The Peruvian Experiment: Continuity and Change Under Military Rule
edited by Abraham E. Lowenthal

(Princeton: 479 pp.: $22.50/$6.95)

Lewis H. Diuguid

The Peruvian military seized power in 1968 and astonished the coup-weary continent by stepping off smartly toward fundamental economic and social change. So novel was the approach that no Latin American adjective came to mind; the wire services had to fall back on "Nasserist" to label the new rulers.

Today barracks left-wingers from Argentina to Ecuador are unhesitatingly identified as "the Peruvians." The phenomenon is even exported—Portugal has its "Peruvians" too.

The label seems to denote a dedication, more intellectual than emotional, to socialism spiced with such decentralizing aspects as worker management. In practice, though, just about any officer to the left of the Organization of American States is likely to be called "Peruvian."

As The Peruvian Experiment makes clear, the definition is more precise in Peru. Still, the Peruvians are disparate and their experiment is too complex and fluid to label neatly. Lowenthal describes it as the "ambiguous revolution."

In ten intense essays twelve scholars analyze the major aims, accomplishments, and failings of the government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado. Two of the authors, Julio Cotler and Richard Webb, are widely respected Peruvian social scientists. Theirs are probably the most critical pieces. Cotler dealing with the ruthlessness of the military's political domination, and Webb showing the limited extent of income redistribution.

Most of the essays relate the military's performance to that under the reformist president ousted in 1968, Fernando Belaunde Terry (hence the subtitle Continuity and Change Under Military Rule). The subject has some inherent excitement. After all, the armed forces in Latin America have consistently aligned themselves with those interested in preserving the status quo—or in rolling back any disturbing experiments. Yet here was an officer corps that had weighed carefully its society, found it wanting, and set out to make it over.

These essays have all the information needed to judge the revolution. But the sense of excitement rarely comes through. Readers who know Peru can provide their own setting, place their own Peruvian friends in the otherwise dry tiers of classes, flesh out the statistics of Indians at the margin of the economy. But the less experienced would benefit from knowing, for instance, that Peru has a spectacular geography, which must influence any society daring to inhabit the flanks of its high, dry Andes.

Dramatic events are more often alluded to than integrated into the analyses. Cotler mentions in passing "the popular uprisings of Cuzco, Arequipa, and Puno in 1972 and 1973" in the course of describing class conflict. How much more vividly we might understand with knowledge of what occurred in those far-away places with strange-sounding names. Most stunning, the 1970 earthquake—which killed fifty thousand Peruvians and destroyed most of the works of man in one of the nation's most treasured valleys—rates no mention in this account of the generals' performance. How did they handle that one?

The omissions seem minor, however, in a book offering so much. Some examples:

David Collier of Indiana University describes the military's innovations in working with, rather than against, the dwellers in squatter slums of Lima and other cities. Although the squatter might have little else, the government was quick to produce his land title. A survey under the old elected government had shown titles had top priority—and the military responded to a popular will that the politicians had ignored.

Susan C. Bourque and David Scott Palmer, Ph.D.'s from Cornell, find that while the agrarian reform has brought the only significant changes in rural Peru under the military, just 10 per cent of the families are affected. "Furthermore," they state, "the law has assisted to a disproportionate degree the most prosperous agricultural population. They find governmental concern genuine, but still not equal to the problems.

Two scholars from the Ford Foundation office in Lima (where Lowenthal also worked), Robert G. Myers and Robert Drysdale, assess the vaunted educational reform. Perhaps because of
Drysdales insight as a Canadian, they are most telling on the bilingual question Quechua vs. Spanish. Peru has come far from the days of the Ministry of Education official who is quoted as saying 'What we really ought to do is brainwash the Indians so that they forget Quechua.' But the authors find no consensus on how the languages, and societies, should coexist.

Boston University economist Shane Hunt chronicles what is probably the armed forces' most disputed policy, the nationalistic treatment of foreign investment. 'The benefits to Peru lie in the impetus to development of human resources, national pride of accomplishment, and lower payments to required foreign factors of production. The costs lie in the efficiency losses....'

Peter Knight, also with Ford until recently and an enthusiast in new forms of economic organization, wades through the acronymic jungle of Peru's worker-participation experiments. Despite his sympathies he finds the performance spotty, with 'reasons to believe that the economic problems may become more severe.'

The book was completed just before President Velasco's ouster last August and his replacement by a more mellow but fellow revolutionary, General Francisco Morales Bermúdez. Lowenthal almost predicted it: 'The Peruvian regime's legislative feats, however impressive, are largely accomplished; the current and future period of implementation will call upon talents and energies not yet fully tested.'

**Born Again**

by Charles W. Colson

(Chosen Books; 351 pp.; $8.95)

Richard J. Mouw

Late one summer evening in 1954 Charles Colson, then a U.S. Marine, had a religious experience while contemplating the heavens from the deck of the U.S.S. Mellette: 'I felt suddenly insignificant staring out into the universe, knowing that I was but a tiny dot standing on a slightly larger dot, floating on a sea that was huge and endless to me, but was only another tiny dot compared to the vastness around me.... That night I suddenly became as certain as I had ever been about anything in my life that out there in that great starlit beyond was God. I was convinced that He ruled over the universe, that to Him there were no mysteries, that He somehow kept it all miraculously in order.'

Given Colson's subsequent career it is easy to conclude—as he himself does—that this experience made an indelible impression on his consciousness, even if the deity himself faded from view. The next two decades of his life manifest an intense effort at 'the imitation of God' as he experienced him during that brief encounter—an effort that is nowhere more obvious than in Colson's involvement in a recent political attempt to 'rule over' a significant corner of the universe by allowing 'no mysteries' and by 'somehow'—indeed, at any cost—keeping it 'all miraculously in order.'

Nineteen years after his shipside experience, on August 12, 1973, Charles Colson had another religious experience. This time he is staring dejectedly at the floor in the living room of a friend who reads to him from C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*: 'In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all.' Once again Colson encounters a superior power. But this time there is no disposition to imitate that power: 'I felt naked and unclean, my bravado de-

... one passage [from Lewis] in particular seemed to sum up what had happened to all of us at the White House: 'For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.' Colson's response leads to a fundamental 'surrender' to the will of God. His initial 'conversion' experience has interesting similarities to C.S. Lewis's own story as recounted in *Surprised by Joy,* although there is no sign that Colson is aware of the parallels. Each begins by embracing a 'theism' that is not-yet-Christian. Each is aware of submitting to a nonhuman 'power' and 'strength' compelling its prey to accept a position of defenselessness. And each goes on to discover that, in Lewis's words, 'the hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.'

Colson's theological development proceeds along remarkably clear Trinitarian lines. The encounter with the Father-God of power is followed by a decision to become a disciple of Jesus the Son. This second stage is characterized by what is, from all appearances, a genuine struggle to 'know the mind of Christ' in dealing with his previous reputation as a sacrificer of grandmothers, with the publicity occasioned by his religious conversion, and with the legal maneuverings necessitated by his involvement in the Watergate affair.

For the theological and spiritual education of Charles Colson the Trinity is joined by four men—regularly referred to as 'the brothers'—who sustain him by comforting, reproving, and instructing him. The group includes Doug Coe, who organizes Bible study groups and 'prayer breakfasts' in the Washington area; Republican Congressman Al Quie of Minnesota; former Democratic Congressman Graham Purrel of Texas; and Harold Hughes, then Democratic Senator from Iowa.

Hughes plays an especially important function as a mediator between Colson and those who are skeptical about the 'new' Colson. The Iowa Senator, a devout 'born again' Christian who has since left politics to work fulltime with Coe, initially rebuffs the latter's efforts to arrange a meeting with Colson. When they finally get together Hughes is gruff and wary, but eventually he becomes one of Colson's closest mentors and