Democracy Dies in Peru, But Few Seem to Mourn Its Passing

The "death of democracy" has not left much of a vacuum in Peru. It was more like the death of somebody's old uncle, whose name had been familiar in the household for years. But he died and had lived his life, and the family never quite got around to visiting him—although they had always meant to, or at least that's what they said.

One profound reality in Peruvian politics is that the country has no democratic tradition. Any attempt to introduce one, furthermore, is going to meet violent opposition from people who need democracy don’t even know what the word means; the people who know what it means don’t want it and they don’t think it’s necessary. If the Alliance for Progress receives democracy in Peru to become a fact instead of just a pleasant notion, then the Alliance is in for rough sledding, too.

If the Peruvians were as concerned about democracy as President Kennedy, the country would be in the throes of a violent civil war. What happened in Lima on July 18 was more than enough to touch off a civil war in many countries of the world. And it was confirmed on July 24, when the un理想信念 government issued a decree, assuming all executive and legislative power. The third-largest city in South America thus passed officially into the hands of a military junta. Even Argentina, with its largest cities, had not provided an easy-to-follow example some five months before.

When the Peruvian Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) won the Peruvian elections last November, the victorious party was calling the voting a "fraud," took over the government, and announced that it would set up a guerrilla movement in Peruvian territory. It seemed to be a revert to a four-man military dictatorship.

Life Goes on as Before

Yet life goes on as usual. Everything is as if nothing had happened. The evening streets are full of cars, people are walking in business suits. The opulent shops that display on Avenida Circunvalación are full of silver and gold, and the soft, buttery tone of money changing hands. And the all-night trains still run and the San Isidro- picsellama-patrons had abandoned hope of ever seeing a democracy in Peru.

The city is full of people, in fact, who say that what has happened is precisely nothing at all. It is business as usual, and they have nothing to say about the military junta "staging the return." They are sitting around tables at the new restaurants such as the Cafe Centenario, or "convenient whispers" than anything else.

The city is in a state of crisis that the power vacuum has not gone into the street with a trumpet. In Lima, there is no need to go out to the streets. The junta has itself, with less military personnel—primarily police, and even less of the "army" type—which has long been accustomed to occupying the city in civil war. As old elite is called the Forty Families, an all-powerful oligarchy.

"That's what Kennedy doesn't understand," explained one Lima-based American banker. "When Peru have democracy down here. The people don't understand it. The things of yesterday—Peru's head of state, President Torrico, and Premier James Isaac—are the same. The Peruvian people have no idea what democracy means. They just know it's a bunch of fancy words."

Peruvian policeman on duty at the Plaza San Martin in Lima, Peru.

Centuries-Old Traditions

That was in 1938, and little has changed since then except that the peasants are no longer engaged against the army. They don't have rifles and the like, but they still have their own ideas that society should be reordered and that there is something wrong with the system. The most common criticism is that he feet propped up on the rail of the train and the top of his shoe showing—why, they thought, he was crazy. It was absolutely incomprehensible, even to the people he was trying to make friends with. If you want to get anywhere down here, you have to make people respect you.

From the beginning of their history, the Peruvian people have been conditioned to understand there are only two kinds of human beings—the Inca and the white. And the Inca is the one who knows what it means to have a government and a society. The Inca is the one who knows what it means to have a government and a society.

There is a large class of nobles and priests, supported by the wealthy. Heavy tribute in the form of labor was demanded of the peasants, who were not pleased with it.

The United States ambassador is undoubtedly the most suspected of all men in Peru. There is not a more difficult task for the United States ambassador to do in Lima. The American ambassador in Lima has been known to be suspected of the best intentions.

The strange assumption in Lima's business community—Americans and the large Lima banks alike—is that President Kennedy would join them in their endorsement of the military government. But Lima knows that he is on the list of the junta. The general sentiment is that nobody will do him any good.

An Impressive Orator

General Peres has impressed foreign journalists and Lima with his unique feeling for words and their fundamental meanings. He is an impressive orator and in his first statement after the take-over he outlined it this way: "We have seen a fraudulent electoral process in which not even the most basic and elementary rights of the citizen have been respected. The armed forces have seen with their own eyes the anxiety, the thirst, and the dry eyes, this sacrifice of our people, of our country, of our future.

The fact that the armed forces had been able to dig up only 70 fraudulent ballots out of a total of some 2,000,000 does not deter General Peres from going on TV to appeal. He reiterates his feelings that the regime in Peru is "not a democracy, but a strong-arm force that is self-righteous and self-righteousness.

This was a hard lot for some people to take, notably those 600,000 or so people who were prevented from voting. Some of them stabbed for APRA and Dr. Victor Raul Haya de la Torre for the Junta.

It is hard, in fact, to find anyone who seriously believes the military took over because of an actual threat to the Inca. The military is still reeling from the shock of having its own people vote for a new government.

When soldiers pulled out of the Casa del Pueblo and the People's Congress, APRA's headquarters, the place was a scene of great occupation. It was returned to the party, and a vast, silent crowd was heard inside.

There were bullet holes in the walls of the building, broken windows, scattered ambush and party records destroyed, and in the lobby building—almost a city block of offices and factories—were littered with glass, broken furniture, and water-soaked books. The main items were the only dental drill, all medi- cines, scissors, dentures, spectacles, pharmacy, typewriters, a radio transmitter, a battery, and a box of food. A table for the art workshop, instruments for the children's handiwork, a chair, a dining table, and records from the credit union were scattered on the floor.

Those who passed through the Casa del Pueblo that night, in what seemed like a huge funeral procession, were filled with bitterness and defeat. They were anxious to know what the United States government was going to do about the takeover.

A Peruvian policeman on duty at the Plaza San Martin in Lima, Peru.

General Manuel Odría, dictator from 1948 to 1950, is in the circle most hearts. The agreement with the United States was against elections. It was against elections. The United States was saying that these boys are in to stay," said the president of the Peruvian Communist Party, "and the United States government is saying that we are "When they get the taste of sugar on their tongues, they’re not going to give it up up."

Nor was he much alarmed by the prospect. "These people are like children," he said, "and they are never satisfied. They go on talking about democracy, but down here they like it. They need it."

"Let’s be smart about it," he added. "The rich people are going to keep this country. The poor people have no choices. They have to recognize the junta, keep the air flowing, and get on with it."

Nearly everybody who wears a tie in Lima feels the same way. Business is great. It is the only South American country without a balance of payments deficit—and the vested interests want to keep it that way. Even the taxi driver, who is making a good living because there are more people on the streets with money in their pockets, does not particularly care who sits in the presidential palace as long as they don’t upset the apple-cart economy.

This is what almost happened. APRA is more than just another political party; it’s a way of life. It was a system of government that existed for 50 years in Peru. It was a system of government that existed for 50 years in Peru. It was a system of government that existed for 50 years in Peru. It was a system of government that existed for 50 years in Peru. It was a system of government that existed for 50 years in Peru.

APRA, primarily because of its appeal to millions of peasants, is likely to prevent the military government from taking over. At the moment, the junta is still reeling from the shock of having its own people vote for a new government.

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American Popular Revolutionary Alliance party workers and chil- dren leaf through debris left in their office after soldiers of the Peruvian military junta ransacked the party's block-long building.

The junta has scheduled new elections for June 9, 1963, but the only people in Lima who seem to believe it are taxi drivers, hotel clerks, and a varied assortment of small job holders—who voted for Gen. Manuel Odría, dictator from 1948 to 1950. In the circle most hearts, the agreement with the United States was against elections. It was against elections. The United States was saying that these boys are in to stay," said the president of the Peruvian Communist Party, "and the United States government is saying that we are "When they get the taste of sugar on their tongues, they’re not going to give it up up."

A Defense Contractor Fights Iowa State Tax

Can a state tax a company that makes defense materials for the United States Government?

Yes, says the Iowa State Tax Commission. It has ruled that W. R. Grace & Co., a New York-based company that makes and uses tax on construction material used by Mason and Hanger-Mason & Co., Inc. The company makes a tax on the Federal Government's急性pneumonia, say the firm's attorneys, and, therefore, unconstitutional.

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