



Uruguay in Transition

Edy Kaufman

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Until the early 1970s Uruguay held a worldwide reputation as a democratic island in Latin America, maintaining a collective executive system that acquired for it the nickname of the "Switzerland of South America." The constitutional tradition was emphasized by a nonpersonalist and non-authoritarian executive, political stability, a high standard of living, and an advanced educational and cultural level.

The military has shattered this established tradition. Over a two-year period its growing involvement in politics ended with absolute control over the executive.

The aim of this work is to analyze this transformation and consider the major variables that have affected political developments in Uruguay. Internal factors are the respective influences wielded by the United States plus Uruguay's two most powerful neighbors, Argentina and Brazil, as well as political trends in the Latin American subsystem. Among the external influences are competing elites (the traditional political parties and the left-wing front), interest groups (universities, trade unions, the church, dominant economic sectors, and the mass media), and the urban guerrilla movement (the Tupamaros). Kaufman analyzes these factors within the context of the Uruguayan economic and political structure, and shows their significance through their effects on the perception of the military elite.

In addition, he attempts to determine whether the army's decision to assume absolute power was strategic or a cumulative result of tactical decisions. Finally, he utilizes the accumulated data to test various hypotheses related to military intervention as an independent variable.

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