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Teachers Backed By Latin Students

By R. S. COCHRANE

PEREIRA, Colombia (CNS) — The popularity of a group of Peace Corps teachers at the Technological University of Pereira has frustrated a "Yankee Go Home" student group with Cuban-trained leaders.

Sources here say that it is the first occasion in recent times, to their knowledge, that student opposition to anti-U.S. agitation has crystalized into a majority movement on the campus of a Latin American public university.

The agitators demanded that the Peace Corps teachers be fired and occupied the buildings of the Mechnical Engineering School for five days. When the rest of the students ignored a strike call they meekly abandoned their sit-in.

The nine American teachers attached to the university are so well thought of on the 1,-300-student campus that even the anti-U.S. group declared that they were doing a "great job."

An anti-American spokesman said that the agitators had no quarrel with the teachers as individuals but with the corps as an agency of the U.S. Government.

In discussion with the university authorities, the anti-U.S. group insisted that the Peace Corps, as a government agency, was a political issue.

The group further contended that the Peace Corps was in Colombia gathering information for imperialistic purposes — cultural and economic imperialism.

The group added:

"They are doing an evaluation of our (Colombian) personality, of the way we think. This evaluation will be used so that the U.S. Army, when it comes here, will know what kind of people we are. We will thus be easier for them to control."

According to one university official, this viewpoint is held firmly and sincerely "by about 10 guys who are emotionally involved, but ignorant of what is going on."

The "about 10 guys" who hold such ideas each heads the equivalent of a cell, to the point where the anti-U.S. group numbers a solid 100 or so, with perhaps twice as many who can be talked into going along.

The actively pro-Peace Corps student group numbers maybe 100, but many more went along with this group's contention that the anti-U.S. squad's actions were harming the university.

University authorities carefully kept the dispute in terms of how authority was to be exercised, rather than let it polarize into sides for or against the Peace Corps in particular and the United States in general.

As one university official put it:

"We are practical. We will use anyone we can, so long as they can teach us something."

A Russian physics teacher will join the staff as soon as he can get a visa problem unscrambled.

In addition to the Peace Corps volunteers, there are or have recently been other American teachers and other foreign teachers are from Britain, India, Belgium, Spain, Italy and West Germany.

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