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New Hope for Latin America

It is for the first time possible, with no mere slap-happy optimism, to foresee the beginning of the end of Castro Communism in Cuba and of Castroism's thus far alarming penetration of Latin America.

This large and sweeping conclusion is not lightly drawn by this columnist; for reserve and skepticism are still most important in looking at the realities of the cold war in this hemisphere. All the same, the prediction is confidently risked, in the afterglow of the decision here of 15 Latin American Republics, in a historic meeting of the Organization of American States, to halt all material trade with Cuba and to throw out Cuba's subversive embassies.

This tough application of twin economic and political sanctions—accompanied as it is by a warning that military force itself will be used against any further Cuban-Communist aggression in this hemisphere—solidifies Pan America as it has never solidified before. Castroism—and Fidel Castro himself—cannot in the end survive, though it is quite true that the road leading to their inevitable fall still has many miles to run and he still has mischief left for us.

His island economy, already all but in ruins, cannot forever stand the outlawry in position under which it is now placed. His export of subversion will at length wither and die; its central web has been in the foreign missions which Mr. Castro has thus far been

able to maintain in Latin American countries.

True it is that four Latin American nations—Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Mexico—voted against sanctions. Bolivia, Chile, and Uruguay will nevertheless go along in the end. Mexico may not. The present Mexican government of President Lopez Mateos has been under powerful left wing pressure in behalf of Mr. Castro, and the president soon to succeed, Diaz Ordaz, may not be strong enough or courageous enough to shrug it off, any more than Lopez Mateos has been.

Still, Mexico or no Mexico, there has now been in Latin America a convulsive turn of almost 180 degrees in the matter of dealing with Mr. Castro. For years the OAS had passed watered-down manifestos against him; but never anything that really hurt him very much. Why at last the adoption of an anti-Castro front with genuine teeth in it?

The answer lies in an event and in a man. The event was the recent overthrow in Brazil of the pro-Communist government of Joao Goulart. The man is Thomas C. Mann, whom President Johnson chose to head our Latin American policies in the first major appointment of his new Presidency. When Mr. Johnson came to power he thus ended a long period of well-intended and soft muddling in Washington by academic young men who thought we should never be beastly to or about Mr. Castro in Latin America because half a

lifetime ago we had perhaps been guilty of "Yankee imperialism" down there.

Mr. Mann was made President Johnson's man on Latin American policies both to cut out a multi-headed direction and because of his special personal qualities. These included long—and practical—experience with the Latins as a professional diplomat. They included a Mann view that the United States need not forever apologize for the gunboats of 50 years ago—and certainly not so long as it was trying to save Latin America itself from a Communist "intervention" infinitely more brutal than any of our old interventions had ever been. They included a Mann view that Castroism is far more than a nuisance; that it is an undoubted, unqualified evil.

Months ago Mr. Mann began a careful preparation that has now ended in the massive adoption of a truly tough line by the OAS. But though his work has been a skillful mixture of compassion for under-privileged Latin countries and total dedication to the vital interests of the United States this alone could not have done the job.

The overthrow of pro-Communism in Brazil was the key. So long as huge Brazil objected to real action against Mr. Castro, no real action could come. So long as Brazil remained pro-Communist in leadership Brazil would object, indeed. When Mr. Goulart went out—the United States did not actually push him out but made no secret of its joy in his departure—the long log jam began to break