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THE LATIN AMERICAN PRESS AND THE SPACE RACE*

One of the most frequent justifications for the United States' participation in the space race is that, for better or for worse, the nation's prestige is hanging in the balance. Aside from the military, paramilitary, and scientific aspects of the question, it is argued that the Soviet and American space teams are locked in a political struggle whose outcome will be regarded as incontrovertible proof of the relative cultural and economic merits of Communism and democracy: Sputnik I, for instance, was regarded more as a blow to our national honor than as a threat to the national security. While the basis of this outlook is undeniably valid, the attempt to elevate the United States' prestige through its efforts in space is greatly complicated by the necessity for understanding the criteria upon which other nations of the world—particularly the unaligned and less developed ones —are liable to compare East vs. West. Even so, there have been virtually no systematic analyses of the impact of the space race on the "target" countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. What follows is an attempt to explore the attitude towards this competition that has developed in Latin America, mainly through a study of the press and editorials.[1]

Some comments of caution are needed at the outset. In the first place, it must be remembered that the opinion of the press is not necessarily that of the people—especially in Latin America, where literacy rates are low and newspapers are often controlled either by wealthy families or by governments. Thus this essay is restricted to a discussion of the ideas of the "opinion-forming elite." Second, it is dangerous to generalize about "Latin American" opinions, since vast national differences in cultural, economic, political and social development find corollaries in the intensity and kind of responses to the space race. In Mexico and Brazil, for instance, the reaction is clear, sophisticated, and articulate; in Bolivia and Paraguay it is delayed, irregular, and superficial. Nevertheless, the reactions in the more advanced countries both influence and foreshadow the opinions of their less developed neighbors.

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[1]Generally speaking, editorials are a more accurate indication of press "opinion" than front-page articles because almost all factual news comes through the American wire services, Associated Press and United Press International.

I: *The Latin American Perspective*

Generally speaking, the space race has made a deep impression on Latin America. Banner headlines follow the course of satellites and astronauts for days, while a myriad of pictures reflect the ecstasy of a hero's happy homecoming. News of Sputnik I covered front pages for more than a week, for example, while the launching itself was widely greeted as "a dividing line in the development of humanity."[2] Feature articles frequently discuss the significance and purpose of scientific research. Even recently devised brand names—like *"Tienda Satélite"* in Mexico City—reveal the Latins' growing interest in space.

These neighbors to the south have also become thoroughly aware of space's role in the Cold War. Hailed as an epoch-making achievement in the history of man, Sputnik I was also regarded by many papers as the signal for a struggle. Ever since then, almost all editorials have considered Soviet and American space efforts to be part of a "race." From time to time, however, excitement over the competition gives way to sorrowful reflection. In 1961, for instance, *Acción* of Montevideo asked its readers to contemplate "the benefits to be gained if the American and Soviet scientists were to unite their efforts, that is, if these feats [in space] were intended to unite rather than to divide, if they were not being used as factors in the cold war."[3]

Such regrets about the political implications of scientific success reflect the most dominant theme in the Latin American response to the space race: the persistent demand that space technology should be used for peaceful purposes. Paper after paper, regardless of its own political leaning, has made this central point. After Gherman Titov's seventeen-orbit flight in August of 1961, *A Folha de São Paulo* bewailed the "terrible ambiguity" of science, which could lead to either progress or disaster.[4] Across the continent, *La Nación* of Santiago expressed its fear of "the possibility that these technological gains might have warlike purposes, or the occurrence of something like the tragic uses of atomic research for the fabrication of frightful weapons of destruction."[5] In this respect, the Latin American attitude is similar to its stand in favor of disarmament. As non-participants in the race, they have no military gains to make—and everything to lose. Proving the peacefulness of its intentions in space, in fact, has become a cardinal tenet in the political litanies of both East and West.

Latin America's pacifistic hopes are most frequently expressed through the statement that "science" and its fruits are "universal."[6] Speaking for

[2] *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, October 5, 1957.

[3] May 7, 1961.

[4] August 9, 1961.

[5] August 8, 1961.

[6] Semantic difficulties might arise from the fact that the Spanish word *ciencia* means "knowledge" as well as "science."

the overwhelming majority of press opinion on the continent, *La Crónica* of Lima stoutly proclaimed that "the triumphs of science belong to humanity and not to a country, a doctrine or a party."[7] This notion is fundamental to the Latins' view of the space race, and cannot be dismissed as the me-too longing of some have-not nations. In large part, it is derived from their Western, humanistic-democratic cultural heritage. Besides, as will be shown below, it explains their recurrent annoyance with the secrecy of Soviet launchings. Finally, it reveals a conviction that space research can have meaningful and practical results, along with a concurrent desire to participate (if only indirectly) in the exploration of the cosmos.

At the same time, Latin America's fear of the destructive capabilities of space technology has undergone a significant evolution. In military terms, Sputnik I appeared to prove that Russia indeed possessed the rockets which Krushchev had bragged about only a month before: "if the artificial satellite exists, then the intercontinental rocket exists."[8] Coming as a shock to many observers, this realization only heightened fears about the possibilities of nuclear annihilation, since it was instantly clear that man was now capable of destroying himself.

As time wore on, however, sophisticated newspapers soon began to assess the military values of space launchings in terms of the "balance of terror." After the Soviets had proved that they possessed the intercontinental missile, the world's total destructive capacity became relatively unimportant when compared to the apportionment of that capacity: if Soviet and American strengths were approximately equal, Latins realized, the two arsenals would "deter" each other into inaction. Besides, the short-run military gains that were left to be made were quite few.[9] *O Estado de São Paulo,* for instance, was relatively unimpressed by Yuri Gagarin's flight in April of 1961, since it "did not at all change the existent military situation, nor the balance of terror which guarantees the peace."[10] Similarly, *A Folha de São Paulo* argued that Gagarin's feat had no military significance since the Soviet Union already had both first-and second-strike capabilities.[11] The fear of nuclear destruction from space, incidentally, has been further diminished by the signing of the Moscow test-ban treaty in August, 1963.[12]

Another cross-current in the Latin American reaction to the space race concerns its function in the political balance of power. Throughout

7May 6, 1961.

8*El Debate,* Montevideo, October 6, 1957.

9This excludes the long-run possibilities of erecting platforms in space or establishing military bases on the moon.

10April 13, 1961. This same idea was expressed in an editorial following the Titov flight four months later: August 8, 1961.

11April 14, 1961.

12Miguel Alemán Jr., private interview (Mexico City), August 16, 1963.

its entire course, observers have approved of the race's tendency to stabilize the world situation. After the delayed launching of Explorer I in 1958, for example, *El País* of Montevideo declared that "the equality has been reestablished," and that conditions for high-level negotiations were "ideal" as a result.[13] Alan Shepard's flight of 1961 gave a similar kind of hope to *El Siglo* of Bogotá, which predicted that "with the coming of equality in the conditions of the struggle, there will be a better climate for the preservation of peace and the strengthening of order."[14] In this respect, Soviet achievements have generally been regarded with suspicion because they have disrupted the equilibrium, whereas American launchings have won approval for their efforts to restore the balance that was lost.

But the political implications of the space race are open to more than one interpretation. To most papers, for instance, it seemed that Sputnik I would bring increased pressure from the Soviets and thus heighten world tension. The independent, imaginative, and influential *Estado de São Paulo,* however, emphasized the possibility that this feat might liberate the U.S.S.R. "from the complexes arising from foreign intervention during the revolution of 1917 and from the superiority of the West in almost every field," and thus remove the psychological causes of aggression.[15] Four years later, this same paper reasoned that Gagarin's flight should consolidate Khrushchev's personal position and strengthen his stance against the Chinese. Titov's success, too, was taken as a prelude to the Twenty-Second Party Congress: "now it remains to be seen," said *O Estado,* "if Khrushchev can really dedicate himself to the great task of peace, and return to the spirit with which he once undertook the trip to Camp David."[16]

Aside from serving as a political makeweight, the space race has another extremely important function in the eyes of Latin Americans: it provides the East and West with a ground for truly peaceful competition. After the initial shock of excitement had passed, observers soon began to reason that a space race is much less dangerous than an arms race. As early as 1958, for example, Rio de Janeiro's *Imprensa Popular* pointed out that the launching of Explorer I moved the struggle for international supremacy "from the field of warlike competition to the field of peaceful competition." The world's most powerful minds, economic and technical resources could now be used "in the cause of the progress and well-being of humanity, and not in the cause of war, and the mutual destruction of nations and peoples."[17] In Santiago, too, *La Nación* pointedly asked its readers if the successive orbits of Sputnik II and Explorer I were not "a satisfactory

13February 2, 1958.
14May 7, 1961.
15October 8, 1957.
16August 8, 1961.
17February 4, 1958.

demonstration of 'peaceful coexistence'?"[18] Undoubtedly, this widespread approval of the peacefulness of competition in space derives in large part from the hope that its progress will yield some tangible and positive results. In some circles, though, this idea sounds more like a tolerant mother's rationale for letting her children play in the mud: it might not do them or anyone else any good, but at least it keeps them out of trouble.

Apart from the political and military aspects of the race, it is worth noting that Latin Americans generally have no philosophical reservations about man's entry into space. As Catholics, they tend to regard such advances as proof of God's generosity—and even of His very existence, since only a perfect and omnipotent Being could have made such an ingenious creature as man "after His own image." Although Bogotá's *El Siglo* pointed out that "the fourth day of the creation is on the carpet" after the Gagarin flight, for example, it concluded that this monumental feat was also a fitting testimony to "the thinking power of man, his will, his power of retention."[19] In fact this confirmation of man's genius tends to corroborate the Latin Americans' traditional veneration of the *caudillo,* the individual hero: thus their unbounded admiration for the astronauts has its roots in the continent's social and political history. The philosophical predilection of the Latins seems to increase, rather than diminish, their fascination with the exploration of the universe.[20]

In view of this background, Communist propaganda on space has evolved in a number of different ways in Latin America. In the first place, there has been an intense effort to establish the Soviets' apparent lead in the competition as definitive proof of the superiority of the U.S.S.R.'s social system. Echoing the proud boast of the Premier himself, for example, the Communist daily *Popular* of Montevideo announced that Sputnik I was the sign of an irreversible trend, only an index of the vast economic might that lay behind the launching. "The secret of this advance," confided an editorial, "is the superiority of the socialist regime."[21] In the same vein, Santiago's *El Siglo* assured its readers that the Soviet success constituted "a triumph of the Marxist philosophy: the dialectic materialism which has now only permitted the workers to triumph over their oppressors, but now also brings them a growing domination over the forces of nature."[22] In slightly varied form, this extraordinary claim has been made after virtually every successful launching by the Soviets.

18 February 2, 1958.

19 April 13, 1961.

20 It is worth noting, however that Gherman Titov seriously offended the Mexican people by declaring that he had been to Heaven and seen no God—and that He therefore never existed. John Glenn, on the other hand, won their approval by stating that the entire universe was God's creation, and therefore open to exploration by mankind. Alemán, interview.

21 October 8, 1957.

22 October 6, 1957.

Its basic appeal, of course, lies in its emphasis on Communism's superiority as a means of fostering social change and economic development. By August of 1961, *El Siglo* had thoroughly refined its argument:

> The Soviet space feats, especially the last two, that of Gagarin and that of Titov, are only possible thanks to the vast development of the industrial and educational capacity of the Soviet Union and the political, economic and cultural system in effect over there. They are the result of man, confronted by a scientific fact . . . and working with it, free from the agonizing obstacles of economic poverty, and free from the antisocial desire for wealth. They are the product of a country that looks freely out into the future, without any aggressive feelings towards anyone and completely dedicated to the achievement of a better world for all men. It is the product of a sound economy which produces, in the field of culture and technology, veritable phalanxes of scientists, technicians and highly skilled workers.

Furthermore, this editorial claimed, Gagarin and Titov themselves represented the social virtues of Communism: children of peasant families, they were also "children of a regime which gives all men equal opportunities, to the farmer, to the laborer, and to the intellectual."[23] Therefore Communism was not only efficient; it was also democratic.

Concurrent with these claims, of course, has been the assertion that the U.S.S.R.'s progress in space has been dedicated to the cause of peace, while the United States has traditionally used its scientific advances for war (Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the inevitable cases in point). Montevideo's *El Popular* trumpeted this idea from the very outset, as Sputnik I revealed that the Soviet Union had finally acquired the military strength to resist the United States' atomic blackmail: "What gives humanity an enormous sensation of relief, is that this extraordinary discovery [of the uses of outer space] will be completely dedicated to the cause of world peace."[24] After the Gagarin flight, the leftist *Ultima Hora* of Rio de Janeiro took advantage of the Eichmann trials to proclaim the difference between "war and peace, the destruction of millions," as symbolized by Eichmann, and "coexistence for scientific progress and the well-being of all," personified by the Russian cosmonaut.[25] By all means, the Communist line has deferred to the Latin American penchant for peace.

In this context, it is curious to note that some party propagandists have taken an entirely different tack. Cubans, especially, have tended to praise Russian space achievements as instruments of power rather than of peace. After the Soviets' first "twin" flight in August of 1962, for example, Havana's Radio CQM warned its listeners that "the military importance of the two Soviet spaceships has not escaped anyone. The importance consists in the brilliant demonstration of precision given by Soviet rocketry. . . .

23 Santiago de Chile, August 7, 1961.
24 October 8, 1961.
25 April 13, 1961.

This precision is more than the Soviets need to drop an international rocket with a nuclear head on any point of the earth."[26] Of course a *Fidelista* news service would be more inclined to emphasize the military aspects of a space shot than regular party organs, largely because of Cuba's particular preoccupation with the possibilities of invasion. While this contradiction in propaganda is glaring, it is nothing new; in fact, it is thoroughly in line with Moscow's persistent alternation of the carrot and the stick.

The major appeal of the United States' program, on the other hand, lies in the fact that its launchings are publicized beforehand and open to the world. This candor has a number of positive results. In the first place, it gives Latin Americans and other "non-participant" peoples a chance to identify themselves with the anticipation, execution and excitement of a flight. For all the inconveniences, the repeated delays before John Glenn's orbital flight in 1962 had their happy side: they demonstrated a diligent concern with the astronaut's personal safety, and also increased the onlooker's sense of involvement. When the voyage was finally over, Rio de Janeiro's *Jornal do Comercio* commented on the fact that skeptics had joked about the American's rocket trouble up until the moment of the take-off. "All this [delay and confusion] is human," ran an editorial, "all too human. It is convincing. Moscow dramatizes. It gives notice of the *fait accompli*. It leaves a fog of unanswered questions in the exhaust of its own rockets."[27] In one way or another, scores of newspapers (including those of the non-Communist left) have echoed this same opinion. More than any other aspect of our space program, this frankness, testifies to the sincerity of American democracy.

The United States' openness also has the effect of making its efforts in space look apolitical, especially since the candor of the launchings is matched by prompt publication of practically all scientific data acquired during the flights. In this respect, *La Nación* of Santiago hailed President Kennedy's promise to release all information from the Shepard flight as "the only scientific way, the only possible one."[28] Taken in this light, the sensational tactics of the Soviet Union are distasteful to many Latin Americans. As *El Colombiano* predicted in Medellín, after the launching of Cosmos II:

> The sensationalistic zeal will soon produce adverse results for the government of the Soviet Union, and certainly the loss of the space race, because the American scientists have approached the problem . . . from a positive angle, that is, through a series of successive experiments, with numerous failures but with more convincing results,

[26]August 14, 1962 (U.S.I.A. dispatch).

[27]February 21, 1962.

[28]May 6, 1961.

> and right now they have in orbit more than fifty satellites of the most varied types, supplying in a continuous stream—some of them for a number of years—data of the greatest importance for the better knowledge of outer space.
>
> We think that the space race has clearly been defined in favor of the scientists of the great country of the North.[29]

As a general rule, Latin Americans who understand the scientific implications of space exploration are relatively unimpressed with sensationalism.

Telstar has been particularly important in this respect. More than one newspaper remarked upon the fact that it was the product of private enterprise—which, to most observers, almost automatically stripped the satellite of any possible military significance. Its possibilities as an instrument of peace, however, were lost on few Latin Americans. *Prensa Libre* of San José, Costa Rica, compared the Telstar launching to the discovery of the telegraph more than a century ago, "which at that time revolutionized the world."[30] *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires hailed the satellite as a "vehicle of union,"[31] and *El País* of Montevideo gratefully observed that "such marvels are in the hands [of those who] will assure their creative and profitable use."[32] Telstar's apparently peaceful intentions, its easily foreseeable uses and the relative immediacy of its application have done much to improve the Latin Americans' conception of the United States' program in space.

International politics have also provided a somewhat hardnosed appeal for the American efforts in space. Since the Soviet Union started the race with such a large advantage, anything the United States can do tends to lessen the gap—and thereby, according to most Latin American papers, reduces world tension as a consequence. As a cartoon expressed it in *El Comercio* of Quito, Ecuador, a worried world heaved a sigh of relief as it watched Alan Shepard join Yuri Gagarin in space: "Phew," ran the caption, "at last!"[33] While this stabilizing quality has been an attractive feature of Project Mercury, it is still disconcerting to know that its appeal is based on the idea that we are losing the race. Whether or not Latin Americans who have supported the American efforts so far will continue to bless our efforts if and when the United States opens an obvious lead is another question. Though it cannot be answered right now, its importance should not be lost on policy-makers.

The disadvantage with which the United States joined the space race in 1957 has worked in our favor in another way, since it appears that we are closing the gap fairly rapidly. Without actually winning the race,

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29 April 8, 1962.
30 August 9, 1962.
31 August 3, 1962.
32 July 12, 1962.
33 May 6, 1961.

therefore, we have managed to convey an impression of the superiority of our own social system. As *El Mercurio* of Santiago commented after the Titov flight, the Soviet lead "does not mean that Communism is stronger than democracy, or that the peoples subject to its rule live better than those in the West. It only means that national problems are looked at differently by the Soviet and American leaders."[34] After the Glenn flight, too, *O Estado de São Paulo* ran a lengthy editorial on "the efficiency of liberty."[35] In spite of its failure to catch the Russians so far, the United States' space program is taken to be an indication of the country's strength, and not weakness, by many Latin Americans.

Without a doubt, this impression of strength is mainly derived from a comparison of America's spending habits with those of the Soviet Union. While one might think that Latin American complaints about the Marshall Plan and other aid programs would be followed up by a heavy barrage against the high financial priorities of the space program, the chronological sequence of events has militated against such an attitude. For the first few years after Sputnik, most Latin American observers were simply stunned and fascinated by achievements in space. Then President Kennedy's announcement of the Alliance for Progress in March of 1961 aroused such enthusiasm among the Americas that expenditures on space were not regarded as an obstacle to the economic development of the continent. This feeling was supported by the Latins' longstanding inability to understand the size of the United States economy: since our gross national product is about eight times that of all Latin America, it is generally regarded as an endless fountain of wealth. Because of these considerations, widespread criticism of the American space budget is likely to be a relatively recent phenomenon, coinciding with the heated debates in our own Congress and, more important, a growing disillusionment about the scope and potential of the Alliance for Progress.

The Russians, on the other hand, have been severely chastised in this respect. Even on the heels of Titov's record-shattering flight, *La Esfera* of Caracas ridiculed the Soviet budget. "What would we think," asked an editorial, "of a workman who stopped eating, dressing decently, taking anyone out, going to the movies, and living in a decent house in order to live in a broken-down one, all so he could buy himself a Cadillac? This is the case of Russia." Gagarin's trip to Cuba made a mockery of human values, the paper said, since it only heightened the contrast between billion-dollar expenditures on space and the crippling poverty of the revolutionary "island paradise." At the opposite extreme was the Alliance for Progress, which sought to meet the needs of a people "whose life is on

34 August 8, 1961.

35 February 22, 1962.

earth, and not in propaganda about space."[36] This theme frequently appears in Latin American newspapers.

With this general outline of the Latin American response in mind, it should be helpful to make a case study of the evolution of a single country's reaction to the space race. We shall now turn to analyze the Mexican opinion on space, as it developed from the launching of Sputnik I in 1957 to the Popovich-Nikolaiev flight in August of 1962.

II. *The Case of Mexico*

Although Mexico's cultural development and international prestige make her one of the most important spokesmen of the "Latin American" viewpoint it should be remembered that this nation differs from her sisters in a number of significant ways. Mexico has firmly resisted the advances of international Communism, for instance, largely because the Revolution of 1910 has provided an indigenous means of social and economic change.[37] Although anti-*gringo* sentiment has been more blatant than in almost any other country, there has been a constant improvement in United States-Mexican relations over the past twenty years, and American customs are gradually being adapted to the Mexican *ambiente*.[38] The absolute superiority of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) has not only given the country remarkable political stability, but has also eclipsed the broad spectrum of dissent that is so common to nations like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela.

The P.R.I.'s political monopoly has also inhibited the national press. For the Mexican government, according to Walter Washington, "controls the press through the distribution of newsprint [as well as financial subsidies]. Direct contacts are maintained between officials of the government and the editors or publishers of papers. All papers at times attack the government and this gives the semblance of a free press. Government interference is on an *ad hoc* basis, so that unless instructions are received publications are fairly free. Through its control of the press, the government effectively limits the opportunity afforded leftist intellectuals to publicize their views."[39] Though ranging from the extreme left to the extreme right, Mexican press opinion is bounded by the limits of governmental tolerance. By no means can it be regarded as a clear-cut measure of public opinion: nearly forty per cent of the population is still illiterate, and only one-tenth of the people read newspapers.[40]

36August 8, 1961.
37See Robert Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Brunswick, 1957), pp.319-349.
38See Oscar Lewis, "Mexico since Cárdenas," *Social Change in Latin America Today* (New York, 1960), pp. 285-346.
39S. Walter Washington, "Mexican Resistance to Communism," *Foreign Affairs*, XXXVI, no. 3 (April, 1958), 512.
40Based on statistical data taken from the 1963 edition of the *Editors and Publishers Yearbook*, pp. 581-584.

Yet the Soviet launching of Sputnik I in October of 1957 made a deep impression on the Mexican press. One of the country's most respectable conservative dailies, *El Universal,* expressed complete wonder and astonishment: banner headlines announced "THE HERALD OF THE PENETRATION OF MAN IN OUTER SPACE," and the front page followed the course of the satellite for more than a week. An editorial marvelled at the fulfillment of dreams previously realized only by "the stage gimmicks at Disneyland," hailing the event as proof of man's ingenuity and courage. In this sense the impact of Sputnik I was essentially philosophical: the satellite was regarded as a miracle of God, and a major breakthrough in man's endless search to discover the origin, structure, and composition of the universe. Beyond doubt, said *El Universal,* the twentieth century would go down in history as one of the most "illustrious" epochs of all time.[41]

This sense of astonishment was accompanied by a thorough ignorance (by no means confined to Mexicans or other Latin Americans) of the technological significance of Sputnik I. *El Universal Gráfico,* for example, was simply dazzled by the satellite's blinding speed—and could speak of hardly anything else.[42] A plethora of headlines and features about voyages to Mars and the moon revealed absolutely no conception of the labor, time and expense that would be required for such a task. To many Mexicans, Sputnik I was just a chapter out of a storybook.

But Mexican observers were not nearly so naïve about the political implications of the satellite. *El Norte* of Monterrey gently chided its northern neighbors for their "satellite psychosis," mocking American hysteria about the possibility of a Russian attack from the moon.[43] Normally sympathetic to the United States, *El Diario de Yucatán* admitted that "Big Brother" had gotten himself into an awful fix: between the racial tension at Little Rock and the Russian lead in the space race, America had suffered a tremendous "loss of moral prestige."[44] Alluding to the Hungarian revolt, *El Universal*'s cartoon of October 7 praised the Soviet space feat as "laudable," but pictured the revolution's suppression as "condemnable."

From a slightly more detached point of view, the independent weekly *Tiempo* noted that the launching proved that the Soviets possessed an intercontinental missile, "capable of carrying a nuclear or thermonuclear bomb." Although Sputnik's military importance could be exaggerated, an article said, it was also the first step in the construction of a military platform in space. The magazine also conceded that the satellite "has given the U.S.S.R. greater prestige among the countries of a neutralist tendancy in the struggle between Communism and democracy," but pointedly refused to

41 October 6, 1957; October 9, 1957.
42 October 7, 1957.
43 October 10, 1957.
44 October 16, 1957.

accept the event as a symbol of the downfall of democracy.[45] Throughout the Mexican press, in fact, the recognition that Sputnik I and subsequent achievements in space would have political significance was somewhat reluctant. As the government-run *Nacional* plaintively stated, "science should be above political systems, because one of the greatest possibilities for the common understanding of men and true friendship among nations is rooted in its universality."[46] Almost against their will, Mexicans accepted Sputnik as a weapon in the Cold War.

In view of these sentiments, the leftist *Popular*[47] responded to the news with a kind of cautious jubilation. In careful deference to the country's longstanding opposition to aggression and force, an editorial vowed that the satellite was a peaceful instrument that would only make men "elevate their outlook and direct their ambitions and will towards conquests other than those achieved by fear, mistrust, and the insane lust for domination." Taken in this context, then, Sputnik I would work to "hasten the coming of true and total brotherhood here on earth."[48]

Nevertheless, *El Popular* was quick to take advantage of the propaganda opportunities opened by the satellite. A series of features drove home the lesson that such a glorious achievement was the natural outcome of a society whose "social and political structures have reached such a point of perfection that scientists are produced *en masse,*" and whose intentions were not bellicose: for Sputnik's orbit, it was argued, gave new hope to the universal desire for "peaceful coexistence between the camps of socialism and capitalism." Only the Americans were warlike. Dismissing their "pathological gestures of fear and repudiation" as a frustrated attempt to diminish the significance of the Soviet feat, *El Popular* mulled over the possibility of a basic flaw in the American national character. "Perhaps," suggested one writer, "the warlike neurosis and the exacerbation of racial conflict are subconsciously linked by a defective educational orientation," whose appearance marked the beginning of "a grave national collapse."[49]

When Explorer I was finally put into orbit on January 31, 1958, however, *El Popular* hastily announced that the U.S.S.R. was still far ahead in the space race—although the American achievement would naturally contribute to worldwide peace and the brotherhood of man. Quite expectedly, *El Universal* showed much more enthusiasm and predicted that the

45 October 14, 1957, p. 43.

46 October 7, 1957.

47 According to Robert Alexander, *El Popular* continued to be "the principal spokesman for international Communism in Mexico, and perhaps in all Latin America," until its publication was stopped in late 1961 or early 1962. *Op. cit.*, p. 335.

48 October 6, 1957.

49 October 6, 1957; October 8, 1957.

United States would soon take a shot at the moon. Furthermore, its readers were assured, "the equilibrium with Russia has been reestablished." As a product of the Western democracies, Explorer I was dedicated to "the service of humanity." Having evened up the Cold War, the American satellite also brought the promise of "a lasting peace, along with the certainty that outer space will only be used for peaceful purposes . . . and for increasing the satisfaction of human needs."[50]

In Mexico, as in the rest of Latin America, it was claimed at an early juncture that space explorations should only be used for peaceful purposes. This point was made by the radical *Popular* after Sputnik I, and by the conservative *Universal* after Explorer I: neither side dared threaten the other with a possible military attack from space. As outlined above, this notion has its roots in an awareness of the "balance of terror," and in the humanistic conviction that scientific knowledge is inherently universal. Furthermore, the Mexican government's firm opposition to aggression might have influenced this opinion. Even so, this view still reveals an attempt to hide from the obvious reality that science could be (and has been) used in the selfish interests of individual nations. At this point, Mexican observers appeared to be so overwhelmed by the importance of the Cold War that they felt totally helpless. Since their country was on the "outside" of all these spectacular achievements, they could only express the vague hope that progress in space would be used for the benefit, and not the destruction, of humankind.

The next major space feat came in April of 1961, when the Russians rocketed Yuri Gagarin around the earth. Though fairly bursting with pride, *El Popular*'s praise of the achievement was tempered by an almost self-conscious disavowal of any aggressive intentions on the part of the Soviet Union. "What point would there be," asked one feature, "in using these space ships, manned by human crews, for nuclear and thermonuclear bombings? If that were done . . . it would simply negate forty-three years of socialistic progress." It was not in the Soviet national interest, and superfluous besides—for the U.S.S.R.'s missile capacity was already much superior to that of the United States. Once again, *El Popular* blamed the war talk on Americans. A full-length column gleefully seized upon the transcript of a Congressional debate, in which a Representative (Victor Anfuso of New York) had argued that the United States should regard the Cold War as a full-scale war: "The United States is at war? Might we ask, with whom? Yet it should be observed that this statement was made by a Congressman, and not by a mere lying correspondent or observer.

50February 2, 1958; February 3, 1958.

That is to say, the declaration has a certain official character . . . "[51] Thus making use of America's discomfiture over the progress of the space race, *El Popular* underlined its basic contention that this attitude contrasted sharply with the Soviet's grandiose appeals for general and complete disarmament.

The more conservative press was still upset about the possibilities of using space achievements as instruments of domination. *El Universal Gráfico* showered Gagarin with praise, for instance, but pointedly pled for peace:

> May God grant that this Russian triumph should not serve to let Khrushchev keep his accustomed ways of hurling threats. The conquest, achieved by the Soviet, should be used for the good of humanity, forgetting war, leaving aside the military applications of the feat. But will this serve to make the Soviets feel as supreme as a god, capable of dominating all existence? That would be deplorable; it would remove all nations from [the possibility of] universal disarmament, the tranquillity and the peace that are so much desired by the world.[52]

El Universal posed the same question, and then answered it a few days later: flushed by his triumph, said an editorial, "Khrushchev saw only his hatred, his old, blind hatred . . . He saw only his hatred, and he wallowed in that hatred with sensuous delight."[53]

Although these sentiments echoed the political litanies that had been chanted from the very beginning of the space race, they were gradually coming to be charged with a specific and positive meaning. Mexicans were not only expressing pious hopes that such achievements would not be used for the destruction of the world, they were starting to resent any blatant attempts at propaganda. In August of 1961, for example, *El Universal* featured an article called *"An Error*: Gagarin, Political Instrument." Ever since the Soviet high command decided to use the cosmonaut as a propagandist, went the argument, "his name and his person have come to be used for ends which are totally separate from their proper functions, and which are putting the young and congenial aviator in a lamentable predicament besides."[54] While the conservative press was obviously biased against the Soviets, the really significant fact is that Mexicans were becoming extremely conscious of the propaganda values of space. Their previous awe in the face of the Cold War and the space race was giving way to an awareness that they were the sought-after prize.

When Alan Shepard later soared three hundred miles down the Caribbean missile range, *El Popular* tried to show no concern. Taking

51 April 14-16, 1961.
52 April 14, 1961.
53 April 15, 1961.
54 August 2, 1961.

its cues from *Prensa Latina* (the *Fidelista* news service), the leftist daily mockingly compared the distances of the American and Russian manned flights, while a four-inch box article derisively predicted that "the United States will try to classify Shepard as the second man to fly through outer space . . . right after Yuri Gagarin." An editorial then proclaimed that the U.S.S.R. would have a man on the moon before the United States could put a man in orbit, "because the U.S.S.R.'s advantages in the penetration of the cosmos are absolute." Nevertheless, deference was also paid to the Mexican's desire for peace, as peace was described as one arena where the two great powers could engage in "competitions of many types, but all of them peaceful."[55]

The Shepard flight also marked the beginning of a running debate between two of the country's leading magazines. With a picture of the astronaut on its cover, *Tiempo* pointed out that the launching of the Liberty Seven had been openly publicized. On the other hand, no one would ever know if there had been any Russian failures, since "the Soviets released the news that Gagarin was in orbit when he had actually returned to earth."[56] Left-leaning *Política,* however, ridiculed the Americans' candor as "cinematic propaganda, Hollywood style." As for the Gagarin and Shepard flights, sniffed the article, "there is no comparison."[57]

Even so, pro-American newspapers regarded both the Shepard and Grissom flights as proof that our technology was at least equal to that of the Russians. *El Universal Gráfico,* for example, followed the Shepard experiment with the assertion that the United States "also triumphs," and interpreted the Grissom flight as another step forward in the voyage "towards the moon."[58] Similarly, *El Universal* insisted that Shepard's manipulation of his spacecraft was "new in space. No other human being has ever done anything like it."[59] In general, however, these two flights received much less coverage than Gagarin, Explorer I or Sputnik I. For one thing, they were not so novel as the previous events. Then, too, Virgil Grissom was crowded off the front page by simultaneous news of the Berlin Wall and the Alliance for Progress.

Gherman Titov's seventeen-orbit flight brought space back to the forefront of Mexican news. The redoubtable *Popular* ran a full-page headline which announced that the Russian ship had "COVERED A GREATER DISTANCE THAN THAT FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON." A follow-up editorial recounted Khrushchev's remark that such achievements

55May 6, 1961; May 8, 1961.
56May 15, 1961, p. 36.
57May 15, 1961, p. 41.
58May 6, 1961; July 25, 1961.
59May 6, 1961.

were an irrefutable sign of the superiority of Marxist-Leninism, and gaily pointed out that "it is from the firm ramp of socialism that the Soviet Union is now launching its spacecraft."[60] *Política,* too, haughtily compared Titov's heroic feat with the "flea hops" made by Shepard and Grissom.[61] With the Berlin Wall safely erected and Titov circling the earth, the leftist press was understandably self-assured.

El Universal's studied concern contrasted sharply with *El Popular*'s cockiness. While the two great powers clung to each other's throats, said the conservative paper, the rest of the world could only sit numbly by. Once again awed by the course of the Cold War, an editorial maintained that the East-West conflict was only part of a larger question:

> . . . at the edge of the mighty struggle in which the world is divided by ideological and economic questions, outside of the passions and blind partisanships which have made a banner out of enmity and hate, are the hundreds of millions of men, women and children, who want and have a right to a better life . . .
>
> These enormous multitudes cannot understand the reason for which men who have reached the pinnacles of knowledge have not been able to scale the heights of genuine human feeling, with the purpose of leading people along the roads of concord and peace, towards that eternal dream which started with the birth of the human being: the brotherhood of man.[62]

In this view, scientific achievements in space only heightened the tragic irony of the modern world—that man's supreme efforts should be the engines of his own destruction. Again revealing its fear and resentment of the Cold War, *El Universal* made a fervent plea in behalf of the oppressed peoples of the world.

El Universal Gráfico took a less eloquent but more hardheaded stand. Frankly aware that the most recent Russian success (and, by implication, the entire space race) would be used for propaganda, the paper pledged its unconcern. For Mexico, it was argued, had her own problems—food, clothing and education—in short, economic development. "These laudable goals," said the editors, "force us to look at things in their true Mexican context, rather than letting ourselves be impressed by spectacular adventures which will be of no benefit to us."[63] To Mexicans, therefore, the Titov flight was totally irrelevant. Showing unmistakable signs of disenchantment with the space race and frustration with the Cold War, *El Universal Gráfico* simply washed its hands of the whole affair.

This same paper took a somewhat different view, however, after John

60 August 7, 1961; August 10, 1961.
61 August 15, 1961, p. 40.
62 August 8, 1961.
63 August 8, 1961.

Glenn made three successful orbits on February 20, 1962. Praising the United States' technological prowess—particularly the fact that Glenn controlled his own capsule—*El Universal Gráfico* took special pride in the role of the tracking station at Guaymas. Part of the glory, therefore, was Mexico's: "If the direct satisfaction must be for the United States, it must not be forgotten that this test was achieved on the American continent and we must all regard it as a little bit our own—especially Mexico, whose station at Guaymas . . . constitutes a very important aid to the success of the enterprise."[64] The paper's rekindled enthusiasm was not inconsistent with its previous disenchantment, however, since Friendship Seven's communication with the Guaymas station made its flight relevant to Mexico in a way that the Titov achievement had not. In sum, *El Universal Gráfico* reflected Mexico's strong desire to participate in the space race—and frustration that its resources were so limited for such an undertaking.

Ecstatic praise for Glenn's achievement from the conservative *Excelsior* revealed this desire in a somewhat different way. Hailing "the triumph of democratic science," an editorial went on to explain that the United States' candor about plans and problems of the flight had contrasted sharply with the Soviet cloak of secrecy. The whole American procedure had been open and free—"Glenn himself was democratically elected for the great scientific test." This openness not only had scientific virtues, said *Excelsior,* it would also have "important repercussions on the international political scene."[65] *El Universal* made the same point. "The cunning smile of the Communists," gloated one editorial, "has already chilled. And for one simple reason: because the entire world has watched Glenn make his flight through space."[66] Glenn's flight had not only narrowed the technological gap that was opened by Sputnik I, it had also turned the political tables.

Staunchly defending the leftist position, though, *Política* maintained that the voyage of the Friendship 7—by contrast with the Gagarin and Titov flights—had only illustrated the superiority of Russian science and technology. A lengthy description of the flight procedure recounted all the delays and disappointments before the launching, and then agreed that all had gone well "by luck." As for the Kennedy-Khrushchev notes on joint participation in some space projects, the magazine observed that such an accord might be worked out for "merely scientific" satellites dealing with meteorology and telecommunications, "but not with regard to the exploration of the interplanetary system—at least for now—since the Soviets have a great advantage over the North Americans."[67]

The rest of the press, however, echoed the more familiar themes. From

64February 21, 1962. *El Nacional* also mentioned the Guaymas base: February 23, 1962.
65February 21, 1962.
66February 22, 1962.
67March 1, 1962, p. 41.

Mérida, *El Diario de Yucatán* declared that the "psychological impact" of the Glenn flight had restored the balance of political power.[68] *Excelsior* reiterated the common assertion that scientific knowledge was "neither totalitarian nor democratic," but universal in nature.[69] Both *El Universal* and *El Diario del Sureste* (Mérida) wondered if these space achievements would be used as "a means of reaching universal harmony, peace among all peoples, or . . . a weapon in new and frightsome wars. Always," said the southeastern daily, "we hope for the best."[70]

After Scott Carpenter's dramatic but imperfect flight on May 24, 1962, the government's *Nacional* praised efforts in space (of both sides) as actions "in the highest sense of history" and the property of all mankind.[71] The petulant *Universal Gráfico,* however, was disappointed again. An outspoken editorial called for "something new":

> in general, the public is convinced that this kind of experiment offers no great challenge: fly more, fly less, its fulfillment is thoroughly feasible. Besides, [the public] is convinced that these flights have been of very little use so far, since it is not clear whether or not any significant discoveries have been made during the various experiments of this type, undertaken by both the Americans and the Russians; rather, it is a bitter competition, more for satisfying the self-love of these two countries than for achieving some progress of a scientific character. In a word, the results are not worth the effort and expense.
>
> In sum, [public] opinion is awaiting more ambitious and more useful feats. For the present there is the voyage to the moon which, in view of the data obtained from the space flights, is perfectly approachable. The people who are involved in this work are undoubtedly considering this idea, but it is being realized much too slowly and we believe that it will be a long time before a new, novel and useful experiment is completed.[72]

This statement is truly remarkable. It not only betrays an astounding naiveté about the scientific purposes of Project Mercury and analogous Russian flights, along with a thorough conviction that the underlying motive of the entire space program is to capture international prestige; it also reveals a fairly complete disenchantment with orbital manned flights. According to *El Universal Gráfico,* Mexico was simply getting bored.

It was Telstar that renewed the Mexicans' interest in space. Hearing that a French television program had been flashed across American screens, a jubilant *Excelsior* covered its front page with the news that "Telstar Entered into Orbit and Transatlantic TV was Born." The next day, an editorial saluted the beginning of a new era in communications." Maintaining that Telstar "probably dumbfounded the Russians as much as

68February 26, 1962.
69February 23, 1962.
70March 2, 1962.
71May 26, 1962.
72May 24, 1962.

a successful United States voyage to the moon," the writer then gave his reason:

> The science and technology of the twentieth century have made some astonishing discoveries; by comparison, however, there have been very few applications until now which have altered the daily life of the great majority of human beings. Approximately three hundred million [people] have not been affected in the least by modern science, and only forty per cent of the world's population enjoys the benefits of secondary products of the prodigious technology of modern times—which has been perfectly channelled towards war. On the contrary, the brilliant discovery of the United States is not directed towards war, but towards peace; it is not an instrument of propaganda, but of positive and functional utility; it does not create fear, but friendship and comprehension, knowledge, understanding and collaboration among all peoples. It is proof that science can be in the service of peace and concord among men.[73]

El Universal also hailed the new "satellite friend," claiming that Telstar's prime importance derived from the fact that "for the first time, one gets the impression that a feat of human skill will serve to unite and not to disunite." This, declared a page-one column, contrasted with previous achievements in space: "recently, the satellite race has looked like a marathon of strength between the two great powers, who are trying to frighten each other and to augment their prestige in the bewildered eyes of the other countries."[74] Incidentally pointing out that Telstar was the joint project of one private company and three governments, *Tiempo* also greeted the achievement as the harbinger of "a new era in world communications."[75]

This sudden and somewhat surprising enthusiasm over Telstar seems to take root in the growing attitude—previously expressed by *El Universal Gráfico's* disenchantment with the Carpenter flight—that Mexicans should take no extraordinary interest in the space race unless it promised to benefit them directly. The early sense of awe, evinced by discussions of Disneyland and Mars, had given way to a more realistic appraisal of the space race. The country was still facing problems of economic development and social reform: Titov and Glenn were literally out of this world, moving in circles whose total irrelevance to questions of land reform, unemployment, education and industrialization became increasingly apparent as time went by. Now Telstar offered a new kind of achievement in space, one whose practical application might be a significant force of economic and social change within Mexico. It is worth noting, however, that none of these possible applications were very strictly defined (at least by the papers I read).

73July 11-12, 1962.
74July 11-12, 1962.
75July 23, 1962, pp. 46-47.

Secondly, Telstar was thoroughly compatible with the Mexicans' long-standing desire for peace. At first glance, it appeared to have no conceivable military potential. Built by a private company, Telstar meant communications, communications meant understanding, and understanding meant peace. In keeping with the country's democratic-humanistic traditions, Mexicans naturally reasoned that communication among the *peoples* of the world would eventually settle international differences.

Yet the Russians soon answered this American challenge by sending Andrei Nikolaiev into orbit on August 11. The next day he was joined by Pavel Popovich: the two cosmonauts reportedly passed within a mile of each other, and they stayed in orbit for days. Delighted by the news, *Política* declared that the twin flight "revealed how backward the North Americans are with respect to the Soviets." The length of this Soviet lead had supposedly struck United States military leaders dumb with fear, a fact which "is in reality a good for humanity, since it strengthens the peace by preventing the Yankees from unleashing a war." Of course, the whole world knew that the Communists would never start a war by themselves. This article also explained why the Russians had withheld scientific data from the West: since they were ahead, "it would be childish to show the Yankees instruments of more advanced spaceships." As soon as the imperialists would agree to general and complete disarmament, of course, a free exchange of information could begin.[76]

Only a little perturbed, however, the conservative *Universal* dismissed the Soviet achievement as "unquestionably" a defensive response to Telstar which only underlined the basic difference between the two space programs. "For the fact of the matter," insisted an editorial, "is that the Americans are inspired by the goal of human understanding, while the Soviets only want to make new conquests." While the Russians were trying to subjugate the peoples of the world, the Americans were trying to improve their lot. "History and time," it was concluded, "will have to judge which of these efforts in space have been genuine triumphs."[77]

Other papers took similar stands. *Novedades,* for example, expressed its satisfaction with the round of congratulations between the White House, the Vatican and the Kremlin, but bluntly concluded that "crime is still a crime." For the latest Soviet achievement, it was noted, fell on the first anniversary of the erection of the Berlin Wall. "The cosmonauts will be triumphantly received in Moscow; but in spite of all the noise, what was done a year ago in Berlin will still be a crime, even worse than the Iron Curtain that Stalin drew across the peoples of Latvia, Finland, Poland,

76August 15, 1962, p. 32. This issue also carried a feature article by Jorge Carrión, in which he linked some Mexicans' suspicion of Soviet achievements in space to the country's "semicolonial and slavish" state of mind. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

77August 14, 1962.

Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany and the other satellite countries, so that the world would not see what was going on in the vast territories that Roosevelt gave away to the Russians."[78] *Excelsior* made the same point. The significance of this outlook lies in the sophistication of its political analysis, not so much with regard to Yalta as to the ultimate intentions behind the timing of the Soviet flight. Clearly, Mexicans were becoming so familiar with the techniques of international propaganda that they were practically impervious to it.

In a later edition, *El Universal* mounted another attack on the Soviet Union. Forcefully asserting that Vostoks III and IV were not instruments of peace but "political warfare," an editorial declared that these flights should be regarded not as a sign of Russia's technological superiority but "as the expression of a desperate and onesided attempt . . . to deceive the free world once more, to blackmail it once again." Proof of the Kremlin's desperate plight could be provided by a look at the Soviet economy. For while Nikolaiev and Popovich were orbiting the earth, "the people of the Russian empire lack the barest necessities of life, and Russian hay, according to Khrushchev himself, is still being cut with the ancient sickle, just as it was a hundred years ago."[79] The Soviet Union simply had no business spending its money on a space race instead of on economic development.

Aside from the recurrent hope that scientific achievements will be used for peaceful purposes, perhaps the most striking aspect of the Mexicans' response to the space race is their acute consciousness of propaganda, both its methods and its significance. Carefully noting the coincidence between the anniversary of the Berlin Wall and the most recent Russian flights, for example, the press became increasingly unimpressed by what it regarded as "sensational" or "stunt" flights. The development of this attitude became most apparent in the growing dissatisfaction with the manned flights—and the contrasting outburst of enthusiasm for Telstar. Though widely publicized, the launching of a Russian woman in the summer of 1963 received a relatively short-lived and superficial response. As time went on, the awareness that they were themselves the "target" audience for the American and Soviet space programs seemed to make Mexicans sensitive about propaganda and even hostile to it.

Yet they have also expressed a strong desire to take part in the development of outer space. In deference to this feeling, the Mexican government established a National Commission on Outer Space in 1962, with the purpose of adapting discoveries by both sides to the needs of its people.

78 August 16, 1962.
79 August 15, 1962.

Generally speaking, however, this desire is also linked to the suspicion that the space race is somehow irrelevant to Mexico, since it appears to have very little in common with the country's indigenous problems. It was gradually recognized that Mexico should not be unduly concerned with the aspects of the space race that could not be suited to her own purposes —but where such achievements could be so adapted, as in the case of Telstar, progress in space should be a source of national pride.

III: *Conclusions*

These observations about the response to the space race in Mexico and the rest of Latin America carry some implicit suggestions for United States public information policy south of the border. In the first place, the *raison d'être* and inadequacies of this paper demand that some government agency keep systematic track of the attitudes evolving in Latin America (and other areas of the world). To the best of my knowledge, neither the United States Information Agency nor National Aeronautics and Space Agency has any carefully compiled, systematic information on this subject. Of course there is the possibility that such material is classified. But if there is no such information, this is an appalling situation—especially since the maintenance of the nation's prestige is one of the major justifications for our participation in the race. In strategic terms, this makes it difficult to know what might be the most effective means of raising our prestige in the eyes of other nations. In domestic political terms, it is asking too much of Congress—and the American taxpayer—to spend billions of dollars on space when such information is not systematically compiled and readily available.

Even so, some general policy conclusions emerge from the body of this paper. Emphasis on the peacefulness of America's intentions in space should, of course, continue to be stressed. The evolution of disenchantment with the manned flights, and the simultaneous excitement over Telstar, demand an educational program which includes a full explanation of the practical implications of both of these feats. In the first place, the purpose of the manned flights should be clearly outlined: if the conservative press began to get fed up with Project Mercury, it might well be totally exasperated by Project Gemini.[80] In this respect, it might be worthwhile to hold some kind of conference for Latin American journalists which would explain the technical details and purposes of the program. Scientific jargon becomes hopelessly jumbled when Associated Press or United Press

[80]Project Mercury is the program of one-man suborbital and orbital missions that came to an end with Gordon Cooper's flight in May of 1963. Project Gemini is another orbital program that will probably run from late 1964 to 1967; it is intended to perfect procedures for the docking, re-entry, and landing of manned space missiles, and offers little in the way of "spectacular" events. Project Apollo, of course, is the program for a manned lunar landing—which will not take place until 1969 or 1970.

International dispatches are hurriedly translated into Spanish.[81]

The apparently declining popularity of the manned flights also calls the priorities of the space program into question. Of course the optimal situation would maintain both the manned flights and the purely "scientific" experiments like Telstar and the meteorological satellites. Naturally, the United States would lose some prestige if the Russians won the race to the moon. On the other hand, budgetary or other considerations might well force the government to cut back its space program. If this should happen, it would seem better—at least in terms of our prestige in Latin America—to cut back on the manned flight program instead of the scientific one. The main reason, of course, is that communications and weather satellites would give us continued leverage in countries like Mexico, which are struggling with problems of economic and social development. Secondly, projects like Telstar offer more immediate returns than Project Apollo. Thirdly, the scientific experiments can operate at full speed on a much lower budget than either Gemini or Apollo. As for letting the Russians reach the moon, it should be remembered that it takes two to make a race.[82]

As other nations watch our efforts, a somewhat ticklish question arises over the timing of American flights (especially the manned ones). Early in our contest with the U.S.S.R. for political prestige, we established a reputation for not letting international or domestic political considerations control our launchings. This practice has won us a measure of good will, but poses a problem. There is the distinct possibility that subsequent flights, even by mistake, might appear to have blatant political motives: Walter Schirra's flight coincided with racial trouble at Oxford, Mississippi, and Gordon Cooper went up in the middle of racial tension at Birmingham, Alabama. This problem admits of two solutions. Either we could consciously manipulate the timing of our flights so that they still looked "apolitical," thus giving each event a specific purpose and avoiding the unsightly embarrassments that have plagued the program so far (as in 1957); or we could announce each effort so far in advance that any attempt to attach political motives to any American launching would be ridiculous. Although this second alternative runs the risk of delay and ridicule, and must be followed consistently, it appears to be the safer and more practical of the two. It also appears to be in practice at the moment.

Finally, the possible practical applications of Telstar and other projects should become the major gospel of American publicity, at least until Project Apollo nears its operational stage. Latin Americans are relatively uninterested in a manned lunar landing still more than six years away.

81 An important step was taken in this direction when Miguel Alemán Jr. attached a glossary of scientific terms to his book, *Los secretos y las leyes del espacio* (Mexico City, 1962).

82 Even the opinion of military experts would tend to support this conclusion, since it is generally conceded that orbital maneuvers are more pertinent to the national security than shots to the moon (manned or unmanned).

They are concerned with their own problems of economic development. Therefore a mighty effort should be made to integrate aspects of the United States space program with the indigenous problems of Mexico, Central and South America. Above all, the peoples of that area should be given a sense of participation in the space program. Within the limits of national security, local scientists and engineers should be offered tours of duty in the tracking stations at Guaymas, Quito, Lima and Santiago. The notion of technical "spin-off" should be explained to government officials and businessmen. Telstar should be presented as a possible solution to problems of rural education—via television—and as a means of accelerating the gradually growing movement for the economic integration of Latin America. The applications of weather satellites should also be widely explained, since accurate forecasts would be an invaluable aid to offshore fishing fleets, and a better understanding of the world's moisture deposits could help solve problems of drought and irrigation. Of course the possibilities of such applications should not be oversold, since disappointment begets resentment. But a focus of this kind, I think, would convince Mexicans and other Latin Americans that the lunar race is by no means the ultimate test of the relative merits of Communism and democracy, and that the United States' space efforts are being made in an attempt to improve and not to dominate the world.