Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution began in 1911 against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, who had been in power since 1876. He was overthrown and replaced by Francisco Madero, an idealist (someone who dreams of a better world) devoted to the interests of the Mexican people. However, Madero was not a good leader. As president he tried to make changes, but he simply could not solve the problems that existed after 35 years of the Díaz dictatorship.

In 1912, Madero was forced out of power and was assassinated. For the next eight years violence and civil war ruled Mexico. Men like Victoriano Huerta, Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata led troops that fought each other and the government.

Finally, in 1920 peace came to Mexico, and reform could take place. The large estancias and haciendas were broken up, and the land was divided among the peons, who were offered credit (loans). The system of land division, copied from the Aztecs, was called the ejido system.

The Mexican government encouraged the building of industry and labor unions. In 1938 oil wells and oil lands were taken away from foreign owners, including Americans. Mexico from that time on has been a producer of oil. Recently, new oil wells have been developed in northern Mexico.

Today, the ideals and the hopes of the Mexican Revolution continue to guide Mexico. As a result, the country has developed a stable government. In addition, Mexico has become one of the most prosperous nations of Latin America.
Bolivian National Revolution

Bolivia also had a national revolution. Most of the people of Bolivia were mestizos or Spaniards. A large minority of Native Americans lived in lonely, isolated villages in the mountains. The Native Americans were always poor, had few rights, and never thought of themselves as Bolivians.

In the 1930s, Bolivia lost a war with Paraguay. The main outcome of the war was unrest. Returning soldiers were not happy with their treatment. Wages in the tin mines were low, and conditions became dangerous. At the same time, Native American war veterans now felt that they were Bolivians, and demanded greater rights and better living conditions. Many small revolts broke out and governments changed every few months.

In 1952, the small revolts turned into a great national revolution. The miners, who began this uprising with a strike for higher pay and better working conditions, were joined by students and the unhappy Native Americans. All of these groups fought the army and won. The tin miners set up their own government.

For the next 12 years the leaders of the miners tried to correct the evils of the past. Most people were given the right to vote, and the army was made much smaller. Land was taken from the large landholders and was divided among the peasants. The government ran the tin mines. There was much confusion, and the economy of Bolivia was upset.

In 1964, the army revolted against the government of the workers and took control of the country. Little progress had been made in the 12 years to improve the lives of the people. Today Bolivia still suffers from many of the same problems that it had in the past. Unlike Mexico, Bolivia did not benefit much from its social revolution.

The Cuban Revolution

The second revolution that brought complete and lasting, as well as far-reaching, changes in Latin America took place in Cuba.

Cuba has an important location near the United States. It lies at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, a short distance from both the United States and the Panama Canal.

Until 1898, Cuba was a colony of Spain. When the U.S. Congress declared war on Spain, it stated that the United States would “leave the government and control of Cuba to its people” (Teller Amendment). However, after Spain was defeated in the Spanish-American War, the United States army stayed in Cuba while Congress debated what to do about the island nation. Many members of Congress believed that the Cuban people were not ready to run their own government. Also, American business leaders wanted to protect their investments in Cuba and therefore opposed complete independence for that nation.

Finally, in 1901, Cubans were allowed to write a constitution for an independent Cuba. The United States then forced the Cubans to agree to the Platt Amendment.

The Platt Amendment limited Cuban independence. It gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba “to protect American life and property.” The United States took the power to veto Cuban decisions in foreign policy and money matters. The amendment also gave the United States the right to intervene “to preserve Cuban independence.” Under the Platt Amendment the United States leased (rented) an area of Cuba on a permanent basis and built the Guantánamo Naval Base [The Platt Amendment was abrogated (done away with) in 1934 but the United States still in 1992 controls the base at Guantánamo.] In fact, the Platt Amendment meant that Cuba was not really independent.
Between 1902 and 1933, Cuba was ruled by shaky or do-nothing dictatorships. Civil violence was frequent, and three times U.S. troops were sent to Cuba to maintain law and order. Most Cubans were poor. They were unhappy about the fact that few Cubans gained from their country’s riches. Cubans objected to U.S. businesses that were making large profits from Cuban resources without sharing the wealth with Cuban workers.

President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

In 1933, an army sergeant, Fulgencio Batista, led a golpe de estado. Although others appeared to rule Cuba, in fact Batista ruled for the next 25 years. He restored order but ended all political opposition and severely limited civil liberties. The economy improved, but the old social problems of poverty and inequality remained and grew.

Revolutionaries tried several times to remove Batista from power, but failed. Then in December 1956, Fidel Castro, his brother Raul, and Ernesto (Che) Guevara began a rebellion. After two years of guerrilla warfare, Batista was overthrown. By January 1959, Fidel Castro was in complete control.

Castro immediately started land reforms. Sugar and tobacco (Cuba’s main products), lands, and cattle production were placed directly under the control of the government. Soon after, Castro nationalized all banks, industries, and foreign-owned companies. Much of this nationalized property was owned by Americans. In response, the United States embargoed all trade with Cuba.
Castro was left without a source of foreign aid and without Cuba’s largest market for sugar. Castro turned to the Soviet Union for help and in 1960 announced publicly that he was a Communist.

As a result of the revolution the living standards of most Cubans improved. Education is free and available to everyone. In 1958, almost one-third of Cuban workers were unemployed. Today, full employment is provided by the Cuban government. Public health care has been greatly improved. Every Cuban has the right to a proper diet and decent housing. Corruption and violent crime have been brought under control.

The price paid for this improvement, however, has been high. In government, Castro and a small group of supporters have determined policy and rule the nation without calling for elections. Civil rights accepted in democratic countries, such as freedom of the press and free dissent (right to disagree), are not permitted. Many Cubans have chosen to leave Cuba rather than live under a dictatorship. Those who remained and showed opposition to Castro often were sent to jail.

The Cuban government did not enjoy the bad publicity it got because of its poor record on human rights. Since the middle of 1988, many hundreds of political prisoners have been released. As a reward, Cuba was elected to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, despite the opposition of the United States.

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, Cuba was forced to rely heavily on Russian economic and financial aid. In April 1989, President Gorbachev of the former Soviet Union promised to continue economic and financial aid but did not try to persuade Castro to follow Russia’s policies of perestroika (reconstruction) and glasnost (openness).

At present Cuba is a nation of young people. Nearly 60 percent of the almost 11 million Cubans were born after Castro came to power in 1959. These youths, the healthiest and best educated younger group in Latin America, have created the greatest pressure for change in Cuba. They do not know or care what Cuba was like before Castro. They want jobs, dollars, and consumer goods.

Despite the grave problems that exist in Cuba, there has been progress. Since early 1990 Castro has encouraged criticism from “within the revolution.” He has promised to debate the idea of change in future party congresses. However, any discussion of a multiparty system or a free-market economy will not be tolerated.

While many millions live in poverty in much of Latin America, there are no beggars on the streets of Havana or other Cuban cities. The infant mortality rate is now about 11 per 1,000 births, compared to about 60 per 1,000 when Castro came to power. Although Cubans may view their society as not fulfilling all of their needs, the majority feel that it is humane and just, treating all with equality—a situation not known in Cuba before Castro.

The wave of economic and social reforms that swept Eastern Europe recently reached Cuba in 1990 or 1991. However, the Cuban government continued to follow the Marxist-Leninist ideas of government central planning and the control of the government through the Communist party.

When hard-line Communists in the Soviet Union tried to take over the government in August 1991, the Castro government seemed to be neutral. But when the coup failed the Cubans were not happy. The Cuban Communist party said it would continue with its Socialist policies.

However, these Socialist policies have not been working too well. Although production of export goods has remained at satisfactory levels, not enough consumer goods are pro-
duced. In addition, military aid has been discontinued, and Russian economic and financial help has been greatly reduced. In August 1990, the Cuban government was forced to tighten rationing because of these Russian cutbacks and the U.S. trade embargo. Every Cuban citizen was limited to two rolls a day and less than a pound of meat every nine days.

To add to the problems, President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union announced in September, 1991 that the Soviet Union would be stopping all military assistance to the Cubans and would further decrease all economic and financial aid in the coming years.

In August 1991, the Pan American Games were held in Cuba. These games gave Cubans a tremendous lift in terms of self-image and pride. The favorable publicity and television coverage throughout Latin America and the United States could not but improve the image of Cuba in the eyes of the peoples of the region.

However, in December 1992, the United Nations voted to ask the United States to remove its blockade of Cuba. The United States voted against the request and has not, as of this time, removed the blockade.

The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua

Like other countries in Latin America, Nicaragua had been ruled by weak and unstable governments since it gained independence from Spain in 1821. These governments favored the rich and powerful at the expense of the majority, who were poor and weak. They did little to develop Nicaraguan resources for the good of the Nicaraguan people.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a leader, Augusto César Sandino, emerged to challenge the existing situation. Sandino captured the imagination and sympathy of Latin Americans everywhere as he led the guerrilla movement against the corrupt government of Nicaragua. A peace was arranged in 1933 and Sandino was given amnesty (freedom from arrest and forgiveness of past crimes). In exchange for the amnesty Sandino promised to lay down his arms and cooperate with the new government to set up a democratic Nicaragua.

A year later Sandino was arrested and put in prison, although no charges were ever made against him. While in prison Sandino was murdered by officers of the Nicaraguan National Guard, the Guardia. The Guardia commander was Anastasio Somoza, who became president of Nicaragua in 1936.

Between 1936 and 1979, members of the Somoza family ruled Nicaragua. The Somozas tolerated no opposition and granted no civil rights to the people. In 1977, a rebellion broke out, led by a guerrilla group called the “Sandinista National Liberation Front.” The group took its name to pay tribute to Augusto Sandino.

In 18 months, in 1979, the Sandinistas were able to overthrow the Somoza government and take control of Nicaragua. The Sandinistas had wide support from the majority of the Nicaraguan people. The actions taken to overthrow the Somoza government were true to the people’s wishes.

Once in power, the Sandinistas received aid from Western Europe, the United States, and Cuba. The Sandinistas established close ties with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations.
When they first came to power, the Sandinistas promised to bring democracy and prosperity to Nicaragua, but these promises proved difficult to keep. Some land was redistributed to landless farm families. However, most of the land was put into collectives (ownership of land and farm machinery is shared). In addition, much of the land was taken over by the government for state-owned and operated farms. The United States stopped its aid to the new government when the Sandinistas put political opponents in jail and welcomed Cuban military and political advisers as well as Russian military aid.

In a further attempt to reform the economy the Sandinista government nationalized the banks, mines, and coffee and cotton plantations. In addition, the army was built up and the government requested aid and advice in this matter from the Russians and the Cubans.

Social programs brought improved health care and nutrition. Education was made available to all, and illiteracy greatly reduced.

When Ronald Reagan became president of the United States, relations between the two countries became strained. The United States feared the close relationship between the Sandinistas and the Russians. Reagan also was unhappy about the Sandinista attempt to turn Nicaragua into a Socialist country. (Nationalization of banks, mines, and the land are steps to socialism.) In addition, the United States accused the Sandinistas of helping Communist guerrillas in nearby El Salvador.

Many Nicaraguans also disliked the new government. Calling themselves “Contras,” a shortened term for antirevolutionaries in Spanish, they were former Somoza supporters and onetime Sandinistas who no longer could support the government. Their forces numbered between 8,000 and 10,000 men.

The Contras began a guerrilla war against the Sandinistas in 1982. President Reagan approved giving aid to the Contras, both by official and by secret means. In 1984, the Central Intelligence Agency helped the Contras to plant mines (explosives) in the harbors of Nicaragua. The International Court of Justice ruled that the United States should stop any blockading or mining of Nicaraguan ports because under international law, mining harbors is an act of war.

Faced with increasing guerrilla attacks and fearing an invasion by the United States, the Sandinistas asked for and received tanks, helicopter gunships, small arms, and ammunition from the Soviet Union. All males were required to register for military service. Fifteen-year-old boys could be drafted.

To further protect itself, the Sandinistas severely limited civil rights. The press was closely censored, and public, outdoor political meetings were forbidden. Citizens had to have travel passes to move from place to place. Political party opposition was limited, and some opposition leaders were thrown in jail. Speaking out against the Sandinistas was regarded as a crime, thus limiting freedom of speech.

In 1984, Daniel Ortega, who headed the revolutionary government, was elected president. By mid-1986, the economy of Nicaragua was in trouble. Because of guerrilla raids, the coffee crops had been cut by 25 percent. More and more money had to be spent on the military; about 50 percent of Nicaragua’s budget was used to fight the Contras.

To improve the situation the government took control of large parts of Nicaragua’s industry (by 1986 about one-half of it was under government control) and about one-quarter of agricultural land and production. Severe shortages continued to exist throughout the country, and unemployment kept increasing. Nicaragua’s foreign debt climbed to about 5 billion dollars.
In the Nicaraguan situation, the U.S. Congress, which reflected the differences of opinion regarding U.S. involvement in other countries that existed since the Vietnam War, did not always follow a consistent policy. In 1984, Congress voted nonmilitary aid—food, clothing, and medicines for the Contras. At the same time, Congress prohibited the Central Intelligence Agency and other government agencies from helping the Contras in any way. Two years later, in 1986, Congress voted to give the Contras 100 million dollars in military aid.

In February 1987, President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica proposed a Central American peace plan. In January 1988, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua agreed to a cease-fire and peace talks with the Contras. However, the peace talks failed and fighting continued.

In February 1990, President Ortega was defeated in an election by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, who was supported by the United States. Ortega, who had said the election was held to end the civil war, pledged to comply with the results.

When Chamorro became president of Nicaragua in April 1990, she appointed Humbererto Ortega, the brother of Daniel Ortega, as head of the armed forces. She took this action to try to gain the loyalty of the Sandanistas.

Since taking office, President Chamorro has succeeded in ending the nine-year civil war between the Sandinista army and the Contras, backed by the United States. She has also eliminated the military draft. Economic conditions in Nicaragua are slowly improving since the United States lifted its economic and trade embargo.

The Long Conflict in El Salvador

From 1931 through the late 1970s, El Salvador was ruled by harsh military dictatorships. Nevertheless, with assistance from the United States, a great deal of economic progress was made, especially between 1951 and 1965. The military junta began to allow opposition groups to form. Labor unions were made legal, and women were granted the right to vote for the first time. As a result the Salvadoran people began to protest the long years of corrupt military rule, the cheating in elections, and the lack of protection for civil liberties. The greatest protests came over the unfair distribution of land and wealth.

The protests led to several unsuccessful attempts to reform the economic and political situation. In 1979, however, in a U.S.-backed program, almost 500 privately owned plantations were turned into cooperatives where the farmers shared the ownership of the land, the crops, the cattle, the equipment, and the profits. This attempt at land reform divided the nation. Most landowners and high army officers opposed any reform. The poor farmers in the cooperatives and other landless farmers joined with the urban poor to support the reform. Rival armed groups were formed, and El Salvador was soon involved in a civil war.

By late 1980 armed conflict, murder, illegal arrests, and torture occurred daily. Right-wing anti-Communist “death squads” killed those who favored social change, whether they were Communists or not. Left-wing guerrillas supported by Communists waged war on the government. Between 1980 and 1986, about 60,000 people were killed in the civil war, and about half a million were forced to leave their homes.

The United States charged that the Cubans and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua were actively helping the guerrillas. President Reagan sent arms and military advisers to El Salvador. He also put pressure on the Salvador government to hold democratic elections.
Election of Duarte

In 1984, elections were held in order to set up a new civilian government. José Napoleon Duarte, a moderate, was elected president. The leftist opposition did not take part in the election, by its own choice. After the election Duarte promised to bring the bloodshed to an end. However, efforts by the Duarte government to negotiate peace with the guerrillas were unsuccessful.

The economy of El Salvador remained in deep trouble. By mid-1986, El Salvador had become almost totally dependent on economic aid from the United States. The cooperatives had fallen deeply in debt. A second land-reform program, "land for the tiller" (plower or farmer), was started. Poor farmers working as tenants on rented lands were given loans at low interest to buy the lands they rented. These farmers have made much progress but still find it difficult to repay the loans.

Cristiani and the Peace Agreement

In 1988, Duarte, seriously ill with cancer, decided not to run for re-election. In July 1989, Alfredo Cristiani of the right-wing Arena party became president of El Salvador. Throughout the rest of 1989 and into 1990 Cristiani made a number of moves to achieve a peaceful settlement of the civil war. At the same time, however, he intensified government military crackdowns on opposition groups, especially religious groups who had been the most outspoken opponents of him and his government.

In September 1991, the government of El Salvador and the leftist rebels of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) signed an agreement, reached after 10 days of negotiation under the guidance of the United Nations. Included in the agreement were these provisions:

1. The guerrillas would lay down their arms and act out their opposition within the existing political process. Elections would be held in the near future.
2. The Salvadoran military would be prevented from using its "death squads" to prevent free exercise of political rights.
3. Civil rights abuses would be investigated, and the abusers would be removed from the army and punished.
4. Economic and land reforms would be instituted as soon as possible.
5. Members of the guerrilla forces would be taken into the new national civilian police force, which might eventually replace the army.
6. The size of the armed forces would be immediately reduced.
7. Families and supporters of the guerrillas would not be forced to leave the lands they had lived on for years in guerrilla-controlled areas of El Salvador.
8. A commission made up of members of the government and the guerrillas would carry out the agreement.

In January 1992, in Mexico City's Chapultepec Castle, the government of President Alfredo Cristiani and the rebel FMLN formally signed a comprehensive peace treaty, putting an end to 12 years of conflict. The war in El Salvador was over.

In advance of an expected "purge" of human rights violations, the Salvadoran armed forces reassigned two dozen ranking officers, including several linked to the November 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests. The National Assembly passed an amnesty paving the way for the return of thousands of FMLN guerrillas, but leaving the door open to try human rights violators on both sides. Rival troops have been confined to areas under United Nations supervision. The army is being trimmed, and the Cristiani government has announced a large-scale plan for reconstruction.
Despite the difficulties lying ahead, the Salvadoran accord is a watershed. It represents a
genuine compromise: the left gave up its hopes to seize the state by force and impose radical
economic reforms, the right giving up its historical control and violent opposition to
change. Such compromise was made possible by a combination of several factors: (1) a
military stalemate; (2) increased flexibility on both sides, brought about by momentous events
in El Salvador and the world; and (3) the pressure of a respected neutral arbitrator in the
United Nations.

El Salvador’s success demonstrates how the end of the cold war has created new opportu-
nities for the United States to set up a different approach to policy in Latin America. By
disconnecting worldwide strategic concerns from local political consequences, the United
States changed its traditional opposition to leftist (radical) movements and distanced itself
from past efforts to seek a military victory over the FMLN. This shift created more space for
Salvadorans to negotiate what may be the foundations of a long-term social peace.

Future policy for dealing with regional conflicts can benefit from the experience of El
Salvador. First, U.S. policy assumed that low-intensity warfare plus reform would overcome
armed resistance. This assumption led the United States into an alliance with right-wing
reactionaries who were opposed to the very reforms necessary to defeat the rebels. Policy-
makers believed that U.S. aid created leverage (influence) to force through these reforms.
However, leverage, as Salvadoran military officers well understood, works only when the
United States is willing to use it. Only after the end of the Cold War and the murder of the
Jesuits was Congress ready to cut aid.

Second, regular elections alone will not guarantee democracy. Especially in the early
years of the war, U.S. policymakers showed an appalling disregard for the violation of
human rights and the exclusion of democratic left parties from the Salvadoran govern-
ment. The United States failed to understand that regularly scheduled elections cannot
channel conflicts in a democratic manner unless they are joined with effective civilian con-
trol over the military and respect for the civil and human rights of all citizens, regardless of
their political opinions.

Finally, cooperative efforts, especially under the auspices of an international organiza-
tion, is more likely to lead to settlements than one-on-one negotiations with the United
States as a party. In the 1980s, overtures from Mexican and French authorities, the Conta-
dora group, and Costa Rica’s President Arias were distinctly unwelcome to the United
States. The Bush administration’s decision to support U.N.-sponsored talks and the
involvement of the third countries was essential for bringing a conclusion to the civil war.

In short, the experience in El Salvador suggests that the United States should learn what
Salvadorans are already learning: in regional conflicts the deliberate effort not to use all of
ones power can be most conducive to a successful outcome.

Central America Today

Today, Central America is an area undergoing serious and important changes. The eco-
nomic and political problems are difficult to solve, and therefore the future of the area is
difficult to foretell.

American involvement in Central America has stirred heated debate in the United
States. Many Americans and refugees from Central America felt that the United States was
supporting undemocratic governments. The United States feels its policy will eventually
lead to greater stability and more personal freedom for the people.
Latin America and the United States

The long history of relations between Latin America and the United States has been marked by extremes. Intense friendship and great ill-will, understanding and misunderstanding, total cooperation and unbending opposition, progress and retreat have been the keys to this relationship. Interdependence and common desires tie the two areas together. More often than not, self-interest has torn them apart.

When the Latin American nations gained their independence from Spain, the U.S. government quickly recognized the government of each Latin American state. In other words, the United States said to the world that it welcomed the Latin American states as equal and independent nations. The United States and Latin America began to trade on a large scale.

Monroe Doctrine

Spain wanted to regain her colonies, and the United States wished to protect the independence of Latin America. President James Monroe started what is called the Monroe Doctrine. Monroe said that the United States would go to war if necessary to stop European nations from setting up new colonies or trying to gain control of the free nations of the New World. However, the United States was not powerful enough in 1823 to back up this idea with force.

Great Britain was also interested in the freedom of the Latin American countries because it had set up a great deal of trade with them. England told the world that it supported the Monroe Doctrine. In case of war, England's large navy would be used to support the United States. No European nation would challenge this power.

Mexico-United States Disputes

Twice between 1835 and 1850 Mexico and the United States became involved in disputes (disagreements). First the Mexicans, led by Santa Anna, tried to prevent a group of Americans living in the Mexican state of Texas from setting up an independent nation. In 1835, Texas defeated Santa Anna at the battle of San Jacinto. With the blessings of the United States, Texas set up an independent nation.

Later, in 1847, Mexico and the United States went to war when the United States annexed Texas as a state. As a result of the Mexican defeat in the war, Mexico was forced to cede the territories we know today as California, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. This was called the Mexican Cession. In all, during this 15-year period, Mexico lost one-third of its territory.

Other Disputes

In 1864, Napoleon III tried to set up a French colony in Mexico. He sent French troops to Mexico to support an Austrian archduke named Maximilian as emperor of Mexico. When the Civil War ended in the United States in 1865, the United States sent 50,000 troops to the Mexican border. The French were told to get out or there would be war. Faced with this threat, the French began to leave. By 1867 the Mexicans had regained control of their government.

Toward the end of the 19th century a boundary dispute developed between Great Britain and Venezuela. Gold was discovered near the border of British Guiana and Venezuela, and both nations claimed the gold field. In 1894, the United States asked that the issue be sent to arbitration. Arbitration is the settling of a dispute between two sides by a person, a group, or a nation agreed upon by both sides. After much discussion the
British finally agreed to arbitration because they wished to avoid a war with the United States.

The court of arbitration included two U.S. Supreme Court judges, two British judges, and a Russian judge. In 1899, the court reached a decision. It gave most of the disputed territory to Great Britain.

War between Spain and the United States broke out in 1898. One cause was the way Americans felt about the treatment of Cubans by Spain. In 1895, the Cubans had revolted against Spanish rule. To crush the rebellion the Spanish government forced hundreds of thousands of Cubans into concentration camps, where many died of disease, starvation, and cruel treatment. American newspapers spoke out strongly against Spanish brutality. Also, in 1898 the United States battleship Maine was blown up in Havana harbor. Spain was blamed, and the United States declared war. The United States won the war in three months. Under the peace treaty, Cuba was given its independence and Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States.

After 1900, the friendship between the United States and Latin America, which had begun to grow, started changing. Because the United States wanted an apology for the arrest of American sailors by Mexican troops, U.S. troops occupied Vera Cruz in Mexico in 1914. In addition, American troops invaded Mexican territory in 1916 to capture the Mexican patriot Pancho Villa. Villa had attacked Americans in Columbus, New Mexico, because he was angered by American policy toward Mexico.

The American role in building the Panama Canal did not help matters. The United States had assisted Panama to become independent from Colombia in 1903. Panama then gave the United States permission to build the canal (Colombia had refused).

Several Caribbean and Central American nations had not paid the money they owed to European nations. To prevent the collection of the debt by force, the United States took control of Nicaragua (1909–1933), Haiti (1915–1934), and the Dominican Republic (1916–1924). The United States collected taxes and paid the debts. The United States also sent troops into Honduras in 1924 and Panama in 1925 to keep order. This policy of intervention (getting involved) was resented by the nations of Latin America.

Trade relations between the United States and Latin America were also a cause of trouble. The Latin Americans sold raw materials to the United States. The money was needed to buy manufactured goods from the United States. In the 1920s, the United States raised tariffs on raw materials, decreasing sales and causing hardships in Latin America.

In addition, a quota system was set up. Exporters of certain products, such as sugar, were allowed to send only certain amounts to the United States so as not to flood the U.S. market. This caused problems especially for nations that depended on the sale of one crop for economic survival.

In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt tried to bring about better relations. Under his Good Neighbor Policy, the United States stopped sending soldiers into Latin America. Also, the United States began to discuss situations with Latin Americans and to treat them as equals.

Latin Americans began to look with friendship toward the United States. During World War II the nations of Latin America, with a few exceptions (Argentina, for one), united behind the Allies in their efforts to defeat Germany and Japan. The rest were either neutral or supported the Axis.
Although the old resentment had lessened, it was still there. In 1948, after the war, a meeting in Bogota, Colombia, of the Organization of American States was scheduled to take place. The meeting had to be postponed for several days when a riot broke out. A mob ran wild through the city, carrying anti-American signs and burning American flags. This event was called a <i>bogotazo</i>. Today this word is still used in Latin America to describe any violent public demonstration.

In the 1950s, relations worsened again. Latin Americans felt they were being ignored by the United States. Armed mobs attacked the automobile of Vice-President Nixon in Venezuela in 1958. The United States supported dictators who were disliked by the people, such as Marcos Perez Jimenez in Venezuela.

When John Kennedy became president in 1960, he announced a new policy, called the “Alliance for Progress.” However, any good the announcement of the policy caused was destroyed by the Bay of Pigs invasion.

### Cuban Missile Crisis

As we have learned, American relations with Cuba had become worse after Fidel Castro became leader of Cuba in 1958 (see pages 677–679). On April 17, 1961, Cuban exiles trained by the Central Intelligence Agency landed at the Bay of Pigs on Cuba’s southern coast. The invasion failed. As a result of the attempt Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union for protection. The invasion also weakened U.S.-Latin American ties because the United States was once again intervening in another country’s affairs.

In October 1962, the United States had proof, through aerial photographs, that the Soviet Union was setting up missile bases in Cuba. The United States acted quickly. President Kennedy ordered a <b>quarantine</b> (blockade) to prevent the shipment of missiles to Cuba. Kennedy stated that a missile attack from Cuba against any country in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded as a Soviet attack against the United States. United States forces were readied for war with the Soviet Union. An emergency meeting of the Organization of American States was called to discuss “the threat to the security of the area.” The United States also asked for an emergency meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations.

The Russians saw that the Latin American nations would back the United States and therefore gave in. The missile sites were taken down, and 42 missiles were shipped out of Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis did much to bring the countries of the New World together in the face of a common threat to all.

### Dominican Republic Crisis

In 1961, Rafael Trujillo Molina, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, was assassinated. After several weak governments, power came into the hands of a committee of generals. In April 1965, a reform party, made up of civilians and young military officers seized power. They wished to make Juan Bosch president.

President Lyndon Johnson of the United States worried that the reformers might include Communists, and that Bosch would set up a Communist-type government. Johnson was also afraid the Dominican Republic might become another Cuba.

In 1965, a group of Dominican army officers forcibly overthrew a newly formed government led by Juan Bosch. Bosch wished to have a democratic government with guaranteed civil liberties for all. He had the support of a majority of the people, including many Communists.

As a result of the <i>gulpe d’estado</i>, fighting broke out between the army and Bosch supporters. President Johnson sent in the U.S. Marines because, he said, they were needed to