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1944

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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

Research and Analysis Branch

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LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE  
1944 ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

DESCRIPTION

A summary of Latin American reactions  
to the reelection of President Roosevelt.

20 November 1944

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SUMMARY

The United States elections aroused intense interest in Latin America, where it was felt that this country's policy toward the various Republics hung in the balance. President Roosevelt's reelection was universally hailed with enthusiasm with the only, but definite exception of outright pro-Fascist groups.

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LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE REELECTION OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

The United States elections were followed in Latin America with intense interest, reflecting Latin American feeling that United States policy toward Latin America hung in the balance. In as remote a country as Bolivia, many people listened to radio election returns until dawn. With the exception of outright pro-fascist groups, the reelection of President Roosevelt aroused universal enthusiasm.

A. Favorable Comment<sup>1</sup>

In Nicaragua, President Somoza declared a two-day national holiday featuring patriotic demonstrations, concerts and fireworks. Foreign Minister Acosta of Costa Rica referred to the President as "the propeller of the Good Neighbor policy." In Bolivia, La Razón declared that the President's victory guaranteed vitalization of the Good Neighbor policy and the consolidation of peace on the basis of the four freedoms. In Brazil, newspapers ran headlines "Superb Example of Democratic Faith," and an amusing story circulated in Rio to the effect that Brazil had its first Presidential election in 14 years on 3 October, at which time U. S. Army and Navy men stationed in Brazil cast their ballots. In more serious vein, Ex-Foreign Minister Aranha declared that President Roosevelt's reelection was the greatest victory of the war...greater than D-Day...His election

1. Full references for part one of this article are on file at this office.

is decisive for the world." Foreign Minister Serrato of Uruguay claimed that if Uruguayans had voted, "they would have supported Mr. Roosevelt to the last man." In Chile, Venezuela and Ecuador, the press was extremely enthusiastic, while in Peru, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies passed a special resolution expressing satisfaction over the election's outcome.

In Argentina, government officials refused to comment. It was apparent, however, that the President's reelection was enthusiastically received by the great majority of Argentinians, many of whom sent messages to Mr. Roosevelt. La Nacion and La Prensa lost no time in editorializing to the effect that unsettled conditions can best be avoided by the exercise of democratic principles and the constitutional rights of popular election. "There can be no danger of dictatorship", said La Prensa pointedly, "in a country which renews its principal authority through clean elections every 4 years."

In a few cases the fourth term provided Latin Americans with an opportunity to promote their own regimes. Thus, in El Salvador, now under a new military dictatorship, the pro-government Diario de Hoy said wistfully that there was nothing in the Constitution of the United States to prohibit reelection of the President, while in Brazil Acting Foreign Minister Leão Velloso, putting in a word for Vargas, stated that the President's reelection was a "great act of

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wisdom on the part of the U. S. public...which realizes that the war effort must not be interrupted."

#### B. Hostile Reactions

Displeasure with the election returns came only from extreme right-wing and pro-Nazi organs. In Mexico, La Nación, organ of extreme rightist Acción Nacional, expressed its opinion through photographs. Prominently featuring two pictures of Governor Dewey, one of them showing him addressing a large audience, the magazine included a third picture of President Roosevelt talking on behalf of Senator Wagner to a small gathering at half-empty Ebbets Field. Just as the issue went to press, returns came in and La Nación added a last-minute flash stating that the President had won "by a small margin of votes."<sup>2</sup>

In Bolivia, La Calle, organ of the pro-Argentine MNR, commented sarcastically: "Unanimously, all our politicians yesterday gave their opinion in favor of Roosevelt's reelection. Of course, as he was the official candidate..."<sup>3</sup>

The most bitter comment came from Argentine pro-Nazi papers. La Fronda insisted that President Roosevelt had won by means of wholesale fraud.<sup>4</sup> Cabildo campaigned vigorously for Governor Dewey. "How fortunate is Mr. Dewey!" one of its articles stated. "He can

2. La Nacion, Mexico City, 11 November 1944.

3. La Calle, La Paz, 8 November 1944.

4. New York Times, 9 November 1944.

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bitterly judge the President's foreign policy and accuse him of  
'dealing with international matters on the basis of secret diplomacy'  
without having the Secretary of State classify his opinion as 'pro-Nazi'.  
I envy Mr. Dewey." If Cabildo was envious, it was also confident.  
By election day its readers had been promised that with Dewey's  
certain election "things will change."<sup>5</sup>

5. Cabildo, Buenos Aires, 10 October 1944.

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