

Ambassador Edwin G. Corr talks with international relations students Terri Ruppert, left, David Pollard and Ted Ross.

The United States and Peru

By AMBASSADOR EDWIN G. CORR

Abbreviated and edited version of an address to the Peruvian-North American Chamber of Commerce, Lima, 10/7/81.

An ambassadorship is the goal of every career foreign service officer, the milestone reached by Oklahoman Edwin G. Corr when President Jimmy Carter nominated him as U.S. Ambassador to Peru in October 1980. Little more than a year later, Corr was President Ronald Reagan's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia. Each of the seven countries in which Ed Corr and his wife Susanne have served in the last 20 years has a claim on their affection, but Peru was the first ambassadorship, a very special place. "Apart from living in my own home state of Oklahoma," he said on departure, "there is no place I have been happier professionally and personally."

Corr believes in the democratic experiment under way in Peru and sees the United States as a positive force in Peru's democratic and economic development. Before his departure, Corr took the opportunity to assess United States relations with Peru, U.S. foreign policy in general and some controversial and misperceived aspects of both. "I am struck by President Reagan's and members of his administration's clarity, consistency and frequency in enunciating his policies," Corr says. "Although some may differ with objectives, emphasis and style, in my memory no other administration has been so lucid in setting out its directions and goals."

—The Editor

Many political observers believe President Reagan's election in November 1980 marks a reorientation in United States politics unequalled since the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932. According to these commentaries, we have come to the end of two epochs in American politics: in domestic politics, the end of the New Deal; in foreign affairs, the end of our identity crisis caused by a hangover from the Vietnam conflict. President Reagan's policies and the American people's support of them reflect a return to a spirit of national confidence — confidence in ourselves, our vision of the world, and the success and validity of our society — a strong and free America acting effectively in the world.

In recent years, it has been fashionable in some circles to criticize the United States as a selfish, imperialistic power, responsible for many of the world's problems. But, by 1981, the poverty of this criticism has been fully exposed. It is not the United States that holds back the development of poorer countries. Quite the contrary, we provide more development assistance funds than any other country in the world, and ours is the single largest market for exports from other countries. I trust that as our own economic house is put in order we will be able to do more to help lesser developing countries' economic growth. Our economic prosperity is the largest single factor in continuing world economic development.

Further, it is not the United States that threatens the peace in Afghanistan, Eastern Europe and Cambodia, and it is not the United States and the countries with liberal economic policies which cannot feed their own populations. It is clear that radical revision of the old clichés and modes of thought about capitalism and dependency are in order.

What, then, is this foreign policy of President Reagan the American people deem worthy of support? The structure, described by Secretary of State Alexander Haig, rests on four pillars: first, the restoration of our economic and military strength; second, the reinvigoration of our alliances and friendships; third, the promotion of progress in the developing countries through peaceful

change; and fourth, a relationship with the Soviet Union characterized by restraint and reciprocity.

Within this structure, there is a clear message that President Reagan attaches great importance to Latin America. He and his top officials have assigned a high priority to the Western Hemisphere, and it occupies an extensive amount of their personal attention.

There prevail abroad distortions and falsehoods about our government's foreign policy that need to be corrected. Among the most erroneous are: the United States no longer cares about democracy and human rights, no longer cares about less developed countries and does not

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intend to help them, and views the world exclusively from the perspective of East-West conflict. An examination of United States-Peruvian relations dispels these unfounded myths.

The United States made clear its support of Peru's return to democratic, constitutional government during the late 1970s and, since the new democratic government took office in July 1980, has cooperated extensively with President Belaunde in his developmental efforts.

We do not presume to tell others what kind of government they should have. We believe that democratic government based on free, periodic, competitive elections is the best government. It works! We intend to encourage democracy and the rule of law wherever we have the opportunity by constructive and prudent actions.

But the United States government's support for Peruvian democracy also is rooted in self-interest. Despite what some critics would have

you believe, the United States consistently gets along better and has smoother, more mutually rewarding relations with freely elected, democratic, constitutional and humane governments.

Our hopes for the success of democracy in Peru are fervent, because we believe the conditions and leadership are propitious to put Peru on the firm road of enduring democratic rule. What is remarkable about Latin American political history is not the fragility of newly established democratic systems, but Latin Americans' deep and lasting dedication to establishing free, independent, western-type democratic societies. Perhaps having personally experienced other forms of government, Latin Americans attest to the statement that, though democracy has many flaws, it is still the best of all possible governments.

The struggle for democratic government is a thread running through Peruvian history. At this point, Peruvians again are attempting to establish for themselves what Costa Ricans attained in 1948 and Venezuelans in 1958 — stable, constitutional government with orderly succession from one president to the next and an end to the politically and economically disruptive cycle of coups, de facto governments, elections and coups again.

Critical examination of Peru's leadership reveals a president dedicated to democracy, with experience, intelligence, vision and wisdom. His political legitimacy and moral authority are extraordinary. This helps to insure that Peru's voice is heard and respected in international affairs. President Fernando Belaunde Terry's vigor, his knowledge of Peru and the world, his honesty and commitment to law and order, enhance his charismatic, democratic leadership. I believe President Belaunde will be noted in history for his vision in promoting Latin American integration, opening the Peruvian jungle, and helping to establish an enduring democratic political system in his country. Yet there are factors that I would note.

The United States government support for democracy in Peru has not been and is not based on the existence



Ambassador Corr, left, credits Peru's President Fernando Belaunde Terry, right, with promoting Latin American integration, opening the Peruvian jungle, and helping to establish an enduring democratic political system in his country.

of a single leader or party. We favor democratic systems and seek to cooperate with them in mutually advantageous ways. We believe that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness of every individual person is the noblest goal of society and government, rather than autocratic efforts to remold the nature of man to fit a preconceived theory. To attain these democratic ideals, exceptional leaders are essential, but over the long run the modern world requires strong democratic institutions that transcend the guidance of any particular person.

I have been impressed by the honor Latin Americans bestowed upon

former Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt at his death last year. During his presidency, there were daily crises and problems not unlike those Peru is now undergoing. Terrorism, inflation, and political, economic and social problems buffeted his administration severely. He coped with these, but that is not why he is so revered. The homage derives from his success in creating a viable, democratic political party and in contributing to the creation of a democratic system within his country that has survived after he turned over the reins of leadership to others via democratic procedures.

Peru is fortunate to have made a

good beginning toward the establishment of enduring democratic political parties. It is hoped that Peruvian political leaders can put their country and institutions first, and thereby overcome crises which inevitably arise in Latin America with the passing of charismatic leaders.

Democracy is particularly vulnerable in its early years. The struggle will be prolonged and constant.

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Perhaps it will be 11 or 12 years until the system is firmly established, and even then democratic devotees will have to tend and safeguard this precious environment in which man's potential is best achieved. The fight is worth it. While Peruvians must focus on and deal with a multitude of daily problems, in the long run the institutional development and strength of their democratic parties hold the keys to success for democracy.

The United States government also supports Peruvian efforts to establish a lasting democracy because we believe that democratic success in Peru will have a favorable and positive effect on the political systems of other South American countries. And this is one of our key objectives in the area. Over the long run, there is nothing more destructive to Latin America's effort to develop and our own constructive, cooperative efforts with the region than the lack of legitimate political succession, bringing with it public uncertainty and apprehension, drastic and sudden lurches in policy, mass turnover of experience and knowledgeable officials, the flight of brains and money from the country, and wastefulness and discouragement on a national scale. We are hopeful this generation of Latin Americans finally can establish enduring democratic political systems. Peru is in the vanguard of this worthy struggle.

What are the conditions under

which Peruvian democracy must function? The United States believes one of the best ways to help Peru's democracy endure is to help get the country's economy moving, so that the government can carry out needed development projects and stimulate the private sector. Stable growth is basic to Peruvians' efforts to attain higher standards of living. Yet, the government must do this within the limits of the disastrous economic situation inherited after 12 years of "revolutionary military government," and the structural problems which have been in the making for decades, if not centuries. And all of this while there is a world-wide recession. We of the United States want to help, and we are doing so.

Those who claim President Reagan is not committed to helping developing nations simply have not been listening or are distorting what they hear because of preconceived ideas. Administration spokesmen have made clear from the beginning that aiding countries to develop is one of our highest priorities. There has been some understandable confusion because of public focus on the President's determination to assure continued adequate American military defensive strength and to get our own economic house in order, but let us take a look at the facts.

As in the case of United States support for democracy, we support development both for reasons of self-interest and from a sense of moral obligation. We care because our economic, social and political well-being is bound inextricably together with those of the developing countries; and we care because we have a tradition of responding with empathy and concern for the problems and misery of others.

President Reagan is committed to continued foreign aid, which has a vital role in promoting development and alleviating human suffering. He emphasizes, however, that development includes other elements besides aid. The key to any country's development has been and always will be that country's ability to motivate its human resources and manage its natural resources in a coordinated effort to invest for the future. Developing countries' domestic economic

policies, industrialized countries' markets open to the exports of developing countries, and developing countries' access to capital markets are all more important than foreign aid.

President Reagan's strategy for development in the third world gives priority to keeping our huge market, already the most open in the world, accessible to developing countries. And, despite strong domestic opposition, the President continues to favor preferential treatment for exports of developing nations. This is why he believes the United States should facilitate private sector involvement in third world development through activities mutually beneficial and totally respectful of host countries' laws and sovereignty.

Secretary Haig in his United Na-

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tions General Assembly opening speech offered five principles, drawn from actual international economic experience, for a new era of growth: (1) an open international trade system, (2) foreign assistance coupled with sound domestic policy and self-help, (3) regional cooperation and bilateral consultations, (4) reliance on incentives for individual economic performance, and (5) security and political stability. Secretary Haig underscored the importance within the international economic system for concessional resource transfers, and he pledged continued high levels of United States aid through both bilateral and multi-lateral programs, but he stressed that the essence of economic growth is the creation of new wealth. In some countries redistribution of existing resources has taken precedence over increased productivity and economic expansion. But, if you want to eat better, you make a bigger pie, not redistribute the slices.

Both the United States and Peru are struggling with inflation and budget deficits. Both are seeking ways to permit our private sectors to become more productive. And both are carrying out courageous and difficult economic measures and adjustments in societies where there are freedom of the news media, vociferous political oppositions, the right to strike and to demonstrate, and accountability of political leaders to the laws of the country. Neither government wants to or can arbitrarily silence opposition, or smash strikers and demonstrators.

What makes the Peruvian effort important in the global sense is that if Peru is successful in bringing about sound economic growth and development within the context of a democratic system, it will be showing the way for other countries to follow. There are a number of examples where, during the post World War II period, dynamic economic growth has occurred in developing countries with open economic systems under authoritative regimes, but the instances where this has occurred within democratic systems are rare.

The United States' total bilateral economic assistance program to Peru is about \$100 million annually, the largest United States' aid program in South America. During the past year, 1,400,000 people a day have received all or part of their nourishment from our food programs. This is not development, nor should it be sustained for long, but it is useful until the Peruvian government gets the economy back on its feet. Our Agency for International Development (AID) programs in Peru are involved in health, education and assistance to small industry and rural integrated development.

I have been satisfied particularly with the innovative cooperation AID has given to President Belaunde's noble efforts to open up the high jungle. In the lower jungle, the Yurimaguas project has increased agricultural production for nine consecutive years in experimental plots. The jungle is perhaps the last great expanse of land that can be placed in agricultural production without exorbitant investments to bring desert lands into cultivation. We believe

that we are on the verge of success. The technology developed will ensure that colonization does not result in depleted soils and environmental ruin, and the increased production may someday be compared to the famous "green revolution" brought about by improved grains and the application of new agricultural technology.

Proud as I am of our AID program — its importance in developing jungle regions, its stimulus to developing and transferring new technology, and its new approaches to old problems — and proud as I am of my country's support to international financial and lending institutions, I know, and President Reagan knows, that aid is only part of our contribution to developing countries.

Virtually every country in the world today recognizes, by word or deed, be they capitalist or communist, developed or developing, that the private sector is a more efficient producer of goods and services than the government. It is ironic that in countries like Cuba, Poland, the Soviet Union and China, communist governments are grappling with

mechanisms to unleash the productive force of private initiative, but find their efforts ensnared and throttled by ideology and state bureaucracies. Peru is much more fortunate; its private sector is able to operate with freedom and as a recognized partner in national development.

Ten years ago, I lamented in the preface of a book I published that too often when we spoke of the Western world, we looked only eastward over the Atlantic and seldom glanced south toward Latin America. This, I wrote, occurs despite the fact that all Americans share a unique historical experience; have a common value system, based largely on Western culture and the Judeo-Christian religion; and seek generally to establish political and economic systems that stress individual human freedom and progress.

As noted earlier, President Reagan and his government assign to Latin America high priority in foreign policies. The amount of news media treatment about Latin America, the number of books, the attention to Latin American literature, and the sense of kinship with this area has, I

believe, grown immensely during the last twenty years.


At the same time that our consciousness of, appreciation for, and recognition of the need to work more closely with Latin America are growing, there persists among some Latin Americans, unfortunately, a legacy of suspicion and a reluctance to acknowledge the inescapable imperative that we must all work together to solve national and global problems of this increasingly interdependent world. With increased Latin American economic and national strength, and with growing confidence of Latin Americans in their political institutions and independence, I am hopeful that we Americans, both North and South, will continue to draw closer. In my opinion, not only do we share common goals and interests, our national experiences and relative geographic proximity make us brothers.

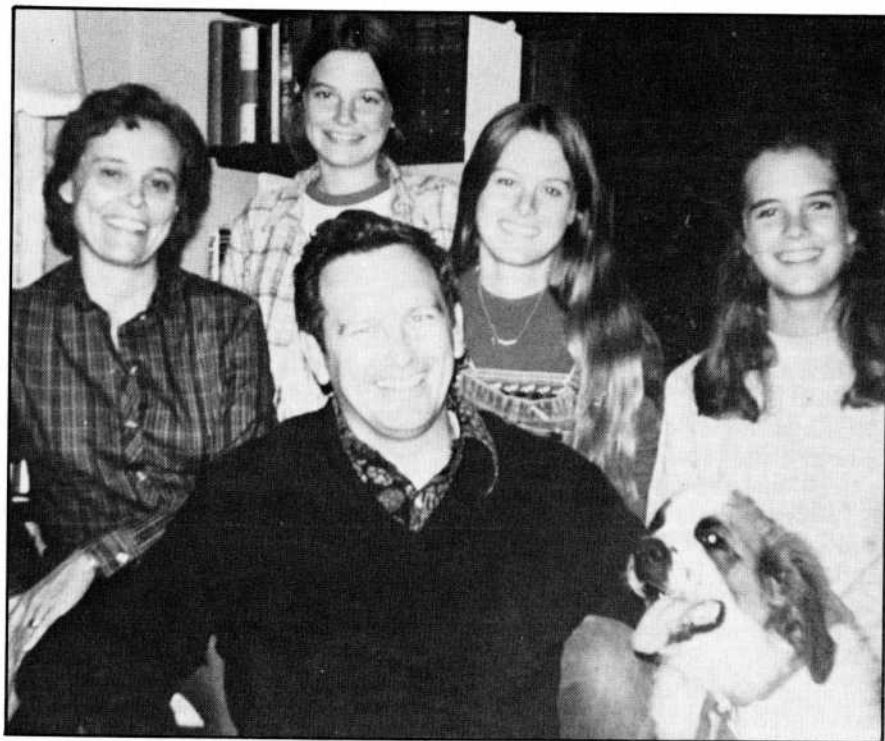
This does not mean we do not have important differences and grievances to resolve. We always will have problems. That is the human condition. But I believe we share a common belief that, through mutual respect and adherence to democratic values, we can combine freedom and development, political stability and economic progress.

I am confident that the time has arrived when the conditions are propitious for Peruvians to attain stable, humane, constitutional democracy and an expanding economy that will permit a better life for themselves and their children. In closing, and speaking directly to the many friends and acquaintances I came to cherish in that challenging land, I borrow the lines of the Peruvian Carlos Alberto Seguin, applying them to my expectation that when I return to Peru, either in the short term or in a few years hence, democracy will be flourishing:

"And when in some future, near or far, the hands of Destiny once again bring us face to face . . .

"Our encounter will not be as that of the traveller, who returns to his city and finds it changed.

"But as one who kissed the buds in his garden one evening, dreamed of them during the night, and, upon waking, rejoiced at seeing they had blossomed into flowers." 



Home for Christmas in Norman a year ago, Ed Corr and St. Bernard friend Freckles pose with Susanne, left, and daughters, Jennifer, Michelle and Phoebe.