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Towards Homes and Graves
About the Returns, *Desaparecidos*[1]
and Exhumation Challenges in Peru
at the End of the Twentieth Century

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Abstract

The article concerns the wartime history of Peru and examines both top-down and bottom-up practices of accounting for the internal conflict of 1980–2000, which were initiated in the background of the warfare. The aim of the article is to discuss the connections I observed between the phenomena referred to in the title: return migrations of the inhabitants of the central-southern province, their search for the victims of forced disappearances, as well as the exhumation challenges emerging since

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1 The article contains a few examples of borrowings from Spanish, which concern various categories of war victims. The translation of majority of them into English is possible, but I have chosen the Spanish terms as they are commonly used in scientific literature also in the English language. This is due to the fact that they literally express the social and cultural idiosyncrasy of the Peruvian conflict, and therefore seem more precise. All of them, however, are explained in the text. The first one is *desaparecido*, a participle of the Spanish verb *desaparecer*, meaning

the beginning of the war. In other words, the text constitutes an attempt to contextualise the above-mentioned issues given competing versions of memory about political violence in the Andes, with particular focus on their top-down determinants in the *Fujimorism* era.

Keywords: Peru, internal conflict, forced disappearances, return migrations, *Fujimorism*, memory studies, forensics, exhumations

Introduction

The article was written at the time when the interest in the exhumation activities in Peru, observable, above all, towards the end of the 2000s and at the beginning of the 2010s, waned and was already on a clear decline. In the very heart of the mentioned exhumation efforts was not only the necessity to investigate and document the acts of human rights violations from the period of internal conflict (while constituting an obvious and objective premise) but also the "epistemological optimism" (Rojas-Perez 10–14), commonly manifested at that time by victims of political violence and resulting from their belief in the objectivity of forensic science as a source of truth and justice (i.e. a relatively subjective factor).[2]

The analysis performed in the article looks behind the current turns in reconciliation policies. It considers selected problems of the Peruvian internal war which took place in 1980–2000 and was fought mainly in the rural areas of central-southern highlands (in the sense of the intensity of military operations as well as the scale of social costs generated by them).[3] The adopted narration is a dialogue

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"to disappear" (which in a literal translation into English would mean "the one who has been disappeared"). In legal jargon this term refers to the victims of forced disappearances, even though its detailed definitions as set forth in international and national legal references may differ considerably. In the text I use it interchangeably with the English term *detained-disappeared*. The problem of the ambiguity of the phenomenon in the context of the political violence in Peru and other Latin American countries is discussed further in the article.

[2] The article was written on the basis of multi-sited fieldwork in Peru, primarily a research visit under a grant from the National Science Centre (NCN) no. 2018/02/X/HS5/00173. This text is an updated version of the publication in Polish (Pietraszczyk-Sękowska, *Powroty (po)do bliskich*), expanded by adding the results of the research on top-down and bottom-up politics of memory during the *Fujimorism* period.

[3] It was the last (in terms of the outbreak period) internal armed conflict in Latin America, considered at the same time to be one of the bloodiest (see i.a. Portocarrero, Degregori, *Qué difícil es ser Dios*; del Pino, Manrique, Uceda, Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Być kobietą w Peru*; Jiménez, *Los Muertos de Ayacucho*). It was fought mainly between state actors and Maoist organization of Shining Path (struggling to take over the power in the country) and it claimed at least 70,000 victims. What is important from the point of view of the conducted analysis, is that the epicenter of the conflict was located in the department of Ayacucho. It was where I carried

with the wartime history of Peru, and, first and foremost, discusses the origins of the phenomena referred to in the title: return migrations and their relationship with the realities of searching for *desaparecidos*. At the same time it forms an attempt to contextualise both the problems against the already competing reveals of memory about the era of violence and emerging exhumation challenges. The assumed perspective focuses, therefore, on certain aspects of investigating Latin American internal conflicts that are slightly different from those dominating in the literature and aims at showing how differences in bottom-up and top-down narrations about the course of armed operations and versions of return policy influenced the "fate" of Peruvian *desaparecidos*. This is understood above all as an opportunity to search, exhume and examine their remains.

Around return migrations and thweir associations with searching for *desaparecidos*

Research into the Peruvian conflict clarification processes should start from looking at the events heralding the progress of pacification, while, at the same time, remaining considerably ahead of the birth of postwar reconciliation philosophy. One of the most important issues in this respect is the phenomenon of return migration, developing non-institutionally on the initiative of the *desplazados* (displaced persons)[4] since the end of the 1980s and controlled by the state since 1992 (when it became the subject of A. Fujimori's government policy as one of elements of reparative actions initiated for the benefit of victims of the conflict). Back in those

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out research in the years 2006–2010 on the role of the peasant population in the conflict, concentrating my work primarily in the north-eastern part of the department. The current project, concerning the conditions of exhumation interventions in postwar Peru, has been implemented since 2015 in a similar area, and was expanded under the NCN "Miniature 2" grant by the central provinces of the department. More detailed information on the area and period of research during which the materials used in the text were collected is presented in appropriate fragments of the article.

4   The analysis of the phenomenon of returns requires signalling of the scale of displacements during the conflict. However, determining this scale has been hindered up to this day due to a variety of reasons; the crucial one apparently being the lack of research among *afectados* and thus the lack of data on the scale of the phenomenon during the first decade of the war. As a result, first estimates given in the 1990s by the NGOs and government agencies included a considerable margin of error, as they varied from 430 000 to 600 000 displaced (see e.g. *Los Desplazados* 17–18, Lozano Martínez 43–4). However, this data does not cover the entire period of the conflict, this is why nowadays it is estimated that in 1980–2000 the problem of displacements could have affected up to 1 million Peruvians (based on CVR, *Hatun Willakuy* 386; Lozano Martínez 43–4, as well as the research among *afectados* and aid organizations in Ayacucho in 2007, 2010, and 2019; in VRAE in 2006–2007; in Huanta and its surroundings in 2007 and 2016; and in the Putis zone in 2015–2019).

days, the apparent new dynamics of former war refugees' mobility made it possible to interpret the problem in relation to the global tendencies, clear at that time, including, above all, the processes of strong differentiation and increasing complexity of migratory behaviour (Skoczek, *Zmiany mobilności przestrzennej ludności Ameryki Łacińskiej* 275). In this way, the discussed phenomenon began to take on the characteristics of pendulum migrations described in the Polish literature by Dariusz Niedźwiedzki. In his opinion, these have global features on the one hand, yet on the other they take the "form of individual phenomena, often arranged according to unique scenarios" (9). The processes of heterogenisation of migratory and adaptive strategies also became a characteristic feature of Peruvian *retornantes* (returning migrants), quickly translating into difficulties in examining and parameterising the problem (Barrantes 5; Rodriguez & Espinosa, Lozano Martínez 15–21; *Los Desplazados* 31–4; Mesa Nacional sobre Desplazamiento 43–54). However, a clearly decentralised nature of their migratory behaviours, placing them in the panorama of global tendencies, resulted from a number of local factors, of which at least three are worth mentioning.

The first factor concerns "overlapping" which at that time happened between the returns and the mobility of the population against the economic background (lasting from the prewar period and caused by the crisis of postfeudal agricultural economy in the region) and the still occurring displacements (their first wave appeared already at the beginning of the conflict, i.e. in 1982–83). The second factor, was paradoxically the lack of circumstances appropriate for return migration, both in the sense of security in many regions of *retornantes'* origin (military actions, calmed down in the highlands in the late 1980s, escalated at that time in the areas of coca cultivation in the valleys) and infrastructure condition (due to destruction of villages by both parties of the conflict, as well as devastation of roads and electrical installations caused mainly by the *senderistas*). The third factor was the temporariness of adaptive strategies of return migrants, obviously connected directly with the above conditions, but also with the individual character of their needs as *afectados* (those affected by the conflict), which for other actors of the Peruvian war may not have been evident (the problem will be discussed in details later).

Despite obvious difficulties, both the victims of displacements and state institutions attempted to organise returns, guided by at least partly convergent reasons. It seems that the most important was the overpopulation of towns and cities overloaded in the 1980s with successive waves of refugees (usually moving along a common axis of escape: from the place of origin to counterinsurgency villages-bases, then through provincial urban centres and capitals to coastal cities and Lima, being for many the ultimate destination of migration). For both sides, overpopulation of urban centres generated the problem of broadly understood security reasons, difficult living conditions and complicated social relations, dominated by discriminatory practices and the stigmatisation of newcomers (*Los Desplazados* 21–5; CVR,

Hatun Willakuy 372–4; Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Być kobietą w Peru* 143–8; Zevallos Trigoso 50–55; Rodriguez & Espinosa 7–11; Lozano Martínez 47–53). Thus, negative consequences of displacements brought about joint initiatives undertaken by their victims and representatives of different levels of authority. In case of the former, cooperation with the administration of Fujimori was so beneficial that its return policy was based, at least officially, on two processes. The first was the standarization of both *retornantes'* security conditions (by introducing, among others, a requirement of collective nature of the undertaking, official registration of a community and a local self-defence group, as well as obtaining the consent of the army to return under its escort), while the second included the rules for access to reparation projects aimed at resettlement of the areas affected by the conflict (by launching the Resettlement Program, PAR, whose funds, largely coming from UNDP aid, were invested both in return actions, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and creation of facilities to improve the standard of living in hard-to-reach rural areas) (Barrantes 6–9; *Los Desplazados* 16–17; Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Od populizmu i umacniania demokracji* 378–9; Lozano Martínez 24, 43–44).

However, the motivation of returning migrants consisted of a number of subjective factors, among which the most important was a desire to collect back remaining belongings from the destroyed houses and to confirm ownership rights to the "fatherland". Another reason, of the crucial significance for these considerations, was the need to find relatives missing as a result of various mechanisms of the civil war, in practice usually coexisting with the need to determine the location of their anonymous graves and organisation of a dignified burial. In this way, the experience of return became inextricably associated with the problem of victims of so-called forced disappearances, or *desaparecidos*.

Along with intensifying processes of searching for the latter, a social phenomenon emerged, soon becoming, like in other countries of the region, a crucial element of the realities of the internal conflict and gradually gaining popularity as a research issue. However, undertaken discourses, both scientific and humanitarian ones, placed the phenomenon of Peruvian *desaparecidos* and the behaviour of their families primarily within the frames of studies on human rights and social memory (for more see Tamayo, Rojas-Perez, CVR, *Las desapariciones forzadas, Los Muertos de Ayacucho, Desaparición forzada en el Perú*). The approach used in this article is developed on the margins of this perspective. During the analysis of war adaptive strategies of internal migrants, I paid attention to the practice of searching for victims of forced disappearances as an important determinant of the dynamics of returns initiated bottom-up by *desplazados* already in the 1980s. Although an observed connection was not always direct, it always occurred, at least indirectly and grew in importance with the progress of the conflict. In the decade of the 1990s both phenomena created a self-reverting mechanism, in which the need to search for *desaparecidos* determined decisions on return organisation, which,

in turn, constantly increased the scale of search and multiplied reveals of its social and political consequences.

The resulting specific *modus operandi* of communities that had experienced political violence will be analysed in the next subsection. It is worth explaining here that the phenomenon of Peruvian *desaparecidos*, while constituting the background of the described processes, had several distinguishing features as such. First of all, unlike in the case of the military dictatorships' context dominating in Latin America, "disappearance" of civilians in Peru was initiated and developed during the democratic rule (paradoxically, the outbreak of the conflict in 1980 took place during the first free elections from over a decade). Moreover, while in most countries of the region the practice of forced disappearances was relatively selective and clearly focused on the middle class, in the case of Peru it was conducted on a massive scale and, at least in statistical terms, concerned to the greater extent the rural population, decimated as a result of arrests both in villages of origin, during escapes and in the places of residence as *desplazados*. For it is worth noting that since many arrests occurred in cities and were conducted by the military, the case of Peru seemed to resemble other states of the region. It should, however, be remembered that in Peru a real plague of detentions-disappearances concerned *barrios* inhabited by communities of migrants from the countryside (both economic, who had come to live there before the conflict, and war refugees), whereas middle class from the cities – wiped out by arrests under dictatorship in such states as Chile or Argentina – less frequently fell victim to forced disappearances, as for the government forces they were not such an easy prey as young people from "invisible" families of Andean origin. Moreover, Shining Path completed the work of terrorising the inhabitants of villages with forced disappearances. A vast majority of its victims came from the countryside, from where they were abducted both for forced recruitment and physical elimination of *comuneros* accused of being in favour of the government.[5] Last but not least, the case of Peru is not obvious in terms of perpetrators, which once again distinguishes it from the case of Latin American dictatorships and at the same time makes it similar to other civil wars in the region in the second half of the 20th century (most importantly, the war in Guatemala and, to some extent, the war in Columbia). For it is undeniable that the majority of Peruvian *desaparecidos* from the period of the internal conflict were victims of the uniformed services and that at least twice the anti-government forces also contributed to the disappearances of the inhabitants of the province. First of all, many civilians who objected to them were abducted and executed in remote places, the location of which was unknown to anyone outside crime perpetrators. It was gradually established only upon the first returns and then searching for

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5 In order to compare the realities of forced disappearances in different countries of the region see also Crenzel, Tarczyński, Dinges, CVR, *Las desapariciones forzadas*, *Desaparición forzada en el Perú* 20–8, Rojas-Baeza and *Los muertos de Ayacucho*.

so-called clandestine burial sites. Secondly, the revolutionaries would regularly perform forced recruitment, mostly among young people and without informing their families about the future fate of the abductees; as a result, many of them still have the status of *desaparecidos*.

The above-mentioned circumstances inevitably led to the emergence of terminological inaccuracies. Therefore, the social perception of the phenomenon of *desaparecidos* has for years been different from its definition in the national and international law. While the affected population would use this term to refer to all of the disappeared during the internal conflict (regardless of who was the perpetrator of crime), both the Declaration of the UN from 1992 and the Inter-American Convention signed two years later, as well as the national criminal law provisions patterned on them, referred the term *desaparecidos* only to the persons who had gone missing as a result of the activities of "state agents." However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2001, recommended that the definition be expanded, acknowledging – in accordance with the Statute of the ICC – that the perpetrators of the forced disappearances may also be "political organisations". As a result, it was only the law passed by the Peruvian Congress in 2016 that included all of the persons who had gone missing during the internal conflict under the term *desaparecidos*.[6] This is why – even though the scale of forced disappearances conducted by the anti-government forces in the strict sense was limited

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6 See Gutiérrez, CVR, *Las desapariciones forzadas* 55–8, Baranowska 39–55 and *Ley de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas durante el Periodo de Violencia 1980–2000*. In the light of the above-mentioned circumstances it does not come as a surprise that establishing the scale of the phenomenon also presents considerable difficulties. Out of all the data available, the only one that does not raise any doubts is the data on differences between the scale of the problem in particular regions of the state (among which the department of Ayacucho invariably remains an epicentre of disappearances since the beginning of the war; in the first half of the 1980s, 90% of officially reported detentions-disappearances came from the north-east part of the region; see Tamayo 97–8, CVR, *Las desapariciones forzadas* 65–71 and *Iniciativa de desaparecidos* 2–4). When it comes to the number of all *desaparecidos* during the conflict and the responsibility of its particular actors for the scale of the phenomenon, the available data changes continuously. Whilst the CVR's Final Report from 2003 mentioned about 8,500 cases of disappearances (see CVR, *Iniciativa de desaparecidos* 2, *Los Muertos de Ayacucho* 29), during my research in Peru in 2019 they amounted to more than 20,000 persons (with the restriction that this number will rise along with the progress of forensic activities). When it comes to the participation of the state and subversive forces in the phenomenon, the CVR report estimates the first to be 44% and the latter – 34%. Thanks to the first (though still incomplete) forensic interventions in military bases which began in 2005, nowadays the government's side is known to be much more accountable both for the scale of forced disappearances and for other war crimes. The data discrepancy presented above does not, however, undermine the competences of the CVR commissioners in any way. It is because the root of the problem is primarily the terminological reductionism, as signalled above, characteristic of the early research on forced disappearances as well as the trauma (both group and individual) caused by their plague, which has still been hindering the parametrisation of the phenomenon, many years after the end of the military

compared to the standards of the state activity – in the text I consider the problem as a crime committed by all of the actors of the war. Nevertheless, I pay the closest attention to the actions of the government's side and its consequences. It is because forced disappearances conducted by the remaining military actors did not so strongly bear upon the behaviour of the families of *desaparecidos*. What they generated was a much less "tactile" phenomenon, hard to fight in any way – neither on the level of a social protest, nor in terms of attempts to establish possible places of detention of the missing persons (even though the relatives of the victims did take up these challenges, to a limited extent).

About the problem of Peruvian *desaparecidos* and search circumstances during the conflict

In the case of Peru, the first traces of links between the realities of the internal conflict and the practice of forced disappearances applied by its actors occurred in the public space at the beginning of the military operations. In February 1983, the Ministry of Public began to receive reports on arrests of civilians submitted by their families, who not only had never been provided with either a detention order or grounds for detaining their relatives by law enforcement agencies but also had been refused the information on the place of isolation or the further fate of their loved ones. In the first half of the 1980s, similar documents came into Lima almost exclusively from the epicentre of the conflict, namely the Ayacuchan provinces and were mostly submitted by mothers and wives of the arrested. Bottom-up attempts to prevent the phenomenon of forced disappearances and clarify its former cases did not, however, receive any response from the state for the next several years, during which the problem spread to further regions of the central-southern up-country and, depending on the current situation in each of them, intensified cyclically (for more see Tamayo, CVR, *Las desapariciones forzadas*, Śniadecka-Kotarska 104–10).

The escalation of the phenomenon in the first years of the conflict was tactically determined. In the case of the practices of Shining Path, it was a result of intensified forced recruitment in villages and, parallelly, abductions and murders of peasants, whose growing resistance to the revolution brought about increased terror of the group. When it comes to the government forces, detentions-disappearances, in connection with extrajudicial executions and collective massacres, became an important element of their strategy to fight the "invisible enemy", identified by uniformed services in a non-selective way inside various social sectors, including

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operations (based on the research in Lima, Ayacucho, Huanta and the Putis zone in April-May 2019).

on a massive scale among the Quechua speaking rural population. Becoming a clear part of the counterinsurgency strategy, subsequent waves of detentions-disappearances were to turn into a kind of *blitzkrieg* with Maoist ideology, as a result of which they were not associated with basic human rights violations both in relation to the "arrested" (in the first place their right to life, but also the presumption of innocence, a judicial trial or contact with relatives) and their families (including the right to truth and information).[7] The consent of the highest civil and military authorities, as well as the mainstream of the society meant that the phenomenon of forced disappearances became an immanent part of the reality of the Peruvian conflict, gradually expanding not only its social and geographical boundaries, but also the semantic ones; with the progress of the pacification, the Peruvian *desaparecidos* became not only the victims of "classic" forced disappearances (that is abductions from homes, schools and streets where they were last seen alive), but also those "disappearing" during collective massacres and individual executions, whose bodies could not have been identified or buried by their relatives (most often due to the need for running away from the crime scene or hiding the relationship with the victim murdered because of their political sympathies other than the perpetrator's).[8]

Moreover, the methods used to develop the practice of forced disappearances and related disinformation campaigns about their victims were almost from the beginning of the conflict multifaceted. And so, launching of the ill-practice was accompanied by a fight against social actors attempting to halt it and account for it; bottom-up and top-down leaders of the search for *desaparecidos* were not only subjected to defamation and intimidation, but also physically liquidated, and the families of the victims were stigmatised as not only favouring terrorists, but even belonging to terrorist organisations themselves or as being financed by them. Due to a total nature of the state's pacification policy in the conflict area – consisting in the gradual expansion of the scope of the state of emergency, increasing competences of the armed forces and, at the same time, limiting access to information to all non-military entities – forced disappearances remained a barely known problem outside the circle of the directly affected families. In this way, the phenomenon developed for over a dozen or so years beyond the awareness of a large part of the society, which, knowing little about the realities of the war in the upcountry, adopted passive attitudes towards the fate of its victims or uncritically agreed with

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[7] Rich selection of literature dedicated to the activity of the government forces in the Andes which is worth consulting includes, among others, an extensive work of R. Uceda, in which he reveals the ways of treating and eliminating the civilians in garrisons, until now concealed by the government; to read more on the attitude of the uniformed services towards the conflict in the province, see e.g. Gorriti, Tapia, Kruijt & del Pilar Tello, and Stelmach.

[8] Based on the research in the upland of Chaca in 2009, in Huanta and its outskirts in 2010 and the Putis zone in 2016 and 2019.

the state policy, connoting the context of detentions-disappearances and protests against them with links with terrorism (Tamayo 95–126; Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Być kobietą w Peru* 102–15; *Desaparición Forzada* 28–35; Rojas-Perez 4–32).

Both top-down and bottom-up aversion towards the activities of *desapareci-dos*' defendants favoured effective denial of their narratives and negation of their rights, multiplying the dimensions of *victim blaming*, used towards families and their missing kins. In case of the former, the experience of the permanent lack of support from the state and the frequent accompanying persecution often translated into a conviction of total impunity of the uniformed services in the zone of emergency, and a related profound sense of personal impotence. In the case of the latter, the fact of being a victim of detention-disappearance meant that the kidnapped "disappeared" in an increasingly permanent manner; a simultaneous break of their material and immaterial presence in the social space through the lack of information about their fate (including a type of guilt, access to a trial, or even a location of the body and a possibility of burial) weakened memory and translated, as always in similar cases, into specific denial of existence and a resulting deprivation of the right to identity (Rojas Baeza 51–109; O'Brien 184–8, Sendyka).

In the face of similar experiences, the behaviour of *desaparecidos'* families was dominated by the commonly known mechanism, according to which the spaces within which people suffer from a grievous lack of their kins, get gradually filled with the memory of them (Ricoeur, Jelin, Kaźmierska). Hence, despite the complexity of the contexts of their struggle, the attitude of *desaparecidos'* relatives remained unbroken. It manifested not only through a discipline of filing court notices and searching for opportunities to cooperate with external actors, observable from the beginning of the conflict, but also through mutual support in the face of both the experience of losing kin and the systematic persecution by state officials. As a result of the correlation of the above-mentioned factors, the first organisations of *desaparecidos'* families were founded as early as in 1983. It was also the time of initiating marches under the slogan "No mataras" ("Do not kill") in Huamanga which aimed at drawing attention to the problem and establishing a cooperation with national and international human rights organisations. This in turn led to creating a new dimension of the fight which took the form of social dialogue, scientific meetings and the first legal solutions (see Tamayo, Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Desaparición forzada en el Perú*, Rojas-Perez).

The activity undertaken by *desaparecidos'* families and actors supporting them ensured the *continuum* of the problem in the public space of the province. Throughout the conflict, the size of the community manifesting its opposition against the ill-practice of forced disappearances and demanding information about the fate of the victims, was, however, negligible in relation to the magnitude of the phenomenon. As a result of experiencing terror and trauma caused by the conflict, especially in the rural areas, the majority of the upcountry inhabitants limited their search

for missing relatives to inquiries at the nearby seats of state institutions, clearly avoiding disclosure of their activities. Limited participation of villagers in the public struggle against the phenomenon of detentions-disappearances was also determined by an objective factor related to the fact that rural areas were to a much greater extent than cities confronted with the problem of collective massacres and consequential displacements. As a result, the rural population – dispersed and disoriented among strange receiving societies, most often relying on only basic livelihood and stigmatised due to its social-ethnic roots (meaning peasant and indigenous) and geographic origin (which at that time connoted links with terrorism) – had very limited possibilities of taking actions supporting the rights of the detained-disappeared.[9]

This situation changed gradually together with successive waves of return migrations, which, generated among others by the need to search for missing relatives, added a new impulse to the phenomenon. In this way, at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, there was already a mentioned above strong correlation between the migratory behaviour of those affected by the conflict and the practice of searching for the missing kins and their graves, which, among other things, resulted in a significant escalation of both phenomena. When analysing the mechanism of this dialectic, one should emphasise that it did not mean that the mobility models of *afectados* looking for their relatives were similar (even in case of a seemingly homogeneous category of migrants, namely *retornantes*). The researched phenomenon consisted of very different scenarios, at least three of which should be indicated here. A large part of cases significant from the point of view of the article concerned displaced people who first made a decision to return and officially obtained the status of *retornantes*, and, having settled down in war-torn villages, tried to adapt to new living conditions. Within the frames of the latter, they were forced to (self)confront with questions about the location of graves of their missing relatives and participation in individual or collective acts of searching (and their aftermath, to which I will refer later in the text). Another category of *afectados*, relevant for the analysis, concerned those who adapted to life in receiving societies, where they stayed permanently (I mainly talk about provincial urban centres), but who in most cases, were unable to give a decent burial to their relatives, missing or murdered in the vicinity of their places of origins. Thus, they assumed the status of *retornantes* only temporarily, in order to participate in the army-protected act of group return and to collect back the remaining property and human remains (which generated no less consequences than in the case above). The third group, remaining partly in the margins of this analysis, includes those affected by political

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[9] Based on the research among *afectados* and human rights activists conducted both in the zones of displacements (Ayacucho 2007, 2010, 2015 and 2019; VRAE 2006 and 2007; Lima 2019; Huanta 2007 and 2010), and after the comeback of the refugees to their villages of origin (Pacobamba 2006; Purus and Chaca 2009; Putis 2015 and 2016).

violence who were not displaced during the conflict period, and hence in the majority of cases who were not return migrants. Nevertheless, the experience of forced disappearances of their loved ones made them devote their lives to the search and, in this way, turned them into endlessly migrating *afectados* (in other words, they did not directly contribute to the phenomenon of returning, but were a key actor of search, therefore constituting an important "source" of spatial mobility determined by war realities).**[10]**

At the moment of convergence of interests and behaviours of these groups, the central-southern upcountry was covered by the processes of dynamic and intersecting circulations of *afectados*, which caused profound changes both in ways of searching and fighting for the rights of the missing people, as well as a further diversification of migratory flows in the region.

The first phenomenon has begun to change in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Above all, the population of *afectados* engaged in the search, which, increasing in numbers, has expanded to include new social sectors. It resulted in dynamisation of the practice of reporting forced disappearances (now registered universally in state and non-governmental institutions), but also an escalation of the previously known and emerging new forms of activities undertaken by families of missing people (including creation of village registers of *desaparecidos* and possible locations of their graves, organisation of local associations of victims of political violence, seeking institutional support from other social actors, and the first, completely unprofessional, attempts to "open" anonymous sites of burial; the issue is discussed more broadly later).

In terms of the new tendencies of spatial mobility of those affected by political violence, apparent already at the turn of 1980s and 1990s, they were a direct reflection of war realities. The dense network of migrations was generated, first of all, by multi-stage and multi-direction character of escapes and returns (as I have written, occurring at that time often quite parallelly), coinciding with migrations of various categories of *afectados* (including return migrants), moving between possible places of isolation and graves of their relatives: the detained-disappeared. It is worth emphasising that all this took place in spaces not only deeply affected by military

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[10] My assumption that the last group of *afectados* can be examined together with the first two stems from the fact that in the indicated period most of the inhabitants of the Andes presented migration tendencies. They originated from the rich traditions of economic mobility in the region, generated both by the Andean practice of bringing different ecological zones into cultivation and by the links between the city, *sierra* and *selva*, tightening since the 1960s. As a result, at the turn of 1970s and 1980s many peasant families were already dispersed, while regularly travelling between the same places of residence and work. After the first disappearances the families of the victims began their search, thus recreating the routes of cyclical migration of their relatives as the most probable locations of their detentions-disappearances (based on research in Ayacucho, Huanta and the Putis zone in 2015, 2016 and 2019).

operations but – in a slightly reduced and modified form – still influenced by them. In other words, apart from the above-described clearly non-homogeneous return processes, the region got "invaded" by the phenomenon of setting new migratory routes which met the needs of *afectados* seeking their relatives. They moved first between the seats of state institutions, in which the victims of forced disappearances could be detained (primarily garrisons located in many departments of the region, military bases, police stations and penitentiary centres), as well as representations of civil authorities and non-state organisations which could have information about the fate of the missing persons (I mean the regional prosecutor's and the ombudsman offices, as well as the progressively growing number of NGOs supporting human rights). It is worth noting that a significant part of the *afectados*' migratory routes also ran through vast spaces of the Andes. In the realities of the diseappearing plague, exterminations of entire villages and extrajudicial executions, for many years the Andean spaces constituted a crime scene and a burial site in one, transforming with time into a cemetery of anonymous war victims (it refers in the first place to the vicinity of military facilities and wastelands, gorges, cliffs, riverbeds or pits, collectively called by the inhabitants of the highlands *botaderos de cadáveres*, or "corpses dumps"[11]). In this context, the search for missing people meant a laborious journey marked by tremendous physical and mental effort, most often undertaken on foot in a small group of relatives, mainly women. Its course was inscribed in many dimensions into the realities of war, causing numerous threats associated with moving throughout the zone of emergency (including both military and political ones, resulting from persecution of *desaparecidos*' families) and emotional burden of presence among the "dumps" of human remains, inside which the elements enabling identification of relatives' corpses were searched (which is important from the point of view of further analysis, most often violating for the first time the archaeological and anthropological context of anonymous burial sites).

In the light of the above analyses, it becomes obvious that bottom-up forms of struggle for the rights of *desaparecidos* and their families must have shaped migratory trends in the region, at the same time constituting an important element of adaptation of *afectados* to the conditions of almost two-decade existence in the realities of war. In the second half of the 1990s, it turned out that the forms of mobility of those affected by the conflict, including their return models, developed

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11 Similar places are commonly known in Latin America under the name of *fosas comúnes* (or in free translation "collective graves"). It is worth noting, however, that in the case of Peru, during works of CVR, this term was withdrawn from the use, as it was considered too narrow, since many of burial sites of victims of terror may hardly be regarded as "graves". Therefore, nowadays all forms of tombs from the conflict period are called, both in the judicial jargon and among the *afectados*, clandestine burial sites (Spanish *sitios clandestinos de entierro*) (CVR, *Plan Nacional de Investigaciones* 151–2, 165–71; *Los Muertos de Ayacucho* 16–17, 72–9; Urrutia, Theidon 38–9).

in a different way than the one presumed by Fujimori's state. When confronting the assumed goals of the then policy towards the war victims and their *modus operandi*, it is worth focusing again on the problem of return migration. As I have already signalled, their course turned out to be decentralised, deeply amorphous and accordingly in a significant number of cases temporary (although still supervised to a great extent by civil and military authorities).[12] Over ten years after first disappearances, the unmet need to find relatives remained one of its most important determinants, concentrating the activity of *retornantes* not only on the challenges of the future but, to a large extent, also on the past experiences.

This determination was paradoxically favoured by one of the motives of the state policy. Since thanks to it the returns gained the status of an "institution", their organisation proved to be a catalyst and a starting point for social integration processes and political activation of *retornantes* as victims of the conflict, and their fate quickly became the subject of interest of non-governmental organisations involved in helping them in many spheres of life requiring (re)construction. As written before, one of the first forms of support provided by NGOs to *desaparecidos'* families as early as in the 1980s was recording disappearances and intervening on their victims' behalf with the organs of state authorities. Along with the progress of return migration, these activities were expanded (at first only selectively) to support *retornantes* in the initial "examination" of graves, commonly present both inside and outside of the living space cleared at that times from the remnants of war.

If we look closely at the course of the returns organisation and the circumstances of searching for graves of *desaparecidos*, we can clearly see the traces of the dialectics linking both activities. The perspective of re-settling in the countryside was commonly accompanied by the question "where are they?," signalling both a concern for those, whose remains were abandoned in the heat of escaping from terror (without being appropriately honoured) and an awareness of the challenges related to future life among them. In this way, a natural consequence of returns was determining the location of anonymous graves and creating their village registers. Importantly, in the 1990s, many of these activities could have been successful, since the oldest members (remembering the beginnings of terror in the village) or direct witnesses of the crime were still present in local communities. The following fieldwork took the form of spontaneous, manual excavations, carried out both

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12 Research on the course of return migrations from this period shows that less than 40% of all *retornantes* resettled permanently in their place of origin (Barrantes). However, this is an average result for many different regions. In practice, the mode and meaning of "return" was individualized and depended on many factors, including proximity of the city as a clear catalyst for circulation between several places of residence (enabling life and work in trade in the city and, "simultaneously", regular involvement in community life and farming in the countryside). In similar cases, a number of *retornantes* living permanently in the villages of origin does not often exceed these days 20% of the prewar population (based on the conversations with *afectados* in Lima, Ayacucho, Huanta and its outskirts, as well as the Putis zone in 2015, 2016 and 2019).

in the alleged burial sites indicated by witnesses and "self-unmasking", usually shallow collective graves, the location of which was indicated by traces of skeletal remains, clothing fragments or bullet shells.

Importantly, similar activities were undertaken both bottom-up by the villagers themselves and in assistance of non-governmental organisations. As I have indicated, in the 1990s, the participation of external actors in locating and verifying anonymus graves was limited, due not so much to the lack of will but rather a number of difficulties which accompanied human rights activities in the situation of internal conflict.[13] Nevertheless, gradually initiated cooperation of *retornantes* and NGOs in the framework of the provisional "archaeology of crime" had already produced at least two measurable effects. Above all, it brought together and combined the interests of both parties, which were, at that time, the only social actors in Peru aware of the fact that without exhumation, identification and dignified burial of human remains scattered throughout the province, the return of refugees to life in villages would not be possible (not to speak of the return of the whole of society to peaceful coexistence after the wartime experiences). What is more, it translated into the creation of the first descriptions of the armed conflict in local contexts and registers of anonymous graves, the location of which could not have been recreated later due to such factors as taphonomic processes, high migration dynamics or the old age of witnesses. Very importantly, these gave both sides an impulse to win official forensic interventions in villages just after the end of the military operations and, subsequently, to apply their results in court trials against perpetrators of the crimes committed during the conflict period.

On the other hand, although the search activities performed in the rural areas were only preliminary and in most cases served not so much exhumation and identification of remains as a confirmation of the location of anonymous graves, many

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[13] The researchers who were examining the organisation of the families of *desaparecidos* (mostly ANFASEP in Ayacucho and COFADER in Lima) jointly point out that the support received by similar entities – though frequently risked and highly selective – already in the 1980s came from various actors: national and international non-governmental organizations, selected local authorities, as well as church institutions of different denominations (the latter referred more often to *afectados* living in Lima than in the province, especially if it was linked to the activity of the Catholic Church; see Tamayo 100–106, Śniadecka-Kotarska, *Być kobietą w Peru* 110–21). However, the cooperation referred to in the paragraph concerns another aspect of fight for the rights of the missing persons, which was only generated in the second decade of the conflict. By this I mean direct help with the search of the victims' remains and their improvised exhumations, which necessitated physical presence among the migrants who were coming back to their life in remote parts of the province. Understandably, it was extremely challenging for those who were not part of the Andean ecumene. According to my respondents, they were given similar support unofficially by single NGOs; the most frequently mentioned were evangelical organizations such as Paz y Esperanza (based on the research in Ayacucho, Huanta and the Putis zone in 2016 and 2019). This problem definitely requires further research on the regional scale.

of them undoubtedly entangled the course of subsequent professional forensic work. Obviously, in the 1990s, similar interventions had an individual character and took place beyond knowledge or control of justice, therefore lacking coherent methodology, and their results were not registered in common databases. It resulted not only in the squandering of the archaeological context of the crime scenes and burial sites but also in the damaging of discovered anthropological material, causing in the future many difficulties in collection of forensic data as well as parameterisation of the researched phenomena.[14]

What needs to be emphasised is that the described activities took place under conditions in which development and standardisation of exhumation work were favoured by many factors, with the exception of the official state policy of memory. Apart from the "forensic turn", observed worldwide for several years (see Anstett & Dreyfus 1–13; Domańska 129–33; O'Brien 7–58), and obvious motivations of families of *desaparecidos*, more and more frequent applications of forensic studies were, paradoxically, coerced by elements of state administration actions for the benefit of the political violence victims, including, above all, the promise to launch reparation programs. Their implementation was associated with the need to define categories of *afectados* as well as to create criteria for granting similar statuses and, consequently, the right to compensation, also for the relatives of those missing. This dependence generated complex mechanisms of accounting for the conflict, within which the socio-psychological aspect was placed in a varying "correlation of forces" together with political, legal and economic ones. Work on each of them (except for the political one) required reference to considerable evidence of the identity of victims and the circumstances of their death, obtaining of which, more than ten years after the outbreak of military operations, was only possible through forensic investigation. On the other hand, despite official support of the return processes and announcements of reparation programs, the state clearly avoided involvement in the organisation of exhumation works. In this way, it sustained the strategy of top-down creation of the memory policy, the content of which, especially in terms of the responsibility of government forces for the form and scale of violence, would be undermined in the light of knowledge gained through forensic investigations.

In this way, although it went hand in hand with the returns of refugees, and gained new strength, the phenomenon of searching for the detained-disappeared still functioned in the political and social non-existence. Having the empirical knowledge of the mechanisms of the conflict, only inhabitants of the central-southern province were aware of the extent and gravity of the problem (and, possibly, trusted representatives of NGOs who gradually informed by them). This community, however, not only was marked by prolonged uncertainty about the fate of

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[14] Based on the interviews with forensic archeologists and human rights activists in Lima, Ayacucho and Huanta in April–May 2019.

the missing ones and the stigmatisation against the background of alleged links with terrorism, but also, which is worth emphasising, it experienced aggressive negation of its own versions of events or the biographies of their relatives. As a result, *desaparecidos* remained present only in the memory of their families, sustained by multiplying forms of their activity. The jointly undertaken initiatives, however, translated not only into a creation of formal and informal communities affected by the disappearance of relatives, but also into a specific sharing of memories about the latter, thanks to which both *desaparecidos* and the groups memorialising them survived (see Jelin, Rojas-Perez, Sendyka). In this way, the local communities of memory were brought to life and consolidated. They constituted peculiar microspaces, within which narrations about life and disappearances as well as images of *desaparecidos* not only remained "safe", but were also passed on to future generations and, together with them, next epochs, changing gradually a social, political and even legal status.

About the fate of memory during the regime of Alberto Fujimori and military forces

Although since 1980 conflict-resolution strategies implemented by successive regimes may have varied, the narrations about the nature of events in the upcountry have remained invariably state-oriented. In accordance with the optics consistently maintained by the central authorities, the country was a victim of political violence caused by a subversive organisation, which as early as in 1981 was officially recognised as a terrorist group aiming to destabilise state structures and physically liquidate the social sectors not supporting it. When a year later armed forces were sent to the central-southern highlands region, taking jurisdiction over an ever-growing area of military operations, the society was successfully persuaded of the need to undertake a defensive battle against the so-called internal enemy. In this way, thanks to the adopted rhetoric and by using coherent military solutions, state forces did not have to inform the public about the course of the conflict and, even more so, legitimise methods of their own activities in the emergency zone through the participation by the society (Tapia 27–55; Salcedo 117–45; Kruijt & del Pilar 81–7; Śniadecka-Kotarska *Od populizmu i obietnic umacniania demokracji* 369–78; Stelmach 51–6; Rojas-Perez 30–2).

Isolation of the society *per excellence*, including the inhabitants of the province, from the influence on the state policy in the region of the conflict occurred during the regime of Alberto Fujimori. His way of managing the crisis was vividly illustrated by Carlos I. Degregori, who juxtaposed the case of Peru in the 1990s with the metaphor of the basement from the film *Underground* by Emir Kusturica, dedicated to the Balkan issues. According to the anthropologist's view, the key

role of the partisan-cutthroat is played by Fujimori who hides a group of refugees (Peruvian society) in the basement of his house (a social space of powerlessness and ignorance), where in exchange for "protection" they perform a series of tasks enabling him to continue military operations. A key motif of analogy discerned by Degregori is related to the fact that the forms of activity and the dependence of those living in the basement on the hegemon do not change even after the war, since they are not informed about its ending (*La década de la antipolítica* 221–3, see also Jankowska).

The paraphrase coined by Degregori is based on the observation that in that created by itself, semi-fictionalised reality, the authoritarian and populist Fujimori's regime turned the internal conflict and its images' management into a basic tool for maintaining power in the country. What is more, due to the clear abandonment of historical narrations or anchoring the national community in the horizons of tradition, the regime consistently multiplied new forms of control of the collective imagination, becoming (in the words of Juan Martín) "a great catalyst of images" (qtd. *La década de la antipolítica* 231, see besides 222-7) or also (more critically) an incubator of the culture of lies. Although this phenomenon translated into a profound degeneration of many spheres of the state- and society-functioning, it devastated with particular strength biographies of war victims and their families, consequently entrapped in its discourses falsifying the realities of the conflict.

For the purposes of the undertaken analysis, it is worth looking at at least three images imposed by Fujimori's regime in the context of the wartime events in the upcountry. The first one concerned directly the course of the conflict and was built up as a result of the propaganda of success, according to which the new counterinsurgency strategy implemented in the early 1990s brought about a long-awaited pacification of the areas constituting a theatre of military activities for more than a decade. A similar discourse not only provided the governing authorities (and their methods) with the victorious status in the conflict and, thus, strengthened their image of the saviour of the upcountry from the *senderistas'* terror, but also, in accordance with the principle that "the history is written by the winners", released the regime from the obligation to disclose the methods of counterinsurgency and evaluate their social costs. Triumphal rhetoric distracted public attention from a series of central authorities' actions contrary to the interests of thousands of people affected by the conflict, including, above all, some arbitrary solutions in the field of the justice system functioning.[15] The latter undermined the chances

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[15] All of them served limiting the influence of civil institutions on the situation in the emergency zone. Undertaken initiatives included assigning competences of civil courts to their military counterparts (operating at the moment of intensifying counterinsurgency in an accelerated and anonymous manner), broad amnesty for state officials (civil and military) for cases of human rights violations in the conflict zone (although introduced in 1992, it covered the whole 1980s, which resulted in liquidation of a large part of the military documentation from before the

of *afectados* to have the conflict investigated and clarified in accordance with international human rights' standards (Fujimori's regime had already been suspected of their violation due to NGOs reports, being anticipation of a subsequent accusation act of genocidal practices), primarily the right of the deceased and *desaparecidos* to the identity and the right of their families to know the truth.

The presented mechanism was related to another part of the images' management process, namely the care for the "portrayal" of the armed forces, under which they were simultaneously given the roles of the symbol of state stability, the guarantor of public safety and the subject of national identification. This type of refiguration was instilled in the collective consciousness with the use of basic elements of "banal nationalism" (Billig qtd. in Degregori, *La década de la antipolítica* 229), namely omnipresent national symbolism, the phenomenon of military-civil parades and the so-called uniform cult, which, mainly due to the increased presence of armed forces in public space, appropriated the symbolic one, leading to militarisation of further spheres of state- and society-functioning. The effectively idealised image of uniformed services was an obvious element of the political-military propaganda of *Fujimorism's* triumph over Shining Path. Nevertheless, casting them in the role of the guardian of the entire set of values was putting up a monument to the army as an unquestioned symbol of state- and nation-building processes. A combination of similar practices in the field of collective imagination management with the phenomenon of institutionalised impunity generated the above-mentioned changes in law and categorically excluded a public manifestation of a role of government forces in the internal conflict that would be different from the official (Degregori, *La década de la antipolítica* 226–30; Stelmach 54–6; Kruijt & del Pilar 92–6).

The shaping of a similar image of the state and the army against the war landscape background was connected with the manipulation of the image of relations between both actors and the rural population. It is worth recalling that this sector constituted both the core of Fujimori's electorate and, invariably from the early 1980s, the main victim of the military operations, in which different state agents participated. So investment in managing the consciousness of *campesinos* (peasants), especially those coming from regions affected by the conflict, was particularly important. Therefore, the governmental policy towards the upcountry took the form of activities allowing the state and the army to feign a multifaceted "turn towards the villages," appearing not only as a defender of the peasant population against the terror of the *senderistas*, but also its political and military ally and moral authority (!)[16] as well as a patron

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Fujimori's regime) and Peru withdrawal from jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Tapia 55–77; Rojas-Perez 31–2; Stelmach 54; Łaciński 68–72; Murakami 361–6).

[16] For example, by propagating the phenomenon of *arrepentidos* (Spanish word meaning "the repentant"), that is former *senderistas* who were allowed to show remorse and then involve in the military actions on the part of the state. Although similar practices took place from the beginning of the conflict, they were officially recognized and used reputationally in the 1990s,

of the (re)construction of rural areas (Tapia 55–83; Starn 237–45; Oliart 405–7). On the basis of these activities there appeared subsequent reveals of the "postwar life of the province" with two central figures. The first one was Fujimori, who, personally visited the Andean villages and turned up in situations simulating the repair of houses, providing aid and weapon to peasants who supported the government forces. During this kind of activities, he was usually accompanied by military officers, the second figure, performing physical work for the reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure, cooperating with the village self-defence committees,[17] as well as authorising and escorting returns of *desplazados.*

The presented mechanisms relate to three areas of the policy of social consciousness management in the conditions of an internal conflict that during Fujimori's regime consisted in exercising power through rhetorical figures. In each of them, the state and the armed forces were assigned the status of a victim and a winner in one, thanks to which their highest representatives gained not only a monopoly on shaping the reality in the emergency zone (including methods of counterinsurgency, principles of reparation programs and conditions of the refugees' return), but also a monopoly on the creation of wartime narrations (including a definition of the terms: "heroism", "terrorism" or "victim"). This kind of arbitrariness was possible

which was when conscription into the army in the emergency zone was also restored (having been stopped for security reasons throughout the entire 1980s). Although the *arrepentidos* institution officially did not last for a long time, it clearly consolidated the practice of the "second chance" offered to members of anti-state forces, which was propagated also after the end of the conflict (I myself found similar leaflets in the Apurímac valley during the research in 2009–2010, for more see Theidon).

[17] The village self-defence structures were the result of bottom-up defense initiatives by the peasant population, over which the army began to take control already in the first years of the conflict. The history and circumstances of the relations of both actors are so complex that they would require a separate discussion. However, since this topic coincides both with the problem of *afectados*, and top-down narrations about the conflict, it is worth referring to its several aspects. Above all, during the period of Fujimori's regime, the "alliance" of the army with officially recognized Self-Defence Committees (CADs) became another figure of manifested triumph over the *senderistas*, used reputationally during joint defilades of the uniformed services and the armed peasant population in Lima. It was a method of building a monument of military-civil cooperation as the secret of pacification of the upcountry, although the real picture of the phenomenon consisted of many features being the source of violence escalation. It included, among others, an element of coercion in the processes of forming committees, a problem of replacing the army with civilians and their resulting abuse of power (not forgetting the scale of incurred social and economic costs), but also the obligation to appoint CAD in allegedly protected by the army return actions. Although the above factors are currently a source of controversy around CADs and their links with the army, due to a method of managing the image of this phenomenon in the 1990s Fujimori and the armed forces gained the status of benefactors of committees and, at the same time, often of peasant population as such (although the phenomenon of self-defence committees and their support by the state dates back to the beginning of the 1980s) (for more see Starn, Fumerton, Pietraszczyk, Pietraszczyk--Sękowska, *Los Comités de Autodefensa del Perú*).

thanks to the key element of collective imagination management, that is politics of (non-)memory or (non-)history (see Degregori, *La década de la antipolítica,* Rojas-Perez, Jelin). Although we refer here to the policy of denial of facts, common among populists, its Peruvian version did not only negate elements of the present but also manipulated the past. Similar measures, allowing for a specific fictionalisation of the realities of life in a war-stricken country, proved to be particularly dangerous for the victims of political violence, including *desaparecidos* and their families. In a situation where social and political cleansing also covered the practice of "cleaning the past," this particular community was deprived of the possibility to manifest its own wartime experiences and make claims towards the state, because these would mean a confrontation with (non-)perpetrators, (non-)acts, (non-)places, (non-)dates, etc. Although its bottom-up stories, painful and contradictory to the top-down triumphalism, could easily be confirmed in the data recorded among the graves and their forensic interpretations, such a solution required space for polyphony that could not exist in state run by Fujimori and the armed forces.

Afterword

Looking at the Peruvian reality of the 1990s, we may easily point out several problems that were to determine the complexity of the internal conflict investigation and clarification processes. The most important of them included heterogeneity of return migrations (which in fact consisted of the flows of long-term refugees to the epicentres of destruction and anonymous graves), the unrelenting practice of searching for victims of forced disappearances (direct witnesses of still tabooed counterinsurgency methods applied by the armed forces) and the increasing necessity to initiate forensic investigations (unfavourable for the state from the political perspective, but required for socio-cultural and economic reasons).

Throughout the entire 1990s, a common element in these problems were the activities of the missing persons' families, which, despite ongoing warfare, political persecution and the stigmatising rhetoric of the authorities, continuously moved between alleged places of detention or burial sites of *desaparecidos*, while guarding their biographies "rejected" by the state. Since some of them managed to become visible in the provincial public space, the phenomenon of searching for missing persons became more evident, although it was still deprived of any support from social sectors which had not suffered political violence (apart from the few harassed NGOs).

At the same time, the figure of the *afectados* searching for their relatives underwent symbolisation, becoming an inseparable element of the image of the conflict in the highlands and the link between space-time continuums which constitute it. As a result, it survived until the collapse of *Fujimorism* and the establishment of CVR at the turn of the century, experiencing an inversion of epochs in the official

policy of memory. The philosophy of the Commission, based on local experiences of political violence as well as global tendencies in the struggle for human rights, generated a micro-boom for new standards of internal conflict clarification, the most important of which was the attachment to bottom-up versions of events, including those contained in human remains. Importantly, since the implementation of the CVR's recommendations was not only supposed to "calm down" the effects of the civil war but even to transform the socio-political reality in Peru, all successive governments were obliged to respect and fulfil them.

In this way, the search for *desaparecidos* gained official status, clearly growing in strength, and revealing, in connection with successive waves of returns, the existence of complex dependencies between the images of the state, the rights and the needs of *afectados* and the knowledge flowing from the results of forensic investigations. This time the identification of victims was supposed to represent not only the formal aspect of reparations, but also the basic condition of "truth and reconciliation," which – built including the bottom-up versions of events in the province – seemed to elevate the knowledge recorded in the biographies of the victims as well as in their biological remains. However, the inevitable dialectics of crime and forensic research once again had to obstruct real changes of the governments' attitude towards *afectados*: recognising the victims – regardless of changing political contexts – remained synonymous with pointing out the perpetrators and their methods.[18]

Although nowadays further analysis of the indicated mechanisms seems to be inevitable, it should, however, be always accompanied by at least two observations. First of all, it concerns a country where serious historical limitations are a challenge on the path to any changes (which means in particular the strong, historically shaped disproportion between the statuses of armed forces and civilians, additionally deepened and consolidated in the *Fujimorism* era). Secondly, it refers to the so-called reconciliation processes (or, attempts at reconciliation) within a society, whose history does not really know the concept of conciliation, at least on the national level.[19]

Translated by Małgorzata Leśniak and Monika Stogowska-Woszczyk.

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[18] It is worth adding that – as the years went by – the struggle for the rights of the missing persons was additionally complicated by the fact that locating and examining anonymous graves turned out to be a threat not only to the uniformed services but also to the civilians involved in the acts of war. This problem refers to an extremely complex, though not widely known phenomenon (which nowadays considerably hinders the progress of investigating and clarifying the conflict in the province), that is the opposition of the Andean societies responsible for the acts of violence inside the communities and between them. It is currently the key element of my research on the *politics of (non-)memory* in the Andes, that is bottom-up strategies of concealing the mechanisms of terror from the period of the civil war.

[19] I am grateful to forensic archeologists, Franco Mora and Illariq Peralta, for sharing their views on this problem.

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