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March 5, 1969

Dear Comrade Lewis:

SUBJECT: THE CENTRAL ISSUES

DECLASSIFIED

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NLJ/LIS 06-76

By cbm, NARA, Date 12-19-06

Here is The Word! Those who ignore it will be doomed to failure and consigned to the Dustbin of History! Those who follow it will achieve peace, progress, prosperity and promotion!

The central issues are:

1. What are our objectives?

Our main objectives are the preservation and strengthening of U S. security on our Latin American flank and the development of a democratic, prosperous and stable Latin America. The two objectives are interrelated. We should not discard the word "democracy" just because it has been bastardized by some and overworked in sickeningly pious platitudes by others. Nor is "democracy" difficult to define.

2. How should we view our relationship with Latin America?

This is a key question, if only because psychological factors are so important on both sides in our unique relationship with Latin America. We should not assume the attitude of tutor, parent or patron. We do not know or care enough to justify such attitudes, and at all events they are counterproductive in Latin America. Just as the Latinos have inhibiting complexes towards us, we must try to rise above our traditional and deeply ingrained provincial attitude of condescension, if not contempt, towards them. One formula calculated to save Latin American face and dignity is that of neighbors in the "home hemisphere". This implies a special relationship (which they want) without placing them in an inferior position.

3. How can we best achieve our objectives? More of the same? Disengagement?

Our performance needs much improvement. More of the same is not good enough. Disengaging and doing less may reduce our visibility in some useful ways, but is not the best answer if we wish to make significant progress towards our objectives. The best answer is to increase our efforts, improve our performance, and reduce visibility in appropriate ways. We should not allow frustration and disgust over our, and Latin American, failures, hypocrisy, naivete, stupidity etc., to sour us towards Latin America or to discourage us from trying to do better in the future.

4. Can we really help the democratization of Latin America?

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Of course, and we can say we are trying to do this without making absurdly optimistic predictions as to how soon it can be done, and without indulging in superficial and counterproductive generalizations about "the military", "the oligarchies", etc. It is essential to make clear our objectives in Latin America, while adding that our role is peripheral, that the main job is up to Latin Americans, that it will not be easy or quick, that we are not trying to impose our views or traditions but rather to assist Latin American self-determination, etc.

I'm off to Richmond this morning for two speeches but will be back this evening. Solidarity Forever!

GLister

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