

# DOÑA CONSUELO

SPEAKS...



POETRY

CHILDREN

COMMUNISM

WOMEN

REVOLUTION

MARXISM-LENINISM

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**DOÑA CONSUELO  
SPEAKS ...**

# MESSAGE TO DOÑA CONSUELO

*This message, written by the 11 Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, was read at the Rededication Ceremony for the Centro Infantil Consuelo Lee de Corretjer, which is part of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, 1671 N. Claremont, on July 26, 1981.*

Dear Doña Consuelo,

As always, we send all our revolutionary love and a strong embrace. You cannot imagine the happiness we felt upon learning that you will again visit Chicago. We are all anxious to spend a few hours with you and have you at our side.

Today the Childcare Center is rededicated in your name. For us there is no other person more dignified for this act. The dedication and importance that you have given to the development of the children is reflected in your poetry and in your life. Our children are the future of the fatherland, their sensitivity, and honesty, have to be directed towards a conception of truth about themselves, their culture and the society that surrounds them.

Many women in prison have asked me if our children study to become revolutionaries, implying that they are submitted to a rigid politico-military discipline. I answer only that our schools teach the children revolutionary love and who the true enemy is. The future of our children cannot be predicted,



but we can establish in them a revolutionary conscience. A love for our country, and an eternal pride of being Puerto Rican.

Doña Consuelo, mother, teacher, symbol emeritus of the revolutionary Puerto Rican woman, you are always in our thoughts. Together we will see the fruit of our sacrifices, together we will march to create a new society for our dear homeland, Puerto Rico.

Dylcia Pagán-Morales

For the 11 Puerto Rican Prisoners of War

LONG LIVE THE CHILDREN!

LONG LIVE THE PUERTO RICAN REVOLUTION!

## INTERVIEW WITH DOÑA CONSUELO

A dense foliage hides the entrance to the white terrace. Four cane chairs and two cats are the only indications that the house is inhabited. After a few seconds the main door is opened. The erect figure of Don Juan Antonio Corretjer appears. At his side the small silhouette of his compañera Doña Consuelo, who steps forward. She is beautifully dressed in blue, a blue which goes with her serene look.

Following brief greetings Don Juan Antonio prudently retires inside the house.

Doña Consuelo remains. She gestures towards the chair while her clear but firm voice warns me, "only 15 minutes". A dialogue immediately begins which lasts for 2 hours and covers details of her life, her poetry and subjects as controversial as politics.

Consuelo Isabel Lee Tapia, granddaughter of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera was born March 29, 1904 at number 3 Hipodromo Street, Santurce. Her parents, Alberto E. Lee and Catalina Tapia Diaz made up a family of ten, of which Consuelo was the seventh. Consuelo Isabel grew up in the heart of a comfortable home. Nevertheless, she preferred a life of deprivations and sacrifices for her country, together with her "indispensable husband" Juan Antonio Corretjer, to whom she dedicated her book "With One Shoulder Less" and of whom she says "Juan is the masculine part who makes up together with me, this loving alliance of two opposites".

The telephone rings and Dona Consuelo calls to her husband "I'll answer for you". Thus the interview continued, continuously interrupted by telephone calls.

"I had my ideals before knowing Juan. My family was on the other side, but they had motivated me to think since I was a child... it is very important to raise a child in this way... teach him/her to think, even if he/she later thinks differently than his parents... I always told my father what I thought... she added with a smile.

She confessed that she owes a great deal to books, "because reading helped me to acquire consciousness, especially Anti-Duhring by Engels". This book details the influence of Hegelian Dialectics in the establishment of Scientific Socialism.

Doña Consuelo began her studies when she was four years old. She attended several schools: Blanche Kellogg, Labra School, Saint John, graduating from the Puerto Rican School for Girls. Her parents cherished the idea of sending her to Europe to study. They would have done it, if it hadn't been for the First World War.

"At this time, they had sunk the ship Carolina and it was dangerous to take long trips".

So she continued her studies with private teachers, in arts, needlework, painting and music:

"I played the piano well, and they wanted me to be a concert pianist" Dona Consuelo told us.

Before her 15th birthday, her parents moved to the U.S. and later she entered Dwight College, where

she studied for four years.

Later, in 1936 two historical events took place which left a deep mark on Consuelo Isabel: the war in Spain and the imprisonment of the Puerto Rican Nationalists. From this moment she began to work for Independence and Socialism for Puerto Rico and joined the Puerto Rican Communist Party. In time, she became a professional photographer with studios in Baltimore and New York. Then she met Corretjer...

"It was like a novel. It happened a little after he left Federal Prison in Atlanta. Due to the Civil War in Spain, I was sent as a delegate, by my party, to a meeting of several organizations. Juan was sent as a representative of the Nationalist Party. I didn't know him personally, but had heard a lot about him, and he had heard a lot about me, so that when I arrived and was introduced to him, he stood up and said, very naturally, 'Hello, Consuelo' and I said 'Hello Juan' and there went the arrow..."

"Later we got married at City Hall in New York. Juan tells me that our wedding day was very long, because our happiness began then and continues to this day.

The news of our wedding came as a great surprise to everyone in Puerto Rico, especially my family... but they love my Juan very much, or better, loved, because I am the only one left of my family".

Doña Consuelo, along with her husband, went to prison in 1969 together with the leadership of the Socialist League, on charges of conspiring against the go-



vernment of the U.S.

When they sent me to prison in Vega Alta, Juan tried to prepare me mentally, saying, "Don't be alarmed if they call you a criminal".

"They presented eight charges against me, but I was only sentenced for one. I was accused of Illegal Possession of Arms and of having filed off the serial number". She adds, amused, "But this isn't true, because that sets my teeth on edge. In fact, I can't peel anything with a knife. I use wooden utensils in the kitchen, if not, it sets my teeth on edge". And she makes a gesture of repulsion, to be more convincing.

About her experiences in prison she relates: "They sent me to Maximun Security in order to keep me isolated from the rest of the prisoners. But they treated me nicely. They called me "grandmother", which I liked because it meant they respected me. When I arrived, I don't know how they found out about my arrival, they gave me a smock, soap, and a belt which said, "Welcome Conzuelo". Doña Consuelo smiled as she emphasized the pronunciation of the Z.

She confessed to us that everything was not rosy, but she always kept up her confidence.

"Before Juan and I were imprisoned, we made an agreement: we mailed each other numbered letters. The first eight never reached me, but I took it easy and I didn't let that bother me. I said to myself: 'Either they carry me out dead or I will leave a free woman', and I left free".

When asked who was her favorite poet, the ques-

tion was barely out when she answered with a charming gesture: "My Juan!", then she rectifies herself, "although I enjoy poets of all languages: spanish, french, english...".

An interesting facet of her life is poetry. Her book, "With One Shoulder Less" was given this title by a poem which appears at the end and talks about the end of her days:

...for the happiness of everyone,  
who now in my absence  
will have to go on carrying their load  
with one shoulder less.

This book covers almost all the stages of her life. About her verses she told us: "What I want to say is that what interests me more than anything is to live, but as a woman, humanly; and that includes confronting as I should all the phenomena that corresponding to being a woman, which is glorious, the greatest of all, and comparable only to a man's being a man".

Optimistically she spoke to us about death: I will die when I want to. When I feel that I no longer want to live, my heart will stop itself just like you and all the rest. A person dies when they no longer feel a desire to live..." Her philosophy of life is summed up in her brief poem "Claws":

Death throws out its claws.  
But it knows well that it has to wait,  
Until I say now!  
When I finish living.

Doña Consuelo Lee has been a woman of many

facets. In 1943 "Pueblos Hispanos" began, a political weekly published in New York and directed by Juan Antonio Corretjer. Consuelo Lee was administrator of this weekly during the years it was published.

Another important moment in the life of Doña Consuelo was the time she spent teaching illiterate people.

"When we arrived in Guaynabo I was a teacher in the Betances School, which founded the People's Union for illiterates". Doña Consuelo told us that the People's Union was an independentista organization which had disappeared by the 50's. "In the school we had 95 students of all ages and conditions. From that was born the Patriotic Alphabet in 1949". It begins like this:

A is for Agueybana, the honorable indian who found Ponce, the Governor.

B is for Betances, noble and wise father, his voice fills us with ardent patriotism.

C is for Cofresi, the sea-faring patriot, cruelly hung by the coward and assassin.....

Doña Consuelo is very accessible. She is not afraid to give her opinion on a theme as controversial as abortion:

"It is the worst experience a woman can go through. I will not allow a man to come to me with his opinion of abortion. Only the woman who experiences it can have an opinion on abortion. If we lived in a just society without such necessities then I would condemn abortion. But in this society in which we live there is

a great deal of poverty and injustice. Many times poor families have to practice abortion out of necessity", soberly said Doña Consuelo, the same Consuelo who wrote the following verses dedicated to her daughter Nene which are a song to motherhood:

They call this motherhood

But it is something much greater.

It is all a preparation for the enormous moment when life bursts out

(As if it were the universe about to give birth to a nova in the skies)

and when it bursts forth it exercises its own vital law...

To exchange views with a human being like Consuelo Lee Tapia de Corretjer is an experience for which 15 minutes, or even two hours are not enough. Doña Consuelo leaves the doors open for other encounters.



# TALKING WITH COMRADES

Not all marxists are necessarily communists.

But every communist is of necessity a marxist.

A marxist is one who accepts the philosophical and economic theory that Marx and Engels synthesized so brilliantly in the Communist Manifesto.

This theory and its presentation illuminate every person with a feeling of justice, however primitive it may be.

Since its introduction to the world people have wanted to rob it of truth and reduce it to an economist theory concerning the economic development of society. For a long time they have tried to deny its great contribution to philosophy, which examines all the facets of life in each stage of their development. That is, given certain circumstances human development took certain forms and history proves it.

But this does not mean that the forms are identical in every human group that lives them. They will have as many varieties as life is able to produce, and that process is infinite.

Everyone who is exposed to historical materialism and the materialist dialectic (like one who is exposed to music, to name only one of the arts) receives it with his individual mind and accepts it with his individual emotional apparatus. But it is always a mind and an emotional apparatus and this always occurs at a moment and a series of circumstances which can not happen except in each specific individual.

Now this does not mean that what changes is the content. What changes is not the truth, but rather the one who receives it and at which moment in his development - not only his own individual development but also that of the society in which he is developing at a given moment.

I believe that the basic achievement of the marxist theory is that it discovered that the development of life in all its forms - not just on this planet but actually in the whole universe - depends on a great number of factors which should coincide exactly at a given moment produced by their own chemistry at a given time and moved by the necessity inherent in their development.

This is based on a law of nature contained in the development of everything that exists, from a leaf to the entire universe.

Development is infinite and it is constant change. And as a natural law, either we take this into account or we suffer the consequences. I repeat, what changes is its form, but its essence - which is life - does not change; it only harmoniously obeys the necessity inherent to it.

To understand these things only requires a mind of average intelligence, which every human being has. I say average because the possibilities of our mental development are in diapers. Another requirement is the extent to which our desire to do so has developed through the circumstances in which our development takes place.



We can lose all the capacities we are born with. I don't mention the exceptions which we consider congeniuses or those we consider abnormal.

To sum up and take in the sails, a marxist is one who accepts the materialist philosophical theory that Marx and Engels brilliantly synthesized in the Communist Manifesto.

But having done this one has to undergo another more important process to give life to the consciousness he receives and to be capable of translating it into action. In essence, Marxism is a guide to action, not a dogma.

That is why I say that not everyone who declares himself a marxist is necessarily a communist. But every communist is necessarily a marxist.

A communist is one who transforms his knowledge of marxism and within himself begins to effect a change that moves him to action.

The first change that begins to occur is the awareness that he has a consciousness, that one is a thinking being and can develop oneself to live his life fully, and can leave behind or eliminate the things that unconsciousness makes him do or think.

The development of one's own mind, the evaluation of one's life and its meaning have to carry one to action.

Everything begins to have meaning: what we say, what we do and the whys that circumstances do not let us develop begin to take an importance. This process is when the individual changes his enormous I

which circumstances have developed as vital to survive among his fellow beings, and he begins to develop himself to live among his fellow beings. And a great many things come to light - ideas, truths which remain eternal but lie covered by the lie of survival vis a vis life itself.

For example, the question Cain asked when they asked him about his brother Abel, as to whether he was his brother's keeper. We do not know if this really happened or not but we do know that long ago this idea was placed as the cornerstone to construct the philosophy of egoism: "live and let live", in place of the human philosophy: "live and help others to live".

This last concept is fundamental for a human life that bases itself in cooperation and responsibility, which is in essence love.

Love for our neighbor is what makes us human; it is first felt in our animal state, but only when it is developed fully and is converted to an acceptance of the fact that our own well-being cannot be separated from that of others does the humanization of the human being begin.

From there develop all the positive ideas we need, which are vital for our survival. These we call virtues. It should be said in passing that these, like all natural laws, can convert themselves to their opposites. We could spend a whole day demonstrating this, but for now let us continue with the use of these virtues for human development.

What are some of these virtues? Faith, considera-

tion, honesty, justice and many more. All are born of love for our neighbor because this is a necessity of life.

It has been translated into every religion and each one has taken away its humanizing essence. Because they always give an egoistic reason. Faith was born out of love for our neighbor and we divided it into good and bad; consideration was born out of love for our neighbor and we corrupted it into the Golden Rule: "don't do to your neighbor anything you don't want him to do to you". These are enough to illustrate.

But as I said, this can be illustrated easily and exhaustively, as the people say who come out exhausted when they have to think.

Now let us take in the sails again. I was born and raised on a island and maritime terms are an important part of my formation.

A communist first has to begin in this society to undo everything that contributes to maintaining us in chains; which we recognize through an acceptance of Marxism as the cause of all the evils we endure; which is the source of all human degradation and which dehumanizes us, no matter how it is covered up.

Therefore the first thing is to try to live in this society without contributing to its prolongation. We want to change it, replace it with another. The first law we have to obey is to change ourselves. This is not easy even to say. But once convinced of its necessity a communist accepts it. It has to be supported by the

human virtues. That is, where hypocrisy is being cultivated, to sustain truth and honesty. Replace diplomacy with the tact and consideration that diplomacy has robbed of life. Change I into We.

To help others to live is far from intruding in the life of another. It is accepting responsibility.

A communist can not be egoistic. To the extent that he goes on conquering egoism and translating self-respect into love for his comrades and he converts himself into a generous, brave, honorable, trustworthy and loyal person, he will be able to change the society in which all of these are changed into their opposites and he will return humanity to a society where these human virtues can develop the way they once did and were able to humanize us. This is the dream of every good person. The forces that want to destroy us are a minority. Illness is held back by health, and health is the signal that we humans are in harmony with nature, of which we are a very beautiful and intelligent product.



# TEACHING THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

The Communist Manifesto is the first and the most important document of the international workers movement. It was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and published for the first time in 1848. One hundred and twenty years have passed, and its importance as a document "at once theoretical and practical", as its authors described it, continues to be of the same magnitude. No Marxist-Leninist can ignore it; he knew it by heart. Undoubtedly Lenin, in learning it by heart, had grasped the importance of this document. If Lenin believed it was indispensable to memorize it in this way, how urgent it must be for us, just millions of our great army of workers, to have to study it.

We understand that every one of us must not only study it, learn it well we believe more so that we must know how to teach it. Over many years, I have tried to assimilate its lessons, and also during many of them, to pass on to others, with my humble capacities, its immense lessons.

For very current reasons, the confusion over what is marxism is spreading on all sides. Numerous organizations and persons call themselves marxists, and new texts appear continuously. Now it is even more important that the Communist Manifesto be studied.

This essay proposes to serve as a kind of educational guide for its study.

## MARXIST LANGUAGE

Marxism, like all science, has its own language. That is to say, it calls certain things by names which that science itself has given to these things. The Manifesto, although it tries to be accessible to the people, uses these particular words. At the same time, the Manifesto contains many historical references. We found then that to teach it to workers, whom the bourgeois dictatorship has condemned to a very low level of instruction, it is necessary, we would say indispensable, to first teach those who are going to study it, the REAL significance that Marx and Engels gave to these words. Also, on account of the numerous historical references made by them in the Manifesto, explaining them briefly gives the opportunity to broaden the general knowledge of the students and makes learning more pleasant.

I remember that many times in my experiences as a piano teacher, I won the attention of a student who did not apply himself by speaking to him of the patriotic sentiments of the music of Chopin. This has also been my experience in the teaching of the Manifesto, when already twenty and more years ago, I explained to the peasants of Ciales and Jayuya the unforgettable words that begin the Manifesto - "A spectre is haunting Europe..." or I explained to them who personages like Metternich, Guizot and the Czar were and why they were mentioned, or about (this is a word that always must be explained to the workers) the German policemen.

Even more important is the explanation of the



marxist significance of simple words which in their everyday use receive a different meaning, or are deliberately used to create confusion among the workers. We cite as an example the word, so important in marxism, the word "CLASS". What is understood by "CLASS"? Everyday we hear ourselves speaking of a "chauffeur class". We marxists know there's no such thing as a "chauffeur class". But the workers generally do believe there is one. To learn the abc's of Marxism its necessary to know the difference between a class and a sector of a class. It is indispensable to know what a class is. When we explain what a class is, Marxism is being taught.

The Manifesto is written with simplicity. But it is not an alphabet primer or a book of first readings for a seven year old. Many of the words used by Marx and Engels are not understood by the workers. For example, on the first page of the Manifesto this phrase is read: "the reproachful epithet". Only a few weeks ago two university students asked during an open session in our offices in Santurce the meaning of the word "epithet".

### THE IDEAS OF THE MANIFESTO

To simplify and shorten a course on the Manifesto, it is convenient to pull out the principal ideas that Marx and Engels present in this great document.

What are these ideas?

The Manifesto begins with an affirmation that is the key to all the historical understanding of Marxists—"The history of all society up to our own time is the

history of class struggle".

The first idea expressed in the Manifesto is therefore the concept of class struggle. Here it will be necessary to explain what class struggle is. Social classes are identified by the relationship of the individuals who compose them to the means of production. If an individual lives by profit, speculation or rent, he is a capitalist, a bourgeois; and one who lives from a wage, is a worker, a laborer, a proletarian.

Among both classes there is established from the beginning a struggle; a workers struggle for better pay, shorter work day, better conditions of life and work; and in this struggle the workers acquire class consciousness; and the struggle which begins with simple and immediate objectives then converts itself into a political struggle to change the whole social system that is based on the exploitation of the workers by the bourgeoisie.

II. The Manifesto says the following: "Political power, speaking properly, is the organized violence of one class for the oppression of another". Certainly then political power, that is to say the State, is always a power, a state, of a class, and responds to the interests of one class against another. Capitalist power, is against the workers, the more so because it is seen as democratic and maintains itself through general election, in which most of those who vote are workers.

In the Manifesto, Marx and Engels add:

"If in the struggle against the bourgeoisie the proletariat constitutes itself unflinching as a class, if



through revolution it converts itself into the dominant class, suppresses by force the old relations of production, it suppresses at the same time as these relations of production, the condition for the existence of class antagonism and classes in general, and therefore its own domination as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, there comes forward an association which the free development of each one will be the condition for the free development of all”.

In this paragraph, two fundamental ideas of Marxism are contained:

1.- The revolutionary seizure of power.

There is no way to dream that the bourgeoisie, masters of all, will peacefully cede their privileges (not rights, privileges) as the dominant class. It will be necessary to apply their own medicine, expropriation in favor of those many more who are the base of a true democracy; and for that it is necessary to organize a party of the working class that will lead the revolution and bring the workers to power.

2.- The dictatorship of the proletariat.

Due to confusion about the word dictatorship, the true significance of this phrase must be explained very clearly to the workers.

The program of this dictatorship as its presented in the Manifesto is the following:

1) Expropriation of real property and application of land rent to the costs of the State.

2) Strongly progressive taxation.

3) Abolition of inheritance.

4) Confiscation of the property of all emigres and traitors.

5) Centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6) Centralization in the hands of the state of the means of transportation.

7) Multiplication of the manufacturing firms belonging to the state, and of the instruments of production, the plowing of uncultivated land and improvement of the land according to a general plan.

8) Obligation of everyone to work; organization of industrial armies, particularly for agriculture.

9) Combination of agriculture and industry measures aimed to gradually make the differences between the city and the country disappear.

10) Free and public education for all children, abolition of child labor in the factories as it is practiced today; a regimen of education combined with material production, etc., etc.

III. It remains to be said that the revolutionary seizure of power, inevitable consequence of class struggle, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, demand for their realization the organization of a political party of the working class that leads the revolution. In the Manifesto it is put forward that this party must be an international party, a party of the workers of all countries, “an international alliance of the working class for the common struggle against the ruling class and

their governments”.

IV. We must remember that the clear definition between marxist tactics and strategy was not made until Lenin rescued the strategic and tactical propositions of Marx and Engels from the captivity to which they had been subjected by the opportunists of the Second International. In the Manifesto this fundamental strategic proposition of marxism is made:

“The communists fight to win the immediate objectives and interests of the working class, but at the same time, they also defend, within the current movement, the future of that movement”.

In the correct interpretation of this principle lies the difference between being an opportunist, a reformist, or a revolutionary; between retarding or advancing the revolutionary movement. The key will always be in conceiving of history as a movement that leads towards the future, always following that main current of history that goes toward the future, being guided always by the light that leads forward - Marxism-Leninism.

In our road towards independence and socialism, that is to say, towards “Socialism, which is independence for the workers”, the importance of the study of the Communist Manifesto cannot be exaggerated.

To conclude, let’s live with great public pride that affirmation of the Manifesto:

“The communists consider it an indignity to hide their ideas and propositions”.

Let us live with the dignity demanded of us by

our teachers, the authors of the Communist Manifesto. This must be the first lesson learned in it and the first lesson to teach.



## TACT AND DIPLOMACY

By Consuelo Lee de Corretjer

Tact is a virtue.

Diplomacy, a vice.

Tact is born of the truth,

Diplomacy, of deceit.

Tact is inherent in human goodness.

Diplomacy is the perversion of that goodness.

Tact is the desire to do good, considering

the feelings, not to wound

but to give comfort without lies.

Diplomacy is the desire to deceive to win egotistical

advantages, without considering

others' feelings.

When tact grows naturally it converts those  
who practice it into one who has improved himself  
to the maximum.

Diplomacy cannot stop glimpsing its ugly face  
of egotistical duplicity.

The motto of tact is Live and Help to Live.

The motto of diplomacy is Live and Let Live.

(Irresponsibility)