

The 'Fidelistas' of Brazil

The soil in which anti-American revolutionary movements can grow in this hemisphere is described in two articles by our correspondent Tad Szulc from Brazil, the second of which appears today. Mr. Szulc found appalling conditions in the Brazilian northeast—the great bulge which brings South America closest to Africa. It may be symbolic that in its sorrows northeast Brazil resembles parts of Africa.

This land of drought and sterility sustains a population—if sustains is the proper word—of about 20,000,000 people whose average annual income is under one hundred dollars and whose average life expectancy is not over thirty years. When they drift away from the thirsty land to the cities, they find themselves without means of support. In Recife, for example, Mr. Szulc reports 400,000 out of a population of 800,000 “unemployed or just partially employed.”

It would be strange if these conditions did not produce protest movements. The preachings of communism and of Left-Wing socialism are beginning to spread. The Communist-infiltrated Peasant Leagues, says Mr. Szulc, “have become an important political factor.” For these agitators the example of Fidel Castro is important. Land reform and other needed remedies are invoked in Castro's name, and the leader of the Peasant Leagues is now visiting Communist China.

In President-Elect Janio da Silva Quadros the Federal Government is under liberal leadership. Efforts are being made to irrigate some of the wasted land in northeast Brazil. But the country that has been able to spend \$200 million on the new interior capital of Brasilia has not yet been able to bring any considerable measure of relief to the poor farmers and laborers of whom Mr. Szulc writes. The “Fidelistas” and the Communists would not bring any relief either, for the mere confiscation of land is not likely to increase its productivity and promises are not good to eat. But Mr. Szulc's findings do suggest that it is time that the United States took a far more positive part in aiding our neighbors south of the Canal. We can fight the “Fidelistas” everywhere in Latin America not with armed force but with the kind of economic aid that proceeds from science and proper understanding.