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## Truth, Race and Reconciliation; Ayacucho and the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

TRUTH, RACE AND RECONCILIATION; AYACUCHO AND THE PERUVIAN  
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

By

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A Thesis submitted to the  
Program in International Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Degree Awarded:  
Fall Semester, 2005

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I would like to dedicate this work to the amazing people of the department of Ayacucho. The majesty of the Andes Mountains in which they live, the rich and dignified history of their ancient culture, is reflected in their strength to survive centuries of conquests, corruption, oppression, political violence and impunity.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without the help of so many people in undertaking this thesis, I would have been lost. In the U.S., I'd like to thank The Center for the Advancement of Human Rights at Florida State University, especially Dr. Terrence Coonan and Vania Llovera, for funding my summer internship in Ayacucho May-July of 2004 and for emergency letter writing and faxing. Thank you to all the people who donated to both my internship and research trips, a special thanks to Rob Lombardo and Lucia Maxwell. Thank you especially Meghan Wozniak for taking care of "my baby". A huge hug to Joy Brudenell and her man Tom Kruger. I did it Bubbles! The teachers at SAIL. My "ex-wife" Trisha Stapleton, you have enriched my life more than I can fathom. Cecelia and David Maloney, am I an honorary Maloney yet? Shelia and Bill Ryan and the spirit of Will (my guardian angel).

En Perú, me gustaría enviar muchas gracias al inteligente, y bien conectado Señor Ricardo Caro Cárdenas, sin él me hubiera perdida en Lima. Te debo muchísimo. Muchas gracias a Javier Torres de la Asociación de Servicios Educativos Rurales, y Lino en la oficina de Ayacucho, Erika Bocanegra Torres de La Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Cesar Cárdenas de la Fiscalía Especial de Ayacucho, Luis Rueda, Máximo Banda Roca y Luis Castillejo del Ministerio Público, División de Medicina Legal de la Fiscalía de Ayacucho, Guillermo Rojas Ames de PAR, Victor Raul Mendez quien trabajó como un traductor en la region de Ayacucho, Jorge Moreno en los archivos de "El Comercio" in Lima, Aaron Van Alstine y Jermón Vargas de Paz Y Esperanza, Señor José Coronel, Director Regional Sur Central- CVR, Cross Cultural Solutions de Ayacucho, especialmente a Rudy Anyosa y Marisol Chancos. Y finalmente, las mujeres y niños de Yanamilla Maximum Security Penitentiary Ayacucho, Yo extraño a ustedes muchísimo.

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## ABSTRACT

Out of the roughly 13 departments mentioned in the final report of Peru's *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), the department of Ayacucho sustained the most damage and the largest internal displacement. It also suffered the largest amount of disappearances and deaths (from both individual assassinations and mass slaughters), and the highest number of other human rights violations such as torture and wrongful incarceration without due process.

This latest experience of violence in this department was rife with the social discrimination that had been prevalent in this department for centuries. This discrimination was first exploited by the insurgents to initiate their "people's revolution", then later expressed with terrible consequences by the state security forces entrusted to put an end to it. It was also exercised by the state's political institutions via prolonged impunity towards Ayacucho's demands for justice.

The truth commission created in the aftermath of the conflict grounded its works in a moral obligation to address the discrimination and racism of the country. It also filtered its proposals for reparation and the means to reconcile through this obligation.

This thesis explores Ayacucho's experience of the Peruvian truth commission and surveys the role of Perú's social structures throughout the process and what the effects and potential scenarios there might be for the resulting struggle for reparation and reconciliation.



## INTRODUCTION

Nothing matches the cruelty of one human to another. In war and conflict, the frenzy of violence and ideological revelry, little seems outside a person's capacity to destroy, ruin or injure. Such anger and violence has been present within the deeds of humans again and again in conflicts through all parts of the world. In Central and South America, it has run its course through almost every single country. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, and Uruguay, have all suffered deleterious sorrows and turmoil. Colombia as I write this, is mired in a bloody and ruthless upheaval.

When thinking of conflict and war, the classic sense of the event invokes visions of battle with an external enemy, a neighboring state, perhaps some sort of invasion. However, in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Latin America's experience, the enemies, whether real, perceived or contrived, have manifested and been fought from within. In place of invasions from outside, politically, socially, ideologically or economically driven eruptions have boiled over inside that have resulted in brutal struggles with complex natures and often tens of thousands of victims of both insurgent elements and the military or other government security forces intent on suppressing or extinguishing them. Often these struggles have been the impetus for authoritarian military coups supported by sympathetic persons, groups and/or political parties.

The natures of these internal conflicts are unique. To begin with, they engender a special kind of distrust and insecurity. In some instances like Perú, whatever forces are at odds with the military organs or governments in power, they are forced to remain sublimated, incognito or otherwise under the radar not lending themselves to be easily identified by a wary public. Also, the government and forces of security in these conflicts have been the perpetrators of some of the most heinous orchestrated acts of human rights violations such as torture and extrajudicial executions. How can you feel safe when those charged with your safety are the very ones to be feared? In addition, the public is captive in the middle of the fighting. They are often manipulated and punished by both sides who, at the same time that they kill, threaten or torture them, vie for or demand their allegiance and support. The irony is overwhelming. Both sides in these conflicts portend to seek to liberate or save "the people" from what they see as either a dangerous un-stabilizing enemy or a ruthless oppressive regime. Yet in so many cases the greater

amount of casualties is suffered by the general population, those whom they seek to “liberate”. In Perú, both *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and the security forces of the state took excessive amounts of campesino lives in their struggles to supposedly bring peace and justice to the country’s interior.

Another unique element of these conflicts is that because they are internal, the process of reconciliation is much more difficult than with a foreign combatant. Having been wounded, killed, displaced and pushed around by your own countrypersons, how do find a way to co-exist with them in the aftermath? When the wars have ended, the combatants do not go back to their country of origin, they return to being your neighbors. You cannot leave; the same borders enclose you and your foes or perpetrators. Yet, in order to move forward, to try to make a durable peace of some kind, to get on with the matter of living, and to endeavor some sort of safeguard against a return to violence, reconciliation must be attempted. Efforts must be made.

So, how do we manage to reconcile? What is reconciliation exactly? Is there a definition that can be agreed upon? Reconciliation can be as evasive and complex a phenomenon to explain, as it is to actualize. It could be that one of the reasons for this is that, reconciliation as an idea has so many facets. Also, it has degrees that can be measured differently by varying sources. What is more, it is a process that involves human beings.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance has published a handbook for reconciliation after violent conflict. In this thin but helpful volume, IDEA offers that reconciliation can be defined as both a goal and a process<sup>1</sup>. The goal of reconciliation, in a general treatment, can be measured or recognized by its nature. It is a living end state with the most minimal of meanings being that there is, “a minimum basis of trust so that there can be a degree of cooperation and mutual reliance”. For the socially fractured scenario of Perú, establishing trust is a delicate matter. A lack of trust between the population of Ayacucho and the state forces of Lima was a preexisting factor prior to the conflict. The overbearing reaction to the insurgency that befell this highland department only exacerbated what had been in operation for centuries. A post-commission scenario of reconciliation for Perú was going to entail reaching farther back and deeper into the country’s social mechanics than the commission was mandated to investigate.

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<sup>1</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes, Luc Huyse, eds. Reconciliation After Violent Conflict, A Handbook. Halmstad, Sweden: Bulls Tryckeri AB, 2003

The process of reconciliation includes the steps necessary, or optimal at least, to help to create, or are conducive to the generating of the nature of the goal. Those steps, according to IDEA, are abridged within these four components: Truth Telling, Healing, Restorative Justice and Reparation. The handbook makes a pointed effort to state that there is no specific order or template by which these components or elements are to be employed. Also, even though each is of great importance and interconnected, not one by itself can gain the reconciliation that's object is a sort of durable peace. In best possible worlds, these four elements work in concert to putting a country or society on the right track towards their goals.

Scholars like David Mendeloff, whose article critiquing the lauded benefits of truth seeking or truth telling processes as an absolute necessity for achieving lasting peace, might take exception to the first element mentioned<sup>2</sup>. In his writings, he points out what he sees as a practice of conflating certain terms when discussing truth seeking and reconciliation. He is also skeptical about the assumptions made of the power of truth by other writers such as Patricia Hayner and Martha Minnow, and some of the persons who have served on assorted truth commissions. I understand his views and agree with him in that there tends to be an emotive element to how truth seeking bodies and their efforts are perceived in so far as there recuperative effects. Nevertheless, I believe that applying IDEA's theories of goal vs. process to his argument might be illustrative.

Mendeloff's argument seems to stem from the perspective of the goal vs. process challenge. He sees the leaps made in the statements of others, who have written on truth commissions or truth-seeking efforts and seen them as invaluable, as having been made ahead of the process and its interconnections with the goal. The connections have been obscured or assumed and are left to be assumed also by readers and practitioners. In my perspective, I believe that he has said in another way what has been stated by the IDEA handbook, "truth *in itself* (my italics) will not bring reconciliation" (nor is it reconciliation); it is merely one element of the extended process. However, this does not deny or exclude its usefulness. Mendeloff himself purposefully stops short of disclaiming the validity of commissions. I attach myself to the idea that truth telling or seeking in the form of organs like commissions, if not a sufficient cause, is at least a necessary one.

Additionally, and very importantly, truth commissions do more than just expound a truth. An important aside to the investigative work, the taking of testimonies, etc. that comprise the procedures of most commissions, is that most are mandated in some form with the task of producing proposals for healing, restorative justice, and reparations; the other three elements mentioned earlier in the process to advancing reconciliation<sup>3</sup>.

Does this mean that they will be successful? Not always. A truth commission's role is one of facilitator. They help design and propose the route to reconciliation. They facilitate discussion about what reconciliation would look like and how to potentially get there within each unique scenario and country. But they do not make reconciliation happen. At mandate's end, they are dissolved and what is left is the plan they came up with and some suggestions or measures to encourage implementation. The implementation itself is not within the duty or facility of the commissions. Reconciliation is the burden of the society; its citizens, institutions and politicians. And that is where the problems begin. Without willingness, progress is difficult. There has to be a societal and political willingness to the labor of settlement, towards the tasks of reconciliation and all its components -reparation, recognition, restorative justice, etc. Without it, there continues to be societal frustration and animosity. Reconciliation can seem to be pushed farther away.

In Perú, this kind of conflict has arisen; a conflict between what the mostly Andino victims in the highlands want from the political class and Perú's greater society at large as far as recognition, reparation and restorative justice, and their willingness to transition forward towards reconciliation. There appears to be a stale mate. On one side, there is a reluctant political body paying an amount of lip service and performing some symbolic gestures yet not forthcoming with solid economic reparations. Accompanying them is the accused military and police forces and a judicial system that is neither altogether willing to participate in restorative justice nor acknowledge their excesses and blatant racist actions. On the other side is a discontented part of the population that refuses to be cooperative, or at least quiet and/or peaceful, without some concession or attention to its demands. Surrounding all this is an atmosphere of long-standing social rifts running along class and race lines. The stubborn and all too familiar face of racism

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<sup>2</sup> David Mendeloff's article entitled, "Truth Seeking Truth Telling and Post Conflict Peacebuilding: Curb the Enthusiasm?" appears in the International Studies Review, Vol. 6, Issue 3 (September 2004)

has been present throughout Perú's experience, from the conflict itself, through its truth-seeking aftermath and in the resulting atmosphere they are now facing in trying to secure reparation.

Most of the activity of the internal war took place in the highland areas of the Andean Mountains. Out of the roughly 13 departments that were indicated or mentioned in the findings of the commission, Ayacucho sustained the most damage and the largest internal displacement. It also suffered the largest amount of disappearances and deaths (from both individual assassinations and mass slaughters), and the highest number of other human rights violations such as torture and wrongful incarceration without due process<sup>4</sup>. Ayacucho is also a department of Perú that is home to some of the densest and most isolated communities of indigenous peoples.

Ayacucho was the war's ideological and physical birthplace and its epic center for the larger part of its duration. The greater impacts of the proposals to initiate reparations and promote reconciliation, by sheer numbers of recipients, are directed at this department. Located in the south central region of the Andes, Ayacucho has always been an important strategic location throughout history from the pre-colonial time of the Wari and Incas, through Perú's conquest by the Spanish.

The mountains that separate elevated Ayacucho from the coastal capital and seat of government that is Lima present a political and racial firewall. For centuries, Perú has experienced a political and economic centralization that has been nurtured by its geological characteristics. The severe Andes resist the construction of transportation and other infrastructure. The land between the two areas is mostly desert or rough rocky terrain not exactly suitable for extensive agriculture or housing stock. With the seaport, a major airport, a skyline of buildings that house most of the corporate headquarters for the country, and the seat of government, Lima has acted as a magnet for modernity and money. Lima is an urban society far removed in all ways from the experience of the interior.

There are several differences between the two regions. Lima is by far one of the wealthiest of departments whereas Ayacucho is one of the three poorest. The majority of the

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on these sorts of mandates, see chapter two of this thesis and the appendices of Hayer, Priscilla B., *Unspeakable Truths, Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*. New York, NY: Rutledge, 2002, pages 305-336

<sup>4</sup> These statistics are not only documented officially in the final report of the CVR to be found at <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/>, but were also being issued by many of the concurrent reports put out by national

population of Lima is mestizo (a mix of European and Peruvian ancestry), or what is classified as “white”; blue eyed and light skinned persons with no trace of native blood. In Ayacucho, the majority of the population is Andino, direct or only slightly mixed decedents of the Incas. Many Ayacuchans live in the *alto plano* or high mountain regions that are very isolated, taking days to reach, and some only accessible by foot. The relationship between these two areas has long been tense and sometimes volatile. Ayacucho sees Lima as indifferent to their needs and oppressive in their racist views of its native peoples. Lima sees Ayacucho as backwards, dirty and uneducated. At the same time, little has come from Lima via persistent government assistance that would remedy the lack of education or incorporate this region in the countries plans for modernization and expansion. There is no industry in Ayacucho. Though there is a university in its capital of Huamanga, its students have little hope of securing a professional career. They must either leave for Lima, or other cosmopolitan cities such as Trujillo, Cuzco or Arequipa, or stay in menial service jobs. Even should they manage to make their way to one of these cities, their Andino appearance is still often a barrier.

Ayacucho vs. Lima in several ways is a case study of the social problems throughout Perú. Ayacucho retains its historical status. It is still a department of political rebelliousness or defiance. I witnessed myself in two visits to the region, riotous strikes and an ethnocentric supremacist takeover of a municipality. It is Ayacucho that is always in the newspapers. It is a political thermostat used to gauge the volatility of social relations in Perú. Chances are that if reconciliation cannot advance or take hold there, it will not fair better on the whole. Many of the characteristics of discrimination and animosity that were exploited by the leaders of insurgence in the initiation of the internal conflict are still present.

To try and begin a process of reconciliation, Perú must deal with what they have left. There is a distrustful population of isolated peoples that have been repeatedly ignored and slighted that are now injured, angry and expectant. There is a reluctant and often ineffective (and commonly corrupt) government and judiciary within a strained economic situation. With an atmosphere that includes all of these aspects, to say that reconciliation is going to be difficult is an understatement. The plans of the Peruvian truth commission have had many obstacles to overcome

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human rights organizations like the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos who were documenting the effects of the violence and its toll on the department before the violence had officially come to an end.

*La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* or, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (here after referred to as the CVR) was constructed to confront, record and understand the events of Perú's political violence. It covers the span of 20 years parenthesized by May 1980 to November 2000. The 17<sup>th</sup> of May is the date of the attack on the local polling place and burning of ballot boxes in the rural pueblo of Chuschi in the department of Ayacucho. November 2000 marks the date at which a scandalized and criminalized President Alberto Fujimori fled the country. The job of Perú's truth commission was a daunting one to say the least. With two years to complete their mandate, their efforts resulted in over 4,000 pages contained in nine volumes with 11 annexes.

The country's internal conflict was complex and the effects were wide spread. A least one third of the departments of this South American country experienced the war directly whether through confrontation with the savage columns of the insurgent groups of Sendero Luminoso or the less prevalent *Movimiento Revolucionario de Tupac Amaru* (Revolutionary Movement of Tupac Amaru or MRTA), or with the military's comparable ruthless anti-insurgent strategies (though by CVR statistics some 80% of the violence was experienced in the interior regions like Ayacucho). Perú was left devastated and divided. The country was economically depressed, psychologically weary, socially disconnected and physically abused.

The officially recorded number of 69,780 thousand killed was presented by the CVR in its final report, submitted to the new democratically elected president, Alejandro Toledo, and the public on August 28<sup>th</sup> 2003. Though this is more than twice the number originally guessed before the commission undertook its work, it is not complete. Since the report, persons have continued to come forward, crimes are still being uncovered and investigated, and the number of those disappeared, executed, tortured, or violated grows. The majority of these victims were and continues to come from the Ayacucho region<sup>5</sup>.

The CVR's final report included the extensive *Plan Integral de Reparaciones*, or Integral Plan for Reparations (here after referred to as the PIR) in sections discussing the challenge of reconciliation. This thesis explores the complex experience of Ayacucho dealing with the CVR, with the issue of reparation and the dynamics of reconciliation within Perú's difficult social structure. It explores several questions. Is Perú ready to deal with its deep-seated social problems

that are so wrapped up in the reconciliation process? Can Ayacucho be expected to be amenable to reconciliation if Perú does not address these social problems? In its process, did the CVR created any unintentional hurdles, set up any ongoing obstacle to reconciliation by so pointedly calling attention to Perú's imbalances and harping on the issue of human rights? Reparations were a constant topic during the duration of the CVR and consistently grounded in a base of moral responsibility and the theme of human rights. The reparation plan was very ambitious, but little has been forthcoming. Was the ongoing promotion and push for payment of reparations, fodder for the discontent now being demonstrated? Should commissions ever be inclined to dilute matters of morality and programs of reparation for the sake of something less sensitive and less comprehensive yet more easily attained?

Struggling in the mire of complex social issues that were in action before the conflict, exploited by it and that still exist, the answers to these questions, are an important consideration to advancing reconciliation in Ayacucho and elsewhere throughout Perú.

The structure of this thesis will be in three chapters. Chapter One will be a brief history of the conflict- its origins, principal players, its social elements, and examples of the worst cases of human rights violations. Chapter Two, will be an exploration of the aspects of a commission, including composition and mandate, and what some of these were for the CVR of Perú. This chapter will include a short exposition of four other commissions in comparison with the CVR. Chapter Three will focus on the works of the CVR in relation to Ayacucho. It will include exploring the use of public audiences for collection of testimonies, the complicated and sometimes misunderstood matter of reparation, and the build up of expectations on the part of Ayacuchanos. The conclusion will speculate on the overall pros and cons of Ayacucho's experience with the CVR. It will present some of the efforts and initiatives since the final report. It will examine some of their successes and/or shortcomings considering how these have affected goals of reconciliation in the Ayacucho region in its social context.

What paths or methods and attentions that were not in play prior to the CVR, are now surfacing, such as the push for full participation in civil matters by *all* citizens, even the most remote? And what emergent initiatives are there to try and break the centralization of Lima? Has all the agitation and disruption that went along with the CVR been bad? Shaking the trees

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<sup>5</sup> The continuation of cases being presented are coming through the permanent installment of a Special Fiscalía or Attorney General for the department and the opening of satellite offices of several human rights NGOs in the region



sometimes is exactly what is required and most important in continuing the momentum of the CVR to address the social inequities.

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with the intention of continuing to take testimonies and affidavits on disappearances, killings and other crimes.

## CHAPTER ONE

### TO THERE FROM WHAT WHERE?

#### Setting the Stage

Reconciliation is the process that comes after rupture. The conflicts that some countries attempt to recover from and for which truth commissions are created can last for decades. In Peru's case, the mandate of *La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación*, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (in text referred to as the CVR) demarcated a span of twenty years, from May 1980 to November 2000, to be investigated. The conflict arose primarily between *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and the Peruvian state. Ayacucho's experience in this time frame peaked in the early through mid eighties. It did not cease to be a region of violent activity after this time, but did note a decrease of intensity.

A brief recount of Peru's internal war and Ayacucho's part in it will provide an idea of the region's embarkation point in the process of reconciliation. Before we can answer the question, "how do we get there from here?" we need to know, "to there from *what* where?" Also, to increase our broader understanding of the scope of Ayacucho's experience and the social elements of the process of reconciliation, it will help to travel the same path traveled by the truth commission. The short objective and first order of business for the CVR, and for any commission, was to establish an official record of events. This is the platform, the setting of the stage, for initiating reconciliation.

In long view, the operations of a country's truth commission, and their initial aims towards reconciliation, are a series of stages with deep breaths to recompose and preparation to move on in between. The conflict is over, a deep breath. The commission is created, another breath. The investigation is completed, a very deep breath. The processing of the information gathered is completed, a breath, and so on and so on. It will help us to follow, or synchronize our breathing in our minds with, the breathing patterns of Ayacucho and the CVR.

## Party Politics

Leftist revolutions and revolutionary thinking are not new to Latin America; they have long been staples in its methodologies for social change. In the last half of the twentieth century, practically every country of Central and South America has had a leftist movement take a turn at forcing or forging social empowerment and governmental restructuring in a socialistic framework. Marxism and communistic paradigms of social reconstruction found fertile ground in this geographical area. For countries developing out of colonial conquest left with class fissures of giant proportions and racial divisions as well, ideas that focused on the victory of the lower worker class over the elite bourgeoisie was music to the ears of those who had suffered the injustices of oppressive class systems.

Throughout Latin America, leftist movements have enjoyed not only popularity, but also a degree of legitimacy. That is different from the history of the neighboring U.S., which included the post-WWII communist head hunting of the House Un-American Activities Commission. In contrast, the development of Socialism and Communism in Central and South America and the Caribbean went about comparatively unencumbered (if not in some instances, celebrated). The violent Maoist insurgent forces of Sendero Luminoso, led by Abimael Guzmán Reinoso, a one-time university philosophy professor, began as a communist political party.

Peruvian politics operate within a multi-party (read multi-multi party) system. There are many more official parties than just two which most North Americans are accustomed to. Both the political left and the right have long lists of parties operating and campaigning for political influence (another reason why Communism, with its single party system, might have appeal).

Communism grew in Perú in the early 20's via Carlos José Mariátequi, an anthropologist who focused on the Incan civilization. Sympathetic to Trotskyism, Mariátequi is known as the father of communism in Perú. Though he did not form a communist political party, his face still graces many flyers and banners of leftist unions and propaganda<sup>1</sup>. The *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* was the first leftist party of Perú formed in 1924 by Víctor Andrés

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<sup>1</sup> Most paintings or likenesses used of Mariátequi show up in a triad along with other communist icons, Che Guevara and Vladimir Lenin.

Haya de la Torre while exiled in Mexico. APRA's hopes were to follow in the path of Russia's revolution<sup>2</sup>.

Over the next four or five decades, APRA was joined by myriad other leftist political parties. The emerging of so many parties over the years came about in part vis-à-vis interpretational differences of how to apply communist principals to Perú's particular situation. Some choose a more radical approach while others, more moderate. Others were born through the splits in the international communist arena such as Trotsky's confrontations with Stalin, Stalin's death with Khrushchev's condemning replacement, and China's arguments with Russia and eventual breaking away. Also, as the years bridged over into the 1960's, the youth and vitality of Che and Castro's Cuban revolution (much closer and more familiar to Perú than Russia or China) drew many of the country's young energetic leftists.

Of all these, the rift that caused the most division among Peru's communist/socialist followers was the animosity between The Soviet Union and China. In the communist miasma, Maoism was growing.

“A powerful current in the radical left was Maoism, or more specifically some, ‘Mao Zedong thought’. In general, such groups developed a vision of Peruvian society as ‘semi feudal’, and of [Velasco's] military government as ‘fascist’ or ‘of fascist tendencies’. They also developed a great distrust in the ‘social imperialism’ of the soviet union, and an expectation that the Chinese path-the ‘protracted people’s war’ from the countryside to the city – provided a revolutionary model for Perú.”<sup>3</sup>

Emerging parties aligned their loyalties with their international counter part, whether it was pro-Soviet or pro-China, and claimed legitimacy through theoretical purity with their respective interpretations of true communism. Like a tree, branches grew, spread out and then split again.

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<sup>2</sup> In a strange twist from its origins, the APRA party is now the farthest right wing party on the electoral docket although still utilizing and espousing socialist rhetoric. It was this party that was later fingered to be the backers and suppliers of forces to the paramilitary squads operative in the upper Huallaga River region during the second half of the era of violence.

<sup>3</sup> (Ivan Hinojosa, *On Poor Relations and the Nouveau Riche: Shining Path and the Radical Peruvian Left, Shining and Other Paths. War and Society in Perú*, 1980-1995)

One of the branch parties from which Sendero Luminoso split was *El Partido Comunista del Perú – Bandera Roja* (PCP-BR), or the Red Flag Communist Party of Perú. Red Flag was a Maoist faction that had split off from the once unified trunk of *El Partido Comunista del Perú* in the opening of the 60's when the later chose to remain loyal to its Soviet roots. The mitosis continued and soon in '67, infighting in Red Flag produced the *PCP-Patria Roja* (Red Fatherland). Guzmán, who had joined the communist party while a university student in Arequipa and then chose to align with the Red Flag pro-China camp, stayed devoted to PCP-BR and was an enthusiastic party member. He was rewarded for his dedication with the job of secretary of the party committee in Ayacucho (where he had moved after college). This position allowed him to make at least one trip to China in this capacity. For Abimael, the trip was pivotal and impressive.

After his exposure first hand to the Cultural Revolution of Mainland China, Abimael became frustrated with the lack of decisive action in the party. He pushed for the preparation in real terms for the popular war. Increasingly heated and insulting public confrontations took place with the Red Flag party leadership over this lack of action and ideological platforms. Guzmán amassed a following of younger activists who found his fiery conviction intriguing and attractive. In 1970, he left PCP-BR, taking his converted fans with him to forge his new party and prepare for war.

The full name of Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path, is *El Partido Comunista del Perú en el Sendero Luminoso de José Carlos Mariátequi* (The Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of José Carlos Mariátequi). The name suggests that the ideas and visions of the party would be those descending from the Trotskyite follower of communism not a group dedicated to the appropriation and application of Chinese Maoism. Guzmán took the name of Mariátequi combining it with a verse of José's poetry to proclaim to the public Sendero's alignment to the early twentieth century figure and thereby establish its legitimate paterfamilias. Like many other parties, Sendero Luminoso claimed to be the only ideologically uncorrupted party devoted to the principals of Karl Marx. However, their line of Marxism followed the progression of Marxist-Lenin-*Maoist* thought. Keeping in mind that Communism is a one party system, with Perú's expanding number of registered parties, progress towards affecting a true Communist state seemed elusive. What they had instead, in the place of a singular Communist party movement, was a generalized *leftist* movement of many arguing parties. One group would

have to win over the others to take the singular position of authority. Knowing this and with erudition for public speaking and a complex, labyrinth-like intellect reflecting Guzmán's education, in speech after speech he lambasted not just some but *all* other parties (including other Maoists like Red Flag and Red Fatherland) as being empty, opportunistic revisionists<sup>4</sup>.

When he became a professor of Philosophy at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga located in the capital of the department of Ayacucho, Guzmán gained access to a captive group of young malleable minds. The Andino students that he taught had come from poor campesino backgrounds and had heard the promises of the government but seen little if any of the benefits. They were exasperated with the glass ceiling and double standards that confronted them as persons of Andino heritage. They were anxious for change. Guzmán and his followers promised change and also, importantly, power, respect and glory. He often asked young students while wooing them into his ranks if they wouldn't enjoy being a commander, a general or high-level party official.

He had access to and eventual ideological control over the social extension programs initiated by the university, including a teachers training program for rural education. Through this advantage and his incendiary manners, he spread his ideas of Maoism, infiltrating the minds and then home villages of the students.

Keeping with the tone of Mao's "People's Revolution", Sendero Luminoso promoted violence as a necessary and indispensable means of achieving change. Their platform expressed the imperative for the absolute destruction of the existing political and governmental structures by violent means in order that a new system could be built from the ground up. Violence would be the machine and blood its fuel for forging the *lucha armada* (armed struggle).

On May 17, 1980 in the rural town of Chuschi in the department of Ayacucho, during Peru's first democratically held elections since the military coup of General Juan Velasco Alvarado had taken power in 1968, the PCP-SL took its first action in initiating its armed struggle against the Peruvian state. The explosive destruction of the ballot boxes of this remote area was an action filled with political and guerrilla symbolism for the young ideological attackers- a blow against the "reactionary bourgeois". The first blow delivered by "the people" in what was intended to be the storm of destruction that would constitute the "the people's war".

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<sup>4</sup> Effort to consolidate under one communist/socialist party have never been successful in Perú. There still exists a splintered left and right. There is a recognized "United Left" but left parties still operate outside its umbrella.

Nothing but the total annihilation of the state would satisfy or signal ultimate victory. Sadly, it also carried a foreboding premonition of the suffering that was to come for the poor, Quechua speaking campesinos that lived there and throughout Ayacucho's highland regions. That May, no one was yet fully aware of the seditious nature of the violence - how extensive, dangerous, heinous and macabre. Nor, how deeply painful the suffering was to be.

Years of intense violence and terror followed in a miasma of guerrilla insurgents, the armed military, state police forces, national intelligence services and the country's own elected officials. It became for Perú the conflict of, "...the longest duration, with the most extensive impact over national territory, and of the highest cost both human and economic in the entire history of the republic" (CVR Final Report, Vol. 1, Ch. 1, Pg. 17).

### **Digging In**

In the final report of the CVR, the conflict has been charted through five periods: the initiation of the violence (1980-1982), the militarization of the conflict (1983-1986), the dissemination of the conflict throughout Perú (1986-1989), escalation of the crisis (1989-1992), and the decline of subversion and the rise of authoritarianism and corruption (1992-2000). As I have indicated earlier, the peak of Ayacucho's experience coincides with the first three periods, especially the first two. Ayacucho is where the war was gestated and initiated.

Sendero's tactics involved the assassination of public leaders and Sendero opponents in smaller towns and villages. They imposed armed strikes, took the enforcement of morality and civic law into their own hands through *juicios popular*, or popular trials, and found ways of infiltrating community organizations to then take them over and either manipulate their members or dismantle them. The take over of private agricultural operations and the destruction of government farmer assistance works were common.

All of Sendero's early actions were focused towards establishing "bases of support" in Ayacucho's countryside. Following Maoist dictum, the revolution would sweep to the city in a storm of people's justice (meaning Andino peasants) from the rural areas. In the beginning, Sendero Luminoso did enjoy an amount of support from some of the rural population. The comrades who were operating in these villages were usually from the area, youth who had gone away to attend the university in the capital city of Huamanga. Parents who hoped for a better life

for their children valued education as a means to that end. Now in a position of educational inferiority to their children, perhaps they believed what they brought back to teach them was valuable.

The moral law they promoted so vigorously publicly punished corrupt police and officials, thieves, adulterers, abusive bosses, and others. Members of the community and victims of these “criminals” were encouraged to participate in their punishment. Sendero comrades also coordinated committees and set up educational programs within each village or town. These activities gave the residents a sense of empowerment and brought some initial improvement in their situations. Something that as a disenfranchised group, they had had little of in their complicated and dominated social history.

But all this “help” was not without a price to pay. Heavy indoctrination into Maoist principles was part of the daily program and allegiance was expected. So complete was the appropriation of China’s Cultural Revolution, that lessons in Chinese were organized and children in Sendero’s educational initiatives (begun under university auspices) were often taught passages from the red book and learned to memorize Chinese war songs<sup>5</sup>. Even the drab outfits associated with Mao’s China were sometimes worn. But perhaps the most grotesque part of their instruction was the encouragement of violence, focusing again mostly on the younger members of the population, even grade school children. If the campesinos were slow in coming around to their point of view or were resistant, compliance was exacted through intimidation or elimination. These first signs of pressure and use of violence were just a hint of what was to come.

Abimael Guzmán followed the example of Mao Tse Tung’s cult of personality. As creator, supreme leader, and ideological mouthpiece for Sendero, he was an ominous figure. His dedication to violence as the tool for revolution was absolute. His demand for unquestioned loyalty to himself and the revolution was unremitting. The combination of these two was manifested through the “blood quota”. This entailed not only the unhesitant employment of murderous brutality against anyone (even children, the elderly and relatives), but also the

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<sup>5</sup> Much of this was simple rote memory learning. Few but Guzmán or his elite comrades understood what they were saying or singing. Only Guzmán had been to China. It is interesting also that for a movement that was so insistent in its uplifting of the Andino campesinos, there appears to have been no effort on Guzmán’s side to attempt these compositions or edicts in the native Quechua of the region. The imposition of a foreign culture is reminiscent of the original conquistadors directives, to which Sendero and others had reacted to and connected to their revolt. This was not the only hypocritical element to their actions.



surrender on the part of all members of the cadres to the sacrifice of their own lives, without hesitation and at any moment. The fact that he was successful in exacting this pledge from hundreds of followers is daunting. What is more, this quota placed or generated a nature to Sendero that the assorted forces of security, once engaged in combat with them, found particularly tenacious. Guzmán's revolution included not merely the possibility of, but the definite *intent* to "leave rivers of blood, leave millions dead."

### **The Reaction**

The governments reaction to what was happening in the highlands was at first minimal. Located far from the events unfolding and thinking that Sendero was just a small group of student agitators with little power and unorganized, they did not pay any extra attention to reports of attacks on remote police outposts or state offices. What is more, the situation of the new government was precarious. Elected President Ferdinand Belaúnde was returning to the presidential palace in Lima after having been ousted from the same office in a military coup twelve years earlier. The proceeding two military governments of Velasco and Bermudez had left the country in economic and social shambles. For that, there was a lot of pressure on this fledgling democracy to quickly right the wrongs of the previous regime. Moreover, even though the military had stepped down, they had not gone far. Their presence was looming. If the new administration were to find itself in a national security situation requiring the involvement of the armed forces, it could be misconstrued as a relapse to military authoritarianism and a sign of weakness. In the opinion of journalists and writers like those working for prestigious national magazines like *Caretas* (the Peruvian equivalent to Time), the attitude of the government was a mix of wait and see, if we ignore it maybe it will go away, and disconnection to the woes of the interior of the country. In later discussions among the CVR, Commissioner Carlos Ivan DeGregori, at one time a university colleague of Guzmán in Huamanga and witness to the events that unfolded, reflects repeatedly on what he calls Lima's "indifference" to Ayacucho.

Abimael Guzmán and his Senderistas would not be ignored for long. With the goal of state destruction, one of Sendero's key strategies was to incite and taunt the state into confrontation. With constant jeering and prodding through bombings, takeovers of private landholdings, assassinations, and attacks on police stations, they predicted the state would react

and strike back hard, so hard that the people would flee into the arms of Sendero to join with them to rise up and take over. Sendero was correct in one part of its prediction. Eventually the state did strike back hard in Ayacucho, very hard.

Roughly, one and a half years after the first attack in Chuschi, President Belaúnde finally declared a state of emergency in Ayacucho and the creation of military bases began throughout the region. Military outfits began muscling their way into townships and villages commandeering structures and scarce resources at liberty. Along with these bases, a practiced suspension of civil rights was soon in effect. Over the next five to six years, the military presence in Ayacucho cost the highest number of lives during the span of the internal war. It also resulted in the greatest number of disappearances and included the most rampant exercise of torture and violation of human rights for the region. Two of the most infamous bases established in Ayacucho were the army's Los Cabitos in Huamanga and the marines operations within the Municipal Stadium of Huanta. Both locations became notorious places where people went in and were never seen again. Commanding officers like Clemente Noel Moral, head of military operations in Ayacucho, and Captain Alvaro Artaza, known as "Comandante Camión" (Huanta), dispatched their duties in this region with an ends justifies the means attitude.

### **Who Is My Enemy?**

By the time the government realized that they had a well organized and savvy insurgent group on their hands, Sendero had thoroughly entrenched itself. Two phrases were heard frequently; "the party has a thousand eyes" and "we move through the people like fish through the water". Part of Sendero's success had been its members' effectiveness in keeping under the radar. Secretive and unidentifiable to the naked eye, Senderistas regularly moved about in day light hours as regular members of society. What is more, the fear they had instilled in so many meant that persons who valued their lives and the lives of their families were not quick to turn them in. Also, in Sendero's unique situation, the larger numbers of members were young, even some as young as 10 to 12 years old (due to the earlier "educational" initiatives). Those in the most immediate position to know their whereabouts and activities might be their own parents, understandably reluctant to hand them over. This elusiveness on Sendero's part and what was perceived as uncooperativeness on the part of the population increased the frustration of the

armed forces sent to root out and capture the insurgents. It left little love between the campesinos living in Ayacucho and Lima's imported troops. Relations between the residents and the occupying armed forces were strained from the beginning.

The face of the enemy that had been presented to the public was brown and Andino. Practically the entire population in the department of Ayacucho is composed of indigenous peoples. Most living within the region fit the description of the enemy. In a scenario that is reminiscent of Vietnam, for the state security forces, anyone and everyone was a potential combatant. Houses were searched from village to village for signs of Sendero paraphernalia; inhabitants were threatened and brutally questioned with an attitude that they were all hiding someone or something. Hearsay became fact and suspected persons were arrested or brought in for questioning to one of the bases. Survivors spoke of humiliation, rape, torture and death. Already carrying the stigma of a people largely discriminated and devalued by the European descendents who mostly comprised the security forces, Ayacuchanos were now *criminally* suspect by appearance, making them vulnerable to harm and/or the loss of their lives. Most who were taken into custody were detained without due process or visitation rights. Concerned relatives were harassed or were also taken into custody if they began to look too hard or question too much as to the whereabouts of loved ones. In large numbers, the people of the department of Ayacucho began to disappear<sup>6</sup>.

Unlike Sendero who had no need or desire to try and hide their actions, the military went to great lengths to cover up, deny or rationalize its crimes. One of the first mass graves was uncovered in an area called Pucayacu, which means red water in Quechua. In this location close to Huanta, they discovered the cadavers of 50 persons showing signs of strangulation, stabbing and shots to the head along with some military debris. After the identification of some of the deceased, the deaths were suspected to have been committed inside the gates of the Municipal Stadium of Huanta. The bodies included persons who had been taken from their homes and brought to the stadium for "questioning". The same persons, who when inquired about by family members, were said to have escaped or to have unknown whereabouts. As the military presence increased in number so did the violations and disappearances. Massacres occurred in the locations of Soccus, Accomarca, and Ccarapaccasa among others. The outcry over the impunity

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<sup>6</sup> Of course the irony here is that as a result of this sort of harassment the armed security forces played right into the hands of Sendero who were anticipating and counting on this harsh over reaction to push the people of the highlands into their camp of supporters, which in many instances is what happened.

experienced by the people of Ayacucho in light of these crimes found little official recognition or at best was sublimated to the necessity of securing the interior of the country.

It goes without saying that Sendero Luminoso was responsible for their share of deaths and destruction. They were the perpetrators of massacres in Ayacucho as well. In the town of Lucanamarca in retribution for the resident's earlier expulsion of the Senderistas, 69 persons including children and small infants were brutally murdered in cold blood using machetes in addition to firearms. Sendero regularly descended upon and terrorized rural areas. When they were met with resistance or were rejected after announcing the "liberation" of the town or village, the backlash was heavy. Usually the terrified population was rounded up and taken to the central plaza or *pampa* (field). Leaders, officials, or other persons thought to have had dealings with the state, other organizations, or affiliates were found out, were summarily executed. Family members were made to watch or participate in the deaths of loved ones. Youth, sometimes mere children, were often kidnapped and forced to become soldiers in their ranks upon threat of death or harm to others. Already impoverished campesinos were forced to provide shelter and what little food and other goods they had to the occupying insurgents. Their homes were graffitied with pro-Sendero slogans.

This forced assistance put the campesinos in a very dangerous position. Commonly after a Sendero visit, the military followed. In many cases, not being able to understand the resident's native Quechua and/or arbitrarily suspecting collusion instead of understanding the duress under which they provided food or clothing to Sendero, security forces punished whole towns. More disappearances, extrajudicial executions and physical torture were the results. In almost every area, the women and young girls were raped.

### **And We Keep on Suffering**

For years, Ayacucho suffered in the crossfire between Sendero and the armed forces. Many fled their villages. Whole populations deserted settlements that had been inhabited for centuries. In numbers estimated at more than 600,000, *los desplazados*, or the displaced, sought the larger towns of Ayacucho or left the department in hopes of finding safety and assistance in the regions outside of their isolation. What most encountered was either the spread of the conflict or an inability to absorb their numbers. In the city of Lima, impromptu settlements and

shantytowns began to appear and rapidly expand with internal refugees who thought that the economic opportunities were better there. But most found that the racism they had perceived from afar was even more limiting in the city itself. With few skills and resources, most turned to the informal sector or menial labor positions, housekeepers, street vendors, and childcare for the better-off middle and upper class *limeños*. Paid poorly against the high cost of living in the city, few could hope to better their conditions. Those who could not find gainful employment or a trade were reduced to begging or panhandling.

The largest numbers of persons in this position were women. Widows and mothers who had lost their husbands and sons to either side in the conflict were now placed in an unfamiliar position of having to provide for their families alone. In the patriarchal culture that existed for them, the role of breadwinner was not only unfamiliar, but also extremely difficult and often filled with an amount of shame, especially if their victimization included rape. They were left with few resources for aid and sometimes socially repudiated for what they had suffered. A consequential and profound result of their violations was the amount of orphans that were born from unwanted pregnancies imposed upon these women. It is telling that women who later testified in the commission's public audiences and hearings commonly did not speak of their victimization through what they had experienced *personally*, but related their suffering through the events that had befallen their men.

They were not entirely silent however. Ayacuchan women like Angélica Mendoza de Acarza who started the *Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Secuestrados, Detenidos y Desaparecidos del Perú* or ANFASEP for short, demanded recognition and action from the government on behalf of those family members who had been kidnapped, detained or disappeared at the hands of the military and police. Similar to the mothers of the disappeared in Chile, they picketed and filled state official offices with posters and photos of missing relatives. Los Clubes de Madres (the mother's clubs) were some of the most successful grassroots organizations to provide support and basic needs assistance to their communities.

But even with these grassroots attempts to alleviate the absence of comprehensive public assistance, justice or recognition, the needs were too great. By the time Ayacucho's central role in the conflict was ebbing, near the end of the 80's, the already poor department was on the slope of destitution. Settlements were abandoned and the towns were getting more crowded, their resources stretched to the breaking point. Trade had all but come to a halt as trucking became

more and more dangerous on the isolated winding routes to and from the area. Ambushes were regular occurrences. Agriculture was destroyed and merchants were stifled by armed strikes enforced by insurgents in their attempts to “starve out the city” as dictated by Mao’s example. Universities were places of suspicion and armed forces oppression. Schools found it hard to operate since these were some of the first places infiltrated by Senderista elements. Martial law or curfews were the order of the day. In some areas, it could be a risk going out even in the daylight, lest you be stopped for questioning on the street. Fear was the heavy cloud that hung in the atmosphere, surrounding everyone in suspicion and anxiety. The level of distrust was high. In reconciliatory matters, the weight of a betraying state organism is somewhat heavier than that of the rebels. Though both committed countless atrocities, the military and police are expected to represent the intentions of the state towards its population. When the time came for the commission to begin its labors, practically the whole of Ayacucho was in need of a comprehensive overhaul, structural, economic, social, emotional and psychological. Besides the efforts at investigating and recording the events of Ayacucho’s years of despair and heartache, they would have thousands of families looking to them to find justice and recompense.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WE NEED A COMMISSION

Making the decision to form a truth commission is easy relative to the task of actualizing it. For the most part, a globally supported popularity has grown for some kind of cumulative, historically important gathering of facts after extended inner turmoil almost such that the thought of *not* having a commission or similar mandated body could seem unusual. With that in mind, and as introduced earlier, Peru is far from the first country to have a commission, even within Latin America. The country has had several examples to choose from. As a matter of fact, saved but for Suriname and the two Guyanas, every country on the South American continent has been through some truth seeking process.

It is a frustrating reflection that there have been so many violent preceding causes for these official bodies. Much effort is focused to deepen and increase our understanding of the value and to seek better methodologies for authoritative and public accountings of the truth (subjective and illusive as it is). However, it goes without saying that this would not be the necessary trend be it but for the fact that we seem to have a lesser understanding and failing methodologies for how to avoid resorting to violence in the first place. Or at least, we have not yet found our way to that sophistication.

#### Aspects of a Commission

##### Size and Makeup

Commissions can come in varying compositions and sizes. Some are small like the three-member commissions created for El Salvador and Guatemala by the United Nations. Others, like the famous and often cited South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, found a larger number was necessary. How the number is decided doesn't seem to come from any standardized formula other than through the discretionary factors of each country's perceived needs. Generally and when able, the effort is to create a blend of public interests, an accurate demographical representation, and to the degree possible, to involve persons from both sides of the conflict. The aim in this last point is to steer away from possible later accusation of bias.

Appositively, balancing these elements can be difficult. A victimized population will find it hard to swallow or uncomfortable having persons associated with their perpetrators taking commission seats doling out “the truth”. Besides the anger that is sure to be present, fear as it relates to accurate disclosure of events is a high level concern.

Likewise, given potentially volatile or defensive political factors at the time the commission is formed, promoting the demands of the victims and delving deeply and meticulously into government violations, can be precarious in transitioning to a democracy. It is a general unavoidable risk in creating a commission, no matter what the size or make up, of confronting popular cathartic-like backlashes and attitudes or a reactive political shut out. The commission must walk the fine line between the two - public and institution.

Some formations of a commission have tried to assuage these kinds of potential pressures by choosing persons completely uninvolved. The three serving as the commission for El Salvador, out of necessity, were not nationals of that country. The genesis of the commission itself was not a product from within El Salvador either. It was a mandated body created as part of a United Nations peace accord. The Salvadorian post-conflict atmosphere was still too tense. The end of the conflict was a negotiated one via the UN without the definitive defeated and/or victorious. Out of that, the decision to choose third party persons of international repute that favored neither side, given the circumstances, was a prudent one.

Perú did not have an atmosphere that required outside arbitrators. The call for the commission and its mandate came from within Perú itself. The adhoc, roundtables and conferences that preceded the actual designation of commissioners were at some liberty to suggest and choose from the full demographic spectrum. With that in mind, in the particular case of Perú it is important, due to the nature of the conflict and the demographic of the greater percentage of victims, to note the glaring absence of any persons of indigenous heritage serving on the commission. This absence, whether conscious or unconscious, out of necessity or choice, became conspicuous to the public and had an impact.

Of course, there is more to a commission than just the commissioners themselves. The numbers of staff and other support persons involved, not to mention the physical machinery imperative to the task, have also varied from body to body. To a degree, these particular variants come from financial factors. Without a doubt, commissions cost money. This money can come from a mix of sources, public and private, internal and international.



Differences in funding affect the number of employees a commission has been able to hire and how much of the needed infrastructure they have been able to afford. Budget constraints can also affect matters of time and scope of the investigations. It would make sense that conflicts of longer durations would warrant larger budgets, larger commissions and longer amounts of time to do the work. But that is not always the way it goes. South Africa comes closest to this ideal investigating a span of 34 years with a large staff of some three hundred persons and a budget of about 18 million dollars a year. It continued its work for about three years. Guatemala, on the other hand, with a similar expanse of time to investigate had a much smaller budget of 9.5 million in total with a two-year time frame in which to complete its investigations.

Constraints on the fiscal solubility of a country coming out of a violent struggle and the willingness or ability of outside international sources to contribute moneys can account for some of the fluctuation. Early commissions like those of Chile and Argentina were fully funded by their own governments, including their reparation schemes. However, in comparison to later, larger and more ambitious commissions, they were small in scale. El Salvador operated on a budget provided entirely by voluntary contributions from members of the United Nations. Others, Peru included, have received funds from international foundations, organizations and sympathetic countries to keep afloat and finish their assignments.

As an aside, there could be provocative conclusions made for the why's and how's of disparities in international monetary support from commission to commission. It might be illustrative to sketch out overall political, geographical, and demographical picture of the distributions of support. What, out of the nature of the conflict, the level of visibility, or even having a famous spokesperson like Nelson Mandela, could solicit greater contributions? There weren't many who by the end of the 1990's did not know what the word Apartheid meant. With large student movements on campuses across the world and media coverage including large-scale Hollywood movies, it was hard not to have at least heard of South Africa. Comparatively, how many were familiar with the ongoing massacres of small Mayan villages in the deeper parts of Guatemala?

Lastly, there are other questions, questions concerning motivations, purposes and objectives, surrounding countries that agree to pay or contribute to the exorbitant costs for

operating their *own* commission of whatever size or make-up, and the commonly subsequent unwillingness to then come forward with the costs of reparations<sup>1</sup>

### **Authority and Mandates**

The mandates of truth seeking bodies and what authorities they invoke in them also vary. With mandates, as with most other aspects of a commission, there are some complications. Mandates can come of presidential decrees or from negotiated peace settlements with third parties. In its most elementary character, a mandate lays out the parameters for the investigation and documentation. A mandate regulates commissions in matters of time (both time frames to be covered and in which to complete their task), of scope (what violations are to be covered and/or excluded), and objectives (whether to produce a strict listing of the facts or to make the case for purposes of prosecutions). The extension or limitation on any one of these can invite an amount of criticism.

A particularly contentious aspect of issuing a mandate is the subsequent determination of how much power or autonomy can, or should a commission be afforded to execute it? Authority may not always be built into a mandate it can be discretionary.

A few of the capabilities that could be available to a commission affect the breadth of their investigative capacity. Are they given the authority to subpoena hostile witnesses, to demand the surrender of documents and archives from branches of government or the military? Do they have access to prisoners? How much can congressional, parliamentary or other institutional blocks thwart them? Whether they have the support of the government, and/or any institution or organization, can be influential to exercising their authority, to whatever extent it may be. Other powers might include implying or indicating responsibility, to publicly name those responsible, or to initiate judicial proceedings, such as was the case with South Africa, to hand out amnesties.

As with all other aspects, each country has had to make its own way through deciding how much authority is necessary to effectively complete the task. Commissions are usually caught in the debate over more or less capacity throughout their work. When it comes to stepping on certain guilty toes, the call comes out to pull back the reins. It is just at these moments that commissions are likely to need and ask for the most liberal interpretation of authority.

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<sup>1</sup> For more info on funding of commissions see Hayner appendix 1, chart 8 on page 335

Peru enjoyed a generous amount of liberty to demand records and request testimony from officials both past and present, including ex-president Alan Garcia. This liberty did not however always translate into cooperation. They could ask all they wanted for whatever they wanted. However, stubborn officials repeatedly denied the existence of documents or access to them even though the presidential decree creating the commission expressed that cooperation *should* be extended to them<sup>2</sup>. Some testimonies were given in such a way as to disclose as little as possible. Some implicated persons simply left the country to avoid interview or possible reprisal.<sup>3</sup>

Mandates often speak of how commissions are looked to for recommendations of reparation and reconciliation. Even if not explicitly laid out in a mandate, most commissions include these matters of remedy as a culmination to their monumental efforts. What's more, with preambles that commonly qualify the need for a commission with the hopes that violent conflicts of these sort never happen again, these recommendations make sense. Appendices of Patricia Hayner's Unspeakable Truths, lay out some of the key recommendations from previous commissions ranging from institutional reforms, to educational initiatives, to cash payments. Not every commission has followed a formula. Some commission's recommendations or plans are more comprehensive. Others are extensive only in certain areas, glossing over others. Chile's commission was very specific in its recommendations for cash payment to the victims of its 17-year military regime. Exact amounts of money were allocated based on a delineated criteria and break down of recipients. El Salvador's commission strongly stated the need to remove those implicated in violations and to bar them from seeking or acquiring civil service positions in the future. They even recommended the dismissal of the members of the Supreme Court. The CVR mandate, Article 2, sections c and d, explicitly delineate part of the commission's objectives as "to elaborate proposals of reparation" and to recommend institutional, legal, educational and other reforms".

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<sup>2</sup> The paragraphs concerning what level of cooperation that was to be afforded the CVR can be found in article 5 of the Supreme Decree No. 65-2001-PCM

<sup>3</sup> In the case of Argentina, some officials refused to admit that what they had done was wrong. They instead insisted that their actions were appropriate under the circumstances and that they acted on behalf of state security. In the prologue to the report Ernesto Sabato states, "In the course of our investigations we have been insulted and threatened by the very people who committed these crimes. Far from expressing any repentance, they continue to repeat the old *excuses* that they were engaged in a *dirty war*, or that they were saving the country and its Western, Christian values." Any kind of acceptance of actions has been seen in some countries, but usually only extends so far as picking up suspects for questioning and detention. When questioned about excess use of force, torture, rape and wrongful death, the familiar denials and uncooperativeness is reasserted.

There is a bit of trickiness to this linkage between mandates and recommendations in regards to the previously mentioned authority. There are three R's intertwined, recommendation, reparation, and reconciliation. The use of authority for investigative purposes is confined to just that, the investigation. When it comes to the final recommendations, they are only that, recommendations. The authority of a commission does not usually extend into the *execution* of these recommendations. Even though in Peru's case, Article 2, section e of the mandates states one of the objectives as the "establishment of mechanisms to carrying out the recommendations", it does not give the commission the authority to see this carriage occur. How this effects Peru's aims of reconciliation one could speculate. In any commission's scenario, the temporary extension of authority and its later retraction, or its limits, when it comes to effecting subsequent recommendations and plans for reparation can and does frustrate goals to advance reconciliation. Popular ideas of usefulness and their solidarity with a commission through the interests of the victims is complicated and deflated when after long periods of discussing reparations and remedy, things break down once the commission is disassembled. Public frustration sets in at the lack of action on the recommendations and/or plans for reparation when they have fallen to someone else, namely the government. Speculatively, that government may be feeling defensive under investigation. They might be less inclined to initiate programs of any kind once the investigation is over. Or, they could carry a grudge and feel the need to exercise their powers by *not* initiating the recommendations as a backlash to a commission's temporary authorities. These complex linkages between mandates, authority, recommendations, reparations and reconciliation are important in commissions' public and political reception and subsequent problems.

### **Those Who Came Before**

Perú is the focus in this thesis, but it is helpful to place Perú's experience in a larger picture. The CVR was not created out of a vacuum and even though every country's commission has distinct histories and characteristics, they serve as examples for those commissions that come after. Started with several recent neighborly examples to choose from when deciding how to go about putting together its commission, what did Peru learn from them? What aspects, if any, did they chose or not chose to reproduce? Did they, or have they experienced some of the same problems as their neighbors or are their problems unique?

With any one of the other Latin American commissions, the CVR would be looking for examples of strategies to borrow that fit their needs or elements that would not work for their political, social and cultural situation. Better than reinventing the wheel, it makes sense to look at those who came before for inspiration and example. Perú recognized the prudence of this kind of modeling in a conference called “*Perú 1980-2000 El Reto de la Verdad y Justicia*” (The Challenge of Truth and Justice). A pre-commission working group consisting of members of the Ministry of Justice, human rights groups, and other NGOs for the establishment of the CVR invited scholars and experts to present papers and lectures on the topic of comparative commissions within Latin America. The opening plenary was titled, “Truth Commissions: Historical experiences and lessons for Perú”.

Before moving on in following chapters to more details specific to the CVR, we will briefly look at four of the commissions in the Latin American region that were available to Perú for consideration: Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala. The four will be presented in chronological order.

### **Argentina**

An important consideration or point of interest in the investigation of the Argentine military regime in relation to the CVR and its own investigations, is the rumored training received by members of the Peruvian armed forces by the Argentine military in the torture tactics used during Argentina’s “dirty war”. Also, resulting successful convictions based on the evidence collected, which was turned over to judicial prosecutors, are to the country’s credit as a whole, though I pause to say to the commission specifically. This would be something those in Perú would want to duplicate. Yet, even with this significant link and success, the commission of Argentina seems a less than impressive example for Perú. They were limited in scope. Only fully investigating the particular crime of “disappearance”, they omitted the plethora of other violations that took place. The final report was somewhat simplistic and superficial in approach and even language. In skimming the contents, one finds a long list of cases and testimony file numbers. One of the last headings in the report is the “Doctrine of Oppression” which is a scattered collection of quotes and referential texts with no deliberate examination of the political or social antecedents to the conflict. There is an absence of sophistication and depth. To be fair, they had no real predecessors to pattern themselves after; they were really the first truth commission in South America, though it did not carry this title. When created, Argentina found

themselves in a profound and important transitional moment as a country. Their efforts were born of a popular cry for atonement or at least a clarification of the horrific practices of the previous regime. Moving forward on the fast track to democracy, the commission plunged into its works adapting and adjusting in the process.

After the government of Argentina was handed back over to civilian hands in 1983, one of the first constitutional acts performed by newly elected president Raúl Alfonsín was to create the *Comisión Nacional para la Desaparición de Personas* (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons), known as CONADEP. It was established to investigate disappearances of persons that took place during the seven-year military junta beginning in 1976. The commission was enacted On December 15, 1983 by presidential decree and given nine months to complete its work<sup>4</sup>.

The commission consisted of initially 10 presidential appointed commissioners; a mix of a respected writer, Ernesto Sábato who served as President of the Commission, bishops, a rabbi, and various persons involved in local human rights organizations. Later, an additional three deputies were solicited from the two chambers of congress (though only one complied).<sup>5</sup> Their limited mandate eliminated any avenue for assigning responsibility- from naming names, and clearly laid out its operations as strictly those of an investigative nature. Any matters of judicial recourse were to be left to the courts.

In the beginning, Congress had wanted a parliamentary commission with more authority; some human rights groups who had been working during the dangerous times of the regime and other NGOs were reluctant to help the commission for this reason. Eventually, they did lend their support by sharing volumes of info they had collected over the years of the dictatorship. This networking with local, and for later commissions, international NGO's and human rights groups, has proved to be one of the most important strategies a truth seeking body can employ to get a head start on the overwhelming task of information collection and to creating the broad based support necessary to its task. The CVR was fortunate that it had at its disposal one of the most efficient and internationally recognized network of human rights groups in Latin America, *La Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (The National Coordinator of Human Rights),

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<sup>4</sup> The full report can be found here: <http://www.nuncamas.org/index2.htm>

<sup>5</sup> There is some discrepancy in just how these three were added to the list of commissioners. In the report itself, it points to the president or working groups as having "solicited" other members to attempt to keep the non-biased balance. Patricia Hayner implies pressure coming from the military or hard right parties of government applied to have them included.

which had been recording and campaigning on behalf of Peruvian victims throughout the violence.

Once underway, the Argentine commission became in nature that of a giant law office meshed with a public investigator. Witnesses and surviving family members began contacting and coming to their offices to give depositions or to seek help in finding the whereabouts or conditions of missing loved ones. They were soon forced to expand their space and staff as the tsunami of testimonies began to swell. Original staff workers were on loan from the Civil Service office. Some of these workers who were given the task of recording the constant flow of depositions had to eventually quit due to the psychological strain that hearing such horrific testimonies on a continuous basis had on them.<sup>6</sup> Later commissions including the CVR, learned from this the importance of psychological support systems for those staff members with these duties.

The recommendations from the report entitled, *Nunca Más* (Never Again), were scant overall. The efforts were not comprehensive enough; they seemed immature or sweeping in their approach and narrow vision-ed to the greater effects and ramifications of the event. There was recommendation for a continuing body to bring the collection of evidence before the judiciary in pursuit of justice. Also that, “The appropriate laws be passed to provide the children and/or relatives of the disappeared with economic assistance, study grants, social security and employment and, at the same time, to authorize measures considered necessary to alleviate the many and varied family and social problems caused by the disappearances.” What these laws might look like and how they would be regulated, what measures were to be authorized and what these varied social problems were, seem undefined giving the recommendations the feeling of being un-weighted or haphazardly discretionary.

What Peru might have learned from Argentina’s work is the need for broader based mandate that encompassed more crimes, a more inclusive definition of “victim”, and an investigation into the deeper social underpinnings of the conflict. For Perú this would be an imperative consideration. They would also need to consider the psychological aftermath of survivors and the effect on the social atmosphere of the country at large. Overall, there is a need for more comprehension and sophistication. They also learned (as probably did others) to budget

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<sup>6</sup> Public audiences to collect testimonies like those of the CVR were not a part of Argentina’s strategies. All testimonies were taken with the witness in private and were confidential as they would be in any legal case under normal investigative circumstances.

adequate time prior to beginning work to prepare for the task ahead. The work groups of the CVR were given 30 days to organize, work out logistics, and to set up the machinery needed.

## **Chile**

Chile's military dictatorship from 1973 until 1990 was Perú's contemporary as their southern and often antagonistic neighbor. On March 11, 1990, the new president of Chile, Patricio Alwyin, took office after Augusto Pinochet was voted out by a narrow margin. As in Argentina, one of the first official actions of the new presidency was the creation of a commission to investigate and clarify human rights violations and oppressive practices of the former military regime. Chile's *Comisión Nacional para la Verdad y Reconciliación* (The National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation) was the first to call itself a truth commission and to include reconciliation in its title. One reason for this inclusion was the on going contentious and divided manner in which the population viewed the events during Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship. Reconciliation was a necessary consideration to moving forward. The number of commissioners was eight. Four were supporters of Pinochet and four were not. The staff of 60 included, besides lawyers and law students, social workers for psychological perspectives.

More sophisticated and comprehensive than Argentina, the Chilean mandate was still limited two important areas. First, the presidential decree that outlined the purpose and jurisdiction of the commission indicated that the commission was to investigate and report on "the most serious cases of human rights violations". Also, these "must be limited to instances of disappearance after arrest, executions, and torture leading to death committed by government agents or people in their service, as well as kidnappings and attempts on the life of persons carried out by private citizens for political reasons". This ruled out a whole group of persons who were no less victimized or traumatized by torture by the sheer fortune of having survived it. They were left out of the deeper investigation and subsequent reparations.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, again as with Argentina, the commission's mandate did not allow the commission to pursue any legal recourse on its own. Instead, they were to hand over their report and evidence to President Alwyin who would "adopt the decisions and initiatives that he regards as appropriate". The mandates of both countries also dictated that they were not to assign

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<sup>7</sup> The mandate of the Chilean commission, Supreme Decree No. 355, can be found at: [http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/chile/chile\\_1993\\_decree.html](http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/chile/chile_1993_decree.html) Later reports and efforts were made in 2004 with the attempts to include in reparation schemes those who had been left out under the definition of the mandate. A Human Rights Watch report of this can be found at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/11/29/chile9742.htm>



responsibility, name suspected guilty persons, or take position on any of the cases in its work. A great deal of the compromises or limitations made within the mandate (as is the case in several countries) was a result of the political atmosphere following the regime change. A still present and powerful military and political right posed a real enough threat to a peaceful transition to democracy that these compromises became necessary and persipacious

Outside of CONADEP's mandate, individual Chileans were stymied in attempts to get convictions in the judiciary due to an amnesty that had been issued by Pinochet. Yet, in an elegant legal maneuvering by the president, names of suspects were made public through continued investigations of cases brought forth by the commission in thier standard court proceedings. By interpreting the amnesty as applying a bar specifically and exclusively on the convictions and not on the further investigations or the judicial proceedings that would lead to conviction, he circumvented the obstacle to revealing the names of the guilty. The materials gathered by the commission help expedite these proceedings. Chile provided an unusual example of how reports and evidence from commissions can be used once relieved of their mandate confines to overcome amnesties and other obstacles to help bring about an amount of justice.

Chile's recommendations were more comprehensive and more itemized than those of Argentina. Part Four of the almost 2000 page report is broken into four chapters that delineate in great detail a litany of recommendations categorized into multiple headings covering everything from symbolic reparations to legal rehabilitations. It was in these recommendations that *La Corporación Nacional para Reconciliación* (the National Corporation for Reconciliation) was established for the continuation of investigating cases left unresolved or incomplete due to time constraints of the commission. Also suggested was a social welfare plan that included aspects from housing to health care to free education and a pension payable in real monetary terms to surviving family members. As a package, the body of recommendations and plans for reparation surpassed those of Argentina and gave Perú a more sophisticated template to consider when thinking over what its objectives might be. In the end, the CVR's proposal of recommendations weighed heavily in the area of institutional reform and welfare provision. They could be laid out in a structured form delineating exact programs and more than simply superficial or in commentary form.

Included in all of their recommendations, reconciliation was important to Chile, as it was to be for Perú. Both include the word in their commission's titles. Yet, the treatment of it in

Chile's final report seems vague and non-specific. Reconciliation is given only two introductory paragraphs in the first chapter and one subsection heading at the end of a chapter, in the last part of the report, before the final conclusions. Part four, Chapter two, Section D, Subsection 4 is written:

“Truth and justice-insofar as they can be attained through the courts-are the pillars on which a reconciled society must be built, but in themselves they are not enough. The various sectors of society affected must also be brought back together. In this regard, it should be noted that this Commission has heard numerous statements from those who suffered indicating their desire that the nation be brought back together and reflecting their spirit of not seeking revenge.

Hence, it is to be hoped that those who are in a position to help advance reconciliation with some gesture or specific act will do so. They could, for example, make available the information they may have on the whereabouts of those who disappeared after arrest or the location of the bodies of people who were executed or tortured to death and have not yet been found.

Only by taking such steps will we advance toward the national reconciliation that is an utter necessity and is also the primary condition for avoiding a repetition of past events.”

A greater portion of the chapter goes into great detail on the promotion and infusion of a “human rights culture” into Chile's social, political and legal fabric. The CVR too was to place the efforts of reconciliation in a context of human rights but expanded and elevated its treatment attaching its importance to a means of changing oppressive social paradigms. Whereas the structure of Chile's report places reconciliation at the end of a list that examines truth, justice, reform, and reparation, Perú places reconciliation as a prominent chapter heading to the finale of its report and all of the previous elements fall under its heading as if the entirety of its 4000 plus pages were leading up to it.

### **El Salvador**

Although El Salvador and Perú are not immediate neighbors, El Salvador would have been an interesting consideration to them in just how differently their commission was formed from most others of Latin America. While commonly created from presidential or parliamentary decrees, El Salvador's commission was, as said earlier, created as a condition to a negotiated peace accord via the United Nations. Much smaller in comparison to other commissions of Latin America it was no less capable.

The small country of El Salvador suffered 12 years of chaos and rampant human rights violations at the hands of both a forceful civilian insurgent group and a military gone unchecked within a submissive and impotent judicial system. Corruption and intimidation left the central government only that in name. They became at the least ineffective and innocuous, at the worst a hive of manipulation and deceit. With the complete absence of the rule of law, it was inevitable that the only pathway to an end to the violence had to come from outside the country. The peace agreements were signed in Mexico in April of 1991 and January of 1992 after a long and often stalled process. Written into these agreements were the call for “The Commission on the Truth” (*la Comisión por la Verdad*) and its mandate laid out in four headings: functions, powers, undertaking by the parties and the report.

The specifics of the mandate were not very much different from any of its predecessors. They, like all others, were restricted from taking any judicial recourse and were limited to an investigative capacity, though broader than those of Argentina and Chile. Even so, they vocally promoted punishment for guilty persons even if they were censured from naming them or issuing convictions.

One of the enviable aspects of El Salvador’s commission was in its composition. Since they were uninvolved dignitaries appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations, they were in an operative sense, answerable only to him and not to the two jockeying parties of the peace accord. The commission even kept an office at the UN in New York City. Without political censure, no parliamentary or congressional interference, they were more at liberty to run things to their liking. Others, like Peru, were not always able to do this, but El Salvador provided a good example of how a more removed body might choose to operate.

Another advantage to their UN status was the international element it brought to their works. Their report put certain aspects of the conflict and perpetuation of the violence in this global perspective calling attention to other members of the United Nations whose advantageous investments in the conflict should be atoned for in donations of funds for compensation to the victims. Other commissions could do the same of course but they would carry less weight without the UN label of approval. And though other commissions had posited the domestic alignment with International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the three commissioners for El Salvador used these laws as the basis for which to codify violations as falling into the mandate’s category of “serious acts of violence”. Certainly, this was influenced by having the

ex-president and one of the former judges of the Inter American Court of Human Rights, Thomas Buergenthal, serving as a commissioner. This connection to and entrenchment in international conventions and bodies of law was an important consideration for later commissions like Guatemala and to the CVR for finding a solid base in which to seat some of its findings and recommendations.

The bulk of the commission's recommendation fell under institutional restructuring. They started with the call for the dismissal of those in the armed forces and within the civil service who were implicated in human rights violations. They then focused largely on the judiciary that had been so terribly amiss in the execution of its duties during the violence. The commission sought what in essence was a house clearing of the entire court system, starting with the Supreme Court of Justice. They did include passages concerning "steps towards reconciliation" which forwarded the idea of compensation, both material and moral, but these were less explicit than the previous aims at reform. Such a strong stance on institutional reform was tantalizing to commissions like the CVR who were also facing disastrous or compromised judicial systems.

One last element of a peace accord mandate that was key for El Salvador that perhaps Perú would have liked to appropriate was the obligation of the two parties to "undertake to carry out the Commission's recommendations". Hard to come by in an internal presidential decree, some kind of obligation from the government to initiate the recommendations of a commission would be attractive.

## **Guatemala**

Guatemala shared with the other three countries mentioned, and with Perú, a similar cold war anti-communist military reaction to leftist activity that was out of control. Their protracted 36-year civil war was the longest lasting and probably the bloodiest with an official estimate of over 200,000 persons killed or disappeared (and presumed dead) reported by the *La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* (CEH) in its final report. For Perú however, Guatemala's experience would have been of particular interest beyond the base political atmosphere of the era. Both Guatemala and Perú had an internal pre-existing social and cultural divide between a more urban population of European ancestry and very rural and mostly isolated indigenous groups. The Maya in Guatemala, like the Incan ancestors in Perú were marginalized. In both conflicts, the greater number of deaths and heinous violations of human rights, including large-scale massacres, rampant use of sexual violation and torture, and the murder and entrapment of

children, were visited upon both these native populations. The discrimination and impunity expressed towards the Maya as a group was reminiscent of the long time disenfranchisement of Ayacuchanos and other Andinos. In both countries, the indigenous groups often took on the role of scapegoat. Guatemala's addressing of this historic disparity in its commission and resulting recommendations would have been an important consideration for Perú.<sup>8</sup>

Like El Salvador, the CEH (Commission for Historical Clarification) was part of a peace accord mediated by the United Nations.<sup>9</sup> Again, it was comprised of three members. But in Guatemala's case, the Secretary General of the UN chose only one person allowing this person to in turn choose the other two, both of whom were to be nationals of Guatemala; unlike El Salvador where all three were foreigners.

The mandate of the CEH, its purpose and operations, is written into the peace accord signed in Oslo between the State of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity in June 1994. The scope of its investigation seems the most broad of those examined here. The three commissioners were to investigate "human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer, connected with the armed conflict." The period to be covered was equally generous, "from the start of the armed conflict until the signing of the firm and lasting peace agreement." What makes the mandate of the CEH unique is the focus on the importance of memory. The title of the final report is "Memory of Silence". Explicitly laid out in its mandate is the need to "preserve the memory of the victims". In its purpose to formulate specific recommendations, initiatives that focused on this end are congruent with the directive of "generating mutual respect and strengthening democracy". With a conflict lasting as long as that of Guatemala, memory would be a real concern. Victims from the initiation of the conflict, an entire generation before the peace accord, needed to be of the same importance as those most fresh in the minds of the people. Perú's experience with Sendero Luminoso was just

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<sup>8</sup> Also that they used this discrimination in relation to recognize the practice of genocide that in the end allowed them to name the guilty where otherwise their mandate prohibited them from doing so; international conventions being seen as trumping the mandates.

<sup>9</sup> Even though this was the official commission of Guatemala, it was not the first effort to investigate violations and collect evidence of the 36 years of internal armed conflict. Prior to the forming of the CEH, Monsignor Juan Gerardi, the archbishop of the Catholic Church of Guatemala, of his singular effort had performed many of the same actions of a commission producing a report called "*Informe Guatemala; Nunca Más*" (Guatemala Report; Never Again), in April of 1998.

one-third the length of time as Guatemala's, yet strengthening and sustaining the popular memory of the past events would be nonetheless useful.

The commission of Guatemala's final report and its accompanying recommendations is soft and reconciliatory in tone. There is recognition of the devastation and ruthlessness of crimes committed against the people of Guatemala, especially the Mayan population, but the usual language of implication is not as prominent. There is a perceptible effort made to avoid focusing on either side, to stay the middle road in laying out the results of their investigation. It seems with each address of criminal behavior it is prefaced or closed with a bit of backsliding to avoid ruffling anyone's feathers or appearing biased.

Regardless of the less toothy body of the report, the recommendations of the CEH directly addressed the problem of racism and discrimination of the Mayan people. A focus was made on respecting the "cultural plurality" of the country and recommendations were made to not only honor the ways and customs of the indigenous population but to encourage their political participation. Besides monuments and national holidays honoring those who died, the commission encouraged the reclamation of "sacred sites" to the Mayan people. This effort to include the culture of an indigenous population was carried out even in the recommendation for the establishment of a reparations organism. Not only was it to address individual claims for reparation but also to consider applications made for *collective* reparations. Many Mayan communities live as a functioning whole. When one person dies, it is of course a loss for that person's family, but since this person also plays a role in the functioning of the community, it is also the community as an entity that suffers.<sup>10</sup>

Perú would have plenty to take into account in these matters for itself and its commission. When considering its purpose and what it wanted to achieve for Perú as a country (needing to reconcile and move forward), the CVR would not be able to lay aside the issues of racism, disenfranchisement and the cultural differences of the department of Ayacucho. These issues were imbedded in the conflict itself; they were part of its impetus. It would be imperative to its success and credibility in the eyes of those most effected and most anxious to see an atonement, to make the best possible undertaking in this area. Having an example to deliberate in tackling this complex and hot button part of the commission's work would have been very valuable.

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to also note the inclusion of landownership policies in the recommendations of the CEH. Most Mayans live an agrarian life and landownership and use is a vital part of their lively hood and survival.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HOW AYACUCHO EXPERIENCED THE CVR

#### A Commission is Made

With the scandalized expulsion/resignation of Alberto Fujimori from office in late November of 2000, the Peruvian congress spokesperson, Valentin Paniagua was chosen to take his place as interim president. Political and social circumstances, including vocal public demand<sup>1</sup>, prompted Paniagua to set in motion the necessary preparations to begin the creation of a truth commission for Perú. His first supreme resolution dated December 9, 2000, just two weeks after assuming office, was to establish an inter-institutional working group on the establishment of a commission; how it should run, what its mandate might look like, what the criteria might be for choosing the commissioners and what kinds of legislative projects might be necessary to assist with its functioning<sup>2</sup>. The working group consisted of members or representatives from The Ministries of Justice, of Defense, and of the Interior. Also from, the Public Defender's Office, the National Coordinator of Human Rights, the Episcopal Conference and the National Evangelic Council. A unique inclusion in this working group was the participation of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Human Development. With a large number of females having lost their husbands to the violence and the substantial preliminary evidence that women were targeted for torture, sexual violence plus other gender related violations, focusing early on in the process on this group of victims was insightful. The group was given 90 days in which to present a report to the office of the interim president on the matters mentioned.

In the first three days of February, the members of the working group held a conference at the National Museum in Lima with help from the Ford Foundation and the International

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<sup>1</sup> There was pressure on him and the government in general to create a presidential commission to thwart efforts of the congress, which housed some Fujimori support (as he had contrived it to be), from creating their own commission that would not be as strong in areas of his anti-terrorism laws that had caused the imprisonment and death of hundreds. Plus, to assume there was no presence of Ayacucho in Lima is false. With the displacement of some 600,000 persons from the countries interior having fled the violence, their presence was felt and perceptible they were seen and vocal.

<sup>2</sup> The group creation decree can be found here: <http://www.cajpe.org.pe/RIJ/bases/legisla/peru/304-2000.HTML>

Center for Transitional Justice. Dignitaries, scholars and international figures were invited to participate. Over the three days, eight papers were presented on issues relevant to the group's task of shaping the potential profile of the commission to be<sup>3</sup>. Also, a short survey was drafted and distributed by the Ministry of Justice (as a representative within the working group) to directors of organizations who would be involved in the commission's work and to academics and other persons of repute. The survey was brief and asked the same basic questions about mandate, what acts should be investigated, and what kind of criteria should guide the selection of commissioners.

Throughout the country, but especially in Ayacucho and other departments who had experienced the brunt of the violence and terror, these early steps towards manifesting the commission were watched with a mix of both hope and numbness. For so long to have been the object of terrific abuse and corruption that seemed to concentrate itself in their regions, being tentative to give into relief was understandable. Many had been falsely led to hope when Fujimori was elected to office. They had been promised an end to the war and that corruption would be contained. Instead they faced an *autogolpe* (self-coup) and ten years of excruciating economic austerities and ruthless anti-terrorism laws that sent many persons to prison without due process on little more than trace suspicions, unfortunate associations or for reasons that were more secretive and dubious.

All this activity that was happening in Lima went on simultaneously with the new presidential candidate's campaigns. Outside the city, during the campaigns, attention was being brought to the issue of the future commission in the newspapers. When the candidates who were hoping to step in where Fujimori was pushed out campaigned through these battered regions, the raised voice asking for truth and for justice and reparation was unavoidable.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Mandate**

On June 2, 2001, constitutional interim president Paniagua scripted the decree that created the truth commission<sup>5</sup>. The decree lays out the mandate, structure, and modus operandi of the commission in seven brief articles. Like all other commissions before it, Perú's commission would have no juridical powers. The commission was subscribed to five objectives:

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<sup>3</sup> A full list and access to the papers of this conference can be found at: <http://www.aprodeh.org.pe>

<sup>4</sup> The national news magazine, La Republica ran an article on the need to discuss CVR in debate and campaigning in Ayacucho its May 15, 2001 issue.

<sup>5</sup> Supreme Decree No 65-2001-PCM can be found here: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/lacomision/nlabor/decsup01.php>



to analyze the political, social and cultural conditions that contributed to the conflict, to contribute to the clarification of crimes and their responsible parties and to the whereabouts or final end of victims, to elaborate proposals of reparations to victims and their families, to recommend institutional, legal, educational and other reforms such as to guarantee the prevention of future crimes, and to establish the mechanisms for the carrying out of these recommendations.

The scope of crimes to be investigated was at the same time explicit and broad. The list covered assassinations and kidnappings, forced disappearances, torture and other grave treatment, violation of the collective Andino community and native people's rights, and other crimes and grave violations against the rights of persons. To carry out its investigative objectives, the CVR's capacity was laid out with greater liberty than some previous commissions in Latin America. Article 6 of the decree delineates its ability to interview anyone, to visit any place, to subpoena any documents it deems necessary to its function. In an interesting accommodation, the CVR was to be afforded the "support and collaboration" of the organs of the Executive Power, including the armed forces and national police, the very same organs that were to be under investigation. The Executive branch was also written into the resolution to undertake whatever coordination within its jurisdiction of "other powers of the state" to promote the cooperation of these with the commission. The CVR was at liberty also to propose special agreements of cooperation with the legislative, judicial powers and the Public Ministry and other constitutionally autonomous institutions.

### **Of Time and Commissioners**

Originally, the commission was given 18 months to complete its work with an optional 5-month extension and was to consist of seven commissioners, all of Peruvian nationality and known for their "ethical strength, prestige and social legitimacy, and identified with the defense of democracy". All commissioners were to be appointed by the interim president with the approval of the Counsel of Ministries. From the date that the decree was signed, 30 days were afforded to the designation of said commissioners. After their installation, they had 90 days in which to organize and to draft the necessary regulatory and structural documentation. The 3 months of preparation to undertake the commission's monumental task were not to be deducted from the 18-month time frame designated for investigation.

The choosing of commissioners, as stated in the decree, was the task of the interim president Mr. Paniagua. Much anticipation and speculation surrounded the theme of who would

be chosen. In the June 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the newspaper, La Republica, just a few days after the supreme decree that was to regulate the commission was published, an article was written pondering at the 30 some names that were at the presidents disposal and guessing who might in the end be chosen. The selection process was at the president's discretion and took place privately without disclosure to the public (including the names being considered). Speaking with persons who were living in Lima and Ayacucho at this time, the general feeling was that they trusted the president's capability and judgment to choose well. Also, many understood the need for certain aspects to take place away from the eyes of not only the public, but of the lingering supporters of Fujimori within an agitated congress, which had been pressuring for a commission of their own under their guided jurisdiction (and no doubt control).

An important insight in the before mentioned article, reflecting public opinion, was the need for persons to serve on the commission who were Quechua speakers. It was no secret that the greatest numbers of victims were native peoples, isolated Andinos who did not speak Spanish. As noted in earlier chapters, the greatest cry for help and justice had throughout the conflict come from the highland department of Ayacucho whose population in greater part speaks Quechua. When it was to come time for testimonies to be taken and stories to be told, the scenes were going to be elaborated in the Quechua culture and language. It only made sense for people to expect that either a native person of the Ayacucho region or at the least, someone who had extensive understanding of their needs, experiences and cultural identity, would be chosen to serve as a commissioner.

The commissioners were chosen and a decree stating their installation was scripted one month after the appearance of the La Republica article. Of the seven names appearing on the decree when it was made public, all with enviable qualifications, there was not one person of Andino heritage. But this was not to be the final roll call.

After the heated 2001 elections, Alejandro Toledo narrowly defeated former president Alan Garcia and on July 28 was sworn in as the new publicly elected president of Perú<sup>6</sup>. He was the first elected leader of indigenous heritage, the first with the blood and the features of an Incan

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that during the entire time the creation and choosing was going on there was a tense battle for the seat of the presidency going on between Aprista Alan Garcia and Perú Posible party candidate Toledo who was attempting for the fifth time to be elected (Toledo founded the party and headed the opposition against Fujimori). The issue of the commission was well debated and utilized in campaigning strategies. Toledo was running against Garcia who had been scandalized in the press after his alleged involvement in the El Frontón prison

descendent. It can't be understated that this fact was of more than passing consequence at this juncture for the country and it wounded people. In August, Toledo affirmed the creation of the commission<sup>7</sup>. He also made a couple of slight changes to the original decree.

Bringing attention to the goal of the commission to lay the foundations for national reconciliation, Toledo changed the name from the "Truth Commission" to the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission". In addition, he added five more commissioners which included the controversial appointment of Lt. Gen. Luis Arias Graziani, a retired member of the Peruvian Armed Forces. Bringing the total to twelve (plus one designated observer, a Monsignor Luis Bambarén Gastelumendi), Toledo gave the CVR an additional 30 days for its organization based on the need to incorporate the new commission members. Unfortunately, the list of the added five was also missing anyone of Andino blood.

The final twelve commissioners consisted of ten males and two females<sup>8</sup>. They were a mix of ex-politicals, academics, professionals and persons of religious organizations. The resume of each appointed person was impressive. They were accomplished in their chosen fields and experienced in matters that were imperative to the work of a truth commission. Enrique Bernales had been president of the Commission for Human Rights of the United Nations, and anthropologist Carlos Ivan DeGregori, a graduate and one time faculty member of the University of Huamanga had written on the conflict in several well published and insightful papers. Sophia Macher, one of the two females, had been the Executive Secretary of the National Coordinator of Human Rights and was part of the original inter-institutional working group that helped form the commission. She had been especially active during the worst part of the conflict and knew intimately the conditions that the commission would be dealing with in terms of the magnitude and nature of the violations. Salomón Lerner Febres was appointed as the president of the commission. As the rector of the Catholic University of Perú, the most prestigious academic institution in the country, he was an educated choice to head what would in essence become a university of regional headquarters and zonal offices. Certainly, the panel was impressive. However, it was also almost entirely composed of light complexioned Limeños (such as those of

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massacres. With the CVR creation in the air the public hot on the issues of the past and government involvement in terrific violations, it is remarkable that Garcia chose to run at all.

<sup>7</sup> Supreme Decree No 101—2001-PCM can be found here:

<http://www.cverdad.org.pe/lacomision/nlabor/decsup02.php>

<sup>8</sup> The full list of commissioners and their profiles can be found here:

<http://www.cverdad.org.pe/lacomision/nlabor/comisionado.php>

Lima are called), a characteristic that did not go unnoticed. Only one of the entire twelve had the ability to speak Quechua, Alberto Morote, the past rector of the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho's capital city.

Even in the preliminary days of its process, the public and the press observed the creation of the CVR with expectant and opinionated eyes. A great many of those eyes were Ayacuchanos, even those that watched from the city of Lima where all the activity was taking place. The flood of displaced persons, who fled the violence from the interior of the country out to cities like Lima, surrounded the central city in multiplicities of settlements, shantytowns and impromptu refugee camps and was present for the announcement.

After the appointment of the chosen twelve, there was no *immediate* reaction of either overwhelming approval or disappointment. That was to come later. For now, the public was given the commission they had asked for. It would not be until they began their work, began to hold public audiences, and began issuing press releases that the accusations of “La comisión pituca” and graffiti equating CVR with Sendero Luminoso, CVR=SL began to appear.

### **Of Morality**

Each member of the commission, by signing an “ethical commitment” on October 1, 2001<sup>9</sup> made an agreement to uphold the work of the CVR in confidence and to act in accordance with the greatest propriety while in its employ. More importantly, however, the idea of ethical principles was not only ingrained into the mundane operations of the commissioners, and of all the staff and volunteers who served the CVR, but also into the purpose and atmosphere of the commissions existence.

In addition to the in-house dialogue concerning morality, like other commissions, the CVR based its legitimacy on international treaties and agreements governing the protection of human rights, these included the Geneva Convention Against Torture and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The CVR considered Perú, as a signatory, liable to these documents and the International Court that was created to litigate their violation.

Just the name “truth commission” suggests attentiveness or sensitivity to a level of morality. Commissions come in the wake of sometimes decades of impunity and barbaric violations against humanity and of human rights. They appear after chaotic periods of what often

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<sup>9</sup> The text of the Ethical Commitment can be found here:  
<http://www.cverdad.org.pe/lacomision/nlabor/pdfs/compromiso.pdf>

seems a deliberate turning away from what is moral. It would then make sense their attempt to recapture the country's virtue in the eyes of its citizens and the international community.

The truth commission for Perú did work from a base of morality like most of its predecessors and they too projected their works as part of a recuperation of what was unconscionably lost or wasted during the conflict. But there was more. There was a certain timbre coming from the CVR. The words coming from the commission, through press releases and interviews, implied that there was a moral debt that needed be paid. Most immediately, the obligation was attributed to the combatants from the 20 some years of internal violence and political corruption perpetrated against the citizens of Perú. But this was not all. The accrual was presented as more far reaching than just these recent events that the commission was called to investigate and respond to. It was a moral burden with a scope that encompassed the country's long-standing imbalance within its social structures and paradigms. Referring back to the mandate and its direction, "to analyze the political, *social and cultural* conditions that contributed to the conflict", the commission would be remiss in its fulfillment if it had not called into question these imbalances.

Directly addressing these historical social rifts and chasms that had marred and agitated the social well being of Perú as a country was in many ways uncomfortable to some public ears. The debt was scripted and vocalized as bring owed from one nearly deliberately ignorant segment or group of society, to another that was discriminated, oppressed, and in several ways used and abandoned<sup>10</sup>. Unable to separate geography from politics due to Perú's centralized set up, this translated into Lima's debt to the interior of the country, mostly the highland regions like Ayacucho. This, in turn of course had racial and cultural implications with Lima and other cities being "white" and the highlands being populated by the "brown" indigenous peoples.

The isolated peoples of the Andes, like in Ayacucho, had always felt the neglect or misunderstanding of the central powers of government throughout the decades, under many regimes, in many fashions<sup>11</sup>. Some, who were living in the farthest reaches of the altiplano, had, if at all, an incomplete or uneducated concept of citizenship, human rights and participation in governance. Or, if they did have, the long time disenfranchisement that nurtured their exclusion

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<sup>10</sup> A debt on the part of those who turned away the whole time that took comfort in the ignorance or in the idea that it was something happening to "those people" and that there was not any effort made to help until Lima felt the punch.

in the process was simply accepted as routine. This region had only in the last years of the 1980's, with the creation of La Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, been widely exposed to grievance for violations as a right due them under the rules of a democracy. The basis of morality that was coming from the commission was a newer language for this region and these people. Later, when the CVR got underway this dissemination of a rights-based language and its accompanying ethical expectations would have a definite impact.

Though this active moral approach was not *strictly* necessary (the social paradigms and their consequences could have been acknowledged and discussed limited to an academic sense), it was not capricious or self-righteous. Claiming that, reconciliation hinged on the restoration of dignity to those who had suffered, the recuperation of morality was seen as an obligation to reconciliation and a necessary pre-requisite to attaining it<sup>12</sup>. Part of the recuperation was the call for urban Perú to face up and acknowledge its racist and classist ways of the past and to atone for it. A great deal was also made of morality in terms of its relationship to issues of reparation through (and as) justice. Even though the commission was aware of its restrictions where matters of the judiciary was concerned, it was not limited in its mandate to speak on such matters as they would be called for in fulfilling the charge of recommendations for reparation and reconciliation.

## **The Truth Comes to Ayacucho**

### **The CVR Opens Its Doors**

The CVR initiated its “public work” officially on November 13, 2001. One of their first actions was to travel the length of the country making a visit to each regional seat of the commission. One of the first stops on the list was the office of the South Central Region in the capital city of Ayacucho. The designation of Huamanga as the location for this region's seat of operations, with the appointment of José Coronel Aguirre as Regional Coordinator, was not only logistically appropriate but also heavily symbolic. The regional seat office was housed within the city public offices, which made it the direct neighbor to the main buildings of La Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, the birthplace of Sendero Luminoso. Both buildings are situated in the city's central Parque de Sucre, also known as the Plaza de Armas, a city square

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<sup>11</sup> For a brief but insightful synopsis of Perú's past regimes, see the introduction and first chapter of Kirk, Robin. The Monkey's Paw: New Chronicles from Peru. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997

<sup>12</sup> See the introduction to the CVR final report, 5.3.1 for text about reparation as broken down into the moral aspects.

formed by four sides of Spanish colonial structures that frame a central grassy area and a memorial statue and garden for the victors of the Battle of Ayacucho. When the commission offices were installed, standing facing the southeast side in front of these sixteenth century structures, to the right end was the birthplace and one time headquarters of the most deadly, successful, and cruel insurgent group to ever sweep through Perú. On the left end, with the magnificent and historic Catedral de Huamanga in between, was the space in which hundreds upon hundreds would come to give an account of their agonizing experiences with death and suffering; they would come to look for answers. Some would come with hope, hope of finding information about missing, “disappeared” loved ones and perhaps finding some recompense and justice.

A group of the commissioners held a course of public and private meetings and press conferences in Huamanga at the university starting at 10:00 am on Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November lasting until the 16th. They coordinated with local officials, non-government groups and with the local staff. These meetings were intended to introduce the commission and its works to the public and the organizations and offices that the CVR were going need to for support. Though this meeting presented the national face of the commission with the CVR president Salomón Febres as lead moderator, it more importantly presented the directors and technical teams of the local office. These directors and teams, and their staff, were to be the real presence and working body of the CVR in the department of Ayacucho. While the 12 commissioners chosen by the president were the official face and voice of the CVR, it was the local staff along with hundreds of volunteers who did the work. They took the testimonies, comforted those in crisis, traveled to the remotest provinces, and coordinated with local officials and NGOs. They were also the ones who would take the brunt of public reactions sparked by political slander or by those who would seek to undermine the commission for whatever motives.

The local office was structured with an administrative staff of 23, all answerable to José Coronel Aguirre, who was in turn answerable to the commissioners in Lima. There were fixed and mobile teams who took testimonies with the help of volunteers, mostly students. There was a psychological support office along with special investigation and forensic teams. There were volunteers who processed the massive amounts of data that flowed un-ebbing into the office. In contrast to the national face of the CVR, almost everyone who worked or volunteered in the

South Central Regional Office in Huamanga was a local resident and Quechua speaking, with the exception of certain forensic specialists, some of who came from outside of the country<sup>13</sup>.

On November 16<sup>th</sup> the group of commissioners left the Ayacucho office to their task for the time being for other locations. They would be back in five months to begin the series of public audiences. As ready as they were ever going to be, the regional office opened their doors.

### **Public Audiences and Testimonies**

“Estas audiencias quieren poner remedio a un silencio ya intolerable.” These words are from CVR president Salomón Febres during the press conference held in Huamanga, April of 2002 at the inauguration of the CVR’s public audiences program. They translate into; “We want these audiences to provide a remedy to a silence now intolerable.” No other Latin American commission had used public audiences in their truth commission efforts. Perhaps following the example of South Africa, Perú’s commission was emphatic in regards to their value and necessity.

The audiences, beginning in the department of Ayacucho, were carefully framed as a moral exercise and as a mechanism of healing<sup>14</sup>. In the same inaugural speech, Mr. Febres calls the audiences “one of the most important and significant activities” of their vast labors. One of their purposes was to address the impunity and “the prolonged indifference of the rest of society before the suffering of so many victims.” Most saw the internal conflict and wide spread violation of human rights as having robbed victims of more than just their loved ones or well being. They also saw the impunity that characterized the attitudes of the centralized state and urban population as endemic of Perú’s disenfranchising social practices and as robbing victims and whole peoples of their dignity as human beings. “During many years, the Peruvian population preferred to turn their faces, to not look in front of them, to ignore the tragedy that their humble brothers were living. That condemned silence, that forgotten on the part of the state and society, is also a way to rob us of our dignity and that is what we want to begin to remedy.”

The commission was recognizing an important element of their purpose. The primary directive of the CVR to reveal the truth was important but they saw that the manner in which that

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<sup>13</sup> Press release no. 69 detailing the contraction of foreign experts in the process of exhumations can be found here: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/informacion/nprensa/notas.php?idnota=27>

<sup>14</sup> See press conference to inaugurate public audiences and what character will they have here: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/audiencias/inaugura.php> They intentionally pointed out that these audiences were not to be “scenes for debate of ideas, nor for confrontation on versions of events, nor trials for the commissions to pass verdicts.”



truth unfolded was an opportunity to heal. The public disclosures were an opportunity to reveal and address issues like racism, long sublimated to discriminatory societal paradigms. The public audiences were more than just a way of getting to the truth of specific crimes and events, they were a means of recuperating voices lost under the silence of impunity and getting at the truth of a society. The commissioners of the CVR considered it necessary for the whole country to hear these accounts in order to advance mutual understanding and empathy and to end isolation. Reflection would be unavoidable if the goal of reconciliation was to be authentically attempted.

The first series of public audiences began in Ayacucho in Huamanga on April 8<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> and in nearby Huanta on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. They opened with a series of speeches by Mr. Febres and several dignitaries including persons of the United Nations, the Organization of American States and a member of the South African commission who brought words from Nobel Peace Prize winner, Desmond Tutu.

After all the official ceremony and show was completed, the commissioners took to their panel seats and the testimonies began. All day and into the evening, person after person took to the microphone. One after another, emotional stories of torture, abduction, rape and murder filled the hall. It also filled the rooms of those listening all over the country, over channels of mass communication that carried the public audiences. Twenty-one cases were recounted in Huamanga and nineteen in Huanta in that first series. Many of the testimonies were related in Quechua, which necessitated the presence of translators in order for the panel of commissioners to understand.

The impact of the public audiences in Ayacucho was multi-faceted. There were intentional or hoped impacts, such as an urban recognition of the situation of the isolated people in the interior of the country and their terrible experiences. Additionally, there were many consequential effects. A study was undertaken by the CVR on the impacts of the public audiences on the participants<sup>15</sup>. The study followed along four general guidelines; to examine if the act of testifying was experienced as diminishing their sense of dignity or as empowering, to evaluate the impact on the participants' self-image, to evaluate the potential to alter relationships between participants and their families and/or local community, and finally, to listen to opinions, reactions, expectations of participants in regard to the results of the testifying process. What they

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<sup>15</sup> The study of the impact of participation in public audiences can be found here: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/audiencias/impacto.php>

found was a range of emotional and psychological effects on the participants. Of course there were the expected sensations of reliving the violence and the exposure of psychological difficulties such as post-traumatic stress, paranoia, and intense depression. But other social/mental phenomena were recorded.

Ayacucho had been the poster child for all that was violent, impoverished, neglected and misunderstood. When Peru thought about the internal conflict, all minds turned to this highland region. Its images of brown, poor, indigenous peoples crying over butchered dirty bodies or unearthed mass graves of whole villages massacred and civic offices full of mothers, wives and children holding pictures of abducted or imprisoned relatives were the slide show to the war. But those who had the power to address their pleas had not carried their cries into action or justice. Now, in some cases after 20 years they were finally being given notice. The anticipation that many spoke of feeling in the post audience impact assessment was a mix of feelings. There was fear for reprisals from security forces. Some spoke of the discomfort of seeing known police persons in the audiences or from the police that were uniformed employed to keep order at the proceedings. There was also fear from those who came from higher isolated areas where hiding Sendero ranks were said to be camping. During the conflict, it was impossible to tell who was a friend and who was a SL member, so stealthily had they invested the communities. Those who still carried the learned paranoia to believe anyone an informant were anxious when giving testimony. But these fears did not stop persons from speaking. This is a nod to the continued vehemence of the CVR that these audiences were necessary and valuable.

An interesting concern noted by several that spoke, was whether others of their communities would perceive them as having “spoken well”. One 41-year-old man, who spoke of a loved one disappearing, expressed this type of concern.<sup>16</sup> Knowing that there would be television cameras and other media from around the country and beyond, he stated in the impact assessment that he was worried about what he has going to say. He was troubled about his role before the public as a representative of his “people” who had suffered the same crimes. He and others felt that when they were given the opportunity to speak, they were not speaking only for themselves. He wanted to present, “something that can sit well with the people”.

The altiplano lifestyle is very community based. It is dependent on village system structures of group support and cooperation in order to survive the harsh conditions. The

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<sup>16</sup> Section 2.1 of the impact study, paragraph 5

individual has an importance beyond his/her nuclear family, fulfilling more than one role. Communities view themselves as a unique collective whole. In the social structure that existed and continues to exist in Perú, the non-indigenous, urban population *also* sees those living in this region as unit based but of course in a more generalized framework- based on their inclusion within a racial group, irregardless of community identification. It can be said, therefore, that the concern of one representing the many and the desire to speak well within that burden was a founded concern.

The audiences were considered by supporters of the commission as a success and were hailed as a long needed catharsis. But racism cannot be undone by simply pointing it out and for Perú. It could not be uprooted so superficially. There is little doubt that the opportunity for victims to convey their experiences and to expose the effects of a racist social set up would have some impact. Yet, the challenge of long rooted hierarchies and deeply socialized attitudes that had been in play for, really, centuries would take more than testimonies.

### **Local Organizations and Groups**

Before the public audiences began, before the regional office had been opened, even before the CVR had finalized its preliminary organizational period, testimonies were being taken around the country. In an August publication distributed by SER (Servicios Educativos Rurales), an NGO dedicated the support and development of rural areas, information was given where persons could go to give information or personal testimony concerning events or crimes they had suffered or witnessed<sup>17</sup>. In the years of turmoil offices like the Defensoria del Pueblo (Public Defender's Office) and the consolidation of nationwide human rights groups that formed the National Coordinator of Human Rights had been collecting evidence, taking testimonies, filing injunctions on behalf of victims, protesting and petitioning. During the organizational phase of the commission, they signed collaboration agreements with over 30 groups, organizations and offices including with the Public Defender and with the National Coordinator. Both had regional offices in Huamanga. The CVR also signed an agreement with an Ayacucho regional collective called Yuyarisun that consisted of the Ayacucho Agricultural Department, SER, IPAZ, and the Departmental Federation of Mother's Clubs.

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<sup>17</sup> "Para Que No Vuelva a Repetir", was published by SER with monies from USAID in August 2001. It was edited by Javier Torres.

At the outset, the CVR relied heavily on these groups and their preexisting networks and voluminous archives to get a jump-start on their investigation. According to José Coronel Aguirre, the regional office of ANFASEP (A human rights group within the National Coordinator of Human Rights focusing on the disappeared) contributed over 120 files of kidnapping cases.

Ex-Regional Director Aguirre also explains that many staff persons within these local offices provided staffing support to the CVR efforts. They acted as translators, took testimonies, collected and cataloged evidence and the overwhelming amount of data. In addition to the clerical operational support that they provided (mostly without pay), their history, recognition and acceptance as a member of the region was invaluable. When the exhumations began, members of ANFASEP and Paz y Esperanza accompanied these processes and the public information events that followed. The CVR as a national undertaking needed local groups to help establish them as credible. Whereas the CVR was to be the national platform for those who had been victimized, it would have been a near impossible task if the local groups had not been the spokespersons for the CVR with the victims themselves.

Unfortunately, as the CVR matured and became more established some of the relationships with these local groups especially in Ayacucho declined to some degree. When the CVR began to rely less on outside support (what the groups saw as rejection or abandonment), some resentment began to give rise to accusations of a clientele scenario. A few cries of imported Lima arrogance and elitism popped up in conversation and the words “comisión pituca” (a slang term for bourgeoisie) were heard. After the final report came out and the problems with reparation and lack of justice began to ferment, these types of feelings would be exacerbated.

### **The Exhumations**

Over 4000 mass graves were said to be in the area of Totos alone. This isolated location in the higher altitudes south west of Ayacucho, is a place where the military would helicopter in the dead to hide their bodies. An x-ray of the mountains would provide a picture of one big disorderly graveyard.

Most killings or massacres committed by Sendero were not so clandestine for the simple fact that they felt vindicated in their murder and felt no need to hide their acts. Often they left

them unburied as a warning. The two natures of the sites where those killed either by one side or the other were found, were distinct. Most persons killed by Sendero were bound and cut, commonly in the throat. Many of these bodies were found with SL paraphernalia like the hammer and sickle or slogans on paper. Those who were believed or proven to be killed by armed forces showed signs of torture, beatings and execution style shots to the back of the head. Unlike the insurgents, the security forces went to great lengths to cover up their crimes. The Municipal Stadium in Huanta or the Los Cabitos military base on the rim of Huamanga, both in the department of Ayacucho, were high volume factories of death. From here and other military locations in the region, the armed forces deliberately attempted to cover up their actions by secretly hiding their remains. For many who were “disappeared”, their remains were transported to far away places to be buried in mass graves.

The first exhumation officially undertaken by the CVR was in the Ayacucho district of Chuschi during January 21-23, 2002. Another symbolic gesture on the commission’s part, Chuschi is where all the violence had begun back in May of 1980 with the explosions of the ballot boxes perpetrated by Sendero. With this first effort, the remains of eight persons who died at the hands of an army patrol were located and uncovered based on witness testimonies. After positive identification through forensic science and through family members by articles of clothing and personal effects found on the completely decayed bodies, the bones were given a public ceremony before being interred in the local cemetery in local custom. Later exhumations were begun in the Totos area and in Lucanamarca, two sites repeatedly implicated in witness testimonies. At exhumations, family and local residents surrounded the sites. The commission provided psychological support for these persons during and after the process.

The challenge of exhuming mass graves for the CVR and survivors in the department of Ayacucho was their overwhelming multitude and the slow process in which they needed to be handled balanced against impatient and emotional surviving family members. There were two motivations active. One, the intent of the CVR and others to execute the finding, study and identification of the dead as a precursor to building solid cases to pass on to the appropriate offices, like the Public Defender’s Office, to take to court in the pursuit of justice. And two, the desires of families to find their loved ones as soon as possible and bring a close to years of uncertainty and anguish. There was an understandable friction between the two. Family members also wanted justice, but how could they reconcile waiting years before they could lay their

husband, children, fathers, mothers and others to rest? And, what reason or precedence did they have to believe that the promise of justice would come about to justify the wait?

Besides the volume itself that was going to demand time and patience, the CVR was forced to make choices about which cases were to be of higher priority. Those cases with the strongest amount of testimonial accounts and supporting evidence were placed higher on the list for subsequent exhumation efforts than those with less evidence. Yet, the vehemence and demands of the families of those persons killed who were not in high priority cases were just as valid and just as constant. It was a difficult task of the CVR to try and convince these persons that there was collective benefit to their reasoning. It would be impossible to bring everyone to justice with so many implicated in incalculable amounts of crimes. The CVR was aiming to make cases that would support demands for trials for the worst offenders and those of the most notorious infamy.

In comparison to the inexhaustible job of exhumations, collecting testimony and coordinating public audiences were elementary. With exhumations, the potential for friction between official efforts and the perceptions and attitudes of the public were higher. The forensic team, with experts from Argentina and Chile (from their own exhumation efforts), were under several pressures, some completely out of their control. At one point, the team initially employed by the commission gave up their posts under the strain of constant pressure from lack of funding, lack of technical resources and defensive political pressures. Popular pressure was evident as well. A Special Attorney General's office was created specifically for Ayacucho to deal with cases of disappearance, forced executions and kidnappings. The office was filled everyday with indigenous persons wanting to get or give information about their relatives. They wanted to know when the Secretary was going to go find them, when the officials were going to do something about all the testimonies they had received telling them where these people were buried.

An additional incidental obstacle that was interfering with exhumations was simple nature and the circumstances of day-to-day life. In some places where graves were located, wild animals had discovered bodies that instead of being buried completely were covered with mounds of rocks because the ground was too hard to dig into. Animals, like wild pigs, had partially consumed some of the remains or had dragged them out of their original locations, sometimes carrying bones long distances away thereby destroying valuable evidence as to their

identity, nature of death or possible additional remains. In other places, local inhabitants had found remains when engaged in agricultural work and undertook their own exhumations.<sup>18</sup>

In this mix of obstacles and demands, the exhumation efforts in Ayacucho were difficult and frustrating at the least, and cause for public and political agitation at the worst. Some unfortunate incidents that exacerbated relations in these efforts were instances of the mishandling of remains, incompetent or incomplete removal and cataloging. Some bones were mixed in with others. In the case of Sancaypata (an area in the district of Totos), 15 were abducted and later assassinated by a military patrol. In an exhumation, 15 bodies were found and identified by the commission as these from Sancaypata. The families did not accept this identification. They did not recognize any of the personal items or clothing. Also, the forensics on the teeth stated that these men chewed coca. The family stated that their community did not grow nor chew coca. A burial ceremony was conducted anyway coordinated by the CVR. Later in April of 2004, another 15 bodies were found. The families immediately identified clothing, belt buckles, repairs in sweaters that they themselves had made, and other articles. In June with the help of the NGO Paz y Esperanza, another ceremony was held in the city hall and the remains were later transported back to their village for burial.

Exhumations of course have also been good and continue to have successes. During the CVR's operations, the exhumations of the 69 bodies persons massacred at Lucanamarca were all recovered. Recent exhumation efforts have revealed a huge killing field and incinerator for remains near the Los Cabitos military base, which has provided sufficient evidence to the Attorney General to file injunctions against the highest military commanders of the Ayacucho region during the conflict.

### **Packed Up and Ready to Go Home**

Eventually the CVR reached the end of their mandate. In the few months before their August 2003 deadline for entering their final report, the Ayacucho regional offices had to stop taking testimonies (though they continued to be taken by the Public Defender's Office and the National Coordinator of Human Rights) in order to finish processing the 5,434 testimonies they

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<sup>18</sup> After making friends with a young man in Ayacucho and visiting his house, he showed me a skull with a bullet hole in the rear of the cranium that he and his brother had found in a mountain crevice while on a hiking trip in the Razuilca base.

had recorded. This high number exceeded original goals by more than 1,100. In the entirety of testimonies that comprised the database of the CVR, 82% were recorded by the regional seats in the interior of the country, away from Lima. Press releases, bulletins and public statements continued to be published by the commission press office as they geared up to prepare the public for the release of their findings and recommendations.

There was a great deal of anticipation and anxiety in Ayacucho (and the whole country) surrounding the release. From that moment on would begin another arduous challenge. Now that the truth was spoken, written and recorded, how was Peru going proceed with the duty of making amends for that truth?

### **High Expectations**

The issue of reparation had been in the press and in the mouths of all those surrounding the commission from the time of its creation. Part of their mandate decrees their obligation to define what reparations should be undertaken for victims to help advance the process of national reconciliation. These, in conjunction with the elevated promotion surrounding the public audiences and testimony taking, helped to heighten the expectations on the issue of reparation. Motivations for testifying were not immune to the hype. The reasons for giving account of victimization became three fold. Of course, large numbers of those who came to give witness did so out of a hope to get information on the final end of missing loved ones or because their conscience and mental anguish demanded it. Also, matters of judicial justice were prevalent. However, it is undeniable that to any person who was living on the edge of abject poverty, especially women who have been thrust into the unfamiliar role of providers for their families after the deaths of their husbands, father and sons, would find the promise of reparation very motivational.

Victor Raul, a resident of Huamanga who worked as a translator and recorder of testimonies during the time of the commission in Ayacucho, had a very interesting and poignant perspective on reparations and the act of poor campesinos coming to tell their stories. In a debate of sorts he and I had in Huamanga in late January 2005 on the potential psychological benefits to recounting their stories as a significant motivating factor for coming forward, his perspective was, “Yes, they are humans. They are emotional, mental beings. But the urban idea of mental health is out of place here. These are people who live very harsh and difficult lives; they are accustomed to some degree to the difficulties of being poor. Their concerns are much more



rudimentary than our urban luxury allows us to be preoccupied with. They are concerned with putting a roof over their heads and food in their mouths.”

Victor in the end was not impressed by the CVR. He saw many come to give testimony that by either misinformation or other misunderstanding had walked from far away isolated places believing they would be compensated upon testifying. Instead, they were given promises. The promotion and expectation of reparations, to some who came forward, became, in a way, the carrot on the end stick.

In the time after the final report and the publishing of the Integral Plan of Reparation, feelings of frustration and betrayal in Ayacucho gestated. These feelings were the result of the government’s subsequent reluctance and other political obstacles to initiating the plan. Old feelings of being used resurfaced. Some in Ayacucho felt that again, Lima had come and taken what they wanted, promising things, and then left them with nothing. Since the matter of reparations had been habitually conversed with the goal of reconciliation, this frustration posed potential problems for the later. There may have been an unintentional construction of a conditional scenario; there would not be one without the other. It is not explicitly evident, yet reasonably sensed that increased frustration concerning lack of reparation would present reluctance to progress towards reconciliation. Without a seen effort to “make good” on the long touted recompense by those who had expected as much for whatever reasons (from their victimization by the government during the conflict to their arduous participation in the commissions proceedings) the road to reconciliation would be bumpy.

One additional complexity presented itself in the milieu of reparation and reconciliation. As the commission may have set up a conditional scenario in relation to these two, they also may have provided the subtext to the justification for that condition.

The issue of oppression, disenfranchisement, and impunity based on long tolerated and pervasive racism was the issue that rode along the entire journey of the commission. The CVR had encouraged the exposure and recognition of its shameful presence. It had pointed to racism as one of the preconditions for the conflict itself and the ensuing impunity shown by the government. When problems with reparations began to ferment, the cry of racism was heard again but this time from the victims. It was not the case that racism had never been challenged by those who were victim of it, neither in Ayacucho nor in other departments. The difference was that a Lima initiative, sanctioned by a democratically elected government had been the first to

bring out the red flag of racism. And after 2 years of promoting human rights, of increasing awareness and education of the inalienable rights of citizenship, the pitch of the cry was louder and stronger with a newly acquired vocabulary to back up their resolve.

### **A New Language**

José Coronel Aguirre, in a personal interview, was asked what he, as the Regional Coordinator felt were the biggest successes and failures of the CVR in Ayacucho<sup>19</sup>. On the top of his list of successes was the “human experience” during the interviewing process of taking testimonies. “Listening with respect and empathy to testimonies of infinite cases of torture, sexual violations, extra judicial executions, kidnappings, massacres and razing of communities.” He goes on to point out that majority of those who came to tell their stories were women. Quechua speaking, illiterate women who “had never before been the object of attention by the judicial power, Public Ministry, Nation Police, or press for their cases much less heard in their demands for justice and reparation.” Along with an open ear to hear the voices of those who had suffered in Ayacucho, the CVR had words and concepts of their own to impart. For each person who came forward to add their story to the list of testimonies, besides receiving an empathetic ear and psychological support, they received a lesson on human rights with its accompanying vocabulary and concepts.

Each bulletin, news release, and broadcast public audience that was held or released was rife with human rights discourse because of course human rights are an inextricable element and primary objective of any truth commission. This had multiple effects on plans of reparation and the people of Ayacucho. It firmly based the need for reparation in an internationally ascribed and recognized paradigm and it also educated those who had been victimized.

Carrying more than just the innate sense of having been wronged most elementarily by having been subjected to extreme physical suffering and mental anguish, they now were provided with the concept that they were “right bearers”. According to Erika Bocanegra who I spoke with at the National Coordinator of Human Rights, some victims recognized during the CVR in Ayacucho had not even considered themselves as full participating citizens of the country in which they lived being so isolated and conditioned to exclusion. Many without the DNI (National Identification Document) that allowed persons to vote, were not even registered with state organisms. Now, they were aware that as citizens in a Peruvian democracy and more

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<sup>19</sup> Personal interview took place in Huamanga in January 2005.

comprehensively as a citizen of the world and member of the human race, they were endowed with inalienable rights. Prior protest and demonstration demanded relief from impunity or justice yet did not always have a solid conceptual base. Now, demands were launched from a claim that, “I am a human and I have human rights which must be recognized, honored and protected.”

The new language acquisition had two sides. Ms. Bocanegra also said that educating victims on the concepts of human rights was in some ways an effective empowerment tool, giving a base to demands, but it also sometimes increased the sense of victimization. “Some now cling to the identity of victim because that is a negative place of power. Instead of being *empowered* to move on and use their citizenship and its implications to participate in government, they prefer to remain passive in the role of victim and make their demands from this subordinated role using human rights as their banner.” Given that most of the victims who came forward as survivors seeking reparation were women who traditionally assumed passive social roles, this makes unfortunate sense. Mister Aguirre’s comments earlier about never having been object of attention by the powers that be is an interesting consideration in the dynamic of having captured the public eye and this new human rights vocabulary. Consider an Andino woman of Ayacucho, traditionally subordinate in a culture that has always been disenfranchised, having been victimized in incomprehensible ways, passing through the CVR process. She now has been treated with reverence, been told she is deserving of a multiplicity of reparations and given a base for that desert that is inseparable from her state of being. And, she has been made aware of all this by “white” Lima. Now armed with a new paradigm and a new vocabulary, this woman and others moved forward after the CVR to ask for what they were promised.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ON THE OTHER END**

#### **The Release of the Report in Ayacucho**

“Much has been written about the persistent cultural, social and economic discrimination in Peruvian society. Little has the authorities of the state or citizens at large done to combat that stigma of our community. This report shows to the country and to the world that it is impossible to live with the depreciation that is a sickness that causes such tangible injuries. From today, the names of thousands of the dead and the disappeared will be here, in these pages, in order to remind us of this.” These words are found in the unreserved introduction to the final report of the CVR of Perú written by the commission president, Salomón Lerner Febres.

The report, with all its findings and recommendations was submitted to the president of the republic, Alejandro Toledo, on August 28, 2003. At the same time, 43 reports of human rights violations were submitted to the Public Ministry to be pursued in the judiciary of the state of Perú. Only these 43 cases from the 69,280 estimated victims that were reflected in the commission’s findings. Already some 69,200+ persons were out of the immediate loop of justice.

The next day on August 29, 2003 at noon, a big ceremony accompanied the release of the report in Ayacucho. A giant stage was constructed in Huamanga’s central Parque de Sucre in the form of a retablo. A retablo is a culturally and regionally specific item that has been crafted by Ayacuchano artisans for centuries. Retablos come in varying sizes. They are basically very ornately painted boxes that contain paper machete figures depicting anecdotal scenes. Originally, they contained biblical scenes and were used by the Spanish missionaries in their encounters with the indigenous peoples of the highland regions who did not speak Spanish and were mostly illiterate. Like many remnants of the conquistadors, retablos have been incorporated into local custom and culture. It is fitting in many ways that this symbol was used for the CVR ceremonies in Ayacucho. There were obvious reasons for deference to the local aesthetic, but also retablos’ purpose is to house and carry stories. During the ceremonies in Huamanga, the giant retablo

doors stood open to either side of the stage as commissioners, local officials, residents and others presented the recorded testament of the violence suffered upon so many in Ayacucho. In a continuation of the theme of story telling, the abbreviated version of the final report was later published (in Quechua and Spanish) with the Quechua title “Hatun Willakuy” which means “great story”. Yet sadly, so many who stood before that giant box that day in August hearing the story they had lived, were as the audiences of those Spanish missionaries so many centuries ago - indigenous and mostly poor and illiterate. The likelihood of them actually reading the results from two years of reliving their anguish was minimal at best.

The crowd was populated by many Ayacuchanos carrying banners and signs with names of family members who had disappeared, been imprisoned or executed asking for justice. The expectation and agenda of reparation and the hope for reconciliation were hot topics with the crowd that day, and with the day’s luminaries. As the festivities went on into the night to celebrate the closing of the commission’s labors, another chapter for the players in Perú’s chronicle was beginning.

Having come through the truth commission and the exposure of the ugliest side of Perú’s social tendencies and their resulting carnage, Ayacucho and the rest of Perú was waiting to see what was going to happen next. Would the government come through with reparations? What would be the atmosphere now between centralized, urban, white Lima, and the weary, needy, expectant Andino interior? What good and bad had come of the two years that the CVR had invested in bringing the conditions of Ayacucho and other departments like this into the public consciousness? Would there be any real change in Perú’s social practices? What would be the effects on reconciliation this focus on matters of social injustice?

### **Recommendation for Reparation**

The recommendations of the CVR were extensive with an over 4000 page supportive document (the final report) pushing them along onto the political docket of public responsibilities. The “Proposals of the CVR. Making Reconciliation”, that were the final fulfillment of their original mandate were broken down into four major headings; Institutional Reforms, Integral Plan of Reparations, National Plan of Anthropological-Forensic Investigations and Mechanisms for Ensuring the Recommendations of the CVR. From other Latin American truth commission efforts, the recommendations of Perú’s final report stood out in their boldness

and comprehensive approach. They demonstrated the research they had engaged in and the comparative study of their geographical neighbors they had made during the early working group sessions.

Each of the areas laid out in their proposal for advancing towards reconciliation is delineated in great detail and introduced with the social justification for these recommendations. In every section, the issues of social fracturing and imbalance are at the forefront, especially in relation to the department of Ayacucho. “Marginalization”, “disenfranchisement” and “devaluation” are words that are liberally used throughout. All areas of the recommendations were important and valuable, but the section that was of the greatest interest to those in Ayacucho was the *Plan Intergral de Reparaciones* (PIR). Within this section were laid out the pay back provisions to those persons of Ayacucho who were victimized.<sup>1</sup>

The definition of victim considered by the CVR was “those persons or groups of persons...having suffered acts or omissions that violate the norms of international law of human rights.” This was a continuation of the grounding in human rights culture that had been carried throughout the truth commission process. It continued as well the potential to broaden the justification for reparation in the mentality of potential recipients of reparations. It was the same potential that was present in the introduction of human rights language during the public audiences and collecting of testimonies; social justice and reparation are not simply finite matters of personalized or collective entitlement due to internally experienced pain or deprivations. Instead, because there is an internationally accepted paradigm that the human being, wherever they may be and of whatever race, religion, or creed, is a vessel of inalienable rights by virtue of their humanity. The corporal state of being human is undeniable. Moreover, for perpetrators (also being human and expecting the respect of *their* rights under the same guidelines) they would be unable to easily deny the rights of another human or to dispute the validity of their claims to reparations without implying the denial that the victims were by definition of the rights, human. Or, more importantly, without blatantly demonstrating a social prejudice. If the perpetrator and

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that though the CVR final report does attribute the highest number of deaths to Sendero Luminoso and also lays the blame for the *manifestation and the initiation* of the violence on their side, the accessory to the crime and the entity identified as responsible for carrying the weight of reparation is the state. This infuriated many of the political class the calling out of their compliance via impunity and ineffectualness and ineptitude. It was in this indignant stance and ideology that Apristas and their supporters began to hurl accusations at the CVR as being leftist sympathizers and disguised SL supporters. Graffiti of CVR=SL began to appear in locations throughout Perú.

the victim share the quality of being human and also share the rights that go along with that, then to deny or violate the rights of another human is a likely reflection of a predetermined bias or operative of discrimination.

Having grounded the recommendations in this atmosphere, the CVR laid out the plan of reparation for both individuals and collective groups whether that was a gender group (women's experience), a racial group (Andinos), or a localized group (distinct communities, provinces, or departments). The PIR divides reparations into six issues and proposes an entity intended to administer and regulate the programs of reparation. These six issues cover; symbolic reparations, two programs of social services in the areas of health and education, the restitution of rights of citizenship, individual economic reparations and a program of collective reparation mostly focusing on the recuperation and reconstruction of lost or neglected infrastructure, basic public utility services and the generation of employment and personal income.

### **Symbolism**

Public gestures on the part of the government such as; legalized memorial days, funded exhibitions, plaques, statues, acts of recognition geared towards reconciliation between the state and those effected by the violence, are some of the elements that fell under symbolic reparations. Traveling photo exhibitions like "Yuyanapaq, To Remember"<sup>2</sup> and the establishment of a national CVR archive installed at the Public Defender's office were some of the initiatives executed in the direct aftermath of the CVR. Though these and assorted ceremonies and installations of plaques in public plazas like the one in the Parque de Sucre in Huamanga were carried out by the state of Perú, the bulk of efforts to preserve the collective memory of the country was undertaken by non-government entities. Some at the national level but also regionally. "*Rescate Por La Memoria*" (Rescue of Memory) was an initiative created by the local Ayacuchano coalition of several NGOs called Yuyarisun<sup>3</sup>. Rescate is an annual exhibition of paintings, drawings, poems, songs and stories submitted by the survivors in Ayacucho. National human rights NGOs like APRODEH, CEPRODEP, La Coordinadora, Paz y Esperanza, Movimiento Para Que No Se Reptia and SER each maintain campaigns and divisions within

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the exhibit can be found here: [http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/p-fotografico/e\\_yuyanapacha.php](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/p-fotografico/e_yuyanapacha.php) The photos from the actual exhibit are included on the CD of the final report that was created in December of 2003 by the Institute of Peruvian Studies, of which commissioners Carlos DeGregori is an honored faculty member.

<sup>3</sup> The collection of drawings, painting, poems, songs and stories can be found here: <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe/>

their structures that focus on perpetuating the collective memory of the country and keeping reparations in the public consciousness.

### **Programs**

The social services and collective recuperation element of the PIR were aimed at providing opportunities and services to the most isolated and ignored population of the country. Health (physical and psychological) and education were pointed to as necessary focuses in the aim to address the quality of life of these persons and to increase their economic opportunity and ability to fully participate in society. State organizations like MIMDES (Ministry of Women and Social Development) and its sub-group PAR (Program of Support for the Repopulating and Development of the Emergency Zones) worked in many of these areas. In a conversation with Guillermo Ames, the director of the local office of PAR in Huamanga, he expressed an amount of pessimism about these programs. In his view many who would benefit from free health care and education for themselves and their children were not being fully served because of the lack of facilities and the corresponding isolation of many of these would be recipients. A qualifying son or daughter could attend a university under a government scholarship if they were inclined to leave their very rural surroundings and travel great distances to the few larger cities that had universities. A person suffering an illness could access free healthcare but for the fact that they were sometimes days away from any reasonably accessible road or community that included a health facility. Some of the attempts to provide for the healing of the psychological wounds included monthly group therapy meetings. But with so few available qualified, willing, Quechua speaking persons to provide the counseling in addition to the cultural foreignness of the idea of psychology, advancement in these matters was slow<sup>4</sup>.

Mr. Ames was optimistic on other issues. His immediate mission was the repopulating and reconstruction of areas that had been wiped out during the violence. Entire villages and communities had been abandoned and the people flooded into the cities seeking escape from the conflict after being declared an emergency zone. Several projects had been launched in many of these isolated areas incorporating the returning residents themselves in rebuilding and re-establishing their homes and the agriculture that is their primary means for making a living.

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<sup>4</sup> There are also the considerations brought up by Mr. Victor Raul in chapter three in relation to the priority of mental health over basic needs being met.



The dedication to financing all of these programs by the Peruvian Congress was usually hesitantly approached<sup>5</sup>. The bottom line of many reparation plans from various truth commissions is the securing and commitment of funds. This applies to all areas of recommendation whether broad social programs or direct compensations to individuals.

### **The Money**

The economic reparations scripted by the CVR were outlined in terms of proposed pensions and who would be entitled to these. Unlike Chile's recommendations, the framework was in terms of eligibility and percentages with no specific dollar amount. The CVR took the position of recommending the structure but not the specifics. They did however suggest means by which the state might secure said funds for whatever totals might be decided on at a later date, presumably by a congressional committee.

Javier Torres is the Executive Director of SER (*Servicios Educativos Rurales*) located in Lima. SER is one of the members of the collective, Yuyarisun and maintains a satellite office in Huamanga, the capital city of Ayacucho. It was one of the many NGOs that signed a cooperation agreement with the CVR. He participated in several of the consulting committees and groups that were created in the final phases of the CVR in consideration of proposing reparations. In a conversation in January 2005 about the lack of activity on the part of the state in the area of committing sufficient monies to all aspects of the CVR recommendations and specifically to the direct economic reparation to individuals, his perspective was one of exasperation. He sighed that reparation had become a political tool in congressional debates. The original reasons for their proposal, to make amends to those persons who, had suffered during the violence of course, but more importantly, had been neglected and disenfranchised, excluded from considerations of the country's best interest, were being more deeply sublimated and pushed aside as time was ticking on. A congressional sub-committee had been formed, they had agreed that reparations were important and that their inclusion in the national budget was imperative, but beyond this "agreement" all proactive motions had stagnated in congressional rigmarole. Mr. Torres had seen the launching of "Paz y Desarrollo", which is the congressionally created campaign for the promotion of "Peace and Development". The slogan for the campaign was "¡Juntos, Sí Podemos!" (Together, Yes We Can!) But he complained that this was more in the vein of

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<sup>5</sup> Some projects in actuality were funded by outside sources of aid. Like the rebuilding of the town Chuschi. An article appeared in La Republica edition for January 10, 2005, about a German NGO funding the reconstruction of

symbolic public gestures in scope. His opinion was that in reality it had boiled down to an inundation of glossy posters and occasional fiestas.

The posters from the week of the 2004 Paz y Desarrollo festivities that took place in Huamanga did not make mention of the CVR. They make a plea to “say no to chaos and violence”, but nothing of the activities for that weeklong summer program addressed how this is supposed to come pass. The timing of the events was scheduled to coincide with the Peruvian national Independence Day holiday week. The events consisted of: live music, school marching parades, art exhibits, church processions of saints, selling of traditional Andino foods, and Kung Fu demonstrations, free hair cuts and a generous 10% discount in living taxes if paid that week. The words of brochure that was distributed for the festival were a confusing mix of themes and time frames without ever openly discussing any particular issue. The schools were all closed for the week in order to march in the parades.

### **Becoming Citizens**

It is important for those seeking reparation, like those persons in Ayacucho, to be proactive in changing their conditions within an unequal social structure like Perú's. It is vital for them to become fully participatory in the democratic political system and to attempt to break through the isolation and marginalization. Voting is a very important tool. Yet, part of the inequality that exists in Perú frustrates the accessibility to this simple exercise. Poignantly, the 20 years of violence that the CVR was created to investigate and assimilate was initiated with the explosive destruction of electoral ballot boxes on the eve of Perú's recuperation for a long military dictatorship and return to a civil ruled elected democracy.

The *Documento Nacional de Identificación* (DNI) is the defining document for citizens of Perú. Without this document, you are in effect a non-registered person with the state. Consequentially, one of the many things you cannot do with out this document is vote. It is in many ways similar to the U.S. social security card. A big difference is that a United States social security card these days is generated practically simultaneously with birth, but a DNI must be applied and *paid* for in a complicated and rural-unfriendly process.

There is an unfortunate predicament involving the DNI, the highland peoples of Ayacucho and the ability to vote that it bestows. Perhaps in an attempt to motivate or encourage voter turnout, if you are in possession of a DNI and do not show up to vote, you will be fined.

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this symbolic location.

This presents a scenario less than optimal for motivating persons who live in far away, less accessible location to make the journey to the nearest ministry, to pay for a card (with the extremely limited money resources that they have) that will in turn penalize them if they are unable to make the same arduous journey for elections.

A female friend I made in Huamanga (an Ayacuchana Andina by birth) who has her DNI registration in Lima but lives in Ayacucho actually pays the fine at every election for not voting because the cost of *not* voting is cheaper than the travel costs of going to Lima where she was residing when issued the card. When I asked her why she doesn't change her voting location, she said that the bureaucracy, complications, and fees involved in the process were discouraging and this way she just paid the fee and had "no hassle". Of course, the state is more than happy to collect.

With the isolation of many of the victims in the Department of Ayacucho, whole communities existed where not one person was in possession of a DNI. The Alianza por el Derecho Ciudadano (Alliance for the Right to Citizenship) estimates that one million persons in Perú are without the DNI. The majority of these persons are rural and indigenous. The alliance, has estimated the total cost for one person living in a rural area, such as Ayacucho, to collect all the necessary proofs, photos, the travel costs, etc. to be able to secure the DNI is about 302./soles, that is close to \$100. That is for *each* person. This cost is well out of the range of the extremely poor Andino persons living in the highlands. No more or less Peruvian than their urban Euro ancestry compatriots<sup>6</sup>, yet they are effectively shut out of their right to exercise their citizenship in their own country.

The Peruvian Constitution states in Article 2, paragraph one that "Every person has the right to life, to their *identity*, their moral, psychic, and physical integrity, their free development and well being". Yet, with an identification document system so unaccommodating to the reality of rural (mostly Andino) life it is clear that even within Peru's own national legal framework, international conventions aside, some rights are not accessible to all.

Besides voting, this complicates matters of reparation when trying to identify persons that would be eligible. The documentation of lost loved ones becomes difficult. The bureaucracy involved in death certificates, proof of marriage, etc. becomes thick when there is no means of positive identification.

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<sup>6</sup> For information on the problem of unregistered persons go here: <http://www.alianzaciudadana.org.pe/>

There has been a drive by the same groups of NGOs that have been present during the entire CVR to register as many of these persons who are without a DNI. Others like the Alliance were created in the time after the commission to address this specific agenda. The goal of registering so many persons is a terrifically difficult logistical and political task and one that will certainly take several years. It would require the cooperation of several state organisms, a restructuring and decentralization of the process, waving of DNI registration fees, mobile registration units, and the sensitive matter of military reform since the DNI is not issued without first acquiring military clearance and registration (male or female), which entails its own fees.

Overall, even through the CVR's strong grounding of its recommendations in a seemingly inarguable context of the issue of human rights via international conventions and law (of which Perú were signatories), and through its consistent reference and exposure of the social injustice existing in the country that is incongruent with these conventions and laws, political cooperation is reluctant. It is easy enough for the political class to admit that social injustice is a problem and that it was a pre-eminent condition that contributed to the success of the bloodiest insurgence in Perú's modern history. It is also a matter of little compromise to vocalize support for the recommendations of the CVR based on this foundation. It is even a political kudo to show such support. Yet, it is a very different arena and battle to be *effective* in their execution. Congressional stalemates, filibusters, and stalling have been the fair of the day. The topic of racism, discrimination and marginalization remains commotive.

## CONCLUSION

### What Was It All For?

Even though the complicated dances of the political arena are the mechanics by which the plan for reparations would be enacted, it is with Perú's people that hopeful long-term reconciliation through social change is going to happen if at all. In Perú's case, as with other Latin American countries that experienced internal conflicts and later truth commissions, reconciliation means of course reconciliation between the effected population, the combatants and their joint experiences. In most cases the focus is greater on the need to reconcile for the actions of a government that was way out of hand and blatantly violated its own tenets to protect its citizens, act in their best interests and uphold their rights. This is certainly true as well in Perú's case.

Others besides the Andinos in Ayacucho and other highland departments were effected and suffered in the 20 years of violence and political impunity. Bombs also went off and persons were assassinated in Lima just like in Ayacucho. Yet, it is undeniable that the prevailing sentiment is that the war was something that was about the interior of the country involving the rural, poor, mostly indigenous people. And, as we have seen pointed out by the commission, there was a distinct level of willful or complacent ignorance to their suffering that was incubated and supported by a palpable level of racism and social disenfranchisement.

The CVR was a large scale, highly visible and vocal entity and process that brought the unjust and discriminatory social practices of the country out onto the public agenda in a countrywide manner. It has spurred political activity (whether productive or not) and an amount of social discourse (though mostly at the academic level) on the topic of racism and marginalization. But outside of the vacuum of academic and intellectual circles where hours or days can be spent *talking* the issues, has it had an impact on that population of the country that has maintained their position of privilege? Has or can the momentum generated by the commission be translated to carry over into tangible social change?

### **Is Peru Ready to Change**

An collaborative investigative study was undertaken in the fall of 2004, a year after the final report was released, by The University of Lima, The Catholic University of Perú and a

social study group called DEMUS. The Ford Foundation funded the report and its purpose was to gauge the self-perspective of Peruvians in relation to social inequality. An unsurprising result was the perceived hierarchy of whose rights were seen to be most valued. At the top of the list were white males, followed by white females. Going down the list were mestizos (those of mixed European and Peruvian blood), then blacks, the physically handicapped, then homosexuals. At the very end of the list, with the smallest percentage of persons surveyed expressing that these persons' rights were valued (12.5%) were indigenous Peruvians.

The Sunday issue of the national newspaper, *El Comercio*, carried the results of the report with an accompanying article in the Sunday magazine supplement, *Somos* (we are). In a profoundly important insight, Aldo Panfichi, a sociologist and consulting committee member to the group DEMUS, states in the article that "There is an awareness in Peruvians about these problems, there is also a large frustration and all the time less patience. This awareness, when it is combined with exasperation, generates a box of social explosion that can unleash a situation where, what a group perceives as a legitimate right, seek to be in power without taking into account the rights of the any others."

This was not an unfounded observation. Just four months after the conclusion of the study, violence broke out in Andahuaylas in the department of Arequipa, just south outside the department of Ayacucho. On January first, a fascist ethnic-political group took over the police station holding hostages and demanding the impeachment of president Toledo. Led by an ex-lieutenant named Antauro Humala, the group called itself the Peruvian Nationalist Movement. Their intentions were to establish an indigenous-centric new governmental structure, one that vigorously enforced the death penalty for treason and corruption. Eerily similar to Guzmán and his lipservice to the glory of the Andino struggle, Humala called for a return to the "values of the Incan Empire". Whether his platform was authentic or yet another megalomaniac vying for glory is arguable. He played on the poor indigenous people's "exasperation" with the lack of progress in addressing their plight. The foot soldiers at the take over of the police station in Andahuaylas, just like in Sendero's cadres, were poor, fed up, Quechua-speaking highlanders who were easily swayed by Antauro's fiery delivery.

I arrived in Lima to research part of this thesis 3 days after the take over when the station was still occupied. Within the week, the situation was quelled. All hostages had been released, no violence on the part of the security forces had been used and Humala was behind bars. For all

historical comparisons, this negotiated end to the occupation was a success. Three weeks later, I was invited to attend a round table discussion headed by Carlos Tapia, one of the former CVR commissioners and hosted by CEPRODEP (Center for Population Promotion and Development), one of the signatories to CVR support agreements. The topic was one of reflection about the scenes that had played out in Andahuaylas and their significance in the arena of the potential for political violence in Perú.

The meeting was well attended, many learned, and involved peoples had intelligent and thoughtful things to contribute to the discourse. Yet, as I listened to the discussion, I couldn't help but wonder how any of this conversing was going to go beyond that room or the offices of the various organizations that were being represented. Like the CVR is some ways, these roundtables and seminar and forums served an academic and cerebral purpose. They increased the depth of understanding at the level of those who had access to the kinds of educational and career opportunities that those who had been susceptible to Humala's conviction did not. Where was the application I was wondering?

Some of the application seems to be coming from various NGOs like the national Coordinator for Human Rights and APRODEH (the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights). Both of these NGOs have collaborated to initiate anti-racism campaigns that entail boycotts of establishments known to discriminate, distribution of printed materials, and public demonstrations and lectures.<sup>1</sup>

The DEMUS study was done just one year after the release of the CVR's final report. One year is scant time to affect major comprehensive social change. It would be interesting to see the same study performed at regular intervals over the span of several years and even a generation to see what impact anti-racist initiatives and efforts propelled by the experiences of the internal conflict and the resulting truth commission. If reconciliation is also, as widely accepted, a process that can take many years, the progress towards social equality in Perú's case should advance congruently with the level of social change.

### **The Good and the Bad**

Any commission, indeed any comprehensive process like a commission is going to have good and bad effects. It is difficult to make definitive decisions about whether or not these

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<sup>1</sup> Both of these sites and their campaigns can be accessed here: <http://www.aprodeh.org.pe/index.htm> and <http://www.dhperu.org/>

commissions are worth it. However, it is possible to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of a particular commission in order to gain potential generalized insight into the truth seeking process. Also, in the wake of a commission is the opportunity to gain insight into a country as a whole. The resulting final reports of truth commissions are testaments of significant moments in a country's history. Chris Strunk of The Council of Hemispheric Affairs wrote in a memorandum to the press the day after the release of the report, "Still, the release of the commission's report provides Peru with a tremendous opportunity to confront its heinous past. The public and televised hearings, a first for a Latin American truth commission, reminded all Peruvians that the terror of the 1980s and 1990s has not been forgotten and that the past cannot be ignored. The commission's report of the high concentration of violence visited upon Peru's indigenous population sheds light on the racism that persists in Peruvian society, and could give the country a chance to finally confront it."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the positive effects or results of the CVR in Perú at large and for Ayacucho specifically, would have to include the ability of the commission to utilize this very public experience to draw attention to the plight of those living in the interior of the country. Their use of public audiences was the first for a truth commission in Latin America. With other countries in this geographical region such as Colombia that may be considering commissions of their own, it will be interesting to see what decisions they make on the use of this public disclosure.

The decision by the CVR to use public audiences and public forums was stated in their press releases and other publications as imperative for breaking the cycle of impunity that had beset those in the interior. Since the voices of those in Ayacucho and other departments have been broadcast, they are slow to being silenced. Instead, with the new vocabulary of human rights discourse, having passed through the very public process of the CVR, and the proof of their plight laid out in the lengthy final report, groups and NGOs like the National Coordinator of Human Rights have found new momentum for carrying forward with the demanding struggle of advancing the human rights agenda in Perú.

In an interview with Mr. Ricardo Cárdenas a sociologist at SER in late 2004 about the progress of human rights discourse and acceptance in Perú and in Ayacucho specifically, he expressed optimism, which he contributed in part to the CVR. "Officially [human rights] is part

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<sup>2</sup> Council On Hemispheric Affairs, Memorandum to the press 03.56, Friday August 29, 2003 can be found here:[http://www.coha.org/NEW\\_PRESS\\_RELEASES/New\\_Press\\_Releases\\_2003/03.56\\_Peru\\_Truth\\_Commission\\_Report.htm](http://www.coha.org/NEW_PRESS_RELEASES/New_Press_Releases_2003/03.56_Peru_Truth_Commission_Report.htm)



of public education. In the campo (countryside) they know, even though it could be in a superficial manner, that this discourse contributes to sustaining the security and the necessity for better conditions of life, and that their relation to the state is fundamental. Perhaps the CVR represents the highest point that human rights discourse has reached in the country.”

Mr. Cárdenas was part of the team at SER that took it upon themselves to dissect the voluminous final report and to redact only those aspects that applied to the department of Ayacucho and publish this abridged version in both Quechua and Spanish. A copy was delivered free of charge to every mayor or village official in the department of Ayacucho. The project of course was not funded by the state of Perú but rather through a grant from USAID. Their reason for this project reflects one of the problematic points of the CVR, that of audience and equal access.

The CVR launched a massive website with the full report in both Spanish and English (but not Quechua). The site also included every press release, every bulletin, transcriptions of every public audience, thematic forum, public lecture or press conference undertaken by the commission. The website is so comprehensive, you can surf your way to finding out how much every person who was employed by the CVR was paid and where their funding came from broken down into percentages of overall costs. It is an impressive site and certainly, the best constructed and maintained out of all commissions prior to Perú in Latin America. It is an attractive site. It also hosts the electronic version of the “Yuyanapaq, Para Recordar” photo exhibit that traveled the country and abroad. But who accesses the site? Those persons whose loved ones or experiences are listed in the report and on the website have limited or no access to a computer much less the Internet. This kind of scenario has spurred some complaining talk about whom the CVR was for. Was it really for the Andino? Or was it simply a grandiose exercise of academic study, a group dissertation by the overwhelmingly intellectual selection of commissioners? This kind of debate is not one that has, or is even meant to have, a definitive outcome. But the debate itself does something to keep some of the repeating issues of about social motivations in the public consciousness.

The process of the CVR did much to increased awareness of gender issues, specifically as they relate to the lives and survival of the women in the rural interior. Since the majority of survivors of “disappeared” persons were wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, the relevance of the social condition of women in places like Ayacucho was an imperative topic of discussion.

Several human rights NGOs stepped up their focus on gender issues and have used the statistical data acquired through the CVR to support and analyze their campaigns. In fact, on many issues, the CVR and the final report are constant points of reference for supporting the work of national and regional NGOs. This comprehensive investigative stock of statistical, analytical information is priceless and alone, reason enough to appreciate the two-year undertaking of the truth commission. Since its release and for the many years to come this body of information was and will be a priceless tool.

Overall, the NGOs of Perú received a huge boost for their agendas via the CVR. Each organization that signed an agreement for cooperation with the commission may have had good, or bad, or frustrating experiences with the CVR during the investigation, but in the aftermath they would not be nearly as prominent or have such a well substantiated platform if the CVR had never happened.

Reconciliation, reparation, advancement, these things won't happen immediately. As recalled in the reconciliation guideline book published by IDEA mentioned in the introduction, these elements are part of a very long process. Yet, Perú is beginning. Problems that underlined the 20 years of violence are being at least acknowledged and kept in the public attention. It may be sometime before Perú is fully ready to or can be effective in alleviating or assuaging these problems.

In the meantime, some of the old habits die-hard. Social injustice is still a problem and in Ayacucho, those who live in this region still resort to strikes and protests to express their discontent. In the late summer of 2004, I was witness to a teachers strike in Huamanga. It was in protest to proposed laws to privatize aspects of the educational system. A law many in Ayacucho saw as robbing them of the right to free education and a measure of discriminatory exclusion.

The strike or *huelga* went on for several weeks. Unfortunately, it ended with a great deal of destruction and the loss of at least one life when the Limeño security forces were shipped in to break the strike. Of course, this immediately sparked accusations of racist Lima oppression. In the chaos, the center of Huamanga in Parque de Sucre, the same offices that had housed the regional seat of the CVR were burned, looted and gutted by an incensed crowd reacting to the Lima presence. I am reminded of the comments of Mr. Panfichi and the level of exasperation that can explode into violence.

Some persons I conversed with during my time in Ayacucho said that as a result of the CVR the level of protest and striking had increased. I imagine that is possible. I saw during the strike fresh graffiti of the familiar equating the CVR with Sendero Luminoso. I later heard talk around town that someone had seen the police themselves painting these things. I also happened upon the scene of a hanged dog from a local bus stand. This is the classic calling card of Sendero.

It is difficult to discern in Huamanga whether protest is more a part of the social cultural fabric than it is an effective means of change. Protesting and striking are nothing new to Ayacucho. Whether the CVR has given fuel to the fires of discontent is a possibility. But it is important to remember that the advance of democracy is not made in silence. Democracy is the right to protest to dispute your government that is beholden to you for being *elected* into office by the public. And it is the government's responsibility to *encourage* the speaking up of its citizen and to guarantee that right to all.

In Perú, the problem of social injustice is one of several issues facing the country. Lima's relationship to Ayacucho and the rest of the interior must be addressed if reconciliation and progress is to be advanced. Through the good and the bad of the arduous two-year commission, this immediate time after its completion and the many years to come, the CVR for better or worse has instigated that uncomfortable process.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

I was born in Tampa, Florida on June 7, 1967. I was awarded a Bachelors of Arts in Intercultural Studies from Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina in 1995.

After graduating, I lived in New York City for five years while pursuing a career in Fashion and Costume Design working freelance in several experimental theater productions and a feature film.

I have lived abroad in India teaching English at the Rinchen Choeling Ani Gompa, a Tibetan nunnery, and interned in Ayacucho, Perú in the summer of 2004 where I worked at the Yanamilla Maximum Security Penal Establishment and conducted some of the research for this thesis. I thank my travels for having given me a broader perspective even on the minutest of scenarios or phenomena. Infinity can be found within each small particle. I also thank my travels for having brought me to my soon to be husband David Orlando Angulo Rubio, just one more reason to love Perú.

My professional experience includes Secretary to the Dean of Work at Warren Wilson College, Grant Management for the Big Bend Rural Health Network in Tallahassee, Florida and Immigration Worker for Catholic Charities.

I enjoy international travel, sewing, service and finding calm and tranquility whenever possible. And I especially love my big fat cat Sammy.