

COOPERATIVE LABOR AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
IN SOUTHERN PERU

Patricia J. Lyon
University of California, Berkeley

A key development program of the present administration in Peru is one entitled Cooperación Popular. Its purpose is to provide direction, technical assistance, and tools for development projects for which the members of a community agree to provide the labor. Cooperación Popular is based on the belief that voluntary communal labor is a significant feature of the work patterns of native communities, and that it has been part of the native Inca tradition since before the Spanish conquest. President Fernando Belaunde Terry has repeatedly argued that this program will be successful in reaching the rural communities in the sierra because it is appropriate to a tradition of communal labor. However, the belief that voluntary community labor is characteristic of native work patterns represents a serious misunderstanding of native society. In view of this fact, how has Cooperación Popular been working?

In the summer of 1967 John H. Rowe, Winifred Lambrecht and I undertook to investigate this problem, supported by a grant from the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. We decided that the most interesting area in which to conduct the study was the sierra of southern Peru, since it was while travelling through this area that Belaunde conceived the program. The work was carried out in three parts: (1) a study of the historical and philosophical basis of the program of Cooperación Popular, done by John H. Rowe; (2) a study of the general organization, operations and effects of the program, done by me, and (3) a study of the forms and uses of cooperative labor in a selected native community near Cuzco, done by Winifred Lambrecht. The results of all three parts are summarized here.

Belaunde himself has given us an account of how the idea for Cooperación Popular came to him. During the election campaign of 1956 he made a campaigning trip by car from Sincuaní to Huancayo. In village after village people begged him for a road, a bridge, paving, a market building. He became concerned with the magnitude of the problem these requests constituted. Obviously, no Peruvian government could afford to undertake a program of public works of such scope that it would reach all the villages. No solution came to him until he reached Chincheros, in the Department of Apurímac. Here he was shown a number of public works, including a rebuilt church, schools, and a road, which had been constructed by the efforts of the townspeople. It then occurred to him that a minimum of government aid would enable other communities to build the local public works they wanted (Belaunde 1959:34-37). He then went on to argue that the cooperative system was characteristic of ancient Peru and proposed "a law which would only take its inspiration from the still perceptible echo of the ancestral voices" (p. 38).

Belaunde's ideas about the nature of native work patterns and the appropriateness of using communal labor for public works in native communities are not original with him. They are derived directly or indirectly from the writings of Hildebrando Castro Pozo, in particular his Del ayllu al cooperativismo socialista of 1936. In a pamphlet without name of author or date which was being distributed by Cooperación Popular in 1967 for publicity purposes, there is an introduction which follows Castro Pozo's argument so closely that it is practically a summary (Cooperación Popular, n.d.). Castro Pozo had a great influence on the younger generation of Peruvian intellectuals, and his mistaken ideas about native society are widely believed by Peruvians.

There are, generally speaking, three kinds of labor arrangements in the native communities of southern Peru which are in some sense cooperative. These arrangements are usually called ayni, minga, and faena. The first two have names of Inca origin and are very old in the native tradition; the third, which has a Spanish name, is also of Spanish origin.

Ayni is an exchange of labor between individuals. A man who works in ayni for another expects that the other man will work for him later on, and work exactly the equivalent amount of time. Minga is a work party, an arrangement whereby a man invites relatives and friends to work with him on some job that requires many hands, and he provides food, drink, and entertainment for the participants in the work. The participants expect their host to be willing to serve in mingas they organize when an occasion arises.

The faena is a form of forced labor in which the community is pressured by someone with power into contributing labor without compensation, under threat of heavy fines, jail, or other similar inducement. The person demanding the faena is rarely a member of the community, and the work done is usually of no immediate benefit to the people who do it. The authorities of a town may demand faena labor from native communities nearby for public works in the town or of benefit to it; owners of large estates may demand faena labor for projects on their estates. The government of President Leguía, in the 1920's, built miles of new highways with forced labor of this kind. In the cases Belaunde saw in which the people of a town claimed to have carried out public works on their own initiative, the labor was probably provided by faenas.

There are a few occasions on which members of a native community sometimes work together for their own benefit and without outside pressure, the commonest being the cleaning and repair of irrigation ditches serving the community. The spirit of cooperation is scarcely so strong as Belaunde believes, however, and the kinds of projects which Cooperación Popular was set up to help are in great part ones traditionally executed with the forced labor of the faena.

The pattern of labor relations just described is widely distributed in southern Peru and can be traced back at least to the early seventeenth century, through the entries for ayni, minga, and related words in the Inca dictionaries of that period. There are, as might be expected, some local variations. The situation at Macay, near Coya in the Urubamba

Valley, may serve as an example. This community is the one studied by Miss Lambrecht, and the information given here was provided by her.

In Macay the patterns of ayni and minga are the same as the general ones described above, with the addition that labor may be exchanged for the use of agricultural implements or draught animals, and such exchanges are also considered ayni. Faenas are organized by the three personeros of the community, its executive officers. The maintenance of the irrigation canals and the distribution of water used to be the only occasions on which faenas were organized for the benefit of the community. A few years ago, however, the community of Macay recovered by legal action a tract of land which had been claimed and occupied by a neighboring hacienda, and it was decided that this land would be worked in common. The irrigation, removal of stones, plowing and sowing of this land is a communal enterprise in which all families participate, the men providing the manual labor and tools and the women contributing by preparing maize beer and food, which is shared. This work is considered a form of faena. The faena system was also used in the construction of the community school, begun in 1958, and continues to be used for its maintenance. Cooperación Popular contributed to the completion of this school, under circumstances to be described below.

Let us look next at the general organization and operations of Cooperación Popular, known in Peruvian bureaucratic jargon as Coopop. The information to be presented on this subject is based on interviews with people currently working in the program, discussions with people who are intimately acquainted with its operations, and materials published by and about it.

Cooperación Popular was established as an official government agency by presidential decree on August 17, 1963, just twenty days after Fernando Belaunde Terry was inaugurated as President of Peru. The rapidity with which the new president created Cooperación Popular reflects his extreme personal interest in the program. Initially Cooperación Popular was under the direction of an Interministerial Executive

Committee, but later it became the Office of Popular Cooperation and Community Development within the Ministry of Development and Public Works, the position which it still held at the time the study was made.

Cooperación Popular is organized on a hierarchical basis with a Central Office in Lima, four Regional Centers, ten Major Centers, and fifty Basic Centers. The Basic Center is the main operational unit engaged in the promotion of community development, technical direction of construction work, and inter-sector coordination on a local and zonal level. The Major Centers provide technical support to the Basic Center, orient and supervise the compliance with directives, and are responsible for the programming and control of sub-regional sections. They also maintain an inventory of administrative resources and carry out studies of proposals initiated on the departmental and sub-regional level. The Regional Centers are responsible for inspection and liaison with Lima. The centers are all staffed with salaried personnel, generally all young professionals. School teachers predominate among the staff members, but there are also some engineers and a few anthropologists.

In the initial planning, Cooperación Popular was visualized as a program which would work in total community development. Perhaps as a result of this visualization, a number of anthropologists were hired at the inception of the program, but most of them were fired in late 1965 and early 1966. The change in personnel reflected a shift in the orientation of the program, so that Cooperación Popular became concerned primarily with construction projects, leaving other aspects of community development to various other governmental and private entities.

The shift in the orientation of Cooperación Popular occurred at about the same time as its transfer to the Ministry of Development and Public Works, the major concern of which is with construction. The new orientation reflects also a recognition of the need for coordination of the work of the various government bureaus involved in community development. Duplication of effort and competition in this area were interfering with the effectiveness of all the government programs. An extreme example

was Puno, where no less than five separate agencies were operating simultaneously with no coordination and no cooperation among them. The other agencies involved in various aspects of community development work are Agrarian Reform; SIPA, which is concerned with agricultural development; the Ministry of Education and Public Health; the Instituto Indigenista; Incoop, an agency devoted to establishing cooperatives; and the Agricultural Development Bank. To solve the problem of duplication of effort, the government negotiated a large loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, about half of which was to be made available to Cooperación Popular under specified conditions. In seven designated sites, five in the central sierra and two in the south (Puno and Sicuani) an effort was to be made to integrate the work of the government agencies involved in community development. What success the integration will have remains to be seen; there is no overall coordinating body, and empire building is a general characteristic of bureaucratic organization.

The new role of Cooperación Popular is described by Belaunde in his 1966 presidential message to Congress.

The activity of the Office of Popular Cooperation is between sectors. It completes irrigation works, so that the agricultural extension agent can intervene immediately; it constructs small dams and roads; that is, it opens new areas to private economic activity, providing them with sources of energy and routes of communication. It builds schools and public health stations which permit the arrival of the teacher and public health personnel. It thus creates the conditions under which other organisms of the public and private sectors can intervene effectively on local and zonal levels (Belaunde 1966:448).

The limitation of its activities is advantageous to Cooperación Popular as a bureaucratic agency, because the things it is supposed to do produce results which can be seen and quantified. The success of Cooperación Popular is, indeed, always described in terms of kilometers of road completed, number of schools or churches built, and so forth. Special emphasis is placed on the monetary value of the man hours contributed by the "people" in the accomplishment of these works. In a total community development program, one of the primary objectives is usually to change

the attitudes of the people, in order to bring about permanent culture change. Attitudes, however, are much less visible and countable than roads and schools.

The basic idea of Cooperación Popular is that its projects should emanate from the community. In theory, the way a program is initiated is that a member of a community or a committee representing it comes to one of the Cooperación Popular centers and asks for help on a project the community wants to undertake. In fact, it commonly happens that an agent of Cooperación Popular initiates a project that the agency thinks would be appropriate. In other cases, a resident outsider, such as the school teacher, invites the help of Cooperación Popular. In either case, the resemblance to the traditional faena system is notable, outside pressure being put on the members of the community to make them contribute work. The only difference is that the Cooperación Popular projects result in things which it believes, whether correctly or not, will be of direct benefit to the people who contribute the work.

The best documented example of the way in which Cooperación Popular personnel sometimes impose their ideas on the communities with which they deal is found in a thesis submitted to the University of Cuzco by an anthropology student who had worked for Cooperación Popular (Carmona Cruz 1965). It deals with Musho in central Peru, but there is no reason to think that parallel situations have not occurred in the south. The Cooperación Popular agents in Musho made a systematic effort to determine what the communities within the zone of action wanted in the way of improvements. It was obvious from the answers they received that what the people wanted most was improvements in irrigation and some equitable method of settling disputes over water rights, a problem which was causing severe inter-community rifts. In the same study there is a list of projects completed in the Musho area. It includes eleven new schools, three stretches of road, a new church, and a couple of other miscellaneous projects, but nothing to do with irrigation. No explanation is given of why local desires were thus disregarded. On the basis of talks with other

personnel of Cooperación Popular, however, we may suspect that one factor in situations like the one described is that the Cooperación Popular agents are not free from the common upper and middle class Peruvian attitudes toward the people they call "Indians." It is widely believed by upper and middle class Peruvians that the Indians are not very bright and do not know what is best for themselves. In addition it may be pointed out that the building of a school requires considerably less technical expertise than does the building of an irrigation system, and Cooperación Popular is swamped with school teachers, not engineers.

An example of the initiation of a Cooperación Popular project by an outsider living in a community is provided by the school at Macay, the community Miss Lambrecht studied. In this case, the community members did want a school, and they had started to build one in 1958, but suspended the job when the community ran out of funds. In this case the community officials required each family to provide a certain number of stones every day and food and drink for the men working. The labor was performed by the faena system. In 1964, the school teacher appealed to Cooperación Popular for help in finishing the building. Cooperación Popular provided the windows, paint, and a corrugated iron roof. It also provided the usual plaque for the facade, reading "El pueblo lo hizo." In the case of Macay, the community got what it wanted, and Cooperación Popular fulfilled the function it was supposed to serve, but if a school teacher is able to call in Cooperación Popular, one would expect to find other cases in which the school teacher rather than the community initiated a project.

In parts of the Cuzco area which we investigated the ideas behind Cooperación Popular are generally not understood. In the Urubamba Valley any kind of forced labor is called "Cooperación Popular," and the identification of the program with the faena tradition is complete. Cooperación Popular is getting local public works done that would otherwise be impossible, and in that sense it is fulfilling its purpose. Some of these public works are ones the communities want and some are not.

There is no great popular interest in the program, and in that sense it has not lived up to Belaunde's hopes for it.¹ We talked to anthropologist who knew something about the situation in other parts of Peru and have the impression that the situation is somewhat different in the central sierra, and that there the people are much more enthusiastic about the program. It would be interesting to explore the reasons for this difference.

NOTES

¹ In this connection, it is interesting to note that apparently Belaunde himself is losing interest in the program. In his lengthy message to Congress delivered on July 29, 1968, Belaunde does not so much as mention Cooperación Popular in spite of considerable discussion of roads, schools and other government building projects (La Prensa, 1968).

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