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*Although it has not received the widespread attention of a Cuba or a Chile, the ongoing political experiment of Peru's military government—first conceived at their senior service college—may well prove to be of more than passing significance to the rest of the hemisphere. Seeking to chart a course between “avaricious capitalism and heartless communism,” Peru's soldiers-turned politicians have taken the first concrete steps toward effecting genuine reform and spurring growth-oriented change in their country's tradition-bound society and economy. While it undoubtedly is too early to predict with any assurance that the Peruvian case is the forerunner of a new trend toward military involvement in reformism in Latin America, it does present intriguing possibilities for the future that few observers would have accepted only 10 years ago.*

## **REVOLUTION FROM WITHIN: CHANGING MILITARY PERSPECTIVES IN PERU**

A research paper

prepared by

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In October 1968 the world read the news of the latest version of a very old phenomenon—another revolution in Latin America. This time it was Peru; the democratically elected government of President Fernando Belaúnde Terry had been overthrown by a junta composed of the chiefs of the armed forces. The leader of the coup, Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, described the new government as revolutionary in nature and proclaimed as its goal the radical transformation of Peru's economy and social institutions into instruments for the benefit of all Peruvians.

Undoubtedly most political observers viewed the events in Peru with disapproval and skepticism. The history of

Latin America is replete with examples of military interventions by reform-minded officers who announced revolutionary reform programs only to lose their enthusiasm for drastic change once they had effected a successful coup.

This inclination to characterize a change in government as a “revolution” is not limited to the new junta in power. Outsiders similarly have been quick to apply the label of revolution to every coup in the region. In actual fact, however, very few true revolutions have occurred in Latin America. Radical change in the basic traditional structures of society had only been achieved in Mexico and Cuba prior to the 1968 Peruvian takeover, whereas the overwhelming majority of so-called revolutions in Latin America have served only

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as a means to change the name of the government. Indeed, the real surprise for students of Latin American politics is not that there have been so many revolutions, but rather that there have been so few.

Three years have passed since the Peruvian military junta seized power and proclaimed a revolution. In retrospect it would appear that those who had earlier scoffed at the chances of achieving genuine reform under military rule were somewhat premature in their judgment, for it is now evident that the military in Peru are strong advocates of rapid social and economic reform. Indeed, subsequent events have demonstrated that this is no stereotyped dictatorship interested only in maintaining the status quo, and it appears that this military government is vastly different in background and motivation from the traditional junta we assumed it to be. General Velasco and his comrades in arms are backing up their revolutionary rhetoric with revolutionary action.

Under Velasco the armed forces have come to accept a leading role in the national development of the country. Its efforts to eliminate the traditional oligarchy from influence and to alter the structure of political, economic, and social power have caused its reforms to be regarded as the most far-reaching and revolutionary to be effected by any Peruvian Government, military or civilian.<sup>1</sup>

What makes these Peruvian events particularly interesting and puzzling is that these reforms are being made by many of the officers who for years have been suppressing the left of center Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (APRA or Aprista) Party which has long been advocating similar reforms. Today's revolution in Peru is being led by the men who in 1965 destroyed a guerrilla insurgency which claimed to represent landless peasants in their fight for land reform. Nevertheless, we now have in the Peruvian leadership

the best example of a seemingly dynamic and reform-minded group of military men committed to progress and the task of modernizing a traditional society.

These conflicting images, coupled with the trend in recent years toward increased authoritarian rule in Latin America and military dominated governments, raise many questions. Is it true, as we have always supposed, that any encroachment of the military into civilian rule is necessarily a step backward in the difficult process of nation building? Or is it possible that military rule can, in fact, establish a suitable basis for facilitating the process of social, economic, and political development?

### THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTION

The military coup which deposed President Fernando Belaunde Terry was not Peru's first experience with direct military involvement in running the government. During the 20th century alone there had been major interventions by the military in 1919, 1930, 1948, and 1962.<sup>2</sup> Over the years the motives and justifications used to explain intervention have varied, but whatever the actual motivations, there has been one common thread: Peruvian military leaders have always maintained that they were forced to act by the failure of civilian government, that they came to power with the purest of patriotic intentions and not until grave national circumstances made their intervention imperative. Ironically, this same rationale which led to Belaunde's ouster by the military in 1968 had also paved the way for his initial ascension to the presidency. When in the 1962 presidential contest Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, founder and leader of the Aprista Party and long considered a blood enemy by Peru's military, appeared likely to defeat his two major opponents (Belaunde of the Popular Action (AP) movement and ex-dictator

Manuel Odria of the Conservative Odrist National Union), the military seized power, nullified the elections, and governed for 1 year.<sup>3</sup> It was clear by this time that the armed forces had abandoned their traditional defense of the status quo and close association with the oligarchy. In the presidential elections held in June 1963, the military clearly favored the election of the reformist Belaúnde Terry.<sup>4</sup> In his scholarly treatment of the political role of the Peruvian military, Stephen L. Rozman states that "the military, in supporting Belaúnde, was perhaps giving civilian government one last chance to make meaningful reform."<sup>5</sup>

Elected by a narrow majority, President Belaúnde pledged to maintain democracy while shuffling his country's pyramidal social structure in favor of the disadvantaged. He called for agrarian reform to revamp the existing system of land tenure under which 0.8 percent of the landholders possessed 83 percent of the arable surface.<sup>6</sup> He promised to reevaluate the status of the International Petroleum Company (IPC), a Standard Oil subsidiary long regarded as a foreign exploiter of the Peruvian economy.

Because fewer than 50,000 Peruvians paid taxes, he urged sweeping fiscal reform. He initiated "Cooperación Popular," a program designed to uplift the isolated, poverty-stricken Indian population by making technical assistance available for local self-help projects such as roadbuilding, school construction, and literacy training.<sup>7</sup> All of these reforms were strongly supported by the military leaders who had influenced Belaúnde's election to office. Unfortunately, he proved unable to effectively implement his proposals. Despite the fact that the President's reforms resembled similar proposals advanced for years by the influential Aprista Party, Belaúnde encountered a great deal of resistance in the Peruvian legislature. This was particularly true on

the two key issues of agrarian reform and IPC.

President Belaúnde's agrarian reform bill originally included the nationalization of the large coastal sugar plantations. A coalition of congressional opponents, which notably included APRA, used various tactics to exclude the sugar plantations from the law eventually passed in January of 1964.<sup>8</sup> Even after passage, presidential-legislative cooperation on agrarian reform did not improve. In 1965, during a period of increased peasant unrest and guerrilla activity in the mountains, Congress cut the amount of funds requested for the reform program.<sup>9</sup> This constant conflict severely limited the impact of agrarian reform under the Belaúnde government. Operating under these conditions, the program's directors had only managed to redistribute land to 2,625 peasant families by 1968.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the frustrations associated with agrarian reform, however, it was the longstanding IPC dispute which proved to be the most volatile issue contributing to Belaúnde's downfall. In the eyes of congressional critics, the administration's handling of the negotiations and the subsequent contract signed by Belaúnde completely discredited the government and "legalized" its overthrow.<sup>11</sup>

The inability of the President and the Congress to work together was also reflected in the failure to cope effectively with such problems as inflation, economic recession, and the housing shortage. Opposed by a congressional coalition headed by the Aprista Party, it became impossible for the Belaúnde government to get legislation passed that would be favorable to economic recovery. Lack of decisive action in these and other areas created an atmosphere conducive to military takeover.<sup>12</sup> As the elections for the 1969 term of office approached, partisan conflict intensified. Congress dissolved in preparation for the elections, and the

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President's own party suffered serious internal splits as administration scandals and labor strikes rocked the government.

Commenting at the time on the chaos engulfing Peru, a respected English journalist wrote:

No one recommends military dictatorship, but it is evident that, if representative democracy does not demonstrate itself capable of protecting the welfare of the nation, if the system obstructs government in their functions, and if it does not give freedom of action to the creators and planners, the choice will alternatively be between anarchy and a "strong" government.<sup>13</sup>

Several months later Peru had a "strong" government indeed. At 2 a.m. on the morning of 3 October 1968, 30 tanks surrounded the presidential palace on Lima's historic Plaza de Armas. Several officers entered the palace to inform Belaúnde that he had been deposed and quickly whisked him off to the airport where a Peruvian Airlines plane carried him to Buenos Aires.<sup>14</sup>

The traditional method of the "midnight palace coup" gave little hint of the progressive nature of the new government or of the revolutionary changes which would follow. However, it is apparent that in view of the deteriorating situation which faced the country, the military saw two alternatives: either a revolution from below, which might well destroy their own position, or, on the other hand, the imposition of a revolution which they could control. They chose, naturally, the latter alternative. In the takeover they committed themselves to preventing a violent revolution through carrying out their own revolutionary plan.<sup>15</sup> As one Peruvian military officer put it:

When one is pursued by a herd of maddened bulls, one has three options. One is to kneel, close the eyes, and pray. The second is to

fight the bulls, which is as good as the first option. The third is to lead the stampeding herd into terrain that is more advantageous to the pursued. The masses in Latin America are starting to stampede. We military are the only ones who are capable of leading them—and us—into safe ground.<sup>16</sup>

Upon assuming power, the military junta lost little time in disassociating themselves from their image as watchdogs of the oligarchy. In a radically worded "Revolutionary Manifesto" issued the day of the coup, the military government denounced the "present unjust social and economic order which places the usufruct of the national wealth solely within reach of the privileged, while the majority suffer the consequences of a marginalization injurious to human dignity."<sup>17</sup> The "Statute of the Revolutionary Government," published later on the same day, spoke of the need

to put an end to economic chaos, administrative immorality, improvisation, a policy of surrender over natural resources of wealth and their exploitation for the benefit of privileged groups; and also to the loss of the principle of authority and to viability to carry out the urgent structural reforms which both the welfare of the Peruvian people and the development of the country require.<sup>18</sup>

Historically, two of Peru's most chronic problems have been the maldistribution of the national wealth among the population as a whole and the country's failure to absorb the Indians into all aspects of national life. High rates of population growth and the subsequent pressures on the small amount of workable land, mass migration to the cities and the accompanying growth of slums have all served to intensify these problems.

It was with these historical problems

in mind that General Velasco announced his government's goal to radically transform Peruvian economic and social institutions in order to: (1) maintain Peru's sovereignty, integrity, and independence; (2) promote structural, social, and economic reforms and development, thus affording a higher standard of living for the Peruvians; and (3) accelerate the integration of the largely unassimilated Indian population.<sup>19</sup>

To accomplish its ambitious aims, the junta pursued a course described by Velasco as "neither Communist nor Capitalist, but peculiarly Peruvian."<sup>20</sup> He has categorized himself as a "revolutionary nationalist," and his rejection of both capitalism and communism is based on his feeling that "the former has failed and the latter will not work."<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the government has suppressed both the old political system of bickering civilian parties and the laissez-faire economic system which had given such free play to both foreign interests and local landlords and capitalists.

While it is easy to talk of restructuring the society and set the goal of a more just distribution of wealth and opportunity, taking concrete steps designed to actually accomplish these goals is quite a different matter. Nonetheless, after 40 months in office, it is generally conceded—even by the most cynical Latin American observers—that the declarations of the Peruvian junta have been put into action. The spectacular seizure of the International Petroleum Company's holdings only 6 days after General Alvarado's ascension to power, combined with the new government's unilateral declaration of the 200-mile territorial sea, has given credibility to the nationalistic stance of the junta. While these early decisions were relatively easy to make, given the ready domestic political support each was assured, the crucial question remained: what action would be taken to im-

plement the truly revolutionary reforms promised to transform Peruvian society?

**Industrial Reform.** Perhaps the best example of General Velasco's efforts to find an alternative between "avaricious capitalism and heartless communism" can be found in his industrial reforms.<sup>22</sup> Although some aspects of his evolving economic policies are somewhat vague, it appears that the government is working toward a mixed economy composed of public, private, and cooperative ownership spheres. A General Law of Industries was decreed in 1970 which places basic industries, including foreign companies, under state control with the central government responsible for planning and regulating the economy. Additionally, it establishes worker-owned cooperatives and profit sharing. The law empowers the government to intervene in virtually all phases of Peruvian industry and gave birth to a new legal concept, "The Industrial Community."

Specifically, four categories, or priorities, are established for industry, whether foreign or locally owned. First priority goes to such basic industries as those producing steel, nonferrous metals, chemicals, fertilizers, cement, and paper, as well as companies manufacturing goods essential to industrial development, such as machine tools, or companies engaged in industrial research. Second priority is assigned companies filling social needs, including those engaged in the production of food, clothing, and housing. Lower priorities are accorded enterprises producing nonessential or luxury goods.

The law further classifies all industries as public, private, or cooperative. All basic industries are reserved to the state which also has the power "whenever convenient" to participate, independently or in partnership, in other industries as well. Only under exceptional cases will private industry be permitted to operate, either in-

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dependently or with the state, in basic industries.

In other categories mixed enterprises are encouraged—those associating foreign and Peruvian capital. However, foreign companies are not allowed to own any more than 33 percent of any local industry.

Unique among the reforms included in the General Law of Industries is the establishment of the Industrial Community. This is a quasi-public company, which will own and operate all existing basic industries for an unspecified number of years. It provides a means for workers to share in the ownership and management of industry. Under the new organization all industrial workers in both the public and private sectors will receive 10 percent of the profits before taxes. Another 15 percent of the company's pretax income will go to each industry's "Industrial Community" which the community will then use to gradually buy out the company's present shareholders. As the community's ownership of equity expands, so will its strength on the company's board of directors until it chooses half the members.<sup>23</sup>

The terminology of the law provides us with a subtle but nonetheless significant insight into the government's attempts to break down the class distinctions which often exist between labor and management. The law replaces the three traditional categories of "workers," "employees," and "management" with that of all "persons employed full time in an industrial firm."

Nobody seems to know if Peru's industrial reform laws represent creeping socialism or old-fashioned profit sharing, but as one General-Cabinet Minister assured, "We are neither capitalist nor Communist. We are building a new relationship between capital and labor, eliminating the traditional battle between the two, making capital recognize labor as human and putting the two together in cooperative enterprises."<sup>24</sup>

**Agrarian Reform.** At the annual celebration of Día del Indio (Indian Day), 24 June 1969, the Agrarian Reform Law was announced, and in a dramatic gesture President Velasco renamed 24 June Día del Campesino—Day of the Rural Laborer. The most comprehensive and basic of any agrarian reform in Latin America except Cuba, it embodies the concepts of social justice and worker ownership of the land. Known officially as Degree Law 17716, the sweeping new act has three main objectives. First, the government sought to set up an integrated reform on a nationwide basis and not isolated efforts here and there; that is, an agrarian reform which could profoundly modify and transform both the economic and social structure of Peru. Secondly, the reform was to be interrelated with other national interests, such as the water problem. Thus, the decision could be made to take over all the sugar plantations, set up agrarian reform "zones," and determine the kinds of crops to be planted in certain areas. Finally, the goal was the creation of a new man and a new society.<sup>25</sup> The phrases may appear to the critic as little more than revolutionary rhetoric, but, in fact, the government had in mind changing the basic structure of agrarian society in Peru and not simply detailed technical alterations.

It is no accident that the new government gave a high priority to agrarian reform; indeed, it has been a major political issue in Peru since the 1930's when it was first championed by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre's Aprista Party. Since that time there has been much talk about agrarian reform, but prior to 1968 results had been meager. Belaúnde's efforts had been watered down to the point where they were generally ineffective. At the time of the takeover, giant foreign companies and a few rich Peruvian families still controlled vast stretches of valuable land. On the Pacific coast, land was generally held in

modern agro-industrial units that sometimes stretched for a quarter of a million acres. In the Sierra less than 200 landowners retained possession of 60 percent of the arable land.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the country several million peons had at their disposal only small parcels of land which could not provide a decent living for an average family. The large, highly profitable sugar estates on the Peruvian coast contrasted with the Sierra's huge but poorly utilized latifundia, (large estates) and the small and ineffective minifundia, (small properties). As noted above, the agrarian reform decreed by the Belaúnde administration had spared the great agricultural-industrial operations on the coast while only permitting 10 percent of the land subject to reform in the Sierra to be affected in the first 4½ years of its implementation.<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, the reforms that have been enacted and enforced by the junta have been far reaching and rapid. In announcing the new reforms, Velasco asserted that the law "will apply throughout the country without privileges and with no exceptions." He said that the plan would "end once and for all the unfair social order that has kept the peasants in poverty and inequity."<sup>28</sup> In the same speech he unveiled the political objectives underlying the reform when he stated that the government's purpose was to "reach a realignment of Peruvian society and, therefore, alter the structure of economic, political and social power in our country."

Although the specific details of the land reform program are somewhat vague, it appears that the goal of the government is to eliminate nonproductive landownership. Application of the law will vary according to the region and the degree of cultivation of the land in question. Abandoned and poorly managed farms will be completely expropriated. Owner farmed properties ranging from 150 to 200 hectares in size

on the coast and from 15 to 55 hectares in the Sierra will not be affected.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, minifundia are to be consolidated into viable agricultural units, while latifundia are being broken up. In return for their land, the former owners are receiving long-term government bonds which can be held to maturity or immediately reinvested in Peruvian industry. In order to insure that the large but efficient agricultural units are not broken up into nonproductive parcels, the government is organizing the former agricultural workers in cooperative associations, which will own and direct the estates.

To date the government has expropriated 6.25 million acres. According to government officials, almost half of this area has been turned over to farmer and employee cooperatives that represent 80,000 families.<sup>30</sup>

In June 1971 the Minister of Agriculture, Gen. Enrique Valdez Angulo, officially transferred the last of the coastal sugar plantations to its new owners. Indicating the far-reaching goals of the land reform program, General Valdez said, "I can announce to you that by 1975 not one 'latifundia' will remain on Peruvian soil . . . and that expropriated lands will have been wholly transferred to the field workers."<sup>31</sup>

In the Sierra, where agrarian reform is far more complicated than it is on the coast, gradual application of reform is making good progress. One of the more ambitious projects undertaken in the Andes is the Cooperative Antapama, located in Valle de Anta. The project joins 45 expropriated haciendas with 5,000 Indian families, covering more than 50,000 acres into a single productive unit.<sup>32</sup>

As an adjunct to the Agrarian Reform Law, the government has also advanced a new code regulating water rights. It stipulates that lakes, streams, and rivers must be used for the welfare



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of all, not for the exclusive benefit of a few large landholders.

In spite of these impressive statistics, the program is not without problems; a serious shortage of arable land remains, which is making reform all the more difficult. A government report issued in late 1970 said that only enough coastal land exists to create fewer than 80,000 family farm units, while there are 171,000 peasant families eligible to receive them. In the Andes the situation is much worse, with the equivalent of fewer than 150,000 family-sized parcels available for 852,000 landless families.<sup>33</sup> The revolutionary government plans to expropriate 5 million more acres of land and some 700,000 animals during 1971-1972, but the continuing demand for scarce resources will exceed these figures by a considerable margin. Faced with difficulties and uncertainties, the agrarian reform program has adopted as an unofficial motto a quotation from the modern Spanish poet Antonio Machado. The lines are: "Traveler, there is no path. Paths are made in the walking."<sup>34</sup>

**Other Reforms.** In many less dramatic ways the government is making its reformist position felt. Prices on basic foodstuffs have been regularized; the distribution of meat has been nationalized; foreign investors who are hedging on further capital expansion are being pressured either to invest or risk losing their concessions; and speculation in urban land development has been curtailed.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the military is expending considerable effort in improving life in the *barridas* (the ring of squatter settlements that surrounds Lima and other cities).

While all the efforts made by the military junta during their first 40 months at the helm of government represent only a fraction of the effort which must be taken to achieve their goals, it is most significant that for the first time in Peruvian history a true

revolution is in progress. In spite of difficulties, the military government has clearly demonstrated a determination to remake the social and economic structures of society in order to bring the poor and the landless into the commonwealth. Whether this reformism might in time give way to a more traditional form of politics remains to be seen; but the fact that a Latin American military government has undertaken a well-planned social transformation has done much to destroy the stereotype of the military as the "watchdogs" of the oligarchy. What accounts for the apparent social commitment of the junta members now ruling Peru? Why is their behavior so different from that of most Latin American military officers who reach power?

Despite difficulties inherent in analyzing the background and the motives of the military leaders who engineered the October takeover, there emerge a number of common factors which may shed some light on the reasons for their social consciousness.

One factor is the social background of Peru's generals, a majority of whom came from the lower and middle classes and who remain unaligned with the country's traditional oligarchy.<sup>36</sup>

No less important is the fact that, more than any other Peruvian institution, the military has been in close touch with the other Peru—the rural areas where poverty, illiteracy, high infant mortality, and underemployment demoralize the population. The contact began in the early 1960's as the army sought to eradicate a guerrilla movement through a vigorous civic action program of land clearance and road construction. The experience sensitized many officers to the needs of Peru's disadvantaged population.<sup>37</sup>

A third factor which seems to have played a prominent role in shaping the outlook of the ruling generals is the education of the Peruvian officer. In addition to standard courses in strategy,

tactics, and command and staff procedures, selected Peruvian officers received training both at home and abroad which introduced them to the political, economic, and social facets of nation building.

However, before proceeding on with a detailed discussion of those factors which have contributed to the social consciousness of Peru's military government, it is necessary to first gain an understanding of certain constitutional ambiguities in Peru's civil-military tradition—a tradition which has served to legitimize the armed forces' political involvement throughout the country's history.

**The Peruvian Constitution and the Role of the Military.** Peru may be unused to revolution in the sense of any radical change in the structure of society, but it is certainly no stranger to military intervention in the workings of constitutional government.

For the average U.S. citizen, the longstanding American respect for constitutional process and the strong tradition mitigating against military involvement in politics make the prospect of a military coup unthinkable in the United States and unpardonable when it happens in other countries. The efforts of the early colonists to break their individual and collective ties with Europe led North Americans to a suspicion of all things military.

Peru, however, as a Hispanic nation lacks the traditions and experience for democracy, as most Americans understand it, to flourish. Early efforts to gain independence from Spain and Portugal led to a tradition of military involvement in government that, although more subtle, is as strong today as it was in the days of the 19th century caudillo. Latin American history has many examples of circumstances where only the armed forces could provide any sort of order and stability in the political vacuum that existed following the

wars of independence. Once established, the precedent for military involvement in politics became not only accepted, it became a tradition. The military coup became not just an aberration, but almost the institutional form of political change. In Peru the military coup signifies not so much a lack of respect for democratic process as it does a reflection of historic precedent and the prevailing view of the military as the "guardians of the Constitution." It would not be an exaggeration to say that, in the political mores of many Latin American States, Peru included, the military is expected to intervene when civilian government becomes conspicuously unable to govern.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, even the Peruvian Constitution appears to bear out this expectation. Article 213, title 12, of the Constitution of 1933 reads, "The purpose of the Armed Forces is to guarantee the rights of the Republic, the fulfillment of the Constitution and the laws, and the conservation of public order."<sup>39</sup>

The military coups of 1962 and 1968 both interrupted constitutional terms of office of presidents elected in unprecedented freedom.<sup>40</sup> The ambiguity of the Constitution becomes clear when we learn that both coups were justified by the military as actions in support of the Constitution under the authority of article 213.<sup>41</sup> Although this provision of the Constitution does not conform to United States and European constitutional traditions, similar formulae are common in Latin America where they have often been employed by Constitution drafters seeking to check potential executive abuse.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that, given their constitutional mandate "to guarantee the fulfillment of the Constitution and the laws," most officers of the Peruvian Armed Forces probably felt justified in ousting President Belaúnde. Indeed, Belaúnde himself has suggested that military intervention is justifiable at times. Following the 1962 elections in which none of the major presidential

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contenders received the one-third plurality required by the Constitution, Belaúnde let it be known that he would just as soon see the armed forces take control of the country as to have the Presidency go to either of his opposition candidates.<sup>43</sup>

Viewed in this context, it is easier to understand the contention of the armed forces that they have a legitimate political mission above that of the government. They feel that their first allegiance is to the nation and to the Constitution, as they interpret it, rather than to the civilian politician who happens to occupy the presidential chair at any given moment. Thus the military's custodianship of the national interest, dating from the wars for independence, has served repeatedly to involve the armed forces directly in the affairs of state.

### Social Origins of the Officer Corps.

The noted Professor of History and Latin American affairs John J. Johnson has stated that in Spanish America, more than any other area of the world, "the officer's social background remains one of the keys to his behavior."<sup>44</sup> In attempting to gain an insight into the social composition of the Peruvian officer corps, however, scholars have been frustrated by the lack of material available to them. The Peruvian Armed Forces have been opposed to allowing any kind of survey or data collecting within any portion of the military establishment.<sup>45</sup> However, all available information indicates that the majority of today's officers come from the middle class, with an over-representation of the interior over the capital city.

This has not always been the case. At the turn of the century, the Peruvian officer was likely to be a young man from a relatively good family in Lima or one of the major provincial capitals. The military academy offered free higher education leading to a respectable profession, and many young men, from

impoverished but relatively "good" families found this an acceptable alternative to the restrictions of the narrowly elitist civilian educational system.<sup>46</sup> Although the officers produced during this period generally came from the upper middle classes, it is clear that they have never been identified with the social or financial elite.<sup>47</sup>

It is ironic, then, that the officers in Peru have seldom reflected the interests of the groups from which they came. To the contrary, on several occasions since World War I, the armed forces have acted to keep the oligarchy, with its legendary "40 families," in power.

Recently, however, there has been a gradual shift in the class composition and class affiliation of the officer corps. Although many of today's senior officers are from an upper middle class background, most junior and middle grade officers, particularly in the army, have come from a lower social stratum. Since about 1950 professional military service has not offered an economically or socially attractive career to individuals of the whitish upper middle classes, and an increasing number of candidates for the military academy have come from urban lower class and peasant backgrounds.<sup>48</sup> The result has been a color shift as well as a class shift, as increasing numbers of officers reflect the Indian majority of Peru. As early as 1960 the Peruvian Army had at least one general who was fullblooded Indian.<sup>49</sup> John Gunther, the well-known Latin American traveler and author, relates the comment made to him by a Lima resident who for many years had attended graduation ceremonies for military cadets, "The young graduates become darker skinned every year!" was the exclamation.<sup>50</sup>

As the racial and economic composition of the armed forces takes on more and more the coloration of the nation as a whole, the geographical areas from which the services draw their members have switched away from Lima and the

coastal urban centers and moved toward the rural provincial towns of the interior. The shift has been felt throughout the officer corps. Fifty-six percent of the men who attained the rank of general in the army between 1955 and 1965 were born either in the central highlands (Sierra) or in the Amazon jungles (Selva).<sup>51</sup>

An individual example of the change that has occurred in the Peruvian officer corps is represented in the person of the President of the Revolutionary Government, Gen. Juan Velasco. He was born 61 years ago into a poor family in northern Peru. As a youngster he played near the tall barbed wire fences of the IPC compound, which he has called "an enclave of the rich designed to keep Peruvians out forever."<sup>52</sup> Like many of his fellow officers, he enlisted in the army as an ordinary soldier and used that opportunity to better himself, eventually gaining admission to the military academy and an army commission.

In view of his humble background, it is not difficult to understand Velasco's failure to line up with the traditional oligarchy and his success in identifying his government with the broad masses of the population. His speeches contain ample references to the popular origins of the armed forces, and when speaking of the revolution, he consistently refers to it as a "revolution of the people and the Armed Forces."

The changing geographical, racial, and class composition of the Peruvian officer corps does not necessarily enable them to implement necessary reforms or to govern well, but they go a long way toward explaining the realignment of the armed forces away from the oligarchy and toward the common man.

**Latent Insurgency.** Fidel Castro's success in deposing the seemingly well entrenched regime of Fulgencio Batista marked the advent of what was termed a new technique for revolution in Latin America. The Cuban example and

Castro's subsequent call for stepped-up terror and subversion in Latin America quickly had its effects in Peru.

While a number of rural disturbances have emerged over the years, the first version of what might be termed a Peruvian Castro-like revolution began in the early sixties. A young Trotskyite, Hugo Blanco, soon began preaching revolution and organizing militant peasant leagues. The action escalated as first a Civil Guard was killed and arms were seized in an attack on a rural police station; then two more policemen were killed and their weapons were taken in an ambush. Cattle thefts from the haciendas also increased markedly.

Although Blanco was captured after a long manhunt, it was clear to thoughtful government and political leaders that he had found in the Indians of the Sierra a fertile breeding ground for revolution. Landless and poverty stricken, the Indians were little more than serfs on the land that had once been a part of the proud Inca Empire. Indeed, in the 1962 national election one of the candidates charged that the Indians probably lived better under the Inca rulers.<sup>53</sup>

The military junta that took over in 1963 apparently agreed. Instead of relying solely on force to deal with the growing unrest in the countryside, the junta enacted a series of measures designed to initiate agrarian reform. Before relinquishing power to Belaúnde, the junta issued a comprehensive decree establishing the broad outlines of what subsequent agrarian reform should look like.<sup>54</sup> This action probably reflected the growing influence of insurgency training in the Peruvian Armed Forces. From the Communist revolutionary thesis that guerrillas are fish that swim in a sea of people, the military had come to the conclusion that if they were to suppress the guerrilla, they must first win the support of the people.

In August 1963, shortly after he had assumed office, President Belaúnde set

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about to do just that. With the encouragement of the military leaders, he called upon the armed forces to join with civilians, using their discipline and technical skills in making war on unacceptable social conditions.<sup>55</sup> All three branches of the military, but principally the army, quickly agreed to join in the President's effort and established civic action programs, including the construction of many new highways and airstrips designed to enable military and civilian experts to reach isolated areas on a regular basis. This was the largest non-military role that the Peruvian Armed Forces had ever assumed and the first organized civic action effort in their history.<sup>56</sup> As a result, the military, more than any other government institution, came in close touch with the other Peru—the rural areas where poverty, illiteracy, high infant mortality, and underemployment demoralized the population. The experience sensitized many officers to the needs of Peru's disadvantaged population.<sup>57</sup> As Gen. Jose Graham, an influential member of the regime expressed it: "We saw unjust land conditions and people living just like animals."<sup>58</sup>

In spite of steps taken by the Belaúnde administration and the armed forces, the revolutionary fires continued to burn. In the summer of 1965 two separately organized Communist guerrilla fronts opened up in the central and southern Andes. Policemen and landlords were ambushed and killed. The cry "Land or Death" spread throughout the Sierra as peasants in the La Convención Valley staged strikes to abolish the centuries-old obligation of free labor on the haciendas. Serfdom ended as the Indian peasants gained de facto ownership of their tiny subsistence plots. Landlords had to scour the highlands to find migrant workers to harvest their crops.

This agrarian revolt in La Convención set the stage for what turned out to be a major Communist miscalculation—an

attempt to follow the land seizures and the general peasant unrest with the "war of national liberation." The miscalculation proved to be fatal. Within 6 months the guerrilla movement was crushed by well-trained Peruvian Ranger units supported by the Peruvian Air Force.

Scholars and military experts have put forth a variety of reasons to explain the failure of the Peruvian insurgency. They point out that the various guerrilla groups were so badly splintered that they could not coordinate their policies, plans, or their actions. Whereas the Sierra Maestra provided Castro with a secure base for guerrilla operations, the Peruvian insurgents found little sustenance in the barren and isolated Andes. To compound their isolation problem, the well-educated, citified guerrilla leaders had great difficulty in gaining the confidence and support of the simple mountain peasants. In many cases the guerrillas did not even speak the Quechua language of the Indians. Then too, thousands of Peruvian soldiers had been trained at U.S. Army counterinsurgency schools, and the United States contributed more than \$120 million in military aid to Peru.<sup>59</sup>

These explanations are all valid and have been confirmed by surviving guerrilla leaders. However, there is another factor that is frequently overlooked or underrated, and that fact centers on government reform measures that had been preempting guerrilla programs. One of the surviving guerrilla leaders, Hector Bejar, comments that "with the enactment of the 1962 military junta's agrarian law and Belaúnde's agrarian reform . . . the slogan 'Land or Death' no longer had such urgent meaning [to the peasants]."<sup>60</sup>

The guerrilla experience of 1962-1965, though successfully controlled in military terms, underscored to the military the importance of social change.<sup>61</sup> It also raised fundamental doubts about the capacity of civilian-directed efforts to achieve that change.

For the moment the Communist uprising had been put down, but military men became increasingly concerned over the number of their countrymen they might have to shoot in order to maintain the peace. If a handful of radicalized urban intellectuals could occupy thousands of troops for months, what would happen if popular forces were enlisted in future disorders?<sup>62</sup> A comment made by a Peruvian general seems to typify the sentiments of much of the officer corps following the defeat of the insurgency:

The only way to fight Communism is through reform and development. . . . We fought the guerrillas in the Andes, and we know. We saw men so desperate that they faced certain death to fight us, and we asked ourselves what made them so brave. . . . You can't win against the guerrillas unless you have the support of the people.<sup>63</sup>

The idea of combating communism through reform and development continued to grow and develop among military leaders. The Ministry of War published an account of the guerrilla campaign and concluded that Peru had entered a period of "latent insurgency."<sup>64</sup> The elimination of this latent state of subversion by getting at its root causes became a primary objective of military action.

In an article published in 1967, the commandant of Peru's national war college, Gen. Edgardo Mercado Jarrín, defined the "latent state of subversion" as the presence of Communist activity exploiting national weakness.<sup>65</sup> He pointed out that the Communist strategy was not limited to military operations alone; that they had a very potent capability to compete with and subvert government efforts in the political, economic, and social fields as well. Communists will always stand ready to exploit national weaknesses in these fields. His list of national weaknesses

included structural imbalances in the society, lack of governmental control and communications with rural areas, fiscal crises, lack of identification by the population with national political objectives, resistance to change by privileged groups, inadequate scientific and technical development, and scarcity of trained personnel. He concluded that, "The prevention of insurgency, in the realm of political responsibility, requires the realization of broad programs of political, economic, social, and psychological development. And here military strategy cannot remain on the sidelines."<sup>66</sup>

Less than a year after this article appeared, General Mercado became the new government's Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is no coincidence that the reforms introduced by the revolutionary government coincided with his list of national weaknesses.

**The Military School System: Teaching Social Commitment.** Minister-General Mercado was not the only officer in Peru with definite ideas on how to best combat latent insurgency. Interviewed by an American journalist shortly after the coup, the new President, General Velasco, gave indication that the junta would be more than just another "caretaker" government: "We have prepared plans in the military school, and we must develop the country. We are going to stay in office until there have been reforms, until we have created the conditions for development."<sup>67</sup>

This statement is extremely revealing for it indicates not only the reformist tenor of the new government, but, more interestingly, that the plans for developing the country had been prepared in a military school.

It has often been the observation of military historians that military training does little to equip an officer with the skills necessary for running a modern state, and the truth of this observation

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is generally acknowledged by military men. Yet here is a statement by an army officer who, as a new head of state, indicates that he has had some degree of preparation for his new position.

The military school system in Peru is modeled after that of the United States.<sup>68</sup> Each of the services maintains its own training facilities for enlisted men and has its own academy to prepare cadets for service as commissioned officers. Additionally, each service maintains a war college for advanced training of officers. Combined training takes place in the national war college, the Center of Advanced Studies (Centro de Altos Estudio Militares, the CAEM). However, here the similarity to U.S. military education ends. In U.S. war colleges the emphasis is on external threats to national security. However, in Peru military officers have increasingly come to feel that the primary threat to the nation is an internal one. Few, if any, feel seriously threatened by a conventional attack from a neighboring country. Consequently, the curriculum of the CAEM has, since its founding in the 1950's, become increasingly oriented toward a wide range of social, economic, and even political problems. By the time of the 1962 national elections and their subsequent annulment by the military, the CAEM had published a statement of the new principles of action for the armed forces. It included a remarkable imperative for all national administrations:

The final end of the State being the welfare of the nation, and the Armed Forces being the instrument which the State uses to impose its policy . . . in order to arrive at collective prosperity, the Armed Forces has a mission to watch over the social welfare, the final end of the State.<sup>69</sup>

Based on this statement it is not difficult to understand how a school created to prepare the high command for national defense is now regarded as

"the only school of political science in Peru."<sup>70</sup> The school offers a 1-year program for officers who appear headed for the top of the ranks in their respective services. In recent years an increasing number of civilians have also been selected to attend. In 1971, 16 students out of 43 were civilians.<sup>71</sup> Although the curriculum contains the standard offerings in strategy, battlefield tactics, and command procedure, the main thrust of the course is oriented toward such socially relevant issues as land reform, developmental economics, tax structure, and foreign policy.<sup>72</sup> The faculty, mostly civilian, represents almost all political views, as do the civilian intellectuals and university professors who participate on a guest lecture basis.<sup>73</sup>

The influence of CAEM and the resulting interest of military men in the socioeconomic problems of the country are clearly reflected in the articles published by the *Revista Militar del Perú*, the official journal of the Peruvian Army. Articles published in the years 1949-51 differ significantly from those published in the years 1962-1964.<sup>74</sup> Issues appearing in the later period contain a significant number of articles on national political, social, and economic problems, or problems of national development in general. This is in marked contrast to the more traditional editorial policy reflected by the *Revista Militar* only 10 to 15 years earlier.

Interestingly enough, the CAEM is not the only educational influence on Peruvian officers. Increasing numbers of military officers have been attending civilian universities both in Peru and abroad. The net effect of this increased emphasis on broadened education has been to convince military officers that they are better equipped than most civilians to deal with problems of development.<sup>75</sup> With the 1968 coup, the colonels and generals moved from the CAEM, where they had merely studied and talked theories, to the presidential palace, where they had the opportunity

to put them in action. It is significant that of the first 19 Cabinet Ministers in the new government, 13 were CAEM graduates.<sup>76</sup>

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The fact that a Latin American military government has undertaken a well-planned social transformation is indeed a unique phenomenon—one that is causing scholars, politicians, and military leaders to view political intervention by the armed forces from a completely new perspective.

The Peruvian military, like its counterparts in other Latin American countries, generally does not favor long-term military rule as a more satisfactory form of government than popularly elected democracy. Only when confronted by a civilian government which has proven itself unable to deal effectively with national problems will the majority of officers advocate taking the machinery of state in their own hands.<sup>77</sup>

The significant thing that has occurred in Peru, however, is not that a majority of the officers were in a "procoup" faction in 1968, but rather that they constituted a "prorevolutionary" faction. Basic changes have taken place which have caused a realignment in the loyalties and the attitudes of the officer corps. Peruvian officers are no longer content to change the government, they are concerned with changing the structure of society. No longer are they involved with slowing down the process of change; rather, their interest is in accelerating change. They seem determined to bring about a revolution from within the nation's institutions in order to eliminate the threat of violent revolution from below.

The military government that has ruled Peru since October 1968 has clearly unleashed a revolutionary process that is reshaping Peruvian society. This fact is disconcerting to those who maintain that change through

democratic process is the only acceptable path to development and reform. This idealism, however, must be tempered by a realistic assessment of local conditions. It has been said that there can be no political democracy without a measure of social democracy.<sup>78</sup> In this regard, Peru is still profoundly undemocratic. The illiteracy and poverty so evident in most of Peru, the great cultural gap between the Indian and Spanish heritages, the glaring social inequities, the land system which has concentrated political and economic power in the hands of a few are not the foundations on which the structure of democratic government is easily built.

Given the continued threat of latent insurgency throughout the continent, it is highly probable that military officers in many Latin American republics will become increasingly concerned with the problems of nation building. As military establishments in these countries continue to broaden their social base, it is likely that they will continue to disassociate themselves from the maintenance of narrow corporate or class privileges.

Latin America in the coming years

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## BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Maj. James L. Williams, U.S. Marine Corps, did his undergraduate work at St. Mary's College and holds a master's degree in international affairs from The George Washington University. His primary

operational experience is in infantry operations, serving most recently in reconnaissance with 3d Reconnaissance, 3d Battalion of the 3d Marine Division in Vietnam. Major Williams served as Commanding Officer of the Marine Barracks, Newport, R.I., from 1968 to 1971, recently graduated from the College of Naval Command and Staff, and is currently assigned to the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

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cannot help but be the scene of profound revolutionary movements. It would be presumptuous to predict that the Peruvian example will necessarily establish a trend influencing the role of the military in other countries. Never-

theless, it is reasonable to expect that if civilian government is not able to meet the need for development and change in the Americas, the military may well be increasingly inclined to precipitate a revolution from within.

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Revolutions are always the work of a conscious minority.

*Walter Lippman: Washington Post, 12 April 1966*