

**“Lo que escribo lo he visto con mis propios ojos”:  
Travels and Foreign Contacts as Regime of Authority,  
1928–1931**

On October 27, 1930, the US consul of Lima-Callao in Peru, William C. Burdett, briefed the Secretary of State on key aspects of the anti-imperialist and Pan-American policies of APRA, a political organization increasingly active in Peru. “The argument of Apra,” he noted, “places Peru in the same class with Nicaragua, Haiti, Santo Domingo and Cuba under American tutelage.”<sup>1</sup> Burdett was correct to believe that APRA interpreted the reality of Peru through the gaze of Central American and Caribbean countries. This region indeed played a pivotal role in raising the awareness of influential APRA leaders like Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and Magda Portal to the imperialist dangers facing Peru. These leaders travelled to the region in the late 1920s to proselytize APRA. Both admitted shortly afterward being deeply shaken by what they witnessed there, as reported in their respective political writings. Haya de la Torre stated in 1928 that his recent travels to Central America “me ha permitido ver de cerca la lucha de uno de los más importantes sectores de la América Latina contra el imperialismo invasor de los Estados Unidos del Norte.”<sup>2</sup> Following her return to Peru in October 1930, Portal similarly emphasized to journalists the lessons that she had learned during her travels in

<sup>1</sup> William C. Burdett, American Consulate general, Callao-Lima, Peru (Burdett); “Haya de la Torre, Peruvian Radical Leader,” October 27, 1930, p. 5; 810.43 A.P.R.A./1; State Department Records; Central Files, 1930–1939 (CF, 1930–1939); RG59; US National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (NACP).

<sup>2</sup> “Have allowed me to see closely the struggle of one of the most important sectors of Latin America against the invading imperialism of the Northern United States,” Haya de la Torre, “La lucha de Centroamérica contra el imperialismo,” (Costa Rica, 1928) in *¿A dónde va Indoamérica?* Santiago de Chile: Editorial Ercilla, 1935, p. 41.

the Caribbean. In contrast to South America, where according to Portal, imperialist penetration advanced more insidiously, namely in the form of foreign loans and investments rather than military interventions, “en estos pueblos, el Imperialismo no tiene ningún disfraz,” she explained about the Caribbean countries.<sup>3</sup> Portal suggested she had come to see and understand this brutal reality because of her travels abroad.

APRA is largely renowned in the scholarship for the originality of its anti-imperialist theses, specifically its capacity to formulate critiques of empire in a way that reflected the historical and social conditions of Latin American countries rather than emulating European models of critical thinking. Exile, as we have seen in Chapter 2, played an important role in this. The experience of traveling abroad prompted the rise of new personal and political consciousnesses that in turn enabled the formation and growth of the continental APRA. The student activists and labour organizers who were deported from Peru in the 1920s, and who politically came of age in exile as APRA leaders, were strikingly self-reflective about the changes that they underwent as they organized their anti-imperialist movement abroad. Their political writings stressed the heuristic value of travel and exile. “Lo que escribo no es consecuencia de lo que he oído o leído,” Haya de la Torre once wrote in exile. “Lo he visto con mis propios ojos.”<sup>4</sup> Many APRA leaders likewise asserted that exile transformed them into men and women of action ready to engage in revolutionary politics.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, they squarely and very conspicuously inferred that their capacity for original reflections about the Americas, and Peru’s social problems in particular, was due to the time they spent in exile.

Chapter 3 investigates these metaphors of exile and travel as regimes of authority and political formation in APRA. To do so, it builds on the work of the historian Martín Bergel, who has coined the term “cultura nómada” (nomadic culture) to explain how Aprista exiles defined their form of political proselytism during the late 1920s.<sup>6</sup> As shown by Bergel,

<sup>3</sup> “In this region, imperialism has no disguise,” Magda Portal, “Con Magda Portal,” October 26, 1930, [newspaper clipping], Magda Portal Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin, Box 10, Folder 10.10. Magda Portal, *América Latina frente al imperialismo*, Lima: Editorial Cahuide, 1931, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> “What I write is not the result of what I have heard or read. I have seen it with my own eyes.” Haya de la Torre, “La suerte de Puerto Rico,” Berlín, junio 1930, in *¿A dónde va Indoamérica?*, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Martín Bergel, “Nomadismo proselitista y revolución. Notas para una caracterización del primer exilio aprista (1923–1931),” *E.I.A.L.*, 20: 1 (2009): 41–66.

<sup>6</sup> Bergel, “Nomadismo proselitista y revolución,” pp. 2–3.

the development of a nomad culture by the late 1920s, associated with world travel and militant action, helped Aprista exiles differentiate their movement from previous generations of Peruvian intellectuals as well as from other anti-imperialist leagues, such as the Communist Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas (LADLA) and the Argentine-based Latin American Union (ULA), which were also simultaneously growing in the Americas.<sup>7</sup> Chapter 3 likewise suggests that the experience of exile had consequences far beyond the ideological formation imparted by the emotional and practical challenges that exile thrust on Apristas. Yet it expands the scope of the research to include the ways in which exile shaped the political identity of these APRA leaders as they were enmeshed in political struggles to retain control of their fast-growing political movement.

In this chapter, I argue that the development of this “nomad culture” in the late 1920s, associated with world travel and militant action, helped define who were authentic revolutionaries in the APRA movement as conflict began to grow in their continent-wide movement. By highlighting the symbolic importance that travel came to occupy in APRA’s political imaginary abroad, I aim to shed new light on the clash that, in 1928, opposed two major APRA leaders – Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and Carlos José Mariátegui – and which scholars have so far studied exclusively through the prism of ideological or tactical disagreements. Doing so reframes this episode as a prolonged conflict rather than a clear-cut rupture between *aprismo* and socialism, as portrayed by the historiography of the Peruvian left. Important ideological differences did emerge in the early APRA as a result of different sites of political action in the movement. But they lingered in the movement, more so and for a longer time than often assessed, with important consequences for the transformation of the anti-imperialist APRA into a Peruvian national-popular party in the early 1930s.

Chapter 3 shows that the regime of travel authority carried on the Peruvian scene in the early 1930s as APRA exiles began their homecoming following the downfall of Augusto B. Leguía in August 1930. Indeed, discourses of deep connection to and knowledge of the

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Pita González, *La Unión Latino Americana y el Boletín Revocación: Redes intelectuales y revistas culturales en la década de 1920*, México, DF: Colegio de México; Colima: Universidad de Colima, 2009; Daniel Kersfeld, *Contra el imperio: historia de la Liga Antimperialista de las Américas*, México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2012; Melgar Bao, “The Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas between the East and Latin America,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 35: 2 (2008): 9–24.

Americas assisted in consolidating the political authority of exiled APRA leaders as they began to convert the continental APRA into a national mass-based party: the Peruvian APRA Party (PAP). Stories of past travels and international connections enabled them to dissociate their movement from that of their political opponents in Peru, specifically the newly founded Communist Party of Peru (PCP), but also from newcomers to the party who had not experienced exile. In the leadership struggle over APRA and over who organized the working and middle classes of Peru, exile, from the lived experience it once was, turned into a discursive referent used to boost celebratory narratives of the APRA leadership before a Peruvian audience. Here lies a fundamental contradiction in the rise of APRA as a populist force in 1930s Peru. On the one hand, Apristas who experienced exile insisted that their primary goal was to bring about a popular democracy that responded to Peruvians' concerns. On the other hand, they claimed that their travels across the Americas the previous decade, and thus their absence from Peru, best positioned them to achieve this nationalist goal. This paradox is reminiscent of the tension we observed in the previous chapters between nationalism and internationalism and which underpinned anti-imperialist iterations of Latin America's national continentalism. This tension, as we shall see, would continue to shape APRA's evolution throughout the 1930s as well.

#### DIVISIONS IN A DIASPORIC COMMUNITY

The previous chapter has primarily focused on the organizing activities of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre while gesturing to other Peruvian Apristas during their time in exile. Yet APRA exiles were not the only ones who contributed to the success of the anti-imperialist APRA in the 1920s. A small but influential group of Apristas had also simultaneously developed in Peru under the leadership of the Peruvian intellectual and famous Marxist thinker, José Carlos Mariátegui. The historian of APRA, Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez, once stated, correctly so, that “la historia peruana del lustro 1924–1928 corresponde en gran parte a Mariátegui.”<sup>8</sup> During that time period, the great *Amauta*, as Mariátegui came to be billed, emerged in Lima as a key player in the labour of

<sup>8</sup> “... to a large extent, the Peruvian history of the 1924–1928 period corresponds to Mariátegui,” Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez, *La literatura política de González Prada, Mariátegui y Haya de la Torre*, México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1957, p. 129.

organizing APRA in Peru.<sup>9</sup> Mariátegui returned to his home country in 1923 after having spent four years of exile in Europe (1919–1923). He devoted most of his time abroad to studying Marxist texts and to observing the nascent communist movement in the region and returned home, writes historian Thomas Angotti, with an important Marxist intellectual baggage and with the determination to help organize the anti-oligarchical forces of Peru.<sup>10</sup> Haya de la Torre passed over the direction of *Claridad* and the Popular Universities Gonzalez Prada to Mariátegui following his arrest and deportation from Peru in October 1923. Both grew into important APRA leaders shortly thereafter.

In Peru, Mariátegui excelled at coordinating the efforts of poets, intellectuals, and labour activists in a way that channelled them into a collective project of creation. To foster dialogue amongst the vanguard forces of Peru, he established in 1926 the journal *Amauta*, a monthly magazine where vanguard artists and leftist intellectuals from Latin America and other parts of the world wrote and debated about arts, politics, and culture. Apristas frequently collaborated in this magazine during the first years of its existence.<sup>11</sup> Those who lived in Lima also regularly gathered at the house of Mariátegui, where they discussed and argued over how best to foster change in Latin American societies.<sup>12</sup> Kathleen Weaver describes the effervescent and eclectic nature of these encounters as follows: “Frequenting Amauta’s informal salon were writers, artists, students, labor leaders, archaeologists, historians, and sociologists. Foreign radicals were sometimes present, and delegations of factory workers or miners often stopped by to confer with Mariátegui on specific labor issues.”<sup>13</sup> The Uruguayan poet and Aprista, Blanca Luz Brum, recalls in similar fashion in her memoirs the political and social

<sup>9</sup> In Quechua *Amauta* means “sage” or “priest.” Kathleen Weaver, *Peruvian Rebel: The World of Magda Portal. With a Selection of Her Poems*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Angotti, “The Contributions of Jose Carlos Mariátegui to Revolutionary Theory,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 13: 2 (1986): 33–57; *José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology*, ed. Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Oscar Terán, “Amauta: vanguardia y revolución,” in Carlos Altamirano (ed.), *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina, Tomo II*, Buenos Aires: Katz editores, 2010, pp. 169–191. Daniel Iglesias, “Nacionalismo y utilización política del pasado: la historia nacional desde la perspectiva de la revista Amauta (1926–1930),” *Histórica*, 30: 2 (2006): 91–114. Alberto Tauro, *Amauta y su influencia*, Lima: Editora Amauta, 1960.

<sup>12</sup> Armando Bazán, *Mariátegui y su tiempo*, Lima: Empresa Editora Amauta, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Weaver, *Peruvian Rebel*, p. 34.

excitement that she felt during her stay in Lima in 1926–1927. “Me llevaron a un mundo diferente al que yo hasta entonces conociera, a un mundo de conflictos y luchas sociales,” she writes about the Apristas and socialist intellectuals she met in Mariátegui’s house. “Estos tenían la piel oscura, estaban mal vestidos y algo desesperado y angustioso temblaba en el fondo de sus pupilas. ¡Eran apristas!”<sup>14</sup> Brum’s recollection of her time in Peru reflects how the community of artists, workers, and reform students who were part of the nascent APRA circles in Peru first kindled her awareness of Latin America’s plight. “Por el Perú entré a la cultura de América,” she writes in her memoirs, “participando de los procesos políticos y sociales que por entonces agitaban las banderas americanistas de esos pueblos.”<sup>15</sup>

During its first years of existence, the APRA operated on two fronts – one abroad, and one at home. This worked quite well for some time. To be sure, as shown in Chapter 2, the lived experience of exile empowered APRA leaders abroad to develop new forms of continental consciousness; it also shaped their anti-US and anti-imperialist sensibilities in ways that eventually differed from those who stayed in Peru and formed the “Lima Group” (grupo de Lima). But, as the burden of distance, miscommunication, and persecution created problems of political organization and ideological cohesion for the movement’s leadership, these hurdles paradoxically contributed to boosting APRA’s resilience. In effect, because the command of APRA was spread through space and not yet centralized into a single executive body, the meaning of APRA was still left open to interpretation. This flexibility had one important consequence for the group’s unity: there was room for conflict to endure in the movement before definitive ruptures took place.

This relative peace began to crumble, starting in 1928. By that point in time, the leadership of APRA in exile agreed that the struggle for liberation had to move onto the Peruvian scene.<sup>16</sup> To carry through with this

<sup>14</sup> “They took me to a different world from the one I had known until then, to a world of conflicts and social struggles. They were dark-skinned, poorly dressed, and something desperate and anguished trembled deep inside their eyes. They were Apristas !,” Blanca Luz Brum, *Mi vida. Cartas de amor a Siqueiros*, Santiago de Chile: Editorial Mare Nostrum, 2004, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> “Through Peru I became part of the culture of America. There, I participated in the political and social processes that were rocking Americanist groups,” *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Juan de Dios Merel to José Carlos Mariátegui, Buenos Aires, September 7, 1928, José Carlos Mariátegui, *Correspondencia (1915–1930)*, Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 1984, p. 429.

task, the Comité Aprista de México founded in January 1928 a Peruvian political party, entitled the Partido Nacionalista Libertador, or Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNL). In addition to seeking to translate APRA's revolutionary ideals to the Peruvian scene, the PNL worked to organize from abroad the onset of the revolution in Peru. It named Haya de la Torre as its de facto presidential candidate, and altogether announced the enactment of two central revolutionary measures upon taking power: (1) enact major land redistribution, and (2) overturn all national laws that favoured imperialist interests at the expense of the workers of Peru.<sup>17</sup> Although ideological discrepancies between Aprista circles in exile and those in Peru had surged beforehand, notably with the anti-Comintern positions that Haya de la Torre adopted during the Anti-Imperialist Congress in Brussels in February 1927, it is with the foundation of the PNL that minor hiccups in the growing APRA community turned into real problems.<sup>18</sup> A crisis burst into the open between the group of México and elements of the Peruvian vanguard back home.

The areas of disagreement were twofold. First, the foundation of the PNL rested on an ideological premise that directly contravened the political work that José Carlos Mariátegui was then spearheading in Peru. Its formation implied the projection of the united front strategy between all anti-imperialist forces of the continent into a national context, taking the form of a united front between the workers (which encompassed, for Apristas, the urban proletariat and the Indigenous peasant masses) and the middle class of Peru. Influenced by the experience of the nationalist Kuomintang in China, Haya de la Torre and others in the APRA began to question their communist allies, starting in 1927. They later disapproved of the class-against-class strategy adopted during the Comintern's Third Period (1928–1935), favouring anti-colonial nationalism over international communism to protect Peru and the Americas from US expansionism.<sup>19</sup> As a result, by 1928, Haya de la Torre and his peers in

<sup>17</sup> "Esquema del plan de México," in Ricardo Martínez de la Torre, *Apuntes para la interpretación marxista de la historia social del Perú (I–II)*, Lima: Impresa Editora Peruana, 1947–1949, pp. 290–293; Alberto Flores Galindo and Manuel Burga, *Apogeo y crisis de la república aristocrática*, Lima: Ediciones "Rikchay Perú," 1979, p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> José A. Barba Caballero, *Haya de la Torre y Mariátegui frente a la historia*, Lima: Amauta, 1978, pp. 143–144; Galindo and Burga, *Apogeo y crisis de la república*, p. 186; Julio Antonio Mella, *¿Qué es el ARPA?*, Miraflores: Editorial Educación, 1975 (1st ed. 1928), pp. 49–53.

<sup>19</sup> Though the possibility of an alliance with communists remained nevertheless open until the early 1930s. See Victor Jefeys and Lazar Jefeys, "Haya de la Torre... ¿Un comunista latinoamericano?," *Istoriia: la revista científica y educativa electrónica*, 12: 6 (2011),

Mexico claimed that it was possible for Peruvians to achieve national liberation within a worldwide capitalist order.

In contrast, Mariátegui and the Peruvian vanguard ruled out this option. According to them, it was simply impossible to realize any type of national sovereignty as long as capitalism reigned supreme. The notion, so central for the “grupo de México,” that the creation of an anti-imperialist state in Peru would establish a bulwark against imperialist intrusions, facilitate national liberation, and therefore allow socialism to eventually come about afterward, was met with stern rejection by Mariátegui and the so-called “grupo de Lima.”<sup>20</sup> To be sure, Mariátegui did not altogether deny the revolutionary potential that nationalism had for a semi-colonial nation like Peru. But he strongly disagreed with the Aprista exiles’ proposal of a united front between the workers and the middle sectors of Peru. Mariátegui saw value in the class-versus-class strategy of the Comintern. He argued that because fighting imperialism necessarily involved waging a total war against capitalism, then it was of paramount importance that the working class, even if still a minority in Peru, remained the vanguard of the revolution.<sup>21</sup> In other words, there was no room in Mariátegui’s reasoning for a revolutionary alliance with the growing middle sectors of Peru – an alliance from which soon emerged the national-popular political culture inherent in Latin American populism.<sup>22</sup> Mariátegui resented that some APRA ideologues contemplated the small bourgeoisie and the middle classes of Peru as viable conduits for the revolution. According to him, the Peruvian vanguard might as well abandon all hope of social transformation, for the promise of a socialist revolution tomorrow rather than today was tantamount to embracing the expansion of imperialist interests in Latin America.<sup>23</sup> Only a socialist revolution, he argued, independent of the

available at: <https://arxiv.gaugn.ru/s207987840000141-4-2/?sl=en>. Also see Martín Bergel’s analysis on the influence of the Kuomintang for APRA’s political formation, and for Latin American populism more broadly in Bergel, *El oriente desplazado*. Los intelectuales y los orígenes del tercermundismo en la Argentina, Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes Editorial, 2015, pp. 258–277.

<sup>20</sup> Galindo and Burga, *Apogeo y crisis de la república*, p. 190.

<sup>21</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, “Replica a Luis Alberto Sánchez,” in *Boletín de Defensa Indígena*, 1: 3, in *Amauta*, 2: 3, March 1927, pp. 38–39.

<sup>22</sup> Bergel, *El oriente desplazado*.

<sup>23</sup> Carlos Franco, “Acerca del surgimiento del marxismo latinoamericano y de las perspectivas de Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre y José Carlos Mariátegui sobre el desarrollo, la nación y el socialismo en América Latina,” in *Del marxismo eurocéntrico al marxismo latinoamericano*, Lima: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la participación, 1981,



course of the so-called universal Western history, had the power to free the oppressed masses of Peru.

The second disagreement was over the political role that the APRA movement was called to play in Peru. APRA exiles in Mexico supported the transformation of APRA into a national party (hence the creation of the PNL in January 1928), whereas those in charge of the movement in Peru rebuffed this position. They proposed instead that APRA had to remain a political alliance, not a party, so that it continued to marshal anti-imperialist forces across the continent while bequeathing to a national-level socialist party the responsibility for revolutionary work in Peru. On September 29, 1928, Mariátegui summarized the crux of the problem in the following terms: “Yo he tenido con Haya primero y con el grupo de México después un largo debate, en el cual he sostenido con abundantes y claras razones que el Apra, como su mismo título lo dice, no debía ser un partido sino una alianza y he desaprobado posteriormente la propaganda con la cual se pretendía presentar la candidatura de Haya.”<sup>24</sup> In many ways, tactical deviations stemmed from different readings of the situation in Peru and of the logics of global capitalism, but they also had to do with how these historical actors perceived their place in the Peruvian vanguard and understood their role as agents of social transformation.

As a result of these ideological and tactical debates, two competing visions for Indo-América began to rise in the late 1920s between Apristas in Peru and those in exile: one Indo-América championed a socialist revolution while the other pressed for a social and anti-imperialist revolution. Mariátegui was by then a fierce advocate of the former. He came to view in “Indo-American socialism” a revolutionary project that spoke to the social and political realities of Peru.<sup>25</sup> Mariátegui is indeed known and celebrated for his promotion of the Indigenist movement in Peru and the Americas from a socialist perspective. His intellectual work vindicated the rights and demands of “Indian Peru” and made the

pp. 67–112; Flores Galindo and Manuel Burga, “La polémica Haya – Mariátegui,” in *Apogeo y crisis de la república*, pp. 185–196; Flores Galindo, “Haya, Mariátegui y el Europeísmo,” *Obras Completas V*, Lima: Casa de estudio del socialismo, 1993, pp. 127–129.

<sup>24</sup> “I have had a long debate, first with Haya, and later with the group of Mexico. I have argued with abundant and clear reasons that APRA, as its title says, should not be a party but an alliance and I have subsequently disapproved the propaganda with which they presented Haya’s candidacy,” Mariátegui to Carlos Arbulú Miranda, Lima, September 20, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 444.

<sup>25</sup> “Aniversario y balance,” *Amauta*, no. 17, September, 1928, p. 3.

emancipation of Indigenous populations the primary goal of the socialist revolution.<sup>26</sup> “The problem of the Indian, which is the problem of Peru, cannot find its solution in an abstract humanitarian formula,” he wrote in 1924 shortly after returning to Peru. “The solution to the problem of the Indian must be a social solution. It must be worked out by the Indian themselves.”<sup>27</sup> Mariátegui rebuked the discourse of cultural and moral salvation, so prevalent in positivist discourses, and advocated instead for the full agency of the Indigenous peasants as revolutionary actors. He nevertheless opposed the creation of an Indian Republic in South America, as proposed by the Comintern in the late 1920s, arguing that race oppression should always be primarily read as class oppression.<sup>28</sup>

Mariátegui’s Indo-American socialism, then, was less a plan for integrating the Americas than a roadmap for Peruvians to bring socialism to life “con nuestra propia realidad, en nuestro propio lenguaje.”<sup>29</sup> By 1928, it had become clear to Mariátegui and the Peruvian vanguard that the real problem surrounding them was not one that opposed Latin or Hispanic or Indo-América to North America, let alone Western civilization per se. Rather, the problem lay in the polarity between capitalism and socialism, and Indo-América’s role as a concept was to help bring about the latter in Peru and the Americas.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, for Haya de la Torre and for Apristas in Mexico, Indo-América was not a means to an end. It was the goal to achieve. This idea gained clarity in later years, but in 1930, it was already clear to Haya de la Torre that correctly naming the continent in a way that revealed to the Latin American peoples what united them rather than insisting on national distinctions in their respective *patria chica* (small nation), constituted a revolutionary priority. He reflected in 1930 upon distinct continental consciousnesses in tandem with their respective historical significance. His conclusions associated Hispano América with the colonial period, Latin America with the republican one, and Pan-América with the contemporary expression of US imperialism in the

<sup>26</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui: *An Anthology*, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, *Mundial*, Lima, December 9, 1924, in José Carlos Mariátegui: *An Anthology*, pp. 141–142.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Becker, “Mariátegui, the Comintern, and the Indigenous Question in Latin America,” *Science and Society*, 70: 4 (October 2006): 450–479.

<sup>29</sup> “With our own reality, in our own language.” “Aniversario y balance,” *Amauta*, no. 17, September, 1928, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ricardo Melgar Bao, *Mariátegui, Indoamérica y las crisis civilizatorias de Occidente*, Lima: Editora Amauta S. A., 1995.

region south of the Río Grande. Indo-América, following that logic, represented altogether the continental and the historical consciousness of a new, emancipated people south of the Río Grande, free at long last from colonial and neocolonial oppression. It was a form of revolutionary consciousness projected onto the future, one that did not exist yet, therefore nebulous, but which Aprista exiles were beginning to see more clearly and strived to bring about.<sup>31</sup>

Notwithstanding these differing Aprista positions regarding the essence or the indispensability of hemispheric unity, their visions for Indo-América shared one common denominator. In the late 1920s to early 1930s, Indo-América had overall much less to do with representing the Indigenous people of the Americas than with organizing one of two things – either a socialist revolution in Peru, or an original movement of Pan-Latin American resistance in the face of global capitalism and the US hegemon. Haya de la Torre brought home this point in 1930 when he favoured the use of “Latin America” over “Indo-América,” since it was so widespread, he claimed, and accepted by many worldwide.<sup>32</sup> Besides, his early references to an “Indo-” América were mostly superficial; they more resembled José Vasconcelos’ mixed-race utopia, or “cosmic race,” than they did any attempt at paying serious attention to Indigenous agency.<sup>33</sup> The same was true of Mariátegui’s approach to Indo-América. Mariátegui did celebrate the Inca past and the mythic cultural essence of the “Indio,” and to be sure his Marxist interpretations have received much praise for that overture. But while rooted in an idealized past, observes the literary scholar Jorge Coronado, his social philosophy “slight[ed] present-day indigenous cultures”.<sup>34</sup>

The current scholarship that is critical of the Indigenist movement helps to grasp how central was the concept of salvation and of a civilizing mission to Apristas’ political endeavours, whether conducted in exile or in

<sup>31</sup> Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “La cuestión del nombre,” (1930), *¿A dónde va Indoamérica*, pp. 31–35.

<sup>32</sup> Haya de la Torre, “La cuestión del nombre,” p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> José Vasconcelos argued that Latin Americans inherited a historical mission from their colonial past. Through mestizaje, he advanced, they must favour the advent of a new era, in which the instinct of beauty, emotions, and spiritual feelings, rather than reason or ethics, would rule human societies. José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 (1st ed. In Spanish 1925).

<sup>34</sup> Jorge Coronado, *The Andes Imagined: Indigenismo, Society, and Modernity*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009, p. 28.

Peru.<sup>35</sup> This doesn't mean that the idea of Indo-América altogether forewent concerns for the impoverished Indigenous populations of the Americas, specifically that of Peru. From the late 1920s onward, APRA's fragmented program fiercely championed their cause and the improvement of their social conditions. Yet they did so in a way that ultimately erased those they claimed to represent.<sup>36</sup> In discourse, the figure of the "Indio" became associated with the new ideal of modernity that Aprista exiles and the Peruvian vanguard wanted to bring forth. In practice, however, these white and mestizo intellectuals never seriously included Indigenous agency and worldviews in their political philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

This shared oblivion in Aprista circles yields an important lesson: in the late 1920s, conflict had little to do with the nascent concepts of Indo-América, for Indo-América was neither hegemonic at the time, nor overly discordant regarding Apristas' approach to Indigenous agency. In contrast, distance, leadership struggles, and hurt feelings, as we shall see, were creating more important headaches for the movement.

#### UNITY IN CONFLICT

Now that we understand better the underlying tensions that ran through APRA's Marxist interpretations during its foundational phase, we must reckon with their persistence in the movement. These tensions fed conflicts and debates more than they precipitated ruptures. Besides, in contrast to what historians have so far suggested, the quarrel that arose between José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in 1928 was not only about ideological discrepancies and tactical incompatibilities. Mariátegui in fact resented that Peruvian exiles had taken the initiative to form a national party from afar. Most vexing was the fact that the Aprista cell in Mexico had moved along with the creation of the

<sup>35</sup> Kim Díaz, "Indigenism in Peru and Bolivia," in Robert Eli Sánchez, Jr. (ed.) *Latin American and Latinx Philosophy: A Collaborative Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. 180–197; Priscilla Archibald, *Imagining Modernity in the Andes*, Lewisburgh, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2011; Coronado, *The Andes Imagined*; Paulo Drinot, *The Allure of Labor. Workers, Race, and the Making of the Peruvian State*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, pp. 17–50.

<sup>37</sup> Coronado, *The Andes Imagined*; Daniel Iglesias, "Redécouverte et idéologisation de l'Amérique latine par l'Alliance populaire révolutionnaire américaine," in Annie-Blonderl and Eliane Talbot (eds), *(Re)découvertes des Amériques. Entre conflits, rencontres et recherche d'identité*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013, pp. 155–166.

Partido Nacionalista Peruano without receiving prior consent from any of the vanguard elements present and active in Peru at the time. Apristas in Mexico had not even consulted them.<sup>38</sup> In a letter dated April 16, 1928, Mariátegui reminded his intractable peers of the organizing work that homebred activists were already doing in Peruvian provinces. Intellectuals, students, schoolteachers, union leaders, and professionals of all sorts appeared, in light of Mariátegui's assessment, to have joined forces on the national scene to mobilize the masses of Peru and stir up their revolutionary potential.<sup>39</sup> What could a group of Peruvian exiles possibly bring to the political organizing underway in Peru that vanguard elements, who lived and worked there, did not know already? "*Les absents ont toujours tort*," says the French adage.<sup>40</sup> So thought Mariátegui: "Si de lo que se trata, como sostiene Haya en una magnífica conferencia," he giped, referring to ongoing Marxist debates about how to best interpret Latin American societies, "es de descubrir la realidad y no de inventarla, me parece que Uds. están siguiendo un método totalmente distinto y contrario."<sup>41</sup>

Beneath this statement lay the assumption that the state of being in Peru rather than abroad gave a comparative advantage to the Peruvian vanguard that revolved around the leadership of Mariátegui. Aprista exiles were too far away. According to Mariátegui, they were too removed and disconnected from Peruvian realities to fully grasp what types of radical politics their country needed. He mused later that year, still in reference to Aprista exiles in Mexico, "Yo no los apruebo. Y creo que estoy más cerca de la realidad y más cerca del Perú que ellos, a pesar de mi presunto europeísmo y de mi supuesto excesivo doctrinarismo."<sup>42</sup> For Marxist theorists, immediate surroundings are crucial to analyzing the historical development of a given society. Only with an accurate

<sup>38</sup> Mariátegui to La Célula Aprista de México, Lima, April 16, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, pp. 371–373.

<sup>39</sup> Mariátegui to La Célula Aprista de México, Lima, April 16, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 372.

<sup>40</sup> "Those who are absent are always wrong."

<sup>41</sup> "If what this is about, as Haya maintains in a magnificent conference, is to discover reality and not to invent it, it seems to me that you are following a totally different and contrary method," Mariátegui to La Célula Aprista de México, Lima, April 16, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 372.

<sup>42</sup> "I do not approve of them. And I believe that I am closer to reality and closer to Peru than they are, despite my alleged Europeanism and my alleged excessive doctrinarism," Mariátegui to Eudocio Ravines, Lima, December 31, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 492.

reading of a social context can they choose the appropriate theoretical lodestar for the war to be waged. Geographical distance, therefore, had the power to flaw an otherwise Marxist interpretation of a particular reality.

What ensued came in the form of personal squabbles. Haya de la Torre's response reached Lima the following month. His words dripped bitterness: "Está Ud. Haciendo mucho daño por su falta de calma, por su afán de aparecer siempre europeo dentro de la terminología europea." The rebuke went on, "Con eso rompe el Apra. Yo sé que está Ud. contra nosotros. No me sorprende. Pero la revolución la haremos nosotros sin mencionar el socialismo pero repartiendo las tierras y luchando contra el imperialismo."<sup>43</sup> To this pledge of rupture Mariátegui replied with silence. "¿Para que escribimos?" he mused later that year, reflecting upon his estranged relationship with Haya de la Torre.<sup>44</sup> Mariátegui was aware that heeding each other's complaints would only compound their falling-out at this point. He also knew that petty squabbles could easily blow out of proportion. To avoid an "unpleasant rupture" with the grupo de México, Mariátegui resolved to stave off situations that risked adding fuel to the flames; he altogether stopped replying to Haya de la Torre. By the end of 1928, the two major Peruvian figures associated with APRA had ceased all communication with one another.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, a restricted number of Apristas in exile appeared eager to bring this fight into the open. Significantly for my argument, they did so in a way that associated their geographical positions outside Peru with capacities for revolutionary thought. Take for example the case of Alejandro Rojas Zevallos, a Peruvian Aprista who lived and worked in New York City, and who openly sided with Haya de la Torre against the leadership of Mariátegui. In a letter he forwarded to the latter in September 1928, Rojas Zevallos used the geographical component to assess his superiority over Apristas in Peru. His text implied that peers back home could not understand the urgency to defend the national sovereignty of Peru. If they toyed with socialist ideas, even as their

<sup>43</sup> "You are doing a lot of damage by your lack of calm, by your desire to always appear European within the European terminology." "With that breaks the APRA. I know that you are against us. I'm not surprised. But we will make the revolution without mentioning socialism, by distributing the lands and fighting against imperialism," Haya de la Torre to Mariátegui, México, May 20, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 379.

<sup>44</sup> "Why write to one another?" Mariátegui to Eudocio Ravines, Lima, December 31, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 490.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 489–490.

country was still only a “colonia,” Rojas Zevallos suggested, it was because they remained oblivious to the realities of persecution and imperialism in the Americas.<sup>46</sup> According to Zevallos, those who lived abroad were confronted with different points of view and benefited from experiences conducive to original creation.<sup>47</sup> Rojas Zevallos was terse and unforgiving. The solution he envisioned to save APRA and protect Peruvians from misguided revolutionaries took the form of overt rupture: “En nombre de los amigos de Haya,” he told Mariátegui, “le invito a declararse contra Haya, a proclamar su rebeldía en nombre de su ‘acendradas convicciones’ y anunciar que usted es ajeno a la campaña nacional contra el leguismo.”<sup>48</sup>

Other APRA leaders in exile thought along similar lines. This was the case of Alberto Hidalgo, an Aprista exiled in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Hidalgo reproached Mariátegui for his excessive focus on the Peruvian scene, which came to the detriment of the American continental scene, he argued. Hidalgo feared that socialist theories would hold Peru captive to narrow nationalist aspirations, pressing instead for a political agenda that apprehended the country in relation to its place within, as well as its connections to, the entire American continent.<sup>49</sup> “Yo no estoy de acuerdo con muchos de sus postulados. Es más. Estoy en contra de ellos,” Hidalgo told Mariátegui in a letter dated 21 December 1928. He added examples to support his claim: “Así por ejemplo usted es nacionalista, así en política como en arte. Ha caído usted en la trampa del comunismo ruso, hecho con fronteras y divisiones raciales.”<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, Hidalgo criticized Mariátegui for being overly nationalist and not internationalist enough, whereas Rojas Zevallo rebuked Mariátegui’s socialism for denying the importance of nationalism when

<sup>46</sup> Alejandro Rojas Zevallos to Mariátegui, Hamburgo, [New York], [septiembre] 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, pp. 446–447. Zevallos, “De nuestros lectores,” *La Prensa*, New York, April 30, 1929, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Rojas Zevallos, “El problema indígena de Hispano America,” *La Prensa*, August 16, 1927, sec. *Tribuna Libre*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> “On behalf of Haya’s friends, I invite you to declare yourself against Haya, to proclaim your rebellion in the name of your ‘solid convictions’ and to announce that you are alien to the national campaign against Leguía,” Zevallos to Mariátegui, Hamburgo, [New York], [September] 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 447.

<sup>49</sup> Alberto Hidalgo to Mariátegui, Buenos Aires, December 21, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 486.

<sup>50</sup> “I do not agree with many of your reasonings. It’s more. I am against them.” “For example, you are a nationalist, in politics as well as in art. You have fallen into the trap of Russian communism, made of borders and racial divisions,” Hidalgo to Mariátegui, Buenos Aires, December 21, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 486.

fighting US imperialism. This discrepancy of opinion can be explained by the lack of cohesion at the time in a movement that grew fast and wide. Not all APRA exiles agreed over the importance of being nationalist or internationalist, and often a single individual looked confused about what exactly being a nationalist or an internationalist entailed, for at the time Apristas were still struggling to syncretize both concepts into a single plan of action. But one thing held true for most of them, and this was that they similarly understood their geographical location as a guarantee against inappropriate revolutionary paths for Peru.

The pugnacious tone of Rojas Zevallos, seen above, is consistent with common interpretations of the strife that opposed in 1928 the two major historical figures of APRA. This scholarship tends to bracket what happened between these two leaders with the outbreak of explicit and immediate divisions among Aprista circles. A consensual narrative proposes that, from then until the 1940s, when the Peruvian APRA party fully swerved to the right of the political spectrum, the intellectual history of Peru wavered between two leftist poles. A sharp divide between the Peruvian vanguard back home, which revolved around the figure of José Carlos Mariátegui, and Aprista exiles abroad, more loyal to Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, forcefully separated these circles starting in 1928. The former group was associated with socialism, whereas those who formed the latter came to be viewed as the only legitimate representatives of APRA.<sup>51</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, Ricardo Martínez de la Torre, and Julio Portocarrero went on to organize the Socialist Party of Peru in October 1928. It became the Communist party of Peru shortly after the death of Mariátegui in April 1930.<sup>52</sup>

Problematically, this individual-focused perspective on political strife has led scholars to concentrate primarily on notions of rupture and division in their apprehension of the many conflicts that rocked the Aprista community from the late 1920s onward. They have found surprisingly little room in their reading of primary sources for notions of conciliation and cooperation. Yet a closer look at the correspondence that

<sup>51</sup> Alberto Flores Galindo and Manuel Burga, “La polémica Haya-Mariátegui,” in *Apogeo y crisis de la república aristocrática*, Lima: Ediciones “Rikchay Perú,” 1979, pp. 185–196. José Barba Caballero and César Lévano, *La polémica: Haya de la Torre – Mariátegui*, s.l., n.d., 1979; Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Haya de la Torre y el APRA*, Santiago de Chile: Pacífico, 1955; Ricardo Martínez de la Torre, *Apuntes para una interpretación marxista*, 1947–1949.

<sup>52</sup> Alberto Flores Galindo, *El pensamiento comunista, 1917–1945*, Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1982, pp. 28, 84–85.



Apristas exchanged during these years reveals a different picture. Those who took clear and unwavering sides in the split between Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui, like Rojas Zevallos above, represented more an exception than the norm. The correspondence that Mariátegui continued to maintain with a panoply of Aprista exiles, even as his relationship with Haya de la Torre took a turn for the worse, brings home the resilience of cooperation in these political circles.

In effect, many Apristas maintained amiable relationships with one another despite the divergence of opinions. Most continued to collaborate in the pages of *Amauta* until the death of José Carlos Mariátegui. Others took pains to openly defend collaboration and solidarity of action in the face of mounting disagreements.<sup>53</sup> Discord was not born yesterday in these groups, nor was it about to die. In these radical and leftist circles, correspondence of action did not have to map onto precise political ambitions. It was possible to experience feelings of solidarity for a common cause of regeneration for Peru and the Americas despite deviating ideological or tactical alignments. Likewise, personal rivalries did not automatically require that allies join one particular faction. The practice of unity in conflict associated with the *Reforma* movement had led Peruvian radicals to place intellectual conflict at the core of their collective endeavours. This was still true in the late 1920s. Ten years after the Grito de Córdoba, the Peruvian vanguard continued to chisel social designs into the backbeat of debates and arguments.

The positions that Mariátegui proselytized in the summer of 1929 make clear that he continued to view the possibility of complementary goals between APRA and the newfound Socialist Party of Peru (PSP). On June 20, 1929, Mariátegui forwarded a series of instructions to Nicanor A. de la Fuente, a close collaborator in Chiclayo, Peru. His letter clearly states the necessity to carry on the fight against divisionism between elements of the Peruvian vanguard, therefore suggesting that as long as both groups clarified their respective functions and realms of actions, then cooperation could still prevail over internal warfare:

Como organización continental, el Apra depende de lo que resulta al congreso antiimperialista de París, a cuyas decisiones, inspiradas seguramente en la necesidad de unificar el movimiento anti-imperialista, ningún revolucionario puede oponer resistencia. [...] Nosotros trabajamos con el proletariado y por el

<sup>53</sup> Fernán Cisneros (H.) a José Carlos Mariátegui, Buenos Aires, October 4, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 449; Hidalgo to Mariátegui, Buenos Aires, December 21, 1928, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 486.

socialismo. Si hay grupos dispuestos a trabajar con la pequeña burguesía por un nacionalismo revolucionario, que ocupen su puesto. No nos negaremos a colaborar con ellos, si representan efectivamente una corriente, un movimiento de masas. Me parece que, planteada así, la cuestión es completamente clara y queda excluida toda posibilidad de divisionismo.<sup>54</sup>

To be sure, Mariátegui's text implies that it was incumbent upon the Lima Group to allocate resources and objectives, and to dictate who, in the end, organized an anti-imperialist alliance abroad and who stayed in Peru to prepare the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, Mariátegui's call for cooperation with APRA is crucial, for it helps to demystify the rigidity with which most studies have approached group dynamics within the Aprista community. That Mariátegui was able to envision, still in 1929, an alliance between a continental APRA and a national-level socialist party, that he considered the possibility of a fruitful collaboration based on complementary objectives between them, runs counter to what most scholarship on APRA has inferred to this day about the divide that ostensibly kept aprismo and socialism hermetically apart from one another, starting somewhat in 1927, and then completely from 1928 onward.<sup>55</sup> The letter that Mariátegui wrote to Mario Nerval the following week concluded with similar call for cooperation between antagonist lines of action: "Los términos del debate quedan así bien esclarecidos," he stated, "y todo reproche por divisionismo completamente excluido. – No hay por nuestra parte divisionismo sino clarificación."<sup>56</sup> In the late 1920s, allegiances to both groups not only appeared plausible, but several members of APRA in fact trusted that this double affiliation had the power to facilitate revolutionary work and assist different realms of action between the national and the continental scene.

<sup>54</sup> "As a continental organization, APRA depends on the results of the anti-imperialist congress in Paris, to whose decisions, surely inspired by the need to unify the anti-imperialist movement, no revolutionary can contest. [...] We work with the proletariat and for socialism. If there are groups willing to work with the petty bourgeoisie for revolutionary nationalism, let them take their place. We will not refuse to collaborate with them, if they effectively represent a current, a mass movement. It seems to me that, put like this, the question is completely clear and any possibility of division is excluded," José Carlos Mariátegui to Nicanor A. de la Fuente, Lima, June 20, 1929, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 584.

<sup>55</sup> An exception to this trend, however, is Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker who also recognize this fact in *José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology*.

<sup>56</sup> "The terms of the debate are thus clarified, and any reproach for divisiveness completely excluded – There is no divisiveness on our part but clarification," José Carlos Mariátegui a Mario Nerval, Lima, June 28, 1929, Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*, p. 597.

This protracted struggle in the APRA movement meant that the need to confirm one's authority endured way beyond the formative years in exile, with consequences for the making of APRA's anti-imperialist project and its subsequent association with Indo-American solidarity a few years later. It is precisely because conflict repeatedly rattled the movement that a branch of the leadership clung so hard to Indo-América. There will be more to say about how this project of hemispheric unity, in addition to advocating Latin American sovereignty by way of continental unity, helped to establish political legitimacy within the movement during the 1930s and early 1940s. But first we must continue to explore the national context in which Aprista exiles returned to Peru in 1930–1931. Their homecoming took place in a context in which the Peruvian vanguard, united yesterday, began to divide. Organizing political parties demanded the dissociation of one party from the another. The experience of travel and exile would help a certain leadership in the movement achieve this task.

#### HEMCOMING

In Peru, Major Luis Miguel Sánchez Cerro's rise to power in August 1930 marked the onset of a democratic opening. A combination of frantic hopes and political shadows took hold of the country soon after this military revolt, launched in the southern province of Arequipa on August 22, 1930, toppled the unpopular government of Augusto B. Leguía within three days. Sánchez Cerro, a mestizo from modest origins, epitomized for the popular sectors the promise of a new Peru.<sup>57</sup> As highlighted by eminent historians of the country, this military coup presaged the beginning of mass politics in Peru.<sup>58</sup> To understand the rapid politicization of the Peruvian masses henceforth, one must consider the underlying tensions that were gripping the country in the preceding decade.<sup>59</sup> In effect, the deepening chasm between the expectations of change initially brought forth by the Leguía government (1919–1923) and the reality of his last term in office (1923–1930) had become untenable by the time Sánchez Cerro victoriously marched on the Peruvian

<sup>57</sup> Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, *La crisis presente, 1914–1939*, Lima: Ediciones “Mercurio Peruano” [1940]. Steve Stein, *Populism in Peru: The Emergence of the Masses and the Politics of Social Control*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, p. 84.

<sup>58</sup> Belaúnde, *La crisis presente, 1914–1939*.

<sup>59</sup> Armando Villanueva and Pablo Macera, *Arrogante Montonero*, Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2011, p. 48.

capital on August 29, 1930. Whereas the ascension of Leguía to the presidency of Peru in 1919 had put an end to the Aristocratic Republic, ultimately his attempts to liquidate the old political order and modernize Peru did not meet expectations. By the end of his *Oncenio* (eleven-year presidential period), Leguía had fallen in disgrace before the popular sectors of Peru. By 1930, they wondered whether this “Patria Nueva,” so cheerfully announced at the beginning of his presidential mandate, had anything to do with them after all: Peru looked more like a playground for foreign investors and US administrative cadres than the modern Peruvian nation Leguía had promised to bring about.

APRA leaders in exile swiftly capitalized on these events. They sensed the imminence of political transformations in their country. The fall of Leguía in August 1930, then, brought not only promises of a democratic Peru, but also the return home of the APRA exiles shortly thereafter. By September of that year, a dozen or so APRA exiles had established themselves in Lima, whence they began orchestrating the integration of APRA into a national political party. They also worked hard to diminish the clout of socialist peers in Peru, since both factions competed with one another to organize the rising popular sectors of Peru.<sup>60</sup> The first party executive was founded soon after and placed under direction of Luis Eduardo Enríquez, a stalwart militant and leader of APRA who had campaigned for the movement in Paris starting in the mid-1920s (he would soon be exiled again, this time in Chile). Three departments oversaw the functioning of the executive committee of the Peruvian section of APRA: the Department of Propaganda (Departamento de Propaganda y Redacción), divided between the office of exterior propaganda and the office of national propaganda, the Department of Economics (Departamento de Economía), and the Department of Discipline (Departamento de Disciplina). Each department was made up of one or two sub-secretaries, in addition to incorporating a couple of

<sup>60</sup> On APRA’s anti-communism, and more specifically on the strategies that the PAP deployed to garner support among organized labour in early 1930s Peru, see Paulo Drinot, “Creole Anti-Communism: Labor, The Peruvian Communist Party, and APRA, 1930–1934,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 92: 4 (2012): 703–736. Steven Hirsch also studied the partnership established in the early 1930s between the non-communist labour movement and the Peruvian APRA party. Hirsch argues that anarcho-syndicalist unions allied with the PAP because they saw in this party a prudent left alternative to a more belligerent, and above all more controlling, Communist Party. Steven J. Hirsch, “The Anarcho-Syndicalist Roots of a Multi-Class Alliance: Organized Labor and the Peruvian Aprista Party, 1900–1930,” Ph. D. Diss., George Washington University, 1997.

“miembros integrantes” as well.<sup>61</sup> Official party documents reported in mid-October 1930 that about twenty-six collaborators worked in or for the party executive, thereby confirming, or more accurately giving the impression that the Peruvian APRA Party (PAP) was already a well-run institution with viable and organized party structures at the national level. This was not the case, as we shall see, but setting out the design of party infrastructure, and doing so conspicuously, did point to a group of undaunted militants who were girding themselves for a solid comeback into Peruvian politics.

As APRA began to cohere into a national political party, between August 1930 and October 1931, the Apristas who had come of age politically in exile faced an important challenge in terms of the party's ideological adaptation. This cohort of APRA leaders needed to reconnect with the Peruvian population. They needed to convince their fellow citizens that their organization was not an international clique dissociated from Peruvian politics, as many of its enemies alleged from 1930 onward. Specifically, they needed to adapt the experiences and the political knowledge they had accumulated abroad, whether in Europe or in the Americas, in a way that would make sense to ordinary Peruvians. Very few people at the time had the opportunity to travel within their own country, let alone abroad. Most simply strove to eke out a living and to live decent and honourable lives. What good was studying imperialism for a peasant of Indigenous descent in the Andes, or a baker in Lima? Why were the United States so bad for them? How exactly did imperialist domination materialize in the lives of Peruvian people? To provide straightforward answers to these questions, the APRA leaders freshly returned from exile needed time to regroup. They needed time to reacquaint themselves with Peru and with the everyday realities of its people to be able to translate the lessons they had learned abroad about US imperialism and global capitalism and the way in which these powerful forces of oppression specifically worked in their country.

Stories of past travels assisted APRA leaders to introduce their movement to the Peruvian electorate prior to adapting its program to the national scene (which it did in August 1931, when Haya de la Torre unveiled the minimum program (*programa mínimo*) of PAP before a crowd of thousands in the Plaza de Acho, a colonial bullring in the city

<sup>61</sup> “Comité Directivo del A.P.R.A.,” *APRA: Órgano del frente único de trabajadores manuales e intelectuales, Partido Aprista Peruano*, Lima, No. 2, October 20, 1930, p. 3.

of Lima).<sup>62</sup> In *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, the anthropologist Mary W. Helms traces how concepts and interpretations conferred on geographical distance and remote areas affect the meaning that subjects grant to material artefacts acquired in these far-away and foreign places.<sup>63</sup> Helm tells us that geographical distance is not neutral. For members of traditional societies, she writes, “geographical distance is frequently thought to correspond with supernatural distance, such that as one moves away from the social center geographically one moves toward places and people that are increasingly ‘different’ and, therefore, regarded as increasingly supernatural, mythical, and powerful.”<sup>64</sup> These conclusions help shed light on the role that travel narratives came to play for the APRA leaders who experienced exile in the 1920s and who returned home in 1930 to organize their movement at the national level from then onward. Upon returning to Peru, APRA exiles took on the habit of telling stories of their recent travels abroad. These travelling stories displayed a symbolic apparatus that implied that roaming foreign lands and exploring distant regions empowered them with rare and arcane knowledge about the world located outside Peru.

One such article cheerfully announced Magda Portal’s imminent homecoming in October 1930, favourably insisting on the knowledge she was able to collect on the Americas: “Su ausencia ha sido fecunda y provechosa, pues ha ganado cultura y saber del conocimiento de la propia América.”<sup>65</sup> Not only had exile permitted Portal to gain a deeper knowledge of the Americas; this article further argued that, in exile, Portal studied and assimilated European political theories, those very ones, the author stressed, which sheepishly applied to Latin American realities would give negative results. But Portal “ha comprendido a América,”

<sup>62</sup> Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, 1931, “Discurso Programa,” in *Política Aprista*, Lima: Editorial Cooperativa Aprista Atahualpa, 1933. Two other documents, “Llamamiento a la Nación por el Partido Aprista” and “Manifiesto a la Nación,” had appeared earlier that year, in January and February 1931 respectively. These documents began proposing a unified proposal analyses informed with questions of national and regional interests, “Documentos Políticos del Partido Aprista Peruano,” *APRA: Órgano del Partido Aprista Peruano*, Lima, March 10, 1931, pp. 3–6.

<sup>63</sup> Mary W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993, p. xi.

<sup>64</sup> Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, p. 7. Also see Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses’ Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

<sup>65</sup> [n.d.], “Magda Portal” [newspaper clipping], [1930], Magda Portal Papers, Box 10, Folder 10.10.

insisted the article. “De allí que sea una de nuestras más fervorosas figuras del movimiento antiimperialista y de unionismo continental que el Apra propugna.”<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, articles in the *APRA* journal, the mouthpiece of the Peruvian section of APRA, and in various other pro-APRA political flyers that I found in Peruvian archives took pains to publicize the cosmopolitan features of APRA’s founding members, associating them with “la gran causa americana” rather than with exclusive Peruvian politics.<sup>67</sup> Appraisals of their capacity for leadership rested on their status as world travellers, able to feel and connect with the rest of the Americas.<sup>68</sup> In this political literature, it was crucial to specify where one had acquired his or her political knowledge since the experience of having lived abroad was allegedly what enabled Apristas to turn the dreams of Reform- students into serious and organized political projects. “Porque en el exterior,” explained the APRA leader Manuel Seoane in a conference he gave upon returning to Peru, “viviendo en el estudio de las universidades o de las bibliotecas, y atendiendo a los experimentos sociales de otros pueblos, hemos aprendido el método científico que nos permitirá llegar a la realización de lo que antes era un sueño de románticos.”<sup>69</sup>

Other stories sought to demonstrate the success that APRA as a continental movement had gained in the 1920s as a way to promote its cause in Peru. In November 1930, the Peruvian newspaper *Crítica* billed Magda Portal as “uno de los más altos exponentes del MOVIMIENTO APRISTA continental” to welcome her back in Peru.<sup>70</sup> The *APRA* journal similarly celebrated that month the return of the APRA leader Manuel Seoane in

<sup>66</sup> “Has understood America.” “Hence, she is one of our most fervent figures in the anti-imperialist movement and continental unionism advocated by APRA,” *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> “The great American cause.” “Serafín Delmar and Julián Petrovick,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 1, October 12, 1930, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Magda Portal, “Haya de la Torre y José Carlos Mariátegui,” *APRA*, no. 2, Lima, October 20, 1930, p. 4; Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Haya de la Torre y el APRA*, Lima: Editorial Universo, 1980 (1954 ed.), p. 206.

<sup>69</sup> “Because abroad, living in the study of universities or libraries, and attending to the social experiments of other peoples, we have learned the scientific method that will allow us to achieve the realization of what was previously a romantic dream,” as cited in Martín Bergel, “La desmesura revolucionaria: Prácticas intelectuales y cultura del heroísmo en los orígenes del aprismo peruano (1921–1930),” p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> “One of the greatest advocate of the continental Aprista movement.” “Con Mui Explicable i Placentero Orgullo Saludamos el Retorno de nuestra Gran Poetisa Magda Portal; Uno De Los Mas Altos Exponentes Del MOVIMIENTO APRISTA continental,” *Crítica*, November 1930, Lima, Newspaper clipping, Magda Portal Papers, Box 10, Folder 10.10.

light of the international prestige he had secured for himself in Argentina. Read one article: “Todo lo que de representativo tiene la gran nación del Plata en intelectualidad, en lucha, en acción, le ha dado su abrazo de despedida, enviando con él sus mensajes fraternales al pueblo peruano.”<sup>71</sup> The display of travel narratives in this case was less about the creative and inner qualities of APRA leaders than about the networks they had built, or the people they had met, during their time in exile. Moreover, they supposed that because intellectuals and civil associations throughout the Americas recognized the merit of the continental APRA, then Peruvians were right to grant their trust to that party.<sup>72</sup>

APRA’s strategy of flaunting travel stories in order to gain political prestige in Peru was nothing new in the region. Travel literature was in nineteenth-century Latin America one of the fundamental narratives that shaped reflections on the region’s emerging nations.<sup>73</sup> Liberal elites and intellectuals travelled abroad, particularly to France and England, using foreign scenes as a foil to think and reflect upon their own identity.<sup>74</sup> Literary scholar Julio Ramos has specifically linked the United States and Europe to symbolic topographies where heuristic visions befell Latin American travellers. Those who travelled abroad were imbued, he notes, with a capacity to translate experiences accumulated from afar “with the objective of correcting the wrong track of his own tradition.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Edward Said’s work on the role of intellectuals in exile suggests that to think as outsiders from the margins of a given system enables intellectuals to move closer to universality. From spaces of exile, whether geographical or metaphorical, Said argues that intellectuals and artists are more likely to challenge the status quo.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> “All that is representative of the great Argentine nation in intellectuality, in struggle, in action, have given him their farewell embrace, sending with him their fraternal messages to the Peruvian people.” “El regreso de Manuel A. Seoane,” *APRA: Órgano del Frente único de Trabajadores Manuales e Intelectuales, Partido Aprista Peruano*, Lima, no. 5, November 9, 1930, pp. 2, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Arturo Dubra y José Pedro Cordozo, “Los Universitarios del Perú y el Uruguay,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 5, November 9, 1930, p. 12. “Pacto revolucionario,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 1, October 12, 1930, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> “Constructing Nations after Independence and Beyond,” in Ingrid E. Fey and Karen Racine (eds), *Strange Pilgrimages: Exile, Travel, and National Identity in Latin America, 1800–1990s*, Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000, pp. 1–74.

<sup>74</sup> Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2001, p. 151.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>76</sup> Edward W. Said, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” in *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1994, pp. 49–53;



This is certainly how APRA leaders liked to imagine themselves. Apristas presented their experience of exile and travel as the linchpin of revolutionary action and of nuanced ideological translations able to morph European theories into original Latin American Marxism. In 1930–1931, it wasn't clear exactly what these translations intellectually entailed, but one thing was certain. According to Aprista publications, Apristas were better equipped than sanchecerrista and communists to implement these translations and thus assess the place of Peru in the Americas. Though APRA leaders initially celebrated the military junta of Sanchez Cerro for successfully ousting the Leguía government, by late October of 1930 they contended that because military regimes lacked the capacity to think globally about national problems, the current administration could only offer short-sighted solutions to the complex predicaments that afflicted Peru as a result of the 1929 world economic crisis.<sup>77</sup>

APRA leaders ridiculed their political opponents who lacked their experience abroad. For example, that same month Portal diminished José Carlos Mariátegui for having experienced his intellectual coming of age in Europe rather than in the Americas.<sup>78</sup> Her attack stemmed from the rift that opposed APRA leaders in exile who were close to Haya de la Torre, and those in Peru who sided with Mariátegui and who manned the socialist party of Peru from 1928 onward. These appellations were tainted with pejorative or complimentary tropes depending on the side one favoured. Those who like Magda Portal sided with Haya de la Torre came to position in the urgency of action the condition for vanguard association.<sup>79</sup> This group faulted those who indulged in abstract thinking without daring to mingle with the surrounding world.<sup>80</sup>

In similar fashion, common Aprista attacks launched against the PCP in the early 1930s included reproaching Mariátegui for being overly theoretical and “Europeanist” in his approach to Latin American

Said, “Representations of the Intellectual,” in *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp. 3–23.

<sup>77</sup> A.G., “Comentario Sobre la Crisis Económica,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 2, October 20, 1930, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Magda Portal, “Haya de la Torre y José Carlos Mariátegui,” *APRA: Órgano del Frente Único de Trabajadores Manuales e Intelectuales*, Partido Aprista Peruano, Lima, no. 2, October 20, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Bergel, “Nomadismo proselitista y revolución,” p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Waldo Frank in America Hispana*, New York: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1930, p. 122.

problems.<sup>81</sup> His sedentary lifestyle was partly to blame for this limitation, according to APRA leaders like Portal. Because of significant health problems, Mariátegui was confined to a wheelchair before his early death in 1930, and thus he never had a chance to explore his own country following his homecoming in the mid-1920s. Mariátegui prepared most of his political organizing through letter-writing, as evidenced by the hundreds of letters that he exchanged with allies and political activists in different parts of Peru.<sup>82</sup> Portal suggested that this sedentary lifestyle had hindered Mariátegui's capacity to develop political philosophies indigenous to the Americas. "Obligado por su invalidez a mirar la vida desde un sillón y a través de [sus] lecturas europeas, no podía despojarse del lente europeo para mirar América," noted Portal.<sup>83</sup> This rebuke reflected the views shared by many APRA leaders who had just returned to Peru to organize the Peruvian section of APRA. For APRA leaders who had come of age in exile, the context of creation underlying the production of a political philosophy was in the early 1930s as important, if not more so, than the accuracy of its ideology and social interpretations.

The recruitment of APRA members and sympathizers took on special importance starting in March 1931, after an internal military coup overthrew Sánchez Cerro and installed in his stead a new junta, headed by the Pierolista David Samanez Ocampo and backed by the pro-Aprista Colonel Gustavo Jiménez.<sup>84</sup> Soon after assuming power, the Samanez Ocampo Junta announced its intention to hold elections nationwide in October 1931 and to allow the participation of political parties, with the

<sup>81</sup> Galindo and Burga, *Apogeo y crisis de la república*, p. 192. These attacks were unwarranted. For one, Mariátegui conducted an project of organization in Peru during the second half of the 1920s. And although the fame of Mariátegui as a prominent intellectual remained somewhat limited up until the 1960s, scholars of revolutionary thought usually concur nowadays in recognizing him as one of the most original Marxist thinkers Latin America has known. Harry E. Vanden, "Mariátegui: Marxismo, Comunismo, and Other Bibliographical Notes," *Latin American Research Review*, 14: 3 (1979): 74; Vanden, "The Peasants as a Revolutionary Class: An Early Latin American View," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 20: 2 (May, 1978): 198–199; Thomas Angotti, "The Contributions of José Carlos Mariátegui to Revolutionary Theory," pp. 42–43; Alberto Flores Galindo and Manuel Burga, "La Polémica Haya-Mariátegui," *Apogeo y crisis de la república*, pp. 185–196; Ricardo Melgar Bao, *Mariátegui, Indoamérica y las crisis civilizatorias de Occidente*.

<sup>82</sup> Mariátegui, *Correspondencia*.

<sup>83</sup> "Forced by his disability to look at life from an armchair and through [his] European readings, he could not shed the European lens to look at America," Portal, "Haya de la Torre y José Carlos Mariátegui," p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Peter F. Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 269.

exception of the Communist Party. The PAP was allowed to openly take part in Peruvian politics and, for the first time, to pursue state power via democratic means. The Junta also passed a new electoral law, whose long-awaited provisions, including the introduction of the secret ballot and the removal of property qualifications for the right to vote, swelled the number of eligible voters in Peru.<sup>85</sup> Determined to take advantage of this opportunity, PAP organized rapidly. Party leaders in Peru officially named Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre as the party's presidential candidate and ordered his return to Peru. They likewise put their propaganda activities into overdrive, as notified by the American Consul General in the region of Callao-Lima. "Aprista propaganda is being spread all over Peru," William C. Burdett reported to the State Secretary on March 23, 1931, "and there are several A.P.R.A. offices in Lima and in other cities. There is even a *célula* for women in Lima." Burdett also noted that, according to APRA's headquarters in Lima, "everyone who has joined the A.P.R.A. has become an enthusiastic propagandist."<sup>86</sup>

Crucial to APRA leaders was indeed the conquest of imaginations. They battled for the hearts and minds of the Peruvian people by way of seduction and dramatized portrayals of their movement.<sup>87</sup> Throughout the electoral campaign in view of the October 1931 elections, APRA leaders continued to insist on the value of travel as the premise for ideological accuracy regarding the fate of the Americas, even as the minimum political program focusing on national politics emerged in August 1931. Although the PCP remained outlawed, it continued in its attempts to organize the workers of Peru. The PCP operated from clandestine cells to "infiltrate trade unions and student groups" on one side, and it used the CGTP "to influence and to attempt to take control of the labor movement" on the other, as highlighted by historian Paulo Drinot.<sup>88</sup> The political material that Apristas produced, then, continued to flaunt the formative value of travel and exile as one way to validate their political credentials vis-à-vis their opponents in organizing Peruvian labour. In addition to augmenting and strengthening intellectual capacities, stressed APRA leaders and ideologues, the experience of travel and

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269; Klarén, *Modernization, Dislocation, and Aprismo: Origins of the Peruvian Aprista Party, 1870–1932*, Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1973, p. 122.

<sup>86</sup> William C. Burdett to the Secretary of State; March 23, 1931, p. 4; 823.00/626 Aprista; CF, 1930–1939; RG59, NACP.

<sup>87</sup> Alfredo Saco Miro Quesada, *Tiempos de Violencia y Rebeldía*, Lima: OKURA Editores, 1985.

<sup>88</sup> Drinot, "Creole Anti-Communism," p. 712.

exile affected the inner qualities of those who travelled. Exile built character, they noted. It allegedly formed authentic and loyal APRA revolutionaries by testing them with hardships.<sup>89</sup> Another way that APRA leaders bolstered their political authority before the Peruvian workers, and the Peruvian electorate more broadly, still included flaunting their associations with foreign intellectuals and foreign political activists. APRA leaders emphasized, like they had the previous year, their authority as intermediaries between Peru and the rest of the continent by publicizing the web of acquaintances and friendships they had developed and collected during their travels in Latin America. This strategy focused on the creative potential and the political value of individuals rather than on the ideas that they proposed.<sup>90</sup>

#### WHO'S THE LEADER IN THIS TOWN?

Yet referring to stories of past travels served purposes other than boosting the legitimacy of unknown APRA leaders before the Peruvian people or competing with sanchecerrista and with communists for the trust of the labouring and middle sectors of Peru. This strategy also helped validate the authority of the APRA leaders who had experienced exile vis-à-vis peer colleagues and party followers in Peru. In the national context leading to the October 1931 elections, the travel trope came to the rescue of APRA leaders who had joined the APRA movement in exile and who had contributed to its development in the late 1920s. Once back in Peru, leaders like Magda Portal, Carlos Manuel Cox, Julián Petrovick, and Manuel Seoane integrated the National Executive Committee of the party (Comité Ejecutivo Nacional del PAP) from whence they spearheaded the transition from the continental APRA to the Peruvian APRA party (PAP) in Peru and prepared for the 1931 elections. They did so amidst a context in which they had to fight not only against political enemies to seduce the

<sup>89</sup> “Llego ayer Oscar Herrera después de seis años de destierro,” Lima, *La Tribuna*, no. 105, August 26, 1931, p. 4. “Como se considera en el extranjero la personalidad e Haya de la Torre y su programa político,” (*The New York Herald Tribune*, August 2, 1931),” Lima, *La Tribuna*, no. 106, August 27, 1931, p. 6. William C. Burdett to Secretary of State; “Haya de la Torre, Peruvian Radical Leader,” Callao-Lima, Peru, October 27, 1930, p. 4-5; 810.43 A.P.R.A./1; CF, 1930–1939; RG59; NACP.

<sup>90</sup> “Nos hace interesantes declaraciones el c. Manuel Vásquez Díaz sobre el Aprismo en México; su actuación en el Congreso Iberoamericano de Estudiantes y la repercusión de la dictadura sanchista en la República Mexicana,” *La Tribuna*, Lima, August 27, 1931, p. 3; Julio Cuadros Caldas, “Por la candidatura de Haya de la Torre a la presidencia del Perú,” *APRA*, Segunda época, no. 3, Lima, March 18, 1931, p. 5.

Peruvian people, but also within their own party structures to make sure they were the ones in control of their fast-growing movement. In addition to introducing the APRA party to the Peruvian population, then, stories of past travels and exile served as an instrument of political control within the party itself.

Traditional scholarship on the APRA has contributed to the widespread but misguided belief that the Peruvian APRA party was an organized and disciplined entity from its inception onward. Many scholars have often incorrectly reproduced official histories regarding the control that Haya de la Torre allegedly exerted over the rank and file of the party from the foundation of the Peruvian section of the APRA from 1930 onward. The process of transition from APRA to PAP in 1930–1931 was in fact fraught with internal struggles, where competing factions jockeyed for leadership of the movement and wrestled to impose specific political orientations on the PAP. In the early 1930s, conflict between Apristas usually stemmed from tactical disagreements over how to take power. The executive committee of the party based in Lima advocated legal means of action to take power – the democracy they wanted for Peru, argued its members, necessarily had to rise from democratic means of action. In contrast, other factions of the Peruvian APRA, specifically on the northern coast of Peru, were inclined to choose violence over democracy to bring about the promised social revolution. This tension between using violence or legal means of action would continue to seep through APRA during most of the 1930s and 1940s, as shown by the literature on the subject.<sup>91</sup>

Yet the scholarship has failed to acknowledge beyond the rift opposing Haya de la Torre to Mariátegui just how much personal squabbles were also very often the cause of internal conflict in PAP. This was the case in the petty conflict that opposed (in the month prior to the October 1931 elections) two second-tier leaders of the PAP in Tumbes, a city located in northwestern Peru. This particular quarrel is instructive for my argument, for it touches on the intricate task of harmonizing the views and interests of a vast array of Apristas whose life experiences and political perspectives seldom squared with one another. As such, casting a spotlight on the feud between the Apristas Alfredo Perla Lapoint and Javier Valera aims to

<sup>91</sup> Nelson Manrique, “*¡Usted Fue Aprista!*” Bases para una historia crítica del APRA. Lima: Fondo editorial PUCP, 2009; Víctor Villanueva, *El APRA en busca del poder, 1930–1940*, Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1975.

showcase how references to persecution and exile helped reaffirm one's authority vis-à-vis party mavericks or pugnacious peers.

The respective life experiences of the Apristas involved in the conflict, Alfredo Perla Lapoint and Javier Valera, were drastically different, and so were their reasons for joining the PAP. Lapoint was young and had suffered repression under the Leguía government. His loyalty to PAP stemmed from his involvement with the continental APRA in the course of the 1920s. After six years of exile, Lapoint returned to Peru in 1930 and, like many of his peers at the time, established himself in the Peruvian capital. There, he worked as a journalist, writing articles in Peruvian newspapers to make a living. Lapoint revolved around the executive committee of the party based in Lima, but he wasn't officially part of it, which explains why the official history of APRA has not recorded his name. In contrast, Valera had never experienced persecution, let alone political exile. A middle-aged professional from the northern Department of Tumbes, his adhesion to APRA happened in Peru. Although less is known about Valera, archival evidence suggests he joined the party in 1931, soon after the foundation of the PAP.

Shortly before the conflict between them began, the Central Committee of Lima (Comité Central de Lima) had commissioned Lapoint to travel to the Department of Junín, in the central highlands of Peru, to begin propaganda work among the local population in view of the 1931 elections. Lapoint was then transferred to the neighbouring city of Huánuco, and then to the northern Departments of Ancash, Lambayeque, and Piura shortly thereafter, each time with the mandate to begin organizing local sections of the party or help new affiliates mount support for *Aprismo*.<sup>92</sup> Tumbes came last. There, Lapoint was so startled by the level of disorganization and by how steep intrigues ran in the local PAP that he felt compelled to report the case to the Central Committee back in Lima.<sup>93</sup> Lapoint blamed Valera for the mess that he witnessed in the region, “el que debía dar ejemplo de integridad, de abierto desinterés,” he wrote in reference to the local leader Valera, but who had instead led the party in Tumbes astray. What remained of the PAP in Tumbes was, according to Lapoint, bogged down in divisions and “consumido por las ambiciones,

<sup>92</sup> Alfredo Perla Lapoint to Señor Doctor Don Javier Valera, Tumbes, September 18, 1931, Archivo General del la Nación, Perú (hereafter cited as AGN), Ministerio de Interior, Dirección de gobierno, Prefectura de Lima, Presos Políticos y Sociales, Legajo 3-9-5-1.15.1.14.3 (1932).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

por las bajas pasiones.”<sup>94</sup> Valera quickly retaliated. He accused Lapoint of an offence whose nature remains unknown. But, as evidenced by the defence that Lapoint mounted for himself before the Central Committee of Lima as well as before Javier Valera, the attack coming from Tumbes inflicted a heavy blow to his reputation.

Evidently, Lapoint felt compelled to justify his credentials before provincial Apristas. The way he did it is instructive to understand how references to travel abroad and to political exile provided symbolic capital within the party itself. Lapoint started by inferring that part of his authority derived from the fact that the Comité Central de Lima had specifically commissioned him to do militant work in Tumbes. More importantly, Lapoint underscored his years passed in exile as a token of his selfless devotion to the party. “Nosotros los soldados fundadores del aprismo,” he told Valera, in reference to those, who according to his letter, suffered persecution at the hands of tyrants, served prison sentences in foreign prisons, and would never dare use the cause of *Aprismo* to advance a political career. “Nuestras luchas eran y son abnegadas,” he concluded, for “en el corazón del auténtico aprista [no] cabe la ambición personalista.”<sup>95</sup>

That Lapoint took pains to highlight his status as a founding member of APRA was intended to dwarf the legitimacy of his rival in Tumbes, a newcomer to aprismo in Peru. His repeated reference to past travels and injustices suffered abroad sought to enhance the prestige that Lapoint allegedly drew from his position as a long-standing militant. Lapoint had seen worse, he claimed, much worse. Yet never had his faith in APRA wavered: “Es muy difícil Dr.,” he warned Valera, “destruir un prestigio creado a la sombra del sacrificio, lealtad, integridad y desprendimiento puesto a toda prueba.”<sup>96</sup> In addition to casting Lapoint, a Lima-based leader who meddled in local politics, as an outsider within his own political movement in Tumbes, the content of his defence speech evidences the inevitability in APRA of jostling for peer validation. Party leaders routinely had to negotiate the right to belong to the PAP, depending on where they stayed or with whom they did political work. Likewise, during most of the 1930s, and to be fair throughout its history

<sup>94</sup> “The one who should set an example of integrity, of open disinterest.” “Consumed by ambitions, by low passions,” *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> “We, the founding soldiers of Aprismo.” “Our struggles were and are self-sacrificing, in the heart of the authentic Apristas there is [no] room for personalistic ambition,” *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> “It is very difficult, Dr., to destroy a reputation created in the shadow of sacrifice, loyalty, integrity and disinterest put to the test,” *ibid.*

from the mid-1920s onward, different APRA leaders had to validate their authority to define what exactly the PAP was about. In this particular case, alluding to a regime of past travels and suffering helped Lapoint distinguish “true” Apristas like himself, from opportunists like Valera who ostensibly saw in the PAP little more than a chance to boost their political career. In Lapoint’s defence speech, it was precisely the experience of exile and persecution that gave meaning to his relationship to *Aprismo*. The lived experience of exile also defined the most intrinsic values of a good Aprista: those of abnegation and self-devotion.

#### ASSESSING CONTROL OF THE LIMA-BASED LEADERSHIP

As an instrument of political control within the party, stories of past travels and exile also helped APRA leaders based in Lima cope with Peru’s manifold regional differences. In the political material that it disseminated around the country, the party leadership based in Lima voiced time and again the urgency to reject models that came from Europe – Spain and France in particular – and replace them with a democratic system in tune with Peruvian realities. Editorials in *APRA* and *La Tribuna* conjured up the betrayal that Peruvians had suffered twice: first with the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, then with the onset of the Republican era, from the early nineteenth century onward. These texts argued that Peru had inherited systems of law and governance and state institutions completely foreign to its reality. The importation of liberal democracy had failed the Peruvian people, explained APRA ideologues. It had served the interests of a restricted minority for too long. Now was the time to devise an original democracy: a democracy crafted by the Peruvian people, for the Peruvian people.<sup>97</sup>

This discourse of inclusion and democracy that APRA leaders put forth in their electoral campaign bore fruit in many different regions of the country. Peruvians were seduced by what they heard at public rallies or read in pro-APRA material. The intensity with which the second generation of APRA leaders, who like Victor Villanueva and Andrés Townsend Ezcurra joined the PAP in the early 1930s when they were teenagers, remembers these first, life-changing encounters with *Aprismo* via in the pages of the newfound APRA journal gestures to the success of the party’s

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, “El Programa Analítico del Aprismo,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 4, August 8, 1931, p. 1.



proselytizing discourse. Villanueva and Townsend Ezcurra similarly recall in their memoirs being in thrall to the articles they read in the *APRA*, and to *APRA*'s political proposals more broadly, for these bore the promise of something new, something worth thinking about.<sup>98</sup>

Particularly heartening for the growing rank and files of PAP was the fact that they were asked to partake in the design of the party's program and structure. To that effect, calls for public participation in the design of *Aprismo* published in the *APRA* journal and in *La Tribuna* summoned up the image of an executive committee willing to hear out its members. *APRA* leaders based in Lima repeatedly asked in *La Tribuna* that their fellow citizens help them wrest politics from common political imaginaries.<sup>99</sup> Organizing Aprista forces nationwide by way of associations of different shapes and sizes, including committees, unions, cells, and professional associations, appeared to grant the promised flexibility so that Peruvians could carve out their own understanding of *aprismo*.<sup>100</sup> On the surface, then, party structures began to develop and expand in ways that reflected the discourse of democratic inclusion found in Aprista publications. This position on democratic party structures furthermore squared very well with another, where PAP emphasized the need to decentralize the Peruvian administration and devolve more executive power to municipalities.<sup>101</sup>

It looked only logical, then, that the leadership in Lima would want their actions to reflect their words. Except they did not. There was a fundamental contradiction in the party leadership based in Lima between a discourse of democracy and inclusion on one side, and a practice of provincial exclusion on the other. The band of *APRA* leaders who had experienced exile and established their headquarters in Lima reproduced the Lima-centric politics that determined the history of Republican Peru.

<sup>98</sup> Andrés Townsend Ezcurra, *50 Años de aprismo: Memorias, Ensayos y Discursos de un Militante*, Lima: Editorial DESA, 1989, p. 34–35; Villanueva and Macera, *Arrogante Montonero*, pp. 46–55.

<sup>99</sup> Small Aprista cells and Aprista sections blossomed all over the map of Peru. During the summer of 1931, a column in *La Tribuna* entitled “Actividades Apristas” reported on the rapid growth and the expanding activities of regional Aprista cells. Doing so gave the impression of a decentralized party administration. “Actividades Apristas,” *La Tribuna*, Lima, July 31, 1931, p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> “Citación,” *La Tribuna*, no. 81, Lima, August 3, 1931, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Manuel Seoane, “Nuestro Anticentralismo,” *APRA*, Segunda Época, no. 1, Lima, March 10, 1931, p. 14; Luis Eduardo Enríquez, “Los Apristas somos regionalistas y anticentralistas,” *APRA*, Segunda Época, no. 1, Lima, March 10, 1931, p. 13; “Democracia funcional,” *La Tribuna*, no. 81, Lima, August 3, 1931, p. 1.

They walked a fine line between acknowledging the importance of members outside the capital while at the same time finding ways to retain control over the party.

The rising popularity of the PAP nationwide, and more especially in the northern coast of Peru though not exclusively, as the work of Jaymie Heilman has begun to disclose, had been creating unexpected headaches for those located in Lima, most of whom had either joined APRA or participated in its foundation in exile.<sup>102</sup> Because the Lima-based executive committee of PAP was the nerve centre that oversaw the institutionalization of *Aprismo* at the national level, provincial committees were expected to follow its instructions.<sup>103</sup> On March 14, 1931, a boxed text section in the *APRA* journal reminded party members that the only section of the APRA leadership that was entitled to authorize their initiatives was the one whose headquarters were located in Lima. Any other factions who claimed to exert leadership in the PAP, they stressed, were rebels that party members should dodge:

Como una forma de ejercer un efectivo control sobre las fuerzas con que cuenta el aprismo, y para evitar que elementos revoltosos, aprovechen de la popularidad de nuestro partido y del nombre de nuestro Jefe, Haya Delatorre [sic], para cometer escándalos, rogamos a todos los compañeros apristas y a los simpatizantes que para efectuar manifestaciones públicas se pongan de acuerdo primero con la Directiva del Partido, que funciona en Belén 1065.<sup>104</sup>

In many ways, these APRA leaders became victims of their own success. The PAP grew too fast for the handful of leaders back from exile to maintain the control they wanted to exert. That the direction of the party, or more specifically those who manned the executive committee based in

<sup>102</sup> Jaymie Patricia Heilman, “We Will No Longer Be Servile: Aprismo in 1930s Ayacucho,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38 (2006): 491–518.

<sup>103</sup> Alfredo Perla Lapoint to Señor Doctor Don Javier Valera, Tumbes, September 18, 1931, AGN, Prefectura de Lima, 3.9.5.1.15.1.14.3; “Anoche en el salón Agurto, tuvo lugar un recital poético-literario por los apristas Dr. Francisco Mendoza Calle y por el líder Alfredo Perla Lapoint,” *El corresponsal*, Chucalanas, [1931], AGN, Prefectura de Lima, 3.9.5.1.15.1.14.3. The relationship between the Central Committee of Lima and regional committees of PAP is understudied. More research is necessary to fully understand how the relations it established with provincial committees worked.

<sup>104</sup> “To exercise effective control over the forces of the Aprismo, and to prevent unruly elements from taking advantage of the popularity of our party and of the name of our Chief, Haya Delatorre [sic], to commit scandals, we ask that all Aprista comrades and sympathizers who want to carry out public demonstrations that they first agree with the Party Directive, which operates in Belén 1065.” “A todos los afiliados y simpatizantes del Partido Aprista peruano,” *APRA*, Lima, Segunda Época, no. 2, March 14, 1931, p. 5.

Lima, felt compelled to reiterate who was in control of coordinating the different sections of its organization points to this section's lack of hegemony within the party. The northern section of PAP, headed by the Comité del Primer Sector del Norte del Partido Aprista Peruano, was particularly problematic for them, as it was wielding increasing influence in the Departments of Cajamarca, Lambayeque and La Libertad.<sup>105</sup> As provincial members began to push forward to adapt the party to their own demands, heeding the voice and demands of these provincial Apristas while at the same time retaining control over the party demanded careful planning. The way in which the First Aprista National Congress, an event organized by the executive committee of the party in August 1931, displayed a discourse of inclusion while making sure that only the APRA leadership associated with the experience of exile made executive decisions brings home this point.

Soon after returning to Peru in 1930, the handful of APRA leaders established in Lima had promised to bring together what they called the “vanguard elements” of Peru in order to develop in a collaborative effort “un programa nacionalista revolucionario de acción política,” fit to solve problems particular to the Peruvian reality.<sup>106</sup> The provisional executive committee of PAP promised to hold a congress to that effect, but significantly, only when all APRA exiles had returned to the country.<sup>107</sup> If they were to gather together the “vanguard” forces of Peru, surely those who then manned the Peruvian section of APRA wanted to wait for their friends to return. This homecoming took quite a while to be completed – over a year, in fact, for it was expensive to sponsor the return of all APRA exiles and the new PAP lacked the funds to proceed rapidly.<sup>108</sup>

When the National Congress finally opened in Lima on August 10, 1931, the advertised goal was still to devise a pragmatic political program that best served the Peruvian people.<sup>109</sup> APRA leaders who manned the executive committee of the party held on to their discourse of national

<sup>105</sup> This committee was based in Trujillo and comprised the following APRA members: Carlos C. Godoy, Federico Chávez, R. J. A. Haya de la Torre, Francisco Dañino Ribatto, Manuel J. Arévalo, Manuel V. Barreto, Alfredo Rebaza Acosta, Américo Pérez Treviño, Pedro G. Lizazaburu and Fernando Cárdenas. *APRA*, Lima, Segunda época, no. 3, March 18, 1931, p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> “a revolutionary nationalist program of political action.” [Boxed text], *APRA*, no. 1, Lima, October 12, 1930, p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>108</sup> William C. Burdett to the Secretary of State; March 23, 1931, p. 4; 823.00/626 Aprista; CF, 1930–1939; RG59, NACP.

<sup>109</sup> “El Programa Analítico del Aprismo,” *APRA*, Lima, no. 4, August 8, 1931, p. 1.

inclusion, asking that local Aprista congresses participate in the elaboration of the Aprista political program. They claimed to want popular input into the design of their national program, for they recognized their lack of knowledge about many of the local scenes. “Tenemos demasiado respeto por el pueblo,” read one passage of the *APRA* special issue of August 1931 on the political program of *Aprismo*, “para adjudicarnos, un grupito de lideres, el derecho de legislar sobre las necesidades de todas y cada una de las provincias, de las cuales desconocemos hasta la real ubicación geográfica.”<sup>110</sup> These *APRA* leaders also felt, more pragmatically, that they needed the backing of the regional factions of the *PAP* if they were to ever claim legitimately that their party represented all of Peru.<sup>111</sup> According to the party leadership in Lima, this call to collaboration proved that they were not intent on devising impossible utopias while conversing in coffee shops. Rather, theirs would be a realistic and scientific political program that stemmed from the consideration of the Peruvian people, as their political discourse promised.<sup>112</sup> The plan was simple: regional congresses first brainstormed, and the National Congress held in Lima subsequently heeded regional proposals, sorted them out, and finally harmonized them into a single and realist program of political action.

But the promise of regional participation was harder to achieve in reality than in discourse. For one, provincial delegates were asked to either travel to the capital or entrust representatives who already lived in Lima with instructions as they partook in the National Congress.<sup>113</sup> This entailed provincial *Apristas* having access to resources, such as travelling money or time off from work, which they did not have. Then came the question of who in the party was entitled to speak during the panels. According to reports in *La Tribuna*, only members of the *CEN*, including Magda Portal, Carlos Manuel Cox, Julián Petrovick, Manuel Seoane, or Arturo Sabroso – in short, members of the Lima-based executive committee – appeared to have had the right to take the floor during the event.<sup>114</sup> All of them had experienced exile. All of them recognized

<sup>110</sup> “We have too much respect for the people, to give ourselves, a small group of leaders, the right to legislate on the needs of each and every one of the provinces, of which we do not even know the real geographic location,” *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.      <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.      <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> “Más de 1500 personas asistieron a la sesión de inauguración del primer Congreso Nacional Aprista,” *La Tribuna*, Lima, August 11, 1931, p. 1.

each other's value and legitimacy by way of the persecution and travel they had undergone in the past. To retain control over the organization of party infrastructure was challenging. The travel trope assisted members of the National Executive Committee of PAP in this task. In effect, except for the calls for collaboration uttered in view of the First Aprista National Congress, true and authentic leaders of APRA continued to be associated in these journals with the experience of travel and exile not only in 1930 but also all through 1931 as well.

The APRA leaders who manned or revolved around the CEN of PAP were the only ones entitled to define what, in the end, the Peruvian APRA party was truly about. If all were sometimes asked to give opinions, the travelled actors designed who was entitled to make decisions in the end. Besides, the party leadership in Lima had one major advantage over those who disagreed with its precepts. It benefited from access to resources that others in the party lacked. Because it controlled the board of direction of *La Tribuna* and the APRA journal, the Lima-based executive committee of PAP was the only one with the capacity to call official convocations of provincial offspring of the party and coordinate the activities of Aprista members nationwide. It also controlled the distribution of propaganda around Peru. Likewise, sending APRA organizers, such as Perla Lapoint, from Lima into the countryside equipped party leaders based in Lima with an informal surveillance system to rein in local initiatives and ensure that the development of Aprismo in Peru remained consistent with the vision they had for the PAP. This vision put forth travel and exile as the prime condition of original critical thinkers and authentic Apristas.

#### CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 deepened our understanding of the ways in which a regime of authority associated with travel abroad, particularly though not exclusively in the Americas, assisted in the late 1920s and early 1930s the APRA leadership who had come of age in exile. Here, the experience of exile was used rhetorically as an instrument of political power and persuasion. Stories of travels in Europe and the Americas helped these leaders to assert their political legitimacy and expertise vis-à-vis their peers who had stayed in Peru during the 1920s, especially from those who openly embraced socialism from 1928 onward. Once returned to Peru and trying to build up APRA from a political activism group to a

political party, the Apristas who experienced exile sought to validate their authority before Peruvian audiences through associations with foreign contacts. They also played up their travels abroad to establish their distinction and legitimacy vis-à-vis new recruits to the party as well as socialist peers.

The APRA leaders who began organizing the Peruvian section of APRA suggested in their proselytizing material that because the Peruvian social and political realities were intimately connected with those of their sister republics in the Americas, the development of a continental consciousness was consequently the fulcrum around which Peruvians should envision their place in the world and design accurate political solutions to the problems that plagued their nation.<sup>115</sup> The creation of the Peruvian self, in other words, passed for Apristas through increased hemispheric consciousness. What mattered most, at the time, was less to define the Americas in a new way than to incite Peruvians to identify with this geographic body. This partly explains why the use of *Indo-América* to name Latin America remained mostly thin on the ground. There was furthermore very little time for creative intellectual work as Apristas campaigned across the country.

But boast about their grasp of the Americas they did. In the face of socialist peers who explained class struggles to the Peruvian population, the APRA positioned its expertise as one that relied on its complementary understanding of Latin American and imperialist realities, specifically its capacity to translate them for a Peruvian public. The political material they produced to proselytize their movement to the Peruvian people argued that, although most of APRA's leaders had not been living in Peru, the legitimacy of their political credentials, as well as their capacity to propose to Peruvians a revolutionary and authentic nationalism, rested precisely on the experiences gained while travelling around the Americas. These experiences had allegedly transformed Apristas into foreign experts bestowed with the intellectual capacity to translate to a Peruvian audience what they had learned and witnessed in Latin America during their travels abroad. These conclusions bring us back to the ongoing tension between nationalism and internationalism in the history of APRA; as the movement entered its populist phase, APRA's growing nationalism was cropping out from its early internationalism. In 1930–1931, more important

<sup>115</sup> APRA Sección Peruana, *APRA*, no. 1, Lima, October 12, 1930, 1.

than the content or accuracy of their ideological translation, however, was the validation of their authority as enlightened translators. The return in 1932 of unabashed persecution against Apristas only strengthened these positions, as APRA leaders continued to vie for survival and political control of their disbanded movement.