The Left: APRA and Communist Party
Chair: Ararat Gocmen
Table of Contents:

Letter from the Chair ................................................................................................................. 3
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 4
Historical Background ............................................................................................................... 5
Positions ..................................................................................................................................... 10
Questions ................................................................................................................................... 13
Premise and History

The events of this crisis revolve around the issues of imperialism and radical political influences, whether internal or external, in the post-World War II politics of South America. This committee will mainly be focused around the dangerously shifting sociopolitical situation in 1950s-era Peru, leading to the Peruvian General Elections on the 17th of June, 1956.¹

The American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) was established in Peru in 1930 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (originally founded in 1924 in Mexico). He dreamed that the APRA would become a political party active not just in Peru, but also one that represented people across the South American continent. The original goals of the party, as set forth and established by Haya de la Torre himself, were to create a universal “Latin-American” identity (Pan-Americanism), to promote a vision of Latin America that would stand against the control and oppression of greater powers (anti-Imperialism against the United States and the USSR), and to generate support for social democratic ideas that would facilitate the establishment of free and fair Latin-American governance. In short, APRA would fight for not only democratic elections, but also socialist ideals such as state ownership over factories and agricultural reform that implemented communal farming². These socialist-inspired policies would galvanize Peruvians and other Latin Americans into becoming members of nascent socialist movements in their respective countries.


What the APRA was up against was a legacy of dictators in Peru. Soon after the establishment of APRA in 1924, it was banned by the reigning president at the time.\(^3\) Even with this handicap, APRA became a very popular movement in the underground political scene in Peru over the years, leading to the election of the first APRA-supported Peruvian President: Jose Luis Bustamante y Rivero (1945).\(^4\) He was the first to instill the major reforms called for by the APRA’s founder. Although eventually Bustamante fell out of favor with APRA’s founder, his presidency would be short-lived: in 1948, a military coup headed by Manuel Odria, a staunch right-wing leader, brought the APRA governance’s of Peru to an abrupt end. Odria then himself assumed the presidency after an ‘election’ where his opposing candidate’s name was not even allowed on the ballot.\(^5\) APRA was banned once more after Odria’s rise to power, and this committee will deal with his right-wing populist regime, offering a crisis-based narrative of it beginning in 1956.

Odria’s regime is noted for rampant political dishonesty and scandals. He has labelled APRA as a Communist front, and his regime has begun having APRA members and associates systematically arrested, tortured, and exiled.\(^6\) The government has even involved Peru’s neighboring countries—such as Colombia, in whose embassy Haya de la Torre sought asylum—in its efforts to suppress the APRA.\(^7\) In the meantime, Odria has receive indirect military and financial support from the United States, living in a mansion and surrounding himself in articles of luxury.

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\(^7\) ibid
while the rest of the country endures his oppression.\textsuperscript{8} Even so, APRA, once again an underground organization, remains active in Peru and continues to heavily impact Peruvian domestic politics. It also remains an important force of the Left in Latin America and the world more generally, inspiring analogous political movements in other countries like Bolivia and Costa Rica, where the Revolutionary National Movement and the National Liberation Party, respectively, have drawn on APRA’s early tactics and methods to generate support among the masses.

The underlying politics of this issue are similar to that of any traditional left-wing vs right-wing clash. Oria’s Regime appeals to the decades-old oligarchy and elites of the Peruvian establishment. This consists of a relative minority amongst the population, while the social base of APRA and the Peruvian Left more generally encompasses the middle and working classes of generally lower income. A major issue for APRA at the moment is its struggle with other Marxist- and socialist-inspired groups for political support from laborers and other sociopolitical blocs within the Peruvian masses. Although APRA, the Communists, and other groups may share similar political and economic ideologies, there exists many rifts between APRA and its more recently founded rivals on the Left, with an increasingly radicalized youth finding Communist Parties much more appealing to the older APRA. There are even rifts within APRA itself, as the leaders of some of its associated labor unions are beginning to shift rightwards and support conservative tendencies such as anti-communism, with some even calling for the banning of Communist organizations.\textsuperscript{9} At


the same time, workers within these unions are shifting leftwards and adopting views more sympathetic to Communism. In this sense, APRA’s traditional allies to both its Left and Right are becoming increasingly left-wing and right-wing, respectively, endangering support for APRA’s social democratic ideals.

Today, in 1956 and with general elections looming, other parties, such as Popular Action, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Pradist Democratic Movement, are challenging both APRA and the existing Odria regime. It will be up to the leaders of APRA to figure out how to navigate the shifting political scene in Peru, especially the rise of Communist sympathies in its working- and middle-class base and right-wing positions among the upper echelons of its ranks. If APRA is to remain politically relevant in Peru, its leadership must consider new alliances with emerging political parties, new policy platforms that might deviate from its traditional social democratic positions, and a new approach to galvanizing the Peruvian masses into supporting it.
Topics:

**Elections**

Who will the Peruvian Left support in the 1956 general elections? How will the Left express its support for this or that political party or individual candidate? This is an urgent matter this committee must decide.

APRA itself is currently an underground political organization, as Odria’s government has outlawed it as a legal political party. Nevertheless, it maintains a strong political base in Peru, owing to its long history of fighting for the Peruvian working class and its commitment to social democratic principles. For this reason, APRA has the potential to considerably affect the results of the upcoming elections. It can (from abroad) officially announce support for a certain party or candidate in the elections. APRA can also organize and agitate in the underground in the name of a certain party or candidate, galvanizing support among its own supporters for the party or candidate it decides to support.

As an underground political organization, the tactics and strategies available to APRA are endless, insofar as they are not radical or disruptive enough to the point of leading Odria and his government to suppress the Left. For example, APRA could reach out to and formally ally with one of the existing political parties partaking in the general elections, distributing propaganda (pamphlets, posters, etc.) and organizing public demonstrations in the name of that party. It could facilitate Peruvian labor unions’ declaration of support for its favored party by mobilizing the aprista loyalists who are members of those unions. APRA could even secretly form a new party that lacks formal ties with Haya de la Torre and the
other aprista leaders but is led and directed by them behind the scenes.

Overall, the possible courses of action that APRA and the Peruvian Left could take in the leadup to the 1956 general elections are endless and will have a substantial impact on the immediate outcome of the elections.

Leftist Sectarianism

APRA and the Left do, however, face a major obstacle in the fact that they suffer from considerable disunity and disagreement in their ranks. The emergence and increasing popularization of Communism among left-wing Peruvians has come to challenge the dominance of APRA’s social democratic ideals in the hearts and minds of the Peruvian working class, while more conservatively inclined social democratic leaders within APRA and Peruvian labor unions has responded to this development with increasingly anti-communist rhetoric. Sectarianism poses a substantial threat to the ability of APRA and the Peruvian Left to politically participate in the leadup to the general elections, as the impact of their attempts at agitation lie in numbers, a reality which sectarianism and internal conflict could invalidate. It is for this reason that this committee includes representatives of the Peruvian Left from outside of APRA, including from the nascent Peruvian Communist Party and the National Youth Front.

The committee must first decide what ideological direction the Peruvian Left will take. Will the traditional social democratic principles of APRA and its aging founders—a reformist, gradualist approach to the achievement of socialism that helps workers fight for greater wages from their employers—be the dominant ideology among left-wing Peruvians in the leadup to the 1956 elections? Will the Communist-inspired visions of radicalized Peruvian
youth reign supreme in defining the Left’s agenda, with revolutionary aspirations and classically ‘Red’ rhetoric at its core? Will older forces from within ARPA and union leadership tear the Left apart by clamoring for an anticommmunist position and disassociation from younger left-wing Peruvians? The Left must stand together to assert itself politically in the upcoming general elections, so the various factions that constitute it must resolve their differences in some way or another and bring an end to the existential threat of leftist sectarianism.

The Peruvian Left will also have to take a position with regards to its relation with foreign leftist movements. In particular, even if arpista leaders end up rejecting Communism as the left-wing ideology of the future in Peru, they must determine, for example, what kind of foreign policy they would pursue in regards to the USSR and its involvement in South America; how to position themselves with regards to other movements of the Left and other left-wing activists in Latin America, such as those in Cuba; and how these will be incorporated into the Left’s foreign policy platform during the 1956 elections.

Pan-Americanism and Anti-Imperialism

Further in regards to foreign policy, ARPA must decide whether to reinforce, reinterpret, or change its commitments regarding Pan-Americanism and anti-imperialism. It has been over thirty years since the party’s founding in Mexico, but important apristas like Magda Portal have grown critical and sometimes even formally left the party in protest over its failure to fully commit to Pan-Americanist and anti-imperialist strategies and mindsets. To clarify their position on the matter so as to make its organizing efforts in the leadup to the 1956 elections more effective, ARPA and the Peruvian Left must directly address these questions, reassert their usual answers
to them, or define new answers. With a general election looming, there is no time for left-wing Peruvians to be ambivalent in their ideological approaches to Latin-American struggle and Western imperialism in South America.

Of course, in outlining these positions, apristas will make some new allies while losing others. Regionalist visions potentially endanger relations with left-wing anti-imperialist movements in Western countries, while internationalist movements like that of Soviet Communism threaten to over-generalize their criticisms of capitalist globalization to such an extent that they mask the particular problems that Western imperialism has created in South America and other parts of Latin America.

In determining which position the Peruvian Left decides to adopt, it will have to take into consideration the nationalist and internationalist sentiments of the Peruvian working class and masses. The issues of national identity and national place in the world are highly contentious ones, and providing the ‘wrong’ answers to them could potentially come at the cost of ARPA and the Left in general losing the favor of the workers and populace who so strongly support them to this day despite their being underground.
Positions

Victor Raul Haya de la Torre (Chair)
Haya de la Torre is the founder and long-time leader of APRA. A politically active student in his youth, he threw APRA’s support behind President Bustamente in 1945 until the latter decided to ban the APRA in 1947 before Odria’s coup in 1948. Since the coup, Haya de la Torre has spent time in asylum in Columbia and later in exile in Mexico, remaining the leader of APRA and overseeing its underground operations in Peru from abroad.

Ramiro Prialé
Prialé is the Secretary General of the APRA, which he was instrumental in creating, and the right hand of party leader Haya de la Torre. A fighter for the rights of common people, he has been politically persecuted along with Haya de la Torre since the coup, and is on the run in Peru.

Manuel Seoane Corrales
Corrales is the head of Immigration and Foreign Affairs for the APRA, in addition to having been a Senator and Constitutional Representative of the Republic of Peru. Studied Religion along with Politics at University, and lived in Buenos Aires for a few years after political trouble began in the 1920’s in Lima.

Alcides Alejandro Spelucin Vega
A professional Late Modernist Poet in addition to being a politician, Vega helped found the APRA and was most focused on Education and Culture policy. He was displaced in 1932 along with 22 other Peruvian representatives and fled to Colombia. He has since returned but is still wary of the situation in Peru.

Luis Alberto Félix Sánchez Sánchez
An academic, Sánchez has been the director of the Peruvian national library and has been a representative of the Constitutional Congress of Peru, as well as Director of Media for the APRA. He has spent much of his life as a professor, but quit in 1931 when he met Haya de la Torre and the other founding members of the APRA and began the organization with them.

Carlos Manuel Cox Roose
The secretary General of the APRA in addition to being one of the cofounders, Roose abandoned higher education to participate in the formation of the APRA.
He is Chief Economist and Finance Director of the APRA, managing the books. He has also served as a Deputy of the Republic of Peru.

**Pedro E. Muñiz Martínez**

Son of a prominent general and the Minister of War, Muñiz Martínez is the APRA’s Mines and Natural Resource Management Director, having a background as an engineer in the copper mining industry working for an American company that exploited a Peruvian mine. Like a few others, he fled to Colombia in 1932, but returned a year later only to be imprisoned by the government for 4 and a half years before leaving again, this time for Chile. He returned in 1940.

**Luis E. Heysen Incháustegui**

An engineer and sociologist in addition to his political activities, Heysen Incháustegui is the APRA’s Food and Agriculture Minister and a founding member. Heysen Incháustegui was one of the first to propose the idea of forming a party, in Buenos Aires with Haya de la Torre. Recently was a Senator of the Republic of Peru, finishing in 1948.

**Arnaldo Alvarado Degregori**

A racecar driver, Degregori is a public figure in Peru and prominent Aprista. When he raced his car was nicknamed “The Brick” due to its color and surprising durability. He is very vocal in his support of the party’s message, making him a controversial figure who nonetheless commands public attention.

**Magda Portal**

Portal was recruited by Haya de la Torre to join APRA in 1930. She was a rising poet by this time and eventually became the party’s Secretary for Women’s Affairs. After Odria’s entry into power forced APRA underground, she remained an active leftist and feminist voice in Peru. However, she broke with the official party line in 1950, arguing that APRA’s leaders had led it astray from its original goals and especially its commitment to anti-imperialism.

**Hugo Pesce**

Pesce is the Communist Party representative, representing the interests of the far-left among the population of Peru and the APRA. He is also a licensed doctor and public health advocate, especially for poorer people.

**Fernando Isaac Sergio Marcelo Marcos Belaúnde Terry**
ARPA

Terry is the leader of National Youth Front, which plans to run a candidate for President of Peru, and he is the obvious choice. The National Youth Front, or FNJD (Frente Nacional de Juventudes Democráticas) is recently established by University students and young professionals.

Alberto Ruiz Eldredge

Ruiz Eldredge is the Leader of the Social Progressive Movement, an ideological but not widespread movement, quite far to the left and critical of many existing policies of the Peruvian government.
ARPA

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