions of the author's statements. According to him there is "only one struggle of any importance" in Latin America, and that is "the struggle against militarism, against feudal enslavement, against mass serfdom, against foreign domination." (P. 380.)

Certainly, "militarism," "feudal enslavement," and "foreign domination" must be swept away. But, these demands remain abstract, empty phrases, unless they arise from an earnest intention to undertake struggle for them along the concrete course that the specific present-day period of history has opened up for us. What is this course, if not barring the way of the Berlin-Rome-Tokio conspiracy to fascize the world? And what is this fascist penetration of the Western Hemisphere which Mr. Beals in his early chapters so well notes, but the attempt to make Munich the capital of the Americas?

Not to recognize this as the grave imminent danger confronting us, not to turn one's analysis into a program of struggle for defeating that danger, is, Mr. Beals, capitulation to that danger!

The author sets himself up as the great champion of the Latin American masses, as the dauntless warrior, the irreconcilable foe of imperialism—all imperialism. "Don Quixote rides the Pampas," remarks Beals wittily; but little does he realize that the rider is none other than himself!

First, Beals' thesis ignores what he himself has told us of the character and objectives of fascist penetration. It indicates a gross lack of comprehension of the main issue which divides the world today and an irresponsible, flippant attitude towards the fate of mankind. Only one quotation from the book need be cited to show the author's narrow horizons. Speaking of the Chaco struggle he wanders into a prophetic mood, observing:

"... perhaps half a century hence, the settlement and control of that area will prove far more important in the new balance of world affairs than all the fretful struggles of a dying Europe. Hitler looked at from the perspective of centuries is a drop in the bucket compared to the fateful tide of Chaco events." (P. 328.)

"Dying Europe!" Then why become perturbed over Spain, over Hitler's rape of Austria and Czechoslovakia, or over German and Italian penetration in Latin America? If Europe is dying, then why stop Hitler from taking the corpse? If Europe is dying, then why fear European fascist influence in the Western Hemisphere? After all, the Chaco struggle was of far greater significance (!).

In this single paragraph Beals virtually gives away his whole position. He exposes his lack of any genuine internationalism, his shallowness, his inability to understand Latin America and its relative place in the present world panorama. He exposes, particularly, his utter inability to size up the menace of fascism—this ocean of misery which is for him but a "drop in the bucket."

THE MEANING OF THE GOOD-NEIGHBOR POLICY

Secondly, this thesis makes a totally incorrect evaluation of the Roosevelt Good-Neighbor Policy and its relevancy to the

struggle against both fascism and imperialism in Latin America.

Prior to the New Deal, the United States pursued a distinctly imperialist bad-neighbor policy towards the peoples and governments south of the Rio Grande. This pre-Roosevelt policy was dictated by Wall Street in the defense of its ever greater financial commitments in Latin America. From 1920 to 1930, American investments in these countries increased from approximately two billion to close to six billion dollars. The government of the United States during this period assumed the role of both policeman and bill-collector for the Chase National Bank. Its diplomacy was aimed at safeguarding these investments, at ensuring the largest possible returns on them, and at "persuading" reluctant governments and peoples into accepting the further blessings of Yankee imperialism.

Super-profits could be extracted from those countries only where the labor movement was docile and the standard of living lower than low. The marines followed the dollar and Wall Street puppet governments followed the marines. By force and violence, through coercion and corruption, American imperialism robbed these countries of their natural wealth, enforced abysmally low living and wage standards, and in alliance with the most reactionary feudal circles, blocked their every effort to emerge from a semi-colonial status.

Yet, this very concentration on the exploitation of the human and material resources led to a narrowing of market possibilities. Latin America found it more difficult to continue, and absolutely impossible to expand its purchases of American products, whether of capital goods for native industry or manufactured commodities for the wide masses. This was a contributing factor leading to the economic and financial collapse of 1929.

With the economic breakdown of that year, the export of American capital suddenly ceased. Its abruptness was matched only by its thoroughness. Together with the great drop in world commodity prices which affected raw material and agricultural products most adversely, the crisis only led in due time to a tremendous weakening of

United States trade with Latin America. In 1930, U. S. trade with this region, although declining rapidly, was still in the neighborhood of six to seven hundred million dollars. By 1932 this had declined to less than one hundred million dollars.

This catastrophic state of the foreign trade of the U.S.A. was the economic lever pressing for a change in its hemisphere policy. That a change was absolutely necessary, became even more evident when the fascist powers began to initiate their policy of economic penetration and trade rivalry in Latin America.

The Good-Neighbor policy as developed by Roosevelt over a period of time aimed to serve therefore a two-fold objective: to help U.S. economic recovery by stimulating trade with Latin America through reciprocal trade agreements; and to counteract the growing fascist penetration which was a rising threat to America's national interests.

A NEW DEAL FOR LATIN AMERICA

But if these were the objectives they could not be realized without paralleling the New Deal for the United States with a New Deal for Latin America. Roosevelt, the bourgeois-liberal and democrat, soon realized that economic recovery could return, that democracy could survive only by increasing the purchasing power of the American people. Of course, this was contrary to the program and interests of the reactionary circles of finance capital whose spokesmen, because of this, adopted a more and more hostile and antagonistic attitude towards the President and the New Deal. The concomitant for Latin America of this New Deal policy was seen by the most progressive New Dealers as aiding our Southern neighbors to increase their own purchasing powers, to expand their market possibilities and therefore also their trade relations with the United States.

Only such a course, based upon cooperation with the Latin American countries in their desire to develop industrially, to achieve full economic and political independence, could win their friendship and help defeat the trade methods of the fascist powers which were based upon a system of barter arrangement and exchange control.*

The failure to regain the Latin American market not only threatened the future of U.S. foreign trade, but was a threat to the very existence and success of the New Deal itself, as it made American economic recovery more difficult.

Therefore, the New Deal for Latin America made necessary as sharp a reversal of former U. S. hemisphere policy, just as the New Deal was a reversal of the policies of Hoover toward the impoverished toiling masses of the United States. It meant curbing the excesses and abuses of imperialism; limiting and curtailing all practices which hinder the development of greater trade opportunities. It meant ending the policy of rule through brute oppression and the beginning of a policy fostering the ideals of democracy. This was necessary, not only in order to promote good will, but because, as long as oligarchic dictatorships were encouraged in the hemisphere, fascism would find fertile breeding ground. All of this, if carried out logically and consistently meant, furthermore, the pursuance of a policy which in time would lead to weakening the hold of Wall Street finance capital upon Latin America, thus delivering a telling blow at the very heart of the most reactionary section of American imperialism.

Thus, the policy of the Good Neighbor, if logically and consistently applied, is directed against the most predatory circles of American finance capital. But it coincides at the same time with the interests of large circles of American business, since it increases their opportunities for trade and commerce with Latin America. That is why this policy has received support, to a degree, from many sections of American business which are nevertheless opponents of the New Deal, in domestic spheres. This policy also corresponds to the need of the American people, as it increases the possibilities for jobs and economic recovery.

* Recently it has become clear to a number of the Latin American countries that this barter system was not advantageous to their own economies, since it has lowered the world price level of their products and made them virtually dependent upon the fascist states.

Roosevelt's renunciation of America's former predatory policies is most clearly formulated in the Declaration of Principles adopted by the Buenos Aires Pan-American Conference on December 1, 1936, stating:

"That the following principles are accepted by the international American community: (a) Proscription of territorial conquest and that, in consequence, no acquisition made through violence shall be recognized; (b) Intervention by one state in the internal or external affairs of another state is condemned; (c) Forcible collection of pecuniary debts is illegal; and (d) Any difference or dispute between the American nations, whatever its nature or origin, shall be settled by the methods of consideration, or full arbitration, or through operation of international justice."

In practice this has meant the renunciation of the Platt Amendment which gave the United States the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Cuba; the withdrawal of American troops from Latin American soil, concretely Haiti; and the recognition of the full sovereignty of the southern states.

Despite the attempts of Beals to ridicule the Good-Neighbor policy, he himself cannot help but give certain grudging recognition to its positive achievements in the following words:

"If one chalks up the fine works of the Roosevelt administration in Latin American matters, not against its own shortcomings, but against those of half a century or more of relations, then Roosevelt stands out as the most original and constructive executive in that respect that has ever sat in the White House. No one can take away the merited praise for these worthier achievements." (P. 244.)

And speaking of America's attitude toward the Mexican oil appropriations, he adds:

"This forbearance and recognition of Mexico's sovereignty shows more restraint and decency than could be expected of any other great power on earth today [Might he not have said—but for the Soviet Union?]. It is a particularly noble example in this hour of international aggression and brutality." (P. 243.)

Beals points out that the Good-Neighbor policy has not been consistently applied, and that it has not gone deep enough. Undeniably, that is true. Within the State Depart-

ment itself, there are men such as Welles and Caffery who try to obstruct the consistent application of this policy. This struggle within the State Department is to be seen, for example, in respect to Mexico. If Roosevelt is desirous of seeing an independent, democratic and prosperous Mexico, he must agree with and support the policies of the Cardenas government which aim to curb the super-exploitation practised by the foreign imperialist enterprises, to raise the wages of the Mexican workers, to give land to the propertyless peons, to make Mexico economically and politically independent. Only such policies as these can help expand the Mexican market and create a greater demand for foreign goods. That is why, contrary to Beals' unstinted praise of the Mexican policy of the U.S. State Department, we, while recognizing its positive aspects, criticize it for its diplomatic attempt to defend the reactionary designs of the American oil and land owners.

Instead of insisting upon immediate payment for oil and land properties, the government of the United States should extend credit facilities to Mexico, helping it move ahead upon its chosen course. Nor would this be altruism on our part. The economic development of Mexico, and its resultant prosperity, would open up an avenue for much greater trade and in turn help American recovery. The Good-Neighbor policy must therefore be a consistent policy, even though it means curbing the reactionary practices of the American oil, mining, utility, sugar and fruit investment interests.

The Good-Neighbor policy must likewise be extended to include the people of Puerto Rico, who to this very day are denied their democratic rights under the tyrannical rule of Governor Winship. Nor is it enough to preach democracy. The United States must insist on true democracy as the foundation for its economic and political alliances. We refer in particular to such countries as Brazil, where despite the anti-Nazi statements of Vargas, Nazism may yet be the victor unless the flood-gates of democracy are opened.

Hence, the conclusions to be drawn are certainly not those of Mr. Beals. Instead of opposing the Good Neighbor policy, we must

oppose the failure to apply it consistently. We must combat the attempts of certain forces in the State Department to nullify this progressive policy in the interests of the most reactionary circles of finance capital. The Good-Neighbor policy has already shown positive accomplishments. It has not only been a deterrent to further fascist penetration, but has also given the countries of Latin America an opportunity to move more rapidly on to the highway of democracy and national emancipation. The logical pursuance of the Good-Neighbor policy is, therefore, not only to the interests of the people of the United States but to those of Latin America as well. It is the growing labor and progressive movement of the United States, in alliance with the labor and democratic forces of Latin America, which will create the necessary guarantees for the further consistent and successful application of this policy.

All of this is particularly essential in the present post-Munich world. For the "peace" established at Munich creates a great danger to the peace and welfare of the Western Hemisphere. Every strengthening of the fascist axis strengthens fascist trends in Latin America and pro-fascist circles in the United States. The Munich Pact bids fair to become the beginning for another agreement at the expense of Latin America and the national interests of the United States. Hitler's drive for colonies will under such conditions be directed towards the Western Hemisphere. Hitler's accomplices on this continent, Hoover, Trotsky and Co., are already preparing to leave the door open for further fascist advances. It would therefore be the height of folly to misunderstand the significance of world events for Latin America. If fascism is to be kept from America's shores, the democratic masses of the United States and Latin America must unite against further Munichs, especially the attempts to impose Munich on Spain and China. For if democracy is defeated in Spain, the barriers to fascism will thereby be lowered in the Americas.

AT THE SERVICE OF THE TROTSKY-FASCISTS

Up to this point, we have refrained from reference to one chapter of Beals' book which would indicate that he has an axe to grind.

This chapter dealing with Communist activities in Latin America has all the earmarks of a Hearst-Trotsky hybrid. At its best, it is vituperation at its worst. Slanders, long ago slain by the arrows of truth, are here resuscitated, and new ones spawned. On this subject the author is not even a good journalist; he is simply a bad liar.

"When the U. S. bought Alaska," Beals states glibly, "we thought that Russia's imperialist ambitions in the Western Hemisphere had been forever checked." But, no. It "has made a new bid for power in the Americas." (P. 133.) And so, Mr. Beals calmly resurrects the old fascist-Trotskyite slander of "Red imperialism."

Does it not behoove Beals, the analyst and student, to answer: What do you mean, "Soviet imperialism"? Does the Soviet Union participate in the Latin American trade war — *can it do so*, by the very essence, the socialist essence, of its economy? Does it pursue a policy of economic penetration? Has it established spheres of predatory influence? Has it at any time or place followed a policy of territorial conquest? Not even Beals can overtly make these accusations. What then, makes it "imperialistic"? Mr. Beals has his own queer definition of imperialism. He makes the extremely vulgar charge that: "Every Communist, up to a certain point, is thus an agent for the Soviet government. . . ." (P. 135.) Since there are scores of thousands of Communists in Latin America, is this not enough to prove (for the cynical mind of Mr. Beals) that there is such a thing as Soviet "imperialism"? After all, people cannot be motivated by beliefs, by ideals. They must, according to him, be "agents." How thankful is the very Wall Street that Mr. Beals makes such an ado of fighting, for his contribution to its arsenal of weapons in the anti-Soviet and Red-baiting barrage!

The Soviet Union which, alone of all great powers, covets no foreign territory, which consistently and persistently struggles for peace against imperialistic intrigues, which has established complete freedom for the nationalities within its own borders is accused of "power politics" and what is more — believe it or not — of betraying loyalist Spain (!). (P. 169.)

It would take a volume to answer all the calumnies, distortions, fabrications and falsehoods concocted in the mind of Carleton Beals. Therefore, we shall treat only a few of these in order to expose the unprincipled character of all of them.

Sick to the stomach at the growing strength and influence of the Mexican Communist Party, Beals sets out to "prove" that the Communists in Mexico have nothing in common with the general progressive development of that country. To do so, he marshals two "facts." One, that the newly-established Party of the Mexican Revolution (P.R.M.), the Mexican form of the People's Front, "has established the principle that no Communist is eligible for membership." (P. 141.) Two, that the Communist Party find itself in such ill-repute, that "On April 18, 1938, the police raided the Mexico City headquarters of the Party and reportedly found a large collection of arms and dynamite." (P. 141.) What are the true facts?

One, on April 10 of this year a declaration of the Communist Party of Mexico defining its attitude towards the newly formed P.R.M. stated in part as follows:

"The Communist Party will give its most energetic support to the P.R.M., and all the Communists will belong to that Party through the different social organizations of which they are members."

And where did this statement appear? In no other place than *El Nacional*, the official daily newspaper of the P.R.M.!

Now as to point two. In the first place,

there were no arms in the Party headquarters. And in the second place, there was no raid in the first place! And if Mr. Beals wants verification for this fact, he can also find it in the columns of *El Nacional* of April 19.

Turning to Peru, he makes another of his wild accusations. The Communist leaders in this country "are today holding plump bureaucratic jobs" (p. 145) under the dictatorship of Benavidas. And yet, as an "expert" on Peru, he knows as well as anyone, that the outstanding leaders of the Communist Party—Terreros and Puertocarrero—are at this very moment languishing in Peruvian prisons, and others—Rabines, Hurwitz, etc.,—are working in exile.

Coming to Chile, Beals ridicules the People's Front of that country and prophetically declares that it does not stand a ghost of a chance in the coming elections. "The real struggle, of course," says he, "is between [Ross] the candidate of the present Executive and the former dictator Ibanez." (P. 154.) But, "of course," the people of Chile proved Beals a false prophet. For, on October 25, they elected Aguirre Cerda, the candidate of the People's Front, as President of Chile—the first victory of its kind in Latin America!

So much for the author's objectivity and honesty.

Carleton Beals starts out with a formal exposure of fascism, its methods and objectives in Latin America. He completes his book with an apology for it.

GIL GREEN.