

# Communication

March 24, 1982

Dear Mr. Vining:

Mr. Jeff Leon's vitriolic reaction to my letter to Secretary Haig is both interesting and surprising. I rather agree with his point that the term "American" is used in many places worldwide in a manner that reflects resentment if not always hatred. Graham Greene's "Ugly American" said a lot about that.

The tenor of Mr. Leon's remarks seems a bit extravagant, but he may have personal knowledge and experience which enables him to cite a "nearly continuous error in our practice of diplomacy worldwide." He does not enumerate his credentials in contrast to mine, but imputes some bombast in my claim to experience from 1951 through 1979 in close contact with Latin Americans. Incidentally he seems to have missed the point I made about overwhelming anti-Soviet sentiment among the leaders down there. In many years of work among them and in 15 years of residence till 1979 I developed a real appreciation of their great intellectual ability and, in many, their high idealism.

I would not indulge in any grammatical "knot-picking" in this. A very polite comment on my letter to Mr. Haig was received, and so well written that I enclose it for your perusal. I do not know Mr. Smith but thank him for his comment which I quote: "we need more input from people like you who have lived in Latin America and know the true situation."

I do not feel that Latin Americans hate America or Americans, but rather that they resent the attitude of our diplomatic corps which I have seen at close hand throughout those years. Our ambassadors are usually very adroit and many are career diplomats I know, but the atmosphere and attitudes of the staffs and certain policies followed have inculcated widespread resentment and often

contempt. Apart from that, the vast give-away programs of AID and the sale of wheat at prices much lower than our domestic market, and many other aspects of our foreign policy have made us look like monkeys or fools at least.

The gist of my letter to the Secretary is that I believe the Latin neighbors in Central America, and the others to the South will join with us if we convince them that it will be practically and politically convenient and that they will receive treatment as allies. I doubt that Russian communism will ever be embraced there, but the violence and terrorism that seems to be increasing could be reduced, restrained or headed off by concerted action, and I mean action on their part first, with our help in transport, perhaps, at the start.

I would, of course welcome any intelligent and informed criticism.

Most Sincerely yours,  
Robert W. Richardson  
Rt. 1, Box 230B  
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