

ORG 1: OAS  
PERS: Hewett, Virginia  
POL 2-01 US (Latin America)

**Comment:**



# OAS Meeting Given New Significance

By VIRGINIA PREWETT

The new U.S. determination to "go as far as the Latin Americans will go" to end dictatorship in the New World lends crucial importance to the Organization of American States meeting to start in Brazil on May 20. Action to strengthen hemisphere democracy is on that meeting's agenda.

Between now and the final act of the May meeting, the U.S. will make a serious effort to "get off the dime" over the problem of Latin American dictatorship.

"The dime" is this situation: The U.S. unilaterally cannot end Latin American dictatorship. Treaties and moral commitments restrain us. Yet Latin Americans consistently blame the U.S. for the rise and reign of their tyrants.

### PRACTICAL RESULTS

If Latin American leadership can get the Latin American governments to formulate and agree on effective measures to end dictatorship, the May meeting can bring practical results.

On the U.S. side, there was never a better chance for action. First of all, the deteriorating situations in Africa and Southeast Asia are giving new urgency to the need for the U.S. to mend its Latin American fences.

More important, President Johnson and his right-hand man for Latin America, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann, have largely corrected the great weakness that has hamstrung our effectiveness in Latin America.

Traditionally, our Latin American policy has been kept secondary to European policy. This was partly because the top State Department officer for Latin America is too far down in the State Department hierarchy to control our policy.

Higher officials mainly interested in Europe and Asia crowded him out. President Johnson has patched over this weakness by making Mr. Mann also a Special White House Assistant.

### STRONG POSITION

Mr. Mann's position today is reinforced by the White House tie. With changes in the air for many State Department officials above him, Mr. Mann in fact today has perhaps the firmest position among the upper ranks.

Another important element is the bankruptcy of the policy—long pushed by many State Department career officers—which would throw Latin America into the boiling pot of the cold war and see the battle fought out country by country.

The major objective of this group of professional diplomats has been somehow to make progress on their favorite project: That of bringing the U.S. and Russia closer together in readiness for a future upsurge of Red China's power.

What has been proved is that if the U.S. tries to reduce tension with Russia by letting down our Latin American fences to Russian advances there, there is no way to keep the Red Chinese from thrusting in, too.

So the U.S. appears ready at last to get behind Latin America's great potential for democracy. We shall now discover how far the Latin Americans themselves are ready to go.