

1956

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY — FORCE FOR A BETTER WORLD

By JANUSZ SLESZYNSKI

The II International Congress of Christian Democracy that ended on September 22nd in Sao Paolo, Brazil, was a remarkable proof of the growth of this new political force — a growth as rapid as that of the city which was host to the Congress.

Two years ago, on the occasion of the First International Congress of Christian Democracy in Santiago de Chile, the Movement was so insignificant that it was known only to experts on Latin American political life and counted in its ranks only three parties of certain tradition and stability: Falange Nacional of Chile; Union Civica of Uruguay; and Partido Social Cristiano (COPEI) of Venezuela. Of these three, only COPEI, that had polled 500,000 votes out of the total of 1,600,000 in the last national elections, could be called a mass party, while Falange and Union Civica had never during their long existence been other than highly regarded, but small, politically insignificant parties. The other Christian Democratic units that participated in the Santiago Congress of December 1955, i.e., Brazilian, Peruvian, Bolivian and Argentine, were freshly organized movements (or reorganized from moribound organizations like Brazilian Partido Democrata Cristao), with neither press nor regular party organizations, composed mostly of groups of young, enthusiastic, but unexperienced intellectuals. Their actual strength and appeal to the electorate had never been tested in a popular vote.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that Latin American Christian Democracy is a very recent phenomenon, without history and tradition.

The oldest Christian Democratic party of the Continent, the Uruguayan Partido Union Civica, has a 60-year old parliamentary tradition. Another, perhaps best known in the outside world, the Chilean Falange Nacional, was founded some 25 years ago and during this period, although it has had little parliamentary representation until the general elections of 1957, has patiently built an efficient party organization in all provinces of Chile, supported the creation of powerful Christian trade unions, and educated a whole generation of Christian Social experts in all fields of political, economic, social and cultural life.

The ideological bases of Latin American Christian Democracy were outlined in the first two international conferences of Christian Democratic leaders held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1947 and 1949. The Manifesto of Montevideo and the Montevideo Movement were among the fruits of these initial international contacts of the young movement. The conference of 1949 produced the outline of the Christian Democratic Organization of Amer-

ica and chose Prof. Dardo Regules, brilliant leader of Uruguayan Christian Democracy, as its first Secretary General.

Among the participants in these early meetings were such well-known veterans of the movement as Prof. Alceu Amoroso Lima of Brazil, Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva of Chile, Senator Dardo Regules of Uruguay, Dr. Javier Correa of Peru, and Dr. Manuel Ordonez of Argentina.

Prior to 1955, international collaboration among the Christian Social movements of Latin America was limited to the South American continent. In that year, however, contacts were established for the first time between the Latin American Movement and Christian Democratic organizations of Western and Central Europe at the First International Congress of Christian Democracy in Santiago de Chile. Participating in the Congress were Arturo Chiodi of Italy and Jose Antonio Aguirre of Spain, representing Nouvelles Equipes Internationales, and Prof. Adolf Prochazka, Janusz Sleszynski, Juliusz Kakarieka, Francisco Bajlec and Adolf Smersu, representing the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe.

Notwithstanding the actual weakness of the Latin American Movement, the Congress in Santiago, in which delegates from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia participated, was a time of stock taking. It popularized the Movement among the masses and was instrumental in assuring the electoral success of the Movement.

The next big step of the Christian Democratic Movement of Latin America in strengthening international cooperation was the participation of its eminent representatives in the First World Conference of Christian Democratic Movements that took place in Paris in November 1956. Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva of Chile, Prof. Andre Franco Montoro of Brazil, Prof. Luis Bedoya of Peru, Dr. Luis Herrera Campins of Venezuela and Dr. Tomas Reyes Vicuna, Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Organization of America, came to Paris and played a most distinguish role in planning a universal program for the Inter-Continental Christian Democratic Movement.

The Santiago and Paris meetings, with the considerable publicity that accompanied them, brought the program of the Christian Democratic parties, as well as their leaders, to the knowledge of Latin American masses. This fact, together with greater self-confidence on the part of the parties' leaders, who felt the solidarity of a powerful,

Janusz Sleszynski is a member of the CDUCE in charge of the Latin American affairs.

world-wide Movement behind them, began at once to pay electoral dividends.

First, the Peruvian Christian Democratic Party, hastily organized in February 1956, after the termination of Manuel Odria's military dictatorship, went to the polls in June and emerged the second biggest Peruvian political party with 14 deputies and 5 senators.

Following the elections in Peru, came the presidential elections in Brazil, where the candidate of Partido Democrata Cristao, Juarez Tavora, trailed the winner of the contest, Juscelino Kubitschek by barely 5%. The Brazilian success was followed closely by a Christian Democratic victory in the general elections in Chile, where the Falange Nacional allied with Partido Conservador Social Cristiano, and, after 20 years of being a completely stationary political force, tripled its parliamentary representation, becoming overnight one of the biggest Chilean political parties and obtaining national majorities for its leading candidates: Eduardo Frei for the Senate and Thomas Reyes for the House of Representatives. Frei's triumph assured him the leading position in the race for the presidency of Chile, that is to be decided in September 1958.

The new popularity of the Movement was also manifest in the July elections for the Argentine Constituent Assembly, where the young and inexperienced Partido Democrata Cristiano won half a million popular votes and elected 8 deputies to the Assembly, thus becoming the third largest political force in Argentina. Encouraged by the re-

sults of the vote and hoping to at least double it in the presidential elections, the C.D.P. of Argentina has decided to put forward its own presidential candidate. The party's nominee will be chosen during its forthcoming convention.

The success recently scored by Christian Democracy in Honduras is another proof of the trend. The Christian Liberal Party of Dr. Ramon Villeda Morales (who was the delegate of his country to the II International Congress of Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe), won a landslide victory, falling only 1 vote short of a two-thirds majority of the deputies to the Constituent Assembly.

All told, when the II International Congress of Christian Democracy was called to Sao Paulo for September 18, 1957, the situation in the Christian Democratic Movement of Latin America was completely changed. The Movement is no longer concerned with laying down ideological and program bases. Rather, the theme of the Congress was: "Economic, social and political unification of Latin America." No longer concerned with generalities, the delegates were busy presenting very concrete plans and methods for their implementation. The Movement has matured and reached the stage when it is bidding for power in Latin America, confident that it can gain it and execute it in the honest, integral and competent way that will fulfill the pledge that was inscribed upon the entrance to the Sao Paulo Congress: "Christian Democracy — Force For A Better World."

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF LATIN AMERICA

MEXICO — PARTIDO ACCION NACIONAL — 8 deputies in the Federal House of Representatives; candidate for 1952 presidential elections: Dr. Efraim Gonzalez Luna.

GUATEMALA — PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO — 5 deputies in the National Congress. Presidential candidate for 1957: Dr. Miguel Asturias.

HONDURAS — PARTIDO LIBERAL CRISTIANO — 30 deputies in the Constituent Assembly; candidate for presidential elections 1958: Dr. Ramon Villeda Morales.

COSTA RICA — PARTIDO DE LIBERACION NACIONAL — 30 deputies in the National Congress; candidate for 1958 presidential elections: Ing. Francisco Orlich.

VENEZUELA — PARTIDO SOCIAL CRISTIANO COPEI — 25 deputies elected to Parliament in last elections — elections cancelled by the government; candidate for December 15, 1957, presidential elections: Dr. Rafael Caldera, now held in prison by the Government of Gen. Marcos Perez Jimenez.

ECUADOR — MOVIMIENTO SOCIAL CRISTIANO — 20 members of House of Representatives

and the Senate; its candidate, Dr. Camilio Ponce Enriquez, elected president of the republic in 1957.

PERU — PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO — 14 deputies and 5 senators elected in 1956 elections.

BOLIVIA — PARTIDO SOCIAL CRISTIANO — has not participated in 1956 general elections as a protest against the totalitarian character of electoral law.

CHILE — PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO — elected 16 deputies and 2 senators in 1957 elections; candidate for September 1958 presidential elections: Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva.

URUGUAY — PARTIDO UNION CIVICA — 5 deputies in the House of Representatives.

ARGENTINA — PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO — 8 deputies in 1957 elections to the Constituent Assembly; presenting its own candidate for the presidential elections in February, 1958, Dr. Lucas Ayarragaray.

BRAZIL — PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTAO — 3 federal deputies to the Parliament; candidate for the governor of Sao Paulo elections: Prof. Andre Franco Montoro, Secretary General of the Party.