

Peruvian students campaign against government for university reform, 1919

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) student participants](#) [1]
- [included participation by more than one social class](#) [2]

Timing

Time period notes:

The Peruvian Student Federation was founded in 1916, but the movement did not gain momentum until 1919. I mark the end of the campaign with the inauguration of Leguia and establishment of the National Congress of Peruvian Students.

27 May

1919

to:

October

1919

Location and Goals

Country:

Peru

Location City/State/Province:

Lima

Location Description:

University of San Marcos

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

University autonomy, student participation in university administration, curricula modernization, more affordable and accessible university education

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike
- 117. General strike

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions›Establishment of the National Congress of Peruvian Students

Segment Length:

25 days

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Economic Justice

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- labor
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Peruvian Student Federation

Partners:

Labor unions and workers

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

President-elect Leguia

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Peruvian Student Federation
- labor

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- President Leguia

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

I have President Leguia joining in the 6th segment after his inauguration to office, when he began aiding the

federation in enacting university reform.

Segment Length:

25 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Pardo Administration

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

None known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

President Pardo sends troops to engage protesters, many are killed in the struggle.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

4 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Total points:

7 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

The Peruvian Student Federation did not succeed in obtaining long-lasting university reforms: President Leguia reversed many of the reforms he himself instituted after winning the presidency with student and popular support. However, despite systematic state oppression of the Federation and the University of San Marcos, university students were successful in reforming and retaining their organization.

At the turn of the 20th century the university was a locus for social and political protest in Peru. Professors and student activists called for university reform, education of the masses, agrarian reform, and the rights of the worker and indigenous populations. A significant protest was mounted in Lima by University of San Marcos students in 1909 to protest the dictatorship of Augusto Leguía (1908-1912; 1919-1930). In 1916, the student organization formed the Peruvian Student Federation (FEP) incorporating students from all of Peru's universities to direct future student protests. The movement expanded considerably after 1918, when the success of Argentina's University Reform Movement, known as simply La Reforma, inspired students to protest for reform across Latin America.

In early January, textile workers appealed to the Federation for their support in a planned general strike, asking to use their headquarters as a meeting space and inviting students to be delegates on the committee. Felipe Chueca, President of the Peruvian Student Federation, assented, sending Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, future Federation president and Peruvian political leader, B. Bueno, and V. Quesada, to operate as delegates. They assisted textile workers in Peru's first general strike from January 13-15. The Pardo administration, headed by President Jose Pardo y Barreda, capitulated to workers' demands by granting them an eight-hour day to resume commercial activity. On May 18, former President Leguia was elected.

In May, Argentine Socialist Alfredo Palacios spoke to students at San Marcos, reporting on the advances made by Argentine students during La Reforma. Inspired, the Peruvian Student Federation organized a general strike with labor allies and protests throughout the city on May 27—the day after Palacios departed Lima—to advance student demands. These included the modernization of the university curriculum, firing of incompetent teachers, university autonomy from the state and the church, scholarships for the underprivileged, and increased student participation in university administration. Caught in a stalemate—Pardo refused to capitulate to their remaining demands and protesters refused the order to cease and desist—the President ordered troops to suppress the strike in early June, resulting in the arrest of 3,000 protesters and a disputed number dead. He then closed the University of San Marco, although student strikes continued to be staged there through July. In the midst of widespread dissatisfaction within the army and Peru concerning Pardo's harsh response to the May student-labor protests, Leguia staged a military coup on July 4th, installing himself provisional President months ahead of schedule. Leguia was endorsed by Liberal and Constitutionalist parties, various labor groups, and the student federation.

President Leguía, inaugurated October 12, enacted widespread university reforms in his first year in office, granting the University of San Marcos extensive autonomy, and dismissing a number of unpopular teachers, policies he soon extended to universities throughout Peru. He also pursued other liberal policies, permitting union organization, ending the serfdom of Indians, extending the franchise to all males over 21, and establishing the direct election of the president and congress. Also in October, Haya de la Torre was elected President of the FEP and, as his first order of business, he called for National Congress of Peruvian Students to implement the objectives of university reform. Leguia, as one of his first acts for the cause, offered to subsidize the congress, set to meet the next year.

However, Leguia's commitment to these reforms appeared weak when, a year later, he closed down the University of San Marcos for a year and removed its chancellor after students protested his civil rights abuses (namely, censorship of the press, corruption, and jailing of political opponents). Through the end of Leguia's regime in 1930, the Federation's efforts would be hampered by continued monitoring and repression. Not stopping at resisting the reversal of their hard-fought reforms, the student federation shifted their focus from education reform to political action, demanding an end to civil rights abuses under Leguia. Overall, however, conditions for universities would only improve after World War Two with increased demand for higher education and the need for limited modernization.

Research Notes

Influences:

The 1918 Argentine University Reform Movement, 1919 January labor strike (1).

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