

Latin America and the United States: The Changing Political Realities. Edited by Julio Cotler and Richard R. Fagen. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974. pp. 417. \$4.95)

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's recent trip to Latin America (February 16-24, 1976) reflects the true character of contemporary United States-Latin American relations. After endorsing a "new dialogue" in 1973, Dr. Kissinger has aroused resentment in Latin America by promising no less than four times to visit our southern neighbors only to postpone them because of foreign policy commitments elsewhere. Thus, recent relations between the United States and Latin America have involved indifference, neglect, and displeasure, often described by the policy-makers as a "low profile." Dr. Kissinger is now faced with the changing political realities brought about by post-Vietnam foreign policy constraints, confused and contradictory relations with Cuba due to its military adventure in Angola, Latin American vexation over the discriminatory passages of the Trade Act of 1974, and an almost universal backing by Latin American governments of Panama's demands for a new canal treaty. Despite the good intentions of Kissinger's mission, it is obvious that the prevailing pattern of our Latin American policy will continue to reflect economic, security, and political interests that often only indirectly concern the Latin American republics.

Recent interest in understanding the changing patterns of United States-Latin American relations is reflected in the edited volume by Julio Cotler and Richard R. Fagen on political relations between the United States and Latin America. What is interesting and somewhat unique about *Latin America and the United States* is its efforts to combine a view of recent events by both Latin American and North American scholars interested in contemporary hemispheric affairs. The major research for this volume was done prior to and during a conference in Lima, Peru in 1972 sponsored by the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies of the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Ford Foundation. The twenty-two essays, half of them commentaries on the other half, were aimed at improving the conceptual, informational, and moral bases of our foreign policy toward Latin America. What emerges in the "dialogues" between Latin American and United States scholars is a thorough reexamination of two conflicting paradigms of hemispheric relations, namely, dependency and liberal. The Latin American analysts at the conference had a tendency to interpret and evaluate political relations between the United States and Latin America as a reflection of the structural relationships of the imperialist domination by the United States in inter-American relations. The "liberal" approach, according to Lowenthal (p. 215), "assumes an essential compatibility of interest between the United States and Latin America" as well as the fact that foreign policy is made by a unitary, rational actor who can be accused of policy failures. The articles by Ernest May, Christopher Mitchell, and Abraham Lowenthal call into question the liberal approach by emphasizing *process* rather than purpose or outcomes. Thus, the North American analysts suggest that a "bureaucratic politics" approach be adopted in order to better understand and explain the process of Latin American policy formulation.

Implicit in the papers is the assumption that serious professional work on hemispheric relations will help to equalize the immense power that the United States wields in Latin America. In other words, inequalities and the misuse of power can be offset by social science research and hemispheric think-tanks. Cotler and Fagen set an optimistic tone for the power of social science in the introductory essay (p. 12): "Never too far below the surface lurked the expectation that social science will make a difference, that ideas and information will eventually filter through the subsoil of the policy-making process and contribute in some way to the amelioration of injustice in the hemisphere." While it is certainly true that more research is needed in the area of foreign policy-making toward Latin America, Cotler and Fagen appear to place undue emphasis on Latin America's incapacity for "knowledge-making and knowledge-using." Certainly the contributions by the fourteen Latin Americans reflect a capacity equal to that of the North American scholars. Unfortunately, this kind of statement may simply reinforce the myth of United States superiority in information gathering and evaluation. Perhaps what is more important is the ability to interpret the information in such a way as to guide policy-makers through the maze of forces involved in making decisions that apply to Latin America. It is also true that we need to know more about Latin America and the United States from the perspective of critics and analysts in Latin America and elsewhere. The major contribution of the Cotler and Fagen volume is its concern with explanation of existing patterns of inter-American relations and the mix of viewpoints offered by scholars with different cultural backgrounds. Publishers and international funding agencies should consider and implement this approach with regard to future conferences on inter-American relations and for other geographical areas.

The Cotler and Fagen volume, however, is not without its pitfalls. The book is divided into four parts, each involving North American and Latin American perspectives on inter-American political and economic relations. The first two parts that focus on recent U.S.-Latin American relations are of considerable value because traditional notions of how the hemisphere operates are subjected to close scrutiny. Part three is particularly disappointing in that only two case studies — Brazil and Mexico — are analyzed and both essays fail to match the scholarly level attained by many of the other essays and commentaries. Furthermore, by excluding other countries the reader is unable to grasp the full range of the special relationship involved in the Latin American policy of the United States. Part four on the armed forces, counterinsurgency, and multinational corporations contains two excellent essays by John Saxe-Fernández and Luciano Martins. Both essays represent the Latin American perspective on the increasing political importance of these actors in hemispheric affairs. The reader is also confronted with several papers that fail to address the theoretical arguments and interpretations of the essays which they are supposed to critically comment on. At times there is absolutely no connection between the critical analyst and the ideas of the author of the essay.

Above all, the essays in the Cotler and Fagen volume reflect the importance of economic variables to explaining the politics of inter-American rela-

tions. Of secondary importance are political and security interests even though policy interests vary within the decision-making machinery and with different degrees of political conflict. Frequently, as the Mitchell and Lowenthal papers point out, poor policy coordination, fragmentation of the United States government, and a low level of presidential attention to Latin America, help to explain the cyclical nature of inter-American relations. Since the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the United States has sought to combine economic, ideological, and security interests in such a way as to safeguard United States supremacy within its sphere of influence. The essays in the Cotler and Fagen volume clearly point to the link between bureaucratic pluralism and policy fragmentation evident in the Cold War conflicts in Guatemala, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

The problems that Secretary of State Kissinger faces in Latin America in the early months of 1976 reflect a general loss of interest in Latin America as an area of strategic importance coupled with a more aggressive and united set of countries that clearly resent past policies of the United States. This means that U.S. policy toward Latin America will more than likely remain indifferent as long as Mexico remains stable, Fidel Castro contains his revolutionary "adventurism," and future Allende's are not elected south of the Río Bravo. As Luigi Einaudi points out, "The main objective of U.S.-Latin American policy today . . . is not positive, but negative: to avert conflict through compromise. Anything goes as long as it is quiet" (p. 243). Cotler and Fagen, and the twenty-two contributors, have taken a first step toward understanding Latin America on its own terms. All Latin Americanists and students of hemispheric relations should read this book; it provides a set of viewpoints that reflect the importance of improving the conceptual and moral foundations of American foreign policies in Latin America.

DAVID W. DENT
*Assistant Professor,
Political Science
Towson State College*