

Wanted: A U.S. Policy For Latin America

MILAN B. SKACEL

The winds of change that have been blowing throughout Latin America for over two decades have picked up velocity and threaten to become a full-fledged hurricane. But the hurricane control center in Washington has been closed for years, and the alienation of Latin America from the United States continues apace while, in the opinion of some students of hemispheric affairs, the Carter Administration's approach to the area lacks direction and brings to mind an ancient adage: "When in danger or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout."

The running in circles is manifest in ill-advised, counter-productive trips and missions; the screaming and shouting is translated into lofty pronunciamientos on human rights violations south of the Rio Grande. There seems to be no cohesiveness, no discernible objective. Latin Americans, bewildered by this frenetic pseudoactivity, have come to the conclusion that we neither understand nor really care about the problems and aspirations of the 350 million people who live in what once we used to call our backyard.

The record tends to bear out the contention that our intentions are unclear, our goals blurred, and our interest erratic and suspect. For, self-serving rhetoric notwithstanding, we have been letting Latin America go by default. No comprehensive proposals have come out of Washington to revitalize and restructure our economic ties with Latin America; no special effort has been made to respond to the basic need of the Latin American countries for easier access to our markets; no substantive overhaul is contemplated of the complex and outdated rules and regulations governing our investment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Political and diplomatic overtures to Latin America reveal comparable lethargy and lack of initiative. There is no dearth of Madison Avenue sloganeering, and catchy phrases — such as Dr. Henry Kissinger's call for a "new dialogue" — succeed at times to temporarily massage a few egos and soothe Latin pride. But there has been little or no substance; what today passes for U.S. policy for Latin America is largely a cosmetic treatment glossing over the

root causes of hemispheric problems. It is an exercise in orchestrated atmospherics.

It would be erroneous and unfair, however, to cast the Carter Administration in the role of villain. The "Inter-American System" President Franklin D. Roosevelt set up in the 1930s with his "Good Neighbor" policy had been steadily disintegrating long before the advent of Jimmy Carter to the Presidency. Presidents Ford, Nixon and Johnson had little or no interest in Latin America, and in the search for the last concerted U.S. effort to formulate and carry out a specific policy for Latin America one must go back to John F. Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress.

Yet, even the Alliance for Progress, an ambitious attempt to emulate the success of the Marshall Plan, was handicapped from the outset by our abysmal ignorance of Latin America and its built-in limitations. The Alliance had been ushered in with the customary ruffles and flourishes accompanied by rhetorical overkill. No challenge, after all, was beyond our capabilities; we had managed to convince ourselves and the rest of the world that the United States was a country with unlimited resources, an infallible problem-solver, a nation on a perpetual crusade in behalf of those less fortunate. The realization that Latin America was not Western Europe, that no public relations campaign could paper over deep-seated conceptual differences or bridge the chasm between our perception of the *raison d'être* for the Alliance and the insistence by Latin American leaders on determining their own national priorities, gradually helped shatter some of the myths and preconceived notions the Kennedy Administration had formed and nurtured about Latin America, but by then it was too late. Our hubris had been punished: the U.S. had created a self-perpetuating bureaucratic monster, a baby Moloch grumbling its discontent at the meager financial offerings; yet it was a creature to which we had given life and thus could hardly disown. So the Alliance labored on amid increasing disinterest, and its many tangible accomplishments were lost in a sea of self-pity at the realization that we could not "re-make" Latin America in a single decade.

The Alliance was the last grandiose scheme in the American "can-do" tradition. The trauma of Vietnam then brought forth a complete, at times irrational, re-examination of U.S. global responsibilities. It helped give rise to fresh neo-

isolationist sentiment — much of it only dormant — and the United States was subjected to growing pressure to abandon its activist posture in international affairs and cultivate its own garden.

Latin America has been a prime victim of this tendency of the United States to look inward. With the exception of a few casual and often ambiguous nods in the direction south of the Rio Grande, Latin America and its problems have been consigned to oblivion. It is symptomatic of the prevailing disinterest in Latin America that in the U.S. Congress, which is replete with lobbies, there is no Latin American “lobby”; the knowledgeable senators and representatives who have spoken forcefully and persuasively about the need for a new approach to U.S.-Latin American relations are crying in the wilderness. There has been no concerted effort by Congress or the media to raise public consciousness and dramatize the danger inherent in any further deterioration of our position in Latin America.

Years of Neglect

The danger is now in sharp evidence, for the years of neglect have exacted a heavy toll. The political influence of the United States in Latin America continues to wane, and our economic position is under steady assault. Europe and Japan, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries — all have made inroads in the area; even the Arabs are exploring closer economic ties. Moreover, anti-U.S. sentiment, kindled by rising nationalism tinged with chauvinism, has become so widespread and so fashionable that it is a favorite ploy of current and would-be leaders in many a Latin American country.

This grim picture, a living testimonial to our ineptness, insensitivity and compulsive dilettantism in foreign affairs, is even more disturbing when one considers the enormous stakes the United States has in a friendly Latin America.

More than \$1 of every \$7 in goods sold by the U.S. is destined for Latin America; our exports to the area were worth over \$17 billion in 1977. Last year we bought an estimated \$18.5 billion worth of goods from Latin America, accounting for \$1 of every \$8 we pay for imports. Private U.S. investment in Latin America is in excess of \$18 billion, or about \$1 of every \$7 worldwide. Some three million Latin Americans visited the United States last year — a small but not quite

negligible contribution to our otherwise seemingly losing battle against huge trade deficits. Moreover, until very recently, the U.S. perennially had a favorable balance-of-payments in trading with Latin America; the current adverse trend reflects, in part, the erosion of our economic position in the area.

Economic considerations are reinforced by today's political realities. The United States already confronts complex problems around the world, such as the prospect of intensified struggle with the Soviet Union, the uneasy truce in the Middle East, racial strife in southern Africa, the problem of OPEC and the spread of Eurocommunism. Trouble in or with Latin America would tax our limited resources even further, conceivably beyond our present capabilities.

In view of these facts, which are both irrefutable and readily available, our cavalier treatment of Latin America defies comprehension.

It must be noted, however, that the Carter Administration has taken a constructive step in the direction of better hemispheric relations by addressing the thorny issue of the Panama Canal, although the new treaties, admittedly, remain a source of legitimate controversy. Yet, when the large picture is considered, President Carter, Secretary Vance and others directly involved cannot but be commended for their courage and determination in bringing the Panama Canal issue to a resolution. No matter how much or how little importance one may place on the quest for better relations with Panama, it is indubitably in our national interest to foster amity with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. And, the Canal issue was a potential powder keg that eventually had come to be widely viewed by Latins as the acid test of America's goodwill and good faith. Moreover, the Canal was a tailor-made cause for demagogues and professional Yanqui haters who would hold volatile Latin audiences in thrall while inveighing against a "colonialist" superpower that had lost its will to oppose Soviet expansionism and was reduced to demonstrating its machismo at the expense of a tiny land of 1.7 million people.

But the removal of the Panama Canal controversy from the inter-American agenda does not automatically signal the dawn of a new era in hemispheric relations. The United States still has no comprehensive, credible policy for Latin America, nor are there indications that one is about to be unveiled.

When one speaks of a policy for Latin America it is with full awareness that the area is no homogeneous entity. The problems, aspirations, even cultural heritage of an Argentine, for example, are often markedly different from those of a Guatemalan, let alone an English-speaking Jamaican. A policy for Latin America, therefore, neither could nor should supersede carefully structured individual U.S. policies for each country south of the Rio Grande, since only such policies can take into account specific national traits, idiosyncrasies and basic needs.

In the context of hemispheric relations, however, there also has to be a U.S. policy for Latin America in general. Most of the problems defy a bilateral approach, and the fresh challenges the U.S. confronts there can be dealt with more effectively on a regional basis.

A policy for Latin America need not call for costly new programs, the funding of which we can ill afford and for which a national consensus may not be obtained. But it should address all areas of shared concern and contain, in broad terms, a set of principles for an overall U.S. approach to Latin America.

A New Approach to Latin America

The new approach is new mainly in the sense that while its individual components have been widely discussed and even postulated, it has not been implemented on a systematic basis. The underlying message is hardly revolutionary; it simply reflects present-day realities.

— The era of U.S. paternalism is over. The nations of Latin America and the Caribbean insist on full partnership, including the right of consent or refusal, in any hemispheric initiative. The hortatory finger, teacher-pupil relationship and outburst of moral indignation are resented and largely ignored, especially since the United States continually acknowledges that it too has feet of clay.

— The campaign to export our brand of democracy must come to an end. The Latins demand from us respect for each country's inalienable right to choose its own system of government — no matter how unpalatable such a government may be to a nation of a different ideological persuasion. It is no concern of ours, the Latins contend, if their governments are not "representative" in our sense of the word; few governments in today's world are.

— An evenhanded approach to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean is a prerequisite for improved hemispheric relations. The U.S. must abandon its standard operating procedure of over-reacting to developments which, while perhaps unwelcome, pose no acute danger to hemispheric security, and then promptly consigning the root cause of the problem to oblivion once outward calm has been restored. The United States has to learn to evaluate trends and developments in Latin America in terms of their lasting, long-range impact; too swift a reaction, while at times necessary, usually reflects absence of an overall concept. A policy based solely on improvisation precludes broad acceptance, since it can be explained and justified neither to the Latins nor to the American people.

— The rhetoric must be toned down. Few Latin American leaders thoroughly understand the intricacies of our system of government, and it has to be made clear to them that even tentative commitments of an administration are contingent on the approval of others in the seats of power, notably members of the U.S. Congress. An administration, therefore, should confine itself to proposals it is reasonably certain will get the necessary support and ultimate acceptance, proposals of understatement and lowered expectations, rather than bombast and unrealistic promises.

Political and Economic Cooperation

A fresh approach to U.S.-Latin American relations, however, cannot achieve the desired impact unless the United States learns to understand and accept Latin American political realities.

One reality is that the military is widely perceived as the sole permanent cohesive force, often as the only force capable of guaranteeing stability and continuity. The military today is no longer an exclusive fief of the oligarchy. In some countries the elite still controls the armed forces, but in an increasing number of nations the key officers are of lower middle class or even “proletarian” origin. As a result, the various military regimes span almost the entire ideological spectrum, including the traditional military-oligarchic dictatorship (Nicaragua), the rightist military regime (Chile), the more moderate rightist military rule (Brazil), and the nationalist-leftist military regime (Panama).

In some countries, the military has become a force for reform; in other countries it upholds the status quo. Its impact on political, social and economic development, however, is decisive in most of Latin America.

One of the reasons for the proliferation of military rule is that the political center is either non-existent or in disarray in all but a handful of Latin American countries. With the exception of a few genuinely democratic states, such as Venezuela, the political center is only marginally represented in government. Where it exists or is permitted to exist, it lacks the muscle and broad-based support to singlehandedly effect change.

Nor is the primacy of the military acutely threatened by either of the two other repositories of actual or latent power — the intellectual community and the Roman Catholic Church. The intellectuals, as a class, are generally distrusted by both the military and the slowly burgeoning middle class. Rightly or wrongly, they have been accused of helping to over-politicize Latin American universities and of allowing themselves to front for political extremists. They have few opportunities to help shape events, and their influence is largely restricted to students who may create occasional havoc but wield no power. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, remains relatively strong, especially in the rural areas. But the Church confronts a deepening abyss between “traditionalists” and “progressives,” and as the centers of power are in the cities — where the military is dominant — its impact on events is somewhat erratic.

In view of the absence of a viable democratic center in most Latin American countries, it is unrealistic to advocate, as some do in the U.S., that we confine our political and moral support to the “progressive elements” in Latin America. It can be argued, moreover, that some military leaders in Latin America are essentially more “progressive” than scores of doctrinaire intellectuals, who are often more interested in safeguarding the pristine purity of their particular dogma than in fostering a country’s economic development and raising the standard of living of a population with which most of them have no personal contact whatsoever.

There is, of course, little doubt that an overwhelming majority of Americans look askance at any military regime, that we prefer a democratic form of government. But, as the

Latins point out, it is inconsistent and discriminatory for the U.S. to apparently accept as "inevitable" the practice of doing business and maintaining correct relations with the totalitarian and authoritarian states of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, while castigating a Latin American military regime as "undemocratic" and "unrepresentative."

Had the U.S. not ceased to forcefully champion self-determination and democratic rule on a global basis and were our current human rights crusade not so patently selective, a case could perhaps be made for discreet proselytizing in Latin America. Under the present-day circumstances, however, we lose credibility and incur ridicule and fresh animosity, if we single out Latin America as the only area where, in our opinion, democracy and self-determination can and must flourish in their optimal incarnation.

There are other reasons, including some of hemispheric security, that we should free the Latin military from the special public pillory we seem to have erected solely for their benefit. No one contends that the regimes of Chile and Nicaragua, for example, represent enlightened government. But, we had better realize that a rightist regime rarely poses a threat to its neighbors, because it is predominantly inward-oriented. A communist or ultra-leftist dictatorship, on the other hand, is driven by built-in messianic zeal; it feels compelled to spread its "message" beyond its borders, in one way or another. It, therefore, represents a constant threat to the security of other countries. Moreover — and this distinction was sharply and ably made in a recent article by Ernest W. Lefever* — authoritarian regimes allow a significantly greater degree of freedom and diversity than do totalitarian dictatorships. The Videla Government, for example, may indeed have committed unconscionable acts during its all-out campaign against terrorists, but the people of Argentina still enjoy more freedom in all spheres of activity than do the Cubans. And yet, perversely, the present Argentine Government is viewed by some Americans as a *bete noire* par excellence, while all sorts of apologies are periodically offered for the Castro regime — whose main achievements are military

* See Ernest W. Lefever, "The Trivialization of Human Rights," *Policy Review*, Winter 1978.

adventurism in Africa, almost total economic dependence on Soviet largesse, and systematic suppression of human rights.

Yet, even if we discard the odd delusion that every self-styled “progressive” is a humanitarian and all military men are Neanderthals and learn to recognize and accept — however reluctantly — Latin American political realities, we cannot hope for substantive improvement in hemispheric cooperation unless we also reexamine our economic relations with Latin America.

Political and Economic Inter-Relationships

One of the main problems in formulating a credible, imaginative policy for Latin America lies in the long-standing practice of treating political and economic considerations as separate, almost autonomous entities. Politics and economics in today’s world are inexorably welded together, yet too many political leaders and economic experts in the Western Hemisphere still confine themselves to viewing inter-American relations solely through their own limited prisms.

The United States Foreign Trade Act of 1974, or rather a clause inserted in the Act by Congress, is an example of the danger attending imperfect understanding of the interrelation between politics and economics. The clause excluded members of OPEC from new tariff preferences, and Ecuador and Venezuela — as OPEC members — were directly affected. And yet, neither country joined the 1973 Arab oil boycott — the motivation behind the clause — but continued to supply oil to the U.S. without interruption. The inclusion of Venezuela and Ecuador had political repercussions throughout Latin America and was a classic example of the failure to evaluate political implications of an economic measure.

It may well be that the implied “special relationship” with Latin America no longer exists, but this surely does not mean that the Latin American nations are now to be singled out, by omission or commission, for punitive action. Fresh perspective is clearly in order, and only by offering tangible proof that we understand and are willing to help meet some of Latin America’s basic economic needs can we expect and demand genuine cooperation that is based on enlightened national self-interests.

It must be recognized, however, that closer economic cooperation with Latin America will bring in its wake some

difficult problems. The conflict here is between short-term impact and long-term objective. The issue is the U.S. market.

Latin Americans resent the fact that they are still regarded as little more than custodians of relatively cheap raw materials and primary products. Fifteen years ago, we actively encouraged the Latins to diversify their economies, including exports. Now that they are in the process of implementing our suggestion they feel it only fair to seek and obtain an easier access to our markets for their products.

There is no doubt that, in the short run, granting concessions, such as new preferential tariffs, could cause economic problems and sporadic dislocations in the United States. U.S. business and labor would be averse to opening up the U.S. market to additional products that could effectively compete with those produced or manufactured domestically; the impact on employment and profits, although relatively negligible, would probably help generate an anti-Latin reaction.

But, such considerations cannot be allowed to influence the larger issue of the national good or the policies of a superpower with global commitments and interests. We can separate economic and political realities only at our peril. If we are guided exclusively by our immediate domestic needs, the prospect of an influx of Latin American goods admittedly is not too attractive. But, we cannot lose sight of potentially far-reaching implications if we continue to treat the Latins as unwanted orphans. It is conceivable that most Latin American republics would be drawn farther and farther away from the United States politically if their economic needs continued to be manifestly unappreciated or ignored outright.

Thus, a policy for Latin America must be both implicit and explicit in addressing the urgent need for a new economic and political accommodation. There are, of course, a myriad of other critical issues to be resolved, such as reaching a hemispheric consensus on Cuba, reorganizing and revitalizing the Organization of American States, and creating a more effective instrument for inter-American security. But, each of these complex issues deserves more than a parenthetical paragraph.

The intent here has been to offer a conceptual framework within which a policy for Latin America should be formulated. And, in addition to addressing the problems at hand, such a policy also should offer hope and inspiration for the future.

For, the United States and its Latin American partners have

yet to even scratch the surface of the bonanza that can be unearthed and fairly divided once the countries of the Americas cease to confine themselves to narrow nationalistic objectives and begin to think in terms of the entire hemisphere. By the year 2000, there may be close to one billion people living in the Western hemisphere. Surely the time has come to recognize our interdependence and collectively draw up and start implementing an overall plan that will help ensure that most of these people will be able to live in peace and dignity.

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The *strong* (strong) in this sense is a relatively new meaning of *strong*. While the earliest attestations of this phenomenon (strong phenomena) are now found in changes on the uninflected plural pronouns of life (the major pronouns) the 1st and 2nd, it is a development after the 19th century. The *strong* (strong) in this sense is a relatively new meaning of *strong*. While the earliest attestations of this phenomenon (strong phenomena) are now found in changes on the uninflected plural pronouns of life (the major pronouns) the 1st and 2nd, it is a development after the 19th century. The *strong* (strong) in this sense is a relatively new meaning of *strong*. While the earliest attestations of this phenomenon (strong phenomena) are now found in changes on the uninflected plural pronouns of life (the major pronouns) the 1st and 2nd, it is a development after the 19th century.

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The first step is to find out how immigrants behave in the U.S. as you saw your distance from us on the U.S. 50th birthday celebration. According to Secretary of State, the U.S. has a long history of welcoming immigrants who have helped to build the U.S. into the world's leading nation. The U.S. has a long history of welcoming immigrants who have helped to build the U.S. into the world's leading nation. The U.S. has a long history of welcoming immigrants who have helped to build the U.S. into the world's leading nation.

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Politics and Language: Why There Are No 'Authoritarians'

SHIRLEY ROBIN LETWIN

Being "authoritarian" is generally considered to be a bad thing. Governments of which we disapprove — whether Communist Russia, Nazi Germany, Col. Qadhafi's Libya, Chile, or Rhodesia — are said to be "authoritarian." What do all these "authoritarian" regimes have in common?

The word suggests that they exercise "authority." If we ask what constitutes exercising authority, the answer is that it means ordering people around and thereby destroying their liberty to do what they choose. And, consequently, admirers as well as opponents of "authoritarianism" agree that the world is divided between "authoritarians" and "lovers of liberty."

Although this way of speaking is endorsed by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it has only recently become widespread. The first definition of "authoritarian" recorded in the dictionary appeared in the *Daily News* in 1879 as "Men who are authoritarian by nature and cannot imagine that a country should be orderly save under a military despotism." The earliest example of our current usage is taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1884, in which a person is described as "A lover of liberty, not an authoritarian."

That something is nevertheless wrong with this usage becomes obvious when we ask the opponents of "authoritarianism" (who are likely to talk also of authoritarian parents and teachers) if they object to a parent's ordering a child to stop eating hemlock, to a teacher's command to use a pen for writing rather than throwing, or to a judge's acquittal of a defendant. The answer is almost certain to be no, even though in all of these cases someone is being ordered to do something. This suggests that there may be different sorts of orders, some more desirable than others, and that we should take care to distinguish them.

Such a suggestion is not in keeping, of course, with the belief, popular now, that the perfection of civilization consists of eliminating all orders and emancipating human beings from any form of submission. But this belief, like the word "authoritarian," is part of the new barbarism. It not only implies that no