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### Commencement Exercises - Stonehill College, Latin America

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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ADDRESS OF SENATOR MILDRED HARTFIELD (D., MONTANA)

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Commencement Exercises

Stonehill College, North Easton, Massachusetts

Sunday, June 3, 1962, 3:00 p.m.

LATIN AMERICA

I appreciate deeply your kindness in inviting me to be with you today and the honor which goes with it. You who have just finished four years of work will understand the special charm of a degree which is obtained without the completion of a single course-requirement. In the circumstances, one might even forgive you a touch of envy, if the good fathers will permit me to say so.

In a more serious vein, I appreciate this opportunity to be with you for a personal reason. This visit evokes deep and poignant memories. Many of you, I am sure, were acquainted with Professor Brassil Fitzgerald. Years ago he taught at Montana State University even as in recent years he taught here at Stonehill. I came to him at a somewhat advanced age for a college-student. I was 27 years old when I entered Montana University. It was not so much that I was a slow-learner. At least, I hope it was not that I was a slow learner. Rather, I think it was a case of stubbornness. In those simpler days of high rates of

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illiteracy--in those simpler days, it was commonplace to believe that any youth over the age of 12 could learn at least as much outside of school as in it. It took many years to convince myself of the fallacy of that belief.

So I went back to school, somewhat sobered by hitches in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, work in the copper mines and an assortment of odd jobs. I might note that my greatest career advancement in all the years from drop-out to back-in was from private to P.F.C. in the Marine Corps.

Professor Fitzgerald was one of my teachers at Montana University. I do not know for what reason--perhaps because he was also stubborn; perhaps because he had a scientific interest in me as a prototype of the contemporary school drop-out problem; perhaps because he sensed that I would tax his great abilities as an educator to the utmost--but whatever the reason, he gave me far more than a formal education. He not only sharpened my grammar; he sharpened my wits. Most of all, he helped me to form a more adequate perspective on human affairs and to develop a sense of self-discipline in participating in them. He drew on the well-springs of his own good and great character in order to give me breadth, depth and direction.

His counsel, in class and out, together with that of my wife, set the basic pattern of my career in public life. So, in reality it is this early contact with Professor Fitzgerald to which my presence

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among you, today, may be traced. You will understand, then, the sense of sweet sorrow which I feel in being here, a feeling which I know Mrs. Mansfield, who was also taught by Brassil, shares. For my career which Professor Fitzgerald did so much to launch has now led me to this place where he ended his career just a short time ago.

In life, Brassil Fitzgerald gave me some of my most decisive experiences. In death, he leaves me some of my most enduring memories.

Among other things, Professor Fitzgerald encouraged my interest in Latin America. For awhile, I taught its history at Montana University. And in recent years I have traveled extensively in the Republics to the south.

So, in part, in tribute to Brassil Fitzgerald and, in part, because Latin America is likely to be of compelling importance to you in the years ahead, I should like to turn your attention to that subject today. I have chosen Latin America, too, because it affords an opportunity to try to impart to you something of the kind of perspective in which Professor Fitzgerald helped me to view human affairs.

If, as most of us do, you skim the newspapers for your information on Latin America you know that until recent years there has been very little news. Events in Cuba, of course, acted to enlarge the flow of information. Still, the composite picture of Latin America which emerges from news-coverage remains flat and two-dimensional. It is like a photographer's montage of a handful of candid camera shots. I am sure

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that as I describe some of these photographs, you will recall them. The mish-mash includes a naked Amazonian savage complete with poison darts. It includes a child obviously suffering from malnutrition and other diseases. It includes a band of bearded revolutionaries, a snow covered peak in the desolate Andes, an old and beautiful Spanish cathedral, an Indian in high felt hat standing beside a llama, a family of downtrodden peasants huddled together outside a shack of a home, a student riot led by communists, a military uprising, rumba dancers, the futuristic city of Brasilia and, most recently, a Peace Corps volunteer helping to build what appears to be a well in a remote village under a sign which reads Alliance for Progress.

Now, there is nothing inaccurate in any of these flashes. Each one, taken individually, is a scene from actual life in Latin America today. But to be familiar with these flashes, to lump them together as Latin America is to understand neither the region nor what is transpiring in it.

We must ask ourselves, first, have we, with these and similar mental flashes, seen all the elements in the situation or just a part of them? Second, we must ask ourselves, do these flashes--each of equal size and shape--give us an accurate sense of proportion with respect to the region?

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Let me illustrate to you, first, the kind of elements which are not reflected in this usual concept of Latin America. To be sure there is malnutrition in the region. The picture of the little child suffering from it, portrays the plight of too many men, women and children who are its victims. And there is disease--all sorts of disease, a good deal of which goes untreated. And there is illiteracy. And countless millions are housed in rural or urban shanty-towns. In short, people in great numbers in Latin America are exposed to a life which is a continuous and bitter struggle for mere survival, from birth to death.

But there is also another side of the coin. Millions in Latin America are well-fed and, in some places, very well-fed. Particularly in the large cities, there are excellent public health services, medical facilities, thousands of first-rate doctors and nurses. As for schooling, while it is appallingly inadequate in many areas, in several countries, it is good by world-wide standards and in at least some instances it compares with the best. It may surprise you to learn, in a region of so much illiteracy that there are in the neighborhood of 400,000 college and university students and upwards of 50,000 will graduate from these schools during this present year. Some will become teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists and so forth. In other words, life will unfold for them pretty much as it will for you, except that it will have more of a Latin accent and, perhaps, offer less numerous and diversified outlets and opportunities.

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Take another element in the stereotype of Latin America: the naked Amazonian savage. It tells us that there is a primitive kind of existence in the region. But does it tell us how small a part of the population lives it? Does it tell us that, for the most part, the people of Latin America are more fully clothed than some of the tourists who walk through the Capitol during a hot Washington summer?

Or look for a moment at the picture of the magnificent Spanish cathedral, so much a hallmark of Latin American guidebooks. Do we see behind the magnificent cathedral? Do we see the thousands of parish churches of these catholic countries? Do we see the thousands of hard-working priests in these simple surroundings? Do we see them laboring in much the same way as do priests in this country and the world over, trying their best to minister to much the same needs?

Or look, too, for a moment at the revolutionaries, the student rioters, the military insurrectionists. Look at the tableaux of terror and violence in which the newspaper accounts freeze these scenes from Latin American life and then look deeper. Do not isolate them in an empty background as a camera does. Do not view them in terms of our experience, in which many avenues exist for the peaceful redress of grievance, for the assertion of popular will. Look at them, rather-- if you would comprehend their meaning more accurately--in the light of certain political facts of life in Latin America. View them in the light

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of tyrannical governments which brook no peaceful opposition. View them in the light of ineffectual government which countenances widespread economic and social misery and offers no hope of alleviating it. Or view them in the light of careless and corrupt government which exploits the many for the personal enrichment of the few. To see the violence--abhorrent as it may be--without seeing these other factors is to see without depth.

These are but a few of the gaps and the distortions in a two-dimensional comprehension of the situation in Latin America. If all the gaps were filled, if all the distortions were set aright, I daresay a somewhat different concept of the region as a whole would emerge. It would contain all these flashes plus many others. In proportion, moreover, some would loom very large and others would hardly show at all. Indeed, what would emerge would be a kind of curve of distribution. It would embrace just about all of the elements which are found in life in the United States, but in different proportions. The segment, for example, which we regard as social advance would be smaller. There would be, in Latin America, proportionately, a much higher number of people without adequate food and shelter and modern services for their health, personal education and development. There would be, proportionately, a much larger percentage of the people living on, working on and depending on the land for their livelihood and getting very little return for their efforts. The urban poor, proportionately, would be more numerous, the rich more conspicuous



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and, all in-between, fewer and less favored. There would be, proportionately, a much more limited development of modern science and industrial technology and an even more limited distribution of its opportunities and benefits among the people. There would be, proportionately, less geographic and cultural integration but more racial and religious integration than in this country. There would be, proportionately, less diversified and less productive economies. There would be, proportionately, less effective institutions, less responsible government in a popular sense. There would be, proportionately, much more fear of internal political upheaval but much less concern with international conflict.

But let me say again, that these and other differences are differences of degree, not absolute differences. Just about the same great diversity of human experience and human hope which we find in the United States is present in Latin America. Proportions alone provide the significant variance.

And in this great diversity, there exists in Latin America an enormous potential for advance in every aspect of human hope and aspiration. It exists quite apart from what we may or may not do in our relations with that area. Generally speaking, Latin America is not going to go forward on the basis of what we do or, indeed, by what any other outside country does. It is going to move, stand still or retrogress primarily on the basis of what the Latin Americans, themselves, do or fail to do.

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The Peace Corps worker building a well in a remote village is a lonely figure and, alone, can have little significance in a continent of thousands of remote villages, and millions of neglected human beings. It is obvious that if the future of these villagers depended primarily on Peace Corps workers we would have to find them, and pay for them, not by the hundreds as we now do, but by the thousands and tens of thousands. Similarly, a great dam built under a foreign-aid program at a cost of many millions of dollars is but a speck on the rivers and streams of Latin America. It is obvious that if light, power and irrigation are to be brought to all the areas of present and future need in Latin America under the aegis of foreign aid alone, it would take not millions or hundreds of millions but billions of dollars.

Similarly, a Latin American military force based heavily on military aid from outside will not automatically insure the security of a Latin American country or the freedoms of its people. On the contrary, it can become a source of insecurity to both unless it has strong roots in its own peoples and serves them through an effective and responsible civil government. Similarly, a Voice of America explaining the evils of communism--no matter how powerful and repetitive--will not be heard in a nation driven to the threshold of massive revolt by years of neglect and oppression. A diplomacy of moderation, of patience, will have little influence unless it is coupled with strong links of mutual interest in commerce, cultural enrichment and the maintenance of peace.

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Now you will note that in mentioning the Peace Corps, foreign aid, military aid, the Voice of America and diplomacy, I have mentioned most of the means by which the United States conducts its official relations with Latin America. To them might be added the unofficial relations-- the business and investment contacts which we have, the tourist contacts, the highly significant private educational, labor and religious contacts.

Yet even when these are added, what the United States does or does not do will not be the primary factor in what transpires in most of Latin America.

Do I mean to suggest, then, that these contacts are unimportant? Not at all. They are immensely important, to us as well as to Latin America. But I think it is essential that we see their role in proper perspective. It is essential that we recognize that, for the most part, they are peripheral to the situation in most Latin American countries. They are not, of themselves, the key to Latin America's future.

The key lies within Latin America itself and the inner forces, the native forces which play upon each national situation. You young people will understand that perhaps better than anyone else. You are subject to all sorts of influence from outside. Sometimes it is welcomed. Sometimes it is not. Sometimes you react favorably to it. Sometimes you do not. But, in the last analysis, it is from within yourself, from what you are and what you hope to be that your futures will unfold.

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In a somewhat similar fashion the Latin Americans will welcome guidance and advice from outside in some matters and sometimes they will not. Sometimes they will welcome assistance and proffers of friendship and sometimes they will not. Sometimes they will be misled by outside nations and sometimes they will not. But in the last analysis what they do with their nations and societies will be what they themselves decide. In the long run, no other nation can make these decisions.

Once that fundamental reality is appreciated, we can place our own role in proper perspective. Without the conceit of assuming ultimate responsibility for what ultimately transpires in Latin America, we can do many constructive things in Latin America and together with Latin America. In many Latin American countries, there is a strong will to close the time-gap in social and economic modernization as between themselves and the United States and other Western nations. There is a strong will to have done with long, sorry histories of oppressive, corrupt and ineffectual governments and to evolve a new tradition of stability, responsibility and responsiveness in government, a new tradition of dedicated public service for the benefit of all rather than the few.

Where such a will exists, it is not a question whether change will or will not come. It is already in process. The significant question is whether it can come in orderly, evolutionary channels. If the pressures for change are great and the resistance to change powerful,

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the prospects are for revolutionary explosions with unpredictable repercussions and reverberations. Cuba is an example of what can happen elsewhere in Latin America. Indeed, we have seen just in recent months situations of dangerously high pressures for change and dangerously high resistance to change, in Venezuela and Argentina, and we are likely to see others. The balance is still uneasy and is likely to remain so in much of Latin America for a long time.

Do I suggest, then, that there is no role for us? On the contrary, I would suggest that the Alliance for Progress and other elements of our Latin American policy can be of the greatest importance. But I stress that they can be constructive, in any significant sense, only when the efforts of the Latin Americans themselves are clearly directed towards evolutionary progress. Then our policies and our actions may, indeed, provide a decisive margin. But to plunge into every situation in an indiscriminate fashion on the assumption that it all and always depends on us is as fallacious as to evade our responsibilities on the assumption that what we do doesn't really make any difference at all.

What we do does matter a great deal, for better or for worse. And we must try to make it matter for the better. For we have a great stake in what occurs in Latin America. There is a trade of many billions of dollars involved. There are very substantial investments. There are political and cultural ties which have much to do with whether this hemisphere and we as a part of it remain reasonably secure in a most insecure world.

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But beyond all others, we have a deeply human stake in the efforts of the people of these other American Republics to build the institutions through which to fulfill, in order and stability, the promise of freedom.

We will be able to help Latin America, we will be able to act for better rather than for worse as we refine our perception of the realities of that region rather than beguile ourselves with the superficial. We will be in a better position to safeguard our interests as we act with a mature and sober restraint on the dictates of these realities.

I hope, certainly, that you will bear in mind this need for a deepening of our understanding of Latin America in the event your futures should carry you to that area in some official or unofficial capacity. I hope you will remember it even if your future association with Latin America should be limited to newspaper reading. For, as you deepen your understanding, you will be in a position to appreciate and to sustain those who have the heavy responsibility of trying to preserve and to strengthen inter-American relations for the benefit of all Americans--north and south--in the Western Hemisphere.