Labor Conflict, Arbitration, and the Labor State in Highland Peru

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This chapter explores labor conflict at the Anglo-French Ticapampa Silver Mining Company mines located at an altitude of approximately four thousand meters above sea level in Ancash, Peru, surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the Western Hemisphere. Established in the first decade of the twentieth century, by the 1920s the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company was the most important producer of silver in Peru. Its famous “casa de gerencia” (management house) was the place where, according to some versions of the story, the famous cocktail “pisco sour” was invented. Yet relatively little is known about the company or its operations in Ancash. Most studies of the history of mining and labor relations in mines in Peru have, for good reasons, focused on the central highlands, and particularly on the Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation, which was by far the most important mining concern in Peru in the first half of the twentieth century. However, the existence of rich, if patchy, documentation on labor disputes in Ticapampa in the 1920s and 1930s provides a unique opportunity to examine close-up the ways in which the regime of labor relations, and more specifically the management of labor conflict, in the mining industry evolved in the first half of the twentieth century beyond Cerro de Pasco. In particular, the study of Ticapampa sheds light on the operation of labor justice in even the most distant places where labor and capital came into conflict.

As I have shown elsewhere, in the first few decades of the twentieth century, and particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, Peruvian modernizing elites viewed the resolution of the labor question as a matter of civilization while workers came to be seen as a valuable resource to be protected and improved through the actions of the state. In a country perceived by its elites as held back on the march to progress by its primarily indigenous and rural population, workers, understood as nonindigenous and associated with modern industry, were imagined as a key actor in a broader project of industrialization as a means to progress. Labor policy, in the shape of
labor laws and state agencies aimed at addressing the labor question, was motivated not only, as
has tended to be argued, by a desire to contain labor militancy and undermine the appeal of
emerging left-wing political ideologies and parties. It also reflected the belief of modernizing
elites that workers could be agents of progress and that social action by the state could protect
and improve workers in their immediate (the workplace) and mediate (the worker communities)
environments. Miners occupied a particularly central role in this racialized understanding of the
potential of industry to bring about a new era of progress based on a modern workforce. As a
privileged environment where Indians came into contact with modern industry, mines, like
haciendas, were understood to be spaces where the indigenous, thanks to the paternalistic
practices of their employers but also of the state, could be redeemed by undergoing a cultural and
even racial transformation from Indians into workers.\(^5\)

Though in some ways liminal spaces between the indigenous and nonindigenous spheres,
mines belonged to the sphere of labor and therefore of progress. Although the workers in the
mines may have been phenotypically or even culturally “Indian,” they were considered workers
and as such were subject to labor legislation and to the system of labor justice. As I have shown
elsewhere, labor and indigeneity were two incommensurable spheres of constitutional and legal
action. As miners, and therefore as workers, the men and women who worked in mines across
the country became subject to a series of labor laws introduced from the first decade of the
twentieth century onward, some specific to miners, but most, such as the 1911 work accident
law, extensive to all who were considered workers. Likewise, they were entitled, indeed in some
ways required, to form unions, in order to participate, from the late 1910s onward, in the system
of collective bargaining and labor arbitration that came into force, and was enshrined, in articles
48 and 49 of the 1920 Constitution. Finally, miners fell under the purview of the Sección del
Trabajo of the Ministerio de Fomento, the Labor Bureau of the Ministry of Development,
established in 1919, which had the power to recognize labor unions and oversee collective
bargaining. The laws, agencies, and ideas constituted what I call the labor state, a state
coproduced by workers through how they accommodated, resisted, and ultimately transformed
the way it addressed the labor question.

Regardless of their phenotype or indigenous background, workers at the Ticapampa mine
thought of themselves as workers. They made use of traditional instruments of labor struggle
such as the strike but also the newly created labor rights and collective bargaining legislation to
bring employers to the negotiating table and seek better wages and working conditions. In forming a union, the Ticapampa workers inserted themselves into a tradition of organizing that tied them to a history of labor that transcended the Peruvian context and globalized their own struggle against capital. In bringing their grievances to the attention of state agencies charged with implementing labor arbitration, the men and women who labored in the mines and in the mill of Ticapampa summoned the Peruvian state to their mining camp. Through labor arbitration, the miners invoked the labor legislation that they knew existed to protect them from exploitative employers such as the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company and at the same time mobilized a discourse that reflected the idea that as workers they were agents of progress. As we will see, they may not always have succeeded in securing better wages or working conditions, but the fact that workers drew on such laws, state agencies, and discourses points to how the coproduction of the labor state by workers and state agents could take place even at four thousand meters above sea level.

The Anglo-French Ticapampa Company

Although set up as early as 1892, and reorganized as a company in 1903, the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company took over a mining operation in Ticapampa that began as early as the 1860s, developed by a Pole named Sokolosky and a French national called Henry Thierry. In this sense, the Anglo-French Ticapampa investment was part of a broader trend of foreign capital penetration in mining in Peru, which, as Rosemary Thorp and Geoff Bertram noted some years ago, radically changed the pattern of ownership of the mining sector from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1920s. Of course, the most important and most visible company in this process of “denationalization of mining” was the Cerro de Pasco Corporation in the central highlands. However, in Ticapampa too, this process was at play. Although not on the same scale as in the central highlands, mining’s impact on the local economy in Ancash was significant. In 1905, there were some 315 mining concessions in Ancash, which made it the second-largest mining department after Junín, where Cerro de Pasco was located, which boasted as many as 1,892 concessions. Ancash employed the second-largest number of miners, some 2,100 “mineros” and 470 “metalurgistas” (Junín’s equivalent figures were 4,200 and 600). Yet the department was largely characterized by small mineral producers who employed a reduced workforce and worked the silver seams “intermittently,” producing on average no more than ten
tons per year. This type of production was highly price sensitive. When silver prices fell, production fell accordingly.\textsuperscript{10} Indeed, of twenty-nine mines identified in Ancash in mining statistics for 1906, only half were in operation.\textsuperscript{11}

As in the central highlands, though again at a much smaller scale, the penetration of foreign capital led to investment in and modernization of the mining activities, thus likely heightening the differences between foreign owned and run mines such as Ticapampa, which were highly capitalized and endowed with the latest technology, and smaller, artisanal miners that were unable to access such sources of capital and technology (and which, available evidence suggests, came to rely on larger concerns such as Ticapampa to process their ore). Although located at close to four thousand meters above sea level, Ticapampa acquired an industrial character and was at the forefront of a major technological transformation in silver mining in Peru.\textsuperscript{12} By the 1910s, the mining camp boasted the “most powerful” lixiviation plant in the country and a smelter. Harry Franck, a U.S. writer and “adventurer” who traveled through much of Peru in the 1910s, described Ticapampa as the “headquarters of a French mining company, the several tall chimneys of which were belching their black smoke into the brilliant sky, their ugliness offset by the first suggestion of industry in Peru.”\textsuperscript{13} According to one source, in 1936, Ticapampa employed 385 workers (\textit{operarios}) and 4 white-collar workers (\textit{empleados}). Average pay for an eight-hour work day was 1.45 soles, the highest rate in the \textit{departamento}, though significantly lower than at Cerro de Pasco, where workers were paid between 2.10 and 3.28 soles, and lower also than at another important silver mine, Caylloma in Arequipa, where workers received 2.00 soles.\textsuperscript{14}

One of the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company managers, Jacques Veigle, who was based at the mine between 1916 and 1919, provided a description of the place in a talk given at the Société de Géographie de Genève in 1945.\textsuperscript{15} According to his account, Veigle reached the mining camp of Ticapampa after riding on horseback up the Peruvian coastal desert from Lima and turning into a mountainous region, “with deep gorges crossed by disturbing bridges.” After passing a summit at 4,700 meters above sea level, he reached the valley where the mining camp is located, between the “White” and “Black” cordilleras that cross the department of Ancash, “bigger than Switzerland.” Veigle described Ticapampa itself as having “a harsh and violent landscape, with a climate characterized by sudden changes of temperature, where the altitude accelerates the pulsations of the heart and forces one to work more slowly.” In keeping with this
representation of the landscape as alien and threatening, Veigle described the local population in the dominant racialized register of the time as primitive and backward: “As for the natives, they are Cholos. They live from sheep farming, wear ponchos and felt or straw hats. Their dwellings are rudimentary; infant mortality is very high.” Whether Ticapampa drew its workforce from the local population is unclear but likely, at least for the less highly skilled tasks. Higher-skilled workers, employed in the lixiviation process, for example, may have been drawn from further afield.  

Despite the perception of an inauspicious environment and a suboptimal local population, the investment made by the French company appears to have paid off, at least initially. In 1908 and then 1917, the building of deep shafts enabled access to a rich seam of silver, known as Collaracra, which according to one report was 1 meter thick and produced 2.5 kilograms of silver per ton mined. In 1917 the mine produced 18,500 kilograms of silver. According to J. Fred Rippy, the company “paid its first dividend in 1905 and an average of nearly 16 percent annually down through the year 1919 on a nominal capital ranging from £100,000 to £140,000.” However, he goes on to add that the company made “no further payment to its owners between 1920 and 1950!” The profitability of the company did not go unnoticed by Peruvian observers: “The prosperity of this company can be judged by the last dividends distributed to its shareholders, which have been 20% in 1910, 20% in 1911, 25% in 1912, and 20% in 1913.” The reasons the company stopped paying dividends after 1920 are unclear. The company reports suggest that it continued to invest in its mining operations in the 1920s. In 1918 the *Boletín del Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Minas* singled out the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company as one of only two mining companies that continued to focus primarily on mining silver (the other was the Sociedad Explotadora de Caylloma, based in Arequipa). Ticapampa had made the most of high prices for silver, producing net gains of more than 1.5 million French francs and a dividend of 27 percent. This favorable situation had allowed the company to put aside significant reserves of half a million Francs in order to cover the cost of building a railway to the coast.

Though the mining operations appear to have been generally successful, their location presented real challenges. The U.S. traveler Annie Peck was certainly impressed by the region: “The mineral riches may rival the Klondike as the scenic splendor surpasses that of Chamonix.” But, located one hundred kilometers from the coast, the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company depended on mule and llama trains to transport the mineral to the port of Huarmey,
where in 1905 the company had been authorized to build a wharf.\textsuperscript{23} As Veigle explained, llamas could only carry 45 kilograms and travel 20 kilometers per day.\textsuperscript{24} In effect, anything weighing more than 130 kilograms (the weight a mule can bear) could not be carried up to or down from the mine. In its report of 1918, the company noted that the creation of a means of communication with the coast was “essential to the development of our mining region, whose wealth is growing day by day.” In its estimation, a railroad would be too expensive and not necessary, since the mineral is high value and has a low volume and weight. Instead a road would suffice. The report proposed the use of tractors (which the European war had demonstrated were powerful and adaptable), which could provide a regular service between the mine and the coast.\textsuperscript{25} By 1920 the company had undertaken the building of a road to the port of Huarmey, and had made some progress, with up to forty kilometers of road accessible to trucks.\textsuperscript{26}

Another challenge faced by the company was labor. The region had one of the highest population densities in the country. Annie Peck noted that “along the [valley] are the considerable towns of Caráz, Yungay, Carhuaz, and Huaráz, capital of the Department, each with populations of several thousand, besides the people at haciendas and at mining centers on either hand. This is one of the richest and most thickly settled portions of Peru.”\textsuperscript{27} However, the large number of mines and haciendas in the region meant that labor was scarce and obtaining labor to work in the Ticapampa mine was expensive and difficult: “In the Sierra the workers are so scarce that the miners snatch them from each other and, to keep them, the owners of the plantations, sugar mills, etc. need to make great advances in wages.”\textsuperscript{28} Company reports from 1907 similarly point to the fact that retaining labor was not straightforward: “The availability of workers has suffered a bit due to the creation of a new company in our mining area. Thanks to the facilities we are seeking to provide to the workers for their food and housing, the number of defections has decreased, and the current contingent is sufficient to meet our needs.”\textsuperscript{29} The following year, the report noted that “the workers we hired were sufficient for our needs except in the planting season.”\textsuperscript{30} As this suggests, workers could be easily enticed to join another company—it was necessary to provide incentives in the shape of good food and accommodation to retain them. Regular advertisements in local newspapers such as \textit{El Departamento de Ancash} and \textit{Huascarán} suggest that labor recruitment was something the company had to pursue actively: “Workers needed for its mines and offices.”\textsuperscript{31}

At the same time, these company reports suggest, the workers employed by the company
were not fully proletarianized. During the harvest and planting seasons, mine labor became scarce.\textsuperscript{32} This was a general problem for the mining industry in much of Peru until the 1920s, as a 1917 report on mining conditions confirmed: “The number of workers occupied by the mining industry in Peru varies considerably, especially in the regions of the highlands, where the main mines are located, because most of them have small crops in nearby valleys and at harvest and planting time they leave the mines, sometimes producing major labor crises.”\textsuperscript{33} And yet, as we will see below, though some mine workers (more likely the less highly skilled) at Ticapampa may have retained some connection to agricultural activities, which during lean times such as the Great Depression served as a safety cushion (as Florencia Mallon has argued for the central highlands), the disputes that they engaged in were motivated by grievances that reflected their condition as mine workers, not as semiproletarianized peasants.\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, the discourses that they employed, in both marking out their identity as workers and in invoking the social legislation and the regime of labor relations that was intended to protect them from capitalist exploitation, firmly inserted them into the sphere of labor.

The 1918–1920 Labor Unrest

In December 1918, the Spanish flu hit the mining camp at Ticapampa. Its effect was devastating, as it was around the world, where it resulted in a death toll of between 50 and 100 million.\textsuperscript{35} In January 1919, \textit{El Departamento de Ancash} reported that the pandemic was causing numerous deaths in Ticapampa “because it is not possible to effectively treat the sick due to a lack of doctors and medicines.” The dead were being removed from the mines on the back of mules, while the company had been forced to shut down operations. Some five hundred workers were infected, the newspaper estimated.\textsuperscript{36} The situation was catastrophic: “The population [of the mines] is totally alarmed, without medicine, lacking in all kinds of resources.”\textsuperscript{37} According to the company, 60 percent of factory workers (\textit{ouvriers d’usine}) and 40 percent of miners were killed, a death toll confirmed by Dr. Amadeo Robles, who had gone out to the mines to help the ill but had fallen ill himself.\textsuperscript{38} Production fell to zero in January and February and only restarted in March.\textsuperscript{39} Jacques Veigle, who was working at Ticapampa at the time, confirms these figures. According to his account, he was himself “seriously ill” and lived through “tragic days.”\textsuperscript{40} These death rates were catastrophic and much higher than elsewhere in Peru, indeed than in nearby Huaraz, where mortality was estimated by Dr. Robles at 1 or 2 percent.\textsuperscript{41} Based on available
evidence, it appears that up to two hundred workers died as a consequence of the pandemic at Ticapampa.

The impact of the pandemic on the mining camp was devastating and possibly worsened by the actions of the company. When the company shut down its operations, the “bodega” or company store shut down. Workers had nowhere to purchase goods, thus considerably worsening the situation caused by the pandemic. As two workers noted in a letter published in *El Departamento de Ancash*: “It is truly horrifying to see lying in the street the corpses of our comrades who, lacking food and people to take care of them, left [their homes] in desperate search [for help] and there and then fell dead.” The workers asked that the company provide basic foodstuffs to help them survive. However, the effect of the flu pandemic was not only demographic. It coincided with a new phase in labor relations. As the company report of 1919 noted, “our decimated worker populations also take part in the labor trouble that the Bolshevik wind has sown in all corners of the world. Some clues make us fear possible strikes that would further reduce our production.” As this suggests, in Ticapampa too, the wave of labor unrest that swept much of the world in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the end of World War I left its mark. As happened elsewhere in Peru in 1918–19, workers at Ticapampa turned to the strike as a means to extract higher wages and better working conditions. This occurred in, and contributed to, a context where national elites viewed the introduction of social legislation as a necessary and modernizing development. Such sentiments, however, often came into conflict with the interests of employers who resisted new labor legislation and attempted to roll back what they perceived to be state interference in labor-capital relations.

The labor unrest of 1918–20 at Ticapampa can be gleaned from reports in the local press and from Ministerio del Interior documents held at the Archivo General de la Nación. *El Departamento de Ancash* reported in March 1918 that a strike had broken out at Ticapampa, one of a number of “regular strikes.” The article reflected a dominant narrative that explained worker militancy in Peru in this period: if workers struck, it was because of the influence of outside agitators. The strikes, it noted, “are a consequence of the incitements of well-known elements, who use all means to influence the workers of that company and push them to make all kinds of demands.” The response to the strike was swift. Twenty-five gendarmes and the subprefect were dispatched from Huaraz to restore order in the mine. However, the reports in the local press also reflected a second narrative: it was the responsibility of the authorities to ensure that the
rights of workers and of capitalists were respected. Workers’ demands were justified in light of the steep increase in prices that the end of World War I had brought about and the fact that their wages had not changed. The press applauded the actions of the subprefect in bringing the strike to a successful end: the company had agreed to increase wages by 20 percent; it would allow workers to use the company bodega; it would pay workers fortnightly (rather than monthly); and it would ensure that a doctor be available at all times, while considering establishing a hospital in the mining camp.47

The trouble was far from over, however. The apparent solution to the unrest was celebrated by the company in a letter sent by the company’s general manager, Pedro Fontenay, to the prefect. In the letter, Fontenay thanked the prefect for his “effective intervention in the satisfactory and fair solution of the strike of our workers” but also, indirectly, for the detachment of eight soldiers that were seconded to the mining camp under the command of alférez (second lieutenant) Félix Davelouis.48 A little over a month later, however, unrest had returned to the mine. Following what they viewed as the unfair dismissal of a worker, the Collaracra miners cut the electricity and telephone cables and let off sticks of dynamite, a form of protest that appears to have been used regularly in Ticapampa. At the same time, the workers in the mill demanded the dismissal of an employee, apparently disliked because he worked in the bodega (perhaps it was believed that he treated workers unfairly or that he was seen as a stooge of the company). The response, again, was to dispatch twenty soldiers to the mine. This appears to have convinced the workers to return to work. Again, the incident was framed in the narrative of the influence of outside agitators. The workers’ demands, according to El Departamento de Ancash, “are merely the consequence of the intrigues and maneuvers of people who for some time now have tried to get others to do their bidding and push workers, who are simply trying to earn their daily bread, to reprehensible and dangerous extremes.” The rights of workers could, the newspaper concluded, be taken to extremes “that are borderline insane.”49

This was the context in which the workers of Ticapampa set up a union, the Sociedad de Auxilios Mutuos de Obreros y Artesanos de Ticapampa (Ticapampa Mutual Aid Society of Workers and Artisans). The union was created in late October 1918 and as such was part of a much larger wave of unionization that took place in Peru at this time.50 The creation of the union or, strictly speaking, mutual aid society appears to have had some support from the company, at least initially. Federico Testolini, a company “ingeniero” who gave a standard as a present to the
union, and Amadeo Robles, described as a company doctor, were present at the union’s inauguration, a lavish affair that included champagne, a band of musicians, a priest brought from Recuay, and a corrida in the Ticapampa bullring. The speeches given by the president and treasurer of the union, Fortunato Montalvo and Alfredo Laguna, respectively, as well as by Daniel Villaizán, described as the “worker delegate,” in effect the legal representative of the workers charged with interceding with the company, who the following year became mayor of Huaraz, point to the ideas that underpinned the creation of the union. They illustrate the extent to which miners at Ticapampa viewed themselves as workers, not semiproletarianized peasants. They inserted themselves in a narrative of worker struggle, organization, and identity that connected them to the history of labor in Europe and the United States as well as to the worker populations of the urban centers and the export industries on the Peruvian coast and elsewhere in the highlands. In so doing, they also located themselves firmly within the sphere of labor as defined by the labor legislation of the Peruvian state.

Montalvo’s speech began with what he called a “short account of proletarian life,” which, in fact, was an erudite attempt to frame the labor struggles in Ticapampa in a global as well as long-run historical context. His overview started with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the establishment of society, and class struggle, jumped back to Plato and Aristotle and Greek and Roman slavery, turned to the feudal institutions of the Middle Ages and the freedom offered to slaves in the afterlife by religion, and moved forward to the nineteenth century, to the abolition of slavery and Abraham Lincoln proclaiming all men are created equal. The abolition of slavery had not ended oppression, Montalvo contended. The waged were now victims of a new and cruel tyrant: capital. Karl Marx had been the first to understand this, he noted. Montalvo’s speech then moved through the 1848 revolutions, the workers’ international, and the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels. He then turned to the rise of socialism and the idea, which he associated with Élisée Réclus, that armed struggle could not succeed when faced with “unconscious masses.” He then turned to the process whereby socialists sought to return to politics and control parliaments in order to legislate in favor of the proletariat, a process that he associated with Alexandre Millerand in France and Woodrow Wilson in the United States. Faced with a railway strike, Wilson had declared that the state had to intervene in conflicts between capital and labor and side with workers “to prevent them becoming victims of the capitalist tyranny.” The passing of the eight-hour-day law, Montalvo concluded, had put an end to a process that had begun with the
Montalvo then turned to the Peruvian context. In so doing, he used a rhetorical device that suggests he was familiar with the writings of the famous Peruvian libertarian writer Manuel González Prada: “The Peruvian social problem is not in Lima, or Callao, or in any other city; it is here, in the real Peru which is not Lima; it is in the haciendas and the mines, where the hacendados and the mine owners become rich thanks to the sweat and even blood of the unfortunate.” Montalvo went on to criticize social legislation, focusing on what he called the trifling accident law, and criticized the fact that each time that workers had demanded their rights from the authorities, “the state has used military force to drown in blood all demands,” while pointing to recent cases such as Chicama, Llaucán, Vitarte, Huacho, and Lobitos. The situation at Ticapampa was, he argued, a unique exception, one in which the company bosses, the “educated worker” (obrero culto), and the political authorities had found a peaceful and just solution. But elsewhere, the situation was dire. In particular he pointed to the situation of the “indigenous race,” which, he suggested, was now in a worse state than during the Ramón Castilla government in the mid-nineteenth century, when forced labor obligations had been banned. Now, however, the indigenous population had to contend with other forms of exploitation: “debt peonage [enganches], low wages, unpaid and coerced labor, etc.” As this suggests, Montalvo viewed Indian exploitation as a grave matter but as separate (if connected) to the struggles of workers. This confirms further the idea that Ticapampa workers, regardless of their phenotype or background, imagined themselves as part of the sphere of labor, not indigeneity.

Montalvo finished his speech by applauding the creation of the union, whose function he presented primarily as consisting of assisting its members who fell ill or died, functions typical of mutual aid societies. This was also the message that Alfredo Laguna, the union’s treasurer, tried to put across in his shorter speech. But Laguna also emphasized that the union represented unity and solidarity among the workforce, which would bring about the end of capitalist exploitation and the beginning of a new era, “and that, simply because our forces have united into a single one to guarantee our interests and to give us the indispensable mutual assistance that we must give to each other, in case of future contingencies.” Finally, Daniel Villaizán, who declared himself to be a “worker of the mind and action,” gave a somewhat patronizing speech, in which he praised the workers for having obtained a “deserved victory” in the strike, the company for having given way to the workers’ demands, and the government for, in essence, not
having used violence to repress the strike. He thanked the workers for having made him their “delegate,” a role that he promised to fulfill “as an advanced sentinel who will guarantee the firmness and stability of the pact under whose protection, restrained and respectful toward your bosses, as always, you [returned] to the daily work, like tireless bees of the hive of progress.”

It is unclear why the company gave its blessing to the union. Perhaps it thought that it would be a docile mutual aid society and nothing else. The rhetoric mobilized by Montalvo and Laguna should have disabused them of this belief. Only a few months later, trouble returned to the mine, and it was focused on the union. On April 2, 1919, *El Departamento de Ancash* reported on an altercation that had rocked the Sociedad de Auxilios Mutuos during a meeting at its “local.” The problem began, according to the newspaper, when a faction headed by Fortunato Montalvo tried to replace Daniel Villaizán as worker delegate to the company with three other delegates, respectively Aurelio Valenzuela, Gustavo Pohl (someone we shall return to), and Víctor Thierry. This attempt to oust Villaizán was resisted by another faction, which appears to have succeeded in imposing its will, electing Agripino González to the presidency of the union. The conflict between these two factions turned violent. A fight broke out and a worker named Daniel Camones let off dynamite sticks, according to the press reports. In turn, this provoked the intervention of the police, led by the *teniente gobernador* of Ticapampa, Josué Espinoza, leading to the arrest of Camones and a confrontation, which resulted in several dead and injured. The situation escalated when Espinoza, accused by the workers of having started the trouble, was himself arrested by a Capitán Rodríguez. Espinoza then escaped. A large detachment of police officers was sent subsequently from Huaraz to investigate and arrest the troublemakers.

These acts of violence were presented in *El Departamento de Ancash* in a familiar narrative. Although the newspaper recognized in an early article that “undoubtedly, there is no such a state of harmony and equity in Ticapampa that would make the relations between the capital and the worker workable,” it blamed the violence on a small group intent on undermining the general workforce, which, by contrast, was focused on work and not politics: “The majority of workers do not want a strike or disorder, . . . they want to work normally.” The trouble, the newspaper insisted, had been motivated “by the disruptive attitude of some workers who are influenced by people who pretend to be defenders of the working class but whose motives are different and even contrary to the welfare of workers and employees of Ticapampa.” Put differently, the newspaper blamed the violence on Montalvo and Camones and a small group of
workers allied to them. By contrast, the authorities, and particularly the teniente gobernador, Josué Espinoza, were blameless. This was a narrative that the new “directive” of the union was clearly keen to make its own, as demonstrated by the decision to name Gonzalo Salazar, the editor of *El Departamento de Ancash*, as its “worker delegate.” In the 1940s, Salazar went on to become a member of parliament for Ancash (as “diputado”) and appears to have played an important role in local politics in the region for much of the 1930s and 1940s. He was, evidence suggests, an important member of the local Ancash elite and, as editor of the main local newspaper, had significant power at the local level.

What motivated Salazar to take such a direct interest in the situation at Ticapampa? To judge from reports in his newspaper, he viewed Ticapampa as a source of progress and modernity in the region. As a local elite, he may well have felt that it was in his interest, and those of his class, to protect the company’s interests. He was clearly alarmed by what he saw as the dangerous militancy of the Ticapampa workers and may have feared that it could spread to other workers in the region, some of whom had also begun to set up unions. The violence at Ticapampa gave Salazar, and his newspaper, an opportunity to further recast the interests of the workers as distinct from what he termed “materialist socialism”: economic progress, he contended, would be achieved through a just and harmonious social regulation of labor and capital. Moreover, labor was to be organized “in accordance with the new human conditions to adapt them not to a materialist socialism in bankruptcy but rather to an effective system based on solidarity [*solidarismo*].” An editorial, written a month after the conflict, returned to these notions. It started by establishing the illegitimacy of labor militancy at Ticapampa: “For some time now the mining company of Ticapampa has been the victim of serious disturbances caused by false worker movements, which not only impact on the operations of the company, but also criminally besmirch the workers by making them appear insubordinate and lacking morality.” The editorial went on to stress that it would always side with workers against the exploitation of unscrupulous capitalists, but what was happening at Ticapampa was merely the work of outside agitators who pushed workers to “inconceivable extremes.”

This was a narrative that again was reprised by the workers who had taken over the union, as reflected by a letter sent to *El Departamento de Ancash* by Agripino González and Daniel Cáceres, who argued that “for some time now, strange elements to the true [sic] working classes of the Company have been inciting a small minority to commit subversive acts that do
not respond to any need but to external interests that damage our dignity as workers.”

They claimed that Montalvo and a small group of workers had attacked them and burned their houses, an accusation that was corroborated by another item in the newspaper, a letter signed by Rocardo Rivero, an intendente or police officer, who claimed that Montalvo, whom he described as “one of the leaders of the rebels [revoltosos],” was responsible for a number of “criminal acts,” including destroying the telephone line, removing railway sleepers over an extension of three hundred meters, and looting the properties of Luis González, Agripino González, Carlo Magno Montoro, and Víctor Moreno. His report suggested that the workers had tried to elect a new union leadership, presumably to replace Agripino González, and that they had been encouraged to do this by Gustavo Pohl. He added that the company manager had refused to recognize the union and its new leadership. He concluded that “this movement is provoked by some individuals who try to take advantage of the divergences between the workers and the Company, divergences that are very harmful to the Mining Company.”

Almost exactly a year later, another strike broke out at Ticapampa. It is possible to examine this strike from a closer vantage point thanks to documents that have survived in the Ministerio del Interior documentation and consist of correspondence from the prefect of Ancash, Manuel Pablo Villanueva, who attempted to resolve the dispute through arbitration. The strike quickly turned violent following the arrival in Recuay of Prefect Villanueva, who, it would seem, had decided to sort out the dispute on his own. On March 12, the prefect held a meeting with the striking workers in the Club de Tiro premises but refused to allow the workers’ lawyer, Gustavo Pohl, to participate in the talks, forcing him out of the building. This appears to have exacerbated feelings and the two hundred or so workers who had gathered outside the locale reacted angrily, firing bullets in the air and blowing up dynamite sticks. A few days later, on March 15, a group of workers attacked the barracks in Recuay, “with all types of weapons and dynamite sticks,” to free several workers who were being held prisoner in the barracks, including Manuel Camones and Emilio Huerta, described in one report as not being workers “but rather well-known agitators . . . some of the principal instigators of the revolt and challenge to the authorities.”

The “combat” lasted from 12:30 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., but the attackers were repelled. The following day, according to officer Juan Faverón’s report, as he was taking the prisoners to Huaraz, he was attacked outside Recuay by “several groups of strikers, who as soon as they saw my troops, started shooting violently with carbines, rifles and revolvers, while others appeared over the hills
and also fired their weapons and used slingshots to fire dynamite sticks and stones of all sizes.”

It is difficult to establish the credibility of these reports. The prefect’s own report, sent to the Director de Gobierno, portrayed the events at Ticapampa and Recuay as “seditive acts” and reproduced the idea that workers were motivated not by genuine grievances but rather by political objectives: “The labor agitation of Ticapampa was not caused by the real and resounding needs [sic] of the workers, but owed to censurable incitements of people alien to the union, who pursued political ends.” Some reports point to collusion between former local authorities, such as “ex gobernador Román Bojorquez” and “ex-Alcalde Josué Espinoza,” and the striking workers, though this is surprising given the past history between these authorities and the workers. One report suggests that during the protests the workers “shouted slogans and among others I heard ‘Death to the Prefect who has been bribed! Long live the strike! Let’s start the looting! Long live Pardo! Death to Leguía! Long live our leader Doctor Pohl!’ These reports, ultimately, attempted to portray the workers’ actions as being orchestrated by local elites who had lost their positions following the change of national government (President Augusto B. Leguía, who ruled until 1930, deposed José Pardo in 1919). Whether there was some degree of collaboration between these elites and the workers is unclear, but what we can conclude is that this framing of the situation suited the broader attempt to present workers’ demands as illegitimate. The workers, through their representative Gustavo Pohl, presented a very different story: the recently installed gobernador of Recuay, a certain Aguero, viewed as responsible, with the prefect, for the recent unrest and violence, was an “employee of the Mining Company of Ticapampa.”

In this context, an arbitration tribunal apparently constituted exclusively by Prefecto Villanueva ruled on the dispute on March 22. The ruling gave both miners and mill operators a 20 percent wage increase, more than the 12 percent offered by the company but significantly less than the 50 percent demanded by the workers. The company also agreed not to raise prices in the bodega during a whole year, to provide a doctor in the mining camp who would offer his services for free to workers and their families, to introduce filters to reduce pollution from the mill’s chimneys, and to make improvements to the workers’ dwellings. However, the wording of the ruling pointed to the rationale that guided the prefect in bringing a solution to the dispute. Workers’ wages, he insisted, had risen continuously since 1913. The hours of work had fallen, and workers were paid overtime. The prices of goods sold in the company store were cheaper
than in Recuay, while workers’ wages in Ticapampa were higher than those paid in other mines and haciendas in the region and workers already received health and pension benefits as well as accident insurance. At the same time, the company’s profits, the prefect noted, were limited by the lower mineral yield; the company had invested “important sums” in the region, including in the road from Huarmey to the mine. Finally, the workers had told the prefect that they appreciated the “goodwill of the Company to improve the situation of its workers.” It followed that the strikes were not a product of conditions at the mines but “of the pernicious action of strange elements, who pursue egoistic ends, which harms the interests of the workers and leads to a frequent alteration of the public order.”

The prefect clearly viewed or at least sought to present the company as a benevolent employer that had the workers’ well-being in mind. Some company employees, such as the “ingeniero” Federico Testolini, who awarded the workers’ union its standard, may have shared such sentiments. But the company managers did not. The 1921 report produced by the company for its shareholders painted a grim picture: the war years had made it impossible to acquire spare parts for the mill and the railways, and much-needed repairs had not been undertaken. Moreover, the mineral yield had been far below expectations. In addition, exchange rate fluctuations had led to a sharp depreciation in the French franc, which meant that the assigned budget of 2,500,000 francs was no longer worth 100,000 Peruvian pounds but only 33,000 Peruvian pounds. The situation was compounded by what the company described as “problems with the workforce.” Decimated by the pandemic, the company had had little choice but to reconstitute it “with undocile and uppity people.” This explained the growing tensions with the workforce, which had resulted in a suspension of production in the final three months of 1920. In order to “discipline the workers,” the company not only stopped operations in the mine; it fired all its workforce. This decision was explained to the chargé d’affaires at the French legation by one of the company heads as owing to “the complete anarchy of the workers, whose continuous strikes and even armed violence make it indispensable to stop the work for at least a prudential time to allow us to completely separate the dangerous elements.” The company decision to fire its entire workforce paid off, at least as far as it was concerned. The workforce, it claimed, “chastened by a long stoppage, has returned more disciplined and less demanding.” Reports from later years suggest that the labor trouble the company had experienced in the years 1918–20 subsided significantly.
A range of factors shaped labor unrest in Ticapampa in 1918–20. The company viewed the flu pandemic as being the source of much of the disruption. In replacing the decimated workforce, it recruited workers who were less docile, if not openly rebellious. Its decision to shut down operations entirely and hire a new workforce reflected this understanding. Certainly, as we have seen, the establishment of the union and the speeches at its inauguration point to the presence of workers with what we could call working-class consciousness but also a knowledge and understanding of labor legislation and the framework of state–labor relations that had begun to be put in place since the early twentieth century. The tensions within the union suggest that not all miners at Ticapampa welcomed such developments, though we cannot know for sure if the new ideas arrived with the new workers. In any case, strikes were hardly new at Ticapampa; they dated back to at least 1913. The intervention of local elites such as the owner of El Departamento de Ancash, who projected onto the unrest his own ideas about the role of capital in developing the region and the threat of militant labor in undermining such development, gave the Ticapampa disputes a broader significance for the region as a whole. Finally, the clearly biased actions of political authorities such as Prefect Manuel Pablo Villanueva, charged with resolving the unrest in the spirit of the new legislation governing labor arbitration, points to the evident problems of implementing such initiatives in a place like Ticapampa.

The 1938 dispute

On April 19, 1938, Amadeo Torre, Roberto Huerta, and Agustín Esquivel submitted an eleven-point pliego de reclamos (list of grievances) on behalf of the workforce to the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company. The demands included significant wage increases, in most cases of 100 percent in the salaries of eight different categories of workers; strict observance of the holiday law; the suppression of “premios” (bonuses), which led some workers to put in twelve-hour shifts; the banning of registering workers as “new” when they had been with the company for years; compensation for workers who had suffered accidents and were disabled; payment of holiday and Sunday work as established by law; the provision of protective equipment for workers; the suppression of monopolies (a reference to the company store, no doubt); provision of medicines and first aid kits in the mines for injured and ill miners; guarantees for the worker delegates; and finally, that the worker delegates be allowed to take their grievances to the authorities if these demands were not met. The list of grievances included one additional
demand, which appears to have been added later: the *bodeguero*, or company storekeeper, Atanasio Pachecho, who “among other abuses has injured the worker Leoncio Maguiña, doña Julia Espinoza and others,” was to be fired. As should be evident, these demands were quite similar to the ones that had motivated strikes in the 1918–20 period discussed above. Little, it would seem, had changed.

However, in fact, quite a lot had changed. For one thing, the union established in 1919 had disappeared. When or why is unclear. But the worker delegates who signed the pliego de reclamos did so as, respectively, presidente, tesorero (treasurer), and secretario of a “Strike Committee,” not of the Sociedad de Auxilios Mutuos de Obreros y Artesanos de Ticapampa. But a lot more besides had changed. In contrast to the 1918–20 period, the 1938 pliego de reclamos set in motion a process of labor conciliation and arbitration that was very different from the arbitration process that Prefect Villanueva had established in 1920 to solve that year’s strike. Only three days later, on April 22, 1938, a conciliation tribunal was convened in Huaraz, at the prefecture. Torre, Huerta, and Esquivel attended, in representation of the workers, along with their lawyer, Dr. César Castro. The company manager attended together with the company lawyer, Glicerio Fernández. Also present were the “agente fiscal,” Pedro M. Cáceres; a procurator, who presided over the tribunal; and the temporary (“accidental”) prefect, Daniel Orjeda. The twelve grievances were discussed at the meeting. Since no agreement was reached, an arbitration tribunal was established. The workers designated Gustavo A. Pohl, who, as we saw, had acted on behalf of the workers in the past, as their *arbitro*. The company designated Alejandro Boza as theirs. The judiciary designated Julio R. Barrón, a “juez de primera instancia,” as the president of the tribunal and the representative of the state.

The tribunal met a little over a month later, on May 25, 1938. In the month leading up to the first meeting of the tribunal, correspondence between the worker delegates and the president of the arbitration tribunal points not only to the workers’ clear understanding of labor legislation but also to their ability to deploy a language that evoked a framework of state–labor relations that legitimized their demands. The workers complained that they had been fired and that the company was flouting labor legislation: “Improper abuses are being committed in a country that has laws that regulate the relationship between capital and work.” They claimed that the company was refusing to pay compensation (equivalent to fifteen days’ wages per year worked), as required by law, to workers who were no longer able to work because they were no longer
able to perform backbreaking labor in the mines. The company claimed that compensation was only to be paid to workers who were fired and not those who left work voluntarily. Moreover, the mine manager had decreed that workers who did not return to work by April 27 would only be reinstated as new workers, thus voiding their legitimate right to accrued compensation in case of dismissal.\textsuperscript{74}

The company lawyer, Juan Clímaco Hurtado, seemingly chosen to represent its interests in the arbitration process, similarly framed his rejection of the workers’ demands by referencing labor law. The strike, he argued, was illegal. The three workers acting on behalf of the workforce, he claimed, did not have the workforce’s support. More generally, he suggested that the workers’ demands were unwarranted. Workers had already received wage increases and, in effect, benefited from the fact that the goods sold in the company store were cheaper than in the local markets: “They benefit from at least 20 centavos per day.”\textsuperscript{75} He insisted, by contrast, that the company implemented rigorously the holiday legislation as well as the accident law and the Sunday rest law. He refuted all the other demands: there was no monopoly on goods provision, and workers could purchase goods somewhere other than the company store if they wished to; adequate medical supplies and first aid were provided in the mining camps; protective equipment was provided and a new ventilation pump had been ordered from the United States. Moreover, Clímaco stressed, the company was in no position to raise wages: it faced significant losses as a consequence of the low mineral content of the extracted ore and because of low international prices for silver, lead, and copper.

Through its representative, the company also attempted to bar the workers’ arbitro, Gustavo Pohl, from serving in the arbitration tribunal. Clímaco claimed that Pohl not only had acted as a legal representative (delegado) of the workers in past disputes but had been in fact behind the strike in 1920. In 1928, moreover, Clímaco claimed, Pohl had led a campaign against the company “for supposed harms caused by the smoke produced by the Company mill.” He argued further that Pohl “has not been recognized as a lawyer by this court and this prevents him from practicing law.” Though Pohl appears to have claimed that this failure to ratify his status was a consequence of the Luis Manuel Sánchez Cerro revolution of 1930, Clímaco argued that Pohl had sided with Sánchez Cerro. His failure to obtain ratification had been confirmed by the Supreme Court, he insisted. Finally, Clímaco referred to Pohl’s “violent spirit” and “well-known short temper,” concluding that “he does not possess the qualities of serenity, culture and
sufficiency that are indispensable to practice law.” Judge Barrón, however, ignored these attempts to have Pohl removed as arbitro, a first defeat for the company. In later correspondence, Climaco returned time and again to this topic, going as far as to claim that Pohl was acting on behalf of the workers and that the letters they wrote to the tribunal were written on Pohl’s typewriter and by him.

A telegram published in El Comercio, Peru’s leading newspaper, signed by Amadeo Torre, Roberto Huerta, and Agustín Esquivel on July 2, 1938, and sent to the Director de Trabajo framed the dispute in a manner that contrasted the pursuit of legitimate and harmonious labor relations enabled by a proactive and progressive state and the rogue behavior of a foreign company. This dispute, the workers argued, “is the first time that the grievances of the workers of Ticapampa have been processed in strict accordance with the laws.” The grievances had unveiled “systematic disregard of labor legislation and the elementary principles of the labor contract” by the company. Indeed, “the foreign company Ticapampa has always drowned the workers’ demand by using violence and intrigue and it has tried to do so again without success.”

The arbitration of the dispute marked a “new era of guarantees and progress for the working class of Ancash, which now feels protected, comforted.” The workers thanked President Óscar Benavides and promised to work hard to bring prosperity to the company and to the nation. The local press reprised the narrative of an exploitative foreign company. El Departamento, once a firm supporter of the company, as we saw, now criticized the Ticapampa managers not only for failing to resolve a dispute that was “clearly legitimate” by accepting the workers’ demands. It also pointed to much more damaging revelations that the company had failed to declare taxable exports of half a million soles.

The ruling, a majority ruling though not a unanimous one, of the arbitration tribunal, issued on July 19, was favorable to the workers. It established, first, that the workers’ wages were too low to meet the basic needs of a worker’s family, and that the increase in wages that the workers were demanding was consistent with wages that the company had paid in the past. Second, it noted that the company’s argument that it had suffered a steep drop in revenue in 1937 because of the fall in prices of metals was irrelevant. The company had done very well in earlier years and could continue to do very well in the future. A fall in revenue in one year was not a reason to adjust wages. Third, it ruled that the company had acted illegally, taking reprisals against workers on strike by firing them. Fourth, it confirmed that the signatures on the pliego
had not been shown to be false. Finally, the tribunal ruled against Climaco’s attempt to bar
Gustavo Pohl from acting as arbitro. The tribunal ordered the company to increase the wages of
the eight different categories of workers (though the amounts awarded were lower than those the
workers had originally requested) and to reinstate the workers who had been fired, including
Amadeo Torre, Roberto Huerta, Agustín Esquivel, and twenty-eight others.79 The sentence was
accompanied by two further documents, one signed by Pohl and the other by the arbitro
representing the company (not the original arbitro, who failed to show up on the day of the
ruling, but another by the name of Morán).

The document signed by Pohl was an addendum to the ruling, which looked at the same
issues in more detail but also reframed the arguments of the ruling in a language that evoked the
idea of state-mediated labor relations as essential to national progress. The low wages the
company currently paid, Pohl argued, reflected “an exploitative, oppressive system, that breaches
the Peruvian laws that protect workers and the respectable principles of the defense of human
capital, such as the eight hour working day, the fixed salary, the strict prohibition of the work of
minors in the mine.” These wages represented “starvation wages, wages of malnutrition, that
seriously affect the conservation of human capital.” These meagre earnings could only cover
about 50 percent of a miner’s family food needs. The company’s position, Pohl insisted, was at
odds with both social ideas and the national interest: “Such a system, moreover used by a foreign
Company, is cruel and at odds with the social conscience of our times, both of our people [de la
nacionalidad] and of the State or Government, and it runs counter to the interests of the Nation;
As the Ministro de Hacienda, don Benjamín Roca, noted in his radio broadcast of April 6, there
is a supreme need to ensure the economic well-being of the proletariat as a means to achieve
social and political peace and in so doing guarantee the interests even of foreign companies; this
is an incontrovertible argument.”80 In this conception, wages to be paid to workers reflected a
broader social notion of human well-being and the national interest. Fair wages were a means to
personal and national improvement as well as social and political peace.

By contrast, Climaco’s rejection of the ruling, while claiming that the presence of Pohl
invalidated the ruling altogether, mobilized a very different conception of labor–capital relations:
“As happens with the labor question, the rise in wages demanded by them is intimately linked to
the profits of the company and the social and economic reality of workers.” The wages the
workers received were sufficient for them to meet their needs, he insisted, adding that workers
could obtain basic goods at the company store at affordable prices. In addition, he stressed, the company was facing a difficult economic situation: “The company has experienced a fall in profits because the price of metals has dropped.” It would not be fair, he concluded, “regardless of whether the workers’ demands are justified,” to force the company to raise wages in this situation. In later correspondence with the president of the arbitration tribunal, Clímaco reiterated these points. He added, moreover, that the ruling fixed wages for certain categories of workers such as the *barreteros* (miners who use a pick or drill to remove the ore), but this made no sense since some workers had a greater aptitude for work than others and the “natural differentiation in workers’ personal aptitudes” were being ignored. In this conception, it was the company’s prerogative to fix wages according to criteria that reflected on the one hand its financial situation and on the other its own assessment of the value of a particular worker’s labor.

The tension between these opposite conceptions of what wages ultimately represented is further illustrated by the demands put forward by Amadeo Torre, Roberto Huerta, and Agustín Esquivel, the three worker representatives who had initiated the dispute and who the company now refused to reinstate. In two letters sent on the same day, July 23, to the president of the arbitration tribunal, the three workers framed their arguments in terms of justice and equity while appealing to a sense of economic nationalism. The company was getting rich thanks to high metal prices while workers’ wages had not risen in nine years: “This process reveals a tremendous injustice, a nameless cruelty on behalf of the aforementioned Company and an inhuman exploitation of a foreign company, toward a group of unfortunate Peruvian workers, which must be addressed in some way, albeit belatedly, and we trust that the well-known spirit of justice of the current Government will lead to a reparation.” The company, they added, had used false accounting to cheat the government of tax revenue and systematically flouted labor legislation. It exploited the workers “in the most inhuman way, making us work like animals, paying us salaries that cannot meet our most urgent needs, and they have taken this brutal exploitation to the extreme of making us work on Sundays, holidays, overtime and all night, while only paying us the ordinary wage, *thus breaking the laws that protect workers*, and obtaining an illicit enrichment at the cost of the hunger and the very life of Peruvian workers.” The workers urged the government to intervene and to ensure that “the laws of our country are respected and applied.”

The company, meanwhile, tried to overturn the ruling by turning to state authorities
higher up the chain while restating its conception of what determined workers’ wages. On July 25, 1938, Clímaco wrote to the Director de Trabajo. He repeated the accusation that Pohl was unqualified to serve on the tribunal and that he had an agenda against the company. At the same time, he repeated the argument that the company could not raise wages because it faced a difficult financial situation because of the prices of metals and that the wages were sufficient to meet the workers’ needs.84 Meanwhile, Carlos A. Lozano, the Lima-based lawyer of the company, wrote to the minister of public health, labor and social foresight. In his letter, in effect a thinly veiled threat, he noted that in light of the tribunal’s ruling and the current price of silver, the company had no choice but to halt production, resulting in the unemployment of four hundred workers and the shutdown of other mines in the region that depended on Ticapampa for the processing of their mineral. He stressed that “it was the Ministry’s role to resolve this conflict, that the workers had always been content with the wages they received, and that the conflict had arisen because there were people who wanted to harm the Company.”85 A second letter, dated July 28, repeated these same arguments and incorporated those that Clímaco had made to the Director de Trabajo.

The available evidence does not provide a clear picture of how the conflict was resolved, or if it was resolved. On September 19, 1938, the Director del Trabajo wrote to the prefect of Huaraz to reiterate an earlier telegram in which he indicated that the dismissal of the workers Torres, Huerta, and Esquivel was an “unacceptable reprisal” and that they were to be reinstated immediately. If the company failed to do so, the prefect was to “take the necessary measures.”86 This suggests that the state attempted to implement the ruling in spite of company opposition, but whether the prefect followed through with the order or what measures he had at his disposal is unclear. Regardless of the actual outcome, what the documentation of the arbitration tribunal reveals is that beyond the question of wages, what was at play in the Ticapampa dispute were differing conceptions of labor relations. The company viewed increased wages and better working conditions as something that it could determine on the basis of its financial health. By its estimation, workers were already receiving good wages and enjoyed good working conditions. By contrast, in making their demands, the workers mobilized an idea of social rights as the basis of their own well-being and the well-being of the nation. This was an idea that could be mobilized by appealing to both a sense of nationalism (and in the process denouncing the unpatriotic behavior of a foreign company) and also a sense of a just social order mediated by a
state that guarded the interests of labor.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to show that the regime of labor relations that was established in the early twentieth century in Peru found its way—indeed, was summoned—to the Ticapampa mines. Here too, among the high peaks of the Cordillera Negra and the Cordillera Blanca, workers mobilized the labor state to mediate their relations with capital. The miners at Ticapampa constituted themselves as workers—they established a union like many other workers across the country did in the late 1910s. They made their own, and forcefully articulated, a global discourse about labor struggle and the exploitation of capital that circulated increasingly widely in the wake of the Russian Revolution. But they also made demands for better wages and better working and living conditions by invoking the labor legislation that successive governments had begun to put in place from the 1900s onward and the spirit of social justice and national progress that such legislation was intended to reflect and enable. In so doing, they inserted themselves fully into the sphere of labor, making themselves both objects of intervention by the labor state and, in turn, agents of an industrial progress that was to transform the country. To be sure, not all workers welcomed such developments, tensions abounded among the workforce, and the union was short-lived. But this was true elsewhere in Peru too.

The managers of the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company, and local elites such as the owner of *El Departamento de Ancash*, like employers and local and national elites elsewhere in the country, viewed these developments with alarm. They mobilized a counterdiscourse that framed worker grievances as illegitimate and the work of outside troublemakers and hotheads. For them, even when they paid lip service to the progressive nature of labor legislation or acceded to labor arbitration, improvements in wages and working conditions were not a matter of labor law or even social justice. They were matters for the company to determine in accordance with its own priorities. As this suggests, as elsewhere in Peru, labor conflict at Ticapampa reflected a broader conflict over the scope of action of the labor state and of its capacity to enforce labor laws and, more specifically, compel both workers and employers to submit to arbitration. In the 1920s, this capacity was constrained by the fact that local authorities charged with overseeing the functioning of the labor state, like Prefect Villanueva, were not always invested in the project of the labor state. In the 1930s, the capacity was greater, though
resistance, from both employers and, it must be said, workers, was not always overcome. But regardless of the outcome of particular disputes, as the case of Ticapampa shows, the labor state, as both a series of laws, legal processes, and state agencies and an idea about the role of labor in the progress of the nation, profoundly shaped relations between labor and capital in early twentieth-century Peru, even at four thousand meters above sea level.

1 I use the following abbreviation in the notes: Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ministerio de Fomento (MF), Ministerio del Interior (MI), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (RREE). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Angela Vergara, Peter Winn, and Julio Pinto as well as to audiences at conferences held in Belfast, Buenos Aires, La Paz, and Lima for comments on earlier versions of this chapter. Elías Amaya Nuñez provided excellent research assistance.


3 See Leon Fink and Juan Manuel Palacio, Labor Justice in the Americas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).


6 No archives of the Anglo-French Ticapampa Company, a freestanding company, survive. I have only been able to locate yearly financial reports produced in Paris by the company for its top management. These reports are available in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. These reports, which were in turn based on reports received from company managers in Lima, unfortunately contain limited information on the mines’ workforce. In fact, they contain relatively little information about the operation of the mines and are, perhaps naturally, much more focused on financial matters, including the financial situation of the company from year to year and issues such as dividends. The earliest report dates from 1907 and the last report from 1933, though some years are missing.


8 Admittedly not all concessions were in production. According to one report, “most mining concessions are acquired not to exploit them, but to avoid dangerous neighbors or for the purpose of speculation.” See M. A. Denegri, *Estadística minera del Perú en 1905* (Lima: Imprenta la Industria, 1906), 42–44.


16 The company advertised jobs in the local Ancash press. See several numbers of both *El Departamento de Ancash* and *El Huascarán*, 1918–20.


21 The company continued its operations until 1967, when the mines were sold to a new company, Compañía Minera Alianza, owned by the Picasso and Brescia families, who invested further in the mines, broadening production from silver to lead and zinc.


27 *Peck, Industrial and Commercial South America 165*.

28 “Memoria sobre la escursion de vacaciones en 1885 a los asientos minerales de ‘Recuay & Huallanca’ presentada por los alumnos Emilio G. Villa & Julio F. Galvez,” Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, Archivo. This was of course a general lament from those concerned with the Peruvian mining industry. According to a report published in 1905 in the *Boletín del Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Minas*, “the working population occupied in the mines is not stable in Peru because Indians go to the mines in search of work, to complement their income at certain times, but not to devote themselves exclusively to mining, because their natural indolence, their small agriculture plots [sic], and their small flocks, allow them to live more or less miserably, without having to work for others, for fixed hours, for generally low wages.” *BCIM*, no. 41 (1905): 27.


31 *El Departamento de Ancash*, January 14, 1918.

32 For a detailed study of this process in the central highlands, see Heraclio Bonilla, *El minero en los Andes* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974).


34 See Mallon, *The Defense of Community in Peru’s Central Highlands*.


36 *El Departamento de Ancash*, January 8, 1919.

37 *El Departamento de Ancash*, January 10, 1919.

38 *El Departamento de Ancash*, January 14, 1919.


In fact, according to El Departamento de Ancash, labor conflict in Ticapampa dated back to 1913, the year when a wave of strikes, at least one per year, began. See El Departamento de Ancash, April 2, 1919.

Anglo-French Ticapampa Silver Mining Company, Assemblée générale ordinaire du 21 juin 1919, 12.

See Drinot, The Allure of Labor, particularly chapters 2 and 3.

El Departamento de Ancash, March 13, 1918, March 15, 1918.

El Departamento de Ancash, March 20, 1918.

El Departamento de Ancash, March 25, 1918.

El Departamento de Ancash, May 4, 1918.

See Drinot, The Allure of Labor, chapter 2.

The speeches were published in installments in El Huascarán, a newspaper largely sympathetic with the Ticapampa workers, between October 28 and November 7, 1918.

This statement echoes González Prada’s famous aphorism, from his speech at Lima’s Politeama theater: “The groups of criollos and foreigners that inhabit the strip of land located between the Pacific and the Andes do not form the real Peru; the nation is formed by the multitude of Indians scattered in the eastern range of the Cordillera.” Manuel González Prada, Pensamiento y librepensamiento (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 2004), p. 24.

Only a few years earlier, a report on the state of mining in Peru recognized the limited implementation of the accident law: “The ‘Law of Workplace Accidents’ is beginning to be applied but given its recent decree and certain complications in the legal procedures it establishes, it is not widely applied yet, but this will happen when the workers become familiar with it and come to understand the benefits it brings them and they will then be able to demand the rights granted to them.” Jimenez, Estadística minera del Perú en 1913, 102.

In Huaraz, for example, a Sociedad de Auxilios Mutuos de Artesanos de Huaras [sic] was shut down in March 1918. See El Departamento de Ancash, February 2, 1918, March 12, 1918. El Huascarán reported regularly on meetings of other unions, including shoemakers and typographers.

El Departamento de Ancash, April 7, 1919.

El Departamento de Ancash, May 5, 1919.

El Departamento de Ancash, May 5, 1919.

El Departamento de Ancash, May 9, 1919.

Juan Faverón to Prefecto, March 14, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.

Juan Faverón to Prefecto, March 14, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.

Prefecto to Director de Gobierno, March 23, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.

Alferez Manuel Rojas to Subprefecto de la Provincia del Cercado, March 15, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.

See letter from Gustavo Pohl to Pedro Rojas Loayza, Senator for Ancash, March 22, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.

The reason for this strike may well be found in the solution to the strike that took place at the end of 1919. The company then had promised essentially the same things. See El Huascarán, November 25, 1919.

“Fallo arbitral,” March 22, 1920, AGN/MI/211/Ancash.
The 1922 report pointed to a much-improved situation, resulting in new investments. As in the previous year, the report noted: “Following the temporary shutdown of the work, the workforce came back more docile and less demanding.” Anglo-French Ticapampa Silver Mining Company, *Assemblée générale ordinaire du 29 août 1921: Rapports du conseil d’administration et du commissaire des comptes* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1921), 6.

Reports from 1923 onward make no reference to labor, though they continue to inform on further investments in production.

We know little about Pohl, other than that he was a lawyer and, it would seem, became mayor of Huaraz between 1925 and 1927. In the 1940s, he appears to have worked at a small mine called Recuperada. What motivated him to serve as the legal representative of the Ticapampa workers for at least twenty years is unknown.

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Amadeo Torres, Roberto Huerta, and Agustín Esquivel to Prefect, April 27, 1938; Juan Clímaco Hurtado to Presidente Corte Superior, April 28, 1938; Corte Superior to Julio R. Barrón, April 29, 1938, all in AGN/MF/15:30.

See letters from workers to president of arbitration tribunal, April 30 and May 2, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30.


*El Comercio*, July 2, 1938, included in AGN/MF/15:30. Clímaco claimed that Pohl had leaked this information to the press. See Juan Clímaco to Presidente del Tribunal Arbitral, July 18, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30.

“Sentencia pronunciada por el tribunal arbitral,” July 19, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30.

Pohl went further, arguing that the company was defrauding the national treasury.


Two letters from Amadeo Torre, Roberto Huerta, and Agustín Esquivel to Presidente del Tribunal Arbitral, July 23, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30, emphasis added.

Juan Clímaco Hurtado to Director de Trabajo, July 25, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30.


Director de Trabajo to Prefecto Huaraz, September 19, 1938, AGN/MF/15:30.