

Introduction

“La nueva revolución de nuestra América será revolución de base y de sentido indio. De conciencia o de subconsciencia indígena expresada en una renovación económica y social.”¹ Thus advocated the Peruvian politician Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in 1930, while living in Berlin, Germany. Indo-América, he argued, is “la expresión de la nueva concepción renovadora de América” and stems from the continental revolution under way.² Indo-América emerged at the beginning of the last century as a hemispheric and anti-imperialist revolutionary ideal, one that claimed to emphasize the Indigenous roots of Latin American culture and society. The American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), a highly influential populist and anti-imperialist movement in twentieth century Peru and Latin America more broadly, first envisioned and theorized Indo-América as a project of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial resistance, making it a key element of its political program during the interwar period.

This book has two intertwined objectives. First, it examines how and why the anti-imperialist project of the APRA took root outside of Peru. Second, it investigates the ways in which struggles for political survival in Peru shaped APRA’s consciousness of the global. Unlike most studies that

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. “The new revolution of our America will have Indian foundations and meaning. It will be based on an Indigenous consciousness or sub-consciousness, which will be expressed through economic and social renewal.” Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “La cuestión del nombre,” In *¿A dónde va Indoamérica?*, Santiago de Chile: Editoriales Ercilla, 1935, p. 29.

² Haya de la Torre, “The expression of the new renovating conception of America,” *¿A dónde va Indoamérica?*, p. 23.

interpret APRA's formation as entirely within the framework of Peruvian national history, the conclusions of this book show how the experience of exile and transnational solidarity decisively shaped the formation and the ideology of this major populist movement. Furthermore, by evincing the role that local politics in Peru and international politics abroad played in shaping APRA's call for hemispheric unity and Latin American solidarity, *Journey to Indo-América* explores more broadly how local dynamics shape global connections and collaborations.

SOLIDARITY AND ANTI-COLONIAL VISIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN UNITY

The American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) emerged in the mid-1920s as a hemispheric anti-imperialist movement. Established by a handful of leftist Peruvian exiles, this international organization demanded political, economic, cultural, and spiritual sovereignty for the people of Latin America. Its adherents, Apristas, rejected political institutions and revolutionary ideologies that came from Europe or the United States. They proposed instead to build a revolutionary doctrine Indigenous to the Americas, one that reflected Latin American realities rather than emulating ideologies that grew out of very different European conditions. As a result, Apristas positioned continental unity at the forefront of their fight against economic imperialism and mental colonialism. This vision, which they described by coining the term Indo-América, was intended to bring both freedom and moral revival to Latin Americans. The founders of APRA were university students and labour activists who had engaged in anti-governmental activities and attacked the political and social conditions that reigned in early twentieth-century Peru. The price they paid for their political activism was persecution, with arrests and waves of deportations starting in the spring of 1923.

The Peruvian students and labour activists who founded APRA initially conceived of their movement as an international organization, reflecting the context of its genesis in exile. The first Aprista committees were concurrently established in Paris, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City between 1926 and 1928. From exile, Aprista members came face to face with Latin American realities. Many echoed Haya de la Torre's reflection on the impact that exile had left on his political beliefs: "mi reciente viaje por Centroamérica, tan fecundo en trascendentes experiencias, me ha permitido ver de cerca la lucha de uno de los más importantes sectores de la América Latina contra el imperialismo invasor de los Estados

Unidos del Norte.”³ From exile, Aprista members also pursued militant activities, and organized and expanded their political movement into Europe and most of the Americas. They started to return to Peru in the summer of 1930 in order to found a national party, the Peruvian APRA party (PAP), in the hope of participating in the 1931 Peruvian elections.⁴

Today, Latin Americans continue to associate Indo-América with a form of resistance against Pan-American visions that are either entrenched in European outlooks or dependent on US dominance in the region. The discursive use of Indo-América, the name Apristas gave to the vast region south of the Río Grande, conveyed a forceful anti-colonial argument. By the end of the interwar period, Apristas came to prefer this name over Hispanic America, which they thought was too close to the legacy of Spain’s colonialism. They similarly rejected Latin America as a nineteenth-century French invention meant to feed anti-Spanish sentiments. Pan-Americanism was also problematic, they claimed, because of its links with economic imperialism and because it included the continent as a whole without distinction between North America and South America. This early political statement partly explains Indo-América’s enduring legacy as a symbol of Latin American resistance against foreign powers.⁵ The resilience of APRA’s Indo-América as a continental utopia and as a political weapon for anti-imperialist resistance also relied, as we shall see, on a surprising ideological malleability put at the service of a political cause in Peru.

APRA’s vision of Latin American unity was hardly new. Aspirations for hemispheric integration have shaped the continent’s political, social, and economic history for over two hundred years. From Simón Bolívar’s dream of a united Spanish America in the early nineteenth century to Hugo Chávez’s “Bolivarian revolution” in the early twenty-first century, Latin America has seen many attempts to forge collective projects that went beyond the confines of the nation-state. To be sure, individual

³ “My recent trip to Central America, which fuelled transcendental experiences, enabled me to closely observe the struggle that one of the most important sectors of Latin America was leading against the invading imperialism of the United States.” Haya de la Torre, *¿A dónde va Indoamérica?*, p. 41.

⁴ On August 25, 1930, Lieutenant Colonel Luis M. Sánchez Cerro fomented a military coup and successfully seized power. The end of Leguía’s *oncenio* (eleven-year term) marked a short-lived political opening in Peruvian politics.

⁵ Harry Kantor, *The Ideology and Program of the Peruvian Aprista Movement*, New York: Octagon Books, 1966, pp. 28–29. Luis Alberto Sánchez, “A New Interpretation of the History of America,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 23: 3 (1943), 442.

countries in Latin America have asserted nationalist claims to exclusive sovereignty over territories and populations. At the same time, broad-based movements have championed unity and solidarity among Latin American peoples as the best vehicle to oppose foreign territorial expansion and cultural and economic influence. Continental nationalism first emerged in modern Latin America as an expression of hemispheric rather than national consciousness – a sense of belonging to the same continent-wide imagined community. Though different linguistic, cultural, and racial ideals formed the basis for an imagined Latin American community, the project of continental nationalism always carried an anti-colonial meaning against foreign intruders.⁶

In the wake of the Mexican Revolution and in the aftermath of the First World War, the first half of the twentieth century saw across Central America, the Caribbean, and South America a diverse, unorthodox constellation of radicals, revolutionaries, reformists, and populists take up the banner of Latin American unity and anti-imperialist struggle.⁷ Their reasons for doing so varied, and as a result so did their perspectives on regional identities. Some of these anti-imperialist thinkers advocated *Hispanicidad*, specifically a return to the spiritual and moral values of Spain, as the best way to contest US imperialism and excessive materialism in the Southern Hemisphere.⁸ Others preferred the larger European and cosmopolitan outlook Latin America provided to resist US

⁶ Aimer Granados and Carlos Marichal (eds), *Construcción de las identidades latinoamericanas. Ensayos de historia intelectual siglos XIX y XX*, México: DF, El Colegio de México, 2004; Luis Tejada Ripalda, “El americanismo. Consideraciones sobre el nacionalismo continental latinoamericano,” *Investigaciones sociales* 8: 12 (2004): 167–200; Jussi Pakkasvirta, *¿Un continente, una nación? Intelectuales latinoamericanos, comunidad política y las revistas culturales en Costa Rica y el Perú*, San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997.

⁷ Barry Carr, “Pioneering Transnational Solidarity in the Americas: The Movement in Support of Augusto C. Sandino, 1927–1934,” *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 20: 2 (2009): 141–152; Alexandra Pita González (ed.), *Redes intelectuales transnacionales en América Latina durante la entreguerra*, México: Universidad de Colima, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2016; Alexandra Pita González, *La Unión Latinoamericana y el Boletín Renovación: Redes intelectuales y revistas culturales en la década de 1920*, México, DF: Colegio de México, Colima: Universidad de Colima, 2009; Ricardo Melgar Bao, “The Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas between the East and Latin America,” *Latin American Perspectives* 35: 2 (2008): 9–24.

⁸ Fabio Moraga Valle, “¿Una nación íbero o indoamericana? Joaquín Edwards Bello y el Nacionalismo continental,” in Alexandra Pita González and Carlos Marichal Salinas (eds), *Pensar el antiimperialismo: Ensayos de historia intelectual latinoamericana, 1900–1930*, México, DF: El Colegio de México, Colima, Universidad de Colima, 2012, p. 247–282.

intervention, or else celebrated the democratic character of the “Latin race” in contradistinction with foreign expansionism.⁹ By the late 1920s and 1930s, Indo-América surged as yet another model of anti-imperialist and hemispheric unity for the region. Whatever the successes, failures, or limitations of these movements, there is no doubt that such aspirations became, and are still, deeply embedded in Latin American political cultures.¹⁰

One such transnational project was that of Peru’s APRA. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, APRA became a powerful national party and saw its calls for Indo-American solidarity, Latin American unity, and anti-imperialist struggle resonate well beyond Peru’s borders throughout the Americas. While *aprismo* was never an ideologically or organizationally united movement, it generated social imaginaries and political symbols that became an enduring part of Latin American politics and culture for generations to come. APRA’s anti-imperialist ideology of the 1920s and 1930s inspired a generation of Latin American intellectuals, artists, and political activists in their quest for social justice.¹¹ It likewise influenced a diverse network of internationalists and self-proclaimed anti-imperialists in the United States who strived to improve inter-American relations during a period characterized by extremely tense US–Latin American relations.¹² Many of these people, Latin Americans and non-Latin Americans alike, would play important roles in the growth and survival of APRA throughout the interwar period, with lasting consequences for APRA’s critiques of Latin America’s structural inequalities. This book

⁹ Michel Gobat, “The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race,” *American Historical Review*, 118: 5 (2013): 1345–1375; Alexandra Pita González and Carlos Marichal Salinas (eds), *Pensar el antiimperialismo: Ensayos de historia intelectual latinoamericana, 1900–1930*, México, DF: El Colegio de México, Colima, Universidad de Colima, 2012.

¹⁰ Aldo Marchesi, *Latin America’s Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

¹¹ Daniel Iglesias, *Du pain et de la Liberté. Socio-histoire des partis populaires apristes (Pérou, Venezuela, 1920–1962)*, Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2015; Leandro Sessa, “‘Semillas en tierras estériles’: La recepción del APRA en la Argentina de mediados de la década de los treinta,” *Revista Sociohistórica*, 28 (2011): 131–161; Robert Whitney, *State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920–1940*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p. 36–53.

¹² Geneviève Dorais, “Missionary Critiques of Empire, 1920–1932: Between Interventionism and Anti-Imperialism,” *The International History Review* 39: 3 (2017): 377–433; Anita Brenner, “Student Rebels in Latin America,” *The Nation*, December 12, 1928, pp. 668–669.

traces the ways in which engaging in interwar trans-American and trans-national solidarity networks, while assisting in crucial ways the organizing efforts of young Peruvian and Latin American radicals and political exiles, also limited the radical possibilities for social and political change that first drove APRA's anti-imperialist project of hemispheric unity.

Doing so places me in dialogue with a divided field of study regarding the revolutionary and transformative potential of *Indoamericanismo* for the Americas. A branch of the literature situates in Indo-América the first true alternative to Eurocentric modernity the region has known in the modern period.¹³ Scholars likewise celebrate the early Marxist interpretations of APRA leaders for vindicating the rights and demands of "Indigenous America" and for including the emancipation of the Indigenous peoples in their strategic vision for Latin America's social revolution.¹⁴ Indo-América, especially its early (though brief) socialist inflections, appears in these analyses as the point of junction between the Andean tradition and the new modernity, a mediating force around which the collective and millenarian forces of the Indigenous masses found common grounds with Marxism.¹⁵ Indo-América has also been enthusiastically portrayed as a fusion of welded temporalities, an imagined *uchrony* (*ucronia*) where past legacies transcendently bequeath to Latin Americans the possibility of emancipated futures.¹⁶

But Indo-América can also be reproved for its conservatism. APRA's Indo-American project lends itself to the same criticisms launched against *Indigenismo*. *Indigenismo* was a political and aesthetic movement that

¹³ See for example Luis Arturo Torres Rojo, "La semántica política de Indoamericana, 1918–1941," in Aimer Granados and Carlos Marichal (eds), *Construcción de las identidades latinoamericanas. Ensayos de historia intelectual siglos XIX y XX*, México, DF: El Colegio de México, 2004, p. 207–240; César Germaná, *El 'Socialismo Indoamericano' de José Carlos Mariátegui: Proyecto de reconstitución del sentido histórico de la sociedad peruana*, Lima: Amauta, 1995; Aníbal Quijano, "Modernity, Identity, and Utopia in Latin America," *Boundary 2*, 20: 3 (1993): 140–155; Quijano, *Introducción a Mariátegui*, Mexico: Ediciones Era, S.A, 1981.

¹⁴ Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker (eds), *José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011, p. 128. One of these celebrated leaders is the Peruvian socialist José Carlos Mariátegui, whose initial affiliation with APRA is often obliterated from historical narratives. I will return to this subject in Chapter 3.

¹⁵ Ricardo Melgar Bao, *Mariátegui, Indoamerica y las crisis civilizatorias de Occidente*, Lima: Editora Amauta S.A, 1995, pp. 32–33.

¹⁶ Torres Rojo, "La semántica política de Indoamericana, 1918–1941"; Luis Arturo Torres Rojo, *Ucronia y alteridad: notas para la historia de los conceptos políticos de Indoamérica, indigenismo e indianismo en México y Perú 1918–1994*, La Paz: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur, 2016.

sought to save and redeem the marginalized Indigenous peoples of Latin America from the perspectives of white and mestizo intellectuals.¹⁷ Not incidentally, the Indigenist movement proliferated during the period under study in this book, particularly in countries like Peru and Mexico with large Indigenous populations, and had a marked influence on APRA's anti-imperialist project of hemispheric unity. Nonetheless, whereas the *idea* of Indo-América initially foregrounded the racialized inequities of Latin America's economic and political development, its consolidation in later years as a *political concept* of anti-imperialist resistance and Latin American solidarity wended up having very little to do with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.¹⁸ That is not to say that APRA's vision of global resistance to imperialism should be dismissed as a fraud. But we must bear in mind this pointed limitation in our attempts to decipher and reckon with Indo-América's lasting ethos of Latin American unity and trans-American solidarity in the face of foreign power and global capitalism.

This is particularly the case since the interwar years saw the United States aggressively promoting its own hemispheric vision of Pan-Americanism, a vision that reflected its growing political, economic, and cultural power in the Americas. It was within this context of expanding US hegemony that APRA's message of anti-imperialist Latin American

¹⁷ Kim Díaz, "Indigenismo in Peru and Bolivia," in Robert Eli Sánchez, Jr. (ed.), *Latin American and Latinx Philosophy: A Collaborative Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. 180–197; Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000. In the past decade, scholars have returned to *Indigenismo* with a critical gaze on the movement's shortcomings while also reckoning with its historical and transformative significance for the meaning of modernity and of inclusive citizenship in early-twentieth-century Latin America. See Laura Giraudo and Stephen E. Lewis, "Introduction: Pan-American Indigenismo (1940–1970): New Approaches to an Ongoing Debate," *Latin American Perspectives* 39: 5 (2012): 3–11; Laura Giraudo and Juan Martín-Sánchez (eds), *La ambivalente historia del indigenismo. Campo interamericano y trayectorias nacionales, 1940–1970*, Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2011; Priscilla Archibald, *Imagining Modernity in the Andes*, Lewisburgh, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2011; Jorge Coronado, *The Andes Imagined: Indigenismo, Society, and Modernity*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.

¹⁸ What distinguishes a concept from an idea, according to the Latin American conceptual historians' readings of Reinhart Koselleck, is the concept's capacity to transcend its initial context of enunciation and to project itself in time. Elías J. Palti, "La nueva historia intelectual y sus repercusiones en América Latina," *Histórica Unisinos*, 11: 3 (2007): 297–305; Elías J. Palti, "The 'Theoretical Revolution' in Intellectual History: From the History of Political Ideas to the History of Political Languages," *History and Theory*, 53: 3 (2014): 387–405.

solidarity first emerged. From the mid-1920s through the mid-1930s, this message provided a powerful and compelling counter-narrative to US imperialism. Yet by the following decade, APRA's attacks against the United States had receded. More striking still is how APRA leaders ultimately accepted and fully engaged in the 1940s with the US-led vision of hemispheric integration as a viable political option. The new Pan-Americanism featuring non-intervention as a function of the Good Neighbor Policy (1933), as well as the rise of European Fascism, can only account in small measure for this political turnabout.

Journey to Indo-América argues that Indo-América, APRA's project of hemispheric unity, came to be understood in the 1940s as a democratic bulwark against the rise of Fascism in Europe, rather than the anti-US movement originally intended not only as a result of world events, but more importantly out of the necessity of political survival at the national level. The ideological and political evolution of the anti-imperialist APRA cannot be fully understood without attention to the state persecution and exile of APRA members. Because of its anti-government activities, before 1945 APRA was never able to participate fully and openly in Peruvian politics. Its survival therefore hinged on the capacity to remain connected to foreign allies. *Journey to Indo-América* explores how the necessity of engaging with international networks of solidarity – on the one hand, in order to withstand repression in Peru, while on the other simultaneously organizing labour and the middle sectors and vying for control of their fast-growing party at the national level – shaped APRA's anti-imperialist theses over time, as well as the project of hemispheric unity it promoted both inside and outside Peru. *Journey to Indo-América* simultaneously underscores the internal conflicts that rocked the Aprista movement from its inception onward. It advances that recurrent experiences of exile and ties to international solidarity contributed to firmly establishing the dominion of a moderate and anti-communist faction in the movement by the mid-to-late 1930s.

APRA'S ANTI-IMPERIALIST THESES

The first political platform of APRA reflected its international roots. In 1926, it released a five-plank program, which it called the “maximum program,” or program for Latin America, as a means to orient and coordinate the struggles of national liberation it hoped to help bring about at the continental level. Its fundamental proposals were: (1) action against Yankee imperialism; (2) the political unity of Latin America; (3)

the nationalization of land and industry; (4) the internationalization of the Panama Canal; and (5) solidarity with all peoples and all oppressed classes.¹⁹ The APRA rejected political institutions and revolutionary ideologies that came from Europe or the United States. They proposed instead to build a revolutionary doctrine Indigenous to the Americas, one that reflected Latin American realities rather than emulating European conditions.²⁰ The influence of APRA's anti-imperialist theses expanded well beyond Peru. Nationalist parties similar to the Peruvian APRA party surged in other Latin American countries, including: The *Acción Democrática* (Venezuela), the *Liberación Nacional* (Costa Rica), the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Bolivia), the *Partido Febrerista* (Paraguay), the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (Dominican Republic), the *Mouvement Ouvrier* (Haiti), the *Partido Popular Democrático* (Puerto Rico), and the *Auténtico* and *Ortodoxo* parties (Cuba).²¹

In the 1920s and parts of the 1930s, Apristas defined imperialism primarily in economic terms. They had read John A. Hobson's thesis on imperialism attentively and understood that territorial expansion was but one expression of imperialist phenomena.²² Travels to Europe in the 1920s introduced José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, two prominent founders and ideologues of APRA, to dialectical materialism, which contributed to shaping their reading of the Peruvian and Latin American realities.²³ Although they initially flirted with communism, Apristas ultimately rejected the rule of the Third International and proposed to create instead an original movement Indigenous to the Americas. Aprista ideologues conformed to what Sheldon B. Liss has called "plain" Marxists, that is, Marxists "who work openly and flexibly, as did Karl Marx, and believe that his ideas are

¹⁹ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, "What is the A.P.R.A.?" *The Labour Monthly*, December 1926, pp. 756–759.

²⁰ Sánchez, "A New Interpretation of the history of America," p. 444.

²¹ Robert J. Alexander, *Aprismo: The Ideas and Doctrines of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre*, Kent, WA: Kent State University Press, 1973, pp. 27–28; Víctor Alba, *Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina*, México: Libreros Mexicanos Unidos, 1964, pp. 284–314.

²² John A. Hobson is one of the first to have explained and theorized the origins of modern economic imperialism. See Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, New York: J. Pott and Company, 1902.

²³ Mariátegui later helped form the Peruvian Socialist party and Peru's General Confederation of Workers.

applicable to present situations.”²⁴ Apristas were, in sum, Marxists who refused ideological dogmatism. They dreaded one size-fits-all interpretations and would rather have abandoned Marxist claims than try to force social realities onto a given doctrine.

APRA’s most compelling work on anti-imperialism appeared during the 1930s. According to Apristas, capitalism in Latin America should not be destroyed, but rather controlled.²⁵ This conclusion stemmed from their peculiar reading of Leninism. Apristas argued that Lenin’s theses on imperialism did not reflect the historical and economic development particular to Latin American countries. They came to view communism as essentially a European phenomenon. Because the socio-economic problems of Europe and Latin America were different, the solutions that their respective problems called for were necessarily different as well, they argued, especially in regard to the relation between capitalism and imperialism. Here probably lies the single most important and original contribution of Apristas to Marxist thought in Latin America: Apristas, as Jeffrey L. Klaiber once wrote, turned Lenin on his head.²⁶ In contrast to what Lenin posited in his seminal work *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, APRA argued that in non-industrialized nations imperialism represented the first rather than the final stage of capitalism.²⁷ Haya de la Torre first exposed and developed this thesis in *El Antimperialismo y el Apra* (1936) and refined it in later years in *Espacio-Tiempo-Histórico* (1948).²⁸ “El imperialismo es la última etapa del capitalismo en los pueblos industriales,” he maintained, writing on behalf of all Latin Americans, “pero representa en los nuestros la primera etapa. Nuestros capitalismo nacieron con el advenimiento del imperialismo moderno. Nace pues, dependiente, y como resultado de la culminación del

²⁴ Sheldon B. Liss, *Marxist Thought in Latin America*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, p. 2.

²⁵ Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “El Antiimperialismo y el APRA,” in *Obras Completas*, Vol. 4, Lima: Editorial Juan Mejía Baca, 1976–1977, n.p.

²⁶ Jeffrey L. Klaiber, “The Non-Communist Left in Latin America,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 32: 4 (October–December, 1971): 613–615.

²⁷ Haya de la Torre, “El Antiimperialismo y el APRA. . .,” pp. 18–21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–24. This work came as a response to the critique that the Cuban communist and revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella directed against APRA. Haya de la Torre argues that this work was meant to counterbalance the advance of both leftist and rightist extremism in Latin American revolutionary proposals. Although Haya de la Torre claims to have written this book in 1928 while in Mexico, this work was first published in 1936.