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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION
IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL STABILITY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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The Role of Public Opinion
In Latin American Political Stability

INTRODUCTION

1. Differences of national origin, temperament, economic fortune, and historical development have led to a wide variation among Latin American countries in the factors most important to their political stability. The hard fact of military predominance or firm oligarchic control has in many cases minimized the role of public opinion. In some countries, on the other hand, democratic tradition is so strong and well developed as to give the people a determining voice in political change. In general, the trend is toward a greater role for public opinion, even where it is only indirectly asserted. This memorandum summarizes our findings; a more detailed country-by-country survey is attached at annex.

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SOUTH AMERICA

2. Most of the republics of South America have historically been controlled by relatively narrow ruling classes, operating with at least the acquiescence of the armed forces and church, and tending to manage or ignore the opinion of the masses. The cheap Japanese transistor radio has tended to revolutionize information dissemination, however, increasing awareness of the world among rural people and urban illiterates. As a result, the masses have become a factor of stability to be reckoned with as never before.

3. In some nations, they have been exploited, managed, and utilized as a power element by demagogues such as Argentina's Peron. In others, such as Venezuela and perhaps Peru, they have been mobilized behind reformist administrations. Chile and Uruguay have well-developed constitutionalist traditions and in these countries opinion has attained a fair degree of sophistication and responsibility. Even in backward Bolivia, opinion mobilized in various parts of the country behind this or that leading person can sway national decision makers.

4. Under normal circumstances Brazilian stability has depended more on the government's success in achieving the cooperation or at least tolerance of the majority of the important political leaders, the major economic interests, and the other politically influential elements than in gaining mass support. The attitudes of these elements in turn have been affected by the rate of inflation and the world price levels of coffee and other commodities. The use of public popularity as a gauge of stability is rendered difficult at best by the multiplicity of political parties. At present Brazil is stable under the military-backed regime of President Castello Branco who, while less popular than his recent predecessors, commands widespread respect--and the endorsement of the elements of power.

5. In most South American countries the armed forces are the decisive power element and determinant of stability. They can maintain in power an unpopular government at least up to a point, or they can oust a regime in which they, as well as perhaps mass opinion, have lost confidence. The military frequently assume the role of defenders of the constitution, as well as of the public order, taking upon themselves a kind of moderative power to assure the equilibrium of nations and the contending power forces within them.

6. In the more mature countries, balancing of contending political forces within factionalized legislatures is a major requisite to stability. No government in South America is immune from economic influences nor, probably, in the last analysis could any of them stand indefinitely without the acquiescence of the Roman Catholic Church.

7. Finally, popular opinion as a whole tends to be apathetic in South America. Only in the heat of well-publicized political campaigns or when the mass man himself comes under unusual economic stress, does he become an aroused entity striving to make his opinions felt. Most of the time traditional power elements, or modern pressure groups, have the predominant voice in decisions of state. There is a threshold of instability where opinion in each of the countries will insist upon being manifest, but in this part of the world that threshold tends to be very high indeed.

MIDDLE AMERICA

8. The factors of stability in Middle America vary greatly according to the patterns of political and economic development. In most of the countries the military constitutes the ultimate political arbiter. The governments must generally contend also with vested economic interests whose influence is exerted through political parties or through business organizations.

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9. In the area as a whole the role of popular opinion is subordinate to other political factors. A notable exception is Costa Rica, where public opinion does control political change. The attitudes of the influential elements of society such as the army and landowners are the only attitudes that are of great concern to the political leaders. Indeed, in some countries such as Guatemala, for example, official control over information prevents development of balanced public opinion. The low level of literacy in Middle America--only 25 percent in Guatemala and 10 percent in Haiti--tends to produce public apathy toward political problems.

10. There appears to be no reliable correlation between the level of stability and the degree of popular support that a particular government may enjoy. The Somoza family in Nicaragua has maintained stability for a generation, notwithstanding public resentment [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Economic prosperity in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Mexico, and El Salvador has perhaps had a more profound impact on stability in those countries than popular opinion as such, although the two factors are certainly related.

11. This is not to say that popular attitudes are not relevant to stability; they are, but to a lesser degree than these other factors. Patent absence of public support for a given regime may encourage opponents already predisposed to carrying out a coup to do so. On the other hand a regime's obvious popularity may deter the opposition from pursuing an extreme course of action.

12. Throughout Middle America there is a rise in public awareness, and popular opinion will become increasingly influential. An accompanying danger is that opportunistic interests will be ready to fan sensitive issues, including anti-US themes, as they long have in Panama, where the result has been continuing instability.

13. In the areas of predominantly British influence--British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad-Tobago--the positive force of parliamentary traditions based on a two-party system is weakened by deep racial splits. Popular attitudes are shaped by these two factors. The strong leadership of Prime Ministers Bustamante and Williams combined with economic progress has overcome racial divisions in Jamaica and Trinidad-Tobago. The antagonisms between East Indians and Negroes in British Guiana are so bitter that a background of constant tension prevails there.

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A. ARGENTINA

1. Political instability has characterized Argentine politics for the past decade. Inability to solve serious economic and social problems (largely inherited from the Peron era, 1943-1955), and to overcome the effects of antidemocratic experiences transmitted from the Peron regime, has effectively hindered progress in maintaining constitutional government. Post-Peron governments have had to cope with exaggerated class consciousness and weak social cohesiveness, a deeply fragmented political party system, and a strongly anti-Peronist military establishment.

2. More concretely, major impediments to efforts toward stable government have been, on the one hand, the inability of any political party to establish majority support, and, on the other, the unwillingness of the Peronist movement as a whole to submit to democratic constitutional government and to throw off Peron's leadership. No political leader (or party) has been able to attract a large popular following. Both of the legally elected presidents since 1955 (Frondizi and Illia) were minority choices in terms of popular vote. This has permitted the coalescence of an opposition majority lacking constructive programs which generally has sought only the removal of the legal government from power. This condition--the continuing inconclusive conflict between a badly fragmented anti-Peronist majority and an antidemocratic Peronist minority (about 25 percent of the electorate)--has required the strong hand of the military to ensure political stability and constitutionality and to prevent extremist political parties from exploiting the vacuum of political power.

3. Public opinion has been deeply opposed to military intervention or interference in government, but, at the same time, it has exhibited no national consensus on solutions to the major problems and issues confronting the country and the government.

4. Argentine political parties have continually exploited the absence of consensus and have attempted to regiment public opinion for the sake of mere opposition to the government in power. This has frequently led to political crises and has served the aims of organized minority parties and groups hoping to gain advantage from the unrest. In addition, it has tended to inhibit the proper functioning of the government. Lack of a consensus and attendant political divisiveness and weak governments have made stability dependent upon military power.

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B. BOLIVIA

1. Prior to the 1952 Bolivian revolution, military power and economic interests, represented by the "big three" tin mining companies, determined the character and longevity of governments. The Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) came to power by force in 1952, however, because of the popular appeal of its reform policies and the mobilization of the tin miners' union on its behalf. During its first few years in power, the MNR cultivated and depended for its support upon proliferating labor and peasant unions and in many instances governed according to popular pressures. Later, after the MNR organization had consolidated its strength, the government began to function more independently of public pressure or at least was able to direct and control public opinion. At the same time, the labor and peasant organizations were falling under the domination of opportunistic leaders who used them as vehicles for personal power. Political stability then depended almost entirely upon deals concluded among the diverse sectors within the MNR and between the MNR and labor and peasant leaders. Victor Paz Estenssoro's government became vulnerable in 1964 when he ignored the balance of power within his party in order to perpetuate himself in office. Important sectors withdrew from the MNR, leaving only a shell. Furthermore, Paz' policies alienated the armed forces' loyalty and, although he himself had rebuilt the military establishment after its decimation in 1952, he ignored its importance until top military leaders had laid their plans to oust him.

2. The stability of the present regime rests on the will, unity, and effectiveness of the armed forces. Barrientos as junta president is personally dependent on their continuing support, although his position is also bolstered by his general popularity and influence among the peasants. The labor unions remain an important factor influencing stability, but their activities and concerns mainly pertain to economic issues and in particular to the relationship between inflation and wage levels. Union leaders find it increasingly difficult to mobilize workers against the government for political reasons alone. Public sentiment could be strongly aroused if the junta government attempted to denationalize the tin

mines or tampered with the land reform program. The government is aware, however, that it could not alter these revolutionary reforms without causing a civil war, and it has no intention of doing so. In essence, the military government and armed forces are sensitive to public opinion, particularly as expressed by pressure groups, but they have little confidence in civilian politicians and no intention of losing their status as final arbiters of "Bolivian national destiny."

C. BRAZIL

1. The factors contributing to stability or instability in Brazil are as varied as the country itself. In recent history, however, the significant weights in the balance have most often been the temper of the military, the rate of inflation, and the level of commodity prices on the international market. Public popularity is a difficult and not necessarily reliable measure to use in assessing governmental durability, because few leaders can anticipate enjoying majority electoral support; coalition government is the rule. Thus, the best gauge of stability is a leader's ability to compose differences between potentially antagonistic forces that are giving him grudging nominal support.

2. The relationship between presidential popularity and national tranquility is well exemplified by the current regime. General Castello Branco, while widely respected, probably does not have the public backing of a Kubitschek or a Goulart, but he does, obviously, have the support of most of the military and the respect of even those who are discontented with his austerity program. He has begun to curb the rate of inflation, and has taken the steps necessary to restore the confidence of Brazil's foreign creditors. Because Castello Branco has not been able to correct the abnormally high level of consumer prices, his regime encounters considerable dissatisfaction and pressure from urban workers. However, a consensus appears to have developed that, like him or not, Castello Branco at least shows signs of reducing the financial and administrative chaos of his predecessors. The influential elements in the power structure such as the military, the major economic interests, and a majority of the important political leaders, cooperate with the administration or at least are tolerant of it. Perhaps this is the key to stability in Brazil. A leader without overwhelming public backing is not tempted to "play to the crowds"; instead he adopts the gradual approach to the business of government, ensuring thereby the general cooperation of the critical elements in his government and in the country.

D. BRITISH GUIANA

1. As a result of the deep and bitter split between British Guiana's largest racial groups, the East Indians and the Negroes, the colony has had a history of instability. Because of this cleavage, politics have developed along racial lines. The East Indians, who comprise 50 percent of the population, support Cheddi Jagan and his Marxist Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) while the Negroes, 44 percent of the population, vote for Forbes Burnham's socialist Peoples National Congress (PNC). In such a situation the government in power can fully expect to be opposed by sizable numbers of the population. Historically, then, a government's stability has depended not so much on how well it is liked as upon the ability of its leader to obtain the support or toleration of the influential elements in the power structure. These include the unions, the major financial interests, the civil servants, the police force, and the British. Actually, the presence of 1,250 British troops in the colony is the main stabilizing factor.

2. In the December 1964 election the PPP won a plurality but not a majority, so Burnham was asked to form a government in coalition with the other major opposition party, the conservative United Force (UF) of Peter D'Aguiar. Premier Burnham, therefore, presides over a mutually antagonistic coalition of conservatives and socialists and heads a government which is opposed by 50 percent of the population. In spite of this, the coalition government has held together reasonably well. Burnham is taking steps to diminish racial tension, is supported by the predominantly Negro civil service and police force, and is backed by the British. Last month the government found a market for the colony's growing rice surplus and was thus able to placate the Indian rice farmers, an important sector of public opinion whose restiveness could have been turned against the regime. Nevertheless, the long-run prospects for stability are poor because it will be many years before politics can be disassociated from race. PPP extremists are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with Jagan's nonviolent

opposition tactics and could break with them at any time. Racial violence could erupt again, especially if the East Indians were led to believe that they could expect persecution if independence were granted under the Burnham government. Finally, the PNC and the UF could easily uncover an issue on which neither side would compromise, thus ending the coalition and bringing down the government.

D-2

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E. CHILE

1. Chile has traditionally had a stable, civilian, representative government which has been based since 1938 on middle-class participation. The country was one of the first South American nations to establish constitutional government and was governed by strong conservative forces until middle-class landowners and businessmen entered politics in the 1920s. Since 1938 the nation's political base has continued to widen and most of the rural farmers and the least privileged urban workers have been brought into the country's political life.

2. Chile resembles the United States in having a politically active population and strong pressure groups. Public opinion is, therefore, an important and reliable measure to use in assessing government longevity. Chilean traditions and customs dictate, however, that an unpopular government must be removed with ballots rather than bullets.

3. The government enjoys great popularity at the present time; President Frei was elected by 56 percent of the vote and the electorate confirmed its approval of his administration by giving his left-of-center Christian Democratic Party (PDC) a large majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the March 1965 congressional elections. Given the policy orientation of the PDC, these elections confirm that Chilean opinion has continued its gradual move to the left. The two major political forces at present are the PDC and the FRAP, a Communist-Socialist coalition. The PDC advocates a European social Christian approach to government; and the FRAP a Marxist solution by "via pacifica," the peaceful road to power. These two forces owe much of their support to popular desire for reform and for changes that were not being provided by the conservative administrations.

4. In addition to tradition and sophisticated political parties, the armed forces constitute a strong apolitical power element. Therefore, the longevity of the government depends on public opinion, but the country's stability is not governed by public popularity alone.

F. COLOMBIA

1. In the past, and to a large extent at the present time also, stability of the political structure in Colombia has derived from the lack of sophistication of the vast majority of the people. Members of a distinct ruling class, usually called "the oligarchy," have shared the government among themselves literally for centuries. Only since World War II has their hold on the country been seriously challenged.

2. At present, Colombia is a constitutional republic with the choice of candidates for elective office strictly limited to members of the old Conservative and Liberal parties. No member of any other party--several sprang up in the past decade--can run for office, be appointed to a patronage position, or even be hired for a government job, however lowly. One result of this artificial system--known as the National Front--is a monumental apathy among the electorate. Only 30 percent of the voters appeared at the polls for the congressional election in March 1964, and the big winners were followers of the old dictator, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. They ran as Conservatives to satisfy the legal requirement, but are usually considered to be members of the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO). They are inalterably opposed to the National Front and will do all in their power to obstruct its congressional program and its "official" presidential candidate next May.

3. The growing middle class is still too small to challenge the oligarchs for political power. Social awareness is spreading, however, partly because of increasing contacts with North American and European technology and culture. As the literacy rate increases, and as the social ideas of the "new church" and other reform movements spread into urban slums and depressed rural districts, a more cogent and cohesive social group will appear. Then--probably within the next decade, possibly within the next five years--public opinion in Colombia will become a significant factor affecting stability.

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4. A major factor in Colombia still is the attitude of the military. They want to stay out of politics; in fact, War Minister Ruiz was sacked recently, at other military leaders' insistence, for political activity. In spite of this desire to stay out of politics, military leaders are reported by a reliable clandestine source last week to have dropped a thinly veiled warning to the President that they would not tolerate his failure to take some action soon to remedy political and economic problems plaguing the country. The basically unstable political situation in Colombia can be expected to produce future crises which could prompt the military to force a state of siege or even make them feel impelled to take over governing the country.

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G. COSTA RICA

Political change in Costa Rica is very definitely responsive to public opinion. Costa Rica has a long tradition of stable and politically mature democratic government, which was reinforced, rather than broken by the civil war in 1948. The events of 1948 support the thesis that Costa Ricans, though normally a peaceful people, are willing to challenge any government which attempts to remain in power illegally.

2. The present Costa Rican Government is controlled by the National Liberation Party (PLN), a democratic party which is slightly left of center, but strongly anti-Communist. The PLN administration under President Francisco Orlich has been faced with a fairly large conservative opposition in the legislature, composed of members of the National Union Party (PUN) and the National Republican Party (PRN). The conservative opposition has acted in a responsible manner, and the PLN administration has, in turn, been responsive to the wishes of its opposition. All parties, whether conservative or liberal in orientation, have been responsive to the needs of the people, and all represent a cross section of the population. All three parties have to their credit a number of reforms which benefited the nation and reduced the appeal of subversive doctrines.

3. Costa Rican elections are generally held on schedule and conducted in an honest manner. The next elections are scheduled for February 1966, at which time the president, all deputies to the legislature, and municipal officials will be elected. There is every reason to believe that Costa Rica will continue its tradition of electoral honesty, and that the defeated parties will accept the judgment of the ballot box.

H. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Under present conditions, we have not attempted to discuss the Dominican Republic in these terms,

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I. ECUADOR

1. Ecuador has traditionally been under the control of a wealthy, conservative ruling class factionalized basically into "in" and "out" groups. The Indian and mestizo masses have been largely inert. The army has been the major power element, and has been used as an instrument of oligarchic groups to attain political power. Popularity of governments therefore has been less important than military support, although in 1961 unwillingness on the part of the armed forces to repress anti-government mob action led to the fall of a president whose popularity had plummeted. Thus, the best gauge of stability is usually an executive's skill in balancing military groups in order to neutralize potential coup instigators.

2. The relationship between executive popularity and political stability is typified by the present situation. The reform-minded, moderate-military junta has been favored for the most part by a favorable economic climate which has prevented civilian politicians from finding support for their antigovernment pleas and actions. As a military government, the junta is regarded by the armed services as their own and they are particularly concerned that it make a good record and bring them prestige. In 1965 the economy has deteriorated because of a drop in vital banana exports and a rise in imports; in combination, an unfavorable balance of trade, reduced amounts of available foreign exchange, a drop in reserves, and slowing economic life in the banana-growing coast have resulted. Simultaneously, politicians have found an issue in the hypersensitive boundaries with Peru and have succeeded in pushing the junta toward a nationalistic attempt to introduce the issue at the 20 May OAS general conference.

3. Fearing that the politico-military situation is sliding, the high command has grown restive, and apparently pressure within the military is building for an accelerated transition to civilian rule lest a worsened climate sully the basically good record of the military in power. To this extent, popular opinion has an indirect influence on

stability insofar as it leads the armed forces to support or reject a government; in essence, this is the key to political stability in Ecuador. A fall of the regime at the moment is increasingly possible.

I-2

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J. EL SALVADOR

1. El Salvador is just beginning to emerge from an era of military dictatorships which were seldom responsive to public opinion. Economic and social development has complemented this recent political progress. Public opinion in the past four or five years appears to have become both more enlightened and more willing to make itself heard.

2. The present government under President Julio A. Rivera originally came to power by military coup in January 1961. In 1962 Rivera was elected president for a five-year term. The government appears to enjoy widespread confidence among both the military and the general public. Rivera has energetically courted public approval without acting in a demagogic manner, and he has also encouraged opposition parties to participate in the political process. In return he has had the advantage of constructive criticism from a responsible opposition. This is an unusual experience for El Salvador and one which may not last. Salvadoreans are, however, gaining experience and confidence in their ability to control their own future. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe elections will be held on schedule and that Rivera will step aside at the end of his legal term (1967).

K. GUATEMALA

1. Stability in Guatemala has come only with dictatorship. The survival of any government has depended on the support or toleration of the armed forces. Political opinion in Guatemala is significant only among very small segments of the population, as 75 percent of the people are illiterate and generally out of touch with national affairs. Most of the Mayan Indians--52 percent of the total population--are not conversant in the national language. Opinion is important among the armed forces, which are unusually responsive to public feeling during periods of civilian government, the upper and middle classes, the students, and politicians. In general, opinion is unsophisticated, responsive to cliches and stereotypes, and characterized by overcredulousness. Conservative groups are ever ready with a "Communist" label for the opposition, a sensitivity in part explained by Guatemala's Communist-dominated revolutionary period 1944-54. Liberal groups, on the other hand, are overresponsive to "Yankee imperialist" themes, a sensitivity in part explained by the long-term political and economic influence of US fruit companies in the country as well as by the US role in the Castillo Armas liberation. This low level of intellectualism is paralleled by the political immaturity evident in Guatemala's traditions of political opposition by conspiracy and of the transfer of power by extra-legal means.

2. The coup-based military regime under Col. Enrique Peralta has been able to provide stability because of military unity, economic prosperity, and a state of siege during most of its two years in power. The government's intolerance of normal political activity has channeled the opposition into subversive activities. Also Cuban-supported guerrillas and terrorists continue to harass the government. While these dangers are not serious at present, they could rapidly grow with disintegration of armed forces unity, harsh repressive tactics by the military government, deterioration of the economic situation, or a postponement of or gross interference with the electoral process. (Elections are tentatively scheduled for the end of 1965.) Under the Peralta regime, the development of opinion has been hampered by withholding from the public a good deal of information and threatening exile to those critical of the administration.

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L. HAITI

1. The longevity of any Haitian government has traditionally depended upon military backing and public apathy, rather than public opinion. The main agent of political change in Haiti, since its independence in 1803, has been the army, which has established and, in turn, overthrown almost every government. The Haitian people--poverty-stricken, beset by diseases, malnourished, and 90 percent illiterate--have not benefited from any government. Most Haitians live in the rural areas and derive a meager existence from small plots of land. They prefer to be undisturbed by the government. Only the urban dwellers--roughly 10 percent of the population--have even a limited education and are capable of constituting a body of public opinion. Public opinion, such as it is, has traditionally been molded by fear and brutality.

2. President Duvalier's legal term expired in 1963. He had himself "re-elected" to a second term, then declared "President for life," and reportedly is planning to become Emperor Francois I. He has been able to remain in office by successfully manipulating or neutralizing the power forces which exist. He has neutralized the army by creating two counterforces, the Civil Militia and the Secret Police (Ton Ton Macoute). The Civil Militia is composed of around 10,000 persons from the lower class who derive prestige from serving in the militia and, therefore, serve Duvalier out of gratitude. The secret police is composed of illiterate thugs, numbering around 1,500. They serve for material profit, either directly from the government or by extortion from the people. All internal opposition that has developed has been crushed, mostly by the secret police, and opponents have been either driven into exile or executed.

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3. Potential opposition to Duvalier which could result in his eventual overthrow would probably come from one of two sources, or from a combination of both. One is the exile groups outside Haiti, whose main weakness is their lack of unity. The other is the secret police and the remainder of the army, whose support could be lost by economic difficulties and Duvalier's consequent inability to pay their salaries. Many of the secret police, however, would probably defend Duvalier out of desperation, because if Duvalier falls, the secret police would very likely become the object of reprisals and violence on the part of the people whom they have persecuted. The population as a whole would probably be induced to oppose Duvalier only if he could be shown to be vulnerable and not in possession of the supernatural powers that he professes to hold.

4. Duvalier's disappearance from the scene--whether due to his overthrow, assassination, or death by natural causes--would surely precipitate chaos and a breakdown of law and order, at least in Port-au-Prince. There is no political faction either within or outside the country, even the military, strong enough to form a government or to control the blood bath which could result.

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M. HONDURAS

1. In the past several generations the army has played so prominent a role in Honduran politics that it has earned the reputation of final political arbiter. Events as recently as October 1963 indicate that the army will continue to play an important part for some time to come. At that time the army stepped in to prevent the election of a candidate who was not to the military's liking. The public is becoming increasingly aware of politics and of its ability to influence the course of events, but it is difficult to determine just what role public opinion will play in the future. Since opinion has traditionally not been expressed freely at the ballot box, there is danger that it will be expressed in a less democratic manner if the development of democratic institutions does not keep pace with the awakening of popular attitudes.

2. The present government, although it was established as the result of a military coup on 3 October 1963, does not have the wholehearted support of the military, mainly because of their dislike for Ricardo Zuniga, a civilian who has interposed himself between the military and their commander in chief, Col. Lopez. Furthermore, even though the administration is supposed to be backed by the Nationalist Party, the smaller of the two major parties, it is supported by only one faction of that party. The leader of that faction is Zuniga, the secretary general of the presidency, who actually controls the government. Zuniga's skill in playing off one opposing faction against another has helped to keep the Lopez government in power for a year and a half. Zuniga's talent for political intrigue enabled him to rig the February 1965 election so as to produce a constituent assembly responsive to his wishes and willing to confirm Lopez as "constitutional president." In addition, the loyalty to Lopez of the key 1st and 2nd army battalions stationed near Tegucigalpa and the lack of unity within the majority Liberal Party have bolstered Lopez' position.

M-1

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N. JAMAICA

1. Jamaica has been independent since August 1962 and has long been an oasis of stability in the troubled Caribbean. The major factors producing this stability have been a strong tradition of parliamentary rule based on a working two-party system, the homogeneous, easygoing population, the apolitical police and military establishments, and the lack of any large dissatisfied minority group. Both political parties enjoy broad popular support, based primarily on their respective labor unions. The large rural population is not a separate political force, but finds representation, along with other well-defined interest groups, in the two major parties. The rapid economic growth which contributed to stability in the 1950s has leveled off, and the long-term high unemployment and rapid population expansion could create sufficient pressure on the economy to affect the stability and popularity of the government.

2. In April 1962 the present government of 81-year-old Prime Minister Bustamante came to power with 50.6 percent of the voters endorsing its essentially conservative programs. The opposition is also generally moderate in outlook, although younger party members favor more progressive socialism than their elderly leader, Norman Manley. The departure from the political scene of these two party patriarchs could create a power vacuum and provoke a measure of instability, as could the growing number of unemployed who offer an inviting field for Communist-inspired agitators.

O. MEXICO

1. Mexico's ruling Party of Revolutionary Institutions (PRI) is composed of sectors which represent the main political elements in that country. Through its organization of political activity at every level the PRI exercises effective control over the formation of opinion as well as the expression of it. Dissatisfaction among workers, teachers, peasants, students, and other groups are almost always handled through the PRI-government complex simply because it is the only source of solution or alleviation. Communist and far rightist efforts to exploit even popular issues have been largely unsuccessful and quickly taken over by groups under government control.

2. Poverty and unrest among peasants hold a latent threat to the stability which Mexico's leaders consider essential to their prime target, the country's continuing rapid development. However, the peasants are the least organized and the most inchoate politically of any sector, and the government can probably maintain this situation until it is better prepared to cope with their problems.

3. Extreme leftist opinion in Mexico is articulate and has many forums including the entire educational system, most intellectual circles, some widely read magazines, and the PRI-government complex itself. Expression of this radicalism is regarded as legitimate and even desirable to give the sense of "continuing revolution" in Mexico. However, it and most other activities are closely supervised and curbed before they pose any threat to stability. Mexican leaders are not infallible in judging potential threats to stability but they seem more skillful at satisfying, sublimating, or suppressing them than the leaders of any other Latin American country.

P. NICARAGUA

1. The ruling Nationalist Liberal Party and the Somoza family, through the National Guard, have been successful in controlling subversive movements, and in the past 30 years Nicaragua has not experienced the violent changes of government which have plagued other Central American Republics. Two thirds of the population are campesinos with a literacy rate of less than 30 percent and with little relationship to the mainstream of society. Although this group is not an active subversive threat to the government because of its low level of expectations, its susceptibility to verbal propaganda offers a promising target to dissident elements. Nevertheless, the bulk of the population is apathetic, and public opinion has significance only among the politically active. Political bitterness is characteristic of the nonpeasant class, and force has provided the solution to many political differences.

2. The most exploitable issue in the country, feeling against the Somozas, remains alive because of the widespread belief that President Rene Schick Gutierrez is a Somoza puppet. Schick's personal prestige, however, seems to be growing, and there is increasing evidence that the Nicaraguan Government is a less monolithic structure than it has been. There have been more constructive exchanges between rival political groups. Under the influence of economic prosperity, civil liberties have been more respected and political tensions have eased. There have been no acts of terrorism or sabotage in recent months and no bands of guerrillas are known to be operating, despite the presence of more than 50 Cuban-trained terrorists in or near the country. The lack of effective antisubversive legislation has facilitated Communist infiltration into government institutions and private organizations, and the domination by the Communist-controlled General Confederation of Labor of a significant portion of organized labor.

3. A potential threat to domestic tranquility is posed by the presidential ambitions of General

Anastasio Somoza. It is probable that his pursuit of his ambition will reawaken the political bitterness of the past, and this may lead to disorder. Minority elements within the traditionalist Conservative Party (PCT) are probably the strongest non-Communist group that would use extralegal means to combat a Somoza candidacy. The PCT, if successful, probably would not overthrow the existing order but would merely replace one element of the upper class with another.

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Q. PANAMA

1. In thirty years, only the last two of Panama's presidents have served out their terms, and they managed the feat by accommodation with ultranationalist and pro-Communist advisers whose metier was their manipulation of public opinion. Indeed, it has been its cynical cooperation in fanning nationalist fervor against the US over the Canal Zone which has helped keep Panama's oligarchy in power for 60 years. Former president Chiari's handling of the January 1964 riots is only the most recent example of this.

2. Public emotion among the lower classes and student groups in Panama City and Colon is the great threat to stability in Panama. It is easily and quickly aroused by trained Communist agitators, extreme nationalists, and political opportunists, frequently using the ubiquitous and irresponsible radio and press. In fact, all anti-US forces in Panama, whether pro-Communist or not, realize that mob emotion and reaction are their greatest assets and try to exploit them. Control of most radio and press is concentrated in a few powerful groups who employ some of the most rabid nationalists and clever, articulate pro-Communists in Panama.

3. Presently the forces determined to oust moderate but ineffective President Robles are using every effort to arouse the public against him, his officials, his program, and his handling of US relations. Although there is usually an incompatibility among the oligarchy resentful of Robles' economic reforms, the supporters of demagogic former president Arnulfo Arias, and various Communist groups, the campaign of these varied elements against Robles is on common ground and has a single effect. There is an almost pervasive sense of impending trouble in Panama.

4. Unrest among Communist-led students, high urban unemployment, resentment of the oligarchy, economic and political opposition to Robles, and strong feelings on the Canal issue are the major factors for instability in Panama. Subversives and self-seekers of all political coloration are in a position to exacerbate them all and are constantly seeking the opportunity to do so. Thus far the issue of Canal negotiations with the US has been played down. If government officials become impatient with the course of the discussions or feel the need to deflect rising public criticism from themselves, the atmosphere could quickly change.

Q-1

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R. PARAGUAY

1. After a long history of dictatorship and bloody strife, Paraguay has attained a semblance of stability and is showing some signs of political liberation. The traditional bases of power in the country have been the strong, partisan military, the police, with a well-established internal security function, and the political organization of the ruling party. The two old, established parties, the Liberals and the Colorados, have alternated rule for nearly a century, but have never peacefully transferred power. A brief period of rule by a third party in the mid-1930s ended in a coup. The great mass of the Paraguayan people are apolitical subsistence farmers; the small number of leading families have strong partisan ties and constitute the only real source of political leadership in the country. Organized labor is small and completely government dominated.

2. The ten-year-old dictatorship of President Alfredo Stroessner has maintained itself in power by carefully balancing Colorado Party, police, and military interests. Public opinion was initially firmly against Stroessner, who severely repressed political opposition and was universally regarded as a typical Latin American dictator. However, he has gradually increased political and press freedom and has permitted two other political parties to register to participate in upcoming municipal elections. Only 53, Stroessner still firmly controls the loci of power, and the improving political and economic picture in Paraguay is helping his popularity both at home and abroad.

R-1

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S. PERU

1. Peru has historically been controlled by the wealthy, conservative elite. The oligarchy, with its military allies, has wielded almost absolute political power without deference to the wishes of the majority. The Indians, who comprise about 55 percent of the population, are not entitled to vote and take little part or interest in political affairs. Stability or instability has hinged primarily on the attitude of the military toward the regime in power and not on whether the administration is popular or unpopular.

2. Since Fernando Belaunde Terry was elected president in 1963, this historical pattern has been altered somewhat. Public opinion is playing a greater role in political stability, but it is still not the primary determinant. Belaunde, a leftist reformer, is extremely popular and the military is firmly behind him and his socioeconomic reforms. More important, traditional military ties with the oligarchy are weakening, and, as the military become more professional, their respect for constitutional adherence increases. Yet Belaunde remains at the mercy of the military; they could overthrow him at will were he to turn sharply toward the far left or press reform too swiftly. On the other hand, he is under heavy pressure to make good on his promises. Failure to move ahead on reform raises the threat of a Communist-led Indian popular revolution. The key to political stability in Peru today seems to be the achievement of a balance between reform and conservatism which will assume the general cooperation of all elements. Belaunde thus far has had success in this endeavor; the margin for error, however, is thin.

S-1

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T. TRINIDAD-TOBAGO

1. Trinidad-Tobago has historically had fundamental political stability based on British-fostered respect for the two-party system. Further contributing to stability has been basic economic viability resting on oil and sugar production, and the apolitical police and military forces. However, the two broadly based political parties in Trinidad-Tobago have polarized along ethnic lines, and although relative calm has been maintained, racial tension is never far below the surface. The East Indian population and the more urban Negro people support candidates and parties on a racial basis rather than on popularity or a political program. The more prolific East Indian minority, at the present rate of increase, will become the majority in 10 or 15 years, and this shift seems sure to increase tensions. The economic pressures caused by the growing number of unemployed workers and the agitation of some leftist-dominated trade unions also seem sure to breed instability.

2. The strong leadership of Prime Minister Eric Williams has been a dominant factor in the island's stability, and he enjoys the support of the Negro majority. With legislative backing, he has taken severe measures against irresponsible union activity. Williams has made a genuine attempt to improve living conditions in rural East Indian villages, and is attempting to allay Indian fears of Negro domination and repression. His success in steering an even course between the two races will continue to be the key to stability in Trinidad-Tobago.

U. URUGUAY

1. Uruguay is threatened by a deepening political and economic crisis. Nearly a century of two-party rule has created a strong tradition favoring democracy, and the military and police have been historically reluctant to interfere with democratic processes. Stability has also been fostered by the racial homogeneity of the population (about 90 percent white) and the development of a large middle class. Despite the fact that the Colorado Party had governed for 93 years when the Blancos won the 1958 elections by a narrow margin, control was transferred in an orderly, constitutional manner. However, the cumbersome nine-man collegial form of government, which in the last 50 years has been twice installed and once deposed, has created an atmosphere which makes decision-making nearly impossible. The present Blanco majority is split into two factions which rarely cooperate to provide the necessary votes for action. The peculiar Uruguayan election law facilitates the factionalization of parties, making it difficult to determine precisely whom or what public opinion favors.

2. The heavy cost of Uruguay's advanced social welfare legislation and the wasteful and inefficient government enterprises have created an economy characterized by industrial recession, rising unemployment, a spiraling cost of living, and growing budget deficits. The increasing public dissatisfaction with government ineptitude and with the economic malaise, typified by the current banking crisis, gives rise to a growing number of rumors of coups from either the right or the left. The strong, vocal Communist Party with 10,000 members and 20,000 sympathizers, has effectively exploited these issues, particularly among students and organized labor. It controls the nation's largest labor confederation. The fact that no popular leader has appeared has been a major factor in deterring an unconstitutional change of government. However, until fundamental economic and political reforms are effected, it is likely that instability will increase and that Uruguay's democratic institutions will be severely tested.

U-1

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V. VENEZUELA

1. The military in Venezuela have traditionally been the final arbiter of power and continue to be a key element. They have become more conscious of public opinion, more professional, and more committed to the support of constitutional government in recent years. President Leoni and his Democratic Action (AD) party, however, draw their most important political backing from labor, particularly rural labor, with which the party has been closely associated since its foundation. The political viability of the government has also come to depend on the ability of the AD party to continue a good working relationship with its coalition partners, the Democratic Republican Union (URD) and the Democratic National Front (FND), upon which Leoni relies for his control of Congress. Business confidence is another important factor contributing to stability and has been strengthened by the government's effective handling of Venezuela's healthy, growing economy. Nevertheless, the Leoni administration, which has to date expended most of its efforts on political matters involving party coalitions and patronage, has come under increasing public criticism for its slowness in implementing needed socioeconomic reforms.

2. Leftist extremist violence and subversion have in recent times supplanted the traditional threat from the military as Venezuela's foremost challenge to stability, although rightist military plotting still continues to be a factor. With a history of consistent dictatorial military regimes, public support for the government is now essentially molded by how the administration preserves the trappings of democratic rule in the face of extremist pressures from both left and right. The contribution of public opinion to stability was evidenced by the massive voter turnout during the presidential election of December 1963 at the height of leftist-extremist violence. This demonstrated overwhelming popular support for the present form of government.

V-1

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3. With a multiplicity of parties and political figures and lack of a clear one-party majority in Congress, the popularity of a single man, the President, is not as important as the popularity of the political system as a whole and the ability of the President to provide leadership by composing differences between frequently antagonistic political groups. Although President Leoni has less personal popularity than his predecessor, he has shown leadership ability by forging a coalition with other parties to gain control of Congress. Nevertheless, public support of the government in the future will depend as much on Leoni's ability to implement measures benefiting the masses as it will on his ability to maintain a stable coalition in Congress and effectively to combat extremist subversion.