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Memorandum From Vernon A. Walters to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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Nota de Archivo: *Washington. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–29, NSC Meeting, Chile, 11/6/70. Secret. Sent for information. The memorandum is typed on White House stationery. At the top of the page, Kissinger wrote, "Attach to P[resident]'s reading for NSC meeting." The President received the memorandum on November 5 along with other preparatory materials for the National Security Council meeting on Chile. He returned the memorandum to Kissinger with a note that reads, "K[issinger]—Read the Walters memo again + see that it is implemented in every respect." (Ibid.)*

Courses in Latin America

We are engaged in a mortal struggle to determine the shape of the future of the world. There is no acceptable alternative to holding Latin America. We simply cannot afford to lose it.

Latin America is a key area in the struggle. Its resources, the social and economic problems of its population, its proximity to the U.S. and its future potential make it a priority target for the enemies of the U.S. We must ensure that it is neither turned against us nor taken over by those who threaten our vital national interests. In my view there are a number of courses which we must adopt if we are to ensure that this continent be denied to those who threaten us and available to us when we need it.

Courses of Action

1. We can support those who believe that reforms alone will vaccinate the area against subversion and hostility towards the United States. We can support unfriendly governments who maintain a democratic facade.

OR

We can support those who believe themselves to be threatened by the same forces which are hostile to us. We can help them to prove that the conquest of underdevelopment does not require large doses of Marxism. We cannot measure other American governments by some sort of U.S. template.

2. We can continue to refuse to sell relatively modern equipment to the countries of Latin America thus driving them into the arms of waiting extra continental suppliers. By measured sales we can easily prevent an arms race, which is in any case more unlikely than in any time in the past. Argentina and Brazil, for example, are closer than at any time since their independence.

OR

We can provide a modicum of modern equipment to friendly governments in order to ensure that they remain tied to us. The procurement of foreign equipment inevitably entails the entry of foreign technicians with their own national interests and ideology. In many cases it is the lack of modern equipment which drives the Latin American military to seek their professional satisfactions outside their chosen profession, that is, in politics. Operating or attempting to operate the same equipment as one's father is neither challenging, inspiring nor satisfying. The idea that modern equipment will be used to overthrow civilian governments is ingenuous and incorrect. This can be done with crossbows.

3. We can tell the South American Armed Forces that their place within their society must be exactly that which the U.S. Armed Forces occupy in our country.

OR

We can recognize that conditions there are different. In many cases both by tradition and constitutionally the Armed Forces have a different role. Often the Constitution gives them the role of guardians of the national institutions. Military coups by leftist military leaders arouse no agitation (Boumediene, N'Gouabi, etc). To many it seems normal and helpful to invite Tito or Ceaucescu, but to invite Medici or Levingston would be anathema.

4. We can take Latin America for granted, pay little attention to our friends there, tell them that the only mission of their armed forces is internal security and feel confident that they have nowhere else to go anyway. We can drive them from a position of warm friendship to the waiting arms of the leftists, whose main priorities are the infiltration of the Church and the military. We can let ideology, not our national interests, determine our policies towards the South American continent.

OR

We can recognize that the South American military do have somewhere else to go. We can give them a sense of participation and consultation as we give our European allies (some of whom are not as reliable as for instance Brazil). We can collaborate with friendly regimes and help them to solve their grave economic and social problems in a non-Marxist framework. If we help, we can influence them. By the end of this century there will be half a billion people in this area, sitting on perhaps the largest untapped sources of raw materials and energy sources. By the end of the century Brazil will have two hundred million people. Today it has a population almost equal to that of France and Britain put together.

5. We can seek to do everything by ourselves, or we can use the more developed countries to help the less developed ones. Argentina and Brazil would in many cases have more acceptability, affinity and a lower profile than we do.

The situation in South America has been deteriorating steadily from our point of view. The coddling of leftists as in Chile has been proven a failure. This situation will continue unless we take positive steps to change it. To do this, I believe we must adopt the following courses of action.

A. Make clear that we have a commitment to help them achieve their aspirations. We will increasingly need their help in the years ahead to face the growing strength of the USSR and Red China. A strong developed Brazil and Argentina could do much to redress the balance.

B. We must give them a sense of recognition and participation. We must give careful treatment to their representatives in the U.S. (Both the Presidents of Argentina and Brazil have been military attachés in the U.S. in recent years.) We must increase, not reduce, our program for visits by key groups to the U.S., both in and out of the Armed Forces.

C. We must provide on a sales basis a modicum of modern military equipment for these countries. We must not tell them that their only mission is internal security. History has proved this false (World War II, Korea, the Congo, Suez, the Dominican Republic, etc.). Some day we may want them to do something that we ourselves do not want to do. We must

encourage them to cooperate with one another (Police Forces, emergency forces, anti-submarine warfare, etc.). Above all, we must keep alive the idea of a common destiny.

D. We must assist our friends to solve their economic, financial and social problems. If they do not then the alternative is Allende or worse. The idea that all military leaders are necessarily unpopular is childish and false. President Medici received a roaring ovation from over a hundred thousand people in Maracan Stadium in Rio when he attended a football game there.

E. We must help the one-crop, one-product nations to diversify their economies and markets. Management assistance must be made available (Frank Pace's organization which provides retired U.S. executives for periods not to exceed three months is an excellent beginning). We must help those countries which are technically incapable of doing so to catalogue their resources and establish their priorities. Above all, we must project an image of friendly understanding and willingness to help. (This is more important perhaps than the aid itself.) We must be able to take decisive action rapidly without endless study groups and feasibility studies (for which they often pay).

F. The alternative to doing the above may be a beleaguered fortress in North America. If we move actively (not necessarily openly) against our opponents, they will respect us for it. They want to believe in us. If we disappoint them as to our will and resolution to defend freedom, it will be at our own peril. Whatever may be the differences between the USSR and China, they both have as a major objective the removal of the United States as a power factor from all areas outside of North America. They can and are cooperating to this end in Latin America. We must meet that challenge.

Specific Actions in the Military Field in Latin America

First and foremost, we must improve the quality of our diplomatic and military representation in Latin America. This area should not become the refuge of incompetence and mediocrity.

1. We must provide a modicum of modern military equipment to the Latin nations, particularly to the larger and more responsible ones. (Everyone is equal, but in Europe Germany is more equal than Denmark. We recognize this.)

2. Instead of telling the nations of Latin America that their only mission is internal security, we must give them a sense of participation in the defense of freedom. By large-scale visits at different levels we must keep alive the sense of common destiny that makes "God bless America" their song too.

3. Much greater attention must be paid to the military representatives of the Latin American nations in Washington. These are the future leaders of their Armed Forces or they would not be here. (The Presidents of both Brazil and Argentina have been Military Attachés in the recent past in Washington. Both carried away a sense of having been slighted while here.

4. More frequent visits to Latin America by top Defense Department officials and senior U.S. officers. Compared with visits to Europe by such officials, the ratio to South America is negligible.

5. A much enlarged program of visits by key Latin American figures and general staff schools to the U.S. must be prepared. Visits to U.S. Forces in Europe and Vietnam would be helpful also. Panama with its Latin American schools also plays a key role. The Four Star job at SouthCom should NOT be reduced to 3 stars. This would be considered a clear indication of loss of interest by the U.S.

6. We must provide Vietnamization type training BEFORE, not AFTER, insurgency starts in the Latin American area.

7. We must be prepared to let Brazil or Argentina sometimes carry the ball instead of doing it ourselves. We must not always try to do everything our way, by ourselves. The Soviet Union has given us many excellent examples of how to do things by proxy.

8. We must make the nations of Latin America understand that their interests go beyond their own borders and that our greater interest and help must be matched by their greater sense of responsibility and sharing in the defense of freedom wherever it may be threatened.