

POST-WORLD WAR II POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

SUMMARY

The overwhelming political development in Latin America since World War II has been the attainment of political power by the people. In most of the countries of the area, the old rural oligarchy and their allies in the church and army hierarchy were replaced, at least for a time, by rising labor, industrial, and middle-class urban groups generally backed by young army officers.

A very important recent political development is the antimilitaristic, antidictatorial trend that has been running in Latin America since 1954. In that year, 13 presidents were military; today only 4 remain (Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Guatemala, and El Salvador).

The political spectrum of contemporary Latin America, on balance, displays a moderate picture.

Concerning recent United States-Latin American relations, the harmony of World War II cooperation tended to obscure the deep-seated sociopolitical changes taking place in Latin America, and with the coming of the cold war the achievement of U.S. objectives has become increasingly difficult, principally because the aims of the United States and the Latin American nations have become increasingly incompatible. While the United States insisted that the security of the hemisphere against the Communist threat must be the major consideration in a common foreign policy, Latin Americans were more concerned with their internal socioeconomic problems, and their governments looked to the United States less for leadership against communism than for cooperation in meeting these problems, chiefly in the form of easing their economic burdens.

The principal features of the collective security system are a hemispheric alliance (Rio Treaty of 1947) and the provision by the United States of military aid to Latin America under the Mutual Security Act. Because military emphasis in U.S. policy toward Latin America appears seriously out of line with our political and economic objectives and long-term interests, we recommend a disarmament program for Latin America and abandonment of the use of military programs as a means to win the political support of the Latin American military.

Since World War II, the U.S. Government has shown little concern for the problem of dictatorship in Latin America, aside from paying occasional lip service to the principles of democracy. We believe that Latin Americans should no longer be allowed to feel that the United States, in its determination to resist communism, is willing to sacrifice democracy in the process. Accordingly, we recommend that the United States, both in its aid program and general attitude, make