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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

IMPACT OF DE GAULLE'S TRIP TO LATIN AMERICA

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
7 October 1964

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Impact of De Gaulle's Trip to Latin
America

1. The Latin American public response to De Gaulle's visit has thus far been friendly enough, but his official contacts have produced no significant results other than the announcement of limited French cultural and technical aid to be provided at some unspecified time in the future. The Latin leaders and peoples have welcomed De Gaulle's visit as an encouragement of their aspirations for increased international stature and "independence," but De Gaulle's emphasis on the "third force" theme apparently has had little impact.

2. De Gaulle had drawn generally large and friendly crowds, although the turnout in Venezuela and Colombia was about half that for President Kennedy in 1961. There and elsewhere the public seemed to be more curious than genuinely enthusiastic. In Argentina, the crowd in Buenos Aires was not sufficiently large to overshadow the noise and disturbance created by Peronists seeking to exploit the visit for their own purposes. The subsequent Cordoba visit was marked by disorder engendered by Peronists who momentarily blocked the passage of the visitors' cars. This led to gunfire by police, causing one death and a number of injuries. The demonstration was directed against Argentine President Illia (whose hand was slightly scratched), rather than De Gaulle, who was distressed, and considered that the effect of his visit has been marred.

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3. De Gaulle's official reception in these countries, although outwardly cordial, has probably been more reserved than he expected. In Colombia, for instance, President Valencia went out of his way to emphasize his close relations with the US, and committed the faux pas of toasting Spain as well as De Gaulle. Perhaps dictatorial President Stroessner in Paraguay, who has trucked in many campesinos to augment the Asuncion crowd today, will make the biggest showing for De Gaulle.

4. The Latin executives' response has probably been conditioned largely by the realization that France has little to offer in economic aid or trade. Perhaps some calculate that the propaganda aspect of the visit could have some effect in stimulating continued US support. President Paz of Bolivia, according to a usually reliable source, said that he expected no French economic help but felt that the De Gaulle visit would cause the US to increase its aid. However, the Latin heads generally would probably not give this much weight and certainly have been careful to acknowledge the importance of their US relations.

5. Several other types of issues have tempered the official response to De Gaulle. In Venezuela President Leoni expressed his concern about French and other European trading with Cuba but got nowhere. He and other chiefs of state have also made strong pleas for wider markets and better terms of trade for their commodities in the European Common Market. De Gaulle made no explicit reference to this subject, although he had given some vague encouragement to Latin aspirations in GATT trade discussions earlier in the year. In Chile press reports suggested that a Chilean objection to upcoming French nuclear tests in the Pacific would be raised, but there is no indication that the matter was discussed. In Brazil official discussions may involve to some extent unresolved issues concerning lobster fishing, commercial debts to France, and the indemnification of French stockholders of nationalized Brazilian enterprises. French press criticism of the Brazilian revolution last April is not expected to affect De Gaulle's reception.

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6. On the whole, De Gaulle's visit appears to have been regarded by most of his hosts as the occasion for conversations as among peers. No great enhancement of France's influence nor De Gaulle's personal grandeur seems likely to accrue. De Gaulle will leave Asuncion for Uruguay on 8 October, and will then visit Brazil beginning on 14 October, returning to Paris on the 16th.

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