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## Now Peru Is Mine

Llamojha Mitma, Manuel, McCall, Grant

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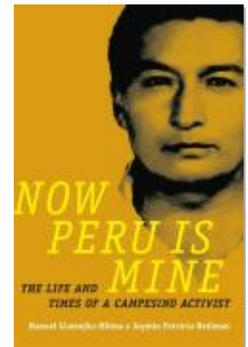
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## A Wound That Won't Heal

**POLITICAL VIOLENCE, DISPLACEMENT, AND LOSS, 1980–2000**

“The bullets were flying,” Llamojha told his CVR interviewers. “I was sure they were going to kill me.” He was describing his daring escape from police who sought to arrest him on charges of terrorism, charges that arose shortly after members of the Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path) launched an armed struggle in May 1980. Party militants began their so-called People’s War in rural Ayacucho, hoping to capture the countryside and then conquer Peru’s cities, ultimately aiming to liberate Peru’s impoverished masses by destroying the Peruvian state.<sup>1</sup> The conflict quickly spiraled into a brutal insurgency and state counterinsurgency. The overwhelming majority of the over 69,000 Peruvians killed in this twenty-year war were rural indigenous men, women, and children. Llamojha’s adversaries were quick to accuse him of involvement in several Shining Path attacks, alleging that he was a member of the militant party. These charges were the most serious accusations Llamojha had ever faced. Because of the extremity of the Shining Path’s violence and the intensity of the Peruvian state’s counterinsurgency, those accused of participation in Shining Path actions usually found themselves labeled terrorists by the Peruvian government and military. Such accusations carried the very real risk of decades in prison or, worse, extrajudicial murder.

These accusations had a devastating impact on Llamojha's life. He and Esther were forced to flee their home in Concepción, escaping Ayacucho for Lima, where they had to scrape together a life as impoverished internal political refugees. They were among 600,000 Peruvian men, women, and children who were displaced because of the violence. With Peru's economy in shambles and a long record of imprisonments, it was almost impossible for Llamojha to find work and support his family. He had to remain away from his beloved community and his home region of Ayacucho for two full decades because it was simply too dangerous to return.

Tragically, these accusations of terrorism also touched Llamojha's children. Walter, Hilda, and Herbert Llamojha were all arrested on spurious charges during the years of violence. Walter very nearly lost his life in one of the war's most notorious state-sponsored atrocities, a deadly government assault on the El Frontón jail. Llamojha's youngest son, Herbert, suffered an even sadder fate. Denounced by Llamojha's brother in a striking act of familial betrayal, Herbert was arrested on charges of participating in the Shining Path's first armed assault, and he vanished after Shining Path militants attacked the jail where he was imprisoned. No one knows what happened to him. Herbert's permanent disappearance marks the central sorrow in Llamojha's life.

The 1980s formed the most painful period in his history, and his rich supply of stories nearly dried up when his narrative reached the onset of the internal war in 1980.<sup>2</sup> He had far less to say about the 1980s and 1990s than the earlier decades of his life, but his experiences were echoed throughout much of Latin America's late twentieth-century history. In El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, revolutionary efforts for change were met with deadly counterinsurgencies that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children. The horrors of political violence forced many to flee their homes and communities as refugees, deeply traumatized by all they had seen and lost. In South America, military dictatorships took hold in Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, and individuals suspected of leftist activities—or even just sympathies—were routinely arrested and tortured. Tens of thousands were also permanently “disappeared,” killed extrajudicially by soldiers and police who claimed no knowledge of their whereabouts.<sup>3</sup> Political violence left Llamojha, his family, and countless other Latin Americans with wounds that won't heal.

## Losing Herbert

Two hours after midnight on July 15, 1980, civil guards stormed into Llamojha's home in Concepción and seized his youngest son, Herbert. The guards took Herbert to the provincial capital, Cangallo, and locked him in jail, accusing him of having helped lead an assault on the Ayrabamba hacienda five days earlier.<sup>4</sup> The attack on Ayrabamba was the Shining Path's first major armed action following the launch of its armed struggle in May 1980. To this day the Shining Path celebrates the Ayrabamba assault as a major, heroic action and praises the leadership role that Augusta La Torre, Shining Path's second-in-command and the wife of Abimael Guzmán, played in the assault.<sup>5</sup>

The Ayrabamba attack began early on the morning of July 10, 1980. Sixty-seven-year-old César Parodi Vassallo—son of the hacendada Elodia Vassallo de Parodi—awoke to a loud explosion. He first thought that the noise came from a radio, but the smell made him realize it was dynamite. Then came a banging on the door. “Open the door!” someone called. “Who are you, damn it?” César asked.<sup>6</sup> When he didn't get a response, he went out onto the terrace and called out to his nephew Carlos. Carlos didn't answer, and when César saw his bedroom door start to give way, broken by a pick, he decided to run. Sliding down a broken ladder, dressed only in his pajamas, the elderly man ran through his fields and across the Pampas River toward the police post in the neighboring community of Ocros.<sup>7</sup>

Down the hall from his uncle, Carlos Parodi Donayri had lain sleeping in his room, alongside his wife, Flora Gutiérrez Zea, and their four young children. At the same moment the intruders banged on César's door, eight armed individuals burst into Carlos's bedroom and grabbed him by his arms and legs. The assailants fired two gunshots at the ceiling and then tied up Carlos and his wife by their hands and feet. In the darkness, Carlos was unable to recognize any of his attackers.<sup>8</sup> The assailants verbally and physically assaulted him and his wife and seized a number of goods and a hefty amount of cash from the bedroom. After several hours, they led Carlos outside to the hacienda's *bagacera*, the area where processed sugarcane stalks and fibers are left to dry. Carlos saw an estimated 50 campesinos standing in the bagacera; others testified that as many as 150 were present.<sup>9</sup> Herbert Llamojha was among those peasants.

Born in 1956, Herbert had grown up in Lima, arriving in Peru's capital when he was just seven years old and remaining there until 1978. He had come back to Concepción because of necessity. His family had been informed

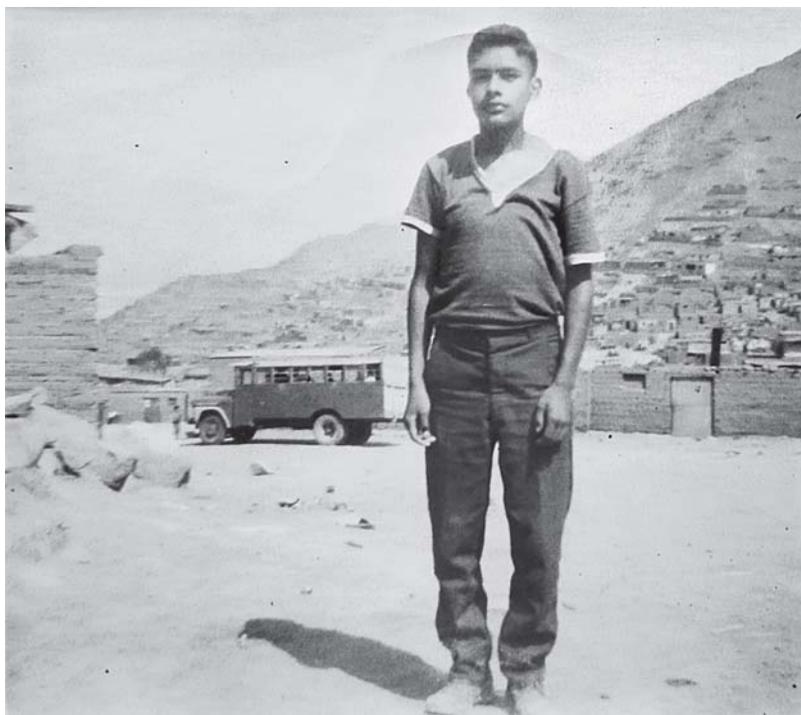


FIG. 6.1 Herbert Llamojha, Lima, 1969 or 1970. Photo courtesy of Manuel Llamojha Mitma.

that their lands in Concepción were subject to seizure if they remained unworked, and as Llamojha was employed in the teachers' cooperative in the city of Ayacucho, responsibility for maintaining the family's terrain fell to doña Esther, who had been living in Lima with her children since the mid-1960s. She decided to move back to Concepción, and Herbert chose to go with her. Coming back to Concepción was a sacrifice for him. The family's dire economic situation had delayed his graduation from secondary school, as he had needed to work while studying; moving back to Concepción ended his studies altogether.<sup>10</sup> But his sister María recalled that Herbert would not even consider staying in Lima. She explained that he was very attached to their mother, so he decided to come back with her to Concepción. As María explained it, Herbert's concern about his mother's welfare meant that "he couldn't leave my mother on her own."<sup>11</sup>

In Concepción, Herbert labored on his parents' plots of land, but he also assumed an active role in the community's affairs. Much like his father, he

became someone to whom local campesinos turned for help: peasant workers from the Ayrabamba hacienda asked him to write a formal complaint on their behalf, denouncing the lack of social security and payment problems on the estate. Herbert also began serving as secretary of both Concepción's community council and its health committee, and he wanted to play an even more active role in Concepción's affairs.<sup>12</sup> But he found himself stymied by the same men who had long harassed his father: the abusive district authorities Grimaldo Castillo, Joaquín Chávez, and Raúl Agüero. In a March 1981 letter, Herbert wrote that Grimaldo Castillo and his allies "believe themselves owners and gentleman of the community. For that, they have the posts of political and communal authority in their power, without giving young people the opportunity to be authorities."<sup>13</sup>

The day before the assault on the Ayrabamba hacienda, Herbert was in the nearby community of Chacari, harvesting corn and wheat. That afternoon, he and around forty other campesinos went to a meeting where a young man from Lima told everyone that they would soon be called to carry out a "popular harvest" on Ayrabamba's lands to recover all that the hacendados had failed to pay to their workers. That call for the popular harvest came early the next morning, and a few hours later Herbert arrived in Ayrabamba alongside a number of other campesinos.<sup>14</sup>

When Herbert got to Ayrabamba, he saw a man and a blond woman paying the hacienda's workers. The woman asked individual hacienda workers how much they were owed for unpaid work on the hacienda, and then she gave them money from a leather bag hanging around her neck—cash that she and fellow assailants had seized from Carlos Parodi's bedroom.<sup>15</sup> We now know that the woman distributing the money was Augusta La Torre, whose nom de guerre was Comrade Norah.<sup>16</sup>

Soon thereafter, several people brought Carlos Parodi outside, his hands bound with twine, and placed him in the center of a group of campesinos. The leading assailants started to berate Carlos for the abuses he had committed against campesinos, denouncing all of his wrongs. After each of these denunciations the crowd applauded. One of the leaders held a knife against him; another kicked him, forcing him to kneel. Many in the group were armed, some with guns, others with slingshots and sticks, and some called for his execution. The leaders then warned him that this was his last chance to leave the hacienda. If he didn't leave, they would come back and evict him by force. After these denunciations, the assailants gave him a few more kicks and then took him to a storage room and locked him in.<sup>17</sup>

Augusta La Torre then opened the hacienda's store to the assembled campesinos, who quickly began taking all they could. Some seized blouses and shoes, others took sandals, locks, medicines, and even towels, quickly emptying the store. But before any further action could ensue, a lookout announced that the police were on their way, so the assault's leaders called on everyone to retreat to Concepción. Once the participants had gathered in Concepción's central plaza, a Shining Path activist announced that the campesinos "had now opened the breach or the path of the poor" and that they should all be ready for the distribution of lands. The campesinos applauded. Another militant then warned "the servants of the government, Victor Llamojha [Herbert's uncle] and Grimaldo Castillo Gutiérrez" to avoid any further engagement with the Parodi hacendados. If they failed to do so, they would be executed by the pueblo. After one more speech, everyone went back to their home communities. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. By the time César Parodi finally made it back to Ayrabamba with civil guards, the attackers had long since fled the hacienda.<sup>18</sup>

By Herbert's telling, he was little more than a bystander at the events at Ayrabamba. After his arrest, he told court authorities that he had done nothing more criminal than take a handful of oranges from the hacienda's orchard. He hadn't taken anything else from the hacienda or its store "for fear that the police would discover it."<sup>19</sup> The initial police reports did not name Herbert as one of the leaders of the attack, but Carlos Parodi and his wife, Flora Gutiérrez, subsequently accused Herbert of playing a much more active role in the assault. Carlos claimed that he had heard Herbert's voice among those denouncing him outside on the bagacera, and Flora claimed that she saw him walking around with a weapon.<sup>20</sup> Five days after the attack on the hacienda, civil guards pulled Herbert from his home and placed him under arrest, charging that he was one of several "intellectual and material authors" of the assault.<sup>21</sup>

Herbert maintained that the accusations against him stemmed from personal enmities rather than his actual involvement in the events at Ayrabamba. He rejected Flora Gutiérrez's accusations as slander motivated by a desire for vengeance. As he phrased it, "she says this because I spoke the truth about the abuses the hacendado commits."<sup>22</sup> Herbert similarly charged that Carlos Parodi had accused him in retaliation for his public denunciation of Parodi's financial misdeeds. In addition, Herbert testified that his other accusers—including his father's long-standing enemy Grimaldo Castillo—"accused him

of being the ringleader because of personal quarrels” and because of hostility against him.<sup>23</sup>

There was an especially troubling element to Herbert’s arrest: he had been betrayed by members of his own family. In one of our interviews, Llamojha explained:

**They seized my son from here. My brother Víctor and my sister Donatilda brought the police here. They broke down the door and entered the house, and they captured him here in the house.**

Herbert himself made a detailed accusation against his uncle Víctor. In court documents, Herbert charged that Víctor had no knowledge whatsoever about who actually participated in the Ayrabamba assault and had denounced him solely because he had “ill will” against him.<sup>24</sup> Herbert was not the only one to accuse Víctor. The indigenous peasants Félix Gómez Salvatierra, Rufina Rosa Martínez, and Marina Loayza Palomino likewise blamed Víctor for their arrests. These individuals explained that they had previously denounced him for a variety of wrongdoings, including embezzlement of Concepción’s community funds, misappropriation of local church funds, and spreading misinformation about Concepción’s school.<sup>25</sup> Marina Loayza also charged that Víctor was closely allied with her other accuser, the district authority Grimaldo Castillo, and that the two men “constantly go to Ayrabamba and are very good friends with the Parodi family. This family even gave a series of gifts to these two people.”<sup>26</sup>

In our interviews, Llamojha offered similarly staunch criticisms of his brother. Llamojha explained:

**Víctor was always in favor of the hacendados, he was always with the hacendados and he was never with the pueblo. He spoke in defense of the hacendados, saying that they were the pueblo’s means of support. He never agreed that the fight should be against the hacendados. Here, in the pueblo itself, there were three persons in favor of the hacendados. He was with that group, and he didn’t agree with what I was fighting for: for the pueblo and for the liberation of Peru. He didn’t agree with this.**

**He was always on the hacendados’ side and he always contradicted me and the others who fought against the hacendados. He always protested, and he always accused me, saying that I was inciting the pueblo, the Indians, to rebel.**

**Because I always fought against the hacendados, he couldn't stand to see me. That's how it was with us.**<sup>27</sup>

While Herbert sat in jail, accused of orchestrating the attack on Ayrabamba, two more charges were levied against him. In November 1980, he and six others were accused of having downed telegraph poles and stolen telegraph wire in the nearby community of Puccka in the closing days of June. This accusation came from Grimaldo Castillo, who reported to civil guards that Herbert and the other six men all “belong to the faction of Shining Path, the same ones who continuously carry out meetings in the main plaza of the district of Concepción, carrying a red flag and threatening the authorities for the simple fact that the authorities don't belong to this political organization.”<sup>28</sup> Herbert staunchly denied the charges against him. He asserted that “he does not belong to any political party, much less is he an agitator with the Shining Path political faction.” He also denied carrying out political meetings in Concepción, though he noted that he did “attend the assemblies of the peasant community of Concepción in which truths about the pueblo's problems are spoken.”<sup>29</sup> The judge ultimately ruled in Herbert's favor, noting that while it was clear the telegraph poles and wire had been vandalized, there was insufficient evidence to establish responsibility for the act.<sup>30</sup>

The second additional charge against Herbert was levied for a crime that was actually committed while he sat in jail. Someone detonated sticks of dynamite in the doorway of Grimaldo Castillo's home in the early morning hours of October 14, 1980. The door was nearly destroyed, but no one was hurt. A civil guard reported that “the presumed authors of the terrorist attack on the home of the Governor of the district of Concepción Grimaldo Castillo Gutiérrez were the ringleading agitators of the Shining Path faction.” The guard then listed eight people, including Herbert.<sup>31</sup> A subsequent civil guard report repeated these charges, asserting that all of the accused “continuously commit a series of offenses” against the public peace, holding meetings in the district's main plaza under a red flag.<sup>32</sup> Grimaldo Castillo blamed Herbert and four others, accusing them of being ringleaders who “carry out acts that go against the public peace.” Grimaldo Castillo added that the accused men were “trying to generate psychosis in the residents so that . . . they would become convinced and would join the Shining Path faction.”<sup>33</sup>

Herbert denied his involvement in the bombing and insisted that he did not belong to the Shining Path. His main defense was timing: he was in jail when Grimaldo Castillo's home was bombed. As Herbert phrased it, his in-

volvement was “an impossible crime, because I simply could not have been in two different places at the same time.”<sup>34</sup> Again, the court agreed, ruling that it could not determine the guilt of the accused. But Herbert did not have the same fortune in the trial for the July 1980 attack on the Ayrabamba hacienda. He was convicted of the charges against him—assault and armed robbery—and sentenced to seven years in prison.<sup>35</sup>

Because of his “extremely bad economic situation,” Herbert could not afford a lawyer and had to represent himself.<sup>36</sup> But even without the aid of an attorney, he made several impassioned calls for his release from jail, writing numerous letters in his own defense.<sup>37</sup> Like the documents Llamojha had penned in earlier decades, Herbert’s letters often stressed the Parodis’ abuses, invoking the image of the gamonal, the extremely abusive local strongman. In a September 1980 letter, Herbert charged that his imprisonment was owing only to the “depraved maneuvers” of Ayrabamba’s hacendados, who were “scheming against the community of Concepción, as they are accustomed to doing when those whom they exploit resist their gamonalist impositions.”<sup>38</sup> Another letter described Ayrabamba as a “stronghold of the blackest feudal gamonalist exploitation.” The same letter asserted that the Parodis “submerge our peasant community in gamonalist terror and perpetuate the exploitation to which they have tied us for more than a half century of pain and tears.”<sup>39</sup> Herbert also made many appeals for his conditional release, stressing his good behavior in the Cangallo jail and in the community of Concepción. None of these strategies worked, and he remained in jail.<sup>40</sup>

After several months in the Cangallo jail, Herbert and his coaccused were transferred to the prison in the department capital, Ayacucho. From that prison, he and eleven others wrote of the abuses and mistreatment they were suffering there. Their troubling letter explained:

We twelve people find ourselves detained in the Ayacucho jail for nearly one year, without reaching the justice that belongs to us by right because of the bias of the Cangallo trial judge, Dr. Juan Flores Rojas, imputing our participation in the incident that took place on the tenth of July of last year, when in reality we had nothing to do with the action. . . . Some of us were taken by guards in our homes, even without arrest orders, only because of false, anonymous claims. Others of us were taken by *sinchis* [shock troops] on the path from our fields where we were working. . . . We have been inhumanely tortured by civil guards, *sinchis*, justices of the peace, lackeys of the hacienda, using ground chilis, hot water thrown on the most vul-

nerable parts of our body, using cactus spines and other things to batter us while naked; using tanks of water . . . to choke us until we faint.<sup>41</sup>

The letter closed by asking for a swift trial. I have found one additional letter from Herbert. In September 1981 he wrote to the Ayacucho courts requesting copies of old documents pertaining to Concepción's 1965 legal conflict with Ayrabamba. He was probably planning to use those documents to support his legal defense, invoking history much as his father always did.<sup>42</sup> But then he vanishes from the archival record. Just a few months later, Herbert himself disappeared.

### **Into Hiding**

Llamojha could do very little to help his imprisoned son—he could visit, he could offer his advice, and he could bring him food, but he could not get Herbert out of jail. And it was not long before Llamojha was unable even to visit Herbert, as the mounting number of accusations against Llamojha himself forced him to go into hiding. Although Llamojha was in the city of Ayacucho at the time of the assault on Ayrabamba and had absolutely no involvement in the events there, various people nonetheless accused him of a role in the attack. Civil guards labeled Llamojha the leader of the assault, asking one Concepción resident to explain his involvement “in the recent terrorist attacks in company with other elements under the direction of known agitator Manuel Llamocca Mitma.”<sup>43</sup> The guards also described an envelope supposedly sent by “the so-titled lieutenant colonel Manuel Llamocca Mitma, commander general of the armed forces of the liberation of Peru.”<sup>44</sup> Llamojha recalled the accusations against him.

**They blamed me. I don't know how this group [Shining Path militants] entered the hacienda. I didn't know.**

These groundless accusations of involvement in the Ayrabamba assault were not the only spurious claims Llamojha faced. He was also accused of leading armed attacks on two military barracks. He told his CVR interviewers about these charges, explaining that his accusers were his longtime local enemies, the three abusive district authorities Grimaldo Castillo, Joaquín Chávez, and Raúl Agüero:

**They were servants of the hacendados, until the end. They couldn't stand the sight of me. So when the armed struggle began, they presented a docu-**

ment to the prefecture. This person Castillo got eleven people to sign, and they sent it to the prefect saying that I had taken the barracks in Huanta, and in San Miguel. I hadn't even gone there! So, there came a really strong order for my capture.

When I asked Llamojha about this order for his arrest, he noted the role played by his brother Víctor and explained:

**They accused me of belonging to the Communist Party that was organizing the armed struggle. Here, in Concepción, those two or three people who were against me, they tricked people into signing a document against me. My own brother got them to do all of this. The denunciation said that I was a terrorist with the community under my sway. So, six police officers came to the teaching cooperative.**

They entered the cooperative. I was working upstairs on the second floor, in the secretary's office; that's where I worked. I don't know what I was thinking, but I had closed the door. The police came up to the secretary's office, but as it was closed, they didn't knock on the door. If they had knocked on the door, I would have come out and they would have arrested me. The six police officers remained seated down below, on the first floor, because my compañeros had said to them, "He isn't here. He has left the commission." They were down there, waiting.

My compañeros came upstairs to advise me. "How are you going to get down? How are you going to leave? Where can you escape from?" they said.

So I said, "I will leave through the door, because they don't know me."

I came down from above, and the six police officers were sitting there. Because they didn't know me, I greeted them—I shook their hands, and I left. I went to my house. You have to be serene; if you act nervous, they'll get suspicious. I wasn't nervous, I greeted them, I shook the police officers' hands, and I left. After that, I didn't return to my workplace, because the police came every day to wait for me.

Llamojha hid in the hills surrounding the city of Ayacucho for an entire month, sleeping amid cactuses. He told his CVR interviewers:

**Happily, a teacher protected me. He was from the north, from Huachao, his last name was Regalado. As he lived down the hill, I went to his house and he gave me food. I was sleeping in the hills, and the bullets were flying, day and night. The soldiers walked around, shooting. The bullets passed right over me, whistling. The bullets made holes in the cactus pears, in the**

***paqpas* [maguey leaves], everything. I was there, the bullets were flying, I was sure they were going to kill me.**

Knowing that his life was in jeopardy, Llamojha made the difficult decision to flee to Lima. Because of the urgent orders for his arrest, he knew that if he presented his national identity documents at the checkpoints, guards would arrest him immediately. He thus forged a birth certificate to attempt to escape. In our interview he explained:

**I was hidden for a month. After that, my wife and I escaped to Lima.**

**It was in '81, in December. There was a checkpoint leaving Ayacucho. I had made up a birth certificate to be able to get through, but they wouldn't let you pass with just a birth certificate. You had to have your national identity document. But I couldn't present that, because of my name. So I didn't have any documents to present.**

**"If you don't have documents, you can't pass," they said.**

**They took me inside the checkpoint. Then, because the police were busy stopping all the cars, I immediately left the checkpoint and got back on the bus. We rode to Pisco and then to Chincha. From Chincha, we had to take a car because people said they wouldn't stop cars at the checkpoints; they'd just let them through.**

**Once we got to Lima, I looked for my son Walter at his workplace, because we didn't have the money to get all the way to his house. But I couldn't find him. We took a taxi to his house, but he wasn't there either, so a neighbor paid the taxi driver.**

That daring escape was not the end of Llamojha's travails, for he was still a wanted man. He told his CVR interviewers:

**When I arrived, my enemies had already communicated with Lima. So, they looked for me, going to the homes of all of my *paisanos* [fellow Concepción community members living in Lima].**

**My *paisanos* said, "No, he's not here. He hasn't been here in a really long time. He must be dead by now."**

**The masses helped me. They never left me alone. That's how the masses are. That's why I like being with the masses, they protect me. They help me in everything.**

Llamojha's youngest daughter, María, followed her parents to Lima shortly thereafter. Knowing that soldiers would likely detain her because of the ar-

rest orders for her father, the teenager employed her father's own strategies: she forged identity documents using a fake name and crafted a letter that supposedly granted her official permission to travel without parental accompaniment.<sup>45</sup>

Llamojha was in hiding in Lima when his son Herbert disappeared. On March 2, 1982, Shining Path militants attacked the Ayacucho prison where Herbert and his co-accused were jailed in an attempt to liberate imprisoned members of their party. Witnesses later reported hearing explosions of dynamite and seeing large columns of smoke in the air. The well-coordinated assault managed to free 304 prisoners, of whom approximately 70 had been accused of being members of the Shining Path.<sup>46</sup> We know that Herbert Llamojha escaped that night, but that is all we know. Police may have killed him right outside the jail, or they may have arrested him and killed him later. Or perhaps he fled the scene and then died elsewhere. His fate is unknown.

The first time Llamojha spoke to me about Herbert's disappearance came toward the end of our first interview together, when I asked him how many children he had.

**I have five, two men, three women. But the boy died. As it happens, they detained him over Ayrabamba. After that, there was the seizure of the Ayacucho jail. All the prisoners left, they escaped. My son, too, escaped from there. The Ayrabamba hacienda did this to my son. From there, my son, I don't remember the date, my wife remembers, a group went to liberate all the prisoners. In this, many prisoners escaped and some who didn't want to leave, stayed. My son escaped, and after that, we don't know anything.**

Llamojha broke down crying when he told me this, and I rushed to comfort him. All that mattered at that point in the interview was to give comfort to an elderly man in terrible emotional pain, and out of compassion, neither Alicia nor I broached the subject of Herbert's disappearance with Llamojha again. Llamojha himself mentioned Herbert in another interview, after Alicia commented that it must have been difficult for Llamojha to be apart from his children during all his years of activism.

**Yes, it was hard to leave them. As I was being pursued, it made me sad. My kids got used to being without me, to being on their own. That's why, when my sons grew up, they helped me in the struggle, in representing the pueblo. That's why they killed the one son. He was the bravest. They took my son from here [Concepción] and killed him.**

Llamojha also wrote about the Ayrabamba assault in one of his personal notebooks but carefully avoided any mention of Herbert's name. The passage reads as follows:

#### **THE SEIZURE OF AYRABAMBA**

The seizure of Ayrabamba occurred on the tenth (10) of July 1980. Days later, thirty-eight campesinos were detained by the instruments of exploitation, the Civil Guard, under the command of César Parodi, a murderous gamonal [gamonal de horca y cuchillo]. Eleven of the detained were kept in the Cangallo jail. A while later, they were transferred to Ayacucho, where an oral hearing took place in the months of September and October 1981 in the Ayacucho Court of Justice. When the oral hearing concluded, nine campesinos were sentenced, some to three years and others to seven years in jail.

The assault on Ayacucho's dungeon jail took place in the month of March 1982, and in the massive escape that resulted, five of the nine prisoners sentenced, born in Concepción, fled. There only remained four who did not want to leave. They were:

1. Alfredo Hinojosa Palomino
2. Marina Loayza Palomino
3. Rosa Martínez Sulca
4. Teodocia Gómez Ochoa

Months later, they were transferred to Lima.<sup>47</sup>

Llamojha kept Herbert's name out of this essay, his son's constant absence surely too painful to even write about. Llamojha is not the only one who suffers; Herbert's disappearance remains a searing hurt for the Llamojha family. Llamojha's eldest daughter, Hilda, began crying when asked about Herbert. Through heavy tears she explained, "I lost my brother . . . when I think of him, I ask 'where could he be?' If he had just died, we could have recovered his body."<sup>48</sup> Walter Llamojha commented that Herbert's disappearance "was very painful, for my mom, my dad, for us. We still miss him, to this day. What happened? What could have happened to him? It's very worrisome and we always miss him."<sup>49</sup> María Llamojha explained, "I think it's something that only people who have experienced can understand. It's not . . . I mean you don't have a person who has died and whom you can bury, and that's very



FIG. 6.2  
Herbert  
Llamojha,  
location  
unknown,  
late 1970s.  
Photo courtesy  
of Manuel  
Llamojha Mitma.

important. It's not the same to have someone disappeared. That's so terrible, and it was terrible for my mother, too, to not be able to find my brother's body. Even today, it's like a hole, like a wound that won't heal." She added, "You have no place to mourn, if he's dead. And you always wonder. When I'm traveling, I always look at other people, wondering if maybe it's him, thinking that maybe he had a nervous breakdown and doesn't recognize us."<sup>50</sup>

Herbert's disappearance was soon followed by other nightmares for Llamojha and his family. The 1982 killing of district authority Grimaldo Castillo brought a renewed surge of state suspicion against Llamojha. Because of Castillo's decades' worth of abuses, Shining Path militants placed him on one of their notorious "black lists"—documents that recorded the names of particularly abusive individuals whom Shining Path activists would then target for assassination. Shining Path militants publicly executed Grimaldo Castillo in Concepción's central plaza in late March 1982. They cut his tongue from his mouth, cut off his testicles, and hung him from a post, where he bled to death.

As a warning to others, they placed a sign on his body that read: “This is how snitches and enemies of the pueblo die. Long live the armed struggle!”<sup>51</sup> Tragically, this kind of absolutist violence became the Shining Path’s hallmark over the long course of the war. Worse still, as the first wave of black list executions came to an end and the state’s counterinsurgency gained strength, Shining Path militants turned their extreme violence against humble indigenous peasants whom they deemed insufficiently cooperative.

Llamojha made reference to this kind of violence when I asked his opinion about the Shining Path.

**I thought it was bad. He [Guzmán] said, “we have to kill the pueblos’ authorities.” I didn’t agree with that. How could we kill authorities who are campesinos? It was a really bad idea to kill low-level authorities. They killed the governor who was here, and I didn’t agree with that. How could they kill the pueblo’s authorities? The authorities were from the pueblo itself, from the indigenous masses. I didn’t agree with that.**

**The Shining Path always had different kinds of ideas, ideas that went against the peasantry. They thought it was easy to lead, and when the campesinos didn’t easily submit themselves to Shining Path’s leadership, they [Shining Path militants] spoke against them and contemplated killing them. No way. That’s not how you lead. I didn’t agree with that.**

In hiding in Lima at the time of Grimaldo Castillo’s assassination, Llamojha had nothing to do with this longtime authority’s death. Nonetheless, because Llamojha had denounced Castillo’s abuses for so many years, Castillo’s children blamed him for their father’s murder.

**In the time that the armed struggle started, a group came here. They pulled Castillo out of the office—he worked in the post office—they pulled him out and they shot him in the plaza.<sup>52</sup> So, his kids rebelled against me, saying that I had sent them [Shining Path militants] to kill him!**

With so many accusations against him, life in Lima proved extremely difficult. At the most basic level, Llamojha had serious trouble finding employment, a major problem given his family’s perilous economic situation. At times the family worried simply that they would not have enough to eat. I asked him what kind of work he did in the 1980s.

**Sometimes in construction, when I could find it. I couldn’t find work, because all the hacendados had put up all sorts of red tape against me.**

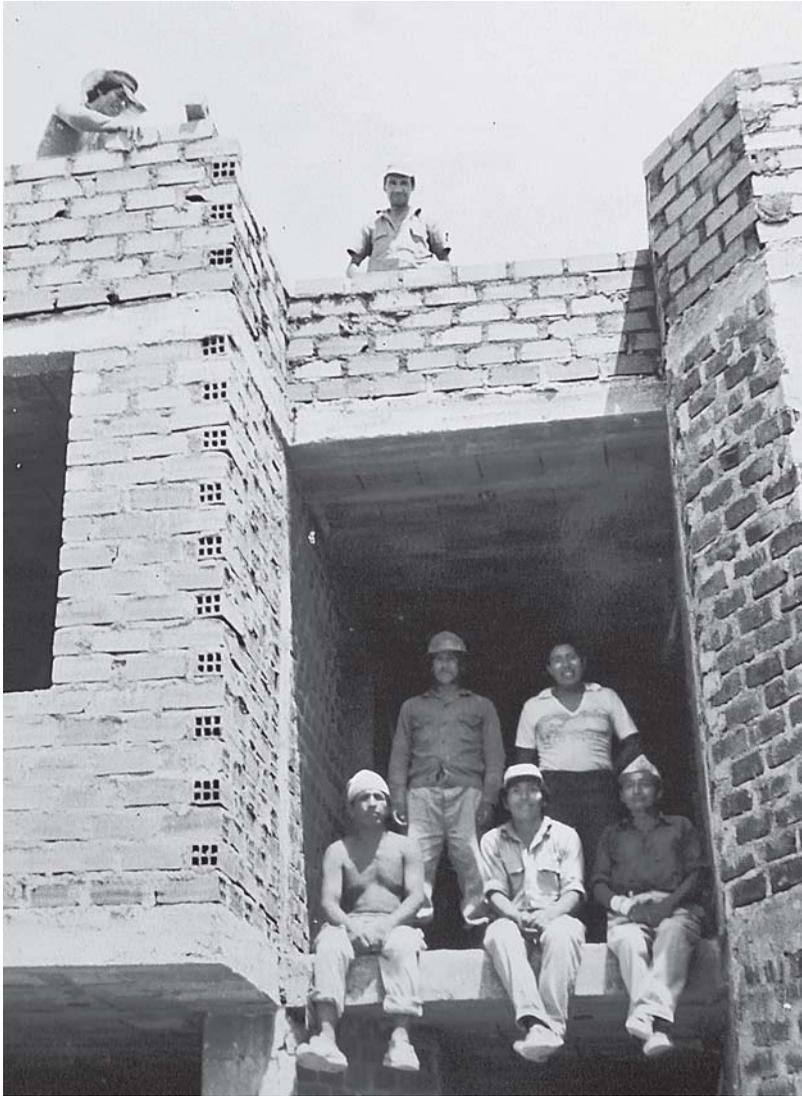


FIG. 6.3 Llamojha (lower right), construction work, Lima, 1984. Photo courtesy of Manuel Llamojha Mitma.

**I couldn't get work without my papers. I had to get statements of good conduct, and the police wouldn't give them to me. Finally, I went to the prefecture in Lima and solicited this.**

**"You have a record! How are you going to work? Businesses want someone clean, and you are fighting with the hacendados," the prefect said to me. Then he gave me my document.**

**"Here it is, then. Your record. It's so long, and for all of Peru. You have committed offenses against all the hacendados you've been around. How can we give you a letter of good conduct, when you haven't had good conduct?"**

**That's how it was. My son [Walter] housed us. We were there until 2000.**

Llamojha's difficulties finding work were compounded by the severe economic crisis of the mid-1980s. The ravages of internal war and the populist economic policies of Aprista president Alan García—in power from 1985 to 1990—plunged Peru into financial crisis.<sup>53</sup> The economic catastrophe was particularly acute in Lima, as many of the country's 600,000 internal refugees had fled there trying to escape the violence and devastation wrought by the Shining Path militants and counterinsurgent military forces in the Andean countryside. These internal refugees struggled to find adequate food, lodging, and employment, often arriving in Lima with minimal, if any, resources.<sup>54</sup> Many of Lima's poorest women responded to the crisis by participating in the Comedor Popular (Common Kitchen) movement, pooling resources to jointly acquire, prepare, and serve food to their impoverished families. Doña Esther was one such woman; she joined the Comedor Popular Santa Rosa de Lima, in Lima's San Juan de Lurigancho neighborhood.

**She started to work in the Comedor Popular, and we got our rations there. She was a leader and directed the Comedor. The other women considered her their leader and they named her to be the boss. Life got better for us with the Comedor. I started to work there, too, as a security guard, and so we had food. Our kids got to eat that food.**

Adding to his difficulties, Llamojha became even more politically marginalized during the 1980s. A fellow activist from Ayacucho recalled seeing Llamojha in Lima during these years and commented: "It seemed really strange to me that a leader of his importance, because of all he had contributed to the peasant movement, wasn't given his due. It's really too bad."<sup>55</sup> Llamojha was also constantly harassed by police. His daughter María recalled

that police always came to their house looking for Llamojha. And when she said he wasn't home, they would force open the door and barge in. They would look through all of Llamojha's papers, all of his things, searching the house "from corner to corner." She explained: "That's why my dad didn't stay with us much. He was always in different places, fleeing from capture."<sup>56</sup>

The police soon looked beyond Llamojha, targeting his two eldest children for arrest. Police interrogated Walter about one of his acquaintances, and when they grew dissatisfied with his answers, they simply arrested Walter and placed him in the notorious El Frontón prison, holding him on groundless charges. This was the same island prison where Llamojha had been held in the early 1940s, accused of being an Aprista revolutionary. Walter recalled how his mother traveled to see him. "Don't cry. I'm going to get out," he said to her, knowing that he had been wrongfully imprisoned. Doña Esther worked with lawyers to get her son out of jail. Just fifteen days after Walter was finally released, the El Frontón jail became the scene of one of the civil war's worst atrocities. In June 1986, soldiers responded to a protest by imprisoned Shining Path militants in the jail's "blue pavilion" by killing an estimated 119 prisoners, about 80 percent of the prisoners in that section.<sup>57</sup>

Llamojha later described this massacre, an atrocity his son Walter only barely escaped. In the pages of his personal notebook, Llamojha wrote:

#### **GENOCIDE IN THE PRISONS**

June 1986

In 1986, President Alan García Pérez ordered the killing of 286 prisoners of the dungeon prisons of El Frontón and Lurigáncho.

In May of 2001, the *ingeniero* [general title of respect for educated persons, literally *engineer*] Ricardo Letts Colmenares formulated a criminal denunciation against Alan García, ex-president of Peru, before the Public Prosecutor's Office, but this enemy of the Peruvian people archived it, with the argument that there was no such massacre of prisoners. That would mean that the prisoners died unnoticed; but the pueblo hasn't forgotten this nor will it ever forget. There will quickly arrive a new prohibited dawn for the poor, where the pueblo will present itself before its enemy assassins, presenting them the corresponding bills so that they will pay dearly, that is to say with high interest.

The millionaires and their assassin governments will pay very (very) dearly, for the thousands and millions of campesinos, workers, and stu-

dents assassinated throughout the country. The pueblo is the Supreme Authority. The millionaires know this very well.

I state and authorize this, signing and marking it in honor of the truth.<sup>58</sup>

Just as police arrested Manuel's son Walter, they seized his daughter Hilda. Police stormed into her home in 1984 and arrested her, despite the fact that she was pregnant. When they questioned her about her father's whereabouts, she answered that he was dead. The police then replied, "You're a terrorist!" and took her to jail.<sup>59</sup> Walter and Hilda's only "crime" was their name: the arrests surely reflected the Peruvian government's desire to intimidate Llamojha by persecuting his children.

Although the worst years of political violence wound down in 1992, after Guzmán was captured in Lima, life remained precarious for Llamojha and his family. It was still too dangerous, too risky, to return to Ayacucho. The 1990s were indeed difficult years for many Peruvians, as the regime of President Alberto Fujimori imposed harsh austerity measures and continued committing major human rights violations. That regime was also exceptionally corrupt, as Fujimori and his spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, engaged in systematic bribery. Worse still, Fujimori strangled Peruvian democracy: he shut down congress in 1992, staging a self-coup that allowed him to operate without the restraints of democratic procedure, and made numerous efforts to silence media outlets that opposed him.<sup>60</sup>

Llamojha offered angry opinions about Fujimori in the pages of his personal notebooks. In a May 2002 passage he wrote:

In the government of the dictatorial regime presided over by the disastrous foreigner Alberto Fujimori, 211 businesses were sold; but it is not known where the money from this sale is to be found.

This fact will be judged by the pueblo, for the pueblo is the Supreme Authority that will never forgive.<sup>61</sup>

In a subsequent passage Llamojha wrote: "Fujimori passed more than 120 laws that he felt like dictating. This is how it is, damn it!"<sup>62</sup> Llamojha also denounced the damage Fujimori and his government were doing in the countryside, writing,

The current regime of "Cambio 90," acting under dictatorial military authority, has promulgated its sinister laws with the aim of destroying the Campesino Communities' ancestral social structure and system of collective property, and of selling their lands to the highest bidders to convert

them into feudal estates. The campesino community members will be subjected to humiliation, treated like servants and slaves.<sup>63</sup>

It was not until the year 2000, when Fujimori's regime collapsed in scandal and Peru transitioned back to democracy, that Llamojha and doña Esther felt safe enough to move back to Concepción. Many of Peru's thousands of internal refugees similarly began returning home to their rural communities in this period.<sup>64</sup> Even then, memories of the internal war's violence and the power of old accusations continued to haunt Llamojha.

**In 2000, I came back to this pueblo. At the very moment that I got out of the car, two people saw me and ran to the police post. "The terrorist has arrived!" they said.**

**The police post immediately communicated with Ayacucho, asking if there was an arrest warrant or not. There wasn't. "There's nothing," they answered, and for that reason they didn't detain me. But to this day, those two people can't look at me.**

**After that, the mayor denounced me to Lima, presenting a document that said I had come to Concepción with twenty men and had attacked and seized the police post.**

Nothing came of these frivolous charges, but they carried a sting that still hurts Llamojha today.<sup>65</sup> He was being blamed for the very political violence that had upended his life. The terrors of the internal war had forced Llamojha to flee from the community he so loved and to remain away for nearly twenty years, struggling to survive as a displaced person. The revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence had brought an abrupt end to his political activities and left him falsely branded a terrorist. Worse still, he had seen his children subjected to political persecution, including the permanent disappearance of his youngest son. These tragedies made the 1980s the most devastating period of Llamojha's complex life and left him and his family with—as his daughter María put it—a wound that wouldn't heal.



FIG. A.1 Llamojha, Concepción, 2013. Author photo.