

---

◇

## Mariátegui, the Comintern, and the Indigenous Question in Latin America

MARC BECKER\*

*ABSTRACT:* Victorio Codovilla, the leader of the Comintern's South American Secretariat, instructed José Carlos Mariátegui, a Peruvian Marxist who had gained a reputation as a strong defender of marginalized Indigenous peoples, to prepare a document for a 1929 Latin American Communist Conference analyzing the possibility of forming an Indian Republic in South America. This republic was to be modeled on similar Comintern proposals to construct Black Republics in the southern United States and South Africa. Mariátegui rejected this proposal, asserting that existing nation-state formation was too advanced in the South American Andes to build a separate Indian Republic. Mariátegui, who was noted for his "open" and sometimes unorthodox interpretations of Marxism, found himself embracing the most orthodox of Marxist positions in maintaining that the oppression of the Indian was a function of their class position and not their race, ethnicity, or national identity. From Mariátegui's point of view, it would be better for the subaltern Indians to fight for equality within existing state structures rather than further marginalizing themselves from the benefits of modernity in an autonomous state. Mariátegui's direct challenge to Comintern dictates is an example of local Party activists refusing to accept Comintern policies passively, but rather actively engaging and influencing those decisions.

\* An earlier version of this essay was published as Marc Becker, "Mariátegui y el problema de las razas en América Latina," *Revista Andina* (Cusco, Peru), No. 35 (July, 2002), 191–220. Thanks to Harry Vanden, Juan de Castro, Thomas Davies, Torbjörn Wandel, David Robinson, Wolfgang Hoeschele, and *Science & Society's* anonymous reviewers for their comments.

Compañeros: Es la primera vez que un Congreso Internacional de los Partidos Comunistas dedica su atención en forma tan amplia y específica al problema racial en la América Latina.  
—Hugo Pesce

**I**N THE 1920S, THE MOSCOW-BASED Third or Communist International (Comintern) advocated the establishment of “independent native republics” for Blacks in South Africa and the United States. The Comintern recognized the revolutionary potential of anti-colonial struggles and, building on Vladimir Lenin’s and Joseph Stalin’s interpretations of the national and colonial questions, defended the rights of self-determination for national minorities, including the right to secede from oppressive state structures (Communist International, 1929, 58; Lenin, 1970; Stalin, 1942). These discussions on the role of race and nationalism in a revolutionary movement soon extended to Latin America with the Comintern’s proposal to carve an Indian Republic out of the Quechua and Aymara peoples in the mountainous Andean Region of South America where Tawantinsuyu, the old Inka empire, flourished before the arrival of the Spanish in 1532. The persistent question of whether a people’s oppression was primarily an issue of class, race, or nationality came to a head at a conference of Latin American communist parties in Buenos Aires in June, 1929. At this meeting, the Peruvian Marxist intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui, in a lengthy treatise “El problema de las razas en la América Latina” (The Problem of Race in Latin America), adamantly maintained that the “Indian Question” was fundamentally one of class relations in which the bourgeois oppressed a rural proletariat, and that this situation could only be addressed through fundamental alterations to the land tenure system.

The discussions of race and ethnicity at the Buenos Aires conference raise questions of how and why the Comintern came to advocate the creation of an Indian Republic in South America, and why Mariátegui, who was normally sensitive and supportive of Indigenous struggles, opposed this proposal. Was not an autonomous Indian Republic something that Indigenous peoples would find very appealing and, in fact, desire? Is Mariátegui guilty of ignoring Indigenous concerns in order to impose his own political agenda? Does Mariátegui’s position betray the persistence of a deep conflict between an Indigenous racial or ethnic identity and a leftist concept

of class struggle?<sup>1</sup> What explains Mariátegui, normally a critical thinker who insisted on working openly and honestly in the context of his local reality, espousing an orthodox Marxist class-based position, whereas the Comintern, often seen as a dogmatic and hierarchical organization, embraced what appears to be a voluntarist attitude toward ethnic consciousness?

Mariátegui's paper was part of intense debates among communist activists worldwide as to whether marginalized and impoverished ethnic populations comprised national or racial minorities, and what the relationship of their identities to the larger class struggle should be. While these discussions brought white communists into closer contact with other ethnic groups and fostered a more sophisticated understanding of racial politics, this contentious issue also led to deep divisions within the left on interpretations of the nature of class struggles. These debates over race, class, and nationalism also challenge our understandings of the nature of the Comintern's relations with its local sections. This period offers a unique window through which to view debates within the left over the role of ethnicity in the building of a social movement.

This essay extends an examination of the Comintern's discussion of race and nationalism in other areas of the world to Latin America, and in this process challenges our understandings of the role of one of Latin America's leading Marxist figures. Mariátegui concluded that the Comintern's policy of establishing Native Republics would not lead to the material improvement of the subaltern masses; rather, removing them from existing nation-state structures would only ensure their increased poverty and marginalization. Mariátegui argued that the best way to achieve liberation for the Indian (and African) masses would be for them to join workers and others in a struggle for a socialist revolution. Liberating the race without addressing underlying class issues would lead to an Indian bourgeois state as exploitative as the current white-dominated one. The categories of race and class are interlinked — one cannot be understood without the other — and both need to be engaged to understand diverse, multicultural countries like Peru. Mariátegui's direct challenge to

1 Wade (1978, 16) notes that "ethnicity" is a recent academic construction that represents a turn away from the negative ramifications of scientific racism. What Mariátegui understood as "race" in the 1920s, most people would see as "ethnicity" today. Deconstructing the use and evolution of this language extends beyond the scope of this essay, and for our purposes here race and ethnicity can be seen as largely synonymous terms.

Comintern dictates is an example of local Party activists refusing to accept policies passively, but instead actively engaging and influencing these decisions.

*José Carlos Mariátegui*

Mariátegui is not well known in North American and European academic circles, but Latin American intellectuals have high regard for his contributions to political theory. Mariátegui was born in 1894 and grew up as a sickly child in a poor *mestizo* family on the outskirts of Lima, Peru. As a teenager, he began to work at a newspaper to help support his family and this introduced him to the field of journalism, both as a livelihood and as a means to propagate his political views. Mariátegui lacked a formal education, but he had a keen mind and was a prolific writer. He is best known for his 1928 book, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. This work contains a critique of Indian relations to Peru's land tenure systems. Mariátegui was also a political activist, founding the Peruvian Socialist Party in 1928 and a trade union federation the following year. Confined to a wheelchair in the coastal capital city of Lima, he never traveled to the highlands where most of the Indians lived. Despite minimal contact with Indigenous communities, Mariátegui gained wide renown and respect as a defender of Indian rights. Unfortunately, Mariátegui's health continued to fail, and in 1930 he died at the height of his career (see Chavarría, 1979; Skinner, 1979–1980; Vanden, 1986; Becker, 1993).

Mariátegui was clearly and irrevocably committed to both socialism and the defense of Indigenous rights. He challenged *indigenista* intellectuals<sup>2</sup> who, critiquing the Indian reality from a privileged educated and urban perspective, asserted that racial inferiorities lay at the heart of their poverty. In a 1927 polemical debate with Luis Alberto Sánchez over the relationship between *indigenismo* and socialism, he wrote that “socialism gives order and definition to the demands of the masses.” Since in Peru 80% of the masses were Indigenous, “socialism cannot be Peruvian — nor can it even be socialism — if it does not stand first in solidarity with Indigenous demands” (Mariátegui, 1994, 249). He made the materialist claim that at its core Indian oppression

2 Writing in the context of post-revolutionary Mexico, historian Alan Knight (1990, 77) defined *indigenistas* as elites who presented a “non-Indian formulation of the ‘Indian problem’” that “involved the imposition of ideas, categories, and policies from outside.”

was a socioeconomic issue rooted in the unequal distribution of land and the failure to overcome the legacy of feudalism in the Peruvian countryside. While many *indigenistas* believed that the solution to Indian poverty and marginalization lay in their assimilation to western culture, Mariátegui maintained that Indian society would only be transformed through a socialist revolution.

Cold War studies of communist movements typically discounted Comintern policies such as the one to create independent native republics as unilateral Soviet decisions designed to respond to Soviet foreign policy interests without bothering to gather any local input (Draper, 1960, 350; Kanet, 1973, 122). Newer studies encourage multidimensional analyses of this history that locates interpretations of the ambiguities of local communist movements in an international context (Johanningsmeier, 1998; Storch, 2000; MPR, 2001). As Mark Solomon (1998, xxiii) notes, "ties to the Soviets and the Comintern were neither automatically self-destructive nor magically beneficial." Far less work has been conducted on these issues in Latin America than in other areas of the world. Preliminary studies, however, indicate similar dynamics, with the Comintern being neither as monolithic or local radicals as passive as is often assumed (Ching, 1998; Carr, 1998). Mariátegui was an internationalist who found value in joining a global revolutionary movement but, like communists elsewhere, he faced the challenge of adapting the Comintern's centralized policies to his local reality.

### *First Latin American Communist Conference*

Bolshevik leaders formed the Comintern in Moscow in 1919 with the goal of fostering a world revolution. Initially the Comintern concentrated its efforts primarily in Western Europe, where it expected that an industrial proletariat would lead a world revolution. Neither Marx nor Lenin had paid much attention to Latin America, and before the 1920s Spanish anarcho-syndicalism had a much stronger influence on the left in the region. When the Comintern began to turn its eyes to "marginalized" sectors of the world, it focused its efforts primarily on Asia, where it believed anti-colonial struggles would lead to a socialist revolution. Michael Weiner (1997) and Wendy Singer (1998) point to the difficulties the Comintern had in coming to terms with agrarian societies in China and India, problems that

would also later be manifested in Latin America. Latin America, similarly lacking capital accumulation and an organized urban proletariat, did not appear to provide the basic objective conditions necessary for a socialist revolution. As a result, with its predominantly rural, non-industrialized population, this region initially remained largely removed from Comintern discussions. Most of the communist parties “were small and insignificant groups, maintaining only tenuous relations with Moscow” (Carr, 1978, 966). Reflecting this marginalized nature, E. H. Carr does not engage in a sustained discussion of Latin America until the penultimate chapter of his monumental multi-volume *A History of Soviet Russia*. When the Comintern did arrive, it did so through the more Europeanized and urban countries of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, largely to the exclusion of Indian and agrarian countries like Peru. Victorio Codovilla, who had emigrated from Italy in 1912 and subsequently joined the Argentine Socialist Party, established the South American Bureau of the Comintern in Buenos Aires in 1926, becoming the chief contact between Moscow and local organizations and the most significant Comintern leader in South America. In contrast to independent Marxist thinkers such as the Cuban Julio Antonio Mella and Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, Codovilla demonstrated a much closer and more faithful intellectual and political dependence on Moscow, and his actions came to characterize the role of the Comintern in Latin America (Löwy, 1992, xxiii; Liss, 1984, 56–59).

It was not until 1928 at the historic Sixth Congress that the Comintern began to pay a significant amount of attention to Latin America. “For the first time,” Nikolai Bukharin, the chair of the Comintern, noted in his opening speech to the congress, Latin America had entered “the orbit of influence of the Communist International.” The Sixth Congress pointed to “the revolt of the Indians in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia” as events that “bear witness to the widening and deepening of the revolutionary process” (Clissold, 1970, 74; Communist International, 1929, 6). Delegates from the Sixth Congress returned to Latin America dedicated to implementing the program that they had drafted in Moscow. Using *La Correspondencia Sudamericana*, the South American Secretariat’s bi-weekly newspaper, as a coordinating tool, Codovilla organized two meetings for 1929. In May, labor groups from 15 countries gathered in Montevideo, Uruguay, for the Congreso Constituyente de la Conferación Sindical Latinoamericana

(Constituent Congress of the Confederation of Latin American Labor Unions). Because of his poor health Mariátegui could not personally attend, but he sent Julio Portocarrero, a worker and one of the founders of the Peruvian Socialist Party, as the head of a small delegation. Agricultural and Indian problems were among the wide variety of subjects discussed at this meeting. Mariátegui contributed an essay on the "Indigenous problem" that outlined the socioeconomic situation of Indians in Latin America. Building on his previous writings, he maintained that the roots of Indian poverty lay in existing land tenure patterns. "Perhaps an indigenous revolutionary consciousness will form slowly," Mariátegui concluded, "but once the Indians have made the socialist ideal their own, they will serve it with a discipline, tenacity, and strength that few proletarians from other milieus will be able to surpass." The delegates enthusiastically received Mariátegui's deep faith in the revolutionary potential of the Indigenous masses, and they voted Portocarrero onto to the Confederation of Latin American Labor Unions' executive committee (CSLA, 1930, 159; Chavarría, 1979, 158).

After the conclusion of the Montevideo conference, many of these same delegates crossed the Río de la Plata to attend the Primera Conferencia Comunista Latinoamericana (First Latin American Communist Conference) in Buenos Aires, June 1–12, 1929. Debate at the congress was largely restricted along the lines of Codovilla's interests, which focused on the labor movement, anti-imperialist struggles and the organization of communist parties. Mariátegui, who asked Dr. Hugo Pesce to be his representative at this conference, drafted three position papers: "Antecedents and Development of Class Action in Peru," "An Anti-Imperialist Point of View," and "The Problem of Race in Latin America." Not only was this the first international meeting of Latin American communist parties; it was also to be the only and last, representing a brief opening between the Comintern's discovery of the continent and the subsequent closing of intellectual and political space for activists in Latin America to design and implement solutions to their own problems.

According to Alberto Flores Galindo (1989, 31, 33), Mariátegui had minimum contact with the Comintern before the 1929 conferences. In fact, it was perhaps dictator Augusto Leguía's accusations that Mariátegui was involved in a communist plot in 1927 that brought the Peruvian to the attention of Codovilla and by extension the Com-

munist International. Leguía probably leveled these charges due to Mariátegui's rising status as a leader among the subjugated masses, but their fallacy is evident in the fact that most of the important intellectuals and literary figures who came to Mariátegui's defense were leftists, but no high profile communists such as Mexican muralist Diego Rivera took up his case as a *cause célèbre* as they did for Augusto César Sandino's fight against the United States Marines in Nicaragua at the time (Stein, 1995). As César Germaná (1995, 174–75) observed, Mariátegui never became "a disciplined militant in the international organization, but neither could one consider him completely separate from it." He did, however, identify with the goals of the international organization. Mariátegui instructed Pesce, who was brought into a secret communist cell within the Peruvian Socialist Party for the purpose of his participation at the Buenos Aires conference, to pursue affiliation with the Third International. Although the Comintern was impressed with Mariátegui's level of intellect and important contributions to the Buenos Aires conference, it rejected the Peruvians' application for membership in the International because of their deviant stances on a variety of ideological issues (Chavarría, 1979, 162).

From the beginning, the Peruvians clashed with the Secretariat over a variety of issues, and Mariátegui's arguments triggered intense polemical debates. The assembled delegates, and in particular Codovilla, severely criticized Mariátegui's deviance from the established line on a variety of issues, including the Indian question and his emphasis on the "realidad peruana," which implied that this country had a national reality that was at variance with that of other countries such as Argentina and Mexico. Coming from Italy and not always aware of the subtleties of socioeconomic differences within Latin America, Codovilla did not want to adjust his Marxist critique for Peru (Flores Galindo, 1989, 42; Chavarría, 1979, 158–59). Mariátegui resisted accepting directives from Moscow because, as Harry Vanden (1986, 90) notes, "they clashed with his creative view of Leninism" which "demanded that good revolutionary praxis be based on the careful application of Marxism to the concrete reality of different nations rather than general directives that might have little to do with local conditions." Francisca da Gamma (1997, 54) situates these clashes within the context of the eurocentric nature of the Comintern and its leadership. Codovilla, in particular, acted in an arrogant and insulting



manner to the Peruvians who came from a more Indian and agrarian society. Since delegates from more “European” countries (Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile) as well as from urban areas overwhelmingly dominated the South American Bureau of the Comintern, it was only natural that the Comintern would come late to “Indian” Peru, and that the Comintern’s eurocentrism made for a difficult reception of Mariátegui’s ideas on race (SSAIC, 1929, 363).

### *The Indian Question*

If the 1928 Sixth Congress led the Comintern to “discover” Latin America, the 1929 Buenos Aires conference led Latin Americans to “discover” the Indian (Gamma, 1997, 53). The proposal to establish an Indian Republic in South America originated in one of the most hotly disputed issues to emerge out of the Comintern’s Sixth Congress concerning the role of racial and ethnic minorities within a country’s larger revolutionary struggle. The Comintern determined that Blacks in both South Africa and the United States comprised subject nations, and instructed local communists to build alliances with these groups with the goal of organizing revolutionary national movements to fight for their self-determination. “One of the most important tasks of the Communist Party,” the Comintern’s congress concluded, “consists in the struggle for a complete and real equality of the negroes, for the abolition of all kinds of racial, social and political inequalities.” Delegates recognized “the right of all nations, regardless of race, to complete self-determination, *i.e.*, going as far as political secession” (Communist International, 1929, 57; Degras, 1956, Vol. 1, 497). Application of this policy was as controversial and complicated in South Africa and the United States, with some white radicals replicating the dominant society’s racist attitudes, as it later would be in South America (for example, see Barry Carr, 1998, 238).

The original impetus for engaging the “Negro Question” came not from the Comintern, but from Black activists in local communist parties. Four years before the Comintern’s historic Sixth Congress, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) began actively to recruit Black members, and by 1928 a vast majority of its members were Black and the Party published material in African languages. Their success led to the discussion of this topic at the Sixth Congress in

Moscow, including the drafting of slogans for independent Black and native republics in the Americas. In the adopted Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries, the Comintern applauded the CPSA's "successes among the negro proletariat," urged them to continue the struggle for racial equality. The Comintern also encouraged the establishment of an "independent native republic," a demand that extended somewhat beyond the CPSA's previous activities (Communist International, 1929, 57–58; ES, 1992, 14; Solomon, 1998, 79–80). Following South Africa's lead, the Sixth Congress instructed the CPUSA to fight for the "right of self-determination for Negroes" (Communist International, 1929, 57). African-American activist Harry Haywood (1978) played a central role in these debates in Moscow, and was key in implementing this policy in the United States. Reflecting a greatly increased consciousness of racial oppression, in 1931 the CPUSA came to the defense of nine young Black men charged with rape in Alabama in the famed "Scottsboro Case." Subsequent attacks against "white chauvinism" within the CPUSA were rigorous, probably far surpassing that of communist parties in South Africa or South America (MPR, 2001, 395; Solomon, 1998; Berland, 2000). In turn, engaging racial issues forced white communists to come to a deeper understanding of United States realities (Zumoff, 2003, 342).

Emerging out of these pivotal debates on the Negro Question at the Sixth Congress in Moscow, race became one of the most contentious and widely debated topics the following year in Buenos Aires. The complicated ramifications of building alliances across racial and class divides and problems with "white chauvinism" were similar in South America to those militants encountered in South Africa and the United States, and raise similar issues of the construction of ethnic and national identities. Even the process through which this topic came to be raised at the Buenos Aires conference indicates the marginalized nature of discussions of race among communists in Latin America. Although the original agenda that Codovilla published in *La Correspondencia Sudamericana* (December 15, 1928, 45) included the "Cuestión campesina" ("peasant question"), there was no mention of engaging the issues of race or Latin America's Indigenous peoples. According to Jürgen Mothes (1992, 157), Jules Humbert-Droz, a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), insisted that Codovilla include a discussion of race

on the meeting's agenda. As head of the Latin Secretariat, Humbert-Droz presented a report on Latin America to the Sixth Congress and was largely responsible for bringing the region to the Comintern's attention (Degras, 1956, Vol. 2, 448, 567; Barbé, 1966, 226, 30). As a result, in April, only two months before the conference, Codovilla added a debate on "The Problem of Race in Latin America," with a Peruvian, Brazilian, and Cuban presenting theses on the subject. In a March 29, 1929 letter, Codovilla specifically requested that Mariátegui prepare a document on the Indians' struggle for emancipation from their current state of slavery for the meeting. Codovilla noted that he was requesting that Mariátegui, who was already well known for his defense of Peru's marginalized rural Indigenous peoples, address this subject because of his "profound knowledge" of the problem, his "serious studies" on the topic, and because he was the only person who could provide a solid base on which the Comintern could build its strategies (Mothes, 1996, 95).

Without outside intervention, Comintern leaders in Latin America most likely would not have raised the question of the role of Indigenous peoples in the revolutionary movement. It is a reflection of the white, urban focus of the Comintern that it had to turn to a party in Peru with which it had minimal contact to make a presentation on this issue. Roger Kanet (1973, 102) similarly notes that the people Stalin charged with organizing "Black Republics" had minimal contact with African peoples. This further highlights the unique role that Mariátegui played in these debates; rather than needing Comintern encouragement to engage Indigenous issues, he was tasked with introducing communists with whom he previously had minimal contact to Latin America's racial dynamics. He was far ahead of most other South American communists in his understanding of race, and this contributed to a perhaps inevitable clash between European and Indian views of the revolutionary struggle in Latin America. Without Indigenous or Afro-Latin intellectuals (such as Harry Haywood in the United States) within the South American Bureau, or at least someone who could clearly articulate and argue passionately for these perspectives, Comintern proposals on the problem of race in Latin America would tend to fall short of their potential. Nevertheless, the Communist International increasingly recognized the crucial role of ethnic groups in emerging revolutionary movements, and pressed onward with attempts to organize this population.

*The Problem of Race*

On the morning of June 8, 1929, delegates at the Buenos Aires conference turned their attention to the fifth point on the agenda, "The Problem of Race in Latin America." "Juárez" from Cuba brought a prepared statement on the "Negro Question" (especially as it related to Cuba) and "Leoncio" from Brazil critiqued the role of Indians and Africans in his country. Mariátegui's historical and socio-economic overview of Indians in Latin America, however, was the longest and most controversial presentation. It represents his most detailed and penetrating analysis of the subject.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hugo Pesce, presenting the document under the alias "Saco" (in honor of the famed anarchist militant Nicola Sacco who had been executed two years earlier in Massachusetts), introduced the discussion with the observation that this was "the first time that an International Congress of Communist Parties has focused their attention in such a broad and specific manner on the racial problem in Latin America." This was an issue that had received little serious study, and bourgeois critiques and capitalist governments had corrupted interpretations of the problem. A lack of rigorous statistical studies and analyses further hindered examinations. Pesce called for an objective study of the racial problem grounded in a Marxist methodology informed by an understanding of class struggle in order to arrive at a revolutionary understanding consistent with Comintern policies (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 433–34).

Mariátegui's lengthy thesis, which focused largely but by no means exclusively on Peru and Indians, surveyed changes from the time of the Inkas and Aztecs, through the Spanish conquest and colonial period, and into the 20th century, with additional sections on Blacks, *mestizos*, and mulattos. Firmly grounding the discussion in a class

3 Part of this document was originally presented in Montevideo in May 1929, and included in the published proceedings from this labor conference, *Bajo la bandera de la C.S.L.A.* The entire essay was first published in *El movimiento revolucionario latino americano*, an official publication of the South American Secretariat of the Comintern, which published the proceedings from the Buenos Aires conference. Ricardo Martínez de la Torre later included it in his four-volume *Apuntes para una interpretación marxista de la historia social del Perú*. Mariátegui also published parts of it in his journal *Amauta* (No. 25, July–August, 1929), and Mariátegui's family later reprinted it in *Ideología y política*, a collection of his ideological and political writings. Michael Pearlman included parts of it in his English translation of Mariátegui's essays (1996), with other sections appearing in Michael Löwy's 1992 anthology of Latin American Marxist writings.

analysis, Mariátegui began his discussion of race with his argument that race disguised underlying class exploitation rooted in an unequal distribution of land:

In Latin American bourgeois intellectual speculation, the race question serves, among other things, to disguise or evade the continent's real problems. Marxist criticism has the unavoidable obligation of establishing it in real terms, ridding it of all sophistic or pedantic equivocation. Economically, socially, and politically, the race question, like the land question, is fundamentally that of liquidating feudalism. (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 434.)

For Mariátegui, the Indian problem in Latin America was an economic and social issue which for Indians meant an agrarian problem, and it needed to be addressed at the level of land tenure relations. Rather than embracing typical *indigenista* ideologies, which maintained that Indian problems would be solved through their assimilation into the *mestizo* population, Mariátegui believed that white colonization had “only retarding and depressive effects in the life of the indigenous races” (*ibid.*, 435). Indians wanted equality, but they did not want to lose their unique identities. Mariátegui categorically rejected the notion that the Indian question was a racial problem, not only because he denied that Indigenous peoples were racially inferior but also because he rejected biological theories that proposed that their position could be strengthened through “crossing the indigenous race with ‘superior’ foreign races” (436). Communist parties that sought racial solutions to this situation of exploitation were simply succumbing to a bourgeois distraction that would never be able to address this problem, and it was a mistake for the Comintern to look in that direction for answers.

Much like his denial that *mestizaje* would improve the Indian race, Mariátegui also rejected the notion that there was something innate within Indians that would lead to their liberation. “It would be foolish and dangerous to oppose the racism of those who deprecate the Indian because they believe in the absolute and permanent superiority of the white race,” Mariátegui wrote, “with the racism of those who overestimate the Indian with a messianic faith in their mission as a race in the American renaissance.” Indian societies responded to the same laws that governed any other culture. “By itself, the race has not risen,” Mariátegui (1929a, 73) observed. “What ensures its

emancipation is the dynamism of an economy and culture that carries the seed of socialism in its midst.” This underscores E. J. Hobsbawm’s observation (1990, 67) that racial discrimination and ethnic differences rarely lead to a nationalist movement. Indian liberation would follow along the same lines, and be subject to the same laws of history, as the working class. In countries with large Indian and Black populations the racial factor must be converted into a revolutionary factor, Mariátegui maintained. In order to succeed, revolutionaries must convince Indians and Blacks that only a workers and peasants government comprised of all races could emancipate them from their oppression (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 439).

Whether rural poverty was primarily a result of racial discrimination or of class exploitation is an issue that has long been debated in Latin America (Wade, 1997, 22–24). Mariátegui, never one for simplistic solutions to problems, appreciated the complicated nature of the interactions between race and class. “It is possible to try to face the solution that the problem of races requires,” he noted, “and establish, as a result, the tasks that concern the Communist Parties in Latin America” (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 462). Racism was a very real problem that needed to be confronted before class solidarity could be built, but the two forms of identity were deeply intertwined with each other. Marxists still experienced difficulties in conceptualizing issues of racial identity, with many militants considering it to be a form of false consciousness that distracted from the more important proletarian class struggle. Nevertheless, in terms of lived experiences, race and ethnicity repeatedly overpowered class in debates over which was more important. Mariátegui noted that Indians, for good reason, often viewed *mestizos* as their oppressors, and only the development of a class consciousness could break through the racial hatred that divided these groups. Not only did Indians have an understandable disdain for their white and *mestizo* exploiters, but it was “not unusual to find prejudice as to the inferiority of the Indian among the very urban elements that proclaim themselves to be revolutionaries” (*ibid.*, 466).<sup>4</sup>

4 Similarly in the United States, Haywood (1978, 122) notes that “membership in the Party did not automatically free whites from white supremacist ideas” nor “Blacks from their distrust of whites.” Instead, “interracial solidarity — even in the Communist Party — required a continuous ideological struggle.”

Converting the race issue into class terms would, according to Mariátegui, lead Indians and Blacks to have a central role in the revolutionary movement. "Only the struggle of Indians, proletarians and peasants in strict alliance with the *mestizo* and white proletariat against the feudal and capitalist regime," he wrote, "will permit the free development of the Indians' racial characteristics." This class struggle building on the Indians' collective spirit, and not the encouragement of a movement toward self-determination, would be what breaks down national borders that divide Indian groups and would lead "to the political autonomy of the race" (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 466). After working through these issues, Mariátegui clearly and unapologetically cast the Indian question as a class, not race or national, struggle.

### *The National Question*

A fundamental issue that separated Mariátegui from the Comintern was whether at its heart the Indian problem was an issue of race, class, or nationality.<sup>5</sup> If Indian and African alienation was due to racial oppression, then the solution lay in struggling for social equality. If, on the other hand, Indian and African communities comprised national minorities, then communists should join their struggle for a separate independent republic with state rights.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on Lenin's and Stalin's writings on nationalism, the Comintern saw Latin American countries as multinational societies similar to Russia, with subordinate nationalities existing alongside the dominant western one. Oppressed nations had the right to self-determination, including the right to establish their own independent nations. Minority populations, however, had the right to the preservation and development of their languages and cultures, but not the right to secede to form separate states. Similar to the situation of Africans in South Africa and the United States, Comintern rhetoric in South America extended beyond strug-

5 In a study of the Negro Question in the United States, Berland (2000, 199) suggests that prior to the Sixth Congress there was a certain degree of fluidity between concepts of race and nation. Even the Program of the Communist International adopted at the Sixth Congress called for "complete equality of all nations and races" (Degras, 1956, Vol. 2, 497). But by 1928 understandings of these terms had hardened.

6 Haywood (1978, 261) later argued that this was a false dichotomy, and that calls for self-determination and equality were not in conflict with each other. Haywood (1978, 323) further maintained that while "race played an important role . . . it was only one element and not the central question."

gling for racial equality to demanding an independent republic. In China, these ideologies appealed to anti-imperialist nationalist leaders who could utilize them in their anti-colonial struggles (Weiner, 1997, 158–59), but the coherence of these policies broke down in Latin America's neocolonial setting where revolutionaries were not fighting against European political control and subaltern ethnic groups had yet to acquire a nationalist consciousness.

Two factors help explain why the issue of nationalism emerged at this point and why it so dominated these discussions. On one hand, the Comintern viewed the racist treatment of African Americans as the "Achilles heel" of capitalism in the United States. Second, this was a period of Stalin's ascendance as a leader and theoretician of international capitalism (Caballero, 1986, 58). Stalin (1942, 12) was particularly interested in the "national question," and his definition of a nation as "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture" influenced subsequent debates. Under his governance, it was logical to extend his interpretations of the multinational situation in the Soviet Union to the role of Blacks in South Africa and the United States, and Indians within Latin America. E. H. Carr (1964, 89) notes that in the early 1920s Comintern leaders were "concerned in the national question mainly as a means of imposing measures of discipline on recalcitrant groups in European parties," but that "interest in movements outside Europe was still perfunctory." Latin America was not included in these early discussions of the national and colonial question (Carr, 1978, 960). By the late 1920s, however, shifts in the Comintern led communists around the world to advocate the creation of independent republics. In Canada, communists began to call for self-determination for the Quebecois (Avakumovic, 1975, 254). Communists in Australia became deeply involved in Aboriginal rights issues (Boughton, 2001, 266). In Latin America, activists proposed the creation of Black Republics in Cuba and Brazil, two countries with the highest African diaspora populations in the Americas (Andrews, 2004, 150; Dulles, 1973, 473). "Making the Negro Question a national question also internationalized the fight for black rights," Jacob Zumoff notes, "placing it on the same plain as the Irish or Jewish questions" (Zumoff, 2003, 336). Within this broader context, proposing an Indigenous Republic in Latin America would be a logical and by no means unprecedented step.



In the conclusion to his lengthy statement on race in Latin America, Mariátegui directly contradicted the Comintern's proposal to establish an Indian Republic in the South American Andes, where a concentration of Quechua and Aymara peoples formed a majority of the population. Although Mariátegui conceded that the establishment of such autonomous republics might work elsewhere, in Peru the proposal was the result of not understanding the socioeconomic situation of the Indigenous masses. "The construction of an autonomous state from the Indian race," Mariátegui maintained, "would not lead to the dictatorship of the Indian proletariat, nor much less the formation of an Indian state without classes." Instead, the result would be "an Indian bourgeois state with all of the internal and external contradictions of other bourgeois states." Mariátegui continued to note that "only the revolutionary class movement of the exploited indigenous masses can open a path to the true liberation of their race" which would result in political self-determination.

Mariátegui recognized that European norms of nationalism would not necessarily apply to the Peruvian situation. In Europe, for example, Germans might form a nation but, as Anthony Smith (1998, 29) notes, "cultural differences only sometimes coincided with the boundaries of political units." Indeed, since only one-tenth of language groups correspond with political boundaries it would entail an unjustified jump in logic to assume that the Quechua and Aymara peoples formed a nation. Since Quechua peoples live along the spine of the Andean highlands stretching from Colombia in the north through Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia to Argentina and Chile in the south, the Comintern proposal would entail a fundamental reworking of political boundaries dating from the beginnings of Spanish colonization in the 16th century. Isolated in the mountains without an industrial base or an outlet to the sea, would such a country be economically viable? Reflecting a fundamental division between ethno-cultural and political definitions of nationalism, Mariátegui believed that the existing nation-states were too deeply entrenched in South America to warrant rethinking their configuration. The Comintern's underestimation of the level of state formation, together with the misapplication of the "National Question," led to a policy which Mariátegui rejected as irrelevant and unworkable. Not only would European solutions not work in Latin America, but even the question of race was not the same in all Latin American countries

and therefore new solutions would have to be worked out for different places within the region. At its core, Mariátegui challenged essentialist notions of nationalism. Mariátegui emphasized that Indian poverty and marginalization were fundamentally an issue of class oppression, and that the solution to Indian problems lay in ending the abusive feudalistic land tenure patterns under which Indians suffered (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 463).

The assembled delegates, and in particular Codovilla, attacked Pesce for a variety of “errors” that they detected in Mariátegui’s thesis. From the Comintern’s point of view, Mariátegui’s most serious shortcoming was his failure to follow a Leninist line that interpreted the Indian problem as “a ‘national question’ that could only be resolved through a separatist movement of self-determination rather than a multiclass revolutionary movement” which the socialists in Peru currently pursued (Chavarría, 1979, 161). The formation of a nation was based on the penetration of capitalist relations and, according to Peters, the representative from the Young Communist International (YCI), this process had not been completed in Peru. Peru lacked the level of capitalist development necessary to have developed a unitary nation. In fact, Peters predicted that before this could happen uprisings in Peru and Bolivia would erase national boundaries and lead to an Indian republic rooted on a new social base (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 468).

Pesce, defending Mariátegui’s arguments, maintained that interpreting the Indian question as a nationalist issue with the goal of Indian self-determination and separatism would be a mistake because it would exclude mestizo peasants and urban workers from the struggle. Although Indians comprised a large part of the revolutionary movement, their exploitation must be understood in class rather than racial terms (Chavarría, 1979, 161). Portocarrero, using the alias “Zamora,” reiterated this point with the observation that already in Peru many of the Indigenous land struggles were against wealthy Indian *caciques* (“chiefs”). Pesce argued that it was simply naive to believe that an Indian state would erase class divisions, since even in the Soviet Union this had not been an automatic process (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, Vol. 2, 470, 473). Woodford McClellan (1993, 387, 388) later presented a similar conclusion that although the Comintern “played a generally positive role in the growing worldwide assault on racism and colonialism,” its actions were limited because

it “had no clear program for eradicating discrimination directed against *Soviet* minorities.” Ironically, in taking this position the Peruvians echoed a statement that the Comintern brought to this meeting. “The Communist Party,” the resolution read, “must be a party of only one class, the party of the proletariat.” The Party should not exclude poor peasants, but rather should include them as an integral part of the struggle (*La Correspondencia Sudamericana*, May 1929, 15).

Anthony Smith (1998, 45) argues that ethnicity “is crucial to an adequate understanding of nationalism.” Does this mean that Mariátegui opposed the plan to form an Indian Republic because he was unaware of the ethnic consciousness of Peru’s rural population? After all, isolated through both his physical infirmities that confined him to a wheelchair and deep regional divisions that divided Peru’s *mestizo* coast from the Indigenous highlands, Mariátegui did not have a lived experience of Quechua and Aymara peoples. Mariátegui argued, however, “that progress in Peru is false, or is at least not Peruvian, so long as it does not include the Indian.” Mariátegui did not ignore the level of ethnic affinities and identities of Indigenous peoples that crossed existing national borders. He was, to be sure, a strong internationalist committed to the unification of the working-class struggle. But he also firmly believed that these struggles must be rooted in and respond to the specifics of a local situation. In his presentation to the Buenos Aires conference, Mariátegui noted that all countries in Latin America did not face identical racial problems. Furthermore, the active participation of Indians was necessary to correct these historic patterns of injustice. Mariátegui claimed that “socialist ideas have strengthened a new and powerful movement for the revindication [*sic*] of the Indian” (1929b, 78–79), but what he increasingly observed was that “Indians themselves begin to show a new consciousness.” Elites had seen Indians as incapable of achieving their own liberation, and so this task fell to urban, white and mestizo intellectuals who paternalistically treated the Indians as objects rather than as authors of this process. Now, instead of paternalistic governmental ruling elites treating Indian poverty as a charity case, Indians had begun to address the underlying economic, social, and agrarian causes of their poverty and marginalization. They would find their own liberty. Divided, Indians had always been easily defeated, but united, their strength would mean victory.

Geraldine Skinner (1979–1980, 470–71) interprets this as “a populist rather than Marxist viewpoint,” and points to it as an example of an underdeveloped ideology. Germaná (1995, 179), on the other hand, claims that Mariátegui did understand and respect Indigenous ethnicity, but rejected the Comintern’s call for self-determination for the Indians because it was foreign to his idea of a “Peruvian nationality in formation” which could be achieved only through the incorporation of the Indigenous peoples into a new socialist society. Furthermore, since the majority of Peru’s population was Indian, finding solutions to their problems was a fundamental issue of Peruvian nationality. “The Indian is the cement of our nationality in formation,” Mariátegui wrote (1994, 291, 292). “When one speaks of Peruvianness, one has to begin by investigating whether this Peruvianness includes the Indian. Without the Indian no Peruvianness is possible.”

Scholars have pointed to Mariátegui’s position as an example of a South American willingness to confront centralized Comintern dictates and reject the imposition of doctrines that were alien to Latin America (Vanden, 1986, 90). Löwy (1998, 86) defends Mariátegui’s “profound intuition . . . that modern socialism, particularly in agrarian societies, should be rooted in popular traditions.” Mariátegui was attempting to move beyond the dualism that pitted European against Indigenous solutions to Peru’s problems. “Socialism is certainly not an Indo-American theory,” he wrote. “It is a worldwide movement.” But he proceeded to observe that “socialism is ultimately in the American tradition” (Mariátegui, 1928, 2, 3). He follows with one of his most famous statements:

We certainly do not wish socialism in America to be a copy and imitation. It must be a heroic creation. We must give life to an Indo-American socialism reflecting our own reality and in our own language.<sup>7</sup>

Solutions could not be mechanically imported; they must emerge out of a critical interpretation of local economic conditions.

7 Similarly in China, Weiner (1997, 189, 190) has observed that “the Comintern failed to come to terms with the fundamental processes underlying revolutionary developments in China.” Only after the Chinese Communist Party was “partially freed from Comintern restraints, was [it] able to pursue successfully a path which combined peasant-based revolution with national liberation.”

Mariátegui was not alone in facing this problem; some communists in the United States and South Africa also found it problematic to equate national minorities in the Soviet Union with Black communities in their countries. Migration to urban areas as well as assimilation into the dominant white culture slowly eroded the African Americans' "common territory" which was understood as a necessary prerequisite for an independent native republic (MPR, 2001, 395; Solomon, 1998, 75; Haywood, 1978, 280). Large geographic distances and the inevitable ensuing problems of communication allowed for a certain amount of intellectual independence for national sections of the Comintern. As scholars discovered in the United States, responses to Comintern directives in Latin America must be understood within the context of the interaction of local and international factors (Carr, 1998, 247). Similarly, Wendy Singer (1998, 282) finds that "communication did not fit the often touted vertical/hierarchical model of directives sent from Moscow to obedient Indian followers." The Comintern was not an omnipresent force, and in a sense Mariátegui, like everyone else, was simply attempting to adapt general Comintern principles to his local reality. Edward Johanningsmeier (1998, xiii) notes "that while overall strategy was often set in Moscow, the day-to-day tactics of Party activists were largely beyond the purview of the Comintern." Barry Carr (1998, 248) discovered similar dynamics in Cuba, comparing local Party application of the spirit rather than the letter of specific Comintern directives to the old Spanish colonial adage "*Obedezco pero no cumpro*" ("I obey but I do not follow through"). From his location on the fringes of Comintern discourse, Mariátegui was adamant about maintaining a seemingly much more orthodox class-based interpretation of the revolutionary struggle because he believed it fit better with the specifics of his local situation. This does not mean that Mariátegui was antagonistic to Indigenous struggles or ethnic cultures. Instead, it reflects a sophisticated understanding of how ethnicity operated in his specific local context.

### *Indigenous Responses*

As an *indigenista* intellectual, Mariátegui was not an Indian but spoke on behalf of Indians. Did Mariátegui reflect Indigenous concerns, or was he putting forward his own political agenda? He believed that "the hope of the Indian is absolutely revolutionary" and that only

socialism could improve their lot. In his classic text *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, Mariátegui echoed Luis Valcárcel's comment that "the Indigenous proletariat awaits its Lenin" (1971, 29), implying that the movement for their liberation would come from an external source rather than from within their communities. In probing who this Lenin might be, Gerardo Leibner (1999, 155) contrasts the idea of a Tupac Amaru-style restoration of Tawantinsuyu (the old Inka empire) with an urban *mestizo indigenista* leading Indians in a modernizing socialist revolution. The first can be interpreted as a reactionary impulse and Mariátegui opposed it, and the second requires the intervention of outsiders such as Mariátegui. Missing from this equation, however, are the desires and goals of the Indigenous peoples themselves.

Although Mariátegui was sympathetic to Indian concerns, during the debates in Buenos Aires apparently no one considered consulting with Indians as to their views on establishing an independent native republic or even bringing them into the discussion. "Did the Negroes *want* a separate nation?" George Breitman asked in an introduction to Leon Trotsky's writings on Black Nationalism (Trotsky, 1978, 14, 22). "If they did, did they *want* it to be located in the South?" The NAACP denounced the proposal as "a plan of plain segregation" (Kanet, 1973, 105, 106). To some African American members of the CPUSA, the plan for a Native Republic "sounded like Jim Crow in a revolutionary guise" (Draper, 1960, 334). After all, by the 1930s African Americans had largely become assimilated into the dominant culture, and did not exhibit the characteristics of a nationality — their own language, customs, religion, or interests. Even in the Soviet mother ship, similar problems plagued attempts to create a Jewish Autonomous Region in Birobidzhan as a way to solve the "Jewish Problem" (Weinberg, 1988). Rather than enlisting in nationalist movements, many African Americans began to work for civil rights. Marxists debated whether the essentially liberal demands of self-determination and social equality would attract the petty bourgeois rather than the proletariat, and would distract from the more fundamental class struggle. George Padmore (1971, 285), an African intellectual who rose to a position of leadership in the Comintern before becoming vigorously critical of the organization, condemned the idea of creating a native republic as an apartheid-style Bantu state. Haywood (1978, 230) first opposed it as a far-fetched idea that was not consistent with

United States reality, but then changed his position and decided that Black nationalism was authentic and provided the best path for a struggle toward racial equality. These dynamic discussions seemed to strengthen and invigorate the Communist Party in the United States.

In proposing the construction of an Indian Republic, the Comintern seemingly was ignorant of, or at least did not have contact with, previous such attempts in the Andes. This millenarian longing for a return to Indigenous rule and a time when there was no hunger and poverty that the Europeans had brought was common in the southern Andes, and stimulated such large-scale revolts as Túpac Amaru II in 1780. More recently, in 1915 Teodomiro Gutiérrez took the name Rumi Maqui (Quechua for “Stone Hand”) and led a radical separatist revolt in Puno, attempting to restore Tawantinsuyu as a state governed by Indians. Subsequently, in the 1930s in Bolivia, Eduardo Leandro Nina Qhispi assumed the presidency of the Republic of Collasuyu (the southern quarter of the old Inka empire) (BF, 1979, 115–19; Albó, 1999, 782–83). Mariátegui was familiar with this history of radical separatist movements, and in fact mentioned Rumi Maqui’s movement in his presentations to both the Montevideo and Buenos Aires conferences (Martínez de la Torre, 1947–1949, vol. 2, 460). Years earlier, Mariátegui (1994, 2902, 1916) had written in glowing terms about Rumi Maqui’s movement representing an Indian hope for the rebirth of Peru and the resurrection of Tawantinsuyu. In fact, Flores Galindo (1987, 303–304) notes that Mariátegui was the first analyst to take the revolt seriously, and that it helped pave the way for the later convergence of socialism and Indigenous concerns. Does the Comintern’s failure to engage these separatist trends reveal a racist disregard for Indians, or simply an ignorance of Andean history? Or did the Comintern’s failure to tap the roots of this tradition mean that their efforts would face failure? The main problem was not the Comintern’s proposal, but the lack of engagement with local activists who would best understand how to conceptualize and implement this policy.

The Comintern helped popularize the concept of Indigenous nationalism, and during the 1930s activists increasingly relied on this construct to advance their struggles. In a 1934 peasant uprising in Chile, communist militants advocated the creation of an “Araucana Mapuche Republic” (Ulianova, 2003, 199). Similarly in Ecuador,

communists argued that Indians had their own languages, dress, and customs that made them independent nationalities (Conferencia de Cabecillas Indios, 1936, 2–3). Some local parties excelled at working in rural areas, such as in Colombia where a majority of members were from rural areas and the Party put forward an Indigenous candidate for president (LeGrand, 1986, 245). In recent years, the struggle to defend rights of self-determination and achieve recognition of the multinational character of Latin American countries had become a common demand of Indigenous organizations. For example, Shuar intellectual Ampam Karakras (2001, 60–62) adamantly maintained that Indians in Ecuador were nationalities because of their cohesive and differentiated identities, cultures, history, languages, spiritual practices, and economies. According to anthropologist Iliana Almeida, leftists who were influenced by Soviet discourse introduced the concept of Indians as “nationalities” to Indigenous organizations in Latin America (Selverston-Scher, 2001, 23). Comintern debates in the 1920s have had a lasting impact on Indigenous discourse in Latin America.

### *Resolutions?*

In a sense, Mariátegui’s ideas on race were far more advanced and complex than those of Moscow, and he began to understand how race can color a person’s experience of class.<sup>8</sup> Undeniably, a new and profound awareness of the problems of racism in Latin America emerged out of these debates. Rather than deflecting criticism away from their failures to engage issues of racism, the Comintern was prepared to deal with these issues on a serious level. For the first time, white, urban activists began to appreciate the rich cultural diversity of Indian and African peoples, a reality that complicated application of a unitary solution to their problems. Communist Party militants previously had believed that racial discrimination as it existed in the United States or South Africa was not present in Latin America, but now they began to sense not only the profoundly racist nature of Latin American societies, but also the complex and intertwined social and economic issues that led to such injustices. For example, a delegate from Venezuela at the Buenos Aires conference remembered “that Brazilian compañeros categorically denied the existence of racial

8 Solomon (1998, 86) similarly argues that Communists in the United States were quite advanced in their understanding of racial struggles.



problems in their country during the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, but now we see that this problem exists and it is serious" (SSAIC, 1929, 301). In fact, this acknowledgment of persistent serious problems with racism was perhaps the most positive and concrete outcome of the Comintern's discussions.

In the end, disagreements at the Buenos Aires conference did not result in an open rupture between the Comintern and the Peruvian Party. In fact, Humbert-Droz came to the Peruvians' defense, maintaining that self-determination was not sufficient to solve racial problems in Latin America. He noted the extremely complicated nature of the racial question in Latin America, and how it was bound up with land issues; the history of conquest, colonization, and slavery; linguistic differences; a rich variety of ethnic groups; and a situation of imperialism which exploited racial tensions. Rather than having the South American Bureau take a definitive stance on the role of racism in a revolutionary movement, Humbert-Droz encouraged more discussion in order to deepen understandings of this issue, and encouraged delegates to forward summaries of their discussions for publication in the Comintern newspaper (SSAIC, 1929, 312, 310–11; *La Correspondencia Sudamericana*, August 1929, 25). Although calling for more study, Humbert-Droz concluded his summary of these discussions with the observation that "only a worker and peasant government, applying the solutions adopted by the Soviet Republic to the old tsarist empire, can provide a true solution to these problems" (SSAIC, 1929, 310, 312). There was room for debate, but Humbert-Droz had his own personal and political fortunes to look after and was willing to press these issues only so far. In the United States, Haywood (1978, 280) similarly notes that the Comintern had not provided "a complete and definite statement, but a new departure, a revolutionary turning point in the treatment of the Afro-American question." Unfortunately, the Comintern failed to provide a mechanism to respond similarly to challenges to the concept of Native Republics, and South American communist parties never again had the luxury of such an open forum as the 1929 Buenos Aires conference in which to advance this discussion.

E. H. Carr (1978, 982) notes that the proceedings of the landmark 1929 Buenos Aires conference of Latin American communist parties were not published in Moscow, which both reflects the marginalized status of Latin America and helps explain why the confer-

ence had such minimal long-term influence on debates on race and nationalism. “Once the conference was over,” Carr remarks, “the interest of the Comintern in this remote and baffling outpost of communism quickly evaporated” (1978, 989). The Comintern’s South American Bureau (1933, 26) reminded local parties of the slogan “self-determination till secession for oppressed nationalities (Negroes, Indians, etc.)” and the urgent need to engage in political work in the countryside, but institutional support often did not extend beyond rhetoric. While Haywood characterizes the Afro-American question as “*the* problem for our Party” (1978, 327), the Comintern never dedicated a corresponding amount of attention to the Indigenous question in Latin America.

The Comintern probably would have realized more success had it been able to engage Indigenous intellectuals in these discussions. Without engaging Indians, these debates on race and nationalism did not progress. To complicate the issue, Mariátegui’s death less than a year after the conference removed one of Latin America’s intellectuals most interested in the Indigenous question. The Comintern continued to face difficulties in advancing this part of its agenda. Another Continental Conference of Latin American Communist Parties was never to be held, and the ideological and political opening in which this debate flourished seemingly closed. With the waning of hope for the emergence of an Indigenous communist-led Latin American revolution, the possibilities for following this path to improve the lot of the “Indigenous race” seemed to fade as well.

*Division of Social Science*  
*Truman State University*  
*100 E. Normal St.*  
*Kirksville, MO 63501*  
*marc@yachana.org*

#### REFERENCES

- Albó, Xavier. 1999. “Andean People in the Twentieth Century.” Pp. 765–871 in Frank Saloman and Stuart B. Schwartz, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*. Cambridge, England/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Amauta, revista mensual de doctrina, literatura, arte, polémica*. 1928–1930. Lima, Peru: Empresa Editora Amauta.

- Anderson, Thomas P. 1992. *Matanza: The 1932 "Slaughter" that Traumatized a Nation, Shaping US-Salvadoran Policy to This Day*. Willimantic/East Haven, Connecticut: Curbstone Press.
- Andrews, George Reid. 2004. *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Avakumovic, Ivan. 1975. *The Communist Party in Canada: A History*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: McClelland and Stewart.
- Barbé, Henri. 1966. "Stalin and the 'Rebellion' of Tasca and Humbert-Droz." Pp. 217-33 in Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko M. Lazic, eds., *The Comintern; Historical Highlights, Essays, Recollections, Documents*. Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University. New York: Praeger.
- Becker, Marc. 1993. *Mariátegui and Latin American Marxist Theory*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Monographs in International Studies.
- Berland, Oscar. 2000. "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America: 1919-1931 (Part Two)." *Science & Society*, 64:2 (Summer), 194-217.
- BF. Burga, Manuel, and Alberto Flores Galindo. 1979. *Apogeo y crisis de la república aristocrática (oligarquía, aprismo y comunismo en el Perú, 1895-1932)*. Lima, Peru: Ediciones Rikchay Perú.
- Boughton, Bob. 2001. "The Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Rights 1920-1970." Pp. 263-94 in Raymond Markey, ed., *Labour and Community: Historical Essays*. Wollongong, Australia: University of Wollongong Press.
- Caballero, Manuel. 1986. *Latin America and the Comintern, 1919-1943*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Carr, Barry. 1998. "From Caribbean Backwater to Revolutionary Opportunity: Cuba's Evolving Relationship with the Comintern, 1925-34." Pp. 234-53 in Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe, eds., *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919-43*. Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press.
- Carr, Edward Hallett. 1964. *A History of Soviet Russia*. Vol. 3, part 1: *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*. New York: Macmillan.
- . 1978. *A History of Soviet Russia*. Vol. 3, part 3: *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*. New York: Macmillan.
- Chavarría, Jesús. 1979. *José Carlos Mariátegui and the Rise of Modern Peru, 1890-1930*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.
- Ching, Erik. 1998. "In Search of the Party: The Communist Party, the Comintern, and the Peasant Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador." *The Americas*, 55:2 (October), 204-39.
- Clissold, Stephen, ed. 1970. *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918-1968: A Documentary Survey*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Communist International. 1929. *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies: Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies, Adopted by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, 1928*. New York: Workers Library.
- Communist International. 1933. *Por un viraje decisivo en el trabajo campesino: carta del*

- Buró Sudamericano de la I.C. a los partidos comunistas de Sudamérica.* Montevideo, Uruguay (?): Editorial "Sud América."
- Confederación Sindical Latino Americana (CSLA). 1930. *Bajo la bandera de la C.S.L.A.: Resoluciones y documentos varios del Congreso Constituyente de la Confederación Sindical Latino Americana efectuado en Montevideo en Mayo de 1929.* Montevideo, Uruguay: Impr. La Linotipo.
- Conferencia de Cabecillas Indios. 1936. "Indicaciones." *Ñucanchic Allpa* [Ecuador], 1:8 (March 17), 2–3.
- Degras, Jane Tabrisky. 1956. *The Communist International, 1919–1943, Documents.* London/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Drapier, Theodore. 1960. *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period.* New York: Viking Press.
- Dulles, John W. F. 1973. *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900–1935.* Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- ES. Ellis, Stephen, and Tsepo Sechaba. 1992. *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Flores Galindo, Alberto. 1987. *Buscando un Inca: identidad y utopía en los andes.* Lima, Peru: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario.
- . 1989. *La agonía de Mariátegui: la polémica con la Komintern.* Lima, Peru: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario.
- Gamma, Francisca da. 1997. "La Internacional Comunista, Mariátegui y el 'descubrimiento' del indígena." *Anuario Mariáteguiano*, 9:9, 50–58.
- Germaná, César. 1995. *El "Socialismo Indo-americano" de José Carlos Mariátegui: Proyecto de reconstitución del sentido histórico de la sociedad peruana.* Lima, Peru: Empresa Editora Amauta.
- Haywood, Harry. 1978. *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist.* Chicago, Illinois: Liberator Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality.* Cambridge, England/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Johanningsmeier, Edward P. 1998. *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Kanet, Roger E. 1973. "The Comintern and the 'Negro Question': Communist Policy in the U.S. and Africa." *Survey* (London), 19:5 (Autumn), 86–122.
- Karakras, Ampam. 2001. "Indigenous Sovereignty: An Ecuadorian Perspective." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 25:2 (Summer), 60–62.
- KHA. Klehr, Harvey, John Earl Haynes, and K. M Anderson. 1998. *The Soviet World of American Communism.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- KHF. Klehr, Harvey, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov. 1995. *The Secret World of American Communism.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Knight, Alan. 1990. "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910–1940." Pp. 71–113 in Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940.* Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- LeGrand, Catherine. 1986. *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850–1936.* Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.

- Leibner, Gerardo. 1999. *El mito del socialismo indígena en Mariátegui*. Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.
- Lenin, V. I. 1970. *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions: Three Articles*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.
- Liss, Sheldon B. 1984. *Marxist Thought in Latin America*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Löwy, Michael. 1998. "Marxism and Romanticism in the Work of José Carlos Mariátegui." *Latin American Perspectives*, 25:4 (101) (July), 76–88.
- . 1992. *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present: An Anthology*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Mariátegui, José Carlos. 1928. "Aniversario y Balance." *Amauta*, 3:17 (September), 3.
- . 1929a. "El proceso del gamonalismo." *Amauta*, 25 (July–August), 69–80.
- . 1929b. "The New Peru." *The Nation*, 128:3315 (January), 78–79.
- . 1971 (1928). *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- . 1990. *Ideología y política*. Lima, Peru: Biblioteca Amauta.
- . 1994. *Mariátegui total*. Lima, Peru: Empresa Editora Amauta.
- . 1996. *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism: Selected Essays of José Carlos Mariátegui*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press.
- Martínez de la Torre, Ricardo. 1947–1949. *Apuntes para una interpretación marxista de la historia social del Perú*. Lima, Peru: Empresa Editora Peruana.
- McClellan, Woodford. 1993. "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925–43." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26:2 (May), 371–90.
- MPR. Miller, James A., Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft. 2001. "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys." *American Historical Review*, 106:2 (April), 387–430.
- Mothes, Jürgen. 1992. "'Luis' gegen Mariátegui? Zur Rolle von Jules Humbert-Droz bei der Entwicklung der Lateinamerikapolitik der Kommunistischen Internationale." Pp. 139–67 in *Centenaire Jules Humbert-Droz: Actes*. Fondation Jules Humbert-Droz. Suisse: La Chaux de Fonds.
- . 1996. "José Carlos Mariátegui und die Komintern: Dokumentation aus dem KI-Archiv Moskau." *The International Newsletter of Historical Studies on Comintern, Communism, and Stalinism*, 3:7–8, 83–100.
- Padmore, George. 1971. *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.
- Penner, Norman. 1977. *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis*. Scarborough, Ontario, Canada: Prentice-Hall of Canada.
- SSAIC. Secretariado Sudamericano de la Internacional Comunista. 1926–1928. *La Correspondencia Sudamericana*.
- . Secretariado Sudamericano de la Internacional Comunista. 1929. *El movimiento revolucionario latinoamericano: Versiones de la primera conferencia comunista latinoamericana, junio de 1929*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Revista La Correspondencia Sudamericana.
- Selverston-Scher, Melina. 2001. *Ethnopolitics in Ecuador: Indigenous Rights and the Strengthening of Democracy*. Coral Gables, Florida/Boulder, Colorado: North-

- South Center Press at the University of Miami. Distributed by Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Singer, Wendy. 1998. "Peasants and the Peoples of the East: Indians and the Rhetoric of the Comintern." Pp. 271–84 in Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe, eds., *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919–43*. Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press/St. Martin's Press.
- Skinner, Geraldine. 1979–1980. "José Carlos Mariátegui and the Emergence of the Peruvian Socialist Movement." *Science & Society*, 43:4 (Winter), 447–71.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1998. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Solomon, Mark I. 1998. *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–36*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.
- Stalin, Joseph. 1942. *Marxism and the National Question: Selected Writings and Speeches*. New York: International Publishers.
- Stein, William W. 1995. "José Carlos Mariátegui y el 'complot comunista' de 1927." *Anuario Mariateguiano*, 7:7, 113–34.
- Storch, Randi. 2000. "Moscow's Archives and the New History of the Communist Party of the United States." *Perspectives*, 38:7 (October), 44–50.
- Trotsky, Leon. 1978. *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism & Self-Determination*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Ulianova, Olga. 2003. "El levantamiento campesino de Lonquimay y la Internacional Comunista." *Estudios Públicos* [Chile], 89 (Verano), 173–233.
- Vanden, Harry E. 1986. *National Marxism in Latin America: José Carlos Mariátegui's Thought and Politics*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Wade, Peter. 1997. *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*. London/Chicago, Illinois: Pluto Press.
- Weinberg, Robert. 1998. *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland — An Illustrated History, 1928–1996*. Judah L. Magnes Museum/Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Weiner, Michael. 1997. "Comintern in East Asia, 1919–39." Pp. 158–90 in Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, eds., *The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Zumoff, Jacob Andrew. 2003. "The American Communist Party and the Communist International, 1919–1929." PhD Dissertation, University of London.