
The author views the government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–1975) as an example of what he calls "military radicalism." This slim book contains a brief analysis of the conditions that led to the coup of 1968 and a somewhat longer examination of the politics within and around the regime from 1968 to 1976.

Looking back over the period, the author views the experiment as a failure relevant to its own general goals but argues that the regime did carry out a number of irreversible transformations of Peruvian society including the destruction of the "old oligarchy." This conclusion leads him to ask, "Is military radicalism ever viable or must it eventually fall of its own weight?" (p. 166). His answer, not surprisingly, is that the evidence of Peru and elsewhere (he alludes to Vargas and Perón) indicates such regimes are not very viable. The problem in his view is a fundamental incompatibility between the needs and goals of popular movements and those of military organizations. Given this reality, the Peruvian "military radicals" would have been better advised to have pursued "technocratic reformism" than to have promoted redistribution of power and popular mobilization.

While the author's conclusions may be provocative, the analysis that precedes them is not. The main part of the book is a purely descriptive essay that chronicles somewhat thinly the known historical record of the period. As such, it could serve as a useful introduction to the student or general reader that knows little or nothing of Peru and/or modern Latin American politics. However, more knowledgeable analysts of Peru and the region will find little new in this book either in terms of information or a fresh analytical perspective.

University of Pittsburgh

James M. Malloy


The great expectations of the Bolivian Revolution of 1952 have, frustratingly, never fully materialized. In explaining why this is so, students of Bolivian history often define it in terms of the role of the