

Haya de la Torre and the Pursuit of Power in Peru, 1926–1948: the Seven Paradoxes of APRA*

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Abstract. – The history of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) can be understood in terms of seven paradoxes, all closely linked to the personality of its founder, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre: 1) APRA was both an international party and a national party; 2) it sought to gain power both through armed insurgencies and elections; 3) it began as an anti-imperialist party yet developed ties with the U.S.; 4) it created a personality cult of Haya de la Torre, but also developed a strong organization that gave it institutional longevity; 5) it was characterized by a strong sense of discipline, yet its history is full of acts of indiscipline; 6) APRA and the military have been traditional political enemies, yet APRA relied on the military to support its insurgent activity; 7) APRA was the first party to recruit women, yet for decades failed to give women full representation within the party.

APRA – the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* – is a party that continues to elicit passionate reactions in Peru.¹ I have received both praise and insults in conversations with strangers – mainly taxi-cab drivers – when I explain that I am engaged in writing a history of APRA, Peru’s most important twentieth century political party and one of Latin America’s most

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¹ I am using the generic term APRA, by which the party is known in Peru, to refer both to the international political movement founded in 1926 and to its Peruvian incarnation, the Partido Aprista Peruano, founded in 1930.

distinct populist parties. These passions have extended to the Peruvian historiography on Aprismo – hence the absence of a balanced monograph on the history of the party, and hence the difficulty of defining a party whose political identity has been hard to pinpoint as it has swung from radical to conservative positions, from embracing electoral democracy to pursuing armed insurgency.² The pattern remains apparent if we turn to the recent past with two almost diametrically opposed APRA governments led by Alan García (1985–1990, 2006–2011) – one defined by a more classic populist nationalism, the second by an adherence to neo-liberal economic principles. Such swings have most often elicited accusations rather than interpretive frameworks. Sociologist Julio Cotler refers to the much used image of a double barreled shotgun to refer to what are considered APRA's opportunistic maneuvers to gain political power.

Between 1931, when Haya de la Torre lost the presidential election to Luis Sánchez Cerro, and 1945, when APRA after more than a decade of

² Few scholars have attempted to write histories that cover the full span of APRA's history. Nelson Manrique, *Usted fue Aprista: Bases para una historia crítica del APRA* (Lima 2009), takes on the task of understanding the party in its national dimension yet persists with the paradigm that judges APRA for having abandoned its early political ideals. Two of the most detailed histories of the party are written by Aprista historians: Percy Murillo Garaycochea, *Historia del APRA 1919–1945* (Lima 1976) and Roy Soto Rivera, *Víctor Raúl: el hombre del siglo XX* (Lima, 2002). A useful non-partisan account is Bernd Goldberg, *50 Jahre Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP) 1930–1980. Eine sozio-ökonomische Analyse zur Erklärung der Politik Perus* (Saarbrücken/Fort Lauderdale 1983). A number of scholars have explored portions of the history of APRA in Peru, either its origins or its regional impact. The classic monograph on the origins of APRA remains Peter Klarén, *Modernization, Dislocation and Aprismo: Origins of the Peruvian Aprista Party, 1870–1932* (Austin 1973). The most recent work on the topic can be found in Fiona Wilson, *Citizenship and Political Violence in Peru: An Andean Town, 1870s to 1970s* (New York 2013). Also see David Nugent, *Modernity at the Edge of Empire: State, Individual, and Nation in the Northern Peruvian Andes, 1885–1935* (Stanford 1997); Lewis Taylor, "The Origins of APRA in Cajamarca, 1928–1935": *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 19, 4 (2000), p. 437–459; Jaymie Patricia Heilman, "We Will No Longer Be Servile: Aprismo in Ayacucho": *Journal of Latin American Studies* 38 (2006), p. 491–518; and Jaymie Patricia Heilman, "To Fight Soviet Agents in the Fatherland: Anti-Communism in Ayacucho's APRA, 1945–1948": *A Contracorriente* 9, 3 (2012), p. 94–120; Paulo Drinot, "Creole Anti-Communism: Labor, the Peruvian Communist Party, and APRA, 1930–1934": *Hispanic American Historical Review* 92, 4 (2012), p. 703–736. On the anarchist roots of APRA see Steven Hirsch, *The Anarcho-syndicalist Roots of a Multi-class Alliance: Organized Labor and the Peruvian Aprista Party, 1900–1933* (doctoral thesis, George Washington University 1997). On APRA as a middle class party see Iñigo García-Bryce, "A Middle Class Revolution: The APRA Party and Middle-Class Identity in Peru, 1931–1956": Ricardo Lopez/Barbara Weinstein (eds.), *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History* (Durham/London 2012), p. 235–252.

underground activity was allowed to participate once again in politics as part of an electoral coalition that brought José Luis Bustamante y Rivero to the presidency, the party participated in dozens of armed insurgencies and two elections (1931, 1945), and was banned from participation in two other elections (1936, 1939). The fact that Haya de la Torre was not allowed to run as presidential candidate was one indication that APRA had become Peru's most important political force. Poorly understood, this period of the party's history has been framed in primarily ideological terms. Official APRA historians tell a story of martyrdom and persecution and refer to this period as "the catacombs". APRA's opponents emphasize the ideological shifts and compromises made by APRA as it sought legality and accuse the party of having abandoned its early ideals. Neither of these frameworks offers a satisfactory analysis for this important period in the party's history. The persistence of such dualities in the writing of APRA's history make the need clear for a more nuanced interpretation that takes into account the changing contexts that help to explain APRA's development.³

Haya de la Torre's struggle to gain power in Peru between 1930 and 1945 can be best understood as a quest for political legitimacy. The period is characterized by an alternation between insurgencies and efforts at democratic political participation as well as by a shift away from the left and toward the center of the political spectrum. The lack of a clear analytical framework for understanding APRA during this period has left the interpretive terrain open to ideological attacks portraying APRA as opportunistic in its quest for power, both in terms of the methods used as well as in its alleged abandonment of an earlier radical ideological position. While opportunism cannot be discarded from the history of APRA – or from that of any other political party for that matter –, it is not particularly helpful for understanding what a number of scholars have identified as one of Latin America's most important populist movements. Political scientist François Bourricaud (clearly sympathetic to APRA as he was Alan García's professor) makes a call for taking the party seriously and on its own terms rather than judging it by unrealistic parameters:

"This facile description used by so many adversaries of APRA both on the left and on the right can easily be encapsulated as the dilemma in which so many intellectuals like to place themselves: politics is either an unconditional compromise that seeks to embody the ideal (liberation of man, reconciliation among men) or is a succession of sordid transactions among petty interests. During the period of the

³ These more nuanced interpretations can be found in the recent scholarship, but have not yet been applied to an understanding of the party as a whole. See note 2.

convivencia, APRA had a doctrine and a praxis which according to all appearances its leaders and militants continued taking seriously.”⁴

The *convivencia* refers to the period between 1956 and 1962 during which APRA regained its legal status by striking a political deal with former enemy Manuel Prado who had won a second term as president.

In this article, I propose that APRA can be understood by examining seven paradoxes, all of which stem from the personality of Haya de la Torre: 1) he founded an international party whose success in Peru came from downplaying its international identity; 2) he built a formidable electoral force while pursuing armed insurgencies as a means of getting to power; 3) he created a revolutionary anti-imperialist party that supported capitalism and reached out to the United States for support; 4) as a charismatic leader, he encouraged a cult of personality and concentrated power in his own hands while building a political party with a strong institutional structure and program that has proved capable of outliving its charismatic leader; 5) he was obsessed with party discipline while presiding over a party whose history is driven by acts of insubordination that challenged party discipline; 6) he quickly earned the enmity of the military, whose hatred of APRA remains legendary, while individual members of the military became key supporters of the party; 7) he led a party that brought women into politics for the first time while at the same time keeping them in a secondary role.

The purpose of this article is to explore the first two decades of the party's history in terms of these paradoxes linked to the personality and life-story of APRA's leader, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. APRA attempted to gain power in Peru both through elections and through a series of attempts at armed insurrection. The article relies on correspondence among Aprista leaders as well as State Department documents reporting on APRA during these years. This period of the party history has not been studied in sufficient detail, partly because of the challenges of piecing together the history of a party that had been declared illegal and whose members were either in hiding, in jail, or exiled.

The first paradox of APRA as both a national and international party played out clearly during its initial years and remained an underlying theme well into the 1950s. Haya de la Torre founded the party while exiled in Europe (the first APRA cell was founded in Paris in 1926) as a Latin American response to the growing influence of the Comintern in Latin America.

⁴ François Bourricaud, *Ideología y desarrollo: el caso del Partido Aprista Peruano* (Mexico City 1966), p. 41. All translations of quotes in this article are the author's.

APRA cells emerged in cities across the continent: Havana and Buenos Aires in 1927, Mexico City in 1928. Haya participated in the intense discussions over political doctrine of the period: he distanced himself from José Carlos Mariátegui, the Peruvian socialist, in a now famous polemic and wrote his most thorough exposition of Aprismo, *El antimperialismo y el Apra* in 1928 (first published in 1936), as a response to attacks by the Cuban communist Julio Antonio Mella. Haya gave Aprismo a distinctly Latin American identity – or Indoamerican to use his preferred terminology – by claiming that while Lenin saw imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, in fact in Latin America imperialism represented the first stage of capitalism. The Mexican Revolution, he claimed, offered a model for the rest of Latin America.

While overtly Aprismo condemned US imperialism, the political movement began as a response to international debates over communism fueled by the Soviet Union's attempts to make inroads in Latin America. According to Manuel Caballero:

“From the early 1920s, the left as a whole had to define itself in relation to the Comintern, and the conflict with the ‘Cominternists’ defined the birth of non-communist parties as important as APRA in Perú and Acción Democrática in Venezuela.”⁵

Yet unlike other Latin American parties, APRA was unique in seeking to create a continent-wide political movement that would compete with the Comintern. This internationalism is reflected in the five point program put forth by Haya de la Torre that included joint action of the countries in Latin America against “Yankee imperialism”, a call for “the political unity of Latin America” and for the creation of a Federation of States, and a demand for the internationalization of the Panama Canal. The fifth point can be read as a direct challenge to the efforts of the Comintern as APRA identifies with “the solidarity of all the oppressed people and classes of the world”.⁶ Echoes of APRA's internationalism can be found as late as the 1980s when Alan García, the first Aprista to reach the Peruvian presidency (1985–1990) proposed to resolve the continent's debt crisis through a united attempt by Latin American nations to link the payment of their debt to export earnings – the formula he proposed was ten percent.

⁵ Manuel Caballero, *La Internacional Comunista y la revolución latinoamericana* (Caracas 1987), p. 24.

⁶ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “What is the APRA?": *The Labour Monthly* (December 1926), p. 756–759, reproduced in Robert Alexander (ed.), *Aprismo: The Ideas and Doctrines of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre* (Kent, OH 1973), p. 97.

Whereas the Comintern attempted to internationalize the Russian Revolution, APRA had its own Latin American revolution to promote: the Mexican Revolution. The Mexican Revolution had resonance throughout Latin America as intellectuals throughout the continent began to see it as a model of nationalist revolution and continental unity.⁷ The international debates about the revolution also occurred at the level of government, as successive Mexican governments beginning with Carranza sought to defend the Revolution, particularly in the face of US propaganda seeking to discredit it.⁸

Aprismo attempted to export the revolution to the rest of the continent. The writings of Haya and other Apristas take the Mexican Revolution as a starting point for the proposed continent-wide revolution. In the founding article “What is the APRA?” published in Britain’s *Labour Monthly*, Haya writes: “The history of the political and economic relations between Latin America and the United States, especially the experience of the Mexican Revolution, lead to the following conclusions” and proceeds to make his case for the need for continental unity against the alliance between governing elites in Latin American and foreign capital.⁹ Point three of the five point Aprista program reads “nationalization of land and industry”, a reference to Article 27 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution, which established national ownership of natural resources. In her 1929 lecture tour through the Caribbean, Aprista leader and founder of the Mexican APRA cell Magda Portal included in her repertoire of lectures one titled “Defensa de la revolución mexicana”.¹⁰

Shortly after the fall of the Leguía dictatorship in Peru, the Partido Aprista Peruano was founded in September 1930. Briefly, APRA maintained its internationalism, alongside a national program for Peru. As presidential candidate in 1931, Haya gave a campaign speech on August 23rd to a huge crowd in Lima’s bullring, the Plaza de Acho, in which he explained how APRA’s nationalist and continental visions were compatible with one another:

⁷ Pablo Yankelevich, *La Revolución Mexicana en América Latina: Intereses políticos e itinerarios intelectuales* (Mexico City 2003), p. 14.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 15. See also Ricardo Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario del exilio en México y América Latina, 1934–1940* (Argentina 2003).

⁹ Haya de la Torre, “What is the APRA?” (note 6), p. 98. Haya’s views on the Mexican Revolution are developed in Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, *El antimperialismo y el APRA* (Santiago de Chile 1936).

¹⁰ Magda Portal, *América latina frente al imperialismo y defensa de la revolución mexicana* (Lima 1931).

“Our continental concept does not exclude our national concept [...]. We must first contemplate the national problem, we must be total nationalists in order to be truly continental and, thus together, be able to incorporate ourselves to the march of world civilization.”¹¹

However, the internationalism soon became problematic. When the Sánchez Cerro government began to persecute the party, it passed a law in 1932 excluding the party from participation on the grounds that it was international. According to Melgar Bao, “the dream of international Aprismo had not disappeared – it simply needed to be kept quiet:

“they had to remain ‘silent’ about the Antidictatorial International being created [...] *Aprismo* had been made illegal by Benavides because APRA was considered an international party, although the Aprista project continued to dream of the formation of an Indoamerican International.”¹²

The argument of APRA as an international party was used by successive governments as a legal justification to exclude APRA from politics.

Faced with this law, Haya and other leaders decided to play down the international presence. In 1942, the name of the party was changed to El Partido del Pueblo to remove the international reference implicit in the original name – Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana. Furthermore, all of Haya’s efforts during the next decade were dedicated to legitimizing his outlawed party within the Peruvian political system, leaving very little energy to implement the international portion of the program. As the Argentine student leader and APRA sympathizer Gabriel del Mazo observed from afar about Haya de la Torre: “His continentalist view seems diminished after he promoted it strongly during his youth”.¹³

However, the correspondence between Haya de la Torre and party leader Magda Portal, exiled in Santiago de Chile from 1939 to 1945, reflects the persistence of internationalism as part of APRA’s identity. In one letter, Haya scolds Portal for not pushing ahead full steam with a Second Congress of Democratic and Popular Parties of Indoamerica to be held in Mexico to follow the first such congress, held in Chile. He reproached her, sometimes harshly, for not defending APRA’s continentalist program more forcefully, suggesting that she should have tried to hold a similar congress in Mexico:

¹¹ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “El Programa: 23.8.31”: *Revolución sin balas: 15 discursos de Haya de la Torre* (Lima 1984), p. 28.

¹² Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario* (note 8), p. 73.

¹³ Gabriel del Mazo to Magda Portal, May 26th, 1940: University of Texas, Austin, Magda Portal Papers (hereinafter MP Papers), Box 1, Folder 4.

“You, the ex-delegates of that congress, should have protested against the postponement of the second congress. You should have said that no national issue is worth as much as the continental issue that the congress would confront. Say something to indicate that exiled Apristas are not only involved in routine, personal and light tasks, but that they are preoccupied with maintaining the continental meaning of our work.”¹⁴

Portal on the other hand urged Haya to leave Peru, where she felt the party had already gained strength, and to dedicate himself once again to the task of forging a continental party: “I am convinced that you are the only person who can promote a New Indoamerican Policy, effectively moving toward the union of the 20 republics.”¹⁵ She also observed that Haya must be exhausted from a life of hiding and would benefit from leaving Peru to be in contact with different people and points of view. Haya held firm, arguing that his enemies wanted him to leave Peru, claiming that President Prado had offered him up to one million (he doesn’t specify the currency) to leave and that this would weaken the party.

Nonetheless, the functioning of APRA continued to have a strongly international dimension as it remained rooted in the dynamics between communities of exiles in different parts of Latin America and the party members in Peru. A growing scholarship has emerged on the importance of these transnational networks that sustained the party during its initial years, and continued to operate once APRA became established in Peru.¹⁶ During the 1930s, Santiago de Chile became an important location for exiles as well as a locus for the printing of political propaganda. The correspondence between Haya de la Torre and Luis Alberto Sánchez, one of the leaders of the APRA exile community in Chile, reveals the centrality of Santiago, and particularly the publishing house Ercilla, to Aprista activities in Peru. The long delayed publication of Haya’s book *El antimperialismo y el APRA* was the subject of numerous letters back and forth between Lima and Santiago. The correspondence between Haya de la Torre and other exiled leaders in

¹⁴ Haya de la Torre to Magda Portal: MP Papers, July 7th, 1941, Box 1, Folder 5.

¹⁵ Magda Portal to Haya de la Torre: MP Papers, June 20th, 1941, Box 1, Folder 5.

¹⁶ The work was pioneered by Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario* (note 8). See Martín Bergel, “Manuel Seoane y Luis Heysen: el entrelugar de los exiliados apristas peruanos en la Argentina de los veinte”: *Políticas de la Memoria* 6/7 (2006–2007), p. 124–142; Iñigo García-Bryce, “Transnational Activist: Magda Portal and the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, 1926–1950”: *The Americas* 70, 4 (2014), p. 677–706; Daniel Iglesias, *Réseaux transnationaux et dynamiques contestataires en exil: sociologie historique des pratiques politiques des dirigeants des partis populaires apristes (1920–1962)* (doctoral thesis, Université de Paris Diderot 2011).

Santiago deals with other important party issues. For example, in 1939, as elections were approaching in Peru, Haya de la Torre called for exiled leaders to return to Peru to support the party. The call from the Comité de Acción del Partido Aprista Peruano is dated April 14th, 1939.¹⁷ The call went out not only to Santiago. León de Vivero, an exiled leader living in New York, writes back to Coronel Pardo saying that he has received the order but will have to wait to return to Lima for health reasons.¹⁸ In some instances these networks were used in efforts to obtain weapons. For example, in 1936, Aprista exiles approached the government of President Toro in Bolivia seeking weapons for an uprising that would begin in Southern Peru. The importance of these international networks persisted into the 1950s, when, during a new period of persecution under the dictatorship of General Manuel Odría, Aprista leaders in exile discussed party policy and direction by mail in what came to be known as the “congresos postales”.

The second paradox of a party that participated in both elections and armed insurgencies also relates to Haya de la Torre, his personality, and his political choices. The first few years of APRA's history show us an extremely pragmatic Haya de la Torre, willing to seek power either through armed revolt or through democratic participation. However, tracing the evolution of Haya's position on this issue is difficult given both the paucity of sources and the nature of the clandestine activities in question. And Aprista doctrine gives no clues along these lines, for as Harry Kantor rightly points out in his sympathetic study of Aprista ideology, APRA did not have a clear statement of the method for getting to power.¹⁹ The lack of a blueprint may have facilitated the pattern of alternating between armed insurgency and democratic participation over the next two decades.²⁰ In the long run, insurgency clearly proved ineffective. Political compromise and negotiation, on the other hand, won the party congressional representation (1945–1948, 1956–1968), prestigious positions such as that held by Luis Alberto Sánchez as Rector of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Mar-

¹⁷ “Orden de regreso de los deportados. Lima, April 14th, 1939”: Thomas M. Davies Jr/ Víctor Villanueva, *Secretos electorales del APRA: correspondencia y documentos de 1939* (Lima 1983), p. 38–39 [document 15].

¹⁸ “Leon de Vivero in New York to Coronel Pardo in Valparaíso, May 5th, 1939”: *ibidem*, p. 58 [document 28].

¹⁹ Harry Kantor, *The Ideology and Program of the Peruvian Aprista Movement* (New York 1977).

²⁰ We still lack an academic study that focuses on the party's insurgent wing and activities. Aprista historian Percy Murillo Garaycochea refers to this insurgent tradition in his book *Historia del APRA* (note 2). In his recent study of APRA, Nelson Manrique also covers this topic. Manrique, *Usted fue Aprista* (note 2).

cos (1946–1948, 1961–1963, 1966–1969), by Haya de la Torre as president of the Constituent Assembly (1978–1979), and eventually the presidency of Peru for Alan García (1985–1990, 2006–2011).

APRA's first attempt to gain power in Peru, known as the "Plan de Mexico", was devised by the APRA cell in Mexico in 1928, when Haya de la Torre was in that country. The plan was to begin an armed insurgency to topple the Leguía government in Peru and put a new party, the Partido Nacionalista Libertador, with Haya as presidential candidate into power. The armed insurgency was allegedly devised by Haya and an old school friend of his and ex-officer, Felipe Iparraguirre, living in El Salvador. Iparraguirre landed on Peru's northern coast but failed to start an armed uprising and instead ended in jail.²¹ Haya had hoped to recruit some of the men who had fought both with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata to start the Revolution in Peru. In a letter to Luis Heysen dated March 27th, 1928, Haya wrote:

"Hopefully you will achieve there what we have achieved here: to encourage many Mexicans and non-Mexicans to join the ranks of the Partido Nacionalista Libertador and to count on them as soldiers. In my most recent trip to the states of Northern Mexico I received the pledges of support of many future soldiers of our Revolution, among them, many of the 'dorados' of Villa."²²

Although the entire incident requires further research, what evidence exists points to the fact that Haya de la Torre originally saw armed insurgency as a real possibility for gaining power in Peru.

Given APRA's early identity as a revolutionary party in the Marxist mold, Haya surprised many party leaders when he decided to participate in the 1931 Peruvian presidential elections. After years in exile, Haya arrived in Peru on July 12th, 1931, and initiated a national campaign against Colonel Luís Sánchez Cerro whose prestige stemmed from the fact that he had unseated Leguía in a military coup the previous year. Haya's loss at the polls to Sánchez Cerro prompted calls of fraud among many party followers and led to a spiral of violence between Apristas and the new Sánchez Cerro government. Among the measures taken by Sánchez Cerro to squelch APRA opposition was the expulsion, in February 1932, of APRA's entire congressional delegation of twenty-three, the outlawing of the APRA party,

²¹ There is still some dispute about the facts with Pedro Planas treating this portion of the plan as factual, and Nelson Manrique questioning it. See Pedro Planas, *Haya de la Torre: Mito y Realidad (Orígenes del APRA)* (Lima 1985).

²² Letter of Haya de la Torre to Luis Heysen, March 27th, 1928[?]: Archivo Armando Villanueva (Lima, Peru), Binder 2.

and the arrest of Haya de la Torre on May 7th of that year. In the meantime, party leaders who favored an armed insurgency reached out to sympathetic members of the Peruvian military in an effort to implement this plan.²³ The timing of events did not go as planned. On July 7th, a group of Apristas in the city of Trujillo disobeyed party orders and launched an attack on an army barrack ahead of schedule, and subsequently took over the city of Trujillo. Haya de la Torre, who was in jail at the time, is very unlikely to have had a hand in these events. The Trujillo insurrection and its sister insurrections in various towns in Northern Peru did not last long. A massive military offensive by land, air, and sea allowed the government to retake the city of Trujillo after four days of fighting and to execute hundreds of rebels in the nearby ruins of the pre-Columbian city of Chan Chan.²⁴ Government persecution of the party intensified, and hundreds or perhaps thousands of Apristas were jailed. This first cycle of violence ended with the assassination, at the hands of an Aprista, of President Sánchez Cerro in 1933.

The Trujillo insurrection was far from an isolated incident: during the 1930s numerous Aprista insurrections of different magnitudes broke out in different parts of the country: Lima, Ayacucho, and Huancaayo in 1934, Cajamarca 1935, Lima 1939, Ancón 1945.²⁵ Some were staged directly by Apristas, others were inspired by APRA. Some were discovered and foiled before they started, others went forward, but none was ultimately successful in bringing APRA to power. What scant evidence connects Haya de la Torre to any particular uprising reveals only glimpses of his thought. For example he briefly stated approval for plans to stage an uprising with weapons to be smuggled in from Bolivia, but cautioned not to discuss it further as the government was intercepting correspondence.²⁶

²³ Murillo Garaycochea, *Historia del APRA* (note 2).

²⁴ For an account of the repercussions of the Trujillo insurrection in twentieth-century Peruvian political culture see Iñigo García-Bryce, “A Revolution Remembered, A Revolution Forgotten: The Apristas Insurrection of Trujillo, Peru, 1932”: *A Contracorriente* 7, 3 (2010), p. 277–322.

²⁵ Margarita Giesecke has demonstrated how the 1932 insurrection was part of a much broader pattern of political violence by Apristas seeking to gain power. See Margarita Giesecke, *The Trujillo Insurrection, the APRA Party and the Making of Modern Peruvian Politics* (doctoral thesis, London University 1993). A full list can be found in Víctor Villanueva, *Ejército peruano: del caudillaje anárquico al militarismo reformista* (Lima 1973), p. 412.

²⁶ Haya de la Torre to “The Three Musketeers” August 30th, 1936, Archivo Pardo: Thomas Davies Jr/Víctor Villanueva, *300 documentos para la historia del APRA* (Lima 1978), p. 73.

APRA continued to train some of its members as an armed wing of the party. The Federación Aprista Juvenil (FAJ; Apra Youth Federation), founded in 1934 and modelled on the youth groups common in Communist parties of the period, included training in both propaganda and military tactics. The FAJ's founder, Armando Villanueva del Campo, tells of how the youths were trained to use weapons, albeit in a fairly rudimentary fashion. This militarized wing within the party was dubbed "Búfalos" in commemoration of Manuel "Búfalo" Barreto, the leader of the Trujillo insurrection. It came to be used not only to combat political enemies outside the party, but also as a disciplinary tool for party members.

The last major attempt at insurgency connected to APRA demonstrates some of the interpretative problems that still beset our understanding of APRA's insurgent tradition. At two o'clock in the morning, on October 3rd, 1948, a group of naval officers staged an attack on a series of military installations in the port of Callao and took over a number of ships in the fleet anchored in the port of Callao. Among the buildings taken on shore was the imposing colonial fortress Real Felipe, built to defend the city of Lima during the time of the Spanish Empire. Bustamante's government called in the army and air force, using tanks and airplanes to put down the insurrection. The most complete account of this incident still is the one written by Major Víctor Villanueva, who threw his support behind the armed insurgency and later accused Haya de la Torre of backing out at the last moment and of not mobilizing civilian Apristas behind the effort.²⁷ The failure of the insurrection is thus explained through reference to Haya's personal decision-making style. Haya withheld his support at this particular juncture because he was apparently seeking the support of army generals in order to guarantee a successful uprising. The failed attempt cost the party another eight years of formal exclusion from politics.

The concurrent efforts to gain power through democratic and violent means become clear if one draws a timeline running from 1928 to 1956. The timeline would be dotted with successive attempts at both armed insurgency and democratic participation. In 1936, APRA put forward the candidacy of Haya de la Torre, but the Benavides government banned his candidacy and subsequently cancelled the election, won by Luis Antonio Eguiguren with Aprista votes. In the 1939 elections, APRA remained an illegal party. However, the party clearly remained a key player, as candidates Manuel Prado and José Quesada of the Patriotic Front both approached

²⁷ Víctor Villanueva, *La sublevación aprista del 48: Tragedia de un pueblo y un partido* (Lima 1973).

Haya for support. While APRA officially called on party followers to abstain in the election, many ended up voting for Prado, the winning candidate.

In 1945, a newly legalized APRA participated as part of a coalition led by José Luis Bustamante y Rivero and obtained congressional representation for the first time since 1931 as well as a couple of cabinet ministers. The brief period of democracy ended with the 1948 insurrection, led by Aprista sympathizers in the Peruvian navy. The failed insurrection was APRA's last major attempt to gain power by force. In 1956, APRA now having moved substantially to the right in its political platform, was able to once again participate in an elected government, the so-called *convivencia* with its former political enemy Manuel Prado. This paved the way for full legality and for Haya de la Torre to finally run for president in 1962. This highly charged election, which he won by a very thin margin and which was to be decided in Congress, led to a military coup to prevent Haya de la Torre from becoming president. The following year, Haya ran for the last time as presidential candidate and lost to Acción Popular's Fernando Belaúnde Terry.

The third paradox is that of a party that began as an anti-imperialist party and proclaimed its opposition to the United States in the very first point of its political program ("Against yankee imperialism") and subsequently embraced the possibility of a positive role for the United States in Latin America. The "Yankee" was removed from the party policy in 1942 as APRA began to position itself as a US ally, first against fascism and then against communism. While this shift can partly be explained as a result of Haya's increased moderation as he sought to legalize APRA, the relationship between Haya and the United States is both nuanced and constantly evolving. From his earliest years, Haya was influenced by his contact with US citizens, and he continued to seek contact with US officials and intellectuals in support of his ideas and his political program. Even before the founding of APRA, the young Haya taught at the Anglo-American School in Lima, where he met Anna Melissa Graves, a teacher and writer who would be his benefactress, helping to pay for his studies while he was in England in 1925.

Despite the strong anti-Yankee rhetoric of the early years, Haya's shift toward a more moderate position occurred very early on in his career as he prepared to enter Peruvian politics. The change of attitude can be seen by comparing different views by US officials of the student activist in 1929 and then the presidential candidate in 1931. On January 11th, 1929, the *chargé d'affaires* in Venezuela, C. Van H. Engert, informed the US State Department on Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, the Peruvian "agitator":

"I have the honor to report that Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre does not, as yet, appear to have visited Venezuela and, it is not likely that he will be permitted to do so if the Venezuelan Government knows anything about his identity. The Legation will therefore informally and discreetly advise the authorities of his past activities. There is no local branch or organization of the 'Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana' (APRA) in existence, and as the regime of President Gómez looks with disfavor upon all societies of this character it seems certain that neither it, nor any groups affiliated with it, would be allowed to establish themselves in Venezuela. Should Haya de la Torre arrive in this country the Legation will endeavor to follow his movements and will report further."²⁸

Yet only two years later, in 1931 when Haya de la Torre had returned to Peru and was running in that year's election as his party's presidential candidate, US ambassador Fred Dearing met him and reported in the following terms:

"From what I know up to this point [...] I should think that if he should become president of Peru, we should have nothing to fear and, on the contrary, might expect an excellent and beneficent administration of strongly liberal tendencies in which justice in the main would be done, and a period of confidence and wellbeing be initiated."²⁹

As soon as he began to play the game of politics in the real setting of Peru rather than the more virtual setting of international propaganda, Haya very quickly made the transition from student leader to national politician. In fact I would argue that his longevity as a key political figure in Peru stems from this understanding of politics as the art of negotiation and compromise, rather than absolutes.

Despite his initial positioning on the Left, Haya de la Torre saw capitalist development as essential to Latin America. The stated need for foreign capital to develop Latin American economies while striving for social welfare was part of the originality of the Aprista formula. During the 1930s, he realized that his party needed US support to gain power in Peru. His caution regarding the United States is reflected in the publication history of his main work *El anti-imperialismo y el APRA*. After the first two editions in 1936, Haya refused to authorize further editions until much later, when it was republished during the government of General Velasco (1968–1975) at a time when the political ground had shifted with the establishment of a

²⁸ Van Engert to Kellogg, Venezuela, January 11th, 1929: National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereinafter NARA), APRA/16, 810.43.

²⁹ Dearing to Kellogg, September 7th, 1931: NARA, APRA/102, 810.43.

military regime in Peru that implemented many of the reforms originally proposed by APRA.

Rather than insist on the anti-imperialist line, Haya published *La Defensa Continental* in 1941, arguing that the Good Neighbor Policy offered an opportunity for better relations with the United States and that in the context of the worldwide struggle between fascism and democracy, Latin American must take the side of democracy and become an ally of the United States. As an explanation for this change of attitude, Haya pointed very directly to concrete steps taken by the United States, such as President Herbert Hoover's withdrawal of US marines from Nicaragua and the repeal of the Platt Amendment that had guaranteed the United States a legal right to intervene in Cuban internal affairs. He attributed many of these changes to the anti-imperialist struggle launched by APRA:

“Faced with this promising ‘change of direction’ in panamericanism – which represents the victory of the Indoamerican anti-imperialist crusade – Aprismo faced the new reality without exaggerated illusions, but free of intolerant prejudices.”³⁰

Even during his early years, Haya offered a more nuanced view of the United States than might be expected from the leader of an anti-imperialist party claiming to fight Yankee imperialism. As Steven Schwartzberg has pointed out, at this early stage Haya acknowledged the importance of anti-imperialists in the United States. Referring to Scott Nearing and Samuel Guy Inman he wrote: “Until now the best books against North American imperialism – we say it frankly – have appeared in North America”.³¹ Later in his life he would place the United States more fully in the role of anti-imperialist precursor. In a 1953 letter to Luis Alberto Sánchez he wrote:

“[...] anti-imperialism – as a movement and as a term – was born in the United States between 1890 and 1900. The first anti-imperialists to be called such – that were under that banner, using the word and concept – were Bryan's Democrats in their struggle against Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge”.³²

³⁰ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, *La defensa continental* (3rd ed., Buenos Aires 1946), p. 11–12.

³¹ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “El antimperalismo y el APRA”: idem, *Obras Completas*, vol. 4 (2nd ed., Lima 1984), p. 148; quoted by Steven Schwartzberg, *Democracy and US Policy in Latin America during the Truman Years* (Gainesville 2003), p. 94.

³² Haya de la Torre to Sánchez, May 21st, 1953, in Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, *Correspondencia*, Luis Alberto Sánchez (ed.), vol. 2 (Lima 1982), p. 66, quoted in Schwartzberg, *Democracy* (note 31), p. 94–95.

He would also argue that Latin Americans could find allies for their cause among liberal middle class intellectuals in the United States.³³ Haya had been in direct contact with some of these intellectuals, such as Carleton Beals, when they visited Lima, even during the period when he was in hiding. During the brief period of legality from 1945 to 1948 we find more direct dealings with the US government, including a trip to the United States between January and May 1948.

Yet even as Haya de la Torre befriended the US and sought to present APRA as an alternative to communism in Latin America, he remained wary in his writings of the United States. In a 1938 editorial written in Cuba, he contrasted the US support of Latin American tyrants with its disapproval of European ones.³⁴ In 1945, in a private interview with an unnamed American businessman, reported on by the US embassy, Haya continued to contrast the US double standard with respect to Europe and Latin America: "It was inconsistent to send an army of millions of men to combat totalitarianism throughout the world and on the other hand to apparently overlook this type of government in Latin America." This kind of approach was damaging to the US, and furthermore "this attitude of the State Department made it particularly difficult for leaders of democratic groups, such as himself, to combat a feeling of unfriendliness toward the United States among the rank and file of their members."³⁵ He thus positioned himself as a reluctant critic, seeking better US behavior to facilitate the support of the APRA party.

One of my conversations with a Lima taxi driver helps to introduce the fourth paradox. When he heard that I was studying APRA, the taxi driver commented that even in the most remote town in Peru you can always find both a police station and an APRA party headquarters. Although the comment is not entirely accurate, it does reflect the degree to which a *caudillo*-led party has been able to create a strong institutional structure that ultimately survived its leader. This paradox can be understood by looking more closely at the organizational structure of APRA, which depended on the one hand on the efforts on a network of individuals both nationally and internationally, and on the other on the deliberate creation of a cult of personality around Haya de la Torre. This official cult of personality began during the 1930s and was intended to foster the kind of mass followings common at this time in the case of fascist parties in Europe. However, the focus on Haya masks the inner workings of a party with a well-defined organizational structure, with a number of leaders both in Peru and in exile who,

³³ Alexander, *Aprismo* (note 6), p. 25.

³⁴ NARA, APRA 219, 819.43.

³⁵ Dispatch 2380 from Milton Wells, January 11th, 1945: NARA, 823.00/1-1145.

despite the increased power of Haya as founder and head of the party, continued to engage in discussions and disagreements regarding policy issues. The list of party leaders whose role still needs to be studied further includes Manuel Seoane, Luis Alberto Sánchez, Ramiro Prialé, Fernando León de Vivero, Manuel Checa, Nicanor Mujica Álvarez Calderón, Luis Heysen, Alfredo Tello, and many others.

The rhythms of persecution and exile that marked Haya de la Torre's life required the existence of a strong organization alongside the strong leader. Haya spent most of the years between 1932 and 1945 in hiding. It is difficult to imagine that he would have been able to exert such a strong influence on the organization under these circumstances. Correspondence with leaders in exile demonstrates that Haya's status of *jefe* of the party did not make him immune from criticism by other party leaders. The correspondence with the exiled leaders in Chile attests to these continued disagreements among leaders that influenced the course of action for Aprismo. For example, in his letter to Haya de la Torre dated April 27th, 1939, Manuel Seoane, long considered the second most important leader within APRA, challenged Haya de la Torre for publicly criticizing some of the party's leaders and hence undermining their authority. The language of this letter points to the importance of Aprismo as a doctrine not connected to any particular personality but rather embodying a set of ideas that guided action:

"I just want to say that I will fulfill my duty, that I will never stop being an Aprista because that would be like being told that I had ceased to have human form, or something along those lines; but I think that the rapport between the leader and the party members should be guided by norms of mutual consideration that stimulate and elevate rather than scoff and belittle".³⁶

Another leader who challenged Haya de la Torre was Magda Portal, who urged him to leave Peru and embark once again on the party's continentalist mission. Following the failed 1948 uprising, during the five years between 1948 and 1953 that Haya found political asylum in the Colombian embassy in Lima, he was more isolated than ever before from the party, which continued to function in his absence.

Haya was originally inspired by the Leninist model of a vanguard party which defined APRA during most of its early decades. During its first years as an international organization, APRA was fairly loosely structured with cells in different countries, joined together primarily through the corre-

³⁶ Manuel Seoane to Haya de la Torre, April 27th, 1939: Davies/Villanueva, *Secretos Electorales* (note 17), p. 48 [document 23].

spondence among their members. For the election of 1931 in Peru, APRA switched to a much broader and open organization, able to draw large numbers of followers who were willing to make small payments that helped to sustain the party. However, once the period of persecution began, the party organization became more vertical in structure, with Haya de la Torre as the unquestioned leader. This vertical structure has remained a hallmark of the party even as it transitioned to become a mass political party participating in elections. Party organization includes a number of established national committees (Discipline, Propaganda, Foreign Relations) as well as a fairly structured organization at the local level. This organizational structure allowed APRA to survive far beyond Haya de la Torre's death in 1979.

As a mass political party with a personality cult, APRA followed a pattern similar to that of totalitarian parties in Europe:

"From the totalitarian parties of Europe, whose rise Haya had witnessed during his exile, APRA borrowed the heavy use of symbolism, the emotional rallies, and the cult of the leader – very effective devices for a mass-based party in a country with a low level of literacy."³⁷

In a letter to her friend Anna Graves (Haya's benefactress), Magda Portal justified the need for this cult of personality claiming that this was what Peru's people needed. It could be argued that Haya was replaced by Alan García as party *caudillo*. However, García has been unable to build a cult of personality around himself or to rival Haya on this front, attesting to the continued importance of party organization as a key to APRA's longevity.

The fifth and related paradox has to do with the issue of discipline: a party for which discipline became a hallmark of party identity (to this day it remains the reputation of APRA in Peru) yet whose history is filled with acts of insubordination and questioning of the discipline imposed by Haya de la Torre and other leaders. From his earliest writings on APRA in the 1920s, Haya expressed the need to create party discipline as he built a party in the Leninist mold. The Aprista youth group FAJ was intended to instill party discipline in the young men and women recruited into the party. The very first point in its written "Code of Action" with forty-eight points intended to mold the behavior of young Apristas. The first of these was: "Young aprista: prepare yourself for action and not for pleasure – that is your duty."³⁸ FAJ was modeled on the Communist youth groups and intended to foster a similar sense of discipline and commitment to the party. The long years of persecution made party discipline all the more important

³⁷ David Werlich, *Peru: A Short History* (Carbondale 1978), p. 206.

³⁸ Roy Soto Rivera, *Victor Raúl: El hombre del siglo XX* (Lima 2002), p. 301.

to keep the party alive. However, the return to legality in 1945 created a new series of demands on party organization. Describing the party in 1948, Werlich writes:

“With party morale and discipline in disarray, APRA’s highly centralized ‘vertical organization’ became a liability. The administrative machinery was too unwieldy for effective control, and the party’s increasingly conservative National Executive Committee could not check the activities of militant subordinates.”³⁹

The emphasis on discipline – the party organization included a Secretariat of Discipline – is best understood in the context of a history of countless challenges to this discipline and to the orders coming from the party leadership. APRA’s two major attempts at revolution, the 1932 and 1948 insurrections, were spearheaded by members of the party without approval of the party leadership. The insurrection of Trujillo on July 7th, 1932, was begun by a car mechanic, Manuel Barreto, who together with his followers disobeyed party orders and initiated an armed attack on an army barrack in Trujillo. The party had been preparing an armed uprising, but party leaders continuously delayed its date and were taken by surprise by the Trujillo events. The second major uprising in Callao in 1948 also occurred without coordination with the party leadership when APRA sympathizers in the navy launched their attack. The most detailed source on this incident remains the account of Major Víctor Villanueva, *La sublevación aprista del 48: Tragedia de un pueblo y un partido* (Lima 1973), a participant who accused Haya of hesitating at the last minute and of not throwing the party’s support behind the uprising. Haya claimed that once he found out about it, he tried to support the uprising by appealing to the army to stage a coup. Once that failed, he “claimed that he considered calling the Aprista masses into the streets, but it was Sunday morning, a very bad time to mobilize students and workers.”⁴⁰ If the claim that Haya de la Torre was not informed about the uprising until two hours after it occurred is accurate, it would point to a lack of coordination and/or an inability of the party leadership to maintain discipline among its ranks.⁴¹ The incident also may point to deeper tensions within the party involving the armed commandos within APRA itself. According to Nelson Manrique the armed groups within APRA (Comando de Defensa), eager to stage a revolution, faced a reluctant Haya de la Torre who had been attempting to convince generals within the military sympathetic to APRA to stage an institutional coup that would pave the way for elections and an eventual APRA victory.

³⁹ Werlich, *Peru* (note 37), p. 243.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 245.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

Other acts of insubordination marked these years, most notably political assassinations. On March 5th, 1932, an Aprista – Jorge Melgar Márquez – shot, but did not kill, President Sánchez Cerro at a church in Lima’s district of Miraflores. The following year, on April 30th, Abelardo Mendoza Leiva, another Aprista, assassinated Sánchez Cerro after he had reviewed troops at Lima’s hippodrome... In 1935 a young member of the FAJ named Carlos Steer assassinated the publisher of *El Comercio*’s, Antonio Miro Quesada, and his wife. The assassination of Miro Quesada solidified the anti-Aprista stance of Peru’s major newspaper.⁴² Indiscipline was not restricted to acts of violence. During the 1939 election, the official party directive that its followers abstain from voting was challenged by a group who secretly published issues of the party newspaper, *La Tribuna*, supporting Manuel Prado, the official candidate, who won with the help of Aprista votes.⁴³

Party history reveals constant tensions and questioning of orders. For example, when Haya issued the directive to those in exile that they should return to Peru in 1939, Manuel Seoane wrote from Chile:

“I do not want to finish this letter without saying that in my judgement, a collective order of this type, that does not take into account the financial difficulties and the different personal situations, although it serves the purposes of demonstrating a spectacular discipline, is not adjusted to the plans that require astuteness necessary in times of emergency, and due to the natural process of indiscretions will alert authorities in charge of watching over entry into Peru.”⁴⁴

The tension within the party resulted in both expulsions and defections. One of the best known defectors was the famous Peruvian novelist Ciro Alegría. A substantial body of anti-Aprista literature began to appear at this time, written mostly by former party members, much of it directed against Haya de la Torre himself.⁴⁵ Over the course of the next decades, the party’s disciplinary committee and Haya de la Torre sanctioned numerous members of the party and in some cases expelled them.

⁴² For an analysis of the oppositional attitude toward APRA in *El Comercio* for these years, see Sönke Hansen, *Neue politische Optionen in Peru im Zeichen der Weltwirtschaftskrise. Das Beispiel der APRA in der liberalkonservativen Presse, 1931–33* (master thesis, University of Hamburg 2006).

⁴³ Werlich, *Peru* (note 37), p. 219.

⁴⁴ Manuel Seoane to César E. Pardo, Santiago, April 27th, 1939: Davies/Villanueva, *Secretos electorales* (note 17), p. 53 [document 24].

⁴⁵ Eduardo Enríquez, *Haya de la Torre, la estafa política más grande de América Latina* (Lima 1951).

A central theme in twentieth-century Peruvian history is the topic of the sixth paradox characterizing the party: the enmity between APRA and the Peruvian military. The APRA–military enmity became entrenched in Peruvian political culture starting with the Trujillo insurrection of 1932. During the days of fighting between APRA rebels and the military forces that recaptured Trujillo, a massacre of army officers occurred in the prison of Trujillo. Although the events were never investigated, the massacre was attributed to APRA. After government forces recaptured the city, hasty military tribunals condemned an undetermined number of Apristas to death. Firing squads performed their task against the adobe walls of the pre-Columbian city of Chan Chan. These events lived on in memory for decades and would be remembered in ceremonies that helped to foster anti-Aprismo within the military.⁴⁶ Anti-APRA propaganda in the military reached new heights during the military dictatorship of General Odría (1948–1956) as the party continued to negotiate its way back into the political system. Haya de la Torre’s inability to win the presidency in 1962, despite his electoral victory, has been attributed to deepseated opposition to him and his party in the ranks of the military.

The APRA–military dichotomy masks the close relationship between members of the two institutions over the decades. Most Aprista insurrections took place with the backing of APRA sympathizers within the military. The appeal of APRA for members of the military went beyond the political message of transforming Peru. As Masterson argues, the degree to which party discipline was emphasized as part of APRA’s identity appealed to members of the military who sought to join APRA: “Ironically, APRA’s political power, generated to a large degree by party discipline and the concomitant loyalty to party activities, encouraged dissatisfied and ambitious military men to join forces with APRA.”⁴⁷ The list of military officers who supported APRA uprisings is long. In March 1933, Lieutenant Coronel Gustavo Jiménez led an uprising of the 11th Infantry Battalion intended to start a revolution and bring APRA to power. This uprising involved collaboration between military and civilian leaders, as is the case of Manuel Chávez Vargas, a school teacher who recruited and trained men to support Jiménez in the northern department of Cajamarca.⁴⁸ The support of military officers is a ubiquitous theme in the history of the party. During the 1930s,

⁴⁶ See García-Bryce, “A Revolution Remembered” (note 24).

⁴⁷ Daniel Masterson, *Militarism and Politics in Latin America: Peru from Sánchez Cerro to Sendero Luminoso* (New York 1991), p. 47.

⁴⁸ Personal interview with Manuel Chavez Vargas, July 8th, 2005; Iñigo García-Bryce, “Entre la democracia y la insurgencia: Testimonios apristas, 1930–1950” (manuscript).

Colonel César Pardo played an important role relaying orders back and forth to the Apristas exiled in Chile.

The failed 1948 uprising points to the participation of a long list of navy officers. It began on October 3rd, led by Major Aguila Pardo and was supported by members of the Peruvian navy. Other military participants in the events included Major Víctor Villanueva and Lieutenant Juan Manuel Ontaneda. At least two other high ranking members of the military are associated with the events of this period, as Haya de la Torre was allegedly negotiating at the time of the insurrection with Generals Juan de Dios Cuadros and José del Carmen Marín to obtain the institutional support of the army for a coup against the Bustamante government.

In some cases the connection between APRA and the military ran deep in family networks. Lieutenant Juan Manuel Ontaneda, who participated in the 1948 revolt, traces his connection to APRA back to his father, Rear Admiral Pablo César Ontaneda. He tells that his father met Haya de la Torre as a result of participating in a revolt led by General Antonio Rodríguez on February 19th, 1939, against the Benavides government. The failed revolt ended with the older Ontaneda in prison.

“When my father was in prison, my mother and I visited him between 1939 and 1945, and at that point I became familiar with the message of Aprismo. This created in me a desire to learn in greater depth about the Aprista ideals, and I did so by reading books that circulated clandestinely at the time.”⁴⁹

The seventh and final paradox involves the role of women in the party. Although APRA became the first party in Peruvian history to recruit women into its ranks, it failed to give them equal status within the party until after they had been granted the vote by General Odría in 1955. Lindomira Peirano tells of how she joined the party when she heard Haya de la Torre speak about the rights of women – yet Haya would later deny women equal rights within the party structure.⁵⁰ The clearest example of this paradox can be seen in the life of Magda Portal, the most prominent woman in the party during its first two decades.⁵¹ Portal helped to found the Mexico cell in

⁴⁹ Juan Manuel Ontaneda Meyer, *Vivencias revolucionarias 3 de octubre de 1948 – Testimonio tomado por los compañeros Percy Murillo y Roy Soto Rivera para la historia del APRA* (Lima, no date).

⁵⁰ Interview with Lindomira Peirano, July 2013: García-Bryce, “Entre la democracia y la insurgencia” (note 48).

⁵¹ For biographies of Portal see Kathleen Weaver, *Peruvian Rebel: The World of Magda Portal* (University Park, PA 2009); and Daniel Reedy, *Magda Portal: La pasionaria peruana. Biografía intelectual* (Lima 2000). For an account of Portal in relation to APRA’s transnational networks see García-Bryce, “Transnational Activist” (note 16).

1928, travelled around the Caribbean in 1929 lecturing on Aprismo, and campaigned for Haya de la Torre during the 1931 election. In Peru she was named Secretary General of the Women's Section of the party and was the only female member of APRA's National Executive Committee. She wrote extensively defending the rights of women. In her 1933 essay *Hacia la mujer nueva: El Aprismo y la mujer* (Lima 1933), she argued for transforming women into Aprista militants willing to combat inequality in Peru. Once APRA was declared illegal, she suffered persecution and spent time in jail in Peru and subsequently lived in exile in Chile. Yet despite her high status in the party, Portal gradually found herself marginalized. When she returned to Peru in 1945 and fought to give women equal status to men within the party, she was rebuffed by Haya de la Torre himself.

The breaking point between her and the party occurred following the Second Aprista Party Congress held between May 27th and June 3rd, 1948. At this event, according to Portal's recollection, Haya declared that "women, since they do not yet have the vote in Peru, cannot be considered authentic members of the Aprista Party. Women can only be sympathizers."⁵² Haya denied Portal's request that women be given the vote within the party structure. Following a public clash with Haya, who shut down debate on the issue, Portal walked out of the congress. Two years later in an accusatory pamphlet, her voice was full of recrimination regarding these events:

"They agreed on what I considered to be the greatest disloyalty for the aprista woman, denying her the right to be a member of the Party 'as long as she lacked political rights' and restricting these rights in the future, since the Statutes established the right of women to vote politically at 24 years of age and that of men at 18 years of age. In this way the Party of the People rewarded women for more than 20 years of loyal commitment, women who had not made any distinctions in age or sex to fight for the conquest of liberty, justice, and democracy for all Peruvians."⁵³

The party's unwillingness to give full rights to women had cultural, political, and personal dimensions. The *machismo* of Peruvian society with its view that women should remain in the private sphere of the home still held sway among most Aprista men. Political factors probably also weighed heavily against Portal's position: at a time when APRA was seeking to distance itself from its radical origins, forging ahead on women's right was not a top priority for Haya.

Haya's clash with Magda at this congress and his unwillingness to grant women full power within the party probably also had personal roots. The

⁵² Weaver, *Peruvian Rebel* (note 51), p. 145.

⁵³ Magda Portal, *¿Quiénes traicionaron al pueblo?* (Lima 1950), p. 27.

relationship between Haya de la Torre and Magda Portal illustrates the ways in which personal relationships helped to shape the various paradoxes that defined the party. Portal had initially been quite close to Haya, and their correspondence demonstrates the degree to which she was able to speak frankly to him about a number of different issues. The initial proximity between Haya de la Torre and Magda Portal slowly was replaced by a more distant and eventually an antagonistic relationship. The reasons for this distancing must remain speculative. The fame of Magda Portal may have proved threatening as she gained international prominence as a political activist within APRA. When she was jailed in 1935, the Argentina journal *Claridad* dedicated a whole issue to her. When she finally left Peru in 1939, tired of the political persecution and of hiding from the police, she was received like a heroine in Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Other evidence also points to the role of personal factors. For reasons that remain unclear, Haya de la Torre had not attended the wake of Portal's daughter Gloria, who committed suicide in 1947. Anecdotal evidence points to a judgemental Haya de la Torre, angry at an alleged illicit sexual relationship between Gloria Portal and a member of APRA's leadership. Whatever the personal details, it is clear that by 1948 the relationship between Portal and Haya had deteriorated.

Each of these seven paradoxes needs to be examined more closely in terms of the shifting events both nationally and internationally, in the first three decades of the party's history. Each revolves in some way around the personality of Haya de la Torre and the network of relationships that he established within and outside the party. Although he rejected the internationalism that had at first driven the party, he remained connected to a network of supporters throughout the continent who published his works, represented the party at international congresses, and advocated for jailed Apristas. Although he wavered about the issue of armed insurrection, he clearly kept this card on the table and thus tacitly or explicitly encouraged the numerous armed uprisings that dotted the party's early history. A pragmatist at heart, he managed somehow to keep Aprismo associated with its early ideas of anti-imperialism and nationalism while developing ties with the United States and negotiating with Peru's most conservative sectors to bring legal acceptance for his party. Despite the cult of personality that grew around him, he presided over a party that had a clear identity, doctrine, and an organizational structure independent of its leader that has now survived Haya de la Torre by thirty-five years and is still considered Peru's only real political party. His obsession with discipline put a mark on a party whose history includes numerous challenges both large and small to the orders and attempts at discipline by the central leadership. His connections

to the military drove the history of the party during these early decades, despite the view of these two institutions as being at odds with another. His relationship with Magda Portal was one factor in the party's paradoxical approach to women – making history by seeking their support but missing the opportunity to make history by excluding them from equal status within the party until after they had officially gained the vote in Peru.

The time has come to move beyond a Manichean approach to what remains one of Latin America's most influential populist parties. As the passion of earlier struggles subsides, APRA deserves to be understood in its full complexity, as a party that has survived through changing periods and scenarios, and in its various different incarnations continues to influence Peruvian and Latin American politics today.

