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## Now Peru Is Mine

Llamojha Mitma, Manuel, McCall, Grant

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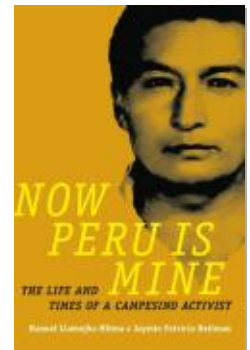
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## FIVE

### “Everything Was Division”

**POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION, 1968–1980**

Traitor. Sellout. Enemy of the Peasantry. These were just some of the charges Llamojha faced during the 1970s. This time, however, his detractors were not hacendados, abusive district authorities, or even government officials. They were other leftists. Over the course of the 1970s, Llamojha participated in a bitter battle for control over the CCP, a struggle he ultimately lost. His recollections about this period form an account of political marginalization: he was ostracized and attacked by his former allies on the left. His experiences in the 1970s help us understand why his life stories so often celebrated those individuals who—as he phrased it—never abandoned him.

The partisan disputes that plagued Peru’s left were intensely heated and hurtful, but they were far from unique. Throughout Latin America’s diverse nations—and across much of the world—rival leftist political parties waged acrimonious battles against each other over the twentieth century, hurling insults and invective as they struggled to gain political traction over one another. Leftists angrily disagreed about whether workers should ally with peasants, whether participation in electoral politics was counterrevolutionary, whether or not to pursue armed struggle, and countless other questions. Although leftist political activists still fought important battles for revolutionary transformations, internecine fights often drew activists’ energy, attention, and time away from larger social justice struggles and sometimes devolved

into startlingly nasty personal attacks.<sup>1</sup> Although leftists in different Latin American contexts made repeated efforts to unite with one another, working hard to transcend both minor and major ideological differences in order to fight more effectively for socioeconomic and political change, unity often proved elusive. Llamojha's particular experiences give us an intensely personal look at how devastating and destructive these conflicts between leftists could be: he was slandered and shunned, and he maintains that his former allies even tried to murder him.

The political battles of the 1970s took place in a period of dramatic change in Peru. Military men under the leadership of General Juan Velasco Alvarado seized power in 1968 and established the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces. Unlike other highly conservative military governments that took power in Latin America during the 1970s, Velasco's regime pursued a course of progressive reform. He nationalized several key industries, introduced a major education reform, and tried to fashion a more inclusive nation-state.<sup>2</sup> Crucially, the Velasco government also introduced a comprehensive agrarian reform that effectively dismantled the hacienda system in Peru. The regime seized hacienda land and redistributed it to campesinos, primarily in the form of state-administered cooperatives. Although the course of reform slowed significantly after 1975, when Velasco was ousted in an internal coup, the military government remained in power until 1980.

In issuing the agrarian reform law, Velasco was answering a demand made by many Latin Americans. Across much of the continent, campesinos and leftist activists alike had long been calling for the redistribution of rural land, seeing it as the only solution to the grave social and economic injustices that plagued the countryside.<sup>3</sup> But many Latin American political activists felt deeply unsatisfied with the state-sponsored agrarian reforms that their governments enacted, believing that such programs did not go far enough, fast enough, and fearing that government reforms drained the peasantry's revolutionary potential.<sup>4</sup> That was certainly the case for Llamojha, who angrily opposed the Velasco regime's actions in the countryside. Against this backdrop of dramatic state-sponsored agrarian reform, the CCP fractured into three competing factions in 1973, torn apart by rivalries, ideological differences, and differing attitudes toward the reform. Each of these factions claimed to be the *true* CCP. The invective that passed between the members of these three rival factions was bitter and sharp, but it was far from unusual in the disputes that transpired among leftists in Latin America.

## **Velasco's Agrarian Reform**

When the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces seized power in 1968, many Peruvian leftists were thrown into crisis.<sup>5</sup> Long accustomed to denouncing the national government as conservative and beholden to elite interests, left-wing political activists now had to contend with a regime that pledged—and acted—to fulfill many long-standing leftist demands. Many prominent Peruvian leftists responded to the Velasco regime by joining it, taking government jobs and advancing the state's agenda.<sup>6</sup> Some took a more moderate approach, recognizing the regime as reformist and sensing an opportunity to radicalize the course of change in the country. Still others rejected the military government entirely, deriding it as capitalist, imperialist, or even fascist and dismissing its reforms as ruses. Llamojha was in the latter group.

I asked him what he thought about the Velasco government and its agrarian reform.

**The peasantry had fought so much for the agrarian reform. So the Velasco government took power, always talking about agrarian reform, and they issued an agrarian reform law. But they didn't follow through, because the hacendados didn't accept it. I knew the government wasn't going to do it. Agrarian reform was going to be made through struggle, when the pueblo took power.**

**"While the powerful and the gamonales are in power, it can't be done. To change the situation and the country's system, the pueblo has to take power." I always talked like this. So, some hacendados denounced me, saying I was a communist! That's how it was. How I struggled in those times.**

In his interview with the CVR, Llamojha added:

**I printed up communiqués explaining that Velasco's agrarian reform didn't favor the peasantry. I sent out five communiqués along these lines. Others sent out communiqués saying that Velasco's agrarian reform was good. That made for confusion, discrepancies with the peasants. I had the majority of support from the peasantry.**

An essay Llamojha wrote in May 1973 was especially forceful in its denunciations of the agrarian reform. He cast the Velasco agrarian reform as "the landlord's path," writing:

The impulse of the landlord's path in the countryside is linked to the objectives of North American imperialism for the development of bureaucratic capitalism in the country. For this, those who adopt the position of the buying and selling of land do it to collaborate with landlords, bureaucratic capitalism, and imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

In this essay he further explained that he staunchly opposed the agrarian reform's stipulations that peasants help the state compensate hacendados for seized lands, something known as the "agrarian debt." He also opposed "the direct intervention of the Government in the execution of the Agrarian Reform" and "the formation of Cooperatives in which the representatives of the landowners and the State outnumber the representatives of the campesinos."<sup>8</sup> To him the proper approach was what he deemed "the peasant's path": the direct confiscation of land by campesinos themselves.<sup>9</sup>

A significant part of his opposition to the Velasco agrarian reform, as his essay suggested, was the distribution of land into state-run cooperatives.<sup>10</sup> He instead wanted land to move directly into peasants' hands. He explained to his CVR interviewers:

**The campesinos realized what a cooperative was, and that cooperatives weren't in the peasantry's favor.**

**When they formed the cooperative, the hacendados themselves were the managers! With the harvest, the harvest of corn, potatoes, everything, they only gave the peasants one *arroba* [about thirty pounds] per family.**

**The campesinos turned bitter. They said, "How are we going to live for a full year on just one *arroba* of corn or wheat? We want our own production from our own land." Saying that, they rejected the cooperatives. In addition, in the countryside, there are fruits like cactus pears and also firewood that campesinos were no longer allowed to collect. But when it was the hacienda, they were free to get firewood, fruit. But not as a cooperative. As a cooperative, they had to pay for one stick of wood, for fruit. They had to pay; they could no longer eat for free. So, the campesinos rejected it.**

Llamojha's pointed opposition to the Velasco regime also stemmed from the fact that the military government's Decree Law 19400 tried to do away with independent campesino organizations and replace them with government-sponsored agrarian leagues and federations. That law also created the Confederación Nacional Agraria (National Agrarian Confederation),



FIG. 5.1 Llamojha with his grandson Yuri and daughters Delia, Hilda, and María, Lima, 1972. Photo courtesy of Manuel Llamojha Mitma.

designed to challenge—and ultimately replace—the CCP. In his 1973 essay Llamojha wrote that Decree Law 19400 “represented the vertical, corporatist organization of fascism.”<sup>11</sup> He surely feared for the CCP’s survival—and for independent peasant political mobilization in general—in a context of active government efforts to champion state-sponsored, state-directed peasant organization.

### **Political Fractures**

By the time the CCP split in 1973, Llamojha had already become deeply enmeshed in heated political disputes among the country’s leftists. In the mid-1960s, his sharpest political critiques had been directed against leftists who followed the Soviet political line. In an open letter that he and other leaders of the CCP published in 1964, they accused CCP sub-secretary general Ramón Nuñez Lafore of betrayal.<sup>12</sup> The letter asserted that this “false campesino” was collaborating with the Ministry of Labor and Indian Affairs in efforts that would ultimately divide the CCP. The letter decried Nuñez’s “brazen treachery” and stripped him of his role in the CCP.<sup>13</sup> The key to understanding this heated denunciation rests with the fact that Nuñez was sympathetic to the Soviet political line, while Llamojha and the other CCP leaders favored the Chinese Maoist line.<sup>14</sup> Llamojha and his fellow CCP leaders also staunchly opposed cooperation with the Peruvian state, a point that further divided Peru’s pro-Soviet leftists from the country’s Maoists.

Llamojha had a similarly strong antipathy toward a group that, like him, also rejected the Soviet line: Trotskyists.

**Trotskyism was not truly the defender of the peasantry. Instead, it distracted peasants with a different way of thinking. It was not truly thinking about the liberation of the peasantry. It wasn’t like that.**

Llamojha’s opposition to Trotskyism also shaped—and was shaped by—his rivalry with Hugo Blanco, Peru’s most famous rural activist and the man who fought alongside Cuzco’s La Convención peasants in the renowned land struggles of the early 1960s.<sup>15</sup> When the CVR interviewers asked Llamojha about Blanco, Llamojha’s reply made reference to the armed campesino militias Blanco had formed to defend seized hacienda lands:

**Hugo Blanco wrecked things because he’s a Trotskyist, nothing more than a provocateur. There was an organization, it had nine hundred armed men.**

**But he formed this group without consulting with the pueblo and then started attacking police posts. They confronted the police and the ensuing repression was against the campesinos. There was a massacre in the valley. They totally razed it, the dead campesinos were thrown into the river.**

But while Llamojha was quick to denounce Trotskyists, communists of the Soviet line, and members of many other leftist political parties during our interviews, he was always extremely reluctant to specify his own particular ideological sympathies. Not once in our interviews did he self-define as a Maoist, a communist, a socialist, or even a Marxist. Instead, whenever I asked him about his political sympathies, loyalties, and ideas, he spoke about his commitment to campesinos and social justice. In his interview with the CVR, he labeled his political vision “the philosophy of the peasantry.”

**The philosophy of the peasantry is to liberate oneself from the clutches of the dominant classes, uniting the peasants and fighting until the total liberation of the peasantry. We the peasantry are suffering. It's the countryside that suffers in everything! So, I always shared this idea, or rather, this explanation with the peasantry, that we have to work united and fight to free ourselves from everything that is feudal slavery, from capitalism. Capitalism is now in its last phase, which is imperialism. And from there, it's going to tumble down because of its own weight. So, we have to take our own path.**

Llamojha also told his CVR interviewers that he taught Karl Marx's ideas about the stages of economic development to Peruvian campesinos.

**I also had to orient on my part. I explained to them that the time is going to come, because we are living in the fourth stage. Like it or not, the fifth stage has to come. It's not because someone wants it, but because this is the law of the world. This is what the struggle for liberation is like.**

**In the world, there are only five stages. We are now living in the fourth stage, in capitalism. Every stage ends with a struggle, with blood. Now, too, we have to pass to the fifth stage with blood, with struggle.**

**This is what I explained to the masses, in congresses, too. I gave guidance in this sense, this was my orientation, philosophically. In the world, there are only five stages in the development of humanity.**

**So, the campesinos asked, “What is the first stage?”**

**I explained about the primitive community, here in Peru.**



**“So, what is the second?” The campesinos asked me. They would ask me this in Quechua.**

**I explained to them, “the second is slavery and the third is feudalism and the fourth is capitalism.”**

Llamojha did not explicitly attribute these ideas to Marx. When his CVR interviewers asked if these ideas reflected a party orientation, he answered simply:

**They were from my own judgments, according to my studies of books.**

In our interviews, I noted that the five stages of history were Marx’s idea and asked Llamojha if he had ever read Marx. He replied:

**As it happens, that’s what I used to educate myself. I really liked his writings about how peasants used to live, about how they should defend themselves, about how they suffered, all of that. I read that and I based my thinking about how to continue fighting on that. And the campesinos really respected me for it.**

But when I asked Llamojha if he characterized himself as a Marxist, noting that many Peruvians of the era did so even if they did not belong to a political party, he was more reserved. He laughingly responded:

**Well, I more or less sympathized. But I didn’t give it all of my heart.**

Llamojha took a similar stance on communism and socialism. Despite his express political sympathies for the communist regimes in Cuba and China and his repeated assertions about the merits of socialism, he never labeled himself a communist or a socialist.

His reticence to self-identify as a Marxist is far from surprising. Accusations of communist affiliations had landed him in jail from the late 1940s forward. More pressing still, twenty-first-century Peru is still reeling from the violence and devastation of the 1980–2000 war that began when militants of the Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path launched an armed struggle, and many Peruvians continue to equate Marxism, socialism, and communism with terrorism. That context can also help us understand Llamojha’s insistence that he never belonged to a political party, despite his close work with members of the Partido Comunista del Perú-Bandera Roja.

I asked Llamojha if he, like so many other members of the CCP, belonged to Bandera Roja.

**No. Sure, we talked, but I never formally joined the party.**

When I pressed the point, asking why he didn't become more involved, he replied:

**I said to them, "I can't. I don't have enough knowledge of the issue." I went to their meetings, but I didn't have any formal role at that time.**

I asked him if he had ever belonged to any political party at all.

**No, not a single one. I just went to their meetings, nothing more, but I never joined a party. I went to their meetings, but I just wanted to be an independent, nothing more! Besides, they gave you jobs to do, and I wouldn't do them!**

**They wanted me to go to the pueblos, to make propaganda for the party. That's why I didn't want to join! I was with the peasantry, with the Confederación Campesina del Perú, and that was enough. The Confederation called on me to go everywhere, and I didn't have time for anything else. They called me to Cuzco, Piura, Chiclayo; they called me everywhere.<sup>16</sup>**

It is entirely possible that Llamojha never joined or even actively sympathized with any political party. A person could certainly be a leftist without belonging to a political party. But it is nonetheless clear that in the 1960s, Llamojha took sides with Saturnino Paredes, the CCP's legal advisor and head of the Maoist Partido Comunista del Perú-Bandera Roja, sharing Paredes's opposition to the Soviet line and praising China. But in the 1970s Llamojha's alliance with Paredes came to a disastrous end. I asked Llamojha what had happened with Paredes.

**It's because Paredes cheated us badly. He always went to China and got money, saying he was making revolution, armed struggle, in Peru. Saying that there were already two liberated pueblos, Pomacocha and Eccash.**

**"They are liberated!" he said.**

**He was bringing a mountain of money from China, millions, claiming he was carrying out armed struggle in all of Peru. But he wasn't.**

**In China they asked me, "How's the revolution going?"**

**"There's no revolution at all there."**

**"But Paredes is taking money and arms from here, to make revolution. He says there are already two liberated pueblos."**

**And I said, "There is nothing. It's a lie."**

**Paredes was cheating China. So China sent investigators, delegates from**

China, to investigate. And they discovered the truth. So when Paredes returned to China, China didn't want to receive him. And they cut this aid to Paredes.<sup>17</sup> So he went over to another country that was socialist, a small country. Albania. He started to go there, and he started getting money from there because China had rejected him on discovering the truth. I clarified all of this. After that, Saturnino Paredes didn't want to even see me. His supporters denounced me, saying that I was earning 60,000 [soles] working for the government, working for SINAMOS [Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilización Social (National System to Support Social Mobilization), a Velasco government agency]. They said this. They distributed flyers throughout all of Peru.

Here, there was one pueblo, Chacari [a community in the district of Concepción]. Paredes sent his people there to kill me. Chacari invited me to go to their fiesta and I went to lead the community's anniversary procession. A group that Paredes had appointed was there to kill me. They surrounded me and grabbed me around the chest.

"You're a traitor to Paredes!" they said.

The people who were there, they defended me. Always. The people who were holding the fiesta came to free me. They grabbed Paredes's supporters, they threw punches and freed me. The people defended me. Because they all knew me. That's how it was with Paredes, the division.<sup>18</sup>

Llamojha was not the only activist who split from Paredes. The Maoist university professor Abimael Guzmán broke ties with Paredes in 1969 and went on to found the Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path in 1970.<sup>19</sup> Members of the political party Vanguardia Revolucionaria likewise opposed Paredes, believing that his politics had taken an unduly radical turn when he switched his allegiance from China to Albania. As prominent Vanguardia Revolucionaria activist Andrés Luna Vargas laughingly phrased it, "Enver Hoxha's Albania! Imagine that! What esoterism! Imagine that! Here? No way."<sup>20</sup> Ricardo Letts Colmenares, one of Vanguardia Revolucionaria's founders, offered a similar perspective. He commented, "Saturnino separated himself from the Chinese line and went to the Albanian line of Enver Hoxha. What craziness!" Letts also expressed sadness that Paredes had taken such a "dogmatic and sectarian" turn.<sup>21</sup>

Vanguardia Revolucionaria's leaders were also deeply unsatisfied with the CCP's direction, feeling that Paredes's extremist politics had led the CCP astray and that it had fallen into a period of inactivity and decay after 1966.<sup>22</sup> One

Vanguardia activist wrote that by 1970 “the participation of the bases was insignificant, the proceedings were bureaucratic,” and the CCP did not “play the role of coordinator, organizer, centralizer, nor effective leader.”<sup>23</sup> Letts similarly recalled: “Our sense was that it was a shame that it [the CCP] was running down a dead-end street, a narrow pass of dogmatic, sectarian deviation,” and that if the CCP continued along that path, it “was going to have immense difficulties in transforming itself into a great organization of the masses.”<sup>24</sup>

These tensions came to a head in May 1973 at the CCP’s Fourth National Congress in Eccash, Ancash. At that congress, members of Vanguardia Revolucionaria and their sympathizers broke from Paredes, noisily withdrawing from the Eccash congress and making plans to hold their own CCP congress.<sup>25</sup> I asked Llamojha about the events in Eccash.

**Yes, they carried out a campesino congress in Eccash. But because we were already divided, I didn’t go. There, too, they agreed to kill me! This is what Paredes did. Everything was division. He divided the Peasant Confederation.**

Llamojha initially allied himself with the Vanguardia Revolucionaria activists who broke from Paredes at Eccash.<sup>26</sup> But when Vanguardia supporters chose party activist Andrés Luna Vargas rather than Llamojha as the leader of their newly established rival faction of the CCP, Llamojha split from it and established his own faction of the CCP, supported primarily by peasants from the department of Cuzco.<sup>27</sup> Suddenly, there were three competing factions of the CCP, each claiming to be the only legitimate Confederación Campesina del Perú.

Llamojha described this division, making reference to Letts:

**Letts Colmenares started organizing another Peasant Confederation. The Peasant Confederation started to split, it started to weaken. That’s why the Confederation divided into three. One was the Confederation I led, another was led by Saturnino Paredes. And then came Letts Colmenares with another Peasant Confederation. That lowered the peasants’ morale, and the struggle had already been losing force. Because there was an agrarian reform, this had confused the peasants, because many of them were not perfectly oriented. That’s what happened. Letts Colmenares started to go around, dividing the people, and that led to the weakening of the Peasant Confederation.**

**Only Cuzco stood firm. When I was working in Ayacucho, a number of people came from Cuzco to talk with me. Cuzco didn’t want the Peasant**

**Confederation to disappear, so they came to Ayacucho to look for me, so that we could be resolute and not allow the Confederation to divide.**

**Paredes had dismissed me; he wanted nothing more to do with me. But Cuzco, they never left me. [Peasants from the department of] Piura, they didn't leave me. They always followed me.<sup>28</sup>**

The three-way split of the CCP generated terrible animosities and much bitter invective, quickly marginalizing Llamojha, whose faction was easily the smallest and the weakest of the three. A 1973 story in the pro-Paredes newspaper *Bandera Roja* proclaimed that Llamojha “has fallen into the dirtiest political and social degeneration, turning into a dummy of Trotskyist and officialist puppets. He doesn't represent any campesinos from Ayacucho, nor those of his Community of Concepción, which he abandoned long ago.”<sup>29</sup> Although that story's claims about Concepción were unfair, it is true that some individuals with whom Llamojha had once worked closely turned against him. At the second provincial convention of Cangallo campesinos, held in October 1974 in Pomacocha, delegates “declared Manuel Llamoja [*sic*] M. a traitor and campesino sellout for participating in the game plotted by the military regime in its efforts to divide the peasant movement and the PERUVIAN PEASANT CONFEDERATION.”<sup>30</sup> These words came as a direct consequence of the fact that the convention's organizers were Paredes's allies. The insults continued in subsequent years. In a 1978 publication, Paredes's faction of the CCP declared Llamojha and several other leaders “enemy agents . . . enemies of the peasantry and agents of exploiters.”<sup>31</sup>

While the sharpest denunciations against Llamojha came from Paredes's camp, members of Vanguardia Revolucionaria also criticized him. A 1974 publication produced by Vanguardia Revolucionaria referred to “Manuel Llamojha's insignificant clique,” commenting that he had “in previous years helped liquidate the campesino movement with his mistaken line and now tries to pass as the maximum leader of a false CCP.”<sup>32</sup> Llamojha was equally critical of Vanguardia Revolucionaria. When his CVR interviewers asked him about the party, he accused it of working on behalf of the Velasco regime and its agency SINAMOS:

**They aided Velasco. They were always on the side of the bourgeoisie, and for that reason, I didn't agree with them. I explained this to the campesinos. Our clear position was to make agrarian reform with our own hands. And that's what we have done.**

When one of the CVR interviewers pointed out that Vanguardia Revolucionaria had taken a similar position, leading peasant land seizures of haciendas in the province of Andahuaylas, Llamojha responded:

**They took lands to deliver them to SINAMOS. Vanguardia organized to seize land, but with the end of delivering it to SINAMOS, because SINAMOS had started to fail in the sierra. So, in came Vanguardia Revolucionaria, surely they were in agreement with SINAMOS. They seized the lands and delivered them to SINAMOS to form a cooperative.**

Llamojha's characterizations of the 1974 Andahuaylas land seizures stem from Vanguardia Revolucionaria's controversial negotiations with the Velasco government following the invasions. Representatives of Vanguardia Revolucionaria and the Andahuaylas peasant federation struck an agreement with the military government whereby the regime recognized Andahuaylas campesinos' legitimate claim to the invaded lands. In exchange, campesinos had to accept the "agrarian debt," paying for the seized lands over a period of time to help compensate the aggrieved hacendados. To many Peruvian leftists and even some members of Vanguardia Revolucionaria, this agreement represented an unacceptable capitulation and a deplorable alliance with the military government.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond Vanguardia Revolucionaria's acceptance of the agrarian debt in Andahuaylas, there is an additional reason why Llamojha cast Vanguardia's land invasions as serving the government: accusing one's rivals of affiliation with the military government was a quick and effective way to deride them. Paredes made precisely this sort of accusation against Llamojha, asserting that Llamojha was on the Velasco regime's payroll. Llamojha's opposition to Vanguardia Revolucionaria's land seizures was also owing to the fact that state authorities blamed him for the invasions. He told his CVR interviewers:

**That's how it was in Andahuaylas. They seized sixty haciendas in the name of the Confederación Campesina del Perú.**

**As it was done in the name of the Confederación Campesina del Perú, and as I was better known—because Vanguardia just formed that year, and that same year they seized the lands in the name of the Confederation—I was blamed.<sup>34</sup> The authorities and the hacendados themselves believed that I was leading the seizure of the haciendas. I didn't even know they were seizing the haciendas, and they started to pursue me, to look for me everywhere, but they didn't manage to find me.**

When I was in Vischongo, twenty civil guards came to my pueblo to capture me, but they didn't find me in my pueblo. In Concepción, there were just three opponents [the abusive district authorities Grimaldo Castillo, Raúl Agüero, and Joaquín Chávez], the rest of the community was with me.

So, these three people said to the guards, "he must be in some *anexo* [small district community or annex]. You guys, divide yourselves into three groups and go and look for him."

They divided up into groups and they went to all the anexos, while five of them remained in the pueblo, waiting. That is, there was an order that they guard my house, but just at night.

These three people had said, "He's going to come back at night. You should wait at his home."

They watched over my house the whole night. I was returning from Vischongo, and when I was close to my pueblo, at the river, the lieutenant governor warned me.

"Don't go into the pueblo, because they are waiting for your return. They're going to come at night and watch over your house. Better if you go back from here," he said to me.

"But if they are only going to go at night, nothing is going to happen." Saying that, I went to my house, I dropped off my packages, and then I left. I went to another place, up into the hills. From there, I sent a message to the pueblo. So, the campesinos, a large number of campesinos, came up into the hills, to find me and to hold an assembly. We held an assembly there. I was there for fifteen days, because the guards would not leave the pueblo. The campesinos, poor things, they were always with me. They never abandoned me. They always came up into the hills, they brought me food.

I continued my questions about Vanguardia Revolucionaria by asking if Llamojha knew Lino Quintanilla, one of the party's most prominent activists. Llamojha replied with a story about the 1974 seizure of the Rurunmarca hacienda.

I met Lino Quintanilla when he came to this side [the Ayacucho side of the border between the departments of Ayacucho and Apurímac], to the Rurunmarca hacienda. There had been a land invasion there. Various communities invaded the Rurunmarca hacienda. It was a sugar-growing estate, and they invaded.

One community was called Pujas, and Lino Quintanilla, I don't know

why, didn't want Pujas to enter the hacienda. So, three Pujas delegates came here by night to inform me and to ask me to speak with Lino to allow Pujas to take part.

"Why shouldn't we participate in this hacienda seizure?" they asked.

We arrived at the hacienda. They [Lino Quintanilla's supporters] had put guards in various spots, and we couldn't pass. So we arrived there and they stopped us.

"Who are you? Where are you going?" they asked. I showed my document.

"Ah! You can pass. You are a national delegate, you are a representative of Peru. You have to enter!"

So, I entered the other sector. Lino Quintanilla was there. He was in control of this part of the territory, with various communities. I arrived there, and sent a note to Quintanilla.

"I want to talk with you guys," I said.

He replied, "You have to come with five delegates!"

I went the next day. They let me pass and I spoke with Lino Quintanilla.

"You! What are you doing here?" he asked me.

"I came, they called on me, they informed me about what's happening, so that's why I've come."

"But what are you going to do here?" he asked me.

"Well, I have to talk with the masses. That's why I've come."

"You don't have to do anything!" he said to me. "I'm here. I'm in charge."

"That's fine, but I'm with the masses," I said to him.

"How can you be with the masses? I'm with the masses!"

"But here I am," I said to him.

He said to me, "You have to be with me! You can't be with the others, with those dirty leaders from Pujas!"

"But why?" I asked.

"This is how it is. They don't want us to take the haciendas."

"But they are not opposed. They have actually already taken the other side. The other part of the hacienda," I said.

"Be very careful! You shouldn't be leading badly," he said.

"How can I be leading badly?"

This was how we argued.<sup>35</sup>

Llamojha's recollections connect the aftermath of his encounter with Quintanilla to the start of his new job at the teachers' cooperative—the central office of the teachers' union—in the city of Ayacucho.<sup>36</sup> That job quickly



led to more criticism from his former allies and, later, to misguided accusations of his involvement in the Shining Path. He explained:

**I was there [in Rurunmarca] for five days. After that, I returned to Concepción and three delegates came from the University of Huamanga. The students' union of Ayacucho had sent delegates to bring me to Ayacucho.**

**"Something might happen to you here! Let's go!" they said.**

**So, the three delegates brought me to Ayacucho to inform the university [about the events at Rurunmarca]. When I arrived in Ayacucho, the teachers gathered so I could speak to them.**

**I spoke and they asked me, "When are you going to go to Lima?"**

**"I want to go now, but I don't have money for the trip," I said.**

**I didn't have the means. So the teachers said to me, "Well, in the teachers' cooperative, they need a custodian."**

**They took me on for a month. But as they saw my work, how I acted, they asked me to stay. I was there until '81. I was working in the cooperative, but I had full permission to leave when there were peasant meetings in other places. And I went. The teachers themselves sent me.**

**"Go to such and such a place, meetings, congresses. Go!" they said. I had full permission to leave, and my salary continued.**

Nelson Pereyra was head of the teachers' cooperative at the time. He recalled: "The cooperative was run by people of a leftist tendency. And we knew very well that Mr. Llamojha Mitma was jobless and in a critical economic situation."<sup>37</sup> At the teachers' cooperative, Llamojha soon began working in the document reception office. He gathered together all of the cooperative's documents, sorting them and putting them into files. He also took responsibility for responding to the queries the cooperative received.

**Every kind of document, every kind of letter that came to the cooperative, I'd answer them, all of them, writing memos.**

Llamojha quickly developed a warm relationship with many of the teachers working at the cooperative. He described it during his interview with the CVR:

**The teachers helped me. We spent a lot of time with the teachers who were clearly revolutionaries. Sure, some had petit bourgeois ideas. But there were others whose thinking was proletarian.**

**When I was working in the teachers' cooperative, too, anything that**

**happened, they [regional authorities] would blame me. Students went out on a march in protest or workers went out on demonstrations and strikes, they'd come to get me. They'd take me prisoner, pulling me out of my workplace. One time, ten civil guards came to take me away, and my work compañeros defended me. They defended me, and so they took all of us away! The cooperative was closed a week, because every last one of the employees was imprisoned, to defend me! That's how it was.**

Many of these “work compañeros” were members of the Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path. Although Nelson Pereyra was not affiliated in any way with the Shining Path, he recalled that members of the Shining Path dominated the Ayacucho teachers' cooperative.<sup>38</sup> Some of Saturnino Paredes's allies thus took Llamojha's new job as proof that he was working with Abimael Guzmán, the Ayacucho university professor who had broken from Paredes in late 1969 and subsequently formed the Shining Path. A publication by the pro-Paredes faction of the CCP charged: “the traitor Llamojha, oriented by the sinister enemy agent Manuel Abimael [*sic*] Guzmán Reynoso who formed the group named ‘Shining,’ proclaimed himself ‘secretary general’ of the CCP, and acts at the service of groups outside the campesino movement, only to keep himself employed in a teaching cooperative controlled by said traitor group.”<sup>39</sup>

Another pro-Paredes document claimed that Llamojha “finds himself manipulated by the so-called ‘Shining Path’ group led by the professor Guzmán,” and the same document denounced “the ‘Shining’ divisionists who manipulate the traitor Llamohja [*sic*] and make him sign divisionist documents.”<sup>40</sup> These comments were biting and malicious, but back in the 1970s these statements did not carry the same kind of weight they do today. In the 1970s, the Shining Path was widely regarded as little more than a fringe political group with little influence outside Ayacucho and had yet to acquire its reputation as a violent, extremist organization.<sup>41</sup>

A few other activists from the 1970s told me that Guzmán participated in Llamojha's faction of the CCP, so I asked Llamojha about his relationship with Guzmán. Mindful of the sensitive nature of the issue—today, many Peruvians quickly cast any association with the Shining Path as involvement in terrorism—I simply asked Llamojha if Abimael Guzmán sought his advice in the 1970s.

**Advice? No. Sure, he asked about the struggle of the campesinos. And I started to meet with him in Ayacucho, when he was a professor. He looked**

for me with other people, to talk. So we talked during meetings. He always attended meetings of the campesinos. But at that time, he didn't say anything about taking up arms. Only about the peasantry's struggle. That's all he talked about. We always saw each other in the peasant meetings.

In Lima, I went to his house. I went twice. But what I didn't like is that he wouldn't talk the way we are talking now.

I'd say to him, "This problem in the sierra, how are we going to solve it?"

"Well, the peasants will take care of this," he'd say to me. "Go and talk with the students from the university," he'd say to me. That's all he'd say to me. He didn't talk much.

I also asked Llamojha if Guzmán participated in the CCP.

**No, he barely participated. He appeared at the last minute, but he never went to the CCP.**

Members of the Shining Path did, however, take part in the national congress that Llamojha convened in 1975 for his faction of the CCP. This congress was held at the Guamán Poma de Ayala school in the city of Ayacucho, a school run by the San Cristóbal de Huamanga University's education faculty. Guzmán was a professor in that faculty, and many of the teachers at Guamán Poma were members of the Shining Path.<sup>42</sup> Llamojha described this congress:

**In this congress that we held in Ayacucho, a national congress, delegates from Cuzco came, they also came from Piura. And there, I stepped down. I had served so many years as secretary general.**

**Cuzco didn't want to let me leave the secretariat. Piura didn't want it either. They said to me, "You aren't going to resign!"**

**The people from Piura, from the department of Tumbes, they didn't want to let me go. "How can we allow that?" they asked.**

This 1975 congress was a terrible disappointment. Because Llamojha's faction of the CCP was small in size and limited in influence, very few delegates came to the gathering.<sup>43</sup> Weak from the start, Llamojha's ties with Guzmán and members of the Shining Path fizzled shortly afterward. Guzmán came to the conclusion that unions were nothing more than deviations from the true course of revolution and that they threatened to delay the onset of armed struggle and popular war. Guzmán thus ended all Shining Path work in the peasant union movement.<sup>44</sup> Llamojha remembered this attitude and dis-

cussed it with his CVR interviewers. He explained that when Shining Path members went out into the countryside,

**they told the communities that unions were no longer worth anything. I asked about this in various meetings that I was invited to, I asked them why. And so they attacked me.**

**“Why? Because is there really any chance that a union is going to make a revolution?” they said to me.**

**“But then who is going to help the armed struggle? Campesinos have to help, because they have organized. And if they don’t, there’s not going to be any armed struggle. That’s how it is!” I said. We argued hard about this.**

**So, when they invited me to meetings, I said, “If the group, or better said the peasants, aren’t going to help the armed struggle, then how are you going to make armed struggle? Because the fight, the armed group, needs the support of the peasantry. And if the unions die? Then how are you going to make a revolution?”**

**But they didn’t pay attention to me. So, from there, they marginalized me because of this. When I talked this way, they marginalized me.**

**“You’re a reactionary,” they said to me. That’s how they talked to me.**

Another component of the Shining Path’s rejection of Llamojha involved his constant discussions of campesinos’ Inka heritage and the injustices of colonialism. In his 1970 address to the CCR, Llamojha argued:

Since the fall of the Inkaic State of Tawantin Suyu [the Quechua term for the Inka Empire], we have been subjected to the most opprobrious and cruel exploitation and servitude by the Spanish colonists . . . who imposed a feudal colonial government, converting all of Peru into feudal domains and staining the immense fields of the Fatherland’s ground with blood. From that instant, millions of us campesinos have been fighting for the recuperation of the lands that were seized from us through the force of arms.<sup>45</sup>

The Shining Path’s leadership had no patience for Llamojha’s anticolonial vision, insisting on a rigidly classist understanding of Peru’s problems as rooted firmly in the workings of international capitalism. The Shining Path also proved brutally disrespectful of Andean cultural practices and beliefs.<sup>46</sup> It is no surprise, then, that a Shining Path militant dismissed Llamojha’s revolutionary potential, disparaging his respect for indigenous rights and history with the comment that he “has Incanist ideas.”<sup>47</sup> Years before the Shining Path

launched its armed struggle, its collaboration with Llamojha had come to a decisive end.

### **A Last Chance for Unity**

With his own faction of the CCP languishing, Llamojha found one final opportunity to resume a prominent role in national peasant struggles. In August 1978, campesinos from the department of Cuzco convened the Special National Congress for the Unification of the Peruvian Peasantry, held in Quillabamba.<sup>48</sup> Congress organizers invited delegates from all three competing factions of the CCP, hoping to consolidate these rivals into one organization. I asked Llamojha about this meeting.

**That was when things were bad between Paredes and me. When I arrived in Quillabamba, Paredes's people did too. They went to this congress in Cuzco on Paredes's behalf and they started to accuse me.**

**"He doesn't represent anybody! He is a traitor!" they said.**

**But the delegations in attendance didn't pay attention. Instead, they asked that I speak. Paredes's people didn't want me to speak, but the masses ruled there. The masses ruled.<sup>49</sup>**

Delegates at the Quillabamba congress elected Llamojha president of a "National Commission of Unification of the Peruvian Peasantry."<sup>50</sup> Although Llamojha's faction of the CCP was far smaller and weaker than the other two, his election as president is not surprising. Certainly, he stood to gain the most from reunification and was probably much more enthusiastic than either Vanguardia Revolucionaria or Paredes's representatives about the prospect. Even more important, peasants from Cuzco made up eighty-eight of the ninety-eight delegates in attendance, and Cuzco campesinos had formed Llamojha's key base of support since the CCP's fracture in 1973.

Reunification did not happen. At Vanguardia Revolucionaria's subsequent Fifth National Congress of its faction of the CCP in Equeco-Chacán, Cuzco, delegates voted on several proposals for expanding their faction, including one proposal to attempt reunification with the other two factions. But they ultimately chose instead to unite with the remnants of the recently disbanded National Agrarian Confederation, rejecting the opportunity to resume working with Llamojha and Paredes.<sup>51</sup> Llamojha was present when that vote happened, attending the congress in the hope of reuniting the CCP.<sup>52</sup> After watching the chance for reunification crumble, he returned to Ayacucho

and his job at the teachers' cooperative. His leadership of the CCP had come to a definitive end. By 1979, Paredes's faction of the CCP had also weakened significantly.<sup>53</sup>

Vanguardia Revolucionaria's hold on the CCP was now solid, and there was no place for Llamojha in that body. His relationship with Paredes and his sympathizers was likewise beyond repair. By this point, Llamojha had also been shunned by Shining Path party members, who rejected his enduring commitment to peasant unions and his indigenist views. At the close of the 1970s, then, his political marginalization was complete. Tragically for him, the 1980s proved even more devastating than the difficult years of the 1970s.

