

III. PROBABLE COURSE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Latin America is an area of very rapid growth. Its population is increasing at a faster rate than that of any other area in the world today (over 2½-percent net gain per year). Already the area contains over 180 million people. By the year 2000, its population is expected to exceed half a billion.

Also, the Latin-American economy is on the rise. Since it has room to develop and expand and untapped resources to exploit, its relative world importance will rise. The economic growth of the area over the next 20 years may well be double the extraordinary development that has occurred during the past 20.

The relative importance of Latin America in world affairs will expand. Its weight in international organizations will grow, and the strategic value of its friendship and cooperation will increase as its material and manpower resources move more and more into the balance in the cold war struggle. The role that Latin America will play in that struggle will be largely determined by the approaches taken to her developing problems by the two major rivals for her international affection.

The overwhelming problem in Latin America today and for the foreseeable future is the social revolution, the revolution of rising popular expectations. This is a problem not only for the Latin Americans themselves, but also for any outside power that hopes to have influence there. The entire area is in the throes of a painful process of social, economic, and political transformation. Only a few countries are yet into the advanced stages of the ordeal. Most of them are just beginning.

The problems are tremendous. Over half the people are undernourished; nearly half are illiterate. The overwhelming majority are propertyless, for both land and natural resources are concentrated in the hands of the few. Over half the working population lives and toils under semifeudal conditions which retard health, welfare, and education.

All the same, those growing numbers who have over the past generation begun to escape their miseries, to resist rural exploitation, to read, and to enjoy the benefits of improved health, are pointing the way to their less fortunate brethren. Emancipation from semifeudal working conditions through economic opportunities in booming cities, an end to political apathy through realization of one's power potential when used as part of a cooperative organization, the taste of a better life at home and the knowledge of living conditions far better still abroad—all these are making irrepressible the force of Latin America's revolution of rising expectations. Demographic pressures and economic development will further accelerate the social revolution.