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WHM - 40
Pre-election Notes

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New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

After months of speechmaking, poster hanging and pamphlet distribution, the 1956 presidential campaign in Perú came to an end last night. As if to mark the end of the propagandizing and the demonstrations, the adherents of the three presidential candidates and of the leading contenders for the capital's congressional seats marched through the downtown streets late in the steel-gray afternoon. In the residential districts cars sped down the tree-lined avenues honking their horns in the one-two-three rhythm of a famous party chant. Hernando Lavalle, Fernando Belaunde Terry and Manuel Prado y Ugarteche took to the air in the evening to remind the voting public once again of their respective virtues. Then, obeying the mandates of an electoral law which decrees that campaigning shall end twenty-four hours before the opening of the polls, the candidates retired to their homes to begin the long wait. Late in the winter night the ever-present fog bank over Lima sent a fine mist swirling in the streets, soaking old handbills and wetting down the layers upon layers of posters which cover the city in almost continuous bands of color. The tons of ripped and tattered paper hanging from the walls had cost millions of soles - money which had gone into the pockets of paper importers, the printing shops, poster hangers and - indirectly - the men handling cleanup contracts. But now, while the candidates and voters waited for the polls to open, the blurbs and slogans faded and wilted in the mist.

The last two weeks of the campaign were characterized by mammoth demonstrations, by new claims of fraudulent practices employed by the various electoral juries and by the skyrocketing popularity of a candidate who, up to June first, had been considered a "cinderella": Fernando Belaunde Terry.

Belaunde's rapid rise in the public eye was closely connected to charges that the National Electoral Jury was trying to rig the elections. On the night of June first, the young (43) architect learned that the Jury had refused to accept his candidacy after having delayed the decision for months. Surrounded by his adherents, Belaunde staged a protest demonstration which rapidly grew into a crowd of angry people. An exceedingly able if demagogical orator, Belaunde took advantage of every opportunity to keep that anger at fever pitch. Trying to break through a hastily formed police line, the crowd met with tear gas bombs and jets of water from a recently imported mob control truck. At one point Belaunde walked forward alone, carrying a huge Peruvian flag, to talk with the commanding officer of the police forces. He demanded to be allowed to march to the Plaza de Armas and present his case to President Odría himself. The candidate was refused and, in the ensuing

scuffle between the police and his followers, was liberally doused with water. One man in the crowd was gravely hurt, others were overcome by tear gas. Unable to break through the police lines, the crowd retired to Belaunde's political headquarters. Then, close to midnight, the news came through. The Jury had reversed its earlier decision. Belaunde's inscription had been accepted.

The events of June first catapulted the young candidate into a limelight which had theretofore been occupied by the staid, conservative Prado and Lavalle. Here was a man who had bearded the lion, who had caused the most talked about body of men in Lima to back down. That took real manliness, real machismo. Observers compared Belaunde's attempted march on the Palace of Government to the early days of the APRA party when Haya de la Torre and his lieutenants fought in the streets to preserve their infant organization. Belaunde, therefore, suddenly became a popular symbol of physical opposition to the entrenched forces of the right which have ruled Perú practically without opposition for eight years. On the eighth of June Belaunde demonstrated the extent to which that symbol had caught hold. He called for a rally in the Plaza San Martín, and his call was answered by the largest crowd recorded to that date in the campaign.

Using the slogan "Without Trucks! Without Millions! Without Bullies!" (a reference to the oft-repeated charges that the government party made a practice of gathering its audiences by means of coercion and bribes) the "belaundistas" toured the residential areas with loudspeaker-equipped taxis, spread posters throughout the city and made use of the generous amounts of space afforded them by Pedro Beltrán's LA PRENSA to whip up enthusiasm for the coming rally. Despite his "progressive" platform (agrarian reform, legalization of the Communist party) Belaunde acquired the financial backing of some of Perú's most famous families. His handsome face and resonant voice gained him the support of many of the newly enfranchised women of Lima and the provinces. But even taking into consideration the support and the donations, the belaundistas themselves were amazed at the turnout in the Plaza San Martín.

The rally began at seven o'clock when groups of belaundistas wearing colored arm bands or carrying placards arrived in the Plaza to receive instructions from their leaders. As the Plaza filled to overflowing, pictures of architect Belaunde's completed projects, of candidate Belaunde's political successes, were flashed on a giant screen. Professional claques kept the crowd excited. From a hotel window Bob Temple and I watched as the mob pressed forward to form a solid block of humanity in the square. From close to one hundred thousand throats came the cheers of the belaundistas: "Fraude, No!"; "Belaunde, Libertad!" Hands clapped in unison with the rhythm of the cheers, and the Plaza became a bedlam of noise so loud that it hurt the eardrums. When Belaunde appeared at the hotel door to be paraded through the throng on the shoulders of his followers, he was no more than a gesticulating doll in the face of such a mob. What he said in his speech made comparatively little difference. The important fact was there in the sea of faces and in the gusts of noise: Belaunde had a good chance now to win the election. Many in the crowd were below voting age (normally 21, can be 18 under certain circumstances). But the large majority of people at the rally - including the large number of women - could

and, if their enthusiasm was any indication, would vote for Fernando Belaunde Terry.

While voters compared the popularity of the three presidential candidates, the biggest potential block of votes in Perú was desperately reappraising the course of action it should take in the face of broken promises and collapsed alliances. APRA was indeed in a bad way (WHM-38). Its support of Hernando Lavalle had gained it little more than promises; Belaunde's rising star had sucked in many of the young party members by its very momentum; APRA leader Priale and his cohorts were indirectly accused by opponents in the party of adopting "donothing" tactics. Last week APRA held a convention of committee chiefs from Lima and the provinces to try to rescue party unity from the growing pressures of discord. As usual, the meeting was held in a location kept secret from the public. The proclamation issued at convention's end, however, was no secret. Priale was releasing his adherents from party discipline. Apristas could vote as they saw fit within the confines of "the fundamental objectives of democratic reintegration of all Peruvians, the demand for the legalization of the Party of the People and general political amnesty." Accusing the present regime of having deliberately fomented the present political confusion and of renegeing on the promises made with respect to APRA status in the President's March third speech (WHM-35), Priale admitted that he had no choice but to give the party free rein.

The results of the withdrawal of party discipline have been obscured in the usual cloud of rumor. From Chile came word that the apristas will vote for Manuel Prado. Other sources maintain that Belaunde will benefit the most from the decision. It is clear that nothing definite can be ascertained until the election returns are in. But it is also clear that the APRA as a party is still a tremendously strong force in Perú. To prove their strength in a simple and decisive manner the apristas held a rally in the Plaza San Martín two days ago, a rally attended by a crowd approximately the same size as that drawn by Belaunde.

There was a great difference in the quality of the two crowds, however. On June eighth the square was filled with excited people representing a host of political ideas ranging from a socialist philosophy to no philosophy at all. On June fourteenth, San Martín was the focal point for a crowd that had gathered in delegations from every district of the city - notwithstanding the fact that a bus strike was in progress - to pay homage to founder Haya and to a single ideal - APRA. The most outstanding feature of the aprista rally was its discipline. There was discipline in the converging ranks of the delegations, the singing of the aprista anthem, the sea of white handkerchiefs waving in a party salute. It was a discipline produced by twenty-five years of political activity and the traditions which emerged from those years. The almost uniform response of the crowd to directions from the speakers' balcony was a traditional discipline. Watching the demonstration from a nearby building with Bob Temple and Dick Patch, I received the impression of the power which such tradition can generate. Apristas have slaughtered and been slaughtered in their history. They have risen to power and fallen again. They have been outlawed on several occasions and are now ending their eighth year of illegality under the terms of the last proscription. This was their first manifesta-

tion in almost a decade. Yet there were no hysterical outbursts, no violence during or after the demonstration. There was simply a display of strength, the ominous strength of a disciplined throng of political believers. Although the manifestation had nominally been called as a gesture of support for congressional candidate, APRA sympathizer and nationally famous poet, José Gálvez, Priale was in reality putting his forces on parade before the apprehensive eyes of officialdom. In the face of such discipline, the government and the candidates alike would think twice about delaying party legalization for too long.

While candidates and parties made their final bids for the support of their platforms, more and more charges of electoral fraud were brought to light by the press. Actually, on this election eve there are few people who sincerely believe that the elections will be completely honest. There are too many examples of dishonest practices circulating in Lima and elsewhere. Looming largest among those examples is the fact that two of the National Electoral Jury's staff members - Temístocles Rocha and Lincoln Pinzás - are themselves running for re-election; they are playing simultaneous roles of judge and contender. Because the Jury holds the power to annul, modify and rectify election returns, the course of action taken by the two jurists has caused a storm of protest.

The provinces, however, have reportedly suffered more than the capital with respect to fraud. Far from the eye of public scrutiny, they offer many opportunities for fraudulent practices. In Huánuco recently a list of instructions sent to pro-government electoral authorities was discovered. It contained orders to impugn the electoral proceedings at any poll where opposition candidates were obviously winning. In addition, it specified the reasons to be given for such an impugment. As impugned returns are sent to the departmental juries for "modification", it is quite possible that the Huánuco instruction sheet is an illustration of a plan to insure the victory of pro-government forces in that Department. Another illustration: a league of voters out to defeat the attempts at re-election of certain pro-government congressmen from Huánuco has been threatened by the authorities and some of its members have been imprisoned.

By far the most sensational attempt to influence the outcome of the elections in the provinces, however, was the day before yesterday's attempt of the Departmental Jury of Junín to throw out the candidacies of forty of the forty-four aspirants for congressional seats. When news of this summary action became known in the Department's capital of Huancayo, a crowd formed to take what it considered to be the necessary steps. Armed with clubs and stones, men and women paraded through the streets demanding that the validity of the revoked candidacies be restored. Pro-government candidates and officials alike went into hiding behind the guns of the police. The Prefect refused to speak to the crowd, instead summoned its leaders to his office for a conference. While negotiations went on, the demonstrators declared a departmental general strike. In the face of such opposition the National Electoral Jury was forced to repudiate its departmental affiliate in public today; it revalidated all but two of the candidacies. For the demonstrators in Huancayo this was a great victory won

against the hated "oficialismo" of Lima. However, in other areas in Perú the chances are that fraud will be practiced to some degree. The Partido Restaurador has developed a taste for the power it has exercised in the past and it knows that the only way to conserve that power is by controlling the elections. For that reason, when I asked a friend recently to predict the outcome of the elections, he said: "Do you want to know who will "win" or who will win?"

There are fifteen hours to go now. Fifteen hours before the polls open and the first voters appear. Most of them will have been to early Mass and not a few will have asked for divine guidance in their choice of a candidate. They will drop their ballots in the urns in the "secret rooms" in accordance with an electoral statute that punishes abstention from voting with loss of citizenship. Then they will go home and wait. The returns should come quickly from Lima - with a third of the votes - Arequipa, and Cuzco. But the remote areas, the area where fraud is more possible, will lag behind in sending in the returns. And if there are evidences of fraud? Belaunde has declared he will fight, citizens' groups have threatened violence. The answer to the question is simple. If there is fraud there will be blood shed and lives lost. The decision to refrain from fraudulent activities and thereby save an unspecified number of lives rests with President Manuel Odría on this election eve.

Sincerely,

William H. MacLeish

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