

Statement by George C. Lodge, prepared for delivery before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 24, 1969, at hearings on U.S. military programs in Latin America.

Although I am not a specialist on U.S. military programs in Latin America, I believe that their effect is now at least partly and perhaps seriously contrary to our national interest. It is wrong, however, to blame the military. The blame belongs to those who define our national interests, fix our objectives, design our policy and construct our programs. For the most part these are highly placed civilians.

It is impossible to separate U.S. military policy in Latin America from the totality of U.S. policy and program, which in general is badly askew.

Allow me to put the case generally first. Profound and irreversible change in the social, political and economic structures of most of Latin America is underway.\* This change appears to be inevitable; its introduction desirable according to many criteria; and the degree of accompanying violence and conflict uncertain. It is of revolutionary proportions involving fundamental reallocation of power, land and wealth; the emergence of new socio-political machinery; the design of new relationships between states within the region and between the region and the world.

The rights and wrongs of this change process are not as relevant to U.S. interests and policy as is its inevitability and the high risk which it carries to peace and survival. In this light, quite apart from the morality of change, it becomes a matter of overriding U.S. interest to understand the change process, to devote considerably more time and effort to the effective design and operation of engines of change, and to realign our actions so that we harmonize with Latin American forces of change instead of clash against them; this all in the hope of making the overall process as orderly and peaceful as possible.

In Latin America, to borrow a phrase used by President Nixon in another context, we have "lost the vision indispensable to great leadership." We have been far too slow in recognizing reality

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\* There are some exceptions: Mexico and Cuba have had their revolutions, attended by years of bloody violence in one case and grave threat to world peace in the other. Venezuela may have shown the way to a new variety of peaceful revolution. Bolivia's case is still uncertain, as is that of Chile

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and in perceiving our vital interests accordingly. As of today, the United States government and to a lesser extent U.S. business is or appears to be deeply committed to the maintenance of the status quo. Our military and economic assistance programs during the 1960's have increased the level and degree of this commitment in spite of the fact that the purposes of the Alliance for Progress were, of course, quite different. This distortion does not seem to have been intentional but rather the unwitting effect of the following six failures:

1. We have failed to realize that changes required for what is generally labelled "economic development" are radical and structural and cannot occur unless there are socio-political institutions (engines of change) in place which can provide the motivation, organization, protection, authority and competence which are essential to break down old structures and build new ones. In Latin America these include rural and urban worker organizations, many different groups affiliated with the radical action element of the Roman Catholic Church, cooperatives, some university activities, and various business enterprises, particularly those engaged in integrated food production, processing and distribution.

2. We have failed to perceive that most Latin American governments have neither the capacity nor the will to introduce the radical - indeed the revolutionary - change which was promised at Punta del Este. We have paid them to promise to do what no government can do: namely, to subvert the power base upon which it rests. In so doing we have corrupted them and ourselves.

3. We have failed to recognize that although we regularly pledge ourselves to support change, we have militarily and economically, in fact, strengthened the obstacles to change, prolonging the status quo and thus frustrating development. Governments of both the United States and Latin America have been able to ignore this fundamental contradiction between words and actions largely because of a higher commitment to "anti-communism", a notion which today has become hollow, vague and misleading, defined differently depending on one's interests.

4. We have failed to acknowledge that in fact today the Communist Party apparatus generally in Latin America is neither a revolutionary force nor a major threat to U.S. interests. Consequently we have failed to appreciate that the ideology of "anti-communism" is no longer either valid or useful. The least significant thing about Castro is that he is a communist. The most radical elements in Brazil today are not the communists but priests and their worker, student followers. The guerrillas in Guatemala are more properly described as revolutionary nationalists than as members of the International Communist Party or as tools of Moscow or Peking. Such groups may, of course, seek and receive aid and comfort from Cuba, the USSR or Red China; and indeed we have it within our power to escalate this relationship beyond its present insignificant levels by continuing our support of the status quo.

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5. We have failed to perceive that the danger to peace in Latin America is not from communism, but from predatory scavengers of the revolutionary process - right or left, foreign or domestic - who seek to use the chaos of change as a means for extension of control and power. The task is to strengthen the change process and protect it from their grasp.

6. We have failed to recognize that governments derive their legitimacy and capability solely from the power and organization upon which they rest. In Latin America this power and organization is often the military, or the oligarchy; it is rarely the majority of the nation. U.S. military and economic assistance to governments, therefore, constitutes intervention by the United States on behalf of the power and the organization of the regime in office. This intervention becomes particularly controversial and perhaps damaging when it adversely affects the formation of political organizations which the regime regards as hostile. Such organizations have in fact included political parties, peasant and worker federations, radical Church groups and revolutionary elements in such countries as Panama, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Brazil. The dangers inherent in such a policy might be clearer if we were to imagine that the Mexican Revolution were going on today. Under our current military assistance program we would be almost certainly deeply involved in that civil struggle, with U.S. Special Forces probably hunting down Zapata who in turn would understandably call on Havana and Moscow for help. Moscow, which at present has no desire to become involved in such activities, could hardly refuse such a plea.

The control of conflict requires the presence in any community - national or international - of an effective police capable of apprehending and confining the bandit and the criminal. But in Latin America banditry and criminality are neither the root nor the principal potential cause of violence; and care must be taken not to confuse such lawlessness with revolution, the right to which is deep in our own political and moral heritage.

The cause of conflict in Latin America is related in large measure to the desire of increasing numbers to achieve rights which we cherish and which are in general accord with our definition of the good community as set out in the Declaration of Independence. In the context of the Latin American environment the achievement of these rights requires reallocation of power and structural shifts which are sufficiently radical to deserve the name of revolution. For these reasons and because the revolution appears inevitable, it follows that the political interests of the U.S. lie in closer cooperation with it. We cannot win a war against the inevitable even though today we are dangerously close to trying.

It thus becomes the interest of the United States to promote the revolution in such a way that the threat of violent conflict, its

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predictable companion, is minimized. The revolution in Latin America requires the full mobilization of those essentially political institutions which I have referred to as engines of change, and without which genuine self-determination is impossible. At the same time the evolution of the structures of the status quo should be eased to the extent possible.

To this end the total thrust of a new foreign assistance policy of the United States should be directed at the purposes set by the Alliance for Progress, but this policy is best achieved by dividing programs into two general categories, those which work within existing structures and those which are designed to introduce basic, structural change. For this purpose AID, both in Washington and Latin America, should be replaced by two principal alternative assistance channels and perhaps several subsidiary ones.

The first channel, which we shall call the New Alliance for Progress, would be a multilateral structure directed by the Inter-American Committee for the Alliance (CIAP) receiving perhaps 70 per cent of U.S. assistance for Latin America and utilizing a broad range of regional agencies. The second, called the American Foundation, would distribute about 25 per cent and would have the purpose of fueling Latin American engines of change. The remainder might be distributed through other routes, such as the overseas investment corporation which has been proposed.\*

Under such a scheme military, police and civil administration training and assistance would be provided regionally under the auspices of the New Alliance. Bilateral military programs would be eliminated except for instances where there was clear evidence of foreign aggression which local military units could not control and where our treaty obligations called for intervention.

One of the most desirable effects of such a new arrangement would be that the United States would be substantially relieved of blame for sustaining any particular regime or element of the status quo. Any effect of this sort would be the result of regional multilateral decision and action. U.S. policy would thus become solidly oriented toward sustaining the institutions of change and not those of the status quo. Even though such an approach would be consistent with the

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\* I have described these proposed changes in more detail in an article in the current issue of Foreign Affairs, "U.S. Aid to Latin America: Funding Radical Change" and in a book to be published soon, Engines of Change: United States Interests and Revolution in Latin America, (Alfred A. Knopf).

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requirements for national self-determination, it would undoubtedly cause protest from some who hold power in Latin America today. They will tend to regard it as a policy of subversion, which in a sense it is. They will speak of intervention in the internal political affairs of sovereign states, which it is. They should be reminded, however, that our present policy also constitutes intervention, only on their behalf. It is time to recognize that almost any foreign assistance or indeed investment in Latin America is bound to be interventionary in one way or another.

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U.S. military doctrine currently appears to be: Latin America threatens to become another Vietnam unless the U.S. helps the armed forces provide a shield against insurgency while the governments build a stable society.\*

This is the argument that I presume underlies current U.S. military aid to Latin America, the assignment by the Department of Defense of U.S. military personnel throughout the hemisphere, and U.S. training of Latin Americans, all of which costs about \$100 million a year. This is all to build and maintain a "shield against insurgency", which presumably will seek and expect insurgents against which to exercise itself.

But who is an "insurgent"? In Guatemala not long ago two U.S. Maryknoll priests armed themselves against the vigilantes of the landowner who were harassing the peasant cooperative which the priests had helped the Indians to organize. It is probably not stretching truth to suggest that in this case we had U.S. trained and equipped soldiers threatening to shoot up U.S. priests. More recently in Northeast Brazil evidence suggests that priests have been harassed if not attacked by the Brazilian military or at least by extreme right wing groups which are supported by some military elements. That these priests, or laymen like them, are called "communists" or "insurgents" does not diminish the danger of such confrontations to U.S. interests. If the Latin American military feels it necessary to engage in these sorts of activities - and there is considerable evidence that it does - it should not be with our help.

Closely related is the question: what are the governments the military speaks of shielding? Few could be described as representative of the majority of the people in their jurisdiction. Their reach, identity and control are extremely limited. There is little political organization through which the majority of the people can make their

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\* See John M. Goshko, Washington Post, February 5, 1968, quoting General Robert W. Porter, U.S. Southern Command.

will felt. In most of rural Latin America the government is hardly a meaningful entity at all. Power emanates from whoever may have it or get it: the owner of a sugar mill, a landowner, the bishop, the army.

The above statement of military doctrine raises a third question: what is the most effective way to cope with insurgency, assuming that by that word we mean foreign aggression? Venezuela is perhaps a relevant example. There seems little doubt that Betancourt defeated Castro's attempts at insurgency in Venezuela in the mid 1960's as much by effective organization of the peasants and industrial workers as by the army. As Victor Alba said of the events: "It was political action that isolated the guerrillas and the terrorists, not the army or the police."

Latin American states need a constabulary to maintain order. They may need a regional force upon which to call in the case of foreign aggression or a foreign-supported activity such as that of Che Guevara in Bolivia. Both of these needs can be filled within the framework of a multilateral regional structure. Additional bilateral U.S. programs, except in extraordinary circumstances, are more likely to threaten our interests than to serve them.

It is argued that the amount of U.S. military assistance to Latin America is small. In a quantitative sense perhaps this is true. In a political, ideological and symbolic sense, however, our military programs are of substantial significance. They represent a particularly tangible form of evidence that when confronted with the contradiction between change and stability we opt for stability, and for a fairly short-run, uncertain oligarchical form of stability at that. And then it does not require much military power to control a country like Panama.