

sponsibility for adding at the back of the magazine, after 130 pages of Latin American material, critiques of Grotowski and Jones—just as in TDR's film issue (T33), we published the text of Viet Rock as a supplement. As for "advising, from a library, how to make revolution," my Comment said nothing about forms of political action—but Mr. Diaz, a Chilean, wrote from his home in Franco's Spain, while Allende fought for and won power.—E.M.

#### THE EDITOR:

You and Mr. Richard Schechner have done a great wrong to the Latin American theatre with your preface and his interview in T46. We, in Latin America, are rather used to fighting against U.S. envoys who openly declare themselves imperialists; however, it is much more difficult to fight against people like you both who present yourselves as friends trying to help us take our first steps in theatre arts—but oh, what a pity!—we are only poor natives from south of the Rio Grande, so why waste an issue of TDR on such a poor subject. I am sure it would do you a great deal of good if you could understand that you possess the same kind of imperialistic thinking that is sometimes denied in your magazine. You think that everything in art is yours. If we use a stage, a garage, a truck, you think we are imitating you; we should try to find another place to perform. You don't understand that in our Latin America we developed many new techniques, devices, and forms long before you did it here. The only problem is that you have in your hands all the international information media: UPI, AP, ANSA, FP, none of which is Brazilian. If a stupid, vulgar thing like *Che!* is presented here, immediately all the international news agencies spread the news all over Latin America saying that certain actors and actresses were arrested on grounds of immorality. And we know that they were simply fucking onstage. Nothing so revolutionary; as you see, we also know those techniques very well. In fact, it seems that we know them so well, that we do so much fucking in our countries, that your government found it necessary to send Mr. MacNamara (whom we also know by his other name; Uncle Scrooge MacDuck) to our countries to distribute free pills.

It is true that Mr. Schechner did not see theatre in Brazil. He himself declares so in his interview. That is his problem; but it is our problem not to allow him to say that there is no theatre in Latin America, for the simple reason that he did not want to see it. He did not even want to hear about it. I remember very well a lecture he delivered at the Aliança Francesa in São Paulo. He told us about his experiences with "guerrilla theatre" that he had done in Grand Central Station and other places in New York. He was very happy and excited because we showed a great deal of interest in his experiences. He thought he was revolutionizing the Brazilian theatre just by giving us the idea of doing theatre in the streets. He was so excited that he didn't even notice that many actors and directors who were there listening to him had been engaged since 1956 in all kinds of theatre in the streets: theatre during political meetings, theatre as political meetings, theatre for peasants in the open air, theatre in factories, etc. Even though we told him our experiences, he preferred to ignore them so that he could feel better as an innovator.

No one has the right to do what Mr. Schechner did. No South American would have the right to come to New York, see just a few plays, like *Dionysus in 69*, for instance (which had its impact in U.S. theatre, but would have little importance in Brazil), and go back to his country saying that there is no theatre in the U.S.

Another imperialistic point of view supported by Mr. Schechner is that we have to be folkloric in order to be authentic. We have to do death rites and *macumba* in order to be Brazilian. Why doesn't he apply that same reasoning to himself? Why doesn't he put on plays about Apache death rites? Simply because he himself is utilizing an imperialistic way of thinking: we have to give you minerals and you give us machines; we give you coffee, lettuce, and tomatoes and you give us refrigerators and airplanes; we give you oil wells and you give us back gasoline. Of course, you establish the prices. We give you folkloric death rites and you give us "international good theatre, made in U.S.A." Of course, you establish the aesthetic standards.

Mr. Schechner insists on the fact that we try to imitate American theatre just because he

## LETTERS

saw *Viet Rock* being rehearsed in Buenos Aires. Does the American theatre imitate England when you import not only scripts, but also actors and sometimes the whole show? It is better to stage *Viet Rock* in Buenos Aires than Anouilh in New York. But one thing we have to say in favor of Mr. Schechner: he admits he may be dead wrong about all he says. And in fact he is. Sometimes he is both wrong and naive. He heard about the theatre people in São Paulo going to protest to the State Governor against a fascist group which had ransacked a theatre for doing a play they did not like. He was so naive he believed we went there to complain. We knew very well that the Governor supported that fascist group and we went there to denounce him to public opinion. Public opinion responded by crowding the theatres, offering volunteers to guard the artists and the theatres, and demonstrating in support of us.

During the time Mr. Schechner was in Brazil, the *São Paulo Fair of Opinion*, which I directed, was bombed twice, *Roda viva* [Whirlpool] had its sets completely destroyed and its cast beaten up, Norma Bengell was kidnapped before a show—and Mr. Schechner did not see any signs of theatre.

I would like you to publish this letter. I think I have the right to ask that. But please, do not edit it. Editing, after all, is not the issue.

Augusto Boal  
São Paulo

### IN REPLY:

Mr. Boal's letter is bitter for me to swallow, but I swallow it. It is hard to be called an imperialist—either through design or naiveté. It is hard to have someone you respect say that you did not see what you set out to see—and that in the not seeing you distorted almost entirely the situation you hoped to report on. My visit to Latin America was too swift; and too much of an official visit.

I was not equipped with the languages. The theatre I did see remained very much like the proscenium and naturalist-musical-thesis theatre of Europe and North America. I do

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