



Susana Pastor

# Peru and the Peruvians

The paradoxical co-existence of abundant natural wealth and pervasive human poverty is something that has struck generations of visitors to Peru. With its mineral reserves, oil, and gas, its fish resources, and its diverse agriculture, it is a country that should generate wealth for all to share. In reality, however, more than half of Peru's population earns less than the equivalent of two dollars a day. As the geographer Antonio Raimondi famously remarked, Peru is like a beggar seated on a bench of gold.

With their nose for gold and silver, the Spanish conquerors – or *conquistadores* – were swift to realise Peru's economic potential. From the mid-16th century onwards they turned Peru into the centre of an empire, the main function of which was to finance the Spanish crown's seemingly inexhaustible appetite for war. In the 19th century, following Peru's independence from Spain, the British and Americans – defying all geographical logic – built railways across the Andes in order to extract copper and silver from the mines of the Peruvian highlands, or *sierra*. More recently, foreign multinational companies have opened up new mining ventures, such as Yanacocha near Cajamarca, and Antamina in

◀ *Francisca Lama jokes with one of her many grandchildren. Like many other citizens, Francisca believes that the future of their town – Tambo Grande in Piura – is under threat from mining developments.*

▶ *Grass-roots organisations are increasingly demanding that their voices be heard throughout Peru. The women's groups taking part in this rally in Santo Domingo, Piura, were able to meet the mayor, and to present their proposals for change to him.*



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Ancash, which mean that Peru will continue into the 21st century in its role as a supplier of minerals to the world market.

However, mining, and other extractive industries like fishing and hydrocarbons (oil and gas), have not produced a balanced pattern of development, either for Peru or for the majority of Peruvians. Although they generate export earnings, these economic activities produce little by way of employment or stimulus to other areas of the economy. This is the case today more than ever before. Mining, for instance, increasingly employs machinery rather than labour. Modern mining companies typically import technical know-how, and many of the other goods and services they require, as inputs. They do little to benefit the regions where they operate; rather, they frequently contaminate the rivers and divert precious water sources away from local agriculture and other uses.

Peru's governments have long wrestled with this paradox of wealth and poverty, but without success. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a left-leaning military government nationalised foreign mining and oil interests, introduced a radical agrarian reform, and took steps to promote local industrialisation. It hoped that this would lead to a more balanced kind of development that would permit redistribution of wealth and income. It failed to do this, and instead it built up unpayable debts. Since then, governments have reverted to the more traditional export model, claiming that private initiative and individual property – not the state – will provide the most reliable means to extricate people from poverty. As this book will show, this is a view that is not entirely borne out by the facts.

Politically, Peru lacks a strong democratic tradition. For much of the 20th century it was ruled by authoritarian regimes, many of them military. The majority of the population lacked a political voice. The main party to express popular interests, the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*, better known as APRA, aroused such distrust in elite circles that it was kept firmly at arm's length by successive governments, winning office only in 1985, over 60 years after it was first founded. In the late 1960s and early

1970s, the Peruvian military took it upon itself to break the power of the land-owning elite, paving the way towards greater social participation. The establishment of full democratic rights was only achieved in 1979, when those who were deemed illiterate (mostly indigenous people) finally won the right to vote.

▼ This stained glass in Lima city centre portrays the Spanish conquistadores.



In spite of this legacy of exclusion, the voice of ordinary people has gained strength over the years, often at the margins of the political system. An array of grass-roots organisations, rural as well as urban, has come to demand that their views and interests be taken on board by political leaders. Organisation runs deep in Peruvian political culture. In part, this reflects the strength of the peasant community, whose origins are rooted way back in Peru's pre-Hispanic past. A sense of community identity has persisted despite the best efforts of the *conquistadores* and their successors to erase it. Today, such organisation can make awkward demands on the country's rulers. It often jars with the activities of political parties and their leaders. It is patchy, stronger in some places than others. Its demands may be highly localised or very specific. Yet such popular organisation provides the bedrock on which a more genuine and participatory democracy can be built.

### **Who were the first Peruvians?**

When the Spanish first arrived in Peru in 1532, they stumbled on one of the most sophisticated of all non-European civilisations. At its height, the Inca empire stretched some 4000 kilometres along the Andes, from what is now southern Colombia to northern Chile. Its population is reckoned to have exceeded 14 million. Through military conquest and administrative subordination, the Incas exercised control over a wide variety of ethnic groups, imposing a common religion and language (Quechua). Roads radiated from the capital, Cuzco, to the four corners of the empire, facilitating transport and communication. Cuzco was a magnificent city, with palaces reputedly decked in gold and silver. The foundations of these are still visible, as is the massive citadel of Sacsahuamán that overlooks the present-day city. Yet despite its size and sophistication, this was a civilisation that did not know the written word, the wheel, or the arch.

► *The ruins of Machu Picchu nestle in the foothills of the Andes. Hidden for many years, they were rediscovered in 1911, and have since become a major tourist attraction.*



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The Incas followed a long line of earlier Peruvian civilisations. The first conquest of the Andes is thought to have taken place some 20,000 years ago, and the remains of the earliest civilisations date from as far back as 11,000 BC. Various different cultures developed on the coast and in the Andes. Compared with some of its predecessors, the Inca civilisation was relatively short-lived. It first emerged in the valley of Cuzco in the 13th and 14th centuries, and entered its most expansive phase only under the Inca Pachacutí, less than a century before the Spanish arrived.

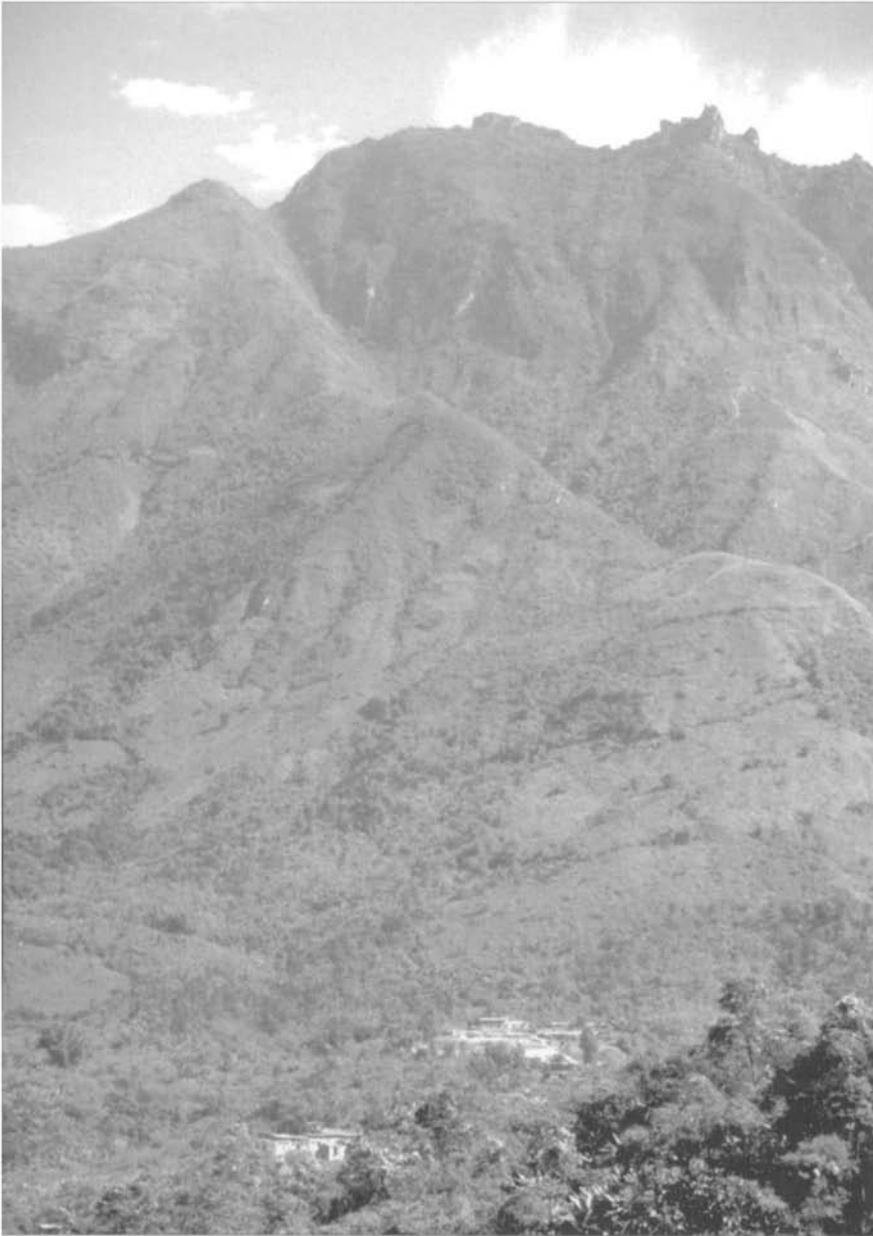
Apart from numerous spectacular ruins, important traces of the Incas still persist five centuries after its demise. The *ayllu*, the basic unit of Inca landholding, is still the foundation of agrarian society in the Andes. In the Inca *ayllu*, grazing land was held by the community while crop land was allotted to individual families according to their size, much as is the case today. Labour tasks, like ploughing or repairing irrigation ditches, were also carried out communally, distributed according to age and gender. This is still the norm in Peruvian peasant communities. With its complex systems of irrigation and terracing, Inca agriculture was able to sustain a population considerably larger than that which lives in the Peruvian Andes today.

### **The formation of modern Peru**

The extent of modern Peru is defined by the way in which the Spanish empire broke up into separate jurisdictions prior to and during the wars of independence at the beginning of the 19th century. As the centre of colonial rule, Lima – known as the ‘city of kings’ – saw its influence dwindle during the 18th century. Peru was the last republic to be ‘liberated’, in 1821. A lack of definitive frontiers led to conflicts with its neighbours that have soured relations ever since. As a result of the War of the Pacific (1879-83), Chile annexed the provinces of Arica and Tarapacá. In 1932, Peru came to blows with Colombia over the border town of Leticia. In 1941, and again in 1995, there were wars with Ecuador over their disputed frontier. Recent governments have sought to resolve these issues, and since 1969 Peru has been a member of the Andean Pact alongside Chile (which withdrew in 1975), Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Still, border problems have yet to be buried entirely. As the 1995 war with Ecuador showed, they can sometimes resurface with surprising force and in unexpected ways.

### **A fractured landscape**

Range after range of bare, jagged ridges rise up out of the coastal mist. The landscape is the texture and colour of crumpled parchment, devoid of human inprint but for a thin black line, way below. This is the road up to Ayacucho from Pisco on the coast. It loops this way and that as it pushes upwards towards the high mountain plains, or *puna*. The line of the



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*cordillera*, the watershed between the Amazon and the Pacific, is etched with light, dusty snow. To the east, the sun's rays throw darts of light across this vast, barren terrain, as the land begins to slope downwards, brown turning to ochre and grey, and eventually with hints of green. Whether seen from the air on the morning flight from Lima to Ayacucho, or traversed by road or even railway, the Andes are the defining feature of Peru's uncompromising geography, a wall that separates cultures and peoples, an obstacle both to economic integration and to the development of a single sense of nation.

Most Peruvians now live on the coast, or *costa*, a narrow strip of inhospitable brown desert bisected by fertile valleys, irrigated by the rivers that descend from the *cordillera*. The city of Lima, along with the port of Callao, has a population of over 8 million. It is home to nearly one third of all Peruvians. Several of Peru's other major cities are built on or near the coast. On the face of it, it is odd that Peru's main centres of population have

grown up in areas where there is so little water or natural vegetation. Nothing grows in the coastal deserts unless water is brought from elsewhere, and even in the coastal river valleys, water supply is seasonal and dependent on rainfall in the sierra. Despite this, the coastal deserts are full of the remains of pre-Columbian civilisations that managed to flourish in spite of the lack of water. According to one of the more plausible theories, the mysterious Nazca lines were a sophisticated method of identifying potential water sources. Situated to the south of Lima, they consist of vast geometric patterns and outlines of animal forms, etched into the desert sands.



► Gathering salt from the Sechura desert, on the north-west coast of Peru. The salt mine is owned by the peasant community of Sechura, and profits are shared with all community members.



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The river valleys are oases of vegetation. A thin irrigation ditch is often all that separates brown from green, a frontier between ecosystems. The valleys have long provided food for the citizens of Lima, as well as export cash-crops such as cotton, sugar, and latterly 'niche' products like asparagus. Rich coastal estates were among the areas affected by the 1970s agrarian reform, when they were converted into co-operatives. The agricultural possibilities of the coast have since been enhanced by massive and costly public investment projects that use lengthy aquaducts to bring water to the coast from the high Andes. In the case of the Majes project, near Arequipa, the headwaters of the Amazon were diverted and channelled westward through the *cordillera* to irrigate the coastal desert plains. As a result of this hugely expensive project, Majes has the distinction of producing some of the most costly alfalfa the world has ever known.

The arid climate of coastal Peru and Chile is a result of the Andes blocking the moist trade winds that blow westwards across South America from the Atlantic. The prevailing winds blow in from the Pacific instead, whilst temperatures are moderated by the cold Humboldt ocean current that flows northwards from Antarctica to the tropical latitudes off Ecuador. A low-lying coastal mist is normally the only source of humidity. The Humboldt is a branch of a cold current that flows eastwards at latitudes close to Antarctica, and then turns north up the coast of Chile and Peru. The cold water brings with it nitrates and phosphates from the seabed, generating abundant plankton and thus a wealth of fish. Every few years, however, the Humboldt is displaced by a warm current that flows southward from the tropics. This is the *El Niño* ('boy child') phenomenon, named by the fishermen after the baby Jesus because the increase in sea temperatures is first noted around Christmas time. Rather than seasonal blessings, *El Niño* disrupts the climate. It raises the sea temperature, killing the plankton that bring the fish. It brings rainfall where normally

► The El Niño of 1997-98 caused widespread flooding in many parts of Peru. These boys, from Chulucanas in Piura, are showing how far up the walls of their home the flood waters rose.



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there is none, causing floods and landslides. And it wreaks havoc in the highlands, or *sierra*, causing drought in places where agriculture is critically dependent on regular annual rainfall.

*The precipitous steeps of the sierra, with its splintered sides of porphyry and granite, and its higher regions wrapped in snows that never melt under the fierce sun of the equator, unless it be from the desolating action of its own volcanic fires, might seem equally unpropitious to the labours of the husbandman. And all communication between the parts of the long-extended territory might be thought to be precluded by the savage character of the region, broken up by precipices, furious torrents, and impassable quebradas – those hideous rents in the mountain chain, whose depths the eye of the terrified traveller, as he winds along his aerial pathway, vainly endeavours to fathom.*

(Prescott: History of the Conquest of Peru)

### Across the Andes and into the Amazon

Lying between the western and eastern ranges of the Andes, the inter-Andean valleys were once the cradle of the Inca civilisation and its precursors. These valleys have traditionally been Peru's main bread basket, as well as the source of most of its mineral wealth. During the colonial period many cities grew up in the sierra, notably Cuzco, but also Cajamarca, Huaraz, Huancayo, and Ayacucho. Mainly peopled by Spanish immigrants, such cities grew rich on the commerce spawned by mining. By far the most important mine was Potosí, situated in what is now Bolivia, whose silver was carried overland to Lima and thence by galleon to Spain. Labour for the mines came from the indigenous population, who were forced to work in inhuman conditions by their Spanish masters. Since the 19th century, the economy of the *sierra* has stagnated. It has been bypassed by the

development that has occurred in Lima and on the coast. With its ornate colonial churches and once aristocratic mansions, Ayacucho is a striking reminder of a vanished Peru.

From pre-Inca times, peoples have farmed in the Andes. Traditionally, communities would offset the risks inherent in peasant agriculture by farming at many different altitudes. Today, some communities farm at over 4000 metres above sea level. Notwithstanding this diverse approach to farming, good land with access to water is in short supply. Until the 1969 agrarian reform, such land was concentrated in the hands of exploitative landlords, known as *gamonales*. Though the reform fragmented the landed estates, it failed to resolve the problems of peasant farming. As we shall see further on, subsistence peasant farmers in the *sierra* remain the poorest of the poor in Peru.

Where the Andes fall away to the east, land and rainfall become plentiful, and entirely different ecosystems emerge. Steep-sided valleys lead downwards to the sub-tropical lowlands, known as the 'high jungle' (or *selva alta*) where, in recent years, coca – the raw material for cocaine – has been king. Most of these areas were opened up to inward migration only in the second half of the 20th century. They were colonised by farmers from the *sierra*, many released from feudal-style bonds by the agrarian reform, and attracted to the *selva* by its agricultural potential. But this inward migration was at the expense of lowland indigenous peoples, whose lands were progressively encroached upon. Conflicts over land led to clashes, often violent, between settlers and indigenous people.

The foothills of the Andes eventually give way to the flat Amazon jungle (*selva baja*). From the air, it looks like a carpet of green, broken only by the wide, red-brown, meandering rivers that form the Amazon river system. Although it constitutes half of the country's surface area, the

Amazon jungle is home to less than five per cent of Peru's population. Its main city, Iquitos, situated just below the point where the waters of the Ucayali and Marañón rivers merge to form the Amazon proper, is still only accessible from the rest of Peru by air or river boat. This jungle is one of the most biologically diverse regions on the planet. So far, the Peruvian Amazon has been less affected by deforestation than neighbouring Brazil. Nevertheless, its rich natural resources mean it is just as vulnerable to uncontrolled exploitation. The lowland Indians, whose lifestyle is perilously dependent on the environment, are threatened by the inroads of outsiders, whether highland migrants, logging firms, oil and gas companies, or those who come to pan gold.

From coastal deserts, to high mountains, to equatorial rainforest, Peru incorporates a vast range of different ecosystems and micro-climates. It is a hotspot for biodiversity. Peru ranks eighth in the world for the diversity of its flowering plants. Yet, as we shall see, many of Peru's fragile ecologies are increasingly under threat as a result of the development of unsustainable extractive industries.

▼ This statue stands in the centre of Lamas, a town on the edge of the Amazon jungle. It portrays a conquistador and a native Indian shaking hands, purporting to represent the 'meeting and friendship' between the two cultures.



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## Winners and losers in a fractured society

On one side lies Monterico, one of Lima's most affluent suburbs; on the other, Pamplona, a city of the poor. A high wall separates the two, arrayed with spikes and broken glass. The wall is a frontier between two worlds, a symbol of social separation and division. Constructed as a line of defence against land invasions, for the citizens of Monterico it acts like a dike stemming the rising tide of poverty; for those in Pamplona it is a physical reminder of the seemingly insurmountable barriers to social advancement.

Despite having adopted republican values nearly two centuries ago, Peru remains a very unequal society. The cutting of its links with imperial Spain did not bring major changes in social structure; rather, it reinforced the dominance of a local elite. Unlike some countries in Latin America – such as Mexico, Bolivia, or Cuba – Peru has never experienced a social revolution from below. Alexander von Humboldt, the German geographer who gave his name to

the ocean current, is said to have marvelled at the differences he observed between rich and poor when he studied the country at the beginning of the 19th century. Peru today is almost as unequal as it was in Humboldt's day, causing some to ask how such deep inequality can be perpetuated over such long periods of time.

Inequality also exists between men and women, particularly in terms of access to privilege and power. The numbers of women visible in public life, whether in politics or business, are still very few. Although women have increasingly challenged this in recent years, *machismo* (the traditional pattern of male dominance) remains deeply ingrained in Peruvian culture. Peruvian women earn, on average, 46 per cent less than men. They usually work in less secure occupations. They are more likely to be



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▲ Collecting brazil nuts amid the lush vegetation of the Peruvian Amazon. It takes 25 years before a brazil nut tree begins to bear fruit. The trees have an average life-span of 100 years.

► Each phase of new building in Pamplona Alta, one of Lima's poorest suburbs, takes the makeshift houses further away from essential basic services like electricity, water, and sanitation. The water truck passing through the street sells water at some of the highest prices in Lima.



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▼ Traditionally, men and women perform different kinds of work in Peru. Women are more likely than men to be responsible for household tasks like child-care. Marcos and his family are unusual. His wife earns money washing clothes, while he stays at home and looks after their children.

illiterate than men (especially in rural areas), and to have received less formal education. Although women head around a quarter of all Peruvian households, notions of male dominance persist within the family. Yet life in Peru has not always been like this. In Inca times, although there was a division of labour between men and women, there was much more equality between the sexes than there is today. Women and men shared the resources of the *ayllu*, and women could inherit property from their mothers. Patriarchy really arrived with the Spanish *conquistadores*, whose traditions of male inheritance and dominance transformed Peruvian society.

Regional and ethnic identities are another source of division in Peruvian society. Such divisions reinforce social barriers, making it even harder to clear the 'wall' of social advancement. The pattern of regional development in recent decades has been to favour the coast over the *sierra* and *selva*, to favour cities at the expense of rural areas, and, above all, to favour Lima. Successive governments have paid lip-service to the notion of decentralisation, but have not succeeded in redressing these imbalances. This has led to high levels of internal migration, especially towards Lima, which has exacerbated the situation still further. Regions outside Lima are now coming to demand a larger share of public spending, and a bigger say in how it is distributed.



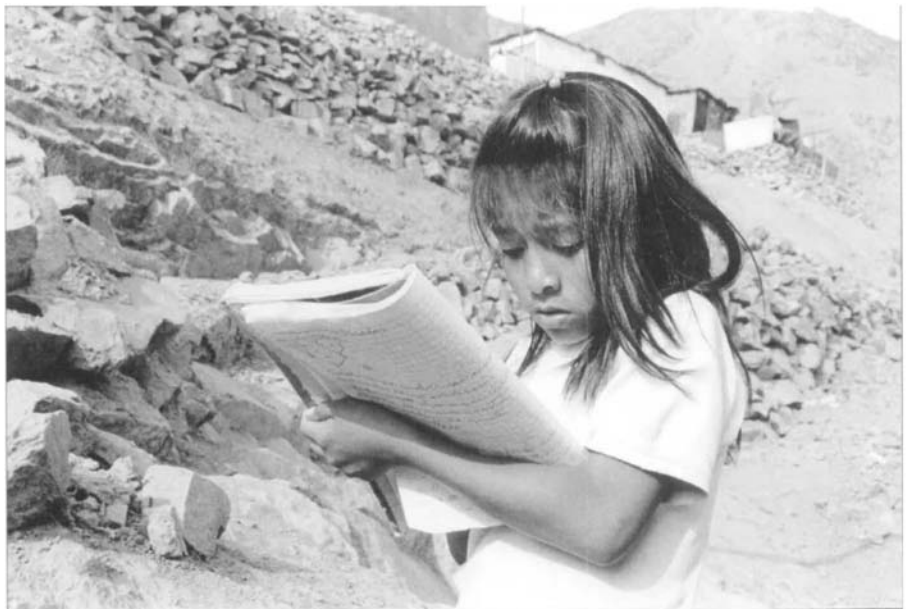
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## Escaping from poverty – ‘one step forward, two steps back’?

Peru has some of the highest levels of poverty of any Latin American country. More than half of the population lives in poverty. These citizens receive incomes lower than the officially-defined poverty line, as measured by the cost of a basket of food and other vital consumer items. Of these, nearly half again live in ‘extreme poverty’, with income insufficient to buy even the most essential food items. There are seven million people whose incomes are thus insufficient to meet the most basic needs. This acute poverty goes hand-in-hand with other key symptoms of deprivation, such as high infant mortality, high illiteracy rates, and low life expectancy.

Nearly three quarters of Peruvians living in rural areas are classified as ‘poor’, and just over half as ‘extremely poor’. Subsistence farmers in the *sierra* are particularly affected. These households depend on the food that they themselves can grow, and they generate little cash income. However, while poverty is more acute in rural areas, it is also widespread in urban centres. In Lima, for example, 40 per cent of the population lives in poverty, mainly in the slum areas that spread out from the centre towards the city’s hinterland. The main problem here is unemployment, and what is sometimes called ‘under-employment’. In Lima, the unemployed and under-employed account for 60 per cent of the potential workforce. The under-employed consist of the self-employed, and those who work in ‘informal’ firms who enjoy none of the legal protection and other benefits of proper employment. Under-employment is indeed a misnomer: in order to survive, most people in this category work long hours in a variety of low-paid occupations. With no unemployment benefits, few can afford to be unemployed for long.

► *Tania Mamani concentrates on her homework amid the building rubble. She lives in San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima’s most densely populated neighbourhood. In this district, 44 per cent of the population has no water, 49 per cent has no sanitation, and 27 per cent of the children under six are malnourished. It is difficult for people here to find paid employment, and make a living.*



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The quest for social improvement is a strong driving force among the poor. Every night, many thousands of people attend night-school to acquire basic skills and qualifications. Education is one of the few avenues for social advancement in Peru. However, job opportunities for skilled and qualified people are limited, and only the lucky few find a route out of poverty this way. Even university graduates struggle to find formal sector employment: the number of university-trained taxi drivers in Lima attests to this.

The only time in recent memory when social advancement for the poor became a reality was in the 1960s and early 1970s, when the expansion of the public sector brought with it large numbers of reasonably well-paid jobs, nurturing Peru's small middle class. With the reversal of such policies in the 1980s and 1990s, this avenue was blocked.

### **Ethnic diversity: source of conflict and creativity**

Peru is a rich mixture of different cultures and languages. In the *sierra*, the main indigenous tongue is Quechua, the language of the Incas. In the vicinity of Lake Titicaca, on the frontier with Bolivia, people speak Aymara, an unrelated language. In the jungle, there are more than 60 different indigenous peoples, grouped into 14 linguistic families.

Although the precise boundaries between ethnic groups have been blurred by migration and inter-marriage, especially in urban areas, there remains a fairly close association between social position and skin colour in Peru: the darker your skin, the lower your status. Racism is omnipresent, reinforcing social divides. Ethnic exclusion has, however, generated less political tension in Peru than in neighbouring Ecuador or Bolivia. In part, this is because the agrarian reform broke with predominant ideas about ethnic identity, known as *indigenismo*, that sought to glorify the Inca past. It officially abolished the remnants of serfdom in rural areas and raised the status of the peasant farmer or *campesino*. It thus opened up alternative paths towards 'modernity' and 'citizenship'. At the same time, José Carlos Mariátegui, the founding father of Peruvian Marxism, reinterpreted *indigenismo* as expressing class struggle, not ethnic division. All this is not to say that ethnicity does not form an important part in defining modern Peruvian identities; it helps to explain the persistence of indigenous languages, beliefs, and customs. Ethnic pride reinforces identities in regional centres like Cuzco, Huancavelica, and Ayacucho. But such identities are not usually defined by ethnicity alone.

Where ethnic consciousness is perhaps most evident and forthright is among the lowland Amazon Indians, for whom defence of their territory and of their way of life are one and the same. The lowland Indians are notoriously circumspect in their dealings with the Peruvian state, keeping their distance from political parties of all sorts – as a result of which they have scant representation in national politics. They are distrustful of mainstream politicians, and feel encroached-upon by outsiders, both

## OUT OF THE MELTING POT – EMERGING IDENTITIES

Peru's ethnic boundaries are increasingly being blurred by migration and inter-marriage, or *mestizaje* (mixing). This is creating a new class of 'mixed' people, or *cholos*, building new identities. There is no fixed definition of 'cholo', and the term is the subject of controversy among anthropologists. Essentially, *cholos* are people who by moving from their place of origin no longer belong anywhere. They are neither fully accepted in their new habitat, nor in the place they have left behind. *Cholo* has traditionally been a pejorative term. However, the numbers of *cholos* in Peru today mean that such notions of rejection and stigma have had to be revised. In Lima, and other large cities, *cholos* are now the majority. For many, to be *cholo* has become a source of pride and even cultural affirmation. *Choloficación* has become the principal way in which indigenous identities are being 'modernised', and creatively re-interpreted.

migrants from the highlands, and others who seek to exploit the natural resources of the jungle. The relationship between lowland Indians and these incomers is often one of suspicion, and even violence.

### A culture 'of all bloods'

Although it can be the source of conflicts, Peru's geographic, regional, and ethnic diversity is the key to the country's vibrant popular culture, a culture that also reflects a strong sense of community and history. It is a culture, to borrow Arguedas's famous phrase, 'of all bloods' (*de todas las sangres*), a culture that has produced a rich mixture of dance, music, stories, painting, and craftsmanship. This living, dynamic culture constantly adopts, and adapts to, new influences. Traditions are thus transferred to Lima and the coast, where they are changed and developed, but not lost. Culture thus continuously provides a way of linking past, present, and future in endlessly creative ways. It also provides a way of reasserting community or even ethnic pride in

ways that reinforce the bonds that join people together. *Chicha*, a music of the urban slums, is but one of the more recent variants of this cultural mixing. *Chicha* music is a hybrid of the modern, tropical *cumbia* from Colombia, and traditional Peruvian *huayno* rhythms.

► The people of Lamas attend the launch of two books about biodiversity and reforestation in the Amazon. The native Aguaruna community at Lamas still retains many traditional customs, as well as the local dialect.



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► Around 200 family members will attend the Pérez family fiesta, in homage to the Virgin, 'Mama Limpia'. The women are preparing the food for the three-day fiesta. Networks of family members, friends, and neighbours come together in order to guarantee the costs of the fiesta. Without these networks, fiestas would be impossible.



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### **Fiesta! Building community through celebration**

The fiesta, the annual celebration of the local patron saint, is the key date in the calendar for all Peruvian communities. Fiestas can last for days – even as long as a week. Despite their sacred and religious importance, fiestas are not solemn occasions. Typically, they include days and nights of parades, music, dancing, and plentiful drinking. They place high demands on all citizens – fiestas are expensive, and every community member must help in the organisation of the event, as well as participating to the full in the fun. But the costs and benefits of the fiesta cannot be calculated in narrow economic terms. The fiesta is an investment in the intangible, in the future of the community.



► Saint's day at Catacaos – townspeople are making ready for the religious procession.

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## THE FEAST OF SAN JUAN

The feast of Saint John the Baptist, June 24, is one of the longest nights of the year – the middle of the Peruvian winter – and a day of diverse festivity across Peru. It is a good example of how very ancient customs have become integrated into the Christian rituals that were superimposed on them when the church arrived in Peru.

June 24 is also the 'day of the *campesino*', or – prior to the agrarian reform – the 'day of the Indian', and the celebrations reflect this agricultural theme. The winter solstice marks the beginning of a fresh agricultural cycle, the moment when the world begins anew. Large bonfires are lit, and offerings made to the 'mother earth' to ensure fertility and a good crop in the year ahead. In Cuzco, June 24 is the festival of *Inti Raimi*, a celebration largely reinvented but which has become hugely popular among Peruvian and foreign tourists. In the jungle, June 24 is the festival of water, when people take to the rivers in acts of purification. It is also a time for eating, particularly *juane*, a local speciality made of rice and chicken.

Religious devotions underscore everyday activities, and are fused into a cultural tradition that is by no means wholeheartedly Christian. Festivals of various kinds at different times of the year provide constant reminders of the depth of popular religiosity. Yet although the Catholic Church remains a powerful institution, closely linked to the state, it no longer enjoys the undisputed power it once wielded. As in other countries, modern life in Peru is increasingly secular, and though the majority of Peruvians have been baptised as Catholics, the numbers who attend mass regularly are dwindling. The Catholic Church is experiencing great problems in recruiting enough priests to fill its parishes. It is also confronting a major challenge from a variety of evangelical Protestant

churches. These have grown rapidly in recent years, their message and approach often more appealing to the poor than those of traditional Catholicism. Moreover, within the Catholic Church deep chasms have emerged between priests committed to social transformation, and a hierarchy that is ever more conservative. The present Archbishop of Lima, Juan Luis Cipriani, was the first-ever cardinal anywhere to belong to Opus Dei, a right-wing ecclesiastical movement which has origins in fascist Spain.

▼ Baptism in Ayacucho



► Baldomero Alejos (1924-76) was one of Peru's most famous photographers. Viewing his pictures at this exhibition was a way for Peruvians to explore their memories of the past. Graciela Romero Sulca points to the picture of herself, her brother, her mother, and grandmother: 'I was only 12 years old.... The others are dead now, and I am the only one still alive. I've lived to be 74 – it's amazing! What a wonderful photograph!'



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## MADE IN PERU

The many faces of Peru and Peruvian culture are the subject of *'Hecho en el Perú'* ('Made in Peru'), a piece of drama written to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the experimental theatre group, Yuyachkani. Yuyachkani wants to create theatrical experiences that ordinary people can relate to and enjoy. *'Hecho en el Perú'* was free to all, and staged in the heart of old Lima, so that the event would reach as many people as possible.

*'Hecho en el Perú'* stretches theatrical conventions to the limit to create new forms of audience involvement. It takes the public on a stroll through six interactive scenes, each acted out behind a glass screen. The audience can spend as long or as little as it wishes in front of each one. Each contains a single actor who explores an important theme in contemporary Peruvian culture. The scenes place the lives of ordinary people at the heart of the theatrical experience. *'La Madre Patria'* ('The Mother Country') is an ironic exploration of the creation of myths about 'nationhood', and the way in which these are used to prop up a status quo that keeps the majority of Peruvians in poverty. It ridicules the formal symbols of republicanism, and looks askance at other cultural forces, such as the Catholic Church, and the influence of Spain and Japan. Another scene, *'Piel de Mujer'* (literally, 'Woman's Skins') explores the many different roles of women in Peruvian society: the *campesina* with her coca, the young militant guerrilla fired up by Maoist doctrine, the woman press-ganged into paramilitary activities by the army, the mother, the maid, the protesting mineworker's wife, and the nun. *'Desembarque'* ('Disembarking') examines the life of Peruvian emigrés, the humiliations they have to suffer in seeking acceptance in a new country, and their nostalgia for the home they have left behind. Other themes are explored in equally creative ways.

Yuyachkani means 'I am remembering' in Quechua. According to Miguel Rubio, one of Yuyachkani's original founders, and the director of *'Hecho en el Perú'*, 'Memory of the past, and how it informs the present, has to provide the key to a better future.'

## Displaced people

Beyond the limits of upper- and middle-class Lima neighbourhoods like Miraflores, San Isidro, and Monterico, most of the city's straggling suburbs began as rows of flimsy shacks erected in the desert sands, or on the barren and rocky mountainsides that protrude like fingers from the Andean foothills towards the ocean. Today, many of these once precarious shanties are densely populated townships with buildings four and five storeys high. This is a tribute to the tenacity of the original settlers of 30 or 40 years ago: they have created a new society out of nothing. It is a world that is far from static: the roofs of most buildings sprout the iron rods of unfinished reinforced concrete pillars, signs of new floors to come. In the outer reaches of the metropolis, ever further from the historic centre, new makeshift shacks of reed panels (*esteras*) appear every week as the city's latest wave of residents dig in.

Above all, Lima is a migrant city. For at least 50 years it has attracted people from the *sierra* with a promise of modernity, wealth, and social advancement. Back in the 1950s, Peru's population was one-third urban and two-thirds

rural; by the 1990s, it was the other way round. Many neighbourhoods have developed by attracting people from the same place of origin, helping to reproduce in the city the diverse cultures of rural Peru. Those who are already established can provide a helping hand to newcomers, whether friends, relatives, or *paisanos* – people from the areas they originally hailed from. Regional and local clubs keep the spirit of the Andes alive within the dust, bricks, and concrete of this very different reality.

The city continues to attract migrants from all over the country, in large part because of the extremes of poverty that still prevail in much of rural Peru. For the young and enterprising in particular, Lima offers a more promising future than tilling the land for scant return. The explosive growth of Lima and other cities is a symptom of the failure of successive governments to improve the prospects for agriculture, especially among peasants and other small farmers. While the agrarian reform was designed to provide a new deal for the peasant by giving access to land, it also failed to provide the markets, credit, and other necessary inputs required to make peasant agriculture economically viable. Significantly, the fastest period of migration to Lima and other coastal cities took place during the decade following the enactment of the agrarian reform.



Susana Pastor

▲ Modesto helps his neighbour Oscar to rebuild the walls of his house in Catacaos. They will cover the tall reed panels with wet mud, which will dry solid in the sun.



Annie Bungeiroth

▲ *Tawaq is a ceramics workshop in Lima. Its members fled from Ayacucho in the Andes, to escape the fighting. They started out with nothing, living in temporary shelters on the edge of Lima. Today, members of the workshop, like Virginia and her son Irwin, earn a good living and have invested in their homes and the business.*

▼ *Influences from abroad – Harry Potter arrives in Lima.*



Susana Pastor

Migration in Peru is also a product of political violence and forced displacement. In the savage guerrilla war that raged in the Andes during the 1980s and early 1990s, peasants found themselves caught in the crossfire between *Sendero Luminoso* (the guerrilla fighters) and the military. The conflict led to the depopulation of large areas of the *sierra*, especially in the southern-central departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac. With Sendero effectively controlling large swathes of the Andes, it became impossible for peasant farmers and their families to continue tending the land. At the same time, they also suffered brutal reprisals from the military. Large numbers fled to the relative safety of towns and cities, many eventually finding their way to the most recent shanties on the periphery of Lima. In the highlands around Ayacucho, the ruined remnants of deserted villages stand as stark reminders to the devastating effects of this violence on rural life. Despite the organisation of programmes to assist people to return to their communities once the violence had abated, only a

small proportion have chosen to embark on the arduous task of rebuilding from scratch their destroyed peasant livelihoods and communities.

Over the last 20 years, Peruvians have moved ever further afield in the search for a better future. No-one knows for sure how many are living in other countries, but estimates range as high as 2.5 million, or 9 per cent of the total population of Peru. Peruvian emigrants are scattered through a wide range of countries in Latin America, North America, Europe, and even as far away as Japan, Korea, and Australia. The two countries with the largest Peruvian colonies are the USA and Spain. Wherever they have settled, most migrants have entered illegally, trapped in a world of semi-informality and legal insecurity.

Up until the 1970s, the only Peruvians to settle abroad were the well-to-do who went away to study, or those exiled for political reasons. Since then, most have belonged to lower income groups, although they are not usually the poorest of the poor. The majority are young, and many have received secondary education of some sort. Their motives for migrating vary, but economic necessity is by far the most important. Although they may cling to their Peruvian identity and customs, few, having made the break, think of

returning, except possibly for holidays or to visit relatives. However, the money that migrants send back to their families each year, estimated at \$1.2 billion, is probably more than the revenue that Peru earns from copper, its most important export commodity. Peru's main export is therefore its people. This exodus of young people, many with education and skills, represents a haemorrhage of potential talent, a human brain drain.

### THE HUAYNO – MELANCHOLY MUSIC OF THE SIERRA

Few dance rhythms are more typical of the Peruvian *sierra* than the *huayno*. *Huaynos* from Ayacucho have a reputation for being particularly melancholy. Usually played on the harp, violin, and guitar, the songs often speak about the relation between man and nature, and reflect the poverty and hardship typical in Ayacucho. They involve a sharing of grief and personal suffering, as well as a sense of community and brotherhood. In recent years, the *huayno* has achieved fame, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. Such fame is a source of pride for Andean communities, whose bands compete for recognition. In part, their success is a consequence of the struggle for human rights in Ayacucho. Many contemporary *huaynos* relate to violence and forced migration, problems that have impressed themselves on the country as a whole. There are thousands of *huayno* groups, hundreds in Ayacucho alone, interpreting and reinterpreting their individual and social predicament through music.



Susana Pastor

▲ 'El Trio los Cuatro' (the 'Trio of Four') has been playing together in Ayacucho for over 15 years. They will play for the three days of the Pérez family fiesta, resting for only two or three hours each day.

#### Huérfano Pajarillo

(Popular *huayno* from Ayacucho)

*Ayacuchano huérfano pajarillo  
A qué has venido a tierras extrañas  
Alza tu vuelo, vamos a Ayacucho  
Donde tus padres lloran tu ausencia*

*En tu pobre casa no te ha faltado  
Caricias, delicias, demás has tenido  
Sólo la pobreza con su tiranía  
Entre sus garras quiso oprimirte*

#### Little orphan bird

Ayacuchano, little orphan bird  
Why have you flown to distant parts?  
Spread your wings, let's go to Ayacucho  
Where your family weeps for your absence.

In your humble home you've never lacked  
Affection, delights you've had aplenty  
Only poverty with its tyranny  
Has tried to oppress you in its claws.

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# The fight for democracy



Susana Pastor

▲ *América Television was directly implicated in the corrupt activities of Fujimori's government. Today, the company is fighting to retain its transmission signal.*

## **Fujimori and the 'Vladivideos'**

Never before has a video brought down a regime. On 14 September 2000, just six weeks after being sworn in for a third consecutive period of office, President Alberto Fujimori's closest adviser, Vladimiro Montesinos, was shown on prime-time television – watched by millions of Peruvians

– handing wads of money to a newly-elected opposition congressman, Alex Kouri, to lure him into supporting the government. In the weeks that followed, several more such videos were screened on national television, showing Montesinos handing out cash to bribe prominent judges, journalists, media-owners, and businessmen. It became clear to all just how Peru had been governed in the ten years since Fujimori first became president in 1990, and the lengths to which Montesinos had gone to mount the fraud that secured Fujimori's second re-election in 2000. The 'Vladivideos', as they became known, opened people's eyes. 'It was more brazen than any of us had ever imagined,' says Federico Arnillas, the head of the *Asociación Nacional de Centros (ANC)*, an umbrella organisation for Peruvian NGOs, 'It was power in its most naked form.'

Within just over two months of the Kouri video being shown, Fujimori had left the country, and Montesinos was in hiding in Venezuela, soon to be arrested and returned to Peru. Fujimori sought refuge in Japan, his ancestral home; ironically, Montesinos ended up in the Callao naval base, in a jail complex he had himself designed to accommodate Abimael Guzmán, the founder and leader of Sendero Luminoso. An interim administration – hastily assembled and presided over by an otherwise unassuming congressman, Valentín Paniagua – launched a return to democracy, and announced fresh presidential and congressional elections. The dismantling of the Fujimori system of government had begun, bringing with it the arrest of key figures associated with the regime, including senior members of the armed forces.



▲ Students from the military college in Piura. Traditionally, the military provided a ladder for social advancement. Today, however, its role in society is severely questioned.

## From coups to loos: the rise and fall of Fujimori

Fujimori was a political unknown when he clinched the presidency in 1990. His only claim to fame at the time was that he had once been rector of the Agrarian University. His election represented a rejection of politicians and the political class, and in particular of Mario Vargas Llosa – the world-famous writer – who had headed up a right-wing coalition, and who most pundits thought would win.

Fujimori, the son of Japanese migrants, snatched victory without a political party to back him up, without funds to finance a presidential campaign, without powerful backers in the business community, and without campaign advisers to guide his every turn. He was elected on the disarmingly simple slogan of ‘honesty, technology, and hard work’, values that many Peruvians supposed to be typically Japanese.

Within two years of taking office, Fujimori had shown his mettle as a political operator. He seized the initiative in overcoming the hyperinflation he had inherited from his predecessor, Alan García. Taking advantage of the popularity this brought, he turned the tables on his political adversaries by closing down Congress, suspending the Supreme Court, and abolishing regional assemblies. He then held fresh congressional elections, this time winning the parliamentary majority he had lacked previously. In turn, this paved the way to a rewriting of the constitution, and the removal of the bar on his immediate presidential re-election. Fujimori’s third political ‘coup’ in these years was the capture of Guzmán and the dismantling of Sendero Luminoso. Buoyed up by these successes, and constantly distancing himself from what he called the ‘*partidocracia*’ (Peru’s traditional party politicians), Fujimori set about maintaining power for the long haul.

In this he had a key ally in the armed forces. Alarmed by the escalation of political violence and what it saw as the economic irresponsibility of the García government, in 1988 the army High Command had produced a document, known as ‘The Green Book’. This underlined the need for a lengthy period – 15 years or more – of firm, authoritative government, in order to end guerrilla subversion and to engineer the shift to a more liberal economy. Though few had ever heard of Fujimori at the time the document was written, it provided the blueprint that his government would follow. One of the key links between Fujimori and the military in the early days was Montesinos, a former army captain who had been dismissed during the left-wing military regime of the early 1970s for selling secrets to the CIA. Having won Fujimori’s confidence, Montesinos set about building up a formidable intelligence machine, the National Intelligence Service, or SIN. The SIN was to become the regime’s ears and eyes, the department responsible for covert activities.

The other two feet of the 'tripod' of power were the business community and popular opinion. With hyperinflation under control, and growth restored, businessmen began to support Fujimori. The government's radical programme of privatisation, which included mines, banks, telecommunications companies, and utilities, provided ample opportunity for lucrative business deals. Its 'no-nonsense' approach to organised labour also won plaudits among the economic elite. However, without public opinion on his side, Fujimori would have been unable to sustain himself in power for long. His landslide re-election victory in 1995, though marred by some irregularities, was a personal triumph. Fujimori's popularity ratings remained high. The lack of serious electoral opposition appears to have convinced him of his chances of winning again in 2000, despite the doubtful constitutionality of a second re-election. It was only in 1998 and 1999 that his popularity began to ebb.

To help build popular support, Fujimori had launched an anti-poverty programme, revamping the Ministry of the Presidency as the main conduit for funds. As its name suggests, the ministry became closely associated with Fujimori himself. It sought to bypass local government and the traditional spending ministries like transport, education, and health, and to channel funds directly to where they were most needed. The system was designed to leave people in no doubt as to who their benefactor was. Throughout the country, large orange hoardings (orange being Fujimori's electoral colours) were intended to convey the impression that the president was labouring day and night in the interests of the poor. Even today, orange-coloured latrines – we could call them 'Fujilos' (in Spanish they are called *fujisilos*) – dot the landscape in rural areas, a curious reminder of a disgraced ex-president. But his popular campaign was not

just a matter of latrines and public works. Food assistance programmes multiplied, and by the 2000 elections, seven out of every ten families were in receipt of food hand-outs of one type or another. With so much at stake, who would dare to vote for opposition candidates?

▼ A 'fujiloo' in Ayacucho. Carlos Alviar explains: 'Many of the latrines have faults in their construction. They were designed to save materials – but they are so narrow that you almost get stuck inside. Nonetheless, they have led to a decrease in diarrhoeal diseases.'



Susana Pastor

## MEDIA MANIPULATION

Support from the media, whether purchased by Montesinos or extracted at his behest through blackmail by the tax department or other authorities, was one of the Fujimori regime's major assets. However, not all the media kow-towed to its wishes in this way. Particularly at the local level, many media outlets maintained a critical stance. This was particularly true of local radio stations, like Radio Cutivalú in Piura. Named after Lucas Cutivalú – an indigenous leader who won recognition from

imperial Spain when he vigorously defended his ancestral lands in the 16th century – Radio Cutivalú has 200,000 listeners in the Piura region, more than any other station. As well as popular music, the station broadcasts programmes on current affairs, agriculture, and local culture. One of its most popular programmes was a soap opera that focused on the still-contentious issue of land ownership.

The government employed various methods to deal with media dissent. In the case of Radio Cutivalú, it repeatedly refused applications for an FM broadcasting licence. 'We were trying to get permission since 1996,' says Rodolfo Aquino Ruíz, 'but our application always ended up in the SIN'. The licence was thus never given. With the SIN abolished and Fujimori gone, Radio Cutivalú now has its FM licence. Small-scale, community radio stations like Radio Cutivalú play a key role in providing entertainment, information, and debate, especially to those in isolated rural areas.

Suzana Pástor



Aemie Bungeroth



### Only one winner – how the 2000 elections were rigged

Categorising Fujimori and *fujimorismo* is not easy. By no means a traditional dictator, he was certainly no democrat. Rather, his regime was a hybrid of both elements. As his second term drew on, and as his strategy to win a third term looked increasingly doubtful, its manipulative methods became ever more blatant. This is where Montesinos and the SIN came in. They took the steps required to ensure that Fujimori would win, whatever people's views really were. The judiciary was cajoled into removing the legal obstacles to Fujimori standing. Opposition candidates fell victim to official slur and slander. Television stations were prevailed upon to cover only Fujimori and his campaign, and to ignore the opposition. A clandestine factory was established to turn out millions of fake signatures so that Fujimori's party would be able to demonstrate enough 'support' to register for the elections. And if these efforts were not enough, on the day of the elections the computers were pre-programmed to ensure a Fujimori victory. The fraudulence of the 2000 elections was condemned by an array of international observers.

ELECTION STATEMENT BY THE  
INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS

'The results of the year 2000 elections in Peru are the foreseeable outcome of a long process where the will of those in power has prevailed over the rule of law and democratic institutions. The legal and institutional order have been subordinated to the will of the Government which has in an authoritarian fashion manipulated the authority vested in it for the purpose of frustrating any act perceived as a threat to its perpetuation in power.'

In the end, Fujimori proved unable to control the situation. In July 2000, tens of thousands of demonstrators filled the streets of Lima to protest at his inauguration for a third term. They came from all over the country, despite the best efforts of the authorities to stop them. The fight for democracy seemed to be reaching a climax. Alejandro Toledo, who had emerged over the previous months as Fujimori's most credible opponent, gained notoriety for leading the demonstrations. The numbers involved revealed the depth of public indignation all over the country. NGOs, grass-roots organisations, and regional pressure groups all played a part. Internationally, the pro-democracy movement was given added impetus by pressure

from the USA, Canada, and European countries.

### **Lacking a democratic tradition**

In constructing his authoritarian regime, Fujimori profited from the absence of a strong democratic tradition in Peru. Unlike other Latin American countries – such as Chile, Uruguay, or Costa Rica – Peru cannot look back to a period in its recent history when government really represented the people and their interests. It never developed a strong party system. Peru is accustomed to lengthy periods of authoritarian rule with only restricted popular participation. In the 1920s, the government of Leguía, known as the *oncenio* because Leguía kept office for eleven years (1919-30), was a thinly disguised dictatorship. Leguía has sometimes been compared with Fujimori, not just because he narrowly outdid Fujimori's ten years as president, but because he also opened up the economy to foreign investors, and presided over a period of export-led growth. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Peru was ruled for eight years – the *ochenio* – by General Manuel Odría, a right-winger with a popular touch. From 1968 to 1980, the country was governed by a military dictatorship under first General Juan Velasco (1968-75), and then General Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-80). It was under Velasco that the armed forces sought to impose a series of major social and economic reforms.

During these years, there was only one political party that could come close to claiming to represent the mass of the population: APRA. Originally founded in Mexico in 1924 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, APRA was repeatedly thwarted in its hopes of winning office by democratic means. Hated by Peru's upper class, and feared by the military, the party suffered long periods of repression and clandestinity. It was partly for this reason that it developed as a vertical, top-down political organisation, with little internal democracy. Haya de la Torre, a powerful

## LOCAL PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

*Propuesta Regional*, in the northern city of Piura, is an example of the sort of local pressure group that developed during the Fujimori regime. It came into being in September 1992, five months after Fujimori's palace coup. It sought to provide a forum for democratic debate following his closure of the regional assemblies. It was backed by a wide range of local institutions, including the Catholic Church, NGOs, media outlets, and an array of civil society organisations.

*Propuesta* also sought to bring local interest groups together and to provide an alternative to discredited political parties. It organised discussion and debate, developing activities around three main topics: regional development, decentralisation, and local democracy. *Propuesta* thus found a way to rally opposition to the government, and to open up a space for change. When democracy was finally restored at the end of 2000, local civic groups found they had a powerful voice with the capacity to influence government in Lima.



Amie Bungeroth

orator who had initially been impressed by Italian fascism, drew up a programme of social and political reforms. But he was never able to carry them out. Haya was challenged on the left by the Peruvian Communist Party, although its development was stalled by the premature death in 1930 of its founder and ideologue, José Carlos Mariátegui. The Communist Party's support was concentrated in the union movement, which was never very large given Peru's scant industrialisation. Relations between APRA and the left came under greatest strain during the Cold War of the 1950s when, to gain acceptance, APRA supported Odría and became stridently anti-communist.

The Velasco years were pivotal in many ways. Where APRA had failed to reform Peru 'from below', Velasco and the armed forces sought to do it 'from above'. By nationalising oil and mining operations, Velasco sought to break the power of foreign multinationals. In their place, he created state companies. Through one of Latin America's most ambitious land reform programmes, he tried to break the power of the rural elite and give the land to those who worked on it. By introducing labour participation arrangements in industrial firms, he sought to give workers a share in the profits of their employers. Those previously excluded were thus offered a greater stake in the economy. Backed by force, the military was able to change the traditional power structure. Yet it did so in a high-handed way that overrode the views and aspirations of ordinary people. As it turned out, the so-called 'Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces' ran into opposition both from those who felt dispossessed, and from those who felt it did not go far enough.

Party politics is a relatively new game in Peru. Although parties existed – APRA and the Communist Party for instance – they did not constitute a ‘party system’ as such. Following the demise of the military government in 1980, such a system came into being. Political parties competed for office in broadly free and fair elections. The 1980 election was won by *Acción Popular*, a centre-right party whose leader, Fernando Belaunde, had been unceremoniously deposed in 1968 by Velasco. *Acción Popular* governed in alliance with the right-wing *Partido Popular Cristiano* (PPC), a business party. The 1985 elections were won for APRA by Alan García, who tried to reposition his party as a social democratic force. On the left, a myriad of feuding Marxist parties managed to shelve some of their differences and form the United Left coalition, or *Izquierda Unida* (IU). The IU victory in the 1983 Lima municipal elections was the first time that a socialist grouping had ever won democratic control of a capital city in Latin America.

By the end of the 1980s, this incipient party system had collapsed. Beset by the effects of the debt crisis, acute economic instability, hyperinflation, rampant corruption, and by the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of guerrilla violence, Peru’s party leaders were found wanting. Belaunde had shown the way: elected in 1980 with 46 per cent of the vote, his party won a mere six per cent in the 1985 elections. The García administration ended in even greater disgrace, even though party loyalty still won APRA 20 per cent of the vote in 1990. Having paraded himself as

▼ *The Congress of the Republic was closed by Fujimori in 1992, and re-opened later that year once new elections had given him a majority. In Peruvian politics, Congress has tended to play a subservient role to the Executive.*



Susana Pastor

the saviour of his country in 1985, García was vilified in 1990 as the author of its virtual collapse. It was in this political vacuum that Peruvians discovered Fujimori, a little-known figure, an outsider to the traditional political class. As the 1990s showed, Fujimori proved to be a canny political player who swiftly realised that his great advantage was his ability to further discredit the mainstream parties and their leaders. Far from creating a public outcry when he violated the constitution in 1992 by closing Congress, he was hailed as a hero who had put the party politicians firmly in their place.

### Terror and counter-terror

Few had heard of Sendero Luminoso, or 'Shining Path' as it is known in English, when it took up cudgels against the Peruvian state in 1980. Only those who made a pastime of following the fratricidal feuds and splits in the Peruvian Marxist Left would have known much about Abimael Guzmán, a Kantian philosopher from the University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga in Ayacucho, who had established a small dissident faction from mainstream Maoism back in the late 1960s. By 1990, the names of Sendero Luminoso and Guzmán (or his *nom de guerre*, 'Camarada Gonzalo') were etched in people's memory everywhere.

Sendero launched its first armed attack on the Peruvian state and its representatives when it tossed a bomb into the polling station at Chuschi,

#### CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE



Huayllay in northern Ayacucho bore more than its fair share of violence during the 1980s, though, unlike other villages in the region, it was never abandoned by its inhabitants. Sendero Luminoso attacked the community on three occasions, murdering 40 people. It would oblige young men and women to join its ranks at gunpoint; if they refused they would be shot. The community mayor, Alejandro Ñaupá Gutiérrez, told us how Sendero had killed his younger brother, and how he himself had narrowly escaped with his life. All families have similar stories to tell. The army also took people away, accusing them of collaborating with Sendero. None were seen again. Many children in Huayllay have grown up as orphans.

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an Ayacuchan village, on the occasion of the 1980 presidential elections. Its initial successes were all in the region of Ayacucho, where Sendero had prepared the political ground with care over the preceding years. It took advantage of a sense of frustration and alienation in a region long ignored by Lima, as well as of the ham-fisted response by the authorities to Sendero. Having failed to stem the tide of violence, the Belaunde administration brought in the army at the end of 1982. It mounted a campaign of counter-terror in order to regain support among people in Ayacucho. Massacres and atrocities became commonplace in rural Ayacucho over the years that followed, as Sendero and the military vied for control of territory.

By the mid-1980s, Sendero had opened up new theatres of conflict: in the central highlands of Junín, in the coca-producing Huallaga valley further east, and in the north of the country inland from Trujillo. Most importantly, around 1985, it took the decision to take the Maoist strategy of encircling the towns a stage further by mounting attacks in urban areas, particularly Lima. The development of its links to the drug traffickers of the Huallaga enabled Sendero to buy guns and improve its military capacity. At the same time, another guerrilla grouping, the *Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru* (MRTA) also took up arms, with its main base in San Martín department in the *selva alta* to the north-east. Influenced more by the Cuban revolution than by Maoism, the MRTA shared neither Sendero's world-view nor its gratuitously violent methods.

Sendero's ability to impose itself on communities stemmed from the terror it instilled among people unable to defend themselves. Where *Sendero* tried to make inroads into places with strong social organisation, it encountered resistance. In the southern department of Puno, for example, with its tightly-knit Aymara-speaking communities, Sendero found it difficult to build support. In the mining communities of the *sierra*, it was also rebuffed. And in Lima, its attempts to infiltrate low-income neighbourhoods met with strong resistance from popular leaders with different ways of thinking and operating.

By the beginning of the 1990s, as Sendero shifted its war to Lima and increased the ferocity of its attacks, it seemed as though the flimsy edifice of the Peruvian state was indeed on the brink of collapse. However, Guzmán's capture in 1992 – a lucky break for the authorities – proved the turning point. Without Guzmán's strong leadership, Sendero lacked the political vision and military capacity to continue as before. What had seemed an irresistible and impenetrable force, rapidly fell apart. A small rump has continued to mount attacks in northern Ayacucho and in the Huallaga valley, but Sendero today is a faint shadow of its former self, restricted to remote areas where its main allies are drug interests. Similarly, the MRTA proved a broken reed. Its last – but perhaps most spectacular – political stunt was the 1997 hostage-taking at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, which led to a three-month-long siege of the building.

► This flour mill in Ayacucho was created to support families displaced by the terror. The women who work here grind flour made of a nutritious combination of nine different Andean grains.



Susana Pastor

▼ Isabel Gutiérrez Palomino is president of the 'mothers' club' at Huayllay. The club brings together single mothers and widows in activities aimed at sustaining and reconstructing the community.

Fujimori's success in dealing with the guerrillas was also a product of a more sophisticated approach to counter-insurgency than the blind violence of the early days. Key to this was the development of community-based local militias, known as *rondas campesinas*, in the early 1980s. The *rondas campesinas* first came into existence in northern Peru, notably in Cajamarca, as peasant communities took steps to defend themselves from cattle rustlers. In Ayacucho, the name was borrowed to describe local militias in which peasants were forced to take part by the army. Still, these

new *rondas* responded to real problems of insecurity and fear of attacks by Sendero. As such, they proliferated in the war zone in the early 1990s, but have become less important since.



Susana Pastor

### Deepening democracy

Villa El Salvador, a township of some 360,000 inhabitants on Lima's southern rim, is an unusual place: it is a planned city. It first grew out of the sand-dunes in the 1970s, at the time of Velasco's military government. It was a place where the migrant squatters from the *sierra* could settle without fear of being constantly moved on. It grew block by block, on the basis of tight communal organisation. Though born under an authoritarian regime, it soon

## THE MURDER OF MARÍA ELENA MOYANO

A turning-point in Sendero Luminoso's attempts to penetrate urban areas was the killing of María Elena Moyano. Moyano was assassinated in Villa El Salvador on February 15 1992, the victim of a Sendero hit squad. First she was shot, then her body was blown to bits with dynamite. A strong community leader and defender of women's rights, María Elena founded *Fepomuves*, the women's federation in Villa El Salvador. She denounced attempts by *senderistas* to sabotage community soup kitchens and other grass-roots organisations. She was killed while inaugurating a new supply centre for the municipality's milk programme for schoolchildren. Her funeral was attended by tens of thousands of people. Her death opened many people's eyes to Sendero's ruthless methods, and its determination to destroy all independent popular organisation. Ten years later, in 2002, María Elena Moyano was officially declared a national heroine. Peru's official pantheon of heroes, mostly war leaders and patriots, includes very few women.

▼ The Creación Sagama shoe workshop is one of the many successful micro-enterprises in Villa El Salvador's industrial park.



Susana Pastor

became a symbol of local democracy and self-government. Driven by the strength of civil society in Villa El Salvador, the municipality tried to tackle head-on many of the problems that afflict other low-income neighbourhoods. It created an industrial park, a flourishing area of manufacture and commerce. People from all over Lima come to buy things of recognised quality at competitive prices direct from the producers. The Spanish government conferred upon Villa El Salvador the prestigious Prince of Asturias prize in recognition of its achievements as a community.

While the story of Villa El Salvador is exceptional, it is by no means alone in having a lively civil society. There are thousands of neighbourhood associations and projects all over Lima that provide basic services for the communities they serve. Among the most important are the *comedores populares*, or community kitchens, where food is prepared daily at cost price for members of the community. The experience of working communally has strengthened people's convictions about what can be achieved even in the most adverse

conditions. The *comedores* have also opened up a major role for women in community politics that did not previously exist. Community services of different types have frequently been aided by the activities of NGOs and the churches, sources of practical help and financial support. Because of

their significance at the local level, especially among women with little previous political experience, the *comedores* have attracted the attentions of political parties.

The government, too, sees them as a useful source of grass-roots backing. Under Fujimori, PRONAA, the government agency responsible for food assistance, tried to use the *comedores* to rally support. It threatened to cut off supplies unless the women of the *comedores* agreed to campaign for the ruling party. Despite such pressures, most grass-roots organisations maintained their independence.



▲ Percy munches bread at the comedor in San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima

## Building power and influence in civil society

Ilo, a port of some 70,000 people, used to be a company town. Located close to the border with Bolivia and Chile, it was the place where the Southern Peru Copper Corporation (SPCC) shipped out copper from its nearby mines at Toquepala and Cuajone. Despite this, it is a town that has long followed its own agenda, led by a determined left-wing local municipality with close ties to the mineworkers. Supported by *Labor*, an NGO with 18 years' experience in the town, the municipality successfully obliged SPCC to reduce the contamination it causes in Ilo. First, the town won a landmark case in 1991 when it took SPCC to international arbitration at The Hague. The result forced the company to divert the dumping of waste from Toquepala to where it would do less environmental damage. Then SPCC was pressured into a commitment to reduce sulphur dioxide fumes from its smelter in the town. In 1996, the municipality unveiled the town's first strategic plan. Its emphasis is on developing environmental awareness among community leaders, strengthening organisation among communities threatened by mining activities, and working on alternative long-term development policies. As well as programmes to monitor air quality, the strategic plan has led to greater public discussion about municipal spending priorities. In 2002, 40 per cent of the municipal investment budget was allocated by local civil society organisations.

In places less politicised than Ilo, a major limitation faced by community organisations is their restricted ability to influence change at the regional or national level. The collapse of political parties in the 1990s removed from the scene one of the means through which public pressure could influence state policy. Fujimori was able to co-opt popular leaders, or simply ignore their demands. Since Fujimori's departure, this seems to be

► Fumes rise from the refinery at Ilo. Many local people suffer from chronic respiratory problems as a result of poor air quality.



▼ Haydee Moreno Cueva explains some of the problems that women face in taking on leadership roles: 'When I was Vice President of the women's network ... I was a lot more involved, and my husband really didn't like it. He used to say, "Why are you going out so much, why do you have so many meetings?" I'd say, "You've got your work, they give you training.... And when we have meetings, I tell you what the meetings are about, I show you leaflets." But he didn't like that, he'd go off and come back drunk, and start throwing things and banging the table.'

changing, and new institutions, which promise to give greater influence to civil society, are emerging. The negotiations that accompanied the return to democracy in 2000 and 2001 involved grass-roots organisations, NGOs, and church groups in the establishment of special local forums (*mesas de concertación*) to debate and agree new rules and policies.

A central aim of the *mesas* has been to try to close the yawning gap between the state and civil society, made larger by the absence of credible political parties. At the national level, attempts were made to forge a consensus among representative groups from all walks of life. The same model was applied at the regional, and even local, levels. 'This is something completely new,' says Pina Huamán, the president of the *mesa* responsible for metropolitan Lima, 'because the drive behind these is from below, not above.' Under Toledo, a special national *mesa* was established to devise a strategy to combat poverty. Many of the officials who were initially put in charge of the poverty strategy had worked for NGOs previously. They therefore had greater sympathy with grass-roots concerns than some of their predecessors.

The work of the *mesas* has further enhanced the role of women in public life. Women have traditionally tended to assume a subordinate role in politics, with limited presence in Congress and in government. This appears to be changing. Reforms to the electoral laws say that at least one-third of party lists for Congress must be made up of women, although of those finally elected to Congress in 2001, only 20 per cent were women. Feminist pressure groups like *Flora Tristán* believe that a lot more has to change before women can really play their role to the maximum. Women will have to extricate themselves from unpaid domestic responsibilities. 'The state needs to provide such facilities as crèches that allow women to become citizens,' says *Flora Tristán's* María Emma Manarelli. She argues that the lack of such facilities is one reason why so few women from lower-income groups can engage in politics, while this is easier for those from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, who usually have help at home.



Annie Bungeroth

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Politics in rural Peru is largely a male preserve, so it is unusual to find a woman president of a peasant federation. But Ayacucho's peasant federation (*Federación Agraria Departamental de Ayacucho* or FADA) is no ordinary federation. From the 1969 agrarian reform up until the 1980s, it was a leading player in the rural politics of the region. In the 1980s, it came under attack both from Sendero Luminoso and the military authorities. In 1997, Fujimori's police threw it out of its offices. Now, reinstated in the *casa del campesino*, Juana Huancahuari has strong ambitions for the FADA to regain its former influence, providing peasants in Ayacucho with a political voice. She stresses the need for co-operation between peasant communities so that they produce the best crops at the right price. 'Organisation is the key to improving market participation,' she says.



▲ Rosa Rivero is the president of CEPRODA MINGA, an NGO, based in Piura, which works with rural communities to develop local plans for sustainable development.

## Increasing decentralisation

Decentralisation is an important way of increasing people's involvement in governmental decision-making, and of bridging the gap between society and the state. Reflecting its authoritarian tradition, and the dominance of its capital, Peru has always been a highly centralised country. Almost all decisions are made in Lima, and local government has little real power. It depends almost entirely on the centre for funding, and receives less than four per cent of the national budget. With government under Fujimori more centralised than ever, one of the main demands of the opposition was to win a new deal for the regions. President Toledo has promised to raise local government spending to 15 per cent of the budget by 2006, and to create new regional authorities. Real devolution, however, implies giving local government the resources to fund its own programmes, while ensuring that these are open, participatory, and transparent. Yet it remains to be seen to what extent Toledo is genuinely determined and able to devolve fiscal responsibility to the regions.

Another aspect of decentralisation involves local people in planning their future. In spite of everything, some timid steps were taken in this direction under Fujimori. In Ayacucho, for instance, local NGOs were invited to work with local communities in a scheme to prioritise community needs and to give them a bigger say in how development funds were spent. Although the plan was half-hearted, and was never followed through, the experience set an

important precedent. The ability of local communities to undertake such schemes depends greatly on the vision of local authorities, particularly mayors. Where such local leadership exists, important advances can be made. The town of Limatambo in Cuzco is an example. At the behest of its mayor, in 1993 the municipality embarked on an experiment in popular participation that became an object lesson to mayors elsewhere. Opening the accounts of the municipality to regular public scrutiny, for instance, has helped to generate popular confidence in local leaders. Participation has also led to the surrounding peasant communities having a more direct role in decision-making. In Piura, too, led on by Propuesta Regional, there were important steps in this direction. These experiences suggest that economic transparency is the key condition for participatory planning.