

many times between 1987 and 1990 and left genuinely frightened by the impoverishment that region had experienced, because as poor or as miserable as I had remembered it being, it was much, much worse. The region had been impoverished, as the rest of Peru had been impoverished, while a cabal of bandits, gangsters ensconced in power, enriched themselves vertiginously. So when we talk about development, we can't focus on the idea of development as a series of economic reforms that are going to put the productive apparatus of the country on the march, augment our exports, and finally allow our country to enter into a process of modernization. No, the development we need has to be a simultaneous development, a development that, while it improves our indices of growth and production, makes the institutions that today are not working begin to work and earns them the credibility, the confidence, and the solidarity that make such institutions effective in a democratic society. That doesn't exist in Latin America, and it's one of the reasons for the failure of the economic reforms, even when they're well crafted

Need to Clean Up Politics

I've been asked many times, "Whom do you admire in Latin America?" I always cite the same person: President Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador (1989–94). He's someone I admire a great deal, and he's not a politician; he's an entrepreneur. Cristiani, a businessman, decided to enter politics during a terrible, tragic time when the military and the guerrillas were killing each other in the streets of San Salvador, and the dead, the disappeared, and the tortured were innumerable He won the election and control of the government. And he governed prudently, not at all charismatically, and he left his nation better than he found it. That may not seem like much, but in reality it was a virtually unique achievement [El Salvador is] now a country that, as was so well said by Montaner, makes slow progress, but makes real progress, which is to say, makes progress in many directions at once. Well, that's what we need in Latin America. We need decent people like Cristiani—businessmen, professionals—to decide to go into politics to clean up the fundamentally dirty, immoral, corrupt activity that, unfortunately, has passed as politics for us.

Culture and Liberalism

Another aspect of development that's fundamental is cultural development. Culture in Latin America is, unfortunately and with few exceptions, a privilege of minorities, and in some places of quite tiny minorities Culture is still considered, by those who are aware of its existence, as a separate world, as a pastime, as an elevated form of leisure, and not as what it is: a tool fundamental to the ability of men and women to make sound decisions in their personal lives, in their family lives, in their professional lives, and above all, in politics when the time comes to make a momentous decision Culture is a defense against demagoguery, a defense against the terrible error of a poor electoral choice.

Progress and Civilization

I want to talk about Chile for a moment Chile is a unique case in Latin American history, and it is a unique case because a military dictatorship, as Pinochet's regime was, had some economic successes. Pinochet allowed liberal economists to make well thought out, functional reforms There occurred in Chile a kind of beneficent accident, and what luck for Chile. But there are many Latin Americans who want to make that accident their model, and they still repeat the notion that what we need in order to achieve development is another Pinochet. To a fair extent, the popularity of Fujimori was due to the fact that many Peruvians saw in him the Peruvian Pinochet. This is misguided: there are historical accidents, but if there is a constant in Latin American history, it is that dictatorships have never been a solution for Latin America's problems. All of them, without a single exception save Chile's, have contributed to the aggravation of the problems that they said they had come to solve: the corruption, the stagnation, the debilitation, or the collapse of institutions

I think that it's very important for us liberals, which I presume that we all are, to coordinate our actions, to exchange information at this time in history when, curiously, liberalism is the victim of many who misunderstand it and has come for many people, some of very good faith, to represent the enemy of progress and of justice. It has come to be synonymous with exploitation, with covetousness, with indifference or cynicism in the face of the

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· spectacle of misery and discrimination. We
 · know that to be not merely inaccurate but a
 · monstrous injustice to a doctrine, a
 · philosophy, that is in reality behind every
 · political, economic, and cultural advance that
 · humanity has experienced. Liberalism is a
 · tradition that must be defended, not merely
 · out of homage to truth, but because we live in
 · a difficult time in history, when progress and
 · civilization are threatened.
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 · who in 1990 was an unsuccessful candidate
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