

*Fear as a Political Construct:
Imagining the Revolution and the
Nation in Peruvian Newspapers*

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FEAR HAS BEEN DEFINED as 'an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm' or as an emotion which causes us 'to be in apprehension of evil; to be afraid; to feel anxiety; to be uncertain; to doubt.' Fear has historically been associated with the possibility of a state of disorder which appeals in many cases to future consequences. Fear is the sense that emerges prior to an action and that guides those in power to establish political mechanisms to stop the possibility that a situation could become out of their control. As Thomas Hobbes stated in *De Cive* (*The Citizen*, 1651): 'I comprehend in this word fear a certain foresight of future evil; neither do I conceive flight the sole property of fear, but to distrust, suspect, take heed, provide so that they may not fear, is also incident to the fearful.'¹

Based on the notion of fear as a mental state denoting uncertainty, apprehensiveness, and anxiety, this article examines how the idea of the revolution as a political construction and as a symptom of fear was perceived and circulated by colonial authorities

1. Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, Charles T. Wood, trans. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972) 24.

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and creole intellectuals in such Peruvian newspapers as the *Mercurio peruano* (1791–95), *El peruano* (1811–13), *El censor de la revolución* (1820), *El pacificador del Perú* (1821), and *Gaceta del Gobierno del Perú* (1823–25). I explore the relationship of these conceptualizations of fear to the manner in which national preoccupations were interpreted as a result of the important historical events taking place at the time. This essay focuses specifically on how, in some instances, the French Revolution (1789–99) and the American Revolution (1775–83) were perceived by Spanish authorities at the end of the colonial period; and on how these movements were interpreted by those involved in the process of Peruvian independence when the time came to define themselves as a nation. I aim to demonstrate the centrality of fear as a political idea and cultural construct in the marketing of these revolutions to readers of those Peruvian newspapers. It is within this context, as Corey Robin has argued, that fear emerges as a contradictory ‘political tool,’ which may be productive for those in power, but may also become ‘an obstacle and a stumbling block’ in the pursuit of a foundation for politics.²

Circulating Fear: The Idea of the Revolution

The *Mercurio peruano* was founded by the Sociedad Académica de Amantes del País (Academic Society of Lovers of the Country), a group of young intellectual creoles, mainly from Lima, whose range of expertise included medicine, commerce, science, geography, religion, literature, and law. The name chosen for their association was intended to emphasize their aims to educate their country and demonstrate their passionate love for it. The founders obviously perceived themselves as spokesmen for their native country and as the chosen few in charge of educating their homeland and the rest of the world.

2. Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16, 252.

The *Mercurio peruano* published nineteen articles about the French Revolution. Fifteen of them were related to the beheading of the French king on the guillotine. According to Claudia Rosas Lauro, these writings were intended to teach the Peruvian people about the dangers of the revolution and to warn them that something similar could occur in Peru.³ The acts related to the insurrection of the Inca Tupac Amaru in 1780–81 were then still a vivid memory for many of the Spanish authorities. This political propaganda against the revolution also aimed to gather sympathy for Spain in its war against France by requesting donations to support the costs of such war.⁴ Although I agree with Rosas Lauro, it is pertinent to ask how the discussion of the French Revolution fit within the cultural and political agenda set forth in their prospectus for *Mercurio peruano* by the creoles in charge. What voice are we really hearing in these particular writings? The editors had contended that their newspaper would depart from coverage of events in other parts of the world in order to focus primarily upon news of their own homeland: 'that we are more interested in what happens in our Nation than what happens to the Canadian, the Laplander or the Muslim.'⁵

It is important to point out that the majority of the news published in the *Mercurio* and related to the French Revolution was not authored by Peruvians themselves. For example, published in the newspaper were royal decrees, excerpts taken from *La Gazeta de Madrid* (*Madrid Gazette*), declarations against France on behalf of the Spanish king, and copies of letters from the French queen. In the case of the royal decrees,

3. Claudia Rosas Lauro, 'El miedo a la revolución. Remores y temores desatados por la Revolución Francesa en el Perú, 1790–1800' in Claudia Rosas Lauro, ed., *El miedo en el Perú, Siglos XVI al XX* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica, 2005), 139.

4. Rosas Lauro, 'El miedo a la revolución,' 143.

5. *Mercurio peruano*, 1, no. 1 (January 2, 1791). All translations from Spanish into English are my own, unless otherwise specified. The edition I have used is *Mercurio Peruano, Prospecto del papel periódico intitulado Mercurio Peruano de Historia, Literatura y Noticias públicas, que á nombre de una Sociedad de Amantes del País, y como uno de ellos promete dar á luz*, Edición Facsimilar (Lima, Biblioteca Nacional del Perú 1964).

colonial authorities described the French Revolution as the most horrific event that could happen to a civilized nation. King Charles IV of Spain, in a royal decree drafted on March 25, 1793, and published in the *Mercurio peruano* on August 15, 1793, made a direct connection between the revolution and 'disorder, impiety and anarchy,' which had contributed to the 'turbulences' and 'horrendous' events in France after the execution of Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette. The decree indicated that the French Revolution had created an excuse to impose an irrational government, full of 'excessive ambition' and 'danger,' translating to instability through Europe. He declared that Spanish citizens felt 'oppressed, horrified and indignant' toward the manner in which the revolution had been conducted and that they were appalled by the fact that France had attacked their country without an official declaration of war.⁶ As a result, King Charles concluded that he had no option but to declare war against France. His intention was to restore 'tranquility to Europe,' thereby contributing to 'the general well-being of humanity' as part of his duty to maintain 'paternal vigilance' over both his own territories and Europe in general.⁷ This 'paternal vigilance' reflected fear and anxiety that events in France could replicate themselves in Spain and other European countries. Fear of seeing his own monarchy overthrown underlies the rhetoric of this royal decree.

The Academic Society of Lovers of the Country responded to this decree by proclaiming their support for the Spanish king in a published note. They considered the acts during and following the French Revolution to be 'the most scandalous events' in human history.⁸ The brief article highlighted the insult that had been committed against the monarchy and encouraged Peruvians to support the war against France financially out of loyalty to their own king. Revolution was viewed here as a foreign affair that could lead to similar events in Spain—or possibly a movement

6. *Mercurio peruano*, 7, no. 273 (August 15, 1793): 250–51.

7. *Mercurio peruano*, 7, no. 273 (August 15, 1793): 249.

8. *Mercurio peruano*, 7, no. 273 (August 15, 1793): 254.

similar to the one that Tupac Amaru had led in 1780.⁹ The editors' support for the king may have come from their own anxiety that France, might spread its military operations against Spanish possessions in the Americas, which could make them vulnerable to the same state of disorder prevalent in France at the time. Their view of the political situation in France, of course, was filtered through official versions recounted to them by Spanish authorities.

Articles reprinted from *La Gazeta de Madrid* also emphasized the notion that the French Revolution had brought instability to Europe, and as such, all citizens must fear the dangers to which they could be exposed if similar political and social events took place in their own territories. It also justified Spain's decision to declare war against France. An article reprinted from *La Gazeta* based on a speech given by the British Prime Minister William Pitt openly stated that what was being witnessed in France was a clear prelude to 'the bad things that all Europe needed to be afraid of.'¹⁰ The revolution and the beheading of the French king were summarized by Pitt as 'the most unfair, cruel and inhuman violation that the history of centuries brings to mind.' As a result, the British minister warned the public of 'the dangers that threaten other nations' if France was not stopped or if other countries followed in France's footsteps. The French revolution was conceived in this speech as 'subversive to all social order, contrary to the experience of centuries, repulsive to morality, hostile to religion, ultimately designed to aggrieve humankind, depriving governments of the energy required to defend the public good.'¹¹ The reprinting of this speech in Spain and its colonies was extremely important because it offered a picture of the

9. It is interesting to note that the editors of the *Mercurio peruano* did not publish any articles related to the Tupac Amaru insurrection. It was as if they felt the need to obliterate this episode from their historical memories.

10. *Mercurio peruano*, 7, no. 273 (August 15, 1793): 255. This article was originally a speech read in London on February 2, 1793, by William Pitt, no defender of the French Revolution, and the attendant agitation in England for parliamentary reform. In this speech he warned that the situation in France could also affect Great Britain to the extent that all British citizens should remain wary of the dangers of such a revolution.

11. *Mercurio peruano*, 7, no. 273 (August 15, 1793):256.

revolution as an unruly act that had disrupted social order and good government and had brought decay at all levels—moral, political, and religious. The objective of this news article was to incite fear in readers, so that they would view the events related to the revolution only in terms of its supposed negative repercussions rather than any positive social and political change related to freedom and equality. As Jean Delemeau suggests, fear in its cultural dimension points to the presence of a threat that forces the individual to see enemies of all sides, whether ‘inside and outside of the space which one wishes to control.’ This type of fear is filtered through suspicions and denunciations, as can be observed in the aforementioned news articles. Fear is always seen as an attempt to destroy a sense of security, or what Delemeau refers to as ‘an utopia of security.’¹²

Unless we conclude that the inclusion of these articles meant agreement with the views they contained, we are forced to question the extent to which the editors were acting freely or coercively. We can either agree with Rosas Lauro when she suggests that the publication of news related to the French Revolution demonstrated opposition by the creole aristocracy to the revolution, or we can question if, lacking a free press, the publication worked as a palliative to calm those who supported the monarchy and viewed its fall as a source of fear. After all, the newspaper was subsidized by the colonial government. As Carmen McEvoy reminds us, the editors of the *Mercurio* had to take into consideration the fact that their writings could be perceived as a threat to the public order and the vice-regal government, especially when many of the editors also held public offices.¹³ Indeed, once the newspaper lost the economic support of the government,

12. Jean Delemeau, ‘Miedos de ayer y de hoy,’ in *El miedo: Reflexiones sobre su dimensión social y cultural*, ed. Marta Ines Villa Martínez (Medellin, Colombia: Corporación Región, 2002), 17, 21.

13. Carmen McEvoy, ‘Seríamos excelentes vasallos y nunca ciudadanos: Prensa republicana y cambio social en Lima, 1791–1822,’ Iván Jaksic, ed., *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002) 73.

VIVA FERNANDO VII.

MINERVA
EXTRAORDINARIA.

Lima 6 de diciembre de 1808.

*A NOCHE LLEGO AL PUERTO
del Callao la fragata Bárbara
procedente de Valparayso con el
adjunto pliego del Señor presi-
dente de Chile á nuestro exce-
lentísimo xefe, de cuyo orden se
imprime sin pérdida de tiempo
para satisfaccion de los fdelisi-
mos peruanos.*

the editors had to cease publication.¹⁴ Again, the fact is that publishing the news might have worked as a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it served to incite fear within those who were witnessing the changes taking place in France from afar, while on the other, it might have provoked readers to learn more about a situation that was being presented to them through the vehicle of official voices. As Teodoro Hampe-Martinez correctly suggests, there is certain ambiguity when it comes to the views that the editors consider worth mentioning when discussing the role of this particular newspaper in Peruvian politics. From 1808 to 1819, Peru endured what has been considered by some historians a civil war. The Central Andes in general witnessed a general cycle of rebellions, revolutions and counter-revolutions that made the attaining of independence from Spain longer there than in Mexico, Venezuela, or Colombia.¹⁵ In the midst of this political instability, *El peruano* was born.

According to its editor, Guillermo del Rio, *El peruano* belonged to all Peruvians, and its goal was to facilitate the circulation of news that could contribute to 'the path of virtue and glory' while 'contributing to their happiness.' The newspaper also aimed to remove Peruvians from 'the stagnation' that had dominated their thinking until then.¹⁶ Still, in 1811, the French Revolution and its aftermaths remained a vivid memory for Spain and its colonies, especially considering circumstances in Spain at the time. In fact, since 1796, in its war against England (1796–1806), and in the

14. It was not until April 18, 1811, that the court of Cadiz instituted in Lima the freedom of the press or the right to publish without a previous license. Villaneuva observes that although freedom of the press was supposedly granted in 1811, the Spanish government established the Juntas de Censura the same year with the aim to examine all writings deemed subversive. 'El peruano,' Carmen Villaneuva, ed. *Coleccion documental de la Independencia del Perú* (Lima: 1972), introduction.

15. Teodoro Hampe Martinez, 'La Revolucion Francesca vista por el *Mercurio peruano*: cambio politico versus reformismo criollo,' Colloque de Bordeaux, *Les Révolutions Ibériques et Ibéro-Américaines à L'Aube du XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989); Jear Piel, 'Aproximación bibliográfica al ciclo de las revoluciones centro andinas (Peru-Bolivia),' Robert M. Maniquis, ed., *La revolución francesa y el mundo ibérico, y el mundo ibérico* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1989), 467.

16. *El peruano*, no. 1 (1811): 1.

Napoleonic wars (1799–1815), Spain found its Atlantic sailings declining and its 'colonial trade strangled.'¹⁷ In sum, the nation was in a state of bankruptcy. For Spaniards at that juncture, Napoleon Bonaparte had become an epitome of everything that had been evil about France since the French revolution. This was sustained by 'his monstrous aggrandizement and the political turmoil that he has caused in Europe.'¹⁸ The decision of Bonaparte to crown his brother as the new king of Spain in 1807, after Charles IV was forced to abdicate, also represented an act that Spaniards as well as Spanish Americans refused to accept.¹⁹

A fascinating article, titled 'Para la historia de la Revolucion de Espana' ('For the History of the Spanish Revolution'), by D. Alvaro Flores Estrada, general procurator of the Principality of Asturias, published first in 1810 in Spain and reprinted in 1811, attests to the presence of this historical event. Flores summarized the French Revolution as an event that incited 'too much enthusiasm in its beginnings, and too many bad things at the end.'²⁰ He added that such an event polarized people to the extent that twenty-one years later it was still difficult to conclude which group was correct: Those who vehemently opposed the revolution or those who viewed it as a necessary step toward progress. However, the author did add one reality: the Revolution left the French people 'horrified after seeing so much blood . . . tired of ten continuous years of the bloodiest war . . . fearful' of so much death, and 'tired and irritable because of all the injustices' that had taken place.²¹ This type of discourse on the French Revolution can be perceived as a preventive measure. The article emphasized the negative consequences of such a historical transformation which could cause the people of a country in which it had happened to question the value of radical social change. This article

17. John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 96.

18. *El peruano*, no. 12 (October 15, 1811): 93.

19. Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, 97.

20. *El peruano*, no. 3 (September 13, 1811): 17.

21. *El peruano* no. 3 (September 13, 1811): 18.

was also very opportunistic, especially in view of the different revolutionary movements that had taken place in Spanish American territories since 1808, whereby Spaniards and Spanish Americans were further distancing themselves from one another politically, socially, and economically. This was also after what is considered the post-constitutional period of 1812, when Peru witnessed strong political repression at all levels, including the press.²²

Eight years later, the Peruvian patriot Bernardo Monteagudo, editor of the newspaper *El censor de la revolución* (*The Judge of the Revolution*), denounced Spain's obligation to make a decision about the future of America.²³ In an introduction to the first issue, the editor emphasized the Age of the Enlightenment as crucial in the process of intellectual, political, and scientific advances that had changed the face of the world on a global scale. Monteagudo continued that theme, in the nineteenth century, South America was fully participating in, and taking advantage of ideas circulated by the great thinkers of the Enlightenment—ideas that had radically changed the relationship of individuals with the world around them. During this period of profound changes, he argued, the revolution, and more specifically political revolutions, came to play a vital role in the development of societies. According to the editor, political revolutions constituted 'the natural pronouncements of having arrived at a moment when society discovers there are other institutions capable of making it happier and it feels capable of overcoming the obstacles facing it.'²⁴

For Monteagudo, the American Revolution represented a perfect example of a successful political revolution that had a profound

22. McEvoy, 'Seríamos excelentes vasallos y nunca ciudadanos,' 53.

23. *El censor de la revolución*, first published on April 20, 1820, lasted until July of the same year. It was published on the tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth of each month from Santiago de Chile. It included articles the editors deemed important when discussions on the issue of the Spanish American revolution, as well as personal letters from citizens and advertisements. Many of the articles dealt with the debate over freedom of the press, including its advantages and how it was being violated by colonial authorities. It has been reprinted in *La prensa en la Independencia de Perú*, Bernardo Monteagudo, ed. (Buenos Aires: Coni Hermanos, 1910).

24. *El censor de la revolución*, no. 1 (1820), 2.

impact on the rest of the Americas. The editor considered this revolution, along with the French and others that had begun to occur in South America, to be positive movements toward freedom and progress, and the only venues to stop the despotism that had been so prevalent in South America. Not even 'fanatic fear' or 'extreme ignorance' could stop the revolution from reaching to the rest of South America. Peruvians, in particular, were 'determined to follow the spirit of the century and the order of nature which call us to establish a liberal and fair government.'²⁵ In this newspaper, the revolution was conceived as a productive process, which, when guided by moderation, was the only valuable tool to achieve freedom and quality. Revolution in this case did not equate with fear but rather implied an essential step toward imposing a social order based on justice.

El pacificador de Perú (*The Peacemaker of Peru*) 1821, a newspaper contemporary with *El censor de la revolución* and edited by the Creole patriots Bernardino Monteagudo and García del Río,²⁶ perceived the situation in Peru between 1811 and 1821 as a perennial

25. *El censor de la revolución*, no. 1 (1820), 2-3.

26. The first two issues of *El pacificador de Perú* (April-September 1821) were published in April 1821 in Huaura, Perú. Issues number 3 through 11 were published in Barranca, and the last two issues (12 and 13), were published in Lima (Imprenta de J. A. López y Compañía). It has been reprinted in *La prensa en la Independencia de Perú*, Monteagudo, ed. The newspaper included a statement by the editor which was followed by letters from a number of Peruvian citizens describing the state of affairs in Lima, in which they expressed their fervent patriotism, and the need for Peru to be a free country. In the final issue, the newspaper reprinted a passage from the 'Message' delivered to Congress on December 3, 1821, by President James Monroe published in the *New-York Evening Post* (December 7, 1821). In it, Monroe commented on the South American independence movements. 'It is understood that the colonies in South America have had great success during the present year in the struggle for their independence. The new Government of Colombia has extended its territories and considerably augmented its strength, and at Buenos Ayres, where civil dissensions had for some time before prevailed, greater harmony and better order appear to have been established. Equal success has attended their efforts in the Provinces on the Pacific. It has long been manifest that it would be impossible for Spain to reduce these colonies by force, and equally so that no conditions short of their independence would be satisfactory to them. It may therefore be presumed, and it is earnestly hoped, that the Government of Spain, guided by enlightened and liberal councils, will find it to comport with its interests and due to its magnanimity to terminate this exhausting controversy on that basis. To promote this result by friendly counsel with the Government of Spain will be the object of the Government of the United States.' The editor of *El pacificador de Perú* commented that Peru was also looking forward to establishment of economic relationships with the United States once independence was achieved 13 (April 10, 1821):1-2.

state of revolution, full chaos, and uncertainty. The editors began all new issues of the newspaper with an epigraph taken from the United States Declaration of Independence: 'We must acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind—enemies in war—in peace, friends.'²⁷ The editors' purpose was to persuade Spain and Peruvians that the only way to pacify Peru and the rest of South America was for Spain 'To Recognize [Peru's] Independence.' Montea-gudo and García stated their opinion that independence could bring economic benefits to both countries instead of total division. They saw commerce as being the potential 'great peace-maker between the two nations.'²⁸ Failure to recognize this would leave Peruvians, they agreed, with just one option: to continue the revolution. As the editors warned Spaniards: 'Damn a thousand times your stubbornness, as it will be the cause of your misfortunes and ours!'²⁹

Continuation of the revolution would bring more horror and anxiety to both countries, and it was to this extent that the editors perceived their newspaper as an instrument to pacify both sides of the military struggle. Nevertheless, the editors warned, if Spain could not accept 'an honorable peace,' then 'let us all die in the fire if we cannot extinguish it before belonging to Spain.'³⁰ Although revolution was not a pacific vehicle for attaining justice, it nevertheless represented a justified means to reach equality and freedom. That end justified engaging in an 'eternal war against the Spanish, although as the editors also declared in that May issue, 'peace and Independence is the noble desire of all Americans.'³¹

27. *El pacificador de Perú*, no. 1 (April 10, 1821): 1.

28. Since the imposition of the Bourbon reforms, creoles were also adamant in wanting to establish free and direct commerce with other European countries as well as the United States. See E. Bradford Burns, *La revolución francesa y el mundo ibérico* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1989), introduction.

29. *El pacificador de Perú*, no. 1 (April 10, 1821): 2.

30. *El pacificador de Perú*, no. 2 (April 20, 1821): 2.

31. *El pacificador de Perú*, no. 6 (May 31, 1821): 1-2. For the editor this was more obvious when considering that, as of June 1821, almost all South America was free, including Nueva Granada (Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador), Buenos Aires, and Chile.

By 1823, Peruvian intellectuals had arrived at their own definition and manner of imagining their revolution. Their views of former and current revolutions such as the French, the American and the revolutions that were currently ongoing in Spanish America, enabled them to conclude that their own revolution was different. In an introductory article on May 28, 1823, *Gaceta del Gobierno del Perú* (*Gazette of the Government of Peru*) took a comprehensive approach to the issue of revolution. The editor began by stating that 'the history of revolutions, which have periodically changed the fate of people for ages, presents perhaps noble acts, but in the midst of the shadows and the horrors that cause the fermentation of private passions.'³² This, however, had not been the case in Peru, where the editor hailed its 'saintly revolution which, without spilling one drop of blood, advances with majestic steps that, albeit slow, are safe.' He emphatically affirmed 'the moderation and sound judgment of the Capital of Peru will always serve as a model when it comes to the great crises of states.' It was the moderation of the creole patriots, their inclination to sacrifice, and the solidarity they felt among each other that would facilitate the expulsion of 'the last trace of Spanish despotism' from Peru.³³

This belief that independence was the only vehicle to guarantee a successful future was anchored in what the American and French revolutions had achieved. In an anonymous article reflecting on the impact of Enlightenment philosophy on the ideological foundation of both revolutions, the author highlighted the crucial role

32. *Gaceta del Gobierno del Perú* (1821-25) was published in Lima by Imprenta del Gobierno and the Imprenta del Estado and also in Trujillo of Perú, where it was published as *Gaceta extraordinaria del gobierno del Perú* in the Imprenta Paredes. This newspaper included news about freedom of press, government edicts and royal decrees, anonymous articles criticizing Spain and advocating Peru's total independence, articles on Bolívar's visit to Peruvian territories, and news about the war between Spain and France among many other subjects. This newspaper was characterized by its global circulation of knowledge, reprinting articles from newspapers in England, France, Colombia, Haiti, Jamaica, Brazil, Portugal and the United States, such as Philadelphia and Baltimore. As with many newspapers of the time, the nature of its content was quite global, if, as Felicity Nussbaum has suggested, we view the term global as the 'movement of ideas across borders and over time.' Nussbaum, ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1-19.

33. *Gaceta del Gobierno del Perú*, no. 43 (1823): 1.

that both revolutions had had in the fight for human rights, freedom, and quality. According to this contributor, Spanish America's fight against Spanish despotism was modeled and fostered by the success of the French and North American revolutions. The article stated that the North American Revolution had been guided by 'noble principles,' which justified freedom from the 'hateful yoke' of oppressors. On the other hand, the French Revolution had succeeded in guaranteeing the defense of human rights for all citizens and the end of monarchical despotism. Both revolutions lent themselves as models to follow in order that Peru might attain similar success and end abuses perpetrated by 'the tyrants of reason,' which had kept the country under a state of 'dejection and barbarism.' The revolution as seen here, was no longer a sign of danger and fear, but rather an exemplum of positive changes in a society, and as such, an act to be emulated.³⁴

Fear and the Productivity of a Political Idea

Newspapers played a vital role in the circulation of ideas and debates that generated the Spanish American wars of independence. As Rebecca Earle observes: 'any thorough account of the move . . . from colony to republic must consider the role of the press; during this period.'³⁵ Newspapers turned into public patriotic spaces in which political and social concerns were persistently debated or

34. *Gaceta del Gobierno del Perú*, no. 43 (1823): 195. The idea of the revolution as a positive conduit for liberty was quite evident on the eve of Peru's official independence, and the year 1822 represented a key moment in the search for independence. In June 1822, San Martín proclaimed Peru's independence. However, the interior remained under the control of royalist forces. A fifty-one delegate congress took control of the government, which later fell to a military coup naming José de Riva Agüero the first president of Peru. Royalist troops forced Riva Agüero to escape to Callao, leaving the congress to appoint Torre Tagle as the new president, whereupon Riva Agüero refused to relinquish his power and allied himself with the royalist forces. Meanwhile Simón Bolívar was 'named military dictator and commander of the armed forces' but was unable to rescue Lima from the Spanish forces. Spain again had control of nearly all of Peru, except in the north, until December 1824, when Bolívar finally recaptured Lima and José de Sucre took control of the highlands. On January 23, 1826, Peru obtained its official independence. See Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

35. Rebecca Earle, 'The Role of Print in the Spanish American Wars of Independence,' Jaksic, ed., *The Political Power of the Word*, 13.

exposed. These media outlets represented both a venue through which Spaniards and Creole Americans were able to articulate their own perceptions of how a revolution needed to be contained and be a blueprint for future change. However, Spanish authorities took full advantage by highlighting the horrendous and bloody nature of the French Revolution as was depicted in the *Mercurio peruano*. Through edicts, royal decrees, and news articles relating to the French Revolution that were reprinted in colonial Spanish American newspapers, Spanish authorities showed through their rhetoric of fear the anxiety that they felt towards the future—namely, losing control of their colonies.

In the case of the creoles after 1811, ignorance and lack of understanding were reasons that individuals would fear the revolution. For Creole Americans, fear, as Montesquieu had suggested in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), was associated with the principle of the despotic government—in this case Spanish—whose goals relied on silencing those who were perceived as a threat by imposing total obedience.³⁶ Ironically, as mentioned earlier, Peruvians in the nineteenth century came to conceive of monarchical government as equal to a despotic one—both guided by the same evil principles. In the Peruvian newspapers that supported the revolution, this word was associated with its original definition of ‘radical change,’ ‘a sudden and violent change in government’ and a ‘change produced by time.’ As with any change, it was approached with trepidation and anxiety due to its ever-changing nature. Revolution represented a social and political construct that aimed to mobilize the public to feel either fear or the strength to combat fear itself.

36. Montesquieu contended that all despotic government was motivated by fear. He also suggested that religion played a crucial role in this type of government that he opposed, preferring a monarchy, which he thought was motivated by honor, or the republican, organized on the principle of virtue. Montesquieu, Charles, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Anne M. Cohler, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 32, 54, 70.

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