

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

CRT - 20
Three Questions

Hotel Bolivar
Lima
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Dear Mr. Rogers:

During the last week conversations with informed Peruvians have helped to clarify some of the apparent confusion in the current political campaign. These discussions have turned around three important questions: Who is supporting whom, and why? How will the elections, scheduled for next Sunday, go? Will there be an armed attempt to take over the government?

There are three candidates: Manuel Prado, Hernando de Lavalle and Fernando Belaúnde Terry. Prado has the support of a number of businessmen and financiers, as well as his previous record as president during World War II (a period when prices were lower, and wages could buy more). He does not have President Odría's support for reasons cited as "personal" (that is, the President does not like him). Lavalle, a moderate and conservative man, has pledged himself to continue the government's economic policies (in fact, he has been a sort of braintrust advisor to Odría on economic matters) and has, therefore, palace approval. He is also backed by many urban industrialists, a group which has grown in power and influence since the first world war. Initially, on the basis that Odría would recognize the legality of the now outlawed APRA party, the apristas publicly came out for him (a right-left coalition based purely on expediency: Lavalle needs the votes, the apristas need legal status). When Odría would not or could not (because of Army opposition) implement this promise by decree, the apristas became silent on Lavalle.

The aprista leaders, however, privately believe that Lavalle will recognize the compact and legalize the party if he becomes president. The rank and file, however, exasperated by this partnership with the traditional enemy, and smarting under twenty-five years of failure to gain the presidential chair, have begun to look sourly on Lavalle. According to one observer, this split in the aprista party is perhaps the most critical development for the future of Peru yet seen in the current elections.

Belaúnde Terry has a less well defined backing. He is

avored by many apristas who do not agree with present party leadership, by others, attached to no one party, who simply feel that a candidate who is not identified in any way with either the government or the industrial-financial groups is necessary, and by a small but articulate group of young professional men who think that the older authoritarianism seen in many Latin countries has failed, and that the time has come for a more democratic style candidate here in Peru.

The inescapable conclusion remains, however, that although these alliances can be identified, few people can see into the mind of the voter who is not connected with any one of them. There are no poll takers in Peru who could predict with Gallup sureness what a significant percentage of the electorate feels about the three candidates.

This, of course, hinders a convenient resolution of the second question, How will the elections go? Prado is popular with the man in the street but not with the apristas nor the government, and has waged an all out campaign (he is said to have spent some U.S. \$750,000. on it). Lavalle, with the governmental and industrial-financial backing may yet win over the apristas (but, again, perhaps only a part of them), and, too, he has in his favor a record of impressive wordly success. He is also a personal friend of Haya de la Torre, the founder of APRA, and there has been a long history of close contact between them. Belaúde, young, aggressive, a reform candidate, not pledged to big business or conservative circles, nor to the government, may appeal to a large segment of the voters who are against these entities. He is also promulgating a sweeping reform program which will benefit almost everyone but the rich.

What it boils down to is this: the man in the street, whose sentiments are unknown or have not yet crystallized, remains a question mark.

The third question, that of the coup, is even more up in the air. It is believed, however, that almost anyone is capable of inspiring one. It is thought that President Odría might find it necessary to invalidate the elections and set up a military junta should the wrong man win. Some feel that either Prado ("After all, he's invested millions of soles in the campaign so far, why not a few million more?") or Belaúde (should he see that the elections were in anyway rigged) might combine with some dissatisfied section of the Army and attempt the coup. A third source of trouble cited is that some ambitious or disgruntled officer group may take advantage of the general confusion to seize power.

The most striking feature of this Peruvian talk of a coup is the general acceptance of it as a normal part of political

change, much as we take for granted the secret ballot or the campaign ballyhoo accompanying a presidential election.

The growth in Belaúnde's popularity has not passed unnoticed by either the other candidates or the electorate. Entering the race late, a novice in political affairs and with a small campaign fund, he has taken the issues to the people throughout the country and made himself felt as a force in a relatively short space of time. On Friday, June 8, he had the chance to demonstrate his drawing power in a rally in Lima's Plaza de San Martín. (Someone remarked that his chances of winning the majority of votes, given the unsettled state of many voters' minds, would be considerably improved should he have a large public turnout.)

All during last week, sound trucks and cars equipped with loud speakers cruised the streets of Lima, announcing the rally and repeating such slogans as "Belaúnde, presidente; Belaúnde is justice; Belaúnde is liberty." More posters appeared on the already cluttered walls and small boys trotted about handing out leaflets, saying such things as, "June 8, you will go without trucks" - a reference to the shoestring budget of the candidate, and contrasting this with the huge sums of money laid out by the others, which included free transportation to meetings. Half pages of LA PRENSA were given over to statements of Belaúnde's party, hammering home the themes of reform and that he is the candidate of the popular masses.

Friday afternoon saw small crowds gathered on the Plaza early in the afternoon, congregating near the speaker's platform, built in front of a huge white backdrop. As the shops and offices emptied the mass thickened, and by seven, the university students had swelled it to considerable proportions. By seven-thirty, when Belaúnde was carried from the Hotel Bolívar (facing the Plaza) on the shoulders of a single perspiring partisan, the crowd was densely packed in the Plaza, thinning out of the edges and in the streets leading away from the square. There were probably some 100,000 people finally gathered to hear Belaúnde outline his program of government.

As he passed through the throngs, coolly waving his arms in greeting, thousands of voices joined in the cry, "Belaúnde, presidente," and "Liberty," backing the words with hand clapping in rhythm to the syllables of the phrases. Ushers with colored bands on their sleeves opened passage for him, and encouraged the cheers in several parts of the crowd. A loudspeaker system whipped up the enthusiasm, and one announcer's voice cracked in his efforts.

The first two speakers were well applauded, but were con-

stantly interrupted by cries of "Belaúnde," while small bands of marchers sporadically erupted onto the square, each bearing its banner and flags. Several persons set off firecrackers heedless of their or anyone else's safety, and near Bill MacLeish and me a claque of young and pretty girls burst into cheers and handclapping every few minutes. When Belaúnde finally rose to speak, his handsome face calm, his figure seeming larger as its shadow was projected against the white backdrop by powerful searchlights, the audience screamed out its cheers and approval for several minutes, the echoes bouncing back and forth over the Plaza. By no means was everyone in attendance participating in this or other demonstrations, but it did appear as if a majority of the crowd was vociferously partisan.

The speech, given in a well modulated, controlled voice, was punctuated by demonstrations of approval. What Belaúnde said was generally expected: the establishment of a National Development Ministry to oversee planned economic change; an agrarian reform involving agricultural extension work, and giving lands to the campesino from state owned properties and wherever needed from private (the campesino to pay for this land with long term government loans); no interference in the internal affairs of the Armed Forces; assistance to the workers; university reform; a plea for political amnesty and the repeal of the present Electoral Law and of the Security Law; and the restitution of legality to proscribed parties (an obvious bid for APRA support).

Toward the end of his speech, he evoked the greatest response when he said that if the elections were not honest, he would take up the banner again as he had on June 1 (when he protested in person the attacks on his meeting by local police, CRT - 19). At this point, someone wondered out loud, "Demagogue or idealist?"

When Belaúnde had finished speaking, the crowd turned down La Colmena, a broad avenue leading out of the Plaza, on their way to his headquarters. Here, squeezed between the walls of the buildings, the crowd oozed along looking from above like thousands of tiny black buttons moving in slow motion. Their voices still carried the evening's cries and when space opened took up the rhythmical hand clapping until it sounded like the beat of a hundred small drums. The candidate, in a car, was noisily pushed along, looking calm and pleased at the frenzied demonstrations about him. Only near midnight did the last of the partisans leave the Plaza, to the night and the street cleaners.

The meeting was, I think, definitely a success, and may have done much to increase Belaúnde's vote getting power. He has already demonstrated to many people that he is prepared to fight in person for his candidacy: the personal protest to the Chief of Police on

June 1 reminded some observers of the apristas in the thirties, who fought with their bodies as well as words for their principles. In hero conscious Peru, this is an important quality in a public figure.

In one way, however, Belaúnde may be speaking out at the wrong time. Some Peruvians point out that the central issue at stake this year is a political one: will the government pass into the hands of a constitutionally elected civilian responsible for his actions to the electorate, or will it remain in the control of an authoritarian group supported by the military?

Belaúnde, although offering himself for the first role, has also campaigned on a reform ticket, one aimed at bringing about sweeping social changes in Peru, especially with regard to the forgotten man in the current campaign, the indian. It is thought that this may divert many people's attention from the central issue as handled by Belaúnde, and that he will be evaluated as a social reformer (not a highly popular function in the minds of the wealthy upper classes, who desire no change, and not too significant, particularly in the land reform aspect, to the urban middle and lower classes) rather than a political innovator.

In any case, June 17 next will resolve these issues as far as the voters are concerned.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Temple

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