

DIAGNOSING PERU

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Recent events in Peru, beginning with the 1968 military coup, have attracted a great deal of attention. Many of those who have analyzed this period of Peruvian history agree that it has been a decisive one, producing transcendental changes. Peruvians, and a good number of foreign academics, have written an incredible amount of material on the years from 1968 to 1975 (about three thousand significant articles on the subject), but this mountain of literature of quite disparate quality hinders more than it helps our understanding of the period.

This excess is partially explained by what can be called "competitive" intellectual production, a style that has particularly deep roots in the United States. Those who pursue academic careers learn early that if they don't take care they fall behind, and if they fall behind they lose. Under such pressure, U.S. university professors are obliged to publish and publish often. This system is more than just rivalry for status, as publishing successes are translated into higher salaries. The research it produces, however, is not always the result of genuine intellectual interest. This lack of interest and the lack of time allowed to mature a theme before a work is published often mean a mediocre or poor product. In the case of Peru, this system has been even more detrimental to quality, as recent events are attractive to publishers because new works on them are easy to sell. Despite it all, some excellent works on Peru have been written recently by North American academics.

For someone facing this mountain of material, the main difficulty is in separating the wheat from the chaff. More often than not, a few days spent reading one author's work will only reveal that his references are second-hand; or his data do not square with reality (although this divergence may be covered by some exculpatory footnote); or his argument is developed, too easily and too rapidly, by reporting a string of anecdotes or drawing up a matrix of variables. The latter will satisfy the functionalist North American tradition but is, nonetheless, not adequate to explain events in Peru. This article will review recently published works that deal with Peruvian society during the past several years and will try to summarize their major findings.

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Now that the reformist efforts of the Peruvian military have ended (buried some time between the end of 1975 and the beginning of 1976) and the period of military government is over, it is time to measure results. Because this stage of Peruvian history is complete, we can ask more from an author who published in 1980 than just a preliminary report of the sort that was useful at the beginning of the 1970s. Perhaps the total historical effect of the phenomenon we are confronting cannot yet be seen, but the immediate, general effect can and should be evaluated.

There are only a few good works that deal at the global level with the process of reform initiated by the military. Perhaps the most important of these, up to this point, is FitzGerald (1979). In 1976, FitzGerald published a short piece that was useful in defining the problems of the Peruvian economy. In this recent work FitzGerald sets for himself and achieves a more ambitious goal. The book's main strength, perhaps, is that it is not just an economic analysis but, rather, a study of the "political economy" of Peru. With the use of economic indicators, FitzGerald identifies the policies followed by Peruvian governments between 1956 and 1978. He writes about the context, limits, and results of these policies and, through this exposition, the structure of the Peruvian economy is revealed. This approach allows FitzGerald's fresh data—which are plentiful—and information on government actions and economic and social constants to appear in an extraordinarily integrated analysis. Although the work concentrates principally on the period that began in 1968, the backward glance that he takes is well founded enough to make his study a comparative one, and shows the essential continuity of certain central features on the Peruvian economy.

FitzGerald's main conclusion modifies the central thesis that shaped his earlier work. He now maintains that the military's reforms did not establish a new and coherent model of capital accumulation that replaced the traditional one; the dualism of the Peruvian economy and the consequent class structure made it impossible to establish a capitalist state with hegemony over the society. He points out, however, the changes that did occur. What took place in the Peruvian economy was, in effect, a process of industrialization that gave significant weight to the industrial sector of the economy. The most salient forms of dependency disappeared as foreign companies withdrew from the productive base. The social structure of the rural sector was fundamentally altered by the agrarian reform program that, by taking land away from the traditional landowner, made new social dynamics possible. FitzGerald also notes that the state was strengthened and that a class consciousness developed within the labor movement. But the military's attempt to restructure the role of capital and to achieve economic development through industrialization could not succeed; it was doomed to fail, given the

duality of the Peruvian economy caused by the economy's orientation towards the world market.

This view will be, without doubt, the basis for disputes and discussions, but FitzGerald contributes an impressive analytic firmness to the groundwork of this interpretation. We can contrast this accomplishment with Schydlowski and Wicht (1979), one of the books that has recently had great publishing success in Peru. These authors claim that the military's political program lacked an economic model and that a certain level of ignorance in government circles about economic problems contributed decisively to the government's fatal unravelling. Such a simplistic explanation does not begin to deal with the underlying problems of the Peruvian economy, an understanding of which makes it possible to comprehend the country's cyclical economic crises and the weakness of General Velasco's development scheme. Fortunately, FitzGerald's book will soon be published in Lima.

If it is possible to find an analytically separate sphere in which only political considerations count, there are two works that manage to show comprehensively the course of events in Peru since 1968. Stepan (1978) is an exposition of the ways in which authoritarian actions of the military government encounter the characteristics of Peruvian society. This analysis of the Peruvian case also permits Stepan to reflect on the role of authoritarianism and corporativism in political regimes, a reflection that sheds light on what was tried in Peru.

Cotler's (1980) short essay, which covers the frustration of military reform efforts, makes the same claim as FitzGerald's work: that it was Peruvian society that doomed these efforts. Cotler reiterates the line of his book of two years ago (*Clases, estado y nación en el Perú*) to emphasize the oligarchic character of Peruvian society, a society incapable of settling into a model of hegemonic rule. What was tried under Velasco's presidency was an effort to overcome the traditional state's inability to respond to people's demands by militarizing the entire society; the paradox is that this effort reinforced the traditional Peruvian political structure and the precarious position of those who exercise authority was maintained. In the economic sphere, the pattern of development that was based on a concentration of income and capital canceled out redistribution measures, although these measures in turn put a break on capitalist development. In summing up his rapid appraisal of the Peruvian situation, Cotler found that the new dominant economic class that emerged during the twelve years of military rule did not succeed in establishing new political control and that, for their part, the popular sectors did not manage to find a means of expressing in the political sphere the gains they had made in gremial organization.

Although this work is preliminary to a larger work now in prepa-

ration, the perspective that Cotler's short essay uses to focus its analysis of military government is the best of any work up to now. It makes the efforts of Anibal Quijano—widely distributed inside and outside Peru—to characterize the Velasco program look outdated. In my opinion, Cotler's work also surpasses Pease Garcia (1977)—which was also a publishing success and informative, but which could not point out the direction of the military government and its social effects beyond official circles—as well as other works published outside Peru, such as Philip (1978) and Palmer (1980), whose inadequacies are clearly apparent.

Philip pays too much attention to the International Petroleum Company issue (which took place early in the military period), giving it an entire chapter. This amount of space is unjustifiable in a work purporting to undertake a final analysis of the military government (Philip may have given way to the temptation of incorporating one of his earlier works, which referred to this specific issue). Philip does diverge from the usual outline of books about this period by introducing a review of leftist and rightist criticism of the military government, a refreshing twist on the treatment of this theme. Other good points: his observation on the perception in military thinking that social conflict is illegitimate; his analyses of the intertwining of bureaucratic decision-making mechanisms designed to preserve the leader's role and of the limits of the economic model for redistributing income; and his insistence that the radicalization of the military was only possible because of the weakness of the left in Peru. Despite the well-drawn conclusion that the weakness of the military's program stemmed from its character, which aimed to conciliate conflicting interests, two important aspects are carelessly done: on the one hand, the economy appears as a minor factor; on the other, the examination of concrete reforms is superficial—based on not always trustworthy secondary sources—and does not manage to show the course of the contradictions and real effects of the implementation of military reformism.

Palmer's book is presented as a basic text on Peru, the central thesis of which is the authoritarian nature of its society. While it is true that the general panorama outlined here—with a profusion of tables and charts, not all of equal interest—can be useful to the undergraduate who needs basic information about Peru, this book is not required reading for any one "initiated" in the study of the country. The presentation of the period that interests us is hurried, in some cases it uses examples that are not the most appropriate, and it definitely does not give a clear picture of what happened and why things ended as they did.

As for collected works, several worthwhile volumes were produced in the U.S. during the years of military government in Peru. Perhaps the most important of them is the one edited by Lowenthal (1975), who, with Cynthia McClintock, has just compiled a new version

on the same subject, *The Peruvian Experiment Reconsidered*, which promises to be of interest.

In the category of sectoral or partial analysis, it is in Peru that many of the most useful books have been published. The best work on the urban sector was Collier (1976), until the appearance of Henry (1978). The main virtue of Henry's book is that it follows the process of military reformism from the perspective of the urban movement and evaluates its effects. The author emphasizes that in the urban sector there appeared a central contradiction, and a pressing one, between structural reforms and the needs of this sector. On the one hand, the government promised to attend to the population's most urgent needs only when "structural reforms" bore fruit; on the other, the bourgeoisie of the construction industry were the beneficiaries of the urban policy and the poor were submitted to an organizational structure that insured its segmented and vertical control by the military government. Henry researches the ways in which this control was gradually but violently exceeded by the mobilization of those living in poor neighborhoods. This movement was definitely an aggressive participant during the 1975–80 years of regressive economic policy under the government of Morales Bermúdez.

Henry's important work is complemented by two other interesting books. Riofrío (1978), in direct and graceful prose, shows the development of urban policy, dictated by the bourgeoisie, up to its exhaustion during the military government. His main thesis is that there was no response to the demands posed by the urban slum dwellers. Sánchez León and Calderón Cockburn (1980) offer some complementary points for following the line of inquiry begun by Henry; they explore the relationship between the slum movement and the military government in its "second phase," the Morales period. The basic problem of Dietz's recent work (1980) is the long gap between the time the fieldwork was done (between 1970 and 1971, with followup in 1975) and its publication. A decade has passed since the slum dwellers were interviewed; this means that the rich dynamic of Henry's analysis (Dietz does not appear to know about Henry's book) is not found here. The fact is that Dietz does deal in an interesting way with the information collected on the attitudes of slum dwellers who asked for assistance from a government agency. The problem is that the economic and political situation of the last four years has sharply altered the conditions under which relations between slum dwellers and government agencies, relations so carefully documented by Dietz, take place. This problem is not resolved by Dietz's treatment of the action of SINAMOS—the political arm of Velasquism—during the last period of the "first phase" (1973–75).

Worker-industry relations has been given top priority by only one researcher in Peru: Denis Sulmount. His works, always filled with scru-

pulously annotated information, are required reading for anyone who wants to become familiar with this topic. The most recent of his books (1977) and one later article (1979) offer a fresh presentation on the progress of the labor movement during the period under consideration here. Nevertheless, his highly descriptive style is not accompanied by sufficiently solid analysis; and he shows a favorable prejudice towards the working class, a slant that often overshadows his line of reasoning. As Sulmont paints the picture, we see a workers' movement that is always on an upward track, in which "treason" is the only explanation for backsliding, and in which all revindication is assumed beforehand to be legitimate. This makes it impossible to perceive, for example, the sharp social problems in Peru created today by a labor movement that certainly has sufficient organization and force for some powerful sectors of its vanguard to reach income and consumption levels that are farther and farther above that of most of Peru's population—a population that is largely unemployed and underemployed. This fact, among others, poses a serious political problem for any leftist political platform.

On the business sector, even less work has been done. Although there have been several stimulating university theses on the subject, perhaps the most interesting work has been by Alberti (1977), on the conduct and reactions of businessmen dealing with the industrial community under the controversial private enterprise reform imposed by the military. The work recently published by Wils (1979) suffers to a great degree because the field research for it was done long ago and the author paid not enough attention to the recent changes that took place in the reality about which he writes.

The rural sector, without doubt, has been the subject of the most systematic work in Peru during these years; therefore, only the most important works will be mentioned here. These are the books produced by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos' efforts to evaluate the agrarian reform program. Although they are only the first of a series of books now being prepared, Caballero (1980) and Matos and Mejía (1980a, b) contain an already well-articulated vision of the economic and social results of the reforms in the countryside.

The first element of this picture is the distance between the results and the proposed goals of the agrarian reform program; second, production has not grown; third, the land distribution program, comprising approximately half of the land area suitable for cultivation, has left more than half the *campesinos* who were legally entitled to participate in the agrarian reform program without any assurances of a reasonable income. Fourth, the process of adjudication has concentrated holdings of productive resources still further into a small number of enterprises, (now associative companies), leaving most of the peasant economy destitute. Fifth, despite its strong presence in the agricultural sector, the

state still has not managed to develop a coherent network of production. Finally, the last element of the picture presented by these works is the deplorable way in which associative companies, which have received land and other resources, operate. Caballero explains this many-faceted disaster by claiming that the development of capitalism in the countryside requires a class that has the power, the resources, and sufficient interest to take charge of management and capital accumulation. These conditions were not present in the Peruvian agricultural sector during the last decade. Instead, as a response to the state's actions in the countryside, there has been an increase in peasant organization and in its ability to urge revindications.

While partial analyses about what was happening in Peru were interesting, it is now time to sum up; but the material available to do this is at very different stages of development. On the one hand, two central questions about the twelve years of military rule have been well analyzed: why the military rose to power, and why it fell. Aside from the endless works that shed light on part of these questions, some of the books cited give well-organized and almost complete answers. Still, there remain differences of opinion. For example, there is no agreement on the nature of the "institutional character" of the regime, nor is there any agreement about the ideological leanings within it. While certain authors stress that it was only a few officers who carried out the reformist program, others find legitimatizing mechanisms for it within the armed forces. While some insist that the entire reform attempt was *military* in character, others seem to neglect that point. Last, while some authors emphasize the differences between certain military chiefs or ministers, others stress what they all had in common.

As for what caused the failure, after a period in which some analyses showed only the road to economic disaster while others developed the theme of the political crisis as a parallel event, most of the recent works on the global situation seem to tie together both sides of the coin, just as they are tied in reality. Perhaps there are still some works in press that can further explore and improve on this analysis, but the basic groundwork on the subject has been laid in the works that have already been published. The unresolvable discrepancy in the treatment of this theme is, perhaps, the different degree of emphasis on the "nature" of the political plan and on the way it was carried out as alternative elements for explaining the failure. In other words, was such a reformist project destined to fail? The practical relevance of this question is easy to guess: Is there any possibility of trying it again?

One gets the impression that, on these two questions, there is ample bibliographic material, indeed so much that the most recent works tend to be repetitious without adding anything significant. This

does not mean, however, that the diagnosis of the changes that have occurred in Peru during the 1970s has been completed. Quite the contrary; perhaps the most crucial questions have only been partially answered: How did Peruvian society change during those ten years? How is it different today, or, referring to the military regime, whose interests were served by the attempt to change Peru that the military proposed to carry out?

It seems clear that only for the agricultural sectors is a convincing answer about to be given; this is not the case for the other reformed sectors, for example, labor. But, beyond each one of the sectoral reforms, how is the country different after the "military revolution"? Perhaps giving an evaluation of government actions as such would be one misleading method of focusing the question. The military reforms are only one authoritarian ingredient, vertically imposed on a complex society. The government actions were, then, just catalysts for a dynamic that went far beyond the objectives proposed by the reforms. There are many features new to Peruvian society during this decade that still require detailed study; for instance, the formation of a revolutionary left that even now plays an important role because of its ability to respond to the military's attempt at reform. The objectives and results of these groups must still be carefully studied, as should all the profound changes in the ideologies current in Peruvian society, since it was perhaps in the area of ideology that the most changes occurred during these years. Other matters that deserve more study are the restructuring of the productive apparatus after the twelve years of military rule, the effects of the economic crisis, and the class structure emerging from the social process that took place during those years.

Clarifying the results of the decade—within the entire society and each of its component parts, including the military—offers us an intellectually provocative and politically relevant task. It is politically relevant because such an evaluation prepares us to come closer to the impossible dream of all social scientists: to be in a better position to predict the future.

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