

Peru Military's Self-Image Led to Coup

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LIMA, Oct. 5—Two days after a lightning coup, the indications are that Peru is headed for an extended period of military dictatorship, with the armed forces trying to recast political, social and economic institutions in a new mold.

The "Revolutionary Government" of Gen. Juen Velasco Alvarado seems to have taken as its model the experiments in military-imposed government now under way in Brazil and Argentina.

The initial evidence suggests a particularly strong resemblance to Argentina, where the regime of strongman president Juan Carlos Onganía has announced plans for a wholesale transformation of Argentine life.

The Peruvian officers corps has been watching events there closely and its view of the military's role in national life closely parallels that of Argentine officers.

In Peru, the officer corps—particularly within the army—has always regarded itself as the repository of the country's highest moral

standards and the guardian of national honor and tradition. Implicit in this has been the conviction that when civilian leadership betrays or fails to measure up to these standards, the military has a duty to step in and set things to rights.

The turbulence caused by Peru's great extremes of wealth and poverty has led the army to frequent interference in political matters. Before this week, Peru had undergone two other coups within 20 years (the more recent, in 1962, brought the country under military rule for a year).

More recently, efforts had been made to turn the military's involvement in civilian affairs to more constructive ends, such as assisting in the physical development of the mountainous and jungly interior. This led to the most ambitious "civic action" program in Latin America. U.S. military advisors frequently held Peru up as an example of how the military advisors frequently held Peru up as an example of how the military's sense of political engagement could help to assist constitutional civilian government.

Below the surface, however, there always has been a hard core of officers—mostly younger men of colonel's rank—that chafed under what it regarded as a downgrading of the military's role. They made no secret of their belief that civilian politicians, with their personal ambitions and their frequently irresponsible partisanship, were unfit to govern.

During most of the term of ousted civilian President Fernando Belaunde in 1963, Terry, beginning this sentiment was tamped down by older officers. Realizing the enormity of Peru's modernization problems, the older men wished to avoid saddling the armed forces with the responsibility for a solution.

In this, the key figure for a long time was Gen. Julio Doig Sanchez, who served Belaunde successively as commander of the army and minister of war. Earlier this year, Doig even tried to work out a rapprochement between the army and the popular American Revolu-

tionary Alliance (APRA)—a political party that the army historically has regarded as its mortal enemy.

But this finally destroyed Doig's influence among officers, and a few weeks ago he was packed off into retirement as Ambassador to Brazil. The focus of leadership within the army then passed to Velasco, who before Thursday was commander of the army and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff.

An up-from-the-ranks soldier with a known conservative bias and strongly anti-Communist views, Peru's new President is understood to admire de Gaulle and believe that Peru, too, needs benevolent but autocratic leadership.

Such ideas had been growing in the army as the Belaunde government found itself beset by a severe fiscal crisis, political paralysis in congress and strained relations with the United States over Peruvian arms purchases and a dispute with a U.S. oil company over its rights to a Peruvian oil field.

The result of the change in the army's dominant mood was Thursday's coup.