

CHAPTER 32

Latin America: Revolution and Reaction into the 21st Century

Chapter Outline Summary

I. Latin America After World War II

A. Mexico and the PRI

- Party of the Institutionalized Republic
- economic growth paramount

- Zapatistas

- Chiapas

- NAFTA

- 2000 national election

- PRI out

II. Radical Options in the 1950s

- Venezuela, Costa Rica

- reforms

- open elections

- Marxist options

- Bolivia

- mix of radicalism and reaction

A. Guatemala: Reform and U.S. Intervention

- Guatemala

- economic disparities

- high mortality rate

- coffee, banana export

- Labor coalition

- Juan José Arevalo elected, 1944

- began land reform

- Foreign interests

- e.g. United Fruit Company

- 1951 elections

- Jacobo Arbenz elected

- more radical land reform

- U.S. stepped in

- overthrown with CIA help

- reform ended

B. The Cuban Revolution: Socialism in the Caribbean

- American influence following Spanish rule

- Sugar export

- Fulgencio Batista, 1934–1944

- military reformer

- 1940, new constitution

- Fidel Castro

- 1953, attempted revolution

- Che Guevara

- helped Castro, 1956

- student, labor support

- 1958, Batista out

1961, U.S. broke relations with Cuba

1962, threat of nuclear war

Continuing Soviet aid

III. The Search for Reform and the Military Option

Continuity

Mexico, one-party system

Venezuela, Chile

Christian Democratic

Liberation Theology

A. Out of the Barracks: Soldiers Take Power

Military intervened in politics, 1960s

often U.S.-backed

Brazil

military takeover, 1964

Argentina

military coup, 1966

Chile

Salvador Allende, socialist

overthrown by military, 1973

Uruguay, 1973

Peru, 1968

Conditions

workers hard-hit

continuing structural problems

repression, torture

B. The New Democratic Trends

Cold war pressures eased in mid-80s

Argentina

elections, 1983

Brazil

presidential elections, 1989

Peru

Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), 1990s

leftist guerillas

El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala

truces between governments, rebels

Panama

U.S. invasion

C. The United States and Latin America: Continuing Presence

American investors

Intervention

pre-1933, 30 times

Good Neighbor Policy, 1933

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Cold War

new involvement

more indirect involvement

Alliance for Progress, 1961

Jimmy Carter

civil liberties

Ronald Reagan, George Bush
more direct intervention

IV. Societies in Search of Change

A. Slow Change in Women's Roles

Vote

Ecuador, 1929

some only in 1950s

Significant progress by mid-80s

B. The Movement of People

Mortality down, fertility up

Urban growth

Mexico City, São Paulo, 1999

18 million

shantytowns

C. Cultural Reflections of Deſpair and Hope

Popular culture

strong blend

Jorge Luis Borges

Gabriel García Marquez

Chapter Summary

Waiting for the Coup. In the summer of 1973, Chileans waited for news of the coup they expected, without knowing from what side of the political spectrum it would come. The entire country stagnated during the wait. Since 1964, military coups had taken place in several Latin American countries. The Chilean president, Salvador Allende, promised peaceful change, but some wanted more rapid reform. Like countries around the world, Chile was being dragged into cold war strife, and internal struggles became entangled with strife between the two great world powers. In the end, a military coup took place on September 11, bringing Augusto Pinochet to power. His repressive regime led to the death of thousands, and many more disappeared. Pinochet was arrested in 1998, and faced charges of crimes against humanity. A new issue had appeared: whether to seek to apply justice to the past, or to move ahead. This chapter and the next deal with the so-called "third world." Along with other societies, the peoples of the third world, developing nations, had to deal with industrialization and its growth, and with their inequality in economic matters with more developed nations. Latin America had characteristics distinguishing it from other developing countries. It had won independence earlier, and had more Western social and political structures. After 1945, Latin American economies concentrated on exports, and thus became very vulnerable to world financial changes.

Chapter Summary. Much of the 20th century was a time of contest between the forces of reaction and revolution. The Latin American struggle was primarily one of economic disengagement and an effort to develop their own cultural and political forms. Along with other societies the peoples of the third world, developing nations, had to deal with industrialization and its growth, and with their inequality in economic matters with more developed nations. Latin America had characteristics distinguishing it from other developing countries. It had won independence earlier, and had more Western social and political structures. After 1945, Latin American economies concentrated on exports, and thus became very vulnerable to world financial changes.

Latin America After World War II. Latin America had not been much involved in the war, but its economies had grown. The cold war stimulated new revolutionary fervor, and hardened United States response to radicalism. Several major nations in 1945 were yet to be dominated by authoritarian rulers.

Mexico and the PRI. Mexico continued one-party rule by the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution; it provided stability, but by the close of the 20th century, the party was corrupt and sacrificed social justice to economic growth. The Zapatista guerrilla movement in Chiapas demonstrated the problem. The government responded with negotiation and repression. In the 1990s, Mexico joined NAFTA in hopes of stimulating its industries. The 2000 national election ended PRI rule.

Radical Options in the 1950s. There were other responses to the problems of Latin American countries, but disagreement remained on how to improve economic and social conditions. In Venezuela and Costa Rica, reform-minded governments triumphed in open elections. Others turned to Marxist socialism as a guide, and became caught up in cold war struggles. Some radical and revolutionary solutions were attempted. In Bolivia, a 1952 revolution supported by miners, peasants, and urban middle-class groups led to mine nationalization and land redistribution. Fears of moving too far to the left brought the army back to power in 1964, and subsequent governments stressed order over reform.

Guatemala: Reform and U.S. Intervention. A first radical solution was tried in Guatemala, a predominantly Indian nation suffering from economic inequality, illiteracy, poor health conditions, and high mortality rates. The economy depended upon the export of coffee and bananas. In 1944, a middle class and labor coalition elected Juan José Arevalo as president. Under a new constitution, he began land reform and improvement of worker and peasant life. Arevalo's reforms and nationalism led to conflict with foreign interests, especially the United Fruit Company. In 1951, the more radical Jacobo Arbenz was elected president. His reformist programs, especially a proposed expropriation of United Fruit land, led the cold war American government to impose economic and diplomatic restrictions on Guatemala. In 1954 the Central Intelligence Agency assisted military opponents to overthrow Arbenz, and under the new government, reform ceased. Continued violence and political instability followed.

The Cuban Revolution: Socialism in the Caribbean. Most of Cuba's population was descended from Spaniards and African slaves. The nation had a large middle class, and better literacy and health conditions than others in the region. Since leaving Spanish rule, Cuba had been subject to American influence in its politics and economy. The economy depended upon the export of sugar. Economic disparity between rural populations and the middle class was a problem. Cuba was ruled from 1934 to 1944 by Fulgencio Batista, an authoritarian military reformer. A 1940 constitution promised democracy and reform, but the government was corrupt, and Batista turned into a dictator. In 1953, Fidel Castro launched an unsuccessful revolution; in 1956, with the help of Che Guevara, a new effort began. By 1958 students, labor, and rural workers joined in to drive out Batista. Castro's sweeping reforms included nationalization of foreign property, farm collectivization, and a centralized socialist economy. Relations with the United States were broken in 1961, and Cuba entered into a close, dependent relationship with the Soviet Union. A United States-sponsored attack by Cuban exiles failed in 1961. When Soviet missiles were discovered in Cuba, a superpower confrontation threatened nuclear war in 1962. Cuba survived cold war politics because of the support of its Soviet ally. Castro's revolution had a mixed balance. Its reforms greatly improved education, health, and housing, especially in rural regions. But industrialization efforts failed, and Cuba still relied on sugar. Rising oil costs and falling sugar prices made Cuba dependent upon Soviet economic aid. The Soviet Union's collapse brought serious economic distress. Even with its problems, the Cuban Revolution inspired many Latin American revolutionaries in their quest for change.

The Search for Reform and the Military Option. Economic and social structures remained unchanged in most countries into the 1980s, despite the various reform approaches. Mexico's one-party system maintained prosperity, often through repression, until conditions changed during the 1980s. Others—Venezuela, Chile—followed Christian Democratic approaches. The clergy was divided politically; many priests became activists for social justice. Liberation theology combined Catholic doctrines and socialist principles to improve life for the poor.

Out of the Barracks: Soldiers Take Power. The Cuban Revolution worried individuals fearing reform within a communist system. As the military became more professionalized, soldiers adopted a creed that made them the true representatives of the nation. During the 1960s, often with support from the United States, they intervened directly in politics. In 1964 the Brazilian military took over the government when the president proposed sweeping reforms. Soldiers took over in Argentina in 1966, and in 1973, the

military in Chile overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende. Similar coups occurred in Uruguay in 1973 and Peru in 1968. The soldiers imposed bureaucratic authoritarian regimes that were supposed to provide economic stability by submerging selfish interests. The military controlled policy and resorted to repression. Thousands were tortured and killed in Argentina. Economic policies fell heaviest on workers, since any economic development came at their cost. Basic structural problems persisted. All regimes were nationalistic, but other policies varied. Peru's leaders had a real social program, including land redistribution. Chile and Uruguay were militantly anti-communist. Argentina fought an unsuccessful war with Britain over the contested Falkland Islands that contributed to the regime's loss of authority.

The New Democratic Trends. By the mid-1980s some military governments were returned to civilian control. Continued economic problems and growing internal dissent contributed to the change. Fears of populist or communist movements, and of United States intervention, declined. There were elections in Argentina in 1983; Brazil chose a popularly elected president in 1989. The democratization process was not easy or universal. In Peru, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) leftist guerrillas disrupted government into the 1990s. Uneasy truces continued between governments and former rebels in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. The United States demonstrated its power by invading Panama. Latin American governments continued to face major problems. Large foreign loans had produced a massive debt burden. High inflation provoked social instability, while compensatory programs had social and political costs. The international drug trade created cartels that threatened or corrupted national governments. Still, by the 1990s, it appeared that democratic trends were well-established.

The United States and Latin America: Continuing Presence. The United States had emerged as the predominant power in the New World after World War I. American investors pushed ahead of European rivals. There was direct involvement in Cuba and Puerto Rico; in other lands the Americans frequently intervened—over 30 times before 1933—to protect economic, political, strategic, and ideological interests. The interventions usually were followed by support for conservative, often dictatorial and corrupt, governments friendly to the United States. The actions produced a growing nationalist and anti-American reaction. The United States changed course in 1933 when Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the Good Neighbor Policy; direct interventions stopped. After World War II, cold war thinking led to new strategies, including participation in regional organizations and the support of democratic, anti-communist administrations. Direct or indirect interventions occurred against governments considered unfriendly. The belief that economic development would eliminate radical political solutions led to programs such as the 1961 Alliance for Progress. The approach had limited success. During the 1970s and 1980s, the United States was willing to deal with military dictatorships. Under Jimmy Carter an effort was made to influence governments to observe civil liberties, and an agreement gave eventual control of the Panama Canal to Panama. Policy became more interventionist under conservative presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.

Thinking Historically: Human Rights in the 20th Century. The tortures and killings committed by repressive Latin American and other governments has drawn attention to the concept of human rights: universal rights justified by a moral standard above national laws. The concept of natural law, perhaps extending back to ancient Greece, also appeared during the 19th century. The movement to abolish the slave trade was a part of the movement. In the 20th century, the concept was attached to the United Nations and its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing basic liberties. Only 30 percent of UN members have a consistently good record in upholding the declaration. The supervising UN commission lacks enforcement powers. Differences in cultural and political values between nations causes varying interpretations of what constitutes human rights. Priorities and strategies in international relations have similar results.

Societies in Search of Change. Social relations in Latin America changed slowly during the 20th century because gender, ethnicity, and class issues remained influential. Population growth, urbanization, and worker migration continued as persistent problems. Widespread discrimination against Indians and African-Americans persists.

Slow Change in Women's Roles. The role of women has changed slowly. They first gained the right to vote in Ecuador in 1929, but some regimes did not grant the right until the 1950s. Reformers at times feared that women, because of their ties to the church, would become a conservative political force. Women were supposed to remain focused on the home and family. Activist feminist movements worked to secure political and other rights, but gaining the right to vote did not mean an ending of male prejudice against equal participation of women in political life. Women faced similar problems in the labor force. In some countries they controlled small-scale commerce in markets, and in others, became an important component of the service sectors. By the mid-1980s, the position of Latin American women was closer to the Western pattern than to that of other world areas.

The Movement of People. Declining mortality and high fertility brought great population expansion to Latin America. By the 1980s, internal migration and movement between countries soared as individuals sought work or basic freedoms. The process was influenced by the fact that mechanized industry did not create enough new jobs. The 20th century was also marked by movement from rural to urban areas. By the 1980s, some cities reached massive size: Mexico City and São Paulo in 1999 each had 18 million inhabitants. The rate of growth created problems since urban economies do not provide enough employment. Shantytowns provided terrible living conditions. The lack of jobs has prevented migrants from becoming part of a unified working-class movement.

Cultural Reflections of Despair and Hope. Most Latin Americans remain Roman Catholics, and Hispanic traditions of family, gender relations, and social interaction continue. Popular culture, drawing upon Indian and African traditions, shows great vitality. Latin American music and dance, such as the tango, samba, and salsa, have an international audience. Poets and novelists, often drawing upon internal social, economic, and political themes, also have worldwide appeal. The general failure to gain social justice in the region caused many writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, to abandon traditional forms.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Struggling Toward the Future in a Global Economy. The search for economic growth, political stability, and social justice continues. Deeply entrenched class interests, international conditions, and political power struggles hindered or blocked revolutionary change. Important results occurred in Mexico and Cuba and influenced others. Different nations—Bolivia, Nicaragua, Perú—attempted radical reform. New ideas, such as liberation theology, appeared. Latin America remains the most advanced sector of the developing world. Globalization has brought new challenges. While economies grew, wealth distribution remained unequal. Traditional cultures are threatened.

KEY TERMS

Third world: term for nations not among the capitalist industrial nations of the first world or the industrialized communist nations of the second world.

Party of Institutionalized Revolution (PRI): inclusive Mexican political party developing from the 1920s; ruled for the rest of the 20th century.

Zapatistas: Mexican guerilla movement; named after revolutionary Emiliano Zapata.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): agreement between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada that lowered trade barriers.

Juan José Arevalo: reformist president of Guatemala elected in 1944; his programs led to conflict with foreign interests.

United Fruit Company: most important foreign company in Guatemala; 1993 nationalization effort of some of its land holdings caused a U.S. reaction.

Fulgencio Batista: authoritarian ruler of Cuba (1934–1944).

Ernesto “Che” Guevara: Argentinian revolutionary; worked with Fidel Castro in Cuba.

Fidel Castro: revolutionary leader who replaced Batista in 1958; reformed Cuban society with socialist measures; supported economically and politically by the Soviet Union until its collapse.

Sandinista party: Nicaraguan party; removed by power in 1990 elections, under U.S. influence. Named for Augusto Sandino.

Liberation theology: combination of Roman Catholic and socialist principles aiming to improve the lives of the poor.

Salvador Allende: Chilean socialist president; overthrown by a military coup in 1973.

Banana republics: conservative, often dictatorial, Latin American governments friendly to the U.S.; exported tropical products.

Good Neighbor Policy: introduced by U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 to deal fairly, without intervention, with Latin American states.

Alliance for Progress: 1961 U.S. program for economic development of Latin America.

Favelas: Brazilian term for shantytowns.

Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez: writers rejecting traditional form as unsuitable for representing reality; turned to “magical realism.”

LESSON SUGGESTIONS

Leader Analysis	Fidel Castro
Conflict Analysis	Cuban Missile Crisis
Change Analysis	Trend toward democracy
Societal Comparison	Latin American, African, and European attitudes toward women
Document Analysis	The People Speak
Inner/Outer Circle	In Depth: Human Rights in the 20th Century

LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

1. **Discuss the various political responses to political, economic, and social problems in Latin America and give your opinion on which response has been the most successful.** The various approaches are liberal democracy, one-party rule (Mexico), populist government, populist nationalists, reformist nationalists, military governments, and communist government (Cuba). For an answer, it can be argued that the most successful government in Latin America, in terms of stability and economic development, has been the one-party system of the PRI in Mexico. The communist government of Cuba also has provided stability and created a broad socialist system, giving significant improvements in education, housing, and health. Other governments, including the military, are often only temporary. None of the governments have resulted in the types of liberal democracy typical of the industrialized nations of the West.