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*Kissinger*

July 18, 1989

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**MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER**

**FROM: Viron P. Vaky**

**SUBJECT: CIA Study on the Church in Latin America**

CIA has just provided a good memorandum analyzing overall the church's role in Latin American development. I think it is a good first step toward providing the kind of insight -- if not the fully detailed picture -- that would interest the President.

CIA is undertaking an analysis on the subject which will include country-by-country appraisals, as requested by the President during the NSC meeting. This will require some additional time, however, and I think that in the meantime the attached memorandum would be interesting reading for the President.

Recommendation:

That you sign the attached memorandum to the President.

VPVaky/vmr

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INFORMATION

7-22-69

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger 19/

SUBJECT: CIA Study on the Church in Latin America

During your conversation with Colombian President Lleras, and again at the NSC Meeting on July 9, you requested a study on the church in Latin America. CIA is preparing a detailed study, including country-by-country appraisals. In the meantime, however, CIA's Office of National Estimates has prepared an excellent general paper entitled "The Church and Change in Latin America." I enclose a copy at Tab A since I think it is a good first step in providing the kind of insight which would interest you.

Very briefly, the CIA paper makes the following points:

- The conversion of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America from a staunch defender of the established order to an outspoken advocate and agent of social change has been a dramatic development.
- This change in the church is partly a response to the growing pressures for change operating throughout the area, and partly a reflection of the guidance and pressures from the Vatican and from new currents within Catholicism itself.
- The progressive clerics are gaining influence in national and regional church councils; but their leadership is challenged and their effectiveness reduced, on the one hand by conservative bishops, and on the other by radical priests who insist upon instant overthrow of the old order no matter what the consequences.
- The impact of the new currents in the church varies from country to country. In countries where the church becomes a proponent of change, this will encourage political groups already imposing the old order. With few exceptions, however, no dramatic results are likely over the next several years; conservative military and civilian establishments that control most countries appear to be much stronger than the proponents of change.

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- In some cases the church's advocacy of reform, and especially the disruptive activities of radical priests, will produce greater instability.
- Over a longer period -- a decade or more -- an increase in the effectiveness of all forces operating for change, including the church, will probably lead more frequently to revolutionary situations. Some individual priests may prove to be charismatic leaders.
- Because clerics working for social improvement tend to blame the plight of the poor on foreign influence as well as local elites, the new trends in the Church will probably strengthen the already formidable currents of anti-Americanism in Latin America.

ypvaky/vmr  
7/18/59

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