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28 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: The Forces of Change in Latin America

Concern over the Soviet presence in Cuba and the Castro-Communist role in Latin America should not obscure the existence of other more immediate threats to Latin American regimes. For without discounting the troubling potential of the Cuban leader and the [] in the hemisphere, the fact is that in most cases where the political status quo is under serious challenge, the threat comes not primarily from Castro-Communist subversive or revolutionary forces, but from revolutionaries of a somewhat different stripe.

1. Allowing for important exceptions to almost every generalization about the area as a whole, it is our view that the really [] revolutionary material in most of Latin America is the urban proletariat, and that the forces most likely to ignite it are nationalistic military or civilian leaders, anxious to alter the present order, impatient with

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gradualism and moderate approaches, and likely to be hostile or indifferent to political freedoms and constitutional procedures. The revolutionary model more likely to prevail is neither Castroism nor constitutional democracy, but something nearer the combination of demagoguery and reformism associated with the earlier Peron.

2. There are, of course, certain important exceptions to the pattern cited above, and the thesis must be shaded in some cases. But even when these cases have been taken into account, there remains a significant pattern of the sort suggested, broadly applicable to Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Peru; and at least incipient in Uruguay and Venezuela.

3. In none of these states do Castro-Communist forces have any realistic prospect of seizing power by force. In many countries there are elements committed to violent revolution, but they are seldom Communist; when they are they appear to be "dissidents" and not subject to Moscow direction. In no country does the top CP leadership appear to see much chance of success for direct revolutionary action in the foreseeable future; nor is it about to go to the hills to conduct guerrilla warfare or risk a showdown with the armed forces. Their essential strategy is to work out a tolerable modus vivendi with the incumbent government, if possible, and in any case to pin their hopes on penetration of incumbent

governments or of radical opposition groups. In short, the Latin American Communist leaders most closely attuned to Moscow's views recognize the local, non-Communist radical elements as the most promising and dynamic agents of future change, and are working to get on their bandwagon. This bandwagon is likely to be driven by young, authoritarian leaders disposed to institute long-overdue reforms in exchange for immediate popular support; inclined to exploit nationalist fervor and Yankophobia; and unsympathetic to the goals of free elections, constitutional procedures, and civilian republics implicit in the philosophy of the Alliance for Progress.

4. The trend poses an obvious dilemma for the US. A too-rigorous adherence to the declared political and constitutional aims of the Alliance for Progress runs the danger that a new generation of Latin American leaders would simply reject the Alliance as out of harmony with modern realities and needs, and in any case inconsistent with their own ideas of quick action through authoritarian means. And the recent record provides scant grounds for optimism about the capacity of civilian, constitutional governments to get the job done in Latin America -- witness Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia.

5. But whether change in Latin America comes under the aegis of younger military leaders or civilian regimes, it is certain in any case to bring strains on traditional relationships

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with the US and the US response will have results not only locally but throughout the rest of the area. The new generation's tolerance for leftist groups and theories will invite infiltration by Communists and other anti-US forces, and denunciation by those aligned with the old order. For the US, there are the related dangers of choice between supporting someone who might turn out to be another Castro; actively opposing a revolutionary radical who in fact may win out, and in the process rendering him even more hostile to the US; or pursuing a wait and see policy, possibly until it is too late to affect the situation either way. Even a US policy of inaction carries positive implications because it tends widely to be interpreted as evidence either that the US approves a revolutionary challenge to an incumbent regime or is powerless to prevent it.

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