



**UGLY
STORIES**
of the Peruvian
Agrarian Reform

ENRIQUE MAYER

UGLY STORIES

*of the Peruvian
Agrarian Reform*

A book in the series

LATIN AMERICA OTHERWISE:
LANGUAGES, EMPIRES, NATIONS

A series edited by

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UGLY STORIES *of the Peruvian Agrarian Reform*

ENRIQUE MAYER

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To the memory of

Héctor Martínez Arellano

CONTENTS

ix	About the Series
xi	Acknowledgments
xv	INTRODUCTION
1	<i>one</i> AGRARIAN REFORMS
41	<i>two</i> HEROES AND ANTIHEROES
75	<i>three</i> LANDOWNERS
111	<i>four</i> MANAGERS AND UNION LEADERS
151	<i>five</i> MACHU ASNU COOPERATIVA
183	<i>six</i> VETERINARIANS AND <i>COMUNEROS</i>
229	CONCLUSION
243	Abbreviations
245	Notes
275	Glossary
279	References
291	Index

ABOUT THE SERIES

Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define “Latin America” while at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped Latin American worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural, and economic intersections that demands a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and correspondingly demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

In 1969, Peru, under the rule of a military dictatorship, initiated one of the most extensive projects of agrarian reform witnessed in Latin America. Revolutionary in its goals, Peru’s land reform eliminated colonial legacy relations of personal servitude and coerced labor; it also initiated a process of land distribution aimed at reversing centuries-old patterns of concentrated land ownership. This project was so far-reaching that its impact is comparable to the abolition of slavery in North America. Yet, over the following three decades, much of this program, including the creation of agrarian cooperatives and cultural initiatives promoting native tradition, was all but abandoned. Moreover, during these decades, Peru imploded, trapped in the throes of a civil war spawned by Shining Path and enflamed

by a government with an entrenched hatred of the highlands and a disregard for human rights and reshaped by a neoliberal economic logic that excoriated government intervention in production and consumption in favor of a market system that reinstalled Peru's enormous social inequalities.

Surprisingly, Peru's agrarian reform and its consequences have been little studied. Even more surprisingly, the understandings and perceptions of those who were party to this venture have been virtually ignored—that is, until now. Enrique Mayer has put together a stunning, innovative volume of memory-stories of peasants, politicians, teachers, merchants, government officials, landowners, day laborers, shopkeepers, and anthropologists (including himself) whose intertwined lives and remembrances construct this tableau of Andean political upheaval. Through an orchestration of voices, Mayer not only brings us close to lived experiences, he makes us take part in these sometimes shared, sometimes conflicting, and always complex perceptions. Mayer, the narrator-anthropologist-analyst-commentator, juxtaposes memories in dramatic readings of events and passions, sensibilities and apprehensions. The reader joins the stories, entering into dialogue with Mayer and his interlocutors. This is Latin America and Latin Americans in a momentous period of history—seen, envisioned, explained, and presented, Otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In July 1969, at the age of twenty-five, I was aboard a Chilean cargo ship returning to Peru after a decade of study at both the University of London and Cornell. The ship stopped in the northern port of Talara. I went ashore, took a local bus to the end of its run on a beach, and there observed some fishermen land their catch in the heavy surf of the Pacific Ocean. I bought some and a woman offered to cook it for me. Watching marine birds circle in the sky and eating the most delicious fried fish of my life, I was told that a few weeks previously the army had expropriated the privately held sugar estates, the richest and most productive agricultural enterprises in the country. Thirty-two years later, in 2001, I was walking with my wife, Lidia Santos, on another beach. This time I was in East Haven, Connecticut. I told her that I wanted to write a book about the momentous agrarian reform, which I had lived through from the moment that I landed in Peru and which I had followed throughout my professional life, in such a way that Peruvian readers would recognize themselves or others through the stories that I would tell. Surprised, Lidia turned to me, saying, "Then why are you writing this book in English?"

I persevered because I told myself an English text would acquire a more universal tone dealing with important human predicaments such as ideological disputes about private property, the rights and wrongs of expropriation, and the merits and difficulties of collective production and of revolutionary reforms gone astray. These are part of the history of the twentieth century throughout the world. Such a book in English could portray for a new international generation what it was like to live through a revolution. Here I want to deeply acknowledge the writerly talent and loving companionship of Lidia Santos.

I started this project in 1988 during a fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., where I wrote

four chapters that I eventually discarded as my focus shifted away from a policy-oriented case study full of statistics and diagrams to a more people-oriented kind of oral history. At the Wilson Center, I benefited from advice by Professors William P. Glade and Richard M. Morse, co-directors of the Latin American Program at that time. In retrospect, I came to realize that 1988 was too early to write about the unraveling of the agrarian reform in Peru because it was still an ongoing process. I waited until the 1990s to rethink the project. Two small grants from the Arnold Beckman Award of the Research Board of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1992 and 1993 allowed me to travel to Peru to begin again.

Very special thanks go to Anne Marie Hocquenghem, who took me to Piura and introduced me to several expropriated landlords and to *ingeniero* Mario Ginocchio. The interviews in Piura in 1994 were a viability test of people's willingness to talk openly about their memories of the agrarian reform. With funding from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in 1996, a Yale sabbatical, and a small grant from the Social Science Research Council, I began the new project with the help of many colleagues in Peru. At the Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales (CEPES), I gratefully acknowledge Fernando Eguren, Juan Rheinek, Mariano Valderrama, Jaime Urrutia, Bertha Consiglieri, Carlos Monge, Flavio Figallo, José Luis Rénique, Custodio Arias, the secretaries who did the rapid transcription (Beatriz Huaytán, Teresa Prado, and Lourdes Cánepa), and especially Danny Pinedo, who diligently worked with me during that whole year. The CEPES and its staff provided an institutional base, infrastructure, contacts, knowledge, companionship, and the opportunity to enjoy their gourmet rooftop lunches. At the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP), I thank Julio Cotler for giving me permission to write a postmodern book, Carlos Iván Degregori for intellectual stimulation, Cecilia Blondet, Efraín Gonzales de Olarte, Carolina Trivelli, and Víctor Caballero Martín for friendship and encouragement. I am especially grateful to onetime associates of the IEP, Hortensia Muñoz and Marisol de la Cadena, who steadfastly encouraged me to keep writing.

Throughout 1996, when not traveling around the country for interviews, I sat in an apartment in San Isidro going over transcriptions of my recordings and chuckling to myself at the humorous stories I was privileged to have been told by so many people throughout the country. I thank them with all my heart. Many people helped me in the field, in Huancayo (Nivardo and Victor Santillán), Ayacucho (Jefrey Gamarra and Enrique

González Carré), Cusco (Jorge Villafuerte and Genaro Paniagua), Puno (Ricardo Vega and Raúl Rodríguez), Trujillo (Elías Minaya), and Lima (María Benavides, Ricardo Letts, Alejandro Camino, Luis Soberón, José Portugal at the Office of Comunidades Campesinas, and many more people at other institutions). I thank my family, too: my mother, Elizabeth de Mayer; my sisters, Maria Scurrah and Renate Millones; my nephew, Mateo Millones; and my brothers-in-law, Martin Scurrah and Luis Millones. At CEPES, the IEP, the Centro de Estudios Rurales Bartolomé de las Casas in Cusco, and all of the libraries of the provincial universities where we researched, I thank the librarians at their respective documentation centers. Two memorable seminars, one at the CEPES and the other at the IEP where I read aloud some of the stories I had collected, were occasions where I absorbed the positive reactions of the audience whom I had asked for help in how one could structure a book with this material.

Summers at my home on the beach at East Haven were dedicated to converting the interview material into chapters at an excruciatingly slow pace of more or less one chapter per summer. The scholarship of the anthropologist Rodrigo Montoya, the economist José María Caballero, and the sociologist Fernando Eguren is crucial for an understanding of the reform, and my readings of their works and conversations with them over the years are reflected in the tenor of this book. At Yale, I give special thanks to Richard Burger, Jim Scott, Kay Mansfield, and the colleagues at Agrarian Studies. Natalia Sobrevilla and Vladimir Gil listened patiently and gave me encouragement. Benjamin Orlove read an early version of the manuscript and gave me a thumbs up message. César Rodríguez, the curator of the Latin American Collection, was also especially helpful. Paul Gootenberg at SUNY Stonybrook invited me to give a lecture for its Center for Latin American Studies in 1997, and it was there that I tried out the first chapter of my draft on an academic audience. I thank him and other audiences that responded to presentations of further chapters at Hampshire College, Colby College, Fairfield University, Connecticut College, the Seminario Permanente de Investigacion Agraria (SEPIA) in Trujillo, the Yale Agrarian Studies program, the Center for Latin American Studies at Pittsburgh, and the Yale Department of Anthropology. Elisabeth Enenbach diligently worked with me in editing the manuscript, and I thank her for her thoroughness and for paying attention to who said what when, and to whom.

I did not want to use a camera during my field trips because photogra-

phy is a crutch to remembering given that it fixes events in space and time through the viewfinder of the photographer holding the camera. Instead I decided to hunt for images produced by others during the times of the agrarian reform. This turned out to be quite an exciting chase. I am grateful to the filmmaker Federico García Hurtado, the photojournalist Carlos (“El Chino”) Domínguez, the artist Jesús Ruiz Durand, and Máximo Gamarra, Hugo Neira, and Teo Chambi. Also, I am grateful to the staff of TAFOS (Talleres de Fotografía Social), a project in the 1980s and 1990s that provided young people in diverse communities with cameras to photograph what they thought important; the photos are now stored at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Thanks go to Brigitte Maass and Briklin Dwyer for the pictures taken at my behest. At Yale, Karina Yager and Mark Saba produced the maps; William K. Sacco, Joseph Szaszai, and Jude Breidenbach at Yale Media Services generated the digital images for this book. Special thanks are also due to Valerie Millholland and the staff for production help at Duke University Press.

INTRODUCTION

Memory

This book deals with memories as its principal source. During my fieldwork in 1995–96, I traveled all over Peru with Danny Pinedo and a small battery-powered tape recorder to interview people who had lived through the agrarian reform (1969–99). The idea came to me a couple of years beforehand, when I was asked by a friend in Lima about my next research project, and I said that it would be the agrarian reform. The disgusted look on his face made me change my stance, and I corrected myself: “Not the reform, but the history of the reform.”

He brightened up, saying that that was an interesting topic, and immediately launched into a long and detailed narration of how the agrarian reform had affected him personally. It was fascinating. I then knew that the idea of collecting oral histories or testimonies (I prefer to call them stories) had great potential. In contrast with the dry accounts full of statistics and class analysis that characterize the literature on the Peruvian agrarian reform, the stories I collected were so vivid that I resolved to base the whole project around the memories people have of the reform.

Armed with a Guggenheim Fellowship and a sabbatical, I conducted the bulk of the interviews that year. Danny was, at that time, a student who had completed his course work in the Anthropology Department at the University of San Marcos in Lima, and he agreed to participate in this project. I was affiliated with the Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales (CEPES), the members of which knew the past and present rural conditions of Peru very well. I had maintained my interest in the agrarian reform for many years and my colleagues at CEPES helped me to roughly sketch out what issues I wanted to interview people about and where. I selected places that I remembered due to their notoriety or because they were emblematic to



Map 1 Peru with main locations mentioned in the text. Drawn by K. Yager.

the reform process, or because I was familiar with the area from previous fieldwork. In each place, Danny and I reviewed the local history of the area and completed a bibliographic search in local university libraries. Then we identified potential people to interview and, after tracking them down and getting them to agree to tell us their stories, we interviewed them. We ended with about eighty interviews, each about ninety minutes, revolving around one particular estate, region, or process. We tried to gather material with as many versions from as many perspectives as possible. Separately we

interviewed the exlandlords, the expropriators, the government officials, the local politicians, the peasant leaders, the activists, the officials of the cooperatives, and the farming families in each region. Once each interview was transcribed, we sent a copy of each transcription to the person we had interviewed and asked if he or she had any comments, corrections, or deletions. We incorporated these into the final transcripts.¹ We also mentioned that we would use their names unless they preferred to remain anonymous (only two persons chose that option). Danny was a good travel companion, a great intellectual partner, and a committed anthropologist.

Memory

What is a memory? In some respects it is a way to relive the past. It is always associated with an emotional state. When, during my interviews, after people began to feel comfortable with the recorder and with me, I could really tell that they were remembering. They began to be oblivious of their surroundings, their gazes turned inward, and their eyes shone. And they intensely came to experience some very crucial moments of their past. Most of these were very painful. Charged with emotion and awash in sentiments, they relived these moments as they told me their stories and enlisted my full empathy. They sweated, cried, raised their voices, and even laughed embarrassedly. These moments were dreamlike, and they could be recaptured afterward by some telltale signs in their narration. I began to notice that this particular moment of remembering had come when the person started adding contextual detail to corroborate time and place. There was a clear positioning of the storyteller vis-à-vis another person. The storytellers remembered or (more likely) reconstructed exact quotable dialogue. There was always a moral or ethical issue at stake, with the narrator taking the “ethical” stance and the quoted interlocutor the unethical one. The point of each story was the narrator’s intent of safeguarding his or her own personal dignity. The narrator asked the anthropologist to share in his or her moral outrage in the face of an unjust accusation, an unfair treatment, a suffered indignity, or a flagrant injustice. This point was often signaled by a bitter laugh.

My recordings were not open ended or free flowing. I sometimes questioned hard and used a loose structure of the principal events of the agrarian reform to get the narrator to move on to other topics. None of the stories I gathered were neutral about the agrarian reform. I found no one,

not one person who wanted to tell me that he or she was happy with the way the agrarian reform worked itself out. Although most agreed that the country did need an agrarian reform at that time, they disagreed about the way it was brought about. I note that most of the time my interviewees were materially, socially, and economically much better off than before the reform. This is true for the peasants. It holds too for many, though not all, of the expropriated landlords who went into business and moved to the city, or the activists, many of whom are now employed by NGOs working on sustainable development. The employees of the government, now retired, remember the failures that came after adjudication of land into cooperatives, or how from their positions of power they saw how so much went wrong despite their reportedly good intentions and honest efforts.

It would be naïve to believe that the people told me the dry and factual truth, and even more simple minded to have personal experiences stand for larger social processes unleashed by the massive process of expropriation and redistribution of land begun by the revolutionary military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado in 1969, a process that took thirty years to work itself out. I realized this when I began to hear certain stories that were told to me as if they were firsthand experiences being repeated by others as if these stories had also happened to them. Here is an example:

Rafael Seminario, a landowner harried by lawsuits revolving around the expropriation of his hacienda, crossed the main plaza in Piura and was accosted by a shoeshine boy.

“Señor, shoeshine?”

“No!”

“Shall I just remove the soil? (*¿Le quito la tierrita?*)”

“Ah! You too want to take my land?”

This joke is much more effective if it is told as if one had personally experienced it. The people I interviewed mixed personal memories, shared experiences, popular opinions produced at that time or collectively elaborated afterward, apt examples kept in mind as cautionary tales, unconfirmed gossip, and political opinions. All of these were shaken together into a cocktail of meanings that poured into the tape recorder. Finding it impossible and unnecessary to sort them out, or to separate truth from exaggeration, I paid more attention to the narrative quality and what it sought to illustrate.

I was interested in eliciting how people's lives had changed because of the reform, and how they personally experienced important events. When they look back, what do Peruvians remember of the reform, and how do they evaluate it? The erratic changes in government policy and acts of resistance defined contexts and circumstances for action. I was interested in documenting the *tumbos de la vida* of different kinds of people over the thirty-year span of the reform, and how individuals navigated those troubled times. *Tumbos de la vida* cannot really be translated as "career patterns," but rather as how to survive when one is buffeted around on very rough roller-coaster rides.

We all know that memory is selective and changes according to context, and this is not quite the point in this book. Just as the many radio interviews that Studs Terkel collected in books such as *Hard Times* (1971) about the Great Depression in the United States provided atmosphere, color, and human content to large-scale events, my intention was to stitch the memories together into a larger narrative. Yet, when I tried to emulate Terkel's style, I realized that his books are effective only if the reader has a certain background or contextual knowledge of the events about which the individuals are reminiscing—in other words, if there is a collective memory that bounces with, reflects, and refracts the individual's own. In the case of the Peruvian agrarian reform, there is no "official story," let alone a "history" of the reform or of Velasco's military leftist government that might lay out some guidelines along which people can order their own remembrances.

On the contrary, the current neoliberal atmosphere has satanized the Velasco government for every evil that befell Peru and which needs to be repaired. "*Guayabera* socialists" (from the Cuban button-down silk shirt that became the symbolic dress for leftists in Peru) were made fun of in editorials, and Velasco's angry face was frequently reproduced to remind people of his errors. The mood was dark during the middle of the Fujimori regime, when I was conducting the interviews for this book, as the society slowly became aware of the devastating destruction and death toll caused in Peru by the uprising of the Maoist Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path. There were opinion makers who circulated the accusation that Velasco's left-wing regime had spawned the terrible Shining Path uprising. My research ended before the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in December 2000 to conduct nationwide hearings, some of which were

televised. Only then did the real horror of what had happened come to the fore. By that time, giving testimony and telling the truth became part of a national process of understanding and reflection. The stories of little people began to matter importantly.

During the time that I was interviewing, however, the situation was different. There was a very strong push to keep silent and to forget about the civil war. It had to do with the very recent collapse of Shining Path and the manner in which it occurred. People were just emerging from a war, and events were far too close to be comfortably remembered without pain, terror, and fear of consequences if one talked. This had to do with the way Shining Path collapsed, with desertions, informants, arbitrary prison sentences for the guilty and not-guilty alike, and the lack of a clear “accounting,” which only began once the Truth and Reconciliation Commission commenced its work. This somber mood may have colored the people’s recollections about the agrarian reform that preceded the period of political violence.

Memory research comes to the rescue of forgetting and deliberate erasure, and this book intends to do this by remembering the good, the bad, and the ugly through the tales of people who lived in those times. I hope that every reader, no matter what his or her current political position or received wisdom about the agrarian reform, can empathize with one or several of the personal stories I have selected to be part of this book. My regrets about those I had to leave out because they would have made the book impossibly long have made the writing process even more difficult than I envisioned. This book is not a history of the agrarian reform, but an invitation to readers to remember and reflect, to tell each other more stories about those times, to reminisce, and to ponder what was important to them and to the nation as events unfolded forty years ago. Many readers will have been born after Velasco’s times and wonder what they were like. Grandparents, parents, and children will be stimulated to reminisce with this book.

Agrarian issues have made good stories, but they are hard to write. I looked for literary models to guide me. I take great comfort that Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1996 [1842]) was so difficult for him to write that he never finished it (the book ends in mid-sentence and he destroyed the second part of his trilogy). Mixing satire, the absurd, and hilarious farce, Gogol tells how Chichikov, the corrupt main character, visits decaying rural

estates in order to buy the dead souls of serfs—and, in the process, portrays the rural Russia of his times in unforgettable ways. George Orwell in *Animal Farm* (1945) uses allegory to point to betrayals and difficulties that arise under the collectivization of farms, but the book was hijacked for anti-Communist propaganda purposes. In contrast, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (1966), by William Hinton, is a participant observer's extraordinary account of the Chinese agrarian reform in the village of Long Bow after the triumph of Mao's revolution of 1947. It was compelling reading for me as an anthropologist as I was living through another agrarian reform in Peru in the 1970s. Microcosmic accounts were also models for the Peruvian novelist Ciro Alegría. Writing in the *indigenista* and realist mode, he produced a village epic of heroic community resistance against nasty landlord intentions in which good and evil are clearly delineated in *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (1941). José María Arguedas's *Yawar fiesta* (1941), which contains more complex characters, used the local context of Puquio in Ayacucho to unfold a more nuanced and profoundly moving psychological portrayal of *hacendados*, peasants, and townspeople locked in conflict and hate.

I was helped in how to structure my tale of stories for a whole nation by reading V. S. Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). It provided me with another model. Naipaul lets his interviewees speak, but he orders the tale, he chooses the context in which to let them speak, and he decides the sequence of events in order to tell his story about the rise of political religious fundamentalism. Naipaul did not like the India that he saw in 1990, and he distilled his unease, his dislike, and his European conservative viewpoint through the tales and observations of those people's narrations. I love my country, I was enthused by the prospect of an agrarian reform really changing my country for the better, and I was upset that it did not work out—and horrified with the violence and killing that came afterward. However, unlike Naipaul, I attempt with the memories that people shared with me to paint a more positive view of the agrarian reform than the one that currently is in fashion.

Each chapter is a story in a very literal way. It has a narrative structure, characters, descriptions, dialogues, and a beginning, a middle, and an end. I constructed the stories from the interviews, memories, and reports from my fieldwork and from scholarly works into larger wholes. In each story I roughly follow the chronological sequence of the reform process, inter-

twining various points of view from my interviewees and my own scholarly comments. I am the narrator. I fashioned these stories out of the material of the interviews and I include my own memories as well. However, I tried to keep myself as much in the background as possible and let the people do the telling. When necessary, I connected them to keep the story going. I also make comments in notes to contextualize and amplify what was impossible to include in the main text, and in them I provide a bibliographic guide with commentary about the issues brought out in the main text. Furthermore, in the notes I chronicle the treatment of the agrarian reform in literature, film, and testimony to explore the degree to which the reform has become part of the cultural milieu of the past or the present.

Although *testimonio* literature also made its mark in Peru, only three publications deal with the specifics of Velasco's reform: Lino Quintanilla (1981), a member of Vanguardia Revolucionaria (VR; the Revolutionary Vanguard party) who was sick and disappointed at subsequent failures, told the anthropologist Rodrigo Montoya how he abandoned his lower-middle-class family and job and married a peasant woman to help peasants organize invasions of landed estates in Andahuaylas in the highlands of southern Peru in 1974. Another testimonial was published by Charlotte Burenienius (2001), wherein Zózimo Torres gives an account of the rise and fall of a cooperative named Huando; she is the granddaughter of the owners, he the union leader of the workers on the same estate. The anthropologists Ricardo Valderrama and Carmen Escalante (1986) published the bitter memories of a serf (*pongo*), who remembered the cruelty of a nearly demented and sick woman owner of an hacienda shortly before the agrarian reform expropriated her in the department of Huancavelica. My book hopes to encourage other personal accounts to enrich our understanding of Peru's tumultuous twentieth century.

The first chapter provides the context of the Velasco regime and gives an overview of the agrarian reform, its antecedents, execution, and the difficulties that followed. It ends with a very positive retrospective opinion of the reform by a member of Velasco's government, Francisco Guerra, a specialist in political science whom I interviewed in 1996. The structure of the story of the agrarian reform is rather simple and can easily be told. The hacienda system that had developed out of Peru's colonial society was extremely unjust and oppressive. Peasants and workers had struggled against it for centuries, and intellectuals had denounced it for a long, long time.

Land was extremely concentrated in large estates. While the first agrarian reform in Latin America came with the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the age of agrarian reforms reached the rest of the continent after the Second World War. In Peru, massive peasant movements in the 1950s and 1960s finally pushed the first government of Fernando Belaúnde Terry to pass an agrarian reform law in 1964. But the implementation of that reform was slow and ineffective. In 1968, Belaúnde was overthrown by a leftist military government led by Juan Velasco Alvarado, who then implemented a drastic and thorough program of expropriations beginning in 1969. Expropriated land was then collectively adjudicated in the form of cooperatives. Shying away from the more drastic forms of collectivization implemented by Communists in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries that fell under the sway of the Soviet bloc, cooperatives were a milder, yet imposed model for social change that left-leaning intellectuals favored in Latin America in the postwar era. However, the Peruvian cooperative models for agriculture did not prosper, and they began to falter. When the country returned to civilian rule in the 1980s, members of the cooperatives organized to dismantle them and to distribute the land among themselves. This book highlights the struggles that were involved in dismantling the collective enterprises that technocratic elements of the military regime had invented, in all good faith, to project a new kind of society out of the reform process.

Each chapter therefore tells of expropriation, the experiences under collective models of social experimentation, the people's subsequent disillusion when the experiments failed, and the ensuing efforts made by collectives' members to capture the land away from government control. Thus expropriation, adjudication, and decollectivization are three phases of the process. The particular details of how this worked itself out in each place, however, make up the stuff of the captivating stories that I managed to collect.

AGRARIAN REFORMS*Relevant Presidential Regimes and Hopefuls in Chronological Order*

MANUEL PRADO UGARTECHE (1939–45), a conservative president who was aligned with oligarchy.

VÍCTOR RAÚL HAYA DE LA TORRE (1895–1979), the founder of the APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, or American Popular Revolutionary Alliance). This persecuted, amnestied, and perennial presidential hopeful espoused a program that included calls for radical agrarian reforms.

MANUEL ODRÍA AMORETTI (1948–56), a conservative military general who was opposed to agrarian reform.

MANUEL PRADO UGARTECHE (1956–62), a president who, in his reelected period, faced massive peasant uprisings in the Cusco region.

GENERAL RICARDO PÉREZ GODOY (1962–63), head of a military junta. To oversee a failed election, he declared a limited agrarian reform in the Cusco region to curb the peasant uprising.

FERNANDO BELAÚNDE TERRY (1963–68), an elected president of Peru, implemented the first agrarian reform.

JUAN VELASCO ALVARADO (1968–75), an army general who led the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces.

FRANCISCO MORALES BERMÚDEZ CERRUTI (1975–80), an army general who overthrew Velasco and initiated the “second phase” of the military’s revolutionary regime.

FERNANDO BELAÚNDE TERRY (1980–85), a reelected president who allowed the dissolution of agrarian cooperatives and oversaw the retreat of the government’s reform policies. The Shining Path began an armed uprising in Ayacucho during his regime.

ALAN GARCÍA PÉREZ (1985–90), the first member of APRA to be elected president. García tried to validate the speedy collapse of agrarian reform cooperatives in the highlands and supported political and economic measures to consolidate some of the agrarian institutions created by the Velasco regime. As president, he faced the brunt of the Shining Path insurgency; he was reelected in 2006.

ALBERTO FUJIMORI (1990–2000), an elected president who implemented neoliberal policies and reversed the remaining statutes of the agrarian reform, allowing unlimited private property and the sale of land. Fujimori privatized collapsing sugar cooperatives; arrested the leader of Shining Path in Lima in 1992; killed hostage-takers of guests in the Japanese embassy, ending armed uprisings in 1997; and resigned in 2000 under a cloud of corruption.

Velasco's Revolution

Juan Velasco Alvarado's government (1968–75) was revolutionary for its time. It was the first moment in which Peru confronted foreign corporations with entrenched privileges. Its nationalism was different because it incorporated indigenous, popular, and Andean people and their cultural themes, widening the imagined community of the nation. It undertook a serious attempt at income redistribution, and it organized a range of programs for the poor in the city and in the countryside. The growth and impact of state enterprises and industrial import substitution programs were being touted as successes elsewhere in Latin America, and Peru's attempt seemed appropriate for those years. Going against Iron Curtain and Cold War policies to open relations with Mao's China, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern Bloc countries, as well as maintaining friendly relationships with Cuba (coupled with nonalignment), was very progressive. Above all, the regime is remembered for executing Latin America's most radical agrarian reform, the subject of this book. This was carried out without bloodshed.

The revolution from above began at dawn on October 3, 1968, when tanks from the armored division of the army rumbled from across the Rimac River in Lima toward the presidential palace with an elite corps of *rangers*. They entered the presidential palace, arresting a startled President Fernando Belaúnde and shipping him off to Buenos Aires. General Velasco (the chief of the armed forces) and his small group of co-conspirators were joined by top-ranking officers of the air force and navy to form the Revo-

lutionary Government of the Armed Forces (Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas), which was to stay in power for twelve years.

Its legacy is still controversial, but there is no doubt that the military's initial left-wing shift and sweeping reforms of practically every aspect of social, economic, and political life were an important watershed for the country. In five years of Velasco's presidency, the military rigorously implemented in top-down, corporatist, and undemocratic ways a slew of profoundly radical reform measures. Coming fast and without warning, one after another, these changes left citizens dizzy and reeling. Dirk Kruijt (1989; 1994), a Dutch sociologist, aptly called it a "revolution by decree."

It was the second time within five years that a military junta had stepped in to break an impasse that civilian regimes could not resolve. The Belaúnde government was blocked by a coalition in Parliament that perversely impeded the implementation of the reforms that he had promised in his election campaigns. Velasco's government surpassed these promises and carried forward many of the dreams for change that progressives had desired for decades. He also introduced innovations such as worker participation in industry—even though they fizzled—that were interesting attempts to reduce the great income inequalities and distances between social classes that were part of Peru's legacy from its colonial, aristocratic, and oligarchic republican past.

Despite its obsession to control them, the junta vastly expanded the political participation of previously un- or underrepresented sectors of society. The popular classes in towns, villages, indigenous communities, and shantytowns were involved in projects and programs that ultimately advanced their incorporation as citizens. The government treated them with greater respect than ever before, discouraging forms of social injustice and everyday humiliation. At the same time, the Velasco style clipped the wings of the elites, breaking up their self-assurance and the privileges they had taken for granted, partly by ridicule and partly by imposing new, more popular horizontal forms of treatment for everyone (those not in uniform, that is). It was the first government ever to execute significant income redistribution in a society of great inequalities. It completed the abolition of all forms of servitude in rural estates, a momentous shift in the history of the Andes, akin to the abolition of slavery in the Americas. It glossed over the racial/ethnic issues that divide Peruvian society by using the neutral class-derived word *campesino* (peasant), banishing the word *indio*.

However, this was done in ways that produced unease and negative reactions. New organizations were created with difficult alphabet-soup acronyms, each controlled by a colonel sitting in the commanding seat as overseer, intervener, or director. Yet within local institutions, a kind of supervised democracy was to function with the less powerful placed on top (if they exceeded the government's limitations, these institutions were subject to "intervention"). Government bureaucracy and state enterprises expanded enormously and invaded new spheres of life; every low-level functionary assumed the air of a barrack sergeant. A tiresome nationalist propaganda machine, which coupled heavily socialized rhetoric with an increasingly muzzled and expropriated press, dominated the scene. Opposing ideas or persons were labeled counterrevolutionary or denounced as dangerous. A paranoid atmosphere generated by ubiquitous spying secret service organizations soured political culture. Public discussion, though not forbidden, was restricted. Private debate, in contrast, was intense. Stealth and intrigue in the timing and imposition of new revolutionary measures meant to keep opposition forces off balance was frustrating and immobilizing to civilians in all walks of life, even to those who supported—often critically—the imposed measures.

Above all, it was a period in which government activity was imbued with a complex technocratic discourse. Reform measures were implemented through the imposition of "models" derived from beliefs that a scientifically correct formula could be designed and enforced to change human character and behavior, thus bringing about a reduction of class conflict and inequality, and the achievement of social cohesion. Velasco's revolutionaries wished to utilize social engineering to create a new, proud, and nationalist Peruvian who was fully participant in a humanitarian society and economy that was neither capitalist nor communist, but fiercely national and patriotic.

My professional debut as a young anthropologist coincided with my only encounter with Velasco. He inaugurated the Congress of Americanists in 1971, where I presented my first paper. A couple hundred foreign and local scholars were seated in a school patio; in front of us on a raised platform under a tent, the general in a green uniform was surrounded by other uniformed dignitaries. Sitting with him were José Matos Mar, an anthropologist and the convener of the congress, and a selection of eminent scholars. After the national anthem and other formalities, Velasco began a short



Figure 1 General Juan Velasco Alvarado heading a political rally in Lima on June 7, 1975. Archive of the photographer Carlos Domínguez. © Carlos Domínguez.

speech with a smoker's raspy voice, but he was interrupted by a protest led by Jacqueline de la Puente, the French widow of the guerrilla leader Luis de la Puente Uceda. Security personnel in civilian clothing who were mixed in with the audience immediately rose and began to move forward. Matos had foreknowledge of this and asked the general if a spokesperson of the group could say a few words. The general accepted. The linguist Alfredo Torero (who was not given a microphone and therefore was inaudible to the audience) asked Velasco, since he was a revolutionary, to give amnesty to the jailed guerrillas of 1965 who had fought for the same ideals as he. Velasco responded in a friendly way, saying that those in prison had been tried in courts and therefore had to complete their sentences. He also said that he would think about it. The ceremony continued. However, as soon as the president left, those whom the secret service had seen murmuring and accompanying Jacqueline were arrested. Matos Mar had to intercede for their release the next day. A couple of months later, amnesty for the guerrillas was granted.

Velasco's popularity as El Chino (a nickname that quickly stuck because of his slanted eyes) among lower classes, workers, and peasants grew slowly as he implemented the reforms that benefited them (fig. 1).¹ Half the middle classes abhorred him (although they gained from expanding employment

opportunities), and landowners had reason enough to fear him because he attacked them frontally. Industrialists were split: most were against, those that collaborated became rich. Foreign-owned companies dedicated to export production were expropriated, but those industrial enterprises and financial institutions that adjusted to the conditions of a rapid and badly designed import substitution industrialization program had a place in the new economy. Political parties were left in limbo and Parliament was closed. Civilian opposition was not treated kindly. Organized unions affiliated with left-wing parties were divided by the creation of parallel pro-Velasco organizations, demobilizing them with rough tactics. The threat of the military boot was always palpable. The regime deported individuals or removed them from office, closed down institutions that were troublesome, or created rival parallel ones as measures of political control. Yet while his regime was oppressive, it did not jail many people, nor kill anyone. Peruvian friends of mine used a funny expression: they said Velasco's was a *dicta-blanda* instead of a *dictadura*, a soft instead of a hard dictatorship, and I agreed.

Cultural life was nationalized, favoring performances by Peruvian folk artists. Handicraft clay pots became fashionable over imported china at dinner parties, and *velasquista* youth put on ponchos and played the pan-pipes in Miraflores, a middle-class suburb of Lima. Government institutions freely appropriated Incan and indigenous cultural elements in images, names, and symbols. *Fútbol* was also absorbed into the revolution when the national team played in the World Cup competition in Mexico in 1970 (*¡viva el Perú, carajo!*). Santa Claus was banned as a symbol of American consumerism and replaced by *el niño Manué* to celebrate a more authentic Peruvian Christmas. The military also flaunted its own privileges, and black Dodge Coronet sedans (assembled in Peru) became a common military status symbol. The period also saw an incredible expansion of intellectual debate, with an emphasis on the social sciences, spilling into public and private spheres . . . and I was a privileged member of this group. I could explain to others what an “irreversible change in the structure of society” was supposed to mean and why the military said it would stay in power until then. It suited me fine!

I was born to middle-class European parents and grew up in Huancayo, a city in the central highlands of Peru. My parents often visited *hacendados* on their estates, and their and my disgust with the way the indigenous

people were pushed around stayed with me, so much so that as a teenager I wanted to be a journalist to denounce injustices. I became an anthropologist instead, graduating from Cornell University. At that time, Cornell had strong intellectual connections to Peru in economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology. I was attracted to this university because Professor Alan Holmberg and his Peruvian collaborator Mario Vásquez had started an experiment on a highland hacienda wherein the serfs were liberated, and which was purported to demonstrate that it had provided a model of how to implement a successful agrarian reform (Mayer 2006).

Following progressive thought in Latin American studies of the 1960s in graduate school, I ended every term paper I wrote on Peru by demanding an authentic agrarian reform as a necessary precondition for development and social integration. I sported a beard and long, curly hair. I landed back in Peru in 1969, doing ethnographic fieldwork for a year in a bilingual Quechua- and Spanish-speaking indigenous peasant community in the central Andes. I then affiliated myself with the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP) and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), both places where the debate for, against, and about the reforms of the military government was intense. I shared an apartment in Miraflores with my married sister and many a foreign graduate student researching aspects of the Velasco revolution. Our place was an intense debating forum. In principle, I agreed with the government's reform aims, yet was critical toward the way it went about them. I did not actively join the regime or any opposition leftist political party, but it was exciting to live in a revolution.

In February 1973, Velasco suffered a sudden serious illness. An aneurism required heavy blood transfusions and the amputation of his leg. Although he recovered, his leadership in the period after his resumption of office was weakened. He was left isolated and became so mistrustful that his prestige and power eroded. The inner core of revolutionary generals was outmaneuvered by air force and navy officers with less revolutionary fervor. In 1976, while the military was secretly looking for ways to replace him, he was ousted in an internal coup by General Francisco Morales Bermúdez. The latter's regime, from 1975 to 1980, announced the continuation of the original revolution—it was called the “second phase”—but actually reversed it. Morales Bermúdez's government was beset with economic troubles (forced to cut back on expenditures and devalue currency); surrounded by hostile dictatorships in Brazil; Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador;

uneasy in its relationships with the United States and international lenders; and facing widespread internal unrest and opposition. The regime became much more repressive than that of Velasco, who, isolated and sick, died on December 24, 1977. Unexpectedly, seventy thousand people showed up at his funeral.

Human rights statistics for the Morales Bermúdez period were not made public, but union smashing, persecution, and arbitrary arrests were common. Constitutional guarantees were suspended and Lima was under strict curfew for months. In spite of this repressive atmosphere, protests against government measures grew, culminating in two impressive general strikes on July 19, 1977, and February 27–28, 1978. Ten days after the first one, Morales Bermúdez announced that the military intended to return to its barracks. In 1978 he convened a constituent assembly (presided over by an aging Haya de la Torre), which was ratified in 1979. General elections were held in May 1980, and the very same deposed Fernando Belaúnde assumed a new civilian government on July 28, 1980.

In 1978, in the darkest days of the second phase, I was offered a job in Mexico. At the airport, where much paperwork was required to show compliance with currency restrictions, taxes, legal deposits, and so on, the emigration officer folded the documents into my passport. He then handed them back, saying, “Congratulations, Mr. Mayer; you are leaving the country. I wish I could join you.” That day the government employees had held a huge demonstration to protest the dismissal of 30 percent of the employees.

Sixteen years later, in 1994, I was in Piura, the birthplace of Velasco. I wanted to see the house where he had lived in his youth in the poorer neighborhood of Castilla, the “wrong” side of the town. Asking for directions, I was turned away. “It is a dangerous area and not safe for people like you,” said a man. “Besides, there is nothing to see.” It was true, in all Piura there was not one single monument to Velasco; no street, plaza, or bridge was named for him. There were many statues of Miguel Grau (a naval hero from the times of the Chilean War), but El Chino was remembered secretly in the *barrios* and the rural areas. The subsequent regimes of Belaúnde, García, and Fujimori, with their officially promoted public culture, have done their best to undo his policies and to erase his memory.