

Part Two

Cinema, Conflict and Society

Parts Two, Three and Four comprise three sets of chronologically ordered analyses of individual films that somehow defied the national cinema crisis, and that provoked varying degrees of comment on both the insurgent violence and counter-insurgent campaign, and on broader questions pertaining to the relationship between national identity and violence. Part Two focuses on the examination of three films made between 1988 and 1991, during an important three-year period of political transition and social turmoil: *La boca del lobo* (Lombardi 1988), *Ni con dios ni con el diablo* (del Pereira 1990) and *Alias la gringa* (1991).

During this time, Peruvian society experienced acute suffering from an economic crisis, including massive hyperinflation, resulting at least in part from the chaotic administration by the regime of President Alan García (1985-1990), and the heightening of the campaign of violence by *Sendero Luminoso*. More regular insurgent attacks on the capital city made it impossible for the political and social elite of the nation to ignore a conflict that until then had been largely acted out in rural parts of the country. García's term ended in 1990 and a surprise election triumph followed for the previously unknown son of a Japanese migrant family, Alberto Fujimori, defeating the favourite of the ruling classes, author Mario Vargas Llosa. Fujimori's appeal was based in large part on his political anonymity and on the strident promises he made to reform the government, defeat *Sendero* and improve the living conditions of the poor majority of Peru.

As for national cinema, the protectionist law established in 1972 by the Velasco's nationalist administration was still in place, although flaws were acknowledged and revisions were underway jointly between film-makers and government policy-makers.

In particular, there was concern that the guaranteed screening feature had led to a degree of complacency amongst national film-makers and a decline in quality of national films that infuriated audiences and exhibitors. Moreover, it had become evident that little of the money that was returned to the production companies was being used to develop the infrastructure needed to sustain a serious film industry. From the late 1980s, film-maker representatives worked hard on a new project with the support of García, and hoped that Fujimori would help them bring this plan to fruition.

Inevitably, given the political climate and the tendency of Peruvian film-makers to create work that explored the main issues that affected different sections of society, violence would be a key concern of the few films that were made during this economically difficult period. Deep social rifts were exposed by the conflict with *Sendero*, based largely on the nation's colonial past and difficulty integrating adequately its indigenous populations. Such tensions shed further light on the need to readdress questions of national identity, to acknowledge the increasingly heterogeneous nature of the Peruvian peoples, and to consider within such discussions the place of *mestizaje* within Peruvian culture. *La boca del lobo*, for example, was the first national feature film to highlight the differences between soldiers and villagers portrayed, and to consider these as important factors motivating much of the violence enacted by the military. One year later, *Ni con dios ni con el diablo* follows an indigenous protagonist who flees his village and, as a representative of those caught up in a tide of migration resulting from the conflict, seeks prosperity in the city. His encounters with different social and cultural groups come under scrutiny and the film thus draws attention to some of the conflicting elements of Peruvian national identity. Finally, Durant's *Alias la gringa* uses the accounts of a man who was imprisoned for delinquent behaviour during the time when many *Sendero* suspects were being locked up without trial. Like

Lombardi's film, it creates a confined setting that would seem to be a microcosm of the nation in terms of the urgency of themes explored and the range of social types portrayed. Through its concern with the capacity of creative activity, in this case writing, as a catalyst for individual and social change, it also considers the broader responsibilities of cultural production at a time of deepening national crisis. The analyses that follow set out to explore each of these issues, relating them overall to the films' shared concern with the connections between national identity and violence.