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Despite Fracas Over Tuna Boats

Latin-U. S. Accord Still Seem Viable

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ONCE AGAIN this past week the United States and Ecuador have been at odds over seizure of American tuna boats in Ecuador's 200-mile-wide "territorial waters."

But the fuss merely tended to obscure a deeper and more significant fact: that relations between Uncle Sam and most of Latin America are less strained today than they have been in a very long time.

Apart from Ecuador, it would be hard to find a really serious running quarrel in the Western Hemisphere — always excepting, of course, the normal state of controlled tension between Washington and Havana.

There are long-standing grievances, recently intensified, over artificial barriers to the sale of Latin American goods on the United States market. And there are groups — inside and outside Latin governments — whose favorite political sport will always be walloping "Yankee imperialism." But issues which could produce major explosions have been very largely cased.

The United States and Mexico, long at odds, are on excellent terms today. Peru and the United States have de-fused, if not solved, their once-acute differences.

There is nothing remotely approaching a Dominican Republic crisis in being or on the horizon. Even in cases, such as Haiti, where powerful moral impulses might tempt Washington to intervene, it has carefully abstained.

THE MOST REMARKABLE example of calm where a storm might have been is Chile. Despite the victory of a Marxist-led coalition in last September's election, both Washington and Santiago have displayed an extraordinary degree of restraint.

Chile could very easily have become another Cuba — another center of conflict, tension and frustration for the United States. Washington could have poured money and pressure into an effort to frustrate the results of the election;

the CIA might even have sought to organize a right-wing coup.

But this, at best, could only have precipitated a civil war, and stirred a new wave of extreme anti-Americanism in the Hemisphere. At worst, the effort would have failed, leaving Chile still in the hands of a Marxist but with a poison tooth for the United States — as Cuba's Fidel Castro was left, in the wake of ineffectual attempts to overthrow his regime.

IN POINT OF fact, the United States swallowed its chagrin and quietly worked out a modus vivendi with the new Chilean leaders. Washington volunteered to keep hands strictly off Chile's domestic business, making clear that American concern was focused, as it had a legitimate right to be, on Chilean foreign policy.

This decision borrowed much from the experience with Castro. When the Kennedy Administration had to identify the really critical sources of United States anxiety over Cuba, it settled on two: Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union, and its effort to export revolution in Latin America.

Had Castro been willing to break away from dependence on Moscow, and stop trying to communize the Hemisphere, an accommodation would have been possible — his domestic policies being left to him. Such an accommodation would, in Washington's eyes, still be possible today. The United States would live with a Cuba which was communist, but independent and non-virulent.

The same approach, governing American policy toward Chile, is having much greater success. Where Castro could not or would not go along, Chile seems willing to agree.

SHE HAS, thus far, sought no special ties with the Soviet bloc. Nor has she shown any interest in exporting Marxism.

Chilean foreign policy has been notably cautious. Santiago has recognized Cuba and Red China; but the latter move was something a noncommunist Chilean govern-

ment might well have done, and which non-communist governments of Canada, Italy and Ethiopia, among others, have recently done.

President Salvador Allende is expected to recognize East Germany, North Korea, and North Vietnam as well. But in the case of Germany, a special emissary was sent to Bonn to soften and prepare the blow.

There has been no demonstrative flag-waving oratory from the Presidential Palace about American "aggression" in Vietnam, no tirades against "Yankee exploitation," no precipitate rush to expropriate the \$850 million in American property in Chile (though copper mines, previously taken over in part, may now be completely nationalized under terms the companies find harsh, and certain other, smaller enterprises have been listed for takeover).

ALLENDE HAS given no sign of being, in these respects, anywhere near as extreme as Castro. By his lights, he is making a considerable contribution to a unique experiment in coexistence across ideological lines.

None of this is easy. The modus vivendi could break down at any time.

When Allende's application of socialism at home, which is more radical than his foreign policy, produces economic and social upheaval — as it is sure to do — he may feel he needs a "foreign devil" to blame. American patience with policies which go so deeply against the grain could run out.

But it is a recordable fact that as of today, the U. S.-Chilean experiment in coexistence has not gone sour. On the contrary, it has done remarkably well. It has made news of the best kind: the story of a crisis which did not happen.