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1



SERVICE SET

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM OF NSC MEETING 583

Held on Wednesday,  
March 6, 1968, 12:00 noon,  
in the Cabinet Room.

Those Present:

The President

The Vice President

State - Secretary Rusk  
Deputy Under Secretary Bohlen  
Assistant Secretary Oliver  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Sayre

Defense - Secretary Clifford  
Under Secretary Nitze

JCS - General Wheeler

Treasury - Secretary Fowler

CIA - Director Helms

USIA - Director Marks

WH - W. W. Rostow  
B. K. Smith  
Tom Johnson  
W. G. Bowdler

Assistant Secretary Oliver opened the discussion on Latin America by reporting on his appearance this morning before Senator Morse's Latin American Subcommittee. He said he had been "well and tolerantly" received with no grilling on the arms buildup in Latin America.

SANITIZED

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On the Latin American paper before the NSC, Assistant Secretary Oliver singled out three issues:

- (1) the problem of keeping up the momentum of the Alliance for Progress if the Alliance appropriation were cut a second year in a row.
- (2) the drop in Latin American trade in 1967 which amounted to 6%, or \$600 million.
- (3) some -- though exaggerated -- backsliding on economic integration since the Summit.

Reporting on his trips to Central America and four South American countries, Mr. Oliver made these points:

- (1) The Central American Common Market (CACM) is going through a difficult adjustment period. The members are considering restrictive measures which would undo the progress made by CACM. We should shift the emphasis of our assistance away from bilateral aid and toward adjustment assistance tied to the strengthening of CACM institutions.
- (2) As the Mexican Foreign Minister has suggested, we should place more emphasis on physical integration to encourage economic integration.
- (3) During the South American tour, he launched the idea of a periodic meeting of Ministers of Defense as a way of getting the Latin Americans to focus more realistically on their military requirements.
- (4) In his conversation with Belaunde, he achieved limited success in getting the promise of a memorandum explaining projected military expenses for 1968, but he received no assurances with respect to postponement of additional military equipment.

The President gave these directives:

- (1) that a task force be established to make a detailed study of existing national road systems in Latin America and how they might be linked up. He indicated a willingness to give his support to findings of the task force.<sup>1/</sup>
- (2) that top level officers responsible for managing our Latin American affairs make a special effort to visit Latin America and engage in other activities demonstrating our continued, high-level interest in the area.

Secretary Bohlen reported on the recently concluded Budapest Meeting of Communist Parties. The most significant result of the Conference was the indication of the Soviet willingness to hold a meeting of communist parties, without all parties participating, to act on the Chinese problem.

Mr. Bohlen also described the Sofia Meeting of Warsaw Pact countries opening today. He noted that both Brezhnev and Kosygin are attending. He said that we do not know what the purpose of the meeting is. Rumors have it that Rumania asked for the session. Among possible motives are to oppose NPT, reduce USSR control in the Warsaw Pact, or discuss European security.

The President told Mr. Bohlen that he hoped that he too would have time to visit several Latin American countries to demonstrate our high-level interest in the area.

The President asked Mr. Helms for the latest situation report from Vietnam. Mr. Helms said [REDACTED] the Generals are fed up with President Thieu and are about to dump him. Mr. Helms indicated this is not surprising, but the timing is hardly auspicious.

<sup>1/</sup> - The President subsequently said that the study might be expanded to include air transportation and communications.

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-4-

The President asked General Wheeler for latest developments on the military side. General Wheeler noted the North Vietnamese-Vietcong buildup around Hue, Danang and Pleiku. He said that our forces were moving out to meet them, and we could expect some pretty heavy fighting in the next few days.

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LIST OF ATTENDEES, NSC MEETING

March 6, 1968; Wednesday, 12:00 noon

Vice President Humphrey

Secretary of State Rusk  
Deputy Under Secretary Bohlen  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert Sayre

Secretary of Defense Clifford  
Deputy Secretary Nitze

Secretary of Treasury Fowler

CIA Director Helms

JCS Chairman Wheeler

USIA Director Marks

Walt Rostow  
Tom Johnson  
Bromley Smith  
William Bowdler