

## A COMMUNICATION ON UNIVERSITY REFORM

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Since the late 1950's interest in Latin American university student politics has increased in this country. Such concern has mainly focused on the contemporary importance of Latin American university student movements. Detailed and sophisticated socio-political analyses have been rendered, with the end in mind, though not always, of explaining the political socialization of Latin American university students, i.e., what makes a student a radical or a conservative. Frequently, the exegetes of Latin American university student politics have made references to the problem of historical origins. In that connection, reference has been made to the University Reform Movement, in particular, to the Córdoba events of June 1918.

Virtually all writers on Latin American university student politics, or the more general emerging field of study of the "Latin American university," have made, in more or less the same terms, the following assumption: "*Beginning with the eruption of student protest at Córdoba in June, 1918, the [University] Reform spread throughout the continent and marked the students as a new force in national politics.*"<sup>1</sup> My purpose in writing this brief communication is to modify this, apparently, generally accepted assumption.

University Reform did not *begin* in Córdoba and then "spread from Córdoba, Argentina to the rest of Hispanic America."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the problem of historical origins must be formulated before we can effectively deal with it, i.e., what do we mean by University Reform? That is primarily an historical problem, and to my knowledge no one has formulated the problem in that manner. The Argentine, Gabriel del Mazo, a participant of the movement, has labored indefatigably to record the history of the movement, but he has never seriously confronted his materials. Moreover, del Mazo suffers the handicap of being politically compromised, a fact which virtually prevents him from approaching his materials critically. Nevertheless, he has compiled invaluable documentation on University Reform for almost all of South America.<sup>3</sup>

I do not propose to close the breach. Rather, what I propose to do is to show, albeit in a brief manner, that in at least one other South American society University Reform had national roots.

The roots of University Reform in Peru lie in the late 19th century. The effects of the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), of positivism, of the socio-economic changes of the 1890's and early 20th century all contributed to the development of reformist tendencies within San Marcos university. The provincial universities of Arequipa and Cuzco were also affected by these influences.

If a date had to be chosen for the beginning of University Reform in Peru I would say 1896, the year when Mariano H. Cornejo, a Spencerian, was appointed to San Marcos' first chair of sociology. In fact, San Marcos was one of the first universities in all of Latin America to establish sociology as a distinct discipline. Positivism, with its emphasis on empiricism and progress, significantly influenced numerous professors and students in San Marcos to seek institutional reforms in curriculum and teaching methods. In Arequipa, Law professor Jorge Polar proposed basic and general curriculum reforms in 1895.

The idea of progress of course was also applied to society at large. In fact, the debacle of the war with Chile led to the development of a strong progressive and nationalist thrust in Peruvian politics. After 1895, a climate of public enthusiasm, of progress, developed in Peru, in particular, in Lima. That optimism was clearly reflected in Francisco Garcia Calderón's *Le Perou Contemporain* (Paris, 1907), as well as in other publications of the times. Victor Andrés Belaúnde, a contemporary of Garcia Calderón and the leading Peruvian delegate to the first Latin American University Student Congress, which met in Montevideo, 1908, wrote years later in his memoirs that "in 1904 there reigned in the world an enthusiasm and universal euphoria. The undisputable law of the moment was the law of progress."<sup>4</sup> Belaúnde then added "all the youth partook of that enthusiasm."

The nationalist enthusiasm of the moment gripped the University students, or a large number of them. As a result of the Montevideo Congress, which according to Belaúnde gave the final touches to the nationalist profile of his generation, the *Centro Universitario*, a San Marcos student organization, was organized on September 23, 1908. One of the Centro's first projects was to organize a university extension program, for in the words of Luis Miró Quesada—written for the *Revista Universitaria*, 1909—"in the present epoch the universities must form the national ideas, and to do that they must relate to [deben vivir] the life of the society in which they exist and place themselves at the service of the country's interests."

In the same year, in a lecture to the Centro members, Carlos E. Paz Soldán, a medical student, presented his program for curriculum reform in the San Marcos Facultad de Medicina. At the same time, Paz Soldán also added that "we students must also intervene in the directive procedures of the university. . . ." In a word, Paz Soldán was asking for *co-gobierno*. Two years earlier, the students of Arequipa had organized the first university student strike in Peru, and in 1909 the students of Cuzco had repeated the tactic.

A qualitative and quantitative change took place in the character of student enrollment at San Marcos between 1908 and 1917. Between 1907 and 1917 enrollment at San Marcos rose from 789 to 1,331 students.<sup>5</sup> In July 1917 the Centro Universitario gave way to the *Federación de Estudiantes del Perú* (the

FEP), and the new leaders of the FEP were no longer the sons of leading families. In 1918, for example, the FEP voted a student delegation to participate in the workers' "general strike" demonstrations. That was the 1918 general strike for the 8-hour day.

It was out of the events of 1918 that Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, a member of the FEP student delegation, emerged. Haya, however, had nothing to do with organizing the San Marcos student strike of June 1919 in the Facultad de Derecho. That strike, organized in one facultad, soon became a university-wide strike. In Derecho, the strike was organized by Humberto del Aguila, Guillermo Luna Cartland, and Raúl Porras Barrenechea, later a brilliant historian and diplomat. Their actions, moreover, were wholly predicated on institutional reform; in the words of Humberto del Aguila they were seeking to change *la universidad teológica*.

In October 1919, in a closely contested election, Haya was elected president of the FEP. In the following year, he organized the first national student congress of Peru which met in Cuzco, 11–20 March 1920. From that point on, University Reform in Peru began to assume a different character. It became the movement of a political caudillo, and subsequently, of a distinct political movement, the APRA.

In the early 1920's, Haya, seeking visibility, visited Argentina and adopted the rhetoric of a continental-wide reform movement—the rhetoric of the Córdoba Manifiesto—thereby linking Peruvian University Reform not only with the Argentine movement but with other movements as well. The actions of Haya, and of those with whom he collaborated resulted in the "Latin Americanization" of the University Reform, which corresponded closely with the continental nationalism or *Hispano Americanismo* of the times. Thereafter, Haya became one of the leading and most effective spokesmen for the *movimiento estudiantil Latinoamericano*.

Haya politicized University Reform in Peru in the sense that he re-defined it as political ideology. From 1919 on, his political aspirations became the aspirations of the Peruvian University Reform. The high point of his activities within Peru at this time was the anti-government demonstrations which he led in 1923 to protest Leguía's attempt to consecrate Peru to the Sacred Heart in preparation for his presidential campaign of the following year. That confrontation did not result in any institutional gains for University Reform. In fact, its political results were significant, for almost overnight Haya de la Torre became a national figure. Exiled after the demonstrations, Haya then began his *peregrinación* to the capitals of the world. Earlier, Haya had used the figure of Manuel González Prada as an historical warrant—hence the *Universidades Populares "González Prada"*—to pre-empt, or try to pre-empt, the emerging Peruvian revolutionary left.

It is best to leave the treatment of such complex events for another opportunity. It is hoped, however, that these brief remarks have contributed to the modification of the generally accepted notion that University Reform *began* in Argentina and then *spread* to the rest of Hispanic America.

## NOTES

1. Robert F. Arnove, "A Survey of Literature and Research on Latin American Universities," *Latin American Research Review*, 3, 1 (Fall 1967) p. 45, emphasis mine. Others have made the same assumption. Kenneth N. Walker, for example, recently wrote that "it is generally known, however, that the [University Reform] movement *began in Argentina* and *spread to other Latin American nations*. . . ." See his article in *Student Politics*, S. M. Lipset (ed.) (New York, 1967), p. 293, emphasis mine. John P. Harrison's, "The Confrontation with the Political University," *The Annals of the American Academy*, Vol. 334 (March 1961) attracted considerable attention to Latin America's "political universities." Harrison wrote on the question of the historical origins of *la Reforma* that "from its starting point in the Rio de la Plata in 1918, the [University Reform] movement spread rapidly throughout Latin America. . . ." p. 76. Still earlier, and possibly the man who started it all, Solomon Lipp made the same assumption. See his "The University Reform in Hispanic America," Unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University (1949).
2. Lipp, *Ibid.*, p. v.
3. See principally his *La reforma universitaria*, 6 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1927).
4. In *Memorias: Mi generación en la universidad*, vol. II (Lima, 1961), p. 55f.
5. See Jorge Basadre, "Un caso en la crisis universitaria Hispano-americana: La Universidad de San Marcos," *La Educación*, Año V, No. 18 (Abril-Junio 1960) Union Panamericana, p. 60.