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Address of Senator Kennedy at Annual Mansfield Lecture - University of Montana

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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ADDRESS BY SENATOR KENNEDY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT THE ANNUAL MANSFIELD LECTURE, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, last Friday evening, the senior Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the able and distinguished assistant majority leader, delivered the annual lecture at the University of Montana that happens—I say in all modesty—to be my name. I was deeply honored that Senator Kennedy agreed to deliver this address. But even more, his statement on international affairs was most outstanding.

I commend it to the Senate's attention and ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

ADDRESS BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL MANSFIELD LECTURE, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Thank you for inviting me to deliver the annual Mansfield Lecture in honor of the distinguished Majority Leader, and Senator Mansfield from the State of Montana, Mike Mansfield. The range and depth of interest of Senator Mansfield bestows a unique opportunity on a lecturer, for he can comment on any number of areas in which the Senator from Montana already has broken ground.

Whether in foreign affairs or domestic issues, Senator Mansfield has exhibited imaginative and responsible leadership for the Congress and the nation.

But it is in the field of international relations where the Majority Leader has concentrated his genius, forcing his colleagues often reluctantly, to face critical questions: the legality of the Vietnam War; the need for a realistic and ill-conceived anti-ballistic missile system; or the duty of Congress to reassert its responsibilities in setting parameters for the use of U.S. armed forces abroad.

In keeping with his spirit, tonight, I would like to offer a new perspective on our relations with Latin America. As we enter the coming decade, I see the need for a moment of reflection, a moment of looking back and deciding how far we have come and how far we have to go.

We began the decade of the Sixties by joining in a call to hemispheric action, a call to promote a better life for millions of Latin Americans who were forced to endure both poverty and oppression. They had been deprived of hope, of faith in political institutions, of a share in the economic and social progress of most of the Western Hemisphere, and of the most basic right that the Western Hemisphere promised the world—the dignity of the individual. In recognition of these deprivations, in March of 1961, the sound of a revolutionary trumpet echoed to the governments and to the people of Latin America, calling on them to join with us in a new Alliance for Progress.

Yet, barely a month later on April 17, 1961—nine years ago tonight—we launched the Bay of Pigs invasion. The invasion was an embarrassing reminder of our history of gunboat diplomacy toward the hemisphere. It showed we had not yet learned the lesson that we have no divine right or latin-communist rhetoric. They had been deprived of hope, of faith in political institutions, of a share in the economic and social progress of most of the Western Hemisphere, and of the most basic right that the Western Hemisphere promised the world—the dignity of the individual. In recognition of these deprivations, in March of 1961, the sound of a revolutionary trumpet echoed to the governments and to the people of Latin America, calling on them to join with us in a new Alliance for Progress.

Yet, barely a month later on April 17, 1961—nine years ago tonight—we launched the Bay of Pigs invasion. The invasion was an embarrassing reminder of our history of gunboat diplomacy toward the hemisphere. It showed we had not yet learned the lesson that we have no divine right to intervene, forcibly or otherwise, in the internal affairs of Latin American nations.

Rarely in our history have two events, coming so close together, so clearly symbolized the best and worst in American foreign policy, Time and again over the past decade, we have seen the noble goals of the Alliance for Progress perverted by the cold war philosophy symbolized by the Bay of Pigs.

For decades, the Pentagon, the State Department and our intelligence agencies have urged the United States to intervene on the side of stability in Latin America out of fear that another JFK ends his foreign policy career by discharging the gunsight. When the United States intervenes to support a government in its efforts to suppress the people's right to self-determination, it shows a new vision of the American people's role in the world.

It Is a new Charter of the Organization of American States that reasserts allegiance to the goals of the Alliance. All too often, news of Latin America's attracts our attention only when a government is overthrown, a plane is hijacked or an ambassador is kidnapped and murdered. The American public still does not realize that 25 republics share our hemisphere. Nor do they realize that more than 10 million of our own citizens are descendents of the blend of Spanish, Portuguese and Indian cultures that is Latin America, or that millions of our black citizens have historical ties to the citizens of Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados.

And so today, it is a personal tragedy that I can repeat nearly the same somber facts about Latin America that President Kennedy cited in 1960 and that Robert Kennedy cited in 1966. The Alliance has been a human failure. More than 30 percent of the population still die before their 40th birthday. Poverty, malnutrition, and disease continue to deny strength and incentive to the majority of the people in Latin America. Family processes bearing miniature coffins offer testimony to one of the world's highest infant mortality rates. There is a 70 percent dropout rate in secondary schools and a 75 percent dropout rate in secondary schools.
The Alliance has been an economic failure. Even our hopes for economic development are far from realization. The rate of population growth per capita has averaged 1.8 percent for the decade, lower than it was in Latin America five years in the future. Where there was no Alliance.

American economic assistance has averaged $2 billion a year. This is far from the $10 billion that in many instances could be bought more cheaply on the world market. We still demand that Brazil, which is not an insurrectionary state, pay 50 percent of the goods it buys in U.S. ships. These shackles on our foreign aid have reduced its value by 40 percent. In too many countries, the only difference between the Alliance and the previous U.S. foreign assistance outpost has been the nameplate on the door.

The Alliance has been a social failure. Land remains in the hands of a minute percentage of the population. In some countries, less than 1 percent of the people own more than 98 percent of the land. One third of the rural labor force is unemployed. There is an increase in the total population of the rural unemployed, a growing number of the world's will grow larger, creating disorder and increasing the flow of unskilled persons into cities. By the end of the eighties, the cities will have not demonstrated the capability to absorb their present labor force.

The Alliance has been a political failure. It was intended to write a new page of political history in Latin America, to end the depredations of dictators, military governments, and military coups. Instead, 13 constitutional governments have been overthrown in nine years. Today, 11 Latin American republics and 2 military governments rule, supported by hundreds of millions of dollars in American military assistance. In some of those nations, basic human rights are violated and the democratic ideals of the Alliance have vanished.

And the spirit of the Alliance has failed here at home. Despite our strong traditions of democracy, the United States continues to support regimes in Latin America that deny basic human rights. We stand silent while political prisoners are tortured in Brazil. Cruel and brutal punishment is suffered by students, priests, and nuns whose only crime has been that they know someone suspected of revolutionary activity. In instances, their only crime was advocating change.

Lawyers have been arrested, beaten and burned with cigarettes. Students have been stripped and beaten. Others have been shocked with electric current, or have their thumbs thrust under their fingernails by a government we support.

According to one authority, since 1964 in Brazil, there have been 30,000 political arrests. There are at least 10,000 political prisoners today and 1,000 political exiles. Thousands of prisoners have been beaten. Hundreds of prisoners have been tortured. More than 23,000 persons may have been killed. 4,000 persons have been deprived of their political rights, including three former presidents. Thirty-five persons have been arrested, 20 former government officials, 18 legislators, and thousands of civil servants. Worst of all, the government has admitted that the Salvadoran Patriot Protection Service had been systematically murdering Indians in an attempt to clear the country's Amazonian frontier for settlement.

I relate these facts, shocking as they are, not because Brazil is alone among governments in the world and hemisphere that engage in such repression. I relate these facts because Brazil has a government that we finance from the money, arms, technical assistance and the comfort of close diplomatic relations.

There is a shocking contrast between the political reality of the present government of Brazil and the political ideal of the Alliance. We must condemn such repression. It is a flagrant denial of our own ideals to be identified with such actions.

While the United States did not initiate the change of government in Brazil, it is we who have chosen to come to share power. The junta overthrew a constitutional government at a time when inflation was crippling the country's economy and observers were fearful of the mounting influence of communists. Thirty days before the coup, it was we who said the United States would support any government that opposed every military takeover. Within hours, it was we who recognized the junta. Three months later, it was we who committed $50 million to the new regime. Last year, despite continuing reports of terror and oppression, it was we who gave $19 million in military aid to the regime of the generals.

The Council of Europe has condemned the Greek military dictatorship for political oppression and the torture of political prisoners. The Organization of American States can do no less. It is the responsibility of the nations of the hemisphere to focus the spotlight of international opinion on the outrages being committed in Brazil. The Organization must call for the policies that are an affront to civilization.

It is not only in Brazil where we see the contractions of support for authoritarian regimes and the ideals of the Alliance. In Argentina, an authoritarian military regime, under the direction of university and military authorities, has been overthrown in Peru military regime rules, and the freedom of the press is ended. In Paraguay, a dictator rules and political expression is silenced.

Authoritarian rule forces those who have dared to challenge it, or have been stripped of their citizenship, or have been deprived of their right to vote. We should never have supported those regimes that have been the subject of the Alliance. We must never support them again.

When the United States is identified with those authoritarian regimes through our economic and military assistance, we defeat our own political purposes and we are false to the ideals of the Alliance. Much of the $673 million in military aid granted in the past nine years has gone to those governments who have applied the same concepts to democracy.

The premise behind our military assistance has been that anti-Americanism, subversion, and communism will end if the military forces are better trained and equipped. In fact, we have seen an even more virulent form of anti-Americanism expressed by the leaders of recent military coups. And the experience of the past decade has shown that the people of Latin America are not vulnerable to foreign ideologies. It was not the efficiency or power of the U.S. equipment that brought defeat to the guerrillas who opposed Guevara, the Bolivian peasants who resented foreign investment.

The answer to the threat of unrest produced by hunger, poverty, disease and institutionalized governmental insufficiency is not to engage in the destruction of people who have exploited them, but to eradicate these ancient evils.

It is time to recognize that fundamental social change is inevitable in the world. Stabilizing the country's economy, we can attempt to produce confrontation with the revolution of rising expectations in Latin America.

The only rational policy for American assistance to Latin America is to direct our effort to persuade governments, whatever their form, to protect the rights of their people. We cannot give support to those military governments which give rise to repression and terror. Yet, last year, one of the implications of the study produced by Governor Rockefeller after his trip to Latin America was that the United States should support military regimes regardless of how they acquired power.

I oppose the report's willing acceptance of military regimes. A regime which usurps a constitutional government and engage in political oppression forfeits its right to all direct United States aid except humanitarian relief. We cannot call the descendents of Juan Ponce de Leon and San Martin that their struggles for freedom are now in vain while a cadre of self-appointed military officers decides the fate of the people in their land.

Three hundred years ago the discovery of America, Colombia's Camilo Torres stated, "The bedrock of any human community, whether it be governed by a tyrannical government or not, is the preservation of natural rights above all the preservation of his personal freedom. Can we, then, permit this question of freedom? Will his personal freedom is no less his birthright."

The Latin American men and women have all died to protect that birthright and we must respect their heritage and reject the casual embrace of authoritarianism.

The destiny of Latin America is for Latin Americans to decide, not the United States. But we can make it clear that although we will not intervene, neither will we be party to any form of repression of the people and their aspirations.

The Alliance for Progress was never intended to be managed, reviewed and judged solely by the United States. To the extent that has been the case, the Alliance has been perverted. At Vina del Mar a year ago, representatives of Latin America made clear that "Latin American countries should endeavor to reach solutions born out of their own consciences, which reflect their own national identity and interest." Ultimately, if solutions to the complexities of reform and development are to be successful, the Latin American nations must define the solutions.

What is now clear is that the Alliance for Progress of the 1970's must return to the spirit that launched a wave of enthusiasm in Latin America nine years ago. That spirit, called for political freedom and social justice, not just economic development. The basic failure of the Alliance for Progress is that it was never tried. For a decade, we have emphasized the need for alliance and we have forgotten the need for progress.

If we are to end poverty and injustice for the millions, the Alliance of the 70's must return to the spirit that launched a wave of enthusiasm in Latin America nine years ago. That spirit called for political freedom and social justice, not just economic development. The basic failure of the Alliance for Progress is that it was never tried. For a decade, we have emphasized the need for alliance and we have forgotten the need for progress.

If we are to end poverty and injustice for the millions, the Alliance of the 1970's must return to the spirit that launched a wave of enthusiasm in Latin America. The real question is not whether the change will come. The question is when, with international support, we can accelerate peaceful change, and avoid a more violent and destructive transformation. The true test of the Alliance for Progress is whether the United States in the 1970's must be how to reform our own efforts so that they complement the Latin American's struggle to modernize.
First, the United States should reassert the political goals of the Alliance. We must match our actions to our rhetoric. Contrary to the original perception of the Alliance, we should not consent to the overthrow of democratic governments on the belief that a "new type of military man has come to the fore."

Second, I urge the immediate withdrawal of all of our military missions. I believe that we must begin now to put to rest the false position to military intrusion in the political arena by our attitude, our speech and our action. Our military presence remains in 17 Latin American countries including Costa Rica, where they have no Army, and Peru where they asked us to phase it out a year and a half ago. Our largest military mission is in Brazil despite that country's use of severe political repression.

In addition to being a far too visible evidence of the U.S. presence in Latin America, the missions have covertly influenced military cliques in the host states. At times, our missions have harassed police at odds with the official statements of our ambassadors. We have been described as "a symbol of alliance, not for progress, but for tyranny."

We should lose no time in phasing out our military assistance programs and we should halt sales of arms on credit to Latin America. The military coup in Guatemala last year, for example, was demonstrated in the war last year between El Salvador and Honduras. Both armies were U.S. equipped and their officers, U.S. trained.

Third, the United States should reserve its economic assistance for those development programs designed to produce social justice and not solely those projects whose only goal is economic growth. The agenda of economic growth of the Alliance in the 1970s must be based on acceptance of fundamental change. We must reject, as inadequate, regressive and counter-productive the claims of those who would cling blindly to the stability of the status quo. The agenda should be used to encourage the economic and social transformation of the society. The Alliance must reassert the priorities of assuring the people of Latin America an adequate education, health care and the opportunity to participate in the process of development.

Peru was a single area where a new approach is needed is the area of land reform. Agricultural production per capita declined in seven countries during the past nine years. Since 1961, the number of landless families added to rural poverty actually has outstripped the number resettle. We are falling farther behind. There are now nine to eleven million Latin American rural families without land.

The present land tenure system reflects the archaic and unjust social structure that began with the Spanish conquest. The ancient lands of the Aztects, Incas and Mayas were usurped, and the Indians were en­slaved. In many areas today, there has been little change for 300 years. The large estales, which spread for thousands of acres, must be divided into economically sustaining farms or cooperative farms, in order to free the campesino and to permit the more productive utilization of the land.

Nothing less than a thorough reforma­tion of rural society is required. For only by undertaking a comprehensive land reform program can the sharecropper's isolation from the development process be ended. Only through comprehensive land reform can the sharecropper's isolated past be removed from Latin America.

I would urge that the United States concentrate its agricultural assistance in those countries that are carrying out progressive agrarian reform. As an example, the United States of Latin American land of seventeen million, we talk of spending $400 million for land reform over the next four years, while able to do at least as much in Latin America, a continent of 270 million people. We must insure that agricultural credit, improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and modern farming techniques are available to the small farmer. For too long, the benefits of the "Green Revolution" have accrued solely to the hacien­da owner, while the small farmer and the sharecropper have been condemned to farm in the same tradition as their forefathers.

Fourth, the United States must assure that American private investment in Latin America plays a much more positive role in the development process. In the past eight years, American business has repatriated $8.5 billion in private profits from past investments, more than three times the total of new investments.

Equally serious, the repair of U.S. prestige has been slowed by a slowdown in U.S. private investment. Part of the explanation for the decline of U.S. investment is found in more attractive investment opportunities in Europe and the impact of rising nationalism has been more important. Expropriation of foreign businesses has become the accepted method for regimes anxious for popular approval.

A realistic appraisal of the Latin American political scene underlines the likelihood of concerted political interest of the United States and Latin America to find a means to avoid the political trauma that accompanied each ex­propriation. Expropriation has followed military coups in Peru and Bolivia and led to estrangement in our relations with those countries.

The fall of the Belaunde government in Peru was particularly unfortunate because of the promise it held for progressive demo­cratic change. Like the governments of Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia and Venezuela it was pledged to carry out social and economic reform.

For nearly his entire term in office, President Belaunde sought a negotiated settle­ment with the International Petroleum Company, despite strong pressure to national­ize the oil fields. Yet, our State Depart­ment decided to put pressure on Peru, and the Organization of American States maintained the threat to take the case to the United Nations. It was not proved that a foreign oil company was under­mining a government that had been respon­sive to the democratic ideals of the Alliance. To avoid such tragic consequences, we must encourage private investment that ac­cords with the development goals of Latin America. The investment insurance and guaran­ties programs we now offer are only one element in the equation. They protect the U.S. investor. But they do nothing to avoid the chaotic effect of expropriation; and they do nothing to encourage Latin American private investment. They do nothing to en­courage the managerial skills and techniques to the Latin American nation.

Therefore, I would urge that we establish a series of alternative development procedures in which joint ventures, partial nationalization or long-term nationalization are agreed to by the prospective U.S. investor at the outset.

Similar investment procedures could be established for existing investments now in danger of expropriation. New ways could be found to protect private investment through enterprise to local, cooperative or public ownership. There is much we can do today. We have had the experience, for the first time of an expropriation crisis to establish the case of American assets in Latin America or to propose new methods of compensation.

Fourth, we must look more closely at another crucial element of our Latin American policy—our relationship with Cuba. Cuba's 1959 coup from active membership in the Organization of Ameri­can States. That action was based on two indictments against the regime of Fidel Castro. First, it stemmed from Castro's call for subversion and revolution against legitimate governments of Latin America. Second, it was rooted in the introduction of Soviet military influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Castro's past attempts to export his revolu­tion have been defeated. Since the failure of the guerrilla movement in Bolivia, there has been no direct Cuban re­ported by any Latin American nation. And the decisive actions of President Kennedy in the Cuban missile crisis ended the Soviet threat from that island.

In 1964, Venezuela brought charges of ag­gression against Cuba, Fidel Castro's public relations were broken by all OAS members except Mexico. In addition, at our urging, an attempt was made to isolate the Cuban re­gime economically. The effectiveness of that policy is open to serious doubt. Mexico and Canada, the OAS members with our West European allies, they maintaining strong economic ties with Cuba. Last year, Cuba's trade with West Europe increased by some $20 million. Non-communist nations, including Japan, also have extended more than $200 million in commercial credit to Cuba.

Venezuela, Uruguay, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and several Caribbean nations have ex­pressed their doubts and reservations about continuing the sterile policy of economic boycott. Ten days ago, Chile began an $11 million, two-year trade agreement with Ha­vana. Even Venezuela, which originally branded Cuba an aggressor in 1964, has now stepped forward for a normalization of trade relations with Cuba.

If the nations of Latin America are taking the initiative in a re-examination of the current Cuban policy, surely the United States can do the same.

There are additional reasons why a new look at Cuba is in order. The boycott unquestionably has pushed the Cuban government into greater dependence on the Soviet Union.

Moreover, readjustment in our relations with Cuba would deprive Castro of a psycho­logical defense that he has used since the beginning of the decade. By depicting the United States as an uncompromising foe of his regime, he has been able to justify repress­ive internal policies and to make our con­tainment policy the scapegoat for his island's economic difficulties.

In short, it is time to recognize that our trade and travel restrictions have not proved effective. To the extent that the Cuban regime is isolated at all, it is by its own choosing and not as a result of any effective American policy. In addition, by re­stricting the flow of information, we help the Cuban government's effort to permit only a single point of view to reach the Cuban people.
I share the opinion expressed a month ago at the Caracas meeting of Latin American representatives that economic boycott is neither the most realistic nor the most productive attitude toward a country whose economic and social system we do not share.

That does not mean we are about to whitewash the Castro regime or overlook the authoritarian structure that now denies liberty to the people. Political oppression and political prisoners still exist in Cuba today. There is no free press; there is no right of dissent. I condemn the existence of such political repression in Cuba, just as I condemn it in non-communist states.

But our policies have been inconsistent toward Cuba and other equally authoritarian regimes. Toward Cuba, our policy is one of artificial and total isolation. Toward authoritarian military governments, we encourage private trade and we maintain formal diplomatic relations. We offer extensive economic and military assistance, and thereby support and identify ourselves with those regimes.

Tonight, I have called on us to limit ourselves to the barest formal relationships with those nations that show a total disdain for democratic principles. I do not seek a rupture of diplomatic relations with them, since such relations entail no approval or moral judgment of the government. If we are completely isolated from these regimes, there will be no opportunity to work for change, no opportunity for diplomats, businessmen, labor leaders and journalists to exert the pressure of intelligent, informed opinion.

And so now with Cuba, I ask only that we explore taking the first step, a re-examination of our trade and travel restrictions. The process may be long and the response from Cuba may be unenthusiastic, but we must begin. By geography, history and culture, Cuba is a part of the Western Hemisphere. As long as the Cuban government respects the OAS charter's prohibition against interference in the internal affairs of other nations, we should join our Latin American allies in exploring the quiet steps leading to Cuba's re-integration to the Inter-American system.

We are starting a new decade, so let us discard the rhetoric and concepts of the cold war and look to the future. It is time to seek a recommitment to the spirit of the Alliance for Progress—to political freedom, social justice and economic progress.

If that spirit does not infuse our programs, then no matter how much money and assistance flows across the border, or how intelligently our programs are conceived, we may fail. We have the capacity, the talent and the technology to help bring about the transformation of Latin America without violent and bloody disorder. But to do that, we must return to the spirit that began the decade. Nine years ago, John Kennedy challenged us to "transform the American continent into a vast crucible of revolutionary ideas and efforts—a tribute to the power of the creative energies of free men and women—an example to all the world that liberty and progress walk hand in hand". Difficult as it may be, it is time to start anew, it is time again to meet that challenge.