

Visitor Describes Violence In Indian Communities

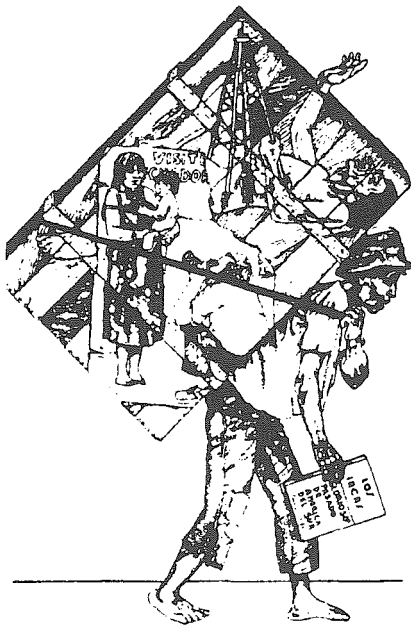
Anatolio Liceta, Quechua Indian who works with the Peace and Justice Service—Peru (Servicio Paz y Justicia—Peru, SERPAJ), visited the San Francisco Bay Area in June to discuss the search for nonviolent social change in Peru. Anatolio comes from the community of Andina San Pedro de Pirca, province of Huaral, in the mountains north of Lima. He is a member of the Federation of Peasants of Cerro de Pasco (Federación de Campesinos de Cerro de Pasco). His family, like most of his community, farms and raises stock. His experiences with nonviolent struggle include teaching adult literacy, organizing Indian farmer cooperatives, and working in the local teachers' union. He tells us:

I come to exchange experiences of nonviolent struggle for peace, particularly at the community level. This struggle is important because at this time in Peru there is increasing indiscriminate violence. There is genocide, including the killing of old people, women, and children.

Our Indian communities are bound together by our working the land communally. We believe that the land is the vital source that sustains all people. In my country in the mountains and on the coast there are 4,200 official Indian communities. They are organized in *ayllus* and are now officially recognized as Indian communities of farmers.

Our communities have at least 4,000 years of history, of life. Four hundred years of struggle and resistance to outside forces can't destroy our people. The fact is that these communities have developed a way of life based on self-sufficiency. The community is the uniting of men and women, but this union doesn't happen in a vacuum. Through work, this union, the community, takes on life. There is a common interest in the land itself that unites us. Together we carry our seeds to the field to plant. Everyone works together equally. The 200 members of the community (*comuneros*) take their seeds to plant the communal land. These 200 *comuneros* carry their tools so that the land will produce. Two hundred *comuneros* carry their food to eat out in the fields, so that they can invite one another to eat before and after planting. And then at the time of the harvesting, the yield is divided up equally among all those in the community. Seeds are saved for the next year.

We don't do this work quietly. We do it with a kind of joyful energy. We always say, "If there is a good crop, we dance. Beautiful. We dance with a band. And if there is a poor crop, we also dance." Why? Because it is not like the person who, if a business is lost or money is lost, he is sad. There is a collective consciousness. In the community, if there is a poor crop, these troubles also unite the people, unite us in our work. These difficulties fortify the ties that bind us. This love of community is important, and it develops through working together.



That is the life in community, which is our strength.

The root of the violence that is occurring now in Peru extends back to the notion of private property, distinct from our traditional community-based way of life. Between 1982 and 1985 there were 7,000 dead and many more than 3,000 missing and presumed dead. Since January, 1986, there are dozens more dead and disappeared. The blame for these deaths is placed on the guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso, but the blame to a much larger extent is also placed on the armed forces of Peru. Sendero Luminoso consists of people who are adventurers and provokers of violence, who kill along with the armed forces. They kill children, old people, and women. This is not a true revolutionary movement. For this reason it is detested by Indian communities. Our organization has a position in the face of this situation. We feel this is genocide that is occurring, and it becomes institutionalized by the armed forces. The consequence of this genocide doesn't mean simply the physical end or disappearance of a person. It also has massive repercussions for the entire extended family, leaving thousands and thousands of orphans and hungry children, and thousands and thousands of mothers and women who go from place to place, to the cemeteries and jails, looking for their loved ones they have lost. You see, the consequences of these kinds of things are not erased from our lives right away.

While there is no complete solution, through SERPAJ we do a number of things. We have helped organize the struggle of the relatives of the disappeared in the Ayacucho region. Their organization, the Association of Relatives of the Kidnapped and Missing of Ayacucho (*Asociación de Familiares de los Secuestrados y Detenidos-Desaparacidos de Ayacucho*), is part of the human rights department of SERPAJ. We also have dining halls in Ayacucho and Lima for the thousands of children who have been orphaned. This is done by the volunteer work of Peruvians and by the assistance of people throughout the world who are helping us.

For more information about the work of SERPAJ, contact the Resource Center for Non-violence, P.O. Box 2324, Santa Cruz, CA 95063.

Human Rights Activist Among Missing In Peru

Among the many people missing as a result of political violence in Peru is Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano, secretary of the Association of Relatives of the Kidnapped and Missing (*Asociación de los Familiares de los Secuestrados y Detenidos-Desaparacidos*), who was arrested in Lima on May 24. A few days earlier she wrote, "The situation in Peru is getting worse. We live in a state of anxiety and insecurity. We are losing hope with this government, but the struggle of our people and of the relatives gives birth to another hope. They have threatened me many times and yet I cannot live with my back turned while my people bleed. I believe that it is better to die struggling, shouting the truth. This is what gives me hope that justice will come. But this we will only achieve with the help of all those persons who are aware of the inequality which reigns in our country."

As we go to press, reports from Lima describe a massacre by police of over 300 prisoners accused of subversive acts. According to official reports, three police died.

