

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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The Elections Reviewed

Hotel Bolivar
Lima
Peru
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Mr. Walter S. Rogers
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522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Industrious workers have scraped most of the election posters from Lima's walls, restoring the city to a more normal aspect. But, although this most tangible manifestation of the furor through which the nation passed during the last six months has vanished at the expense of the owners of stores and buildings (a suggestion was put forth that the political parties pay for poster removal but met with little enthusiasm in the parties' headquarters), the elections are still very much alive in the commentaries now being made and those which will surely come.

Much of the discussion is filled with wonder: first, that the elections were relatively honest, and, second, that the present government seems inclined to retire gracefully on July 28 when Manuel Prado will take office. The concept of popular mandate is on shaky grounds in Peru, whose history has been one of the successive usurpations of power by one group or another at the expense of the electorate's will. Even past elections, such as the one which brought Prado to power in 1939, have been something less than uncontrolled, but, at least, such ballotings prepared the way for this year's demand that free elections be permitted.

Being the victor in free elections does not alone guarantee that the winning candidate will enter into the presidential chair. The realities of the Peruvian power situation demand that the Armed Forces be considered, especially since there is now a general in the presidency, working with a military cabinet. Publicly the Armed Forces have declared themselves without ambition to alter the June 17 mandate, and say that they are prepared to defend Prado's right to inauguration.

This is very soothing to the voters who, at this time, seem as jealous of tranquility as of their rights as expressed through ballots. With peace more or less assured, the people have turned to leisurely examinations of the whys and wherefores of the voting results, in which Hernan de Lavalles made a surprisingly poor showing,

with Fernando Belaúnde and Prado sharing between them the lion's portion. Roughly, the three men received these percentages (with some fifty thousand ballots still uncounted): Lavalle, 15%; Belaúnde, 35%; and Prado, 45%.

It seems clear that Lavalle did so badly because he was the candidate approved by President Odría, and not because of personal unpopularity. The voters wanted a change, so much so that it is felt that no one sponsored by the government could have won (including winner Prado). Incident also to his defeat were the huge sums of money laid out in campaign advertising by his party, which met with much adverse comment, and the concentration of this propaganda in Lima to the exclusion of the sensitive provinces. It was not so much that he went unadvertised there but that these provincial capitals felt snubbed. Since most of them are partisan to a concept of Lima as an octopus strangling the autonomy of the departments, anything which Lima receives as special treatment is taken badly.

Belaúnde, the novice and the latecomer, polled a much larger share of the votes than was expected. A variety of factors seem to have produced this result. He is young, handsome and an effective platform performer. He emphasized reform in politics, economics and the social sphere and numbered among his supporters young Army and professional men who want to see some new element active in Peru's future. The most articulate among these groupings was the Social Progressive Movement which propounded changes similar to those put forth by Belaúnde. In addition, he had no discernible alliances with any of the older power groups and was able to maintain that his administration would be based on Peruvian rather than pressure group needs and desires.

By the same token this lack of alliances may have cost him the election: in a dramatic last minute decision, the apristas, perhaps the largest single voting bloc in the country, gave their support to Prado. No one knows exactly how many votes APRA can control, but there is substantial agreement that the number is large enough to have given Prado the margin by which he won.

The winner, Prado, has been in politics for many decades, and during that time has made surprisingly few enemies. He is popular among the voters and during his last presidency (1939-45) visited the provinces and became known among the grass roots electorate. Although as president he was not overly effective, he has nonetheless remained as an affectionate memory. In the current campaign, he, like Belaúnde, was without official support, and, in addition, he was running in spite of a serious heart attack which enhanced his personal stock considerably. Finally, he did receive the official APRA support which now seems to have been critical given the relatively narrow

margin between him and Belaúnde.

The factors cited above ignore one significant question: what was the effect of the political platforms, if any, which the candidates presented to the people? Lavalle and Prado offered generalities on "economic and social progress" in Peru without defining clearly what these implied. Belaúnde, by contrast, laid down a point by point outline of what his government would do which centered around reform in economic planning and social welfare. As part of his economic remedy, he envisaged a program of land reform which would be directed at bringing into effective national participation that 40% of the population which did not vote - the sierra indian.

Just what appeal these programs had in a country lacking organized expressions of public opinion is debatable. One can only assume a correlation between each candidate's showing and a statement of the voters' beliefs. Prado seems to demonstrate a triumph of person over program while Lavalle represents the failure of the man to overcome his platform - for one statement of his that he intended to follow the present government's policies smacked of the one thing which the electorate was dead set against: continuism of the Odría regime. In the case of Belaúnde, not well known, not well publicized, it seems justifiable to ascribe some of his strength to the reform measures he offered.

Within these there is a sharp split: the measures intended to develop Peru economically and those with the goal of raising the standard of living of the lower and middle classes stand on one side, and, as far as they go, are not particularly unique in Peruvian politics. On the other side stand his statements concerning land reform which is indeed something new in a Peruvian politician's vocabulary. Much of the speculation on what the elections show focuses on this aspect of Belaúnde's platform.

In one way this is a curious reaction, for the individuals most benefitted by land reform, the indians, did not vote, and the majority of those who did, - workers and white collar employees - have little to gain directly from land reform. Perhaps the novelty of the measure explains the great comment it has attracted.

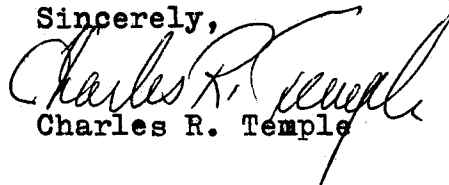
Among Peruvian intellectuals, young professional men (including military officers) and several groups of large landholders, there is a belief that Peru is on the edge of a social change which will bring the indian into a greater participation in national life. These people look at Bolivia and shudder at the drastic, bloody and in many ways inept introduction of the indian into the status of full citizen. They feel that this is not the way to accomplish social change, and want to introduce change gradually into Peru.

Among the landholders, a most convincing argument for gradual change is the fact that in Bolivia the former hacendados have lost everything, whereas it is very possible that if measures are taken now in Peru to alter the indian's status, the end result will be concessions of land but with the owner still in possession of property and with capital (the payment for expropriation) available for investment in other commercial enterprise. As well, he comes out with his life.

Undoubtedly Belaúnde appealed to these groups and received their votes. Moreover, the votes of the workers and employees who have nothing immediate to win from land reform may have in the first instance been given for other aspects of the Belaúnde program, but, at the same time, they acceded to land reform as part and parcel of *belaundismo*. In other words, 35% of the registered voters went on record as being in favor of his reform program of which land reform is a key aspect.

The consequences of this decision may influence the course of the Prado administration, or they may not, but there is a feeling among many people that this public statement of conviction will have to have some outlet in the next six years. Pertinent to this consideration is the formation of a new political party called "Popular Action" (announced last night in a radio speech by Belaúnde) to be headed up by Belaúnde, and which will undoubtedly try to keep reform issues raised in the campaign alive, and may succeed in obtaining government participation in them.

Sincerely,



Charles R. Temple

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