

HISTORIA PROBLEMA Y PROMESA

homenaje a
jorge basadre

Capítulo 6



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA DEL PERU

FONDO EDITORIAL 1978

© Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú
Fondo Editorial 1978

Diseño de carátula: Víctor Cumpa

Tuvo a su cargo la revisión técnica: Guillermo Cock

Fotografía: Guillermo Hare

JORGE BASADRE
AND THE IDEA OF THE PERUVIAN NATION,
1870 – 1930

Jesús Chavarría
University of California, Sta. Barbara

It is almost as if without them, we would not have an idea of the modern Peruvian nation, of its nature and configurations.

By way of their writings on the society and culture of Peru (some in the field of letters, others in journalism or scholarship), they contributed seminally to our understanding of the Peruvian experience upon its arrival into the Modern Age. If we speak of a unique nationalist age as taking place in Peru between the 1870s and 1930, it is in good measure because of their grasp of the implications of the onset of modernization for the rise of the modern Peruvian nation.

Who were and are they, these giants of the Peruvian nationalist tradition? To call upon them is to hear the names of the “grandes” of the Peruvian nationalist intellectual tradition:¹ of Manuel González Prada, Clorinda Matto de Turner, Javier Prado y Ugarteche, Manuel Vicente Villarán, José de la Riva Agüero y Osma, Francisco García Calderón, Julio Tello, José Carlos Mariátegui, Luis Alberto Sánchez, and Jorge Basadre himself, to name but a select few. As we know, there were many more. To weigh their hegemonic importance we need only recall what Pablo Macera has said of them: “in our entire historical process, from the sixteenth century on, no other group has known a greater influence or lasted as long”.²

In reaching closer to my purpose in this brief essay, let me say how in the roll of such impressive individuals, whose lives were tainted by that bittersweet nineteenth-century Latin American experience of “wanting country” (as another member of the group put it on still another memorable occasion³), Basadre’s figures among those of the first rank. Had he written nothing else but *Perú: problema y posibilidad*, that would have sufficed to assure him a

1 Jorge Basadre himself used the term “grande” in referring to Francisco García Calderón and his generation. See his “ensayo preliminar” to: Francisco García Calderón, *En torno al Perú y América* (Lima, 1954), p. 10.

2 Jorge Basadre and Pablo Macera, *Conversaciones* (Lima, 1974), p. 12.

3 The phrase is Víctor Andrés Belaúnde’s, from his: *Memorias*, 3 vols. (Lima, 1961), 2:55.

leading place among the greats of his country's nationalist tradition. As it is, his monumental *Historia de la república del Perú*, now in its voluminous sixth edition represents, among other things, a magnificent tribute to one of the commanding passions of the contemporaries of his youth, to know truly the meaning of their history (which took not a little courage), and to join the fight to achieve nationhood. Thus, this all too brief essay on why, what, and how these men and women contributed to the Peruvian nationalist tradition and how they themselves became historical personages, is gladly offered to this celebration of homage to Jorge Basadre, teacher, historian, public figure, and surely one of the great citizens of Peru and America today.

Only recently have we started becoming critically aware about the collective significance of the lives of these men and women referred to above. To a remarkable degree, their significance stemmed from the fact that they reflected the "spirit of the age". It was due to the manifold and powerful impact of modernization upon the structure and texture of their society and culture at the turn of the century, that they grasped how their country was being changed by the onset of modern Western influences. In a word, their works mirror the pervasive social and cultural crisis of their times, product of the wrenching process of capitalist modernization.

Economic expansion largely explains what I mean by the onset of modernization and the major events occurring during the years, 1870-1930. It linked production on the Peruvian coast and sierra to the world market; it established new modes of communication and transportation among the various regions of Peru; it produced a dynamic, multi-class society centered politically in Lima; it affected the various styles of fashion, cultural expression, and intellectual discourse. In short, it altered the social process.

That all of the nationalist intellectuals, and they are a numerous lot, came to coalesce into groups and into a "group", can be attributed to a variety of causes; perhaps chief among them, that as they came of age they encountered a common shaping experience that determined their individual life histories: the country, they realized as they entered their years of manhood and womanhood, was in deep crisis. Indeed it was, caught in the throes of great changes. And as their knowledge and feeling of the crisis deepened, they came to focus on the core of its significance, which was the contradiction between the general backwardness of their society and culture and the need for introducing Western progress. In conceiving their times in historical and political terms, these

nationalist intellectuals par excellence rendered a historical metaphor, a picture as it were, of the many contradictions and conflicts underlying the social and cultural life process of their country as it struggled to become a nation, and this became their idea of the Peruvian nation.

II

Like most other Latin American countries, after independence Peru did not become immediately integrated into the unfolding Western capitalist-dominated world market. That did not take place until the second half of the nineteenth-century. In his highly original *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, Tulio Halperín Donghi proposed how it was not until beginning in the 1880s—“años más, años menos”—that there began a period he characterized as a “maturation of the neocolonial order” (product of accelerated Western capitalist expansion).⁴ Another author, D.C.M. Platt, in his *Latin America and British Trade, 1806-1914*, tends to corroborate Halperín Donghi’s periodization, in writing how the years between the early 1800s and the 1850s, were a time of “modest expansion, not of radical change” in the social order of the region, and how the “take-off point in the economic relationship between Latin America and the outside world” did not materialize until the latter part of the century.⁵

Among the more well-known recent students of Peru’s nineteenth-century economy, Jonathan V. Levin, William M. Mathew, and Heraclio Bonilla, there exists substantial agreement that Peru generally conforms to the periodization proposed above for the entire region of Latin America. So there exists general agreement, it seems, for viewing the turn of the century as a highly significant period of transition in the historical development of Peru, hence the uniqueness of the age.

But in what ways does the period 1870s to 1930, constitute a distinctive epoch? why begin in the 1870s? what are the claims of the seventies as a crucial decade, as harbinger of a new age? Simply, that with the appearance of *El Partido Civil* in 1871, and more specifically with the Pardo presidency of

4 *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* (Madrid, 1969), p. 280.

5 *Latin America and British Trade, 1806-1914* (London, 1972), p. 3.

1872-76, there appeared in the country, for the first time, a progressive national class capable of seizing state sovereignty for the purpose of—as their reformist pronouncements loftily insisted—creating a modern Peruvian nation. Pardo epitomized this new bourgeoisie, motivated as he was by two of its basic passions, “that of accumulating gold and that of becoming master of the highest reaches of national politics”.⁶

To be sure, the *civilista* victory of 1872 soon enough proved elusive, and the harsh realities then set in. So the brief appearance of the *civilistas* early in the 70s represents only a glimmer of the future, but that glimmer was strong enough to illuminate the fullness of the age that was to come. The appearance of a national class, with a modern, progressive nationalist awareness, is what qualifies the seventies as a crucial decade. Pardo and the *civilistas* brought a new consciousness to government, even González Prada recognized that.⁷

However, if Pardo’s presidency illustrates the dawn of a new day, the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) marks the coming of the first night of bitter darkness. After Pardo came the deluge: the most crippling war ever fought by Peru, bringing in its wake national disaster. Crime, prostitution, disease, and desolation plagued the streets of Lima during the occupation, and for a moment a political vacuum set upon the country. From such a blow, it took Peru well over a decade only to recover its initial composure, but by the 1890s conditions were once more propitious for pursuing the grand design of national development called forth by the *civilistas* in the 70s.

One of the crucial achievements of the postwar military governments, that of General Andrés Avelino Cáceres, was the negotiation of the notorious Grace Contract between the Peruvian government and British bondholders in 1890. In the 80s, the Cáceres government faced a bankrupt economy and a foreign debt estimated at 51 million pounds sterling. To resolve the fiscal and economic imbroglio, Cáceres, aided by *civilista* advisors, turned to the proposal of Michael

6 The quotation is from Mariano Amézaga, in: Jorge Basadre, *Perú: problema y posibilidad* (Lima, 1931), p. 111. In economic terms, the 70s represent the beginning of a period of “contraction” for the national economy, owing to the “great depression” in Great Britain and to the collapse of the guano industry, that will last until 1895. It was the preceding growth periods, from the 1830s to 1876, that brought forth the new class that took power in 1872 and that was to dominate national politics, on the whole, until 1919. Cf. Heraclio Bonilla, “La coyuntura comercial del siglo XIX en el Perú”, *Revista del Museo Nacional*, t. XXXV (Lima: 1967-68), pp. 180-82.

7 This argument has been presented in more comprehensive fashion in my article: “Desaparición del Perú colonial, (1870-1919)”, *Aportes* (enero 1972), pp. 120-153.

P. Grace, an Anglo-American financier with experience in Peruvian business matters.⁸ Once the contract was negotiated and approved, amid great controversy and indeed a national scandal, an era of economic expansion and prosperity followed, due to the rise of Western capital investments.⁹

As one of the leading students of Peruvian economic history has written, what distinguished the period of expansion at the turn of the century from previous epochs, was the direct "placement of (British) capital in the agricultural and mining sector . . ." ¹⁰ Foreign capital investments increased at an ever-rising rate at the turn of the century. Initially the most active, the British invested in external bonds, in Peruvian Corporation (the company chartered by the bondholders in 1890 after the negotiation of the Grace Contract) bonds and shares (after the 90s, 45 to 90% of total British investments were tied up in the Peruvian Corporation), in Lima Municipal Bonds, in the Northwestern of Peru Railway, and in sugar estates, mining properties, public utilities, and manufacturing.

Up to the beginning of the twentieth-century, American investors had not fully awakened to Peruvian opportunities, but once enticed they established themselves quickly. The first major American investment produced another corporate giant of the modern Peruvian economy (along with the Peruvian Corporation), the Cerro de Pasco Corporation (1901-02), which in a matter of years accounted for about 90% of the total mining production of the country, solely on the basis of its excavations at Morococha and Cerro de Pasco.¹¹ Another major American acquisition came in 1916, when the Pacific Petroleum

8 On the particulars of the contract see: "The Peruvian Corporation, Ltd., Its Origins and History", *West Coast Leader* (7 October 1931), p. 7. For a good discussion of the negotiations see also: Marion Gordon Daniels, "Guano, Railroads and the Peruvian Corporation", Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1949, pp. 55-70.

9 One estimate placed total British investments at about \$ 121.5 million and the U.S. total at about \$ 50 million in 1915. F.M. Halsey, *Investments in Latin America and the British West Indies* (Washington, D.C., 1918), p. 322. For the rise of U.S. capital investments see: William Sampson Bollinger, "The Rise of United States Influence in the Peruvian Economy, 1869-1921", Master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1971, especially pp. 204-253.

10 Heraclio Bonilla, "Aspects de l'histoire économique et sociale du Pérou au XIXe siècle," 2 vols., Doctoral thesis, Ecole Pratiques des Hautes Etudes, Université de Paris, Paris, 1970, 2:380.

11 Cf. J.A. Broggi, "El cobre en el Perú", *Copper Resources of the World: Papers of the Sixteenth International Geographical Congress* (Washington, D.C., 1933), p. 511; also Bollinger, "Rise of the United States Influence", pp. 188-203.

Company, originally incorporated in London in 1889, sold its interests, comprised mainly of the La Brea and Pariñas fields in Piura, to the International Petroleum Corporation, Toronto subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey.¹²

Rising foreign capital investments, it seems hardly necessary to insist, affected powerfully the broadness of the country's economic structures. For instance, rising foreign capital tended to reinforce the long-established thrust of the exchange sector to mobilize mainly for export production. Readily, new products such as copper and petroleum joined the list of new demands made upon Peruvian production by world economy. Mining had been on the upswing since the 1870s. One estimate place the value of mining production in 1886 (in Libras peruanas, then about equivalent to the British pound) at Lp 423,000, and by 1916 production had climbed to Lp 8,500,000.¹³ The establishment of the School of Mining Engineers in 1876, reform of the Mining Code in 1877 and 1901 (which permitted foreign ownership of mining property), and the creation of the Corps of Mining Engineers in 1901, further corroborates the growing importance of the mining sector. Not many years after the discovery of vanadium in 1904, Peru provided nearly seventy percent of the world's vanadium output.

Related events took place in the agrarian sector of the northern coast. After the setback of the Pacific War, the sugar and cotton-producing haciendas of the northern departments of La Libertad and Lambayeque, recovered rapidly. Expanding sugar-producing haciendas not only absorbed modern technology, but also surrounding smaller estates. By the early 1900s, the Larco Herrera brothers, the Cartavio Sugar Company, and the *Sociedad Agrícola Casa Grande, Ltda.*, had become the "big three" fiefs of a northern sugar aristocracy.¹⁴

Accelerated expansion on the coast wrought further changes of vast importance on the agrarian sector of the Andean highlands. Chevalier has shown how the expansion of the great sierra haciendas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stemmed in large part from the meeting of "local history

12 Luis Laurie Solis, *La diplomacia del petróleo y el caso de la Brea y Pariñas* (Lima, 1934), p. 102.

13 For the rise in mining and new demands on Peruvian production, cf. Alberto Salomón, *Perú: Potentialities and Economic Development* (London, 1920), p. 37, and, Charles A. McQueen, *Peruvian Public Finance* (Washington, D.C., 1926), p. 21.

14 Peter F. Klarén, "Origins of the Peruvian Aprista Party: A Study of Social and Economic Change in the Department of La Libertad, 1870-1932", Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1968, esp. chaps. 1-3.

and world conjuncture."¹⁵ This encounter between Peruvian village and world economy, Chevalier wrote, resulted from demands thrust upon the traditional forms of Andean agriculture, especially ranching, by heightening economic development and urbanization on the coast. World conjuncture had a even more direct impact on the highlands, for as soon as firms such as the Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation and the Peruvian Corporation established their mining operations, they diversified their interests. Wool production, the most significant Andean agricultural export, quickly attracted their attention. Soon, English textile firms with parent offices in Santiago de Chile and elsewhere, appeared in Arequipa, Puno, and Cuzco.¹⁶

Foreign capital also encouraged industry and foreign trade. With the organization of the *Sociedad Industrial Santa Catalina* by Bartolomé Boggio, Mariano Ignacio Prado y Ugarteche, and Juan Manuel Peña Costa, in 1890, modern textile manufacturing began in Peru. On July 18, 1895, moreover, the *Empresa Transmisora de Fuerza Eléctrica* made its first transmission to the Santa Catalina textile factory, and thereafter the electrical industry developed parallel to the textile industry. Urban commerce also advanced, but as in most Spanish American countries, it remained mostly in foreign hands. Italians dominated food merchandising; the French specialized in retail sales, ready-made clothing, silks and luxury items; the English concentrated on the export-import trade, although the Germans had the greater share of the import trade.¹⁷

Still other sectors were also affected. Banking leaped forward at the turn of the century, as did the insurance business as well. José Payán, an enterprising Cuban emigré, played a major role in the modernization of Peruvian banking. And Augusto B. Leguía, caudillo and president of Peru, made his fortune in founding the *Compañía de Seguros "Rimac"* (1896), and on its Board of Directors sat the seigniorial Manuel Candamo and José Pardo, both also presidents of Peru. In general, the Peruvian economy expanded during these years; from 1900 to 1913 the country enjoyed an uninterrupted favorable

15 Francois Chevalier, "L'expansion de la grande propriété dans le Haut-Perou au XXe siècle," *Annales* (Juillet-Aout 1966), pp. 821-5.

16 Jean Piel, "A Propos d'un Soulèvement Rural Péruvien au Début du Vingtième siècle: Tocroyoc (1921)", *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* (October-December 1967), p. 376.

17 Alejandro Garland, *El Perú en 1906* (Lima, 1907), p. 269 *passim*.

balance of trade.¹⁸

As such momentous changes overtook the country, and this growth curve continued with periodic fluctuations until the 1929 crash, they transformed the face of Lima. So rapidly did traditional Lima appear to be retreating before the onslaught of modernization, that José Gálvez felt prompted to write the first fragments of *Una Lima que se va* in the early 1900s, recording with a Proustian sense of time and memory, the vanishing colonial ambience. Lima's modernization did not come abruptly, of course. In the nineteenth century, caudillos such as Castilla, Balta, Pardo, and Piérola, all had promoted the capital's urban growth. Balta's urban development plan, prepared by the engineer Luis Sada, first proposed enlargement of the city beyond its historic walls. Further, Balta's construction of the *Ferrocarril Central* served to transform Lima into a center of an emerging national market, an entrépot for the exchange of goods and services from coast and sierra, and from abroad. Not until the creation of the *Ministerio de Fomento* by Piérola (January 18, 1896), did a sustained process of urban modernization get underway, however. After the opening of the *Avenida 9 de diciembre* in 1898, there began the relatively rapid reconstruction of the farming *fundos* surrounding the capital into working and middle-class suburbs.¹⁹

Parallel to such events, a new urban technology also appeared. As early as 1855, Santiago Lombardo, with government support, had introduced and installed a telegraph line between Lima and Callao. A decade later, in 1866-67, the government called for a national telegraph network. The first telephones were installed a few years later. In early 1888, two establishments installed telephone equipment for their own restricted use, and in August the government called for bids to extend telephone service throughout the city. By 1889, the newly-organized *Compañía Peruana de Teléfonos* had linked Lima to Callao and Miraflores by telephone.²⁰ Moreover, by 1902, the city's nocturnal intrigue subsided somewhat owing to the partial establishment of electric street lighting. Two years later, the first automobile, a Brasier, shocked pedestrians on the streets of Lima, and by 1906, a tramline offered its services to the city's dwellers. Mail statistics further confirm the revolution in communications

18 *Informaciones comerciales, económicas, y financieras del Perú*, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (Departamento Comercial) no. 9 (Lima, 1938), pp. 224-28. Between 1900 and 1913, exports jumped from 49 million *soles* to about 80 million.

19 Juan Bromley and José Barbagelata, *Evolución urbana de la ciudad de Lima* (Lima, 1945), p. 93.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 86 *passim*.

changing the country. Between 1901 when postal statistics were first recorded and 1905, domestic and foreign mail service rose by a total of 7,842, 050 items.²¹

Such changes did not take place, for the most part, amid untroubled circumstances. On the contrary, at times unbridled conflict characterized Peruvian society and culture, parallel to the changes taking place at the level of economy. In this summary, it is hardly possible to trace an analysis and chronicle of the mobilization of different class formations and of their political parties. Neither is it possible to outline the changing forms and content of cultural expression. Suffice to say that changes in economy affected intellectual life and culture generally: fashions and styles changed, new forms evolved, art, architecture, literature, and music all reflected the impact of modernization. This is not to say that the entire breadth and scope of the country was touched by these changes, or that all of this occurred overnight. But the tempo of life did change among the elites of Lima, and even the urban and rural masses were affected.²²

As modernization permeated the social fabric, it influenced public opinion, intellectual discourse, and even the consciousness of the different social strata. We shall now see how it particularly affected the consciousness of an emerging group of intellectuals. And as it affected their consciousness, it turned them into passionate nationalists.

III

Intellectuals did not exist as such in the nineteenth-century. Generally speaking, writers and artists came from the well-to-do, or else they were beholden to the state or to wealthy patrons.²³ In fact, the word *intellectual* did not appear as a social category in Peru until the first years of the twentieth-century. It was not until then that intellectuals —men and women of relatively independent thinking and who live their ideas²⁴ —could earn their livelihood as intellectuals. The transformation of journalism at the turn of the century, and other changes in career and occupational structures, laured

21 Garland, *Perú en 1906*, p. 153.

22 Klarén even proposes that modernization produced the *Aprista* party, Peru's first mass political party, "Origins of the Peruvian Aprista Party", p. 56 *passim*.

23 The observation is from Luis Alberto Sánchez's *La literatura peruana*, 4 vols. (Lima, 1956), 3: 963.

24 For the concept of the intellectual as a man who "lives his ideas", see: George Lichtheim's "Reflections on Trotsky", in: *The Concept of Ideology* (New York, 1967), pp. 211-212.

ambitious young men to the capital with promises of social advancement and self-fulfillment. But the intellectual climate of opinion which reigned in the early twentieth-century, pervasively nationalistic, took its origins in the 1870s with the fierce reaction precipitated by the War of the Pacific.

By the early 70s, romanticism, which had dominated the climate of opinion for the three previous decades, was decidedly on the wane. Its demise coincided with the War of the Pacific, in fact, though it still left its imprint on Peruvian writers by contributing to their soon-to-come nationalist awakening. Never militant nationalists in Peru, the romantics nevertheless invoked a sense of tradition and of place.²⁵ One of their leading figures, the Spanish scholar Sebastián Lorente (who had arrived in Lima in 1842), established the study of Peruvian history and literature at San Marcos University in the 60s. Positivism, realism, and naturalism challenged its supremacy beginning in the 70s, however.

Of the many Peruvian intellectuals who embraced positivism in the late nineteenth-century, no one espoused it as militantly as the poet and pamphleteer, Manuel González Prada. Rebellious in nature since early childhood, once he attained young manhood González Prada, of aristocratic and staunch reactionary familial background, suppressed the class *de* from his name.²⁶ From then on he pursued an increasingly radical politics until his death in 1918.

Various reasons explain the radicalization of González Prada in the seventies, but the most shattering of them all was the War of the Pacific. When the war broke out, he quickly joined the reserve militias organized to defend Lima, eventually becoming a lieutenant colonel with an artillery unit in Miraflores. And after the ignominious defeat suffered at the hands of the Chileans, he returned disgusted and embittered to his home in Lima, refusing to leave its confines while the foreign occupation lasted.

During his strange self-imposed exile, he suffered from a prolonged depression. Later he reported how during those years he remained in a catatonic state, indifferent to "things and even to friends". When his head finally cleared, he had become, in his own words, "...another man. I felt that all of my past had died".²⁷ Somehow he survived the dilemma, and eventually emerged, surrounded by a group of like-minded writers the *Círculo Literario*, as a militant

25 Sánchez, *La literatura peruana*, 4: 968.

26 Luis Alberto Sánchez, *don Manuel* (Lima, 1964), p. 65.

27 Manuel González Prada, *El tonel de Diógenes* (México, 1945), p. 39.

nationalist intellectual. His "Discurso del Politeama", delivered the evening of 28 July 1888, national independence day, was to become a classic denunciation of the military, the Church, and caudillos, of the powers holding sway, for plunging the country into an abyss of frailty and corruption.

At the same time, the "Discurso" portrayed the exploited indigenous masses as representing the country's central national dilemma. Convinced of the benevolent powers of the "positive sciences", González Prada also assailed the Church for exerting an authoritarian and reactionary intellectual influence, and entrusted the task of building a new Peru to the youth.

Soon after, he left for an extended sojourn in Europe in the 1890s, returning to Peru as a committed anarchist pamphleteer in 1898. Thenceforth he committed his efforts to the country's fledgling working-class movement. Writing impassioned broadsides for anarchist newspapers such as *Los Peruanos*, he inveighed consistently against the established authorities. Though he rejected the Marxist notion of class struggle, in his famous "El intelectual y el obrero", given to the *Federación de Obreros Panaderos* on May Day 1905 (this being perhaps one of the first appearances of the term *intellectuals* in Peru), he proposed a revolutionary strategy rooted in an alliance between intellectuals and workers.²⁸

On the plane of action, González Prada represents, more than anything else, an eclectic populist tribune beset with troubling inner and social contradictions. Yet his legacy influenced, in many instances decisively, future generations of nationalist intellectuals. Moreover, he was the first to propose, in his brief essay *Nuestros indios* (1904), a socio-economic approach to the *indigenista* question, and indeed his entire generation contributed fundamentally to the development of a socially-conscious *indigenista* movement. Clorinda Matto de Turner, author of the influential *indigenista* novel *Aves sin nido* (1889) and a member of the literary and political milieu surrounding González Prada before his departure for Europe, too had linked race and nationalism (as well as literature and the intellectuals) by demanding in a famous article appearing in *El Perú ilustrado* (October 1889): "let us forge national writers, writers of the race".

28 Significantly, González Prada was in France in the 1890s, precisely at the time when the term *intellectual* came into general use there as a result of *l'Affaire Dreyfus*. Víctor Brombert, *The Intellectual Hero* (Chicago, 1964), p. 21 *passim*. The term also appeared in the title though not in the text, of a 1905 pamphlet by the Arequipan, don Carlos D. Gibson, *Un intelectual* (Arequipa, 1905).

Economics, however, did not much preoccupy González Prada and others in his circle. Neither did it influence, to any great degree, the intellectuals who followed them in the 1890s and early 1900s. What did motivate the lawyers and scholars who provided the burgeoning financial and industrial bourgeoisie with intellectual and even political direction, was a passion for historical studies.

1879: "nuestro año terrible" in the words of Luis Alberto Sánchez, year of the war with Chile, is the dividing line between the generation of González Prada and the intellectuals of the bourgeoisie who began to gain public recognition in the 1890s. The first came of age in the 1870s and experienced the war as grownup men; the new generation grew up and reached their coming of age during years of widespread sorrow and despair. Not until the mid-90s, after the "revolución de '95", which led to the crowning of Piérola president, did optimism return. In the making of that optimism, the young intellectuals of the upper-classes played not a small part.

The new intellectuals of the upper-class differed, socially and culturally, from the radical intellectuals who followed González Prada, and they also differed in their attitudes toward race. In some instances they were outspokenly racist, while in others even while writing positively about the indigenous race and their culture, particularly about their ancient achievements, they remained tied to the belief that the mestizo represented the ideal national type—the Westernized or choloized *indio*. Actually the intellectuals of the upper-class, most of whom were *criollos*, emulated, at times excessively, an Hispanist, French, or English style—they were epitomes of the English, French, or Spanish intellectuals whom they read and so much admired. These men were fervent nationalists nonetheless; they exuded an ardent optimism about the national ideal. For them, that ideal was for Peru to become a country like the United States, Great Britain, or France, governed by liberal-democratic political institutions and invigorated by a modernizing capitalist economy.

If we compare the two groups, we find that González Prada's generation of "nuestro año terrible" also assimilated Western influences; they absorbed positivism, realism, anarchism, symbolism. Insofar as they did not identify an imperialist national threat, they remained culturally tied to the West. Yet their attitudes did differ from those of the elite intellectuals on two important counts: class and race.

The new generation that we encounter now espoused the interests of their class and of the white race first and foremost, even as they also expressed high

national ideals. Positivism, with its stress on progress, initially shaped their philosophical and social outlook. Within the University of San Marcos, the institution they dominated so thoroughly, positivism had appeared as a mere reference in an inaugural lecture of 1871. But its influence increased throughout the decade, and it survived the war. Indeed, in the 1880s, it seemed the perfect ideology for a class seeking to push the country out of the morass into which they had fallen. Moreover, positivism served as the perfect ideology too for an ascending class with visions of national leadership.²⁹

The leading and certainly the most commanding positivist at San Marcos in the 1890s was the youthful Javier Prado y Ugarteche, son of the military caudillo and former president, Mariano I. Prado. The young Prado taught philosophy and history, and played an active role in university governance. Other notable figures accompanied him, such as Carlos Wiese, Mariano Cornejo, José Matías Manzanilla, Manuel Vicente Villarán, and Víctor Maúrtua. These men, and the list is only intended to be representative, figured among the most prestigious names at San Marcos and in the political and social circles of the capital. Most of them were also practising lawyers, and leaders of the *civilista* progressive wing. With some exceptions, they were men of ideas but also worldly men of influence and power. Their legal offices, among the most important of the day, were retained by some of the leading British and American corporate interests in the country.

As men of action and high ideals, they promoted liberal progressive national policies in keeping with the nationalist vision of Manuel Pardo, founder of the *civilistas*. Though viewing themselves as democrats, they had little contact with the urban and rural mestizo and indigenous masses. For them positivism meant a measure of material progress, but also the maintenance of the social status quo. Prado and Villarán, in particular, looked to the United States as the model modern nation.³⁰

In their student days they avidly read their Renan, Guyau, Fouillée, Boutroux, Spencer, and Taine. What they admired most about the United States as grown adults was its political and economic institutions, whose strength they

29 This subject is treated more amply in my article, "The Intellectuals and The Crisis of Modern Peruvian Nationalism: 1870-1919", *Hispanic American Historical Review* (May 1970), pp. 267-276.

30 Cf. Javier Prado's *La nueva época y los destinos de los Estados Unidos* (Lima, 1918); and Manuel Vicente Villarán, *El factor económico en la educación nacional* (Lima, 1954).

attributed to a democratic ethos perpetuated through a system of public education.³¹ Prado and Villarán stand out for their abiding concern with the country's system of education.

Probing into their own past, they encountered the Spanish "black legend" and also the "inferior race" of the urban and rural masses. Prado and Villarán both subscribed to the *fin de siècle* racism rife throughout Latin America, which attributed the backwardness of the area to the inferiority of the native races.³² At the age of 23, in 1894, Prado delivered *El estado social del Perú durante la dominación española*, which was to guide so many distinguished young men toward the field of history. Prado even conceived the method of *El estado social* as "scientifically historiographical", and he hoped it would turn into a "nationalist science".³³ His lectures at San Marcos during the late 90s consistently awed Prado's students, as he expounded on the importance of history and education to the progress of nations. On such occasions, he also assigned a high purpose to the university, that of becoming "the center for the formation of the collective soul" of the nation.³⁴

Prado, Villarán, Wiese, and Manzanilla, as well as the other positivist professors, passed on their euptic optimism to their students, especially to the young intellectuals about to become public figures owing to their scholarly and public accomplishments: José de la Riva Agüero y Osma, Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, Francisco García Calderón, and so many others. What these young men shared in common, in addition to their ethnic and social backgrounds, was that all had been "born amid the ruins left by the War of the Pacific; we spent our youth assimilating the experiences which came with the bitterness of the national disaster . . ."³⁵

31 *Ibid.*

32 Cf. Javier Prado's *Estado social del Perú durante la dominación española* (Lima, 1941), pp. 196-97. Villarán was more cautious, saying only that, ". . . we must agree, above all, in that the laziness, the physical and mental inerti, are the weakness of Hispano-Americanism . . ." "La educación nacional y la influencia extranjera", *Estudios sobre educación nacional* (Lima, 1922), pp. 58-59.

33 Villarán's Preface to *Estado social del Perú*. . . , op. cit., p. 9. No less an authority than Luis Alberto Sánchez credited Prado with initiating the "orientación peruanista" among the scholars. "Literatura peruana, capítulo de un ensayo preliminar", *La Prensa* (7 August 1920), p. 9.

34 Villarán, *ibid.*, p. 10.

35 Ventura García Calderón, *Nosotros* (Paris, 1946), p. 106 *passim*.

Even more than their professors, they were haunted by the past, and obsessively driven to account for the "historical origin of our calamity".³⁶ When they reached their twenties, they vehemently rejected González Prada for promoting "the systematic destruction of all Peruvian values".³⁷ Instead, they turned to Ricardo Palma, genial author of the *Tradiciones peruanas*, and to their professors at San Marcos, who after all were responsible for the "intellectual renovation of Peru". They too read their Barrés, Taine, Renan, and Spencer; the latter's *First Principles* became one of their "essential books".

At first, Belaúnde strongly resisted positivism's materialist implications. "By temperament and intuition", he reported later, "I found repugnant the explanation of social phenomena by simple economic factors". In Manzanilla's economic class Belaúnde found he could not bring himself to grant economic factors, "exclusive or even principal causality" in the social process. During the university holidays of 1902, we find him rushing to Arequipa in fear that he might be losing his faith due to the "subtle venom of the positivist and lay surroundings of San Marcos".³⁸

So it fell to de la Riva Agüero, always the most strong-willed of the three, to pave the way towards a temporary assimilation of positivism. This enthusiasm for positivism, for Western forms of modern progress, which marked the utterances of de la Riva Agüero and particularly of García Calderón, lasted until the first Leguía administration (1908-1912). Beset by unresolved and almost constant conflict, Leguía's first presidency rattled the enthusiasm of *civilismo* and of the populace generally.

Nonetheless, at the height of the *belle époque* in Peru, de la Riva Agüero brought forth at a very tender age two magisterial historical studies, *Carácter de la literatura del Perú independiente* (1905) and *La historia en el Perú* (1910). García Calderón followed suit with his brilliantly styled *Le Pérou contemporain* (1907), a finely crafted essay of incisive and bold interpretation. Belaúnde's turn came when he published *El Perú antiguo y los modernos sociólogos* in 1908, but his *La crisis presente* given in 1914 as an inaugural lecture at San Marcos presaged the decay of the upper-class nationalist ideal.

On the other hand, de la Riva Agüero had already undergone, in 1912, the experience that was to reverse his infatuation with the modern temper. On a

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

38 Belaúnde, *Memorias*, 2:58.

prolonged and solitary journey on horseback in the high sierra, what he saw moved him deeply. Face to face with monumental ruins that preserved mute but palpable evidence of the greatness of the Incaic and to a lesser extent Spanish colonial empires, de la Riva Agüero re-discovered his own true past in the traditions of hierarchical order and natural law. Overcome with emotion, he wrote how, "the sierra is the cradle of the nationality . . . the spinal column of its life . . . the principal region of Peru".³⁹

After such an experience, his interest in positivism and science began to decline. Moreover, the working—and middle—classes, responding to the impact of modernization on social structure, were clamoring for participating in the political process on their terms, and that he could not abide. After the Leguía coup d'état of 1919, he hurriedly left Peru appalled and frustrated by the leveling tendencies of the *Patria Nueva*. Ultimately he embraced fascism.

Belaúnde and García Calderón avoided such extremes, but they also changed. After the first cracks in *civilista* hegemony, which came on the heels of Leguía's first presidency, their optimism slowly turned to pessimism.

In the train of Leguía's juggernaut of 1919, there appeared still another group of nationalist intellectuals, just as energetic and as brilliant but more militantly activist than the intellectuals of the upper-classes. A youthful Jorge Basadre wrote of the generation preceding his own in 1924: ". . . from them, against all of the favorable expectations, we have books, articles, verses, but no action".⁴⁰ Some years later Luis Alberto Sánchez could still express some bitterness because of their class advantages. The group of García Calderón and the others he wrote: ". . . had everything in its favor: newspapers, money, social position, official favor, a coincidence of values with the governing class, inoffensive theories, vapid idealism, their own university . . ."⁴¹

The new intellectuals who came of age in 1919, an intensely political year in Peru as it was elsewhere, were with some exception of middle-class background and they themselves identified with the new middle-class and not with the upper-class. In time, they represented the most progressive and even radical sectors of the Peruvian middle-class that came to power with Leguía

39 de la Riva Agüero, *Paisajes peruanos* (Lima, 1955), p. 186.

40 "Motivos de la época: La emoción social", *Claridad*, no. 5 (Lima, 1924), p. 11.

41 "Perú en 3 tiempos", *Amauta*, no. 25 (Julio-Agosto 1929), p. 26.

precisely in 1919. Declaring their solidarity with the *gonzalezpradistas*, these young intellectuals put into practice the union of manual and intellectual workers prescribed much earlier by González Prada, for seeking revolutionary change. They emerged out of the political welter of 1919, as a result of their participation in the workers' and university student strikes of 1918-19, militant defenders of the urban and rural mestizo and *indígena* masses.

Obviously while they shared some assumptions, they differed on others. For instance, some were more radical than others, and some were more *indigenista* in their outlook. Taken together however they constitute an extraordinary array of names, among them: Luis Alberto Sánchez, Raúl Porras Barrenechea, José Carlos Mariátegui, Jorge Basadre, César Vallejo, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, to name only a few.

Even though they all shared a passion "for country", for knowledge about their past and present and for the need to act for the realization of their future, they experienced quite varied life histories. They all thought passionately about the same things, but they approached such things from different perspectives, depending upon their own personal social past, their ethnic background, and their individual consciousness. An extraordinary witness, Luis Alberto Sánchez, his judgement inspired in that realism that comes from exercising public life in Peru, has reported: "Many times I have asked myself, what brought us together as a group, and what separated us as individuals? The only plausible answer is that there took hold of some of us fear, of others faith, and of others uncontrollable ambition".⁴²

Whatever their inner contradictions and true aspirations might have been, their writings constitute a body of nationalist literature comparable to anything of note that had been produced before. So many of these leading figures were authors of multi-voluminous works. Armed with a new critical disposition toward explaining social reality, they crafted a metaphor of the birth of the nation with their written words. Peru was not a nation, it was a semicolonial dependent client state; Peru was a semi-colonized society caught in the throes of becoming an independent nation. Moreover, nearly all of them envisioned a socialist resolution of the national impasse. José Carlos Mariátegui, in particular, applied to Peru and to all of Indo America, the Marxist Third World schema of "anti-colonialist movements of nationalist liberation" in proposing a revolutio-

42 *La literatura peruana*, 4: 1323.

nary solution to the problem of dependency and liberation.⁴³

It was Mariátegui who introduced into Peru a revolutionary new approach to the elucidation of social reality. Another expert witness, Basadre himself, has reported how it was Mariátegui, "who proposed, truly, a new treatment of Peruvian history . . ."⁴⁴ This new treatment, or method, emphasized the role of economy in the determination of social formations. Many of the "enfoques" of those of this generation who were theoretically aware of the problem of method in approaching society, were materialist. But they were materialists of a certain kind, as was for example Mariátegui. On the question of the role of consciousness *vis á vis* that of the mode of production in determining social and historical formations, Mariátegui was a Bukharinist and partial to the Croceian-infiltrated Italian brand of Gramscian Marxism.⁴⁵ So economy, in some of their studies, interacts dialectically with other social forces, and it does not necessarily predominate in the outcome of such interactions.

Indeed, theirs was the generation that discovered a class struggle view of politics and of historical and social change. Moreover, they tied their own political aspirations either with the reformist middle- or revolutionary working- urban and rural mestizo and indigenous classes. Here I cannot comment sufficiently on their involvement in the field of political action, but rather choose to focus on how they too were obsessed with the past, with searching for an explanation of why Peru and Peruvians were the way they were.

With their works, which appear as a culmination to that tradition initiated in the 70s, we get a still more rounded out, more spontaneous, and perceptive explanation of the national reality that took into account economy, politics, sociology, literature, art, indeed, the broad range of society. They even dealt with problems of consciousness. After all, they were building on solid foundations, the conceptual outlook and social investigations of their predecessors, the men and women who stood away from them on the other shore, the horizon of the seventies. Taken altogether, the men and women of the

43 Cf. Mariátegui's *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Lima, 1928), p. 30, and, his "Nacionalismo y vanguardismo", *Mundial* (27 November 1925).

44 Basadre and Macera, *Conversaciones, op. cit.*, p. 93.

45 He was also a Leninist in his embrace of voluntarist action, as well as because of his idea of the revolutionary party. This subject is more amply treated in my forthcoming study, *José Carlos Mariátegui and the Rise of the Peruvian Nation, 1870-1930* (Editore Einaudi: Torino, 1976), chapter 8.

20s and of the 70s represent the totalization of an age: the birth of an idea of the modern Peruvian nation.

IV

Jorge Basadre's *Perú: problema y posibilidad*, a model of the dictum that the responsibility of the historian must be "to be quick in understanding, slow in judgment,"⁴⁶ is highly representative of the outlook of the men and women so far mentioned. Though not everyone agreed that Peru was semi-colonized, and therefore in need of decolonization, Basadre proposed in *Problema* that Peruvian nationalism must be "defensivo contra el ausentismo y defensivo contra la presión extranjera, de absorción material o mental".⁴⁷

Problema therefore was as cosmopolitan and avant-garde in spirit and analysis, as it was prudent in drawing its conclusions. Much later, Basadre would reveal, in the *Introducción a las bases documentales para la historia de la República del Perú con algunas reflexiones*,⁴⁸ the vast and varied documentary evidence on which rests the method and approach already presaged in *Problema*, product of a master craftsman in the field of historical writing. One of the peculiar strengths of all of Basadre's major works has been a concern for the role of economy, of social formations, of politics, indeed, of cultural production, ranging from such institutional activities as education and science, to concern with "costumbres, cuentos, leyendas, y tradiciones". Such a multifaceted approach makes of his work a rare kind of political history. Macera puts it neatly in writing: "Basadre . . . analiza el sistema de efectos y decisiones asociadas al comportamiento político e insiste, al mismo tiempo, en la relación de este sector con la estructura económica y la expresión cultural".⁴⁹ And from what we can tell from the recently published and magnificent *conversación* with Pablo Macera, his understanding of human nature and of the historical process, grows and grows.

In the entire course of the twentieth century, there have not appeared many works in Peru to match the creations of those intellectuals who lived the noonday of their lives during the years from 1870 to 1930. As Macera has noted,

46 The phrase is J.H. Plumb's, from his Introduction to J.H. Parry's *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* (London, 1966), p. 17.

47 *Perú: problema y posibilidad*, p. 7.

48 *Introducción a las bases documentales para la historia de la República del Perú con algunas reflexiones*, 2 vols. (Lima, 1971).

49 Basadre and Macera, *Conversaciones*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

as a group they still have "hegemony". For the most part, the works of these men and women have not yet been fully examined, let alone assimilated. If full understanding comes only after the event, perhaps it is only now that we can begin to understand the nature of those works, which have affected so profoundly the course of Peru's twentieth-century historical and social consciousness.