

such as the Radicals of Argentina and Chile, the Colorados of Uruguay, and the Liberals of Colombia. After the great depression, however, labor-oriented parties were formed in most Latin American countries and rapidly became the chief challengers to the traditional political system.

These new broadly based parties, whether labor-oriented or middle-class oriented, or both, were reform parties. To a large degree they had common programs. They were exponents of political democracy; they called for universal suffrage, secret ballots, free elections, an end to army intervention in politics, and genuine representative governments. Industrialization was their panacea, to them the only means of attaining economic independence, social equality, and a higher standard of living. For the rural sector of the economy, such parties demanded agrarian reform, the breakup of the latifundia system, and distribution of land to the peons. Claiming to represent the people, they called for broad programs of social security and for the setting aside of increasing percentages of the national budget for public health and welfare. They introduced the concept of universal education and promoted an expanded school system and reduction of illiteracy. In international relations, these popular parties were generally anti-imperialistic and anti-totalitarian.

The traditionalist political system, despite the sweeping economic and social changes and the growth of popular opposition parties, was able to withstand the pressures against it in most Latin American countries until the final 2 years of World War II.

Demands for political change and reforms by post-World War I working class and middle income professional and commercial groups were generally ignored during the 1920's. The world economic crisis of 1930 brought into sharp focus the tensions between the traditional upper-group rulers and the new aspirants for power. But in the face of the threat from popular groups, the oligarchy turned over the presidential palace to their allies, the army generals. They were determined to preserve the ancient regime by force, if necessary.

When World War II broke out in Europe in 1939, the old order was still entrenched in Latin American politics. Half the 20 republics were ruled by conservative military men. Rightist, unrepresentative military dictatorships prevailed in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, and Venezuela. Traditionalist civilian regimes, maintained in office by the armed forces, prevailed in Argentina, Panama, and Haiti. The army-backed Vargas and Batista dictatorships were entrenched in Brazil and Cuba respectively. Only Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay had reasonably democratic representative governments.

The net effect of World War II upon Latin American politics was to freeze traditionalist regimes in power as long as the security of the hemisphere was threatened. The international crisis permitted no leeway for political experimentation, social change, or economic reform. The wartime emergency provided dictatorial regimes with justification for outlawing change for the duration. Also, the United States, whose overriding consideration was strategic, did its best to maintain stability in Latin America by providing incumbent regimes with military and economic aid.