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The Shining Path and the Future of Peru

Gordon H. McCormick

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Gordon H. McCormick

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PREFACE

This study was sponsored by the Department of State (DOS) and RAND's National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), an OSD-supported federally funded research and development center. It was produced under the auspices of a jointly funded project on "Peru in Transition," conducted in RAND's International Security and Defense Program. This report, the final product of this study, examines the threat to Peruvian stability posed by the guerilla group Sendero Luminoso, or the Shining Path, the degree to which this problem has been compounded by economic and political crisis, and the likely future course of the insurgency.

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SUMMARY

Peru is facing a compound crisis, a condition from which it will be difficult if not impossible to recover without first undergoing a period of serious political unrest. This condition has been created by the confluence of three distinct but mutually influential trends: the collapse of the modern economic sector, the slow radicalization of Peruvian politics, and the escalating threat posed by the guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path. The first of these trends is manifest in an accelerating negative growth rate, hyperinflation, the depletion of the foreign reserve stock, and one of the highest per capita debts in Latin America. The second is revealed in President Garcia's approval rating, now at less than 10 percent and still falling, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance's (APRA) increasing illegitimacy, the poor institutionalization of Peru's alternative political parties, the absence of a strong centrist alternative to the present order, and the growing incidence of organized opposition to the current regime. The most serious problem, ultimately, is the threat posed by the Shining Path, manifest in the group's growing range of operations, its new-found ability to appeal to traditional elements of the legal left, and the government's apparent inability to stop it. These three trends have now converged, resulting in a situation that is notably more unstable and potentially explosive than the sum of its parts.

Sendero's influence on Peruvian society has been synergistic. Although the movement is by no means responsible for the country's present economic condition or even the current standing of the Garcia government, it has made a bad situation worse. The cost of the guerrilla campaign in economic losses alone is estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$10 billion. Sendero has forced a diversion of scarce national resources, disrupted the rural economy, and contributed to the general decline in popular confidence in the country's long-run economic future. Similarly, although the regime's low approval rating is due largely to its gross mismanagement of the economy, its inability to contain the escalating level of violence has clearly contributed to its declining fortunes and the corresponding growth in political unrest. These problems have by now become mutually reinforcing. The country's political and economic disintegration has created new opportunities for the Shining Path, providing it with new backers, new issues, and a climate of discontent.

Sendero's prospects will continue to be tied closely to the fate of Peruvian democracy, the state of the economy, and popular

Keywords: Peru, South America, Guerrilla Group,
Sendero Luminoso, Shining Path, President
Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), Political Crisis

expectations in the future. The social and economic tensions that have overtaken the country have pressured Peru's governing institutions to the breaking point and have led to a crisis of confidence among a diverse segment of the population. Although the current regime or its successor, with international assistance, could influence several of the more egregious manifestations of this condition, any attempt to address its basis will be difficult and painful. Popular dissatisfaction with the present order can be expected to continue to mount. Most of the political pressure associated with this mood will remain diffuse or be safely channeled through the legal Left. Some of it will find an outlet in spontaneous demonstration. In other cases, those who find themselves outside of or abandoned by the system will turn to violence, thus working to the advantage of Sendero, which is making a concerted effort to broaden its base of support.

The most important variable for the immediate future is whether the military will once again attempt to take over the government. Given the country's turbulent political situation, growing tensions between the civil and military leaderships, the escalating level of guerrilla violence, the military's political tradition, and the certainty that conditions will become much worse before they get better, the real question is not whether there will be a coup but when. Although rumors of a takeover have so far been unfounded, elements of the military's leadership have undoubtedly considered such a move and are prepared to seize power if necessary. It is conceivable that President Garcia himself would welcome a coup, which would provide him with the opportunity to escape the difficult choices that currently face his administration and permit him to shift the blame for the country's coming collapse to the armed forces.

A coup would be an act of necessity rather than choice. The military has shown no real interest in returning to power. There is little public support for such a move; and the memory of its most recent tenure in office (1968-1980), which laid the foundation for many of the country's present economic difficulties, is still fresh. The military leadership is also aware that should it seize power it will be held responsible for the economic legacy of the current regime, risk losing what little support Peru still has within the international economic community, and shoulder the burden of any unpopular measures that will have to be taken to get the economy on its feet again. These concerns, while a deterrent, will not keep the army from moving against the government should the threat posed by the Shining Path continue to escalate or if the regime proves to be incapable of controlling the growing level of popular unrest. The military correctly considers itself to be the ultimate defender of the state rather than any particular form of government or administration, duly elected or not.

Should the army eventually seize power, it could well do so with some measure of (reluctant) popular support, notably from among the country's small elite and middle class. If the choice is between law and order under military rule or escalating social and political upheaval, many will opt for a military takeover. A coup could result in an immediate crackdown on public demonstrations and a stepped up, unrestrained campaign against the Shining Path. Organized violence would drop initially as anyone remotely suspected of having guerrilla ties was rounded up by the authorities. However, such a program would be likely to undermine its own objectives through the polarization of Peruvian society. The military, without options and easily frustrated, could be expected to respond with a campaign of counterterror. The regime would find itself locked in a cycle of decline. The army's counterterror campaign would almost certainly generate its own violent reaction, causing further waves of repression. Political violence would increase, as would popular support for the armed opposition, including Sendero.

To succeed, the army would have to kill or incarcerate SL members and sympathizers at a faster rate than SL was generating them. Such a campaign, whatever its ethical objections, is probably beyond the army's ability to carry out. The military, for one thing, would have to direct its effort against individuals rather than the organization, for which it has and is likely to continue to have very little information. Although such an approach might reap certain rewards in the cities where Sendero has proven to be most vulnerable to government efforts to penetrate its low-level apparatus, it can be expected to fail completely in the countryside, where the army will face the same intelligence, logistical, and operational constraints it does today, in addition to being forced to operate in a hostile political environment. The Shining Path has also proven to be a resilient organization. Although it would certainly suffer losses in any government campaign, it will be capable of replacing them as long as its organizational structure is intact, its core leadership survives, and it retains its rural base. If the movement's political network, as I believe, is far more extensive than the number of its attacks might indicate, Sendero is likely already to have the necessary organizational base to embrace those who would be pushed into its arms by an officially sponsored program of counterterror.

An event of this nature could push Peru into a crisis slide from which it could take many years to recover. The military's counterterror campaign could also end in a guerrilla victory. Political polarization, while a crisis in its own right, would exacerbate an already disastrous economic situation and play into the hands of the Shining Path.

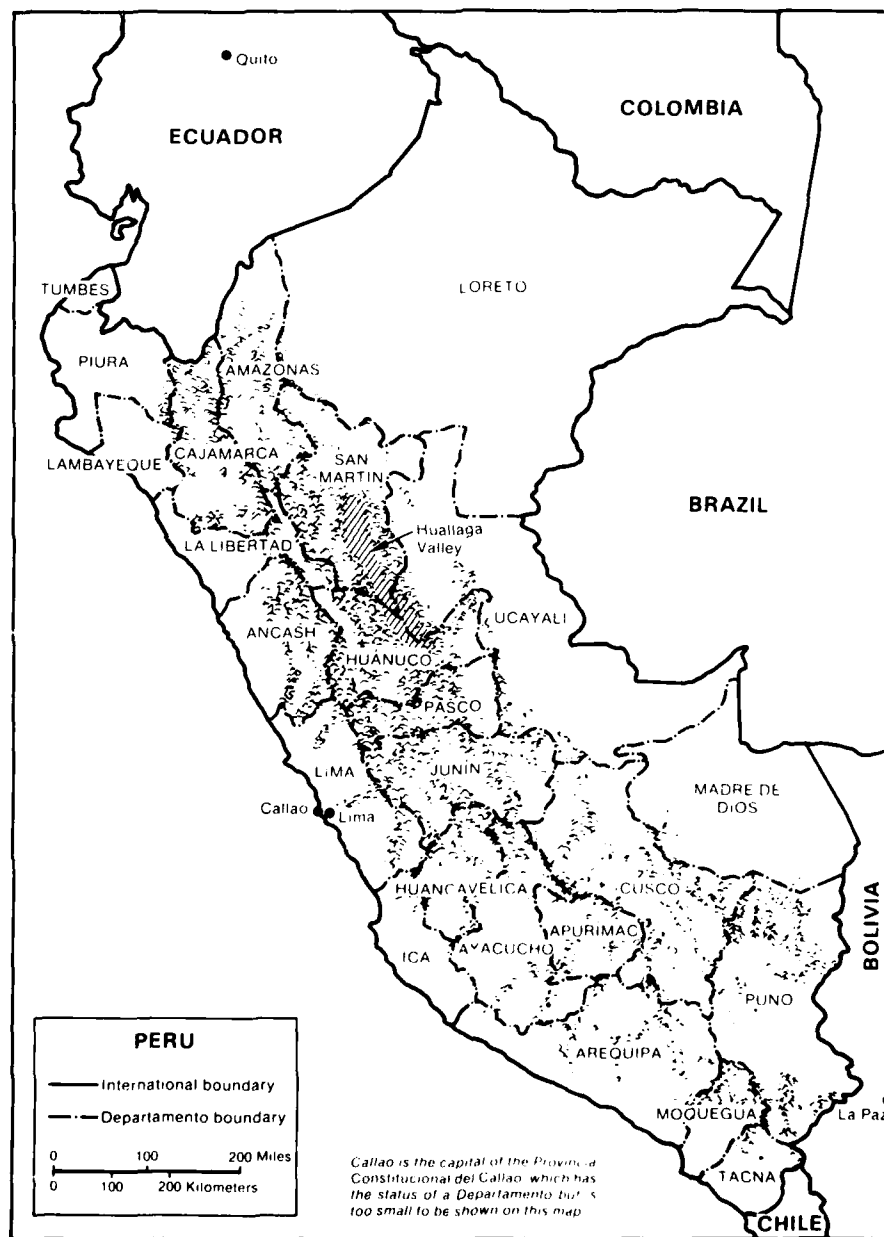
Each of these trends could be expected to feed on the others at an accelerating rate until Peru is driven into the grip of a self-reinforcing process of social and political disintegration. In these circumstances the government will have lost control over its future. Its own policy of political repression will have contributed directly and indirectly to the crisis.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although the conclusions presented in this study are my own, they owe much to discussions with many long-time observers of Peruvian affairs and their willingness to share their insights. Five individuals, in particular, deserve mention: Stephen McFarland and Tim Stater, for their knowledge of Sendero and the politics of the Peruvian Left; Russell Graham, for his insights into the Peruvian economy; Lt. Colonel Henry Robertson, for discussions about the Peruvian armed forces; and Colonel Gregory Jannarone, for his hospitality and his insights into the principles and practices of armed insurrection.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Peru is a country poised on the brink of internal collapse. The most serious, long term challenge it faces is posed by the guerrilla group known as the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso). Once confined to the isolated and impoverished region of Ayacucho, over the course of the past nine years its operations have spread to encompass every one of the country's administrative departments. Sendero has established a strong base of operations in the Andean sierra, the southern altiplano, the coca growing areas of the Upper Huallaga valley, and most of the country's major urban centers. Its campaign, and the reaction it has fostered, has cost as many as 15,000 lives; resulted in the destruction of billions of dollars in property, national infrastructure, and lost economic opportunity; led to the depopulation of large regions of the Peruvian countryside; and created a clear and present crisis for Peru's fragile democratic institutions.

Sendero and the social and economic disequilibrium that have fostered its growth have moved Peru into a prerevolutionary situation. What the final outcome of this condition will be is far from clear. At best, Peru can look forward to a protracted campaign against the Shining Path. Should this campaign devolve into a "dirty war" it could end in a full-scale class conflict between the army and Peru's rural and urban poor. The worst case scenario is that Sendero could win. Although that seemed inconceivable even as late as 1987, it has become a plausible outcome. That we can discuss this possibility today is a testament both to Sendero's vitality as a political force and to the government of Peru's continuing inability to make any serious inroads against the insurgency. One way or another, the Shining Path will be a force to be reckoned with for the foreseeable future. There will be no quick or easy solutions. The movement is firmly entrenched in the highlands and is already a permanent presence in and around Lima. Its growth has not been rapid, but it has been steady. Sendero now enjoys a substantial base of support in the countryside and has begun actively recruiting from among the urban work force and the country's rapidly growing mass of urban unemployed. It has also proven to be a resilient, adaptable, and ruthless organization. These traits, together, have made Sendero a formidable adversary.

The future of the conflict, however, will turn not only on the interaction between Sendero and the government of Peru, but on several important secondary variables that, in principle, could either

dampen or accelerate the search for radical alternatives to the present order. The most important of these appear to be the state of the national economy, the health of the current political party system, and the cohesion and adaptability of the Peruvian armed forces. In practice, the situation looks bleak. Peru faces the most serious economic crisis in its modern history, the country's political system has been discredited and is in disarray, and the armed forces suffer from a series of institutional and material weaknesses that have thus far hobbled their counterinsurgency program. Peru's economic and political problems alone would be cause for grave concern. Coming, as they do, at a time when the country faces an advanced insurgency has resulted in a potentially explosive environment. These events have already dangerously eroded the regime's legitimacy and could easily serve as a catalyst for an open, spontaneous revolt against the government. The results would play directly into the hands of the Shining Path, which has been preparing for this day in earnest. It is unlikely, under these circumstances, that the army could put down a direct challenge to the regime without resorting to a concerted campaign of counterterror. Such a campaign can be expected to strengthen Sendero's base of popular support.

This study examines each of these issues in turn. It first examines the Shining Path, its origins, organization, the nature of its support, the movement's governing doctrine and theory of victory, and the character of its rural and urban campaigns. This is followed by a discussion of those variables that are likely to determine the direction, growth, and prospects of the insurgency in the future: the capabilities and limitations of the Peruvian army, the nature of the country's current economic and associated political crises, the prospects for and possible consequences of a military coup, and the net strengths and weaknesses of the Shining Path. The report concludes by discussing what all of this could mean for the future of modern Peru.

II. THE RISE OF THE SHINING PATH¹

Sendero Luminoso (SL) was founded in 1970 by Abimael Guzman, then a professor of philosophy at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga in Ayacucho. Since then, Guzman has remained the primary force behind the movement's ideological development, its spiritual head, and its chief strategist in its protracted war against the government of Peru. Accounts of Guzman's youth describe him as "smart," "studious," a boy "who consistently received top marks in comportment," a "mother's dream." Later accounts, portraying his early involvement in communist party politics, describe him as a "theorist of the highest level," a man of "great will and tenacity," and an individual with a developed taste for classical music, pre-Socratic philosophy, and the works of Hemingway and Joyce.² Today, he is described under his *nom de guerre* of "Comrade Gonzalo" as the "Fourth Sword of Marxism," a heroic figure whose life's work and ideological contributions stand in logical order with those of Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Isolated and aloof, Guzman is nevertheless said to have shaped Sendero in his own image, exercising a strong personal hold over the movement's agenda, direction, and doctrinal orientation. Despite its national presence and size, now believed to be as large as 10,000 cadre, Sendero remains a highly individualized movement, established and based on the cult of personality of Comrade Gonzalo.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The origins of the Shining Path can be traced to the 1964 fissure within the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) brought about by the Sino-Soviet split. In a move reflected throughout the national party organizations of Latin America, the pro-Chinese wing of the PCP broke with the pro-Moscow majority to form the PCP-Bandera Roja (Red Flag). The main point of ideological dispute between the two factions was over the proper role to be assigned to the "armed struggle" in the larger struggle for power. Following the Moscow party line, the traditional wing of the party chose to abandon revolutionary violence.

¹*Partido Comunista del Peru—Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path).*

²Bonner, 1988, p. 35; Ellenbogen and Enrique, 1982; Special Translation—"Biographic Data on Sendero Luminoso Leader Abimael Guzman Reynoso," Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), August 3, 1982.

Victory was to be achieved through peaceful means, with the cooperation and eventual co-optation of the country's ruling classes. To Bandera Roja, this policy was tantamount to selling out the revolution. In its first national congress, the movement reavowed its commitment to armed struggle and, following the Chinese road to power, declared that the revolution would originate in the countryside through the mobilization of the peasantry and lead to the final encirclement of urban Peru.³

PCP-Bandera Roja itself split in 1967 over the charge that the movement's leadership was not moving decisively enough to initiate an armed revolt⁴ and again in 1970 when Abimael Guzman and his followers were expelled from the group for ideological heresy and "occultism." It was with this break that the Shining Path emerged as an organized political forum, headed by Guzman and based at the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho. The name of the group emerged from Guzman's control over the *Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario por el Sendero Luminoso de Mariategui*, the Revolutionary Student Front for the Shining Path of Mariategui. This group and those that had followed Guzman with his split from PCP-Bandera Roja formed the initial leadership core of the new PCP-Shining Path. At this juncture, the movement looked little different from the scores of other radical student-based organizations that came and went among the country's politicized university community. Though it quickly gained a reputation for dogmatism and intolerance toward its competitors on the left, the movement's rhetoric was never matched by a call to action. Between 1970 and 1977, Sendero maintained a low profile. The organization appeared to content itself with educational activities and showed little inclination to implement its threat to destroy Peru's "fascist" society.

This, the first phase in Sendero's development, laid the groundwork for much that has followed over the course of the past decade. The movement's ideological base, its initial base of support, and its theory of victory were all developed over the course of its first seven years. From the outset, Sendero was the brainchild of Abimael Guzman. Ideologically, the movement was presented as a synthesis of the work of Mao and the "native socialism" of Jose Carlos Mariategui, a Peruvian intellectual who was responsible for the initial development of the PCP in 1928.⁵ From Mao, Guzman was able to borrow the concept of

³This discussion draws on Taylor, 1985.

⁴The group that emerged from this split was called Patria Roja (Red Homeland), a radical Maoist organization from the central highland.

⁵Palmer, 1986, p. 128. Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930) was the founding father of the Peruvian Socialist Party in the 1920s. His views on rural socialism are developed in his most prominent work, *Siete Ensayos* (*Seven Essays*). See also the discussion by Gaupp, 1984, pp. 27-31.

the peasant-based revolution and (his own interpretation of) the tenets of Chinese Marxism. These were wedded to the theories of Mariategui, whose writings argued that the basis of Peruvian socialism lay in the structure and norms of the pre-Colombian peasant community, a system destroyed by the Spanish conquest and since kept down by the inherited order in Lima. The synthesis of these concepts, suitably interpreted by Guzman himself, was to provide the ideological basis of a new socialist Peruvian state. The revolution that would bring this "new state of workers and peasants" into being would logically begin among Peru's traditional Indian populations, the direct descendants of the country's socialist tradition.

These early years also saw the development of Sendero's primary leadership group, its first cadre, and its initial efforts to mobilize a base of support among its chosen constituency. These efforts were aided by the nature of the University of Huamanga's charter as a teaching institution and the fact that Guzman, who became personnel director of the university in 1971, was able to control the faculty selection process. Through the establishment of a radical faculty, Guzman was able to oversee the indoctrination and recruitment of a generation of student supporters, many of whom in turn became teachers themselves, returning to their villages to carry on the movement's message and establish a core network of political activists. Within several years, Sendero had moved beyond Huamanga to begin recruiting among the highland Indian communities. By the mid-1970s, this initial base of support had begun to extend beyond Ayacucho with the growth of local cells in the surrounding areas of Cusco, Apurímac, Huacavelica, and Junín, as well as in the city of Lima. The movement's local recruiting pool was drawn primarily from isolated highland farming communities and the slum dwellers of the capital city. With patience, and careful political work, Sendero managed to establish an impressive network of supporters and contacts before it ever made its first move against the government of Peru. This approach, with very few exceptions, has since been a hallmark of the organization.⁶

The Shining Path has become a direct threat to the government of Peru. The movement is by far the largest and most effective armed opposition group in the country, it has proven to be the most difficult to target, and it stands alone in maintaining a national base of support. Sendero has manifested a high degree of organizational discipline and group cohesion. Though it has suffered very high casualties during the 1980s, its numbers have grown steadily. The morale, motivation, and

⁶See Gonzalez, 1986b, pp. 28-57, particularly "To Understand the Shining Path" by Raul Gonzalez.

solidarity of Sendero's membership remain strong. To date, there have been no known challenges to Guzman's leadership, few defections, and no success in penetrating the organization's command structure.⁷ Sendero has also been able to show results. It has expanded out of its original operating area in the department of Ayacucho to establish a range of operations that extend from one end of the country to the other, from the *pueblos juvenes*, the shantytowns that ring the city of Lima, to the Andean sierra. Its program of "propaganda by the deed" has given it a national prominence and an influence that far exceed the size of the organization. Although measures to contain the movement's spread have been selectively successful, Sendero is still able to operate in large areas of the country with little to no interference from either the police or the armed forces.⁸

AUTHORITY AND CONTROL

Little is known of Sendero's organizational makeup and decision-making structure. What is known suggests that Guzman, despite rumors of his death, retains tight authority over the movement, even as its range of operations has spread into most of Peru's 24 departments. Guzman's influence is exercised through a National Directorate and a Central Committee, which together oversee the movement's operations. The organization is broken out into a series of regional commands that are responsible for establishing "bases," recruitment, building a network of local support, and planning and carrying out local operations. Sendero's rank-and-file are organized along cellular lines and draw upon the assistance of local sympathizers and part-time activists. Strategic and political decisionmaking within the movement appears to

⁷In general, Peruvian security forces have been unsuccessful at penetrating Sendero at any level. The one exception to this has been in the Lima "metropolitan committee," where the government has managed to infiltrate and roll up a large number of Sendero cells. This has led to the capture of several important members of the movement's leadership, including Osman Morote Barrionuevo (Comrade "Remegio"), a member of Sendero's Central Committee and at one time reputed to be Secretary General of the Party, the number two position under "President Gonzalo." This is not the first time Sendero has faced problems in the capital. Sendero was rumored to have "frozen promotions" within the Lima command in 1986 until it could put its security house in order. This led to a temporary decrease in operations. The growth in activism in 1987 and the first half of 1988 suggests that this was accomplished to the group's satisfaction. With Morote's capture, however, Sendero operations suffered a downturn once again, as the group reorganized its urban networks to protect them from any information the police might acquire through his interrogation. Operations in Lima appear to have again picked up during 1989.

⁸A useful overview of the early development of the Shining Path has been provided by Werlich, 1984a, pp. 29-32, 36-37, 78-82, 90; 1988, pp. 13-16, 36-37. See also McClintock, 1983, pp. 19-34.

be centralized. The organization itself, however, is highly atomized, spread as it is from one end of Peru to the other. Guzman must work through others. Few of the movement's membership are reported to have actually seen Guzman.

Guzman, however, is the force behind the scenes. He has carefully cultivated an image of genius and omnipresence among his followers, who often appear to be as enamored of the man and his image as of the goals and objectives of the organization. Authority and control within Sendero, in this respect, appear to hinge on some variant of what has been termed the "charismatic leader-follower relationship."⁹ Such a relationship is based on four properties: (1) the group leader, in this case Abimael Guzman, is believed to possess a unique vision of the future and superhuman qualities; (2) group followers unquestionably accept the leader's views, statements, and judgment; (3) they comply with his orders and directives without condition; and (4) they give the leader an unqualified devotion. Although this relationship can be subject to breakdown over time, when it is operative it results in a unique bond between the leader of an organization and its rank-and-file membership. The leader under these conditions is much more than the simple head of the group. For a period of time, at least, he commands absolute authority. He is viewed as a historic individual by his followers, who assume the role of his disciples. A relationship of this nature will result in high group unity. It will also tend to limit the role of the organization's secondary or mid-level leadership, whose principal role in the eyes of the membership will be to serve as a link between the leader and those who are sent out to do his bidding.

Second-order leadership within the Shining Path is shared among several individuals. With the loss of most of its original leadership group, however, who these individuals actually are and what authority they are able to exercise over strategy and doctrine are largely unknown. Sendero's early leadership core appears to have been made up of Osman Morote Barrionuevo and Julio Cesar Mezzich, both of whom may have served for some time as Sendero's second in command; Antonio Diaz Martinez, believed at one time to be the number three man in the organization; Claudio Bellido Huatalia, thought at one time to have led SL's Central Command, incorporating the regions of Ayacucho, Apurímac, and Huancavelica; Augusta La Torre, Guzman's wife and an important ideologue within the movement; and Luis Kawata, thought to have been one of the organization's first founding members. Of these, only La Torre and Mezzich are still at large. Morote, as noted earlier, was captured by security forces in June

⁹Wilner, 1984, pp. 18-29. See also the analysis by Post, n.d.

1988. Diaz was arrested in 1983 and subsequently killed during the uprising at Lurigancho prison in June 1986. Bellido, though his body was never found, is thought to have been killed during a gun battle with the army in Ayacucho in October 1986; and Kawata is believed to have been expelled from the movement and possibly killed by Sendero sometime in the early 1980s. Despite this turmoil within its inner circle, the scope of Sendero's operations has continued to grow, suggesting that these losses are being replaced without seriously curtailing Sendero's willingness to take risks or its ability to carry out its plans.¹⁰

Although the precise role played by Sendero's second-order leadership remains unclear, it is evident it has played a key role in the movement's development and success. This role has been imposed on it by the natural difficulties of maintaining timely communications in the back areas of Peru. Command and control pose a problem of coordination not only between Sendero's national leadership and its various regional and local commands, but among the national leadership itself. If the organization and responsibility of Sendero's leadership core today are similar to that of only a few years ago, most of Sendero's inner circle are, at any one time, dispersed throughout the country in command of one of the movement's six identified "regional committees." How communications are maintained among the leadership and between the leadership and its subordinate commands is not known with certainty. It is generally assumed, however, that most communications are carried out through the country's postal service in code, and through a national network of couriers and dead drops. For reasons of security as well as the inherent limitations of Peru's telecommunications net, the organization is not believed to make extensive use of the country's phone system. For these reasons, Sendero's regional commands probably operate with some degree of *tactical* independence. One can assume that this must also be the case at the level of the individual cell, which for reasons of security as well as distance appears to have limited direct association with Sendero's leadership at any level. Although this system still seems to be functioning well, it has placed several potentially important operational constraints on the movement that are not commonly appreciated and that could well be an important factor in any future showdown with the government of Peru.

Despite these limitations, Sendero has been quite successful in its efforts to establish and maintain a national presence. Whatever their methods lack in the way of speed and sophistication, Guzman and his inner circle preside over an organization with a clear self-identity, a

¹⁰See for example, "The Leaders: Who's Who in the National Directorate of the Shining Path," *Si* (Lima), February 29, 1988, pp. 30-32.

notable degree of group solidarity, and a functioning means of communicating its wishes to the movement's rank and file. Efforts in these areas were enhanced considerably by the gradual takeover of the newspaper *El Diario*, which currently serves as the movement's unofficial mouthpiece.¹¹ This move has not only provided an important and "legitimate" avenue for advertising SL's accomplishments and airing its attacks against the system, it has given the group an instrument to maintain daily contact with a dispersed and clandestine membership. The importance of such a development cannot be exaggerated. Apart from any tactical role *El Diario* might play in signaling or even coordinating SL operations or movements, it provides an irreplaceable means of maintaining cohesion and group loyalty within an otherwise secret organization. Sendero's rank and file, through the good offices of *El Diario*, are in day-to-day contact with the great Gonzalo. The newspaper is able to reach out to the movement's anonymous membership to encourage the myth and convey the message, while maintaining the security of Sendero's decentralized organization.

This role was clearly revealed in the aftermath of Sendero's much touted first Party Congress, reportedly held in January 1988. The stated purpose of the Congress was to begin the process of "institutionalizing the thought of Comrade Gonzalo." The results of these meetings, which allegedly brought all of Sendero's top leadership together in a secret location somewhere in Peru, were published and discussed in *El Diario* for days. In the process, they were conveyed both to Sendero's local cells, which otherwise might not receive a detailed statement of the proceedings until long after the event, and to other real or potential supporters, who might otherwise never know of the results of the Congress at all. In this case and in others, *El Diario* conveyed an important body of information quickly, accurately, and safely. Indeed, one might argue that the process of "institutionalizing" Gonzalo's thought could never really be accomplished without the aid of such a national transmission belt as *El Diario*. How else would the message be broadcast and recorded in full to all concerned? In the secrecy of their individual cells, elements of Sendero's metropolitan committee can now consider and discuss the results of the Congress in the comforting knowledge that their counterparts in Ayacucho, Puno, and San Martin departments are meeting to address the same issues.

¹¹*El Diario* initially changed hands in 1985. At that time it also changed from a weekly to a daily. The newspaper is published nationally and is available only on newsstands. It has no subscription list that the authorities might use to identify possible Sendero sympathizers. Its estimated daily circulation in 1988 was 6000. It claimed 30,000 readers. In early December 1988 a new law was passed making it illegal to "incite or encourage terrorism." *El Diario* disappeared from newsstands for several months. It reappeared as a weekly in March 1988.

From the little we know of the inner workings of the organization, Guzman's leadership position and the centralized character of Sendero decisionmaking have not eliminated the role of internal debate. Guzman himself has long advocated the value of dialectical discussion, what he has termed "the two line struggle," as a means of evaluating an option. The group has been known to have engaged in a conscious process of "self-criticism" in an effort to determine when, where, and why a particular action or campaign failed to produce its intended result.¹² One of the more graphic examples of this process was the internal debate that reportedly ensued over Sendero's early failures to establish a permanent foothold in Puno, where despite what looked like a promising beginning, Sendero's local network suffered a series of major setbacks against government security forces in 1985-86. Captured documents indicate that the failure in Puno was debated at length at the highest levels of the organization. After careful scrutiny, it was concluded that the movement's attempt to move on to a military footing had been premature. Armed action had outpaced efforts to prepare a secure base of political support, with predictable results. In a reaffirmation of the principle "people are more important than guns," the perceived lesson of the Puno setback was that the organization must guard against the temptation to move on to the offensive without first ensuring that it will be able to draw on the assistance of the masses.

What the threshold of tolerance is, of course, we cannot know. As in the case of Luis Kawata, there have been reports of individuals who have crossed Guzman and were subsequently expelled from or demoted within the movement. Anyone who would seriously describe himself as the "Fourth Sword of Marxism" and is held in as high esteem as Commander Gonzalo, within an organization of his own creation, is not likely to brook any opposition to his right to decide on a proper course of action. Nor, as far as we know, has he ever had to. This does not mean, however, that alternative courses of action are not subject to spirited debate, that there are not differences of opinion within the movement's inner circle, or that the group is incapable of institutional learning. Sendero has matured as an organization. It has begun to show an ability to adapt and a level of tactical flexibility that was not in evidence several years ago. It seems unlikely that Sendero would have been able to evolve in this manner in the absence of a decision-making process that encouraged (or at least permitted) internal debate. The Shining Path, as an organization, has apparently managed to

¹²See the transcript of the 12-hour interview of Abimael Guzman, July 15, 1988, by *El Diario* editor Luis Arce Bonja, printed in *El Diario*, July 24, 1988, p. 7 (henceforth, Guzman interview).

maintain its personalized character without discouraging the flexibility of mind necessary for institutional survival.

RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT

Sendero's rank and file membership is drawn from a cross section of Peru's dispossessed, from poor highland peasants to the large mass of urban unemployed, often recent arrivals to the city, that have come to swell the population of Lima and its environs. However, it has recently become apparent that the movement is making a concerted effort to expand its recruiting base by including elements that had not previously played a central role in the organization's activities. Although Sendero's initial membership had been drawn from the teaching faculty and student body of the University of Huamanga, its influence within the university community had waned during the early years of its rural campaign. This has changed as Sendero has made a clear effort to appeal to radical circles among Peru's traditional student Left. Sendero has also begun to infiltrate and radicalize organized labor as part of a larger program, begun in 1986, to expand its support among the country's proletariat, the "urban counterpart" to its peasant base. These and similar efforts have not only led to an expansion in its urban presence, but have allowed it to compete more effectively with the legal Left. Sendero's rhetoric is as strident today as it was in the mid-1980s, but in an effort to expand its mass appeal, its chosen constituency has grown to include youth, women, "the leading proletariat," "the main peasantry," intellectuals, and even the petit and "medium" bourgeois.

As part of this process, the movement has begun to make extensive use of front groups, known in the parlance of the Shining Path as "generated organisms." This is a substantial break with the group's earlier method of operation. Before 1986, Sendero sought to maintain a clear distance from the expressed concerns and methods of Peru's legal Left. Among other things, this included forgoing the advantages of establishing an open front or range of front organizations that might serve to mobilize and unify the broadest level of anti-government sentiment. This has changed dramatically with the establishment of a wide selection of popular organizations designed to give Sendero an open channel of mass mobilization. Included are such groups as the Movement of Classist Workers (MOTC), the Revolutionary Student Front (FER), the Single Trade Union of Educated Workers of Peru, the National Federation of Teachers of the Peruvian University, the Popular Women's Movement (MFP), the Revolutionary Front of Secondary

Students (FRES), the Neighborhood Classist Movement (MCB), and the Movement of Poor Peasants (MCP). According to Sendero, these groups were formed as part of "a broad mobilization" to get "deep into the heart of the masses," to "agitate," and to "open the Party" and help "prepare for the beginning of the popular war."¹³

Though these organizations are clearly identified with the Shining Path and its objectives, as front groups they are able to operate quite openly with little evident concern that they will suffer at the hands of Peru's democratic government. In this way and others, the Shining Path has sought to exploit Peru's still open society in its larger program to undermine and ultimately overthrow the country's democratic regime. The government, in this respect, faces a dilemma. It can either attempt to move decisively against the movement in all its forms with every method at its disposal, thereby undermining its own legitimacy, or it can continue to operate under its own rules and hope that it will be able to stem the insurgency without being forced to resort to extralegal means. Sendero, for its part, appears to be attempting to force this issue by pushing the government and the army toward the threshold of repression. Whatever short-run advantages it might gain through operating in an open society, the movement's long-run interests lie with a government crackdown. Such a move, in Sendero's view, would polarize society, further undermine popular trust in the regime, and swell the ranks of the movement's supporters, all of which will be preconditions to victory.

Sendero's recruitment practices are known to be cautious and methodical. The value of this approach is borne out by the fact that the government has had very little success in penetrating the movement and no success whatsoever in infiltrating its chain of command. Sendero is said to take three years to vet a prospective recruit before he or she is assigned to an operating cell. Only an organization with the confidence and patience to take the long view could afford to carry out such a lengthy process of recruitment and observation before a new member is given the "secret handshake" and absorbed into its day-to-day routine. As in other clandestine organizations, the vetting process is composed of a series of progressively more difficult tasks that the recruit will carry out under the watchful eyes of other members of the

¹³Sendero has also established related support groups to provide aid to members and sympathizers of the movement and their families. These include the Association of Democratic Lawyers, established to provide legal support to captured Senderistas; Popular Aid, which provides other forms of support to incarcerated guerrillas; the Committee of the Families of Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, which provides aid and solace to the families of captured guerrillas as well as organizing political rallies and public protests; and the Association of New Culture, which provides a range of educational services.

group. These are designed to prove his loyalty and commitment to the organization and eventually place him beyond the pale of the law. In the final step in this process the recruit is sent out to kill a police officer and bring back his weapon. The killing is a self-defining act, severing the new member's ethical tie to society and bonding him to the organization. This process, coupled with the failsafe mechanism of Sendero's cell structure, has proven to be a successful means of both weeding out the faint of heart and maintaining a high level of institutional security.

From its inception during the early 1970s, Sendero emphasized youth. Cadre leaving Huamanga often returned to the countryside to become primary and secondary school instructors for the express purpose of leaving the movement's mark on the upcoming generation. Those who were turned by this experience have come of age, and the process is continuing. "Children," according to a recent SL document, "must be encouraged to participate in the popular war. . . . They are the future [and] must change their ideology and adopt that of the proletariat."¹⁴ In an effort to implement such a program, Sendero is rumored to have established education camps in various parts of rural Peru for the "the orphans of the revolution" and is known to give close attention to the political education of youth within its "liberated zones." The young, according to Sendero, have little or no political past and are open to the wisdom of Comrade Gonzalo. They do not have to be reeducated, only educated. As they grow, they will educate others, and the seed of revolution will grow with them. In the meantime, many of these youth will take up arms against the government. Cadre, particularly in rural Peru, are often quite young. It is not unusual for individuals in their early teens to be found participating as junior partners in armed operations against government forces. For an organization that is consciously laying the foundation for a protracted war against this and the next government of Peru, today's youth are the basis for tomorrow's revolution.

There have been several attempts in the 1980s to bring the insurgency to a negotiated conclusion. The initial call for talks with Sendero was made by the Belaunde government in 1982, followed by further calls for negotiations during Garcia's first year in office in 1985 and 1986. These efforts were either ignored or rebuffed. Although Guzman has held out the promise of a negotiated end to the conflict, it will come only when the Peruvian regime is prepared to sign the documents of surrender. "You sign at the bargaining table," he has said, "only

¹⁴Undated document, "Bases for Discussion: The PCP Calls on the Masses to Struggle for Power, The Thinking of Gonzalo and the Workers," published in *El Diario* (part of a special supplement), January 8, 1988.

what has been confirmed on the battlefield." Any dialogue before this time, he has argued, would be not only premature, but "cheap demagoguery" designed to undermine Sendero's revolutionary goals. Peru, in Guzman's view, has entered

a period of full-fledged ideological belligerence. The men who represent a force for change cannot come to terms or mingle, even if by accident or chance, with those who represent a force for the status quo or for regression. An historic abyss separates them. They speak a separate language and they do not have a shared sense of history.

This is true not only of the current government but also of the "parliamentary cretins" and "revisionists" of the legal left. These groups are joined, in Guzman's words, "like Siamese twins, so they will both march to their grave [together]."¹⁵

¹⁵Guzman interview, pp. 30-35.

III. HIGH STRATEGY, LOW TACTICS

The Shining Path will ultimately triumph, in Guzman's view, through armed struggle. Under the slogan "Combat and Resist!" Sendero has set about to instigate a "popular war" that will begin in the high country, spread throughout rural Peru, and surround and finally overwhelm the cities. Guzman, in the words of one veteran Sendero watcher, "sees Peru as a vast expanse of dry tinder" where, drawing from Mao's writings, one spark will serve to start the prairie fire.¹ The struggle will be a protracted one that could last "twenty, seventy-five, or a hundred years." In a modification of Mao's three-phased theory of protracted war, Guzman has developed a five-point program for victory through which the revolution will pass before Sendero succeeds in defeating the Lima government. These are (1) agitation and armed propaganda; (2) sabotage against Peru's socioeconomic system; (3) the generalization of the guerrilla struggle; (4) the conquest and expansion of the revolution's support base and the strengthening of the guerrilla army; and (5) general civil war, the siege of the cities, and the final collapse of state power.² During the 1980s, Sendero has declared, it has already accomplished its first three objectives and is now waging phase four of the struggle.

EARLY OPERATIONS

Sendero's opening engagement in the war took place on the eve of Peru's return to democratic elections on May 17, 1980, with a series of attacks against polling places in peasant villages in Ayacucho. Over the next few months, this operation was followed by selected attacks against "the symbols of the fascist state" throughout large areas of the department, including police stations, government offices, and various nationally sponsored development projects. The Belaunde government dismissed these first operations as an aberration, the work of a handful of either misguided or possibly demented individuals. Others argued that these attacks were not even political in orientation, but the work of thieves, hooligans, or cattle rustlers, pursuing their own interests under cover of an incomprehensible political rhetoric. In either case,

¹Gonzalez, 1986, p. 36.

²See the report in *Caretas*, September: 20, 1982, pp. 20-23. See also Taylor, 1985, p. 25; Gonzalez, 1986a, p. 36; and Palmer, 1986, pp. 128-129.

the emerging security problem in Ayacucho was judged to be a police matter rather than one requiring the attention of the military. This interpretation was seconded by the army, which argued that it was neither trained for nor interested in carrying out such police functions.

The government downplayed the developing insurgency through the end of 1980. By early 1981, however, it was finally forced to act. In March it passed a broad antiterrorist law, imposing stiff penalties against any person or group that willingly aided or cooperated with terrorists, followed in October with the first declared state of emergency in Ayacucho. This move proved to be a desperate act of an increasingly besieged administration. While Sendero's center of operations was still confined to Ayacucho, the number and scope of its attacks were growing rapidly. Sendero had passed through its first phase of operations, that of "agitation and armed propaganda," and had begun to carry out systematic attacks against the basis of state power (infrastructure targets) in the department. The movement's target list now included bridges, rail lines, electric power stations and transmission lines, telecommunications facilities, and a wide variety of other primary and secondary economic targets. Other actions during this period included staged "people's trials" to punish landowners, money lenders, corrupt officials, or village merchants; and the establishment of the first "zones of liberation" within the interior. Sendero's statistics, then as today, are uncertain, but the group is estimated to have carried out between 300 and 400 individual operations throughout Peru by the end of the first three months of 1981.

The government's answer to this growing problem appeared sensible at the time if somewhat belated. In retrospect, however, the regime was still underestimating Sendero's appeal and established support base. The declared emergency permitted Lima to impose a strict curfew in the department capital, suspend constitutional protection against arbitrary arrest, and open the way for the first concerted use of force against the guerrillas. With the declaration of emergency, the government sent 1400 "Sinchis," a special unit of the Peruvian Civil Guard, into Ayacucho to reestablish the peace and hunt down the movement's ring-leaders. These measures were ultimately unsuccessful. As Belaunde had feared, the imposition of marshal law and the employment of the Civil Guard soon led to wide-scale abuses, probably doing more harm than good to the effort to contain the Shining Path. Sendero, for its part, responded by expanding the war. On March 2, 1982, the guerrillas launched a daring raid against a prison in Ayacucho city housing a large number of Senderistas. The battle for control of the prison lasted for five hours and was carried out by between 50 and 60 guerrillas. It was the first large operation carried out by

Sendero and resulted in the escape of 54 convicted or suspected terrorists and 193 additional prisoners, most of whom were being held for drug-related crimes. To carry home its point, Sendero followed up its success in Ayacucho city with a series of strikes against local police stations, various public works, and economic targets, and a dynamite attack against the presidential palace in Lima.³

By 1983, Sendero had hit its stride. According to its own program, the movement had moved into the third phase of armed struggle, the "generalization of the guerrilla war" and the cultivation of a mass base of support. Sendero's efforts in this stage were manifest in two areas: a notable growth in operations throughout Ayacucho, and the first concerted attempt to extend its range of operations beyond the central highlands. The escalation in Ayacucho was impressive, both in scale and for the fact that it was conducted in the face of military opposition. The first regular army units were deployed to the department in December 1982. Sendero's decision to step up its operations in Ayacucho, therefore, corresponded to a counter-escalatory move by the government. Eight districts in Ayacucho and neighboring Huancavelica were placed under a state of emergency and 2000 troops were sent in to put down the insurgency. Although the regime appears to have finally arisen to the threat, its response once again proved inadequate. Reports of abuses by the military and the police were rife. Their actions appeared initially to slow down SL's operating tempo, but it did so at a price: Six months after the intervention the death toll in Ayacucho numbered almost 1000. Even elements within the armed forces acknowledged that many of those arrested and killed were probably unconnected with Sendero. As one ranking officer was quoted as saying, however, if the army kills 60, at least 6 can be expected to be Senderistas.⁴ In the end, even such measures were incapable of stemming SL's spread throughout the department. Sendero was estimated to have carried out between 450 and 550 operations in the Ayacucho emergency zone in 1983 and between 600 and 700 actions in 1984.

By the end of 1983 the escalation in the Ayacucho emergency zone was matched by a notable growth in Sendero operations throughout most of the sierra. The departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurímac, Huanaco, La Libertad, Pasco, and Junín, each now faced a growing insurgency threat. By the end of 1984, this threat had been extended to Cajamarca and Ancash as well. The apparent ease with which the Shining Path had managed to extend its operations across Peru's highland departments directly contradicted those who had

³Werlich, 1984b, pp. 81-82; Lamberg, 1982, pp. 14-15; McClintock, 1983, *passim*.

⁴Quoted in Raul Gonzalez, *Debate*, (Lima), September 1983, p. 46.

argued that the insurgency was a problem unique to Ayacucho and would never gain a foothold elsewhere. Although this move appeared to come on swiftly, in fact it represented many years of proselytizing and political education, much of which preceded the armed struggle in 1980. For years, however, these efforts were being conducted without the knowledge of Peruvian authorities, who as a group cared little for rural matters. By the time the dimensions of the insurgency became evident, it was generally too late to do anything but react to the guerrillas with force. By the end of 1985, as a result, Sendero had become a national presence.

THE RURAL CAMPAIGN

Sendero's success in establishing a national base of operations was due as much to the lack of a strong official presence throughout much of rural Peru as it was to the group's efforts to solicit popular support. Years of neglect on the part of the central government had placed it in a very poor position to combat or even contain the movement's spreading influence. For all intents and purposes, the highlands of Peru proved to be a political void that Sendero moved methodically to fill. This, coupled with a deep-rooted distrust of the central government, provided the group with a ready-made pool of potential supporters, primed to accept Sendero's message or at least not interfere with its operations. Where the government attempted to make a stand, as in Ayacucho, it generally did more harm than good, alienating the peasantry and increasing sympathy for the guerrillas. Popular fears of the central authorities were confirmed by the excesses of the army and the civil guard. The challenge that faced Sendero was to turn this potential base of support into a reliable source of recruits, intelligence, and material aid. It moved to achieve this objective through a combination of careful political work and the calculated use of terror and symbolic violence.

From the outset, Sendero proved to be adept at using Peru's rural traditions and the highlands village system to its advantage. Much like the Jesuits of old, Sendero attempted to exploit local perspectives and beliefs to establish a foothold among the highland populations. Peru's village system, like that of all peasant-based societies, is made up of closed, parochial communities. They are physically, culturally, and psychologically remote from life in modern Peru and often from each other. Next to kinship ties, the village association defines the principal area of trust and cooperation for the highland peasant, a relationship that is reinforced by tradition and a complex web of interfamily

marriages. Getting behind the veil of village life to tap into this association required time, patience, and careful planning. Where Sendero was successful in doing so, it was usually through its early efforts to educate a core group of followers who would return to their villages to lay the basis for future political work. When Sendero finally entered the village openly, sometimes years later, it moved into a community that was often ready to respond to its initiatives and receive the teachings of Comrade Gonzalo. This process, which would gradually be extended to surrounding villages, provided Sendero with its initial support base.

The insular character of the highland village society has been used to the movement's advantage. The peasant's traditional suspicion of outsiders and the general openness of village life have been a source of security, providing Sendero with timely intelligence on the location and movements of the security forces, the arrival of any "foreigners," and the attitudes of those who might still question the group's presence. The village is typically placed under the control of five individuals who are responsible for the administration of most aspects of the community's routine. Apart from the group leader, these are in charge of security, educational development, production, party organization, and recruitment. With time, Sendero will reorganize the village's agricultural base, redistributing any large land holdings, and halt the cultivation of any cash crops. In several instances, Sendero has been known to order the local peasantry to plant only for its own needs and those of its immediate community, eliminating any surplus that might be sold and eventually find its way to the cities. The purpose of these measures is to hasten the end of Peru's money-based economy, further insulate village life, and gradually isolate the cities from the product of the countryside.⁵

Where Sendero has met with resistance, or where a village has been brought under government supervision, its tactics have been more direct. One of its most effective methods has been the coordinated use of posted death threats and selective assassination to eliminate the established authority structure and disrupt or paralyze local institutions. Targets include any local political institutions, particularly those with ties to the departmental or central governments, peasant associations, economic development agencies, and the local security apparatus. Moving into a village, Sendero will declare the region to be a "zone of liberation." Local administrators, community leaders, and "traitors" will be rounded up and, after a brief trial, will invariably be shot, hanged, beheaded, or mutilated for their crimes against the

⁵Radu, 1984, pp. 529-530.

people. Entire villages are reported to have been massacred for either refusing to cooperate with Sendero or cooperating with the national authorities. After setting an example, the guerrillas will next publish a death list of all those in the region who are slated to be brought to justice. Those whose names appear on the list—teachers, minor officials, priests, and other local leaders who have or could speak out against the movement—flee for their lives, leaving the peasantry to their fate and large areas in the hands of the Shining Path. Lima, under these circumstances, is left with the choice of either conceding the region to the guerrillas or sending in the army in an effort to restore its authority.

Since 1987, Sendero's assassination campaign has been increasingly directed against the APRA and other government officials living in the capital.⁶ The highly directed nature of these attacks, and the fact that many reveal that the movement must have some access to often closely held information regarding the responsibilities and whereabouts of the victims, tend to confirm Peruvian fears that Sendero has succeeded in infiltrating elements of the government, the police, and the armed forces. Targets are selected either for their prominence or because they are or have been directly involved in the counterinsurgency effort, including military or police officials who have completed tours in the countryside and have returned to Lima. This latter group, in particular, has been subject to numerous attacks over the past three years, and indicates the degree to which Sendero has been able to tap into official sources in preparing its hit lists. Other recent targets have included APRA leader Carlos Lopez Silva; the Deputy Secretary of APRA, Nelson Pozo Garland, gunned to death in his automobile; Rodrigo Franco Montes, slated to be the next Economic Minister, who was killed with members of his family in front of his home; and APRA official Alberto Kitazano and Attorney General Cesar Elejalde, both of whom were subject to unsuccessful assassination attempts. The selective killing of high government and defense personnel has now become a standard feature of Sendero operations. The incidence of such attacks has risen notably over the past three years.

It is not clear to what degree Sendero has been able to enjoy the willing support of the peasantry and to what degree it has been required to solicit local aid through force or the threat of sanctions. Even where the group has extracted support at the point of a gun, however, it has generally been able to depend on the peasantry's hostility toward the government and their fear of reprisals to keep the local population in check. After generations of exploitation and neglect, the Indian finds it difficult to see the central government as his saviour,

⁶For a full list of these targets see *Risk Assessments*, Weekly Reports.

regardless of what abuses he may have suffered at the hands of the Shining Path. These feelings are reinforced not only by the heavy-handed and often indiscriminate methods of Peru's security forces, but by their inability to maintain a permanent or effective rural presence. Having once "pacified" a village, the army will generally move on, leaving the local population vulnerable to Sendero's return. Even in those few areas where the army has established permanent base camps they are willing to operate only during the day. The night belongs to the guerrillas. Anyone known or suspected of cooperating with the security forces is likely to suffer the consequences of "popular justice" when the sun goes down. The peasant, in short, is often trapped by the circumstances of the war. The incentive under these conditions is to do what is necessary to placate Sendero.⁷

One of the more disturbing recent trends of Sendero's rural campaign has been its growing involvement in the narcotics trade. This has become evident in the upper Huallaga valley and began shortly after Sendero first moved into the region in 1985. The Huallaga valley, located some 300 miles northeast of Lima, has long been the center of Peru's thriving underground coca industry. Coca production and processing, in turn, have played a central role in the region's economy, providing employment to the great majority of the area's Indian and mestizo population. According to Peruvian estimates, over 125,000 hectares in the upper Huallaga valley alone are under cultivation. Most of the eventual product, coca paste and processed cocaine, will find its way to the United States through channels established with Colombian dealers operating in border areas. Until recently, local growers operated with little interference. Their interest was in profits rather than politics, except where it was necessary to buy off local government officials charged with shutting down their operations. However, the area has recently come under increasing Sendero influence, limiting the government's ability to bring drug production under control and forcing local growers and traffickers to find ways of adjusting to Sendero's presence. Although the initial relationship between the Shining Path and the drug trade was reportedly hostile, punctuated by periodic shootouts, an apparent *modus vivendi* has been reached that works to the advantage of all sides.⁸

The link between Sendero and Peru's narcotics trade is still not as structured as that once established, for example, between Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian cartels.

⁷DeQuine, 1984, pp. 610-613.

⁸For a general discussion of the narcotics-insurgency connection see Craig, 1987, pp. 1-34; Cohen, 1989; Hayes, 1987; and Steinitz, 1985, pp. 142-143.

It has, however, brought the movement certain advantages. Sendero's primary interest appears to be in recruitment and the value of the Upper Huallaga region as a rural base of operations. Most of those now living in the valley are recent arrivals, attracted from the mountains by the prospect of a steady income. Most are Quechua speakers, often exclusively so, and have the same cultural and economic backgrounds as Sendero's rural cadre.⁹ Sendero sought to exploit this tie from the outset, against a backdrop of general lawlessness. Before SL's arrival, leaf production and distribution was dominated by force. Local campesinos often suffered badly at the hands of Colombian traffickers, whose hired guns, known as *sicarios*, operated in the valley at will.¹⁰ Sendero arrived on the scene as a countervailing power, providing local growers with protection in return for their support. This role was later extended against the government and efforts to put down the coca trade as Peru's drug eradication program accelerated in 1987. This tactic, for the most part, has proven to be successful. Regional support for the guerrillas has grown naturally, in response to both the heavy-handed ways of the traffickers and the government's increasing efforts to bring the valley and its environs under control. Shining Path strength has grown accordingly, with the result that it is Sendero rather than the regime that is today the dominant player in the region.

A secondary advantage has been financial. Before Sendero's move into the Upper Huallaga, most of its limited revenues were received from the "donations" of its supporters and expropriations from local landowners, petty capitalists, and elements of the peasantry who were judged to be hostile to the movement's objectives or methods. Additional money may have been gathered through bank robberies, although this has never been confirmed. Its current connection with the drug trade has considerably improved its financial standing, providing it with an estimated income of between \$20 and \$30 million a year; if this figure is accurate, the Shining Path would be the wealthiest political movement in the country. This status was achieved initially by intermittently taxing foreign traffickers for the right to operate out of the region's enumerable clandestine landing strips and a variety of other forms of drug-related extortion. As the movement's presence in the valley has grown, its ability to monitor the trade in leaf, paste, and base has expanded considerably.¹¹ Its effective tax base has grown

⁹The current estimated population of the Upper Huallaga valley is 200,000; 50 percent of whom are believed to have settled there in the 1980s. See U.S. House of Representatives, 1989, pp. 6-8.

¹⁰See Gonzalez, 1989, pp. 22-24.

¹¹Peru is the world's leading producer of coca leaf, which small processors turn into paste. This paste, the first intermediate product in the production of cocaine, is pro-

accordingly. All growers, processors, and traffickers operating in areas that have come under Sendero control are now subject to taxation. This process has by now become routinized, and the tax is generally viewed as just another price of doing business. Periodic confrontations still occur with foreign buyers. An easy relationship, however, has developed between Sendero and the local population. Although some portion of their income now goes to the guerrillas, Sendero has in a sense served as their broker, providing local peasants with a degree of bargaining power toward the foreign trafficker they never previously enjoyed. The price of leaf has risen in the process, and few complain. Most are better off under Sendero's jurisdiction than they were when they were subject to the mercy of the narcotraficantes.

Although Sendero appears to have maintained an arm's-length relationship with local traffickers, its Huallaga base is collocated with that of the drug trade and has benefited from its presence. The fear in Lima is that a more directly cooperative alliance among Sendero, local growers, and foreign buyers could be forged in the future. One can easily imagine circumstances under which such a relationship would be to Sendero's tactical advantage, but the movement's ideological rigidity and evident puritanism can be expected to place limits on the nature of these links. The fact that the Shining Path and Peru's coca industry are so firmly entrenched in the same region of the country, however, will continue to pull both groups closer together. Each also needs the other, Sendero to finance the revolution, and foreign traffickers to export the raw materials of their trade. They also share an opponent. The government has encouraged this development by attempting to link their drug control program to the war against Sendero. Past operations in the upper Huallaga have often been carried out by combined force teams designed to go after the drug industry and guerrillas alike. Lack of enthusiasm, the magnitude of the problem, and resource limitations have greatly circumscribed this effort. In the meantime, the Shining Path is growing rich off the drug trade. As one can imagine, the revenue that they are able to generate from taxing local producers and buyers is considerable. How and where this money is being spent is unknown.

While the Shining Path has become flush, there is truth in Guzman's statement that the movement "is waging the most economical people's war on earth." "The enemy has the weapons," he has said, "consequently, the problem is to wrest them from him. . . . They have

cessed into cocaine base and eventually into cocaine hydrochloride. Until some years ago, traffickers tended to purchase raw leaf for export. Today they largely purchase preprocessed paste and/or base. This is refined into cocaine in Colombia for export to wholesalers.

an obligation to give them to us. It is their obligation to bring them to us wherever we are. And we have to admit they are starting to deliver."¹² The movement's most important source of weapons, mainly dynamite, has been the thousands of small mining camps dotting the Peruvian highlands. These camps are impossible to protect and have provided Sendero with an almost unlimited supply of explosives. In one attack reported in 1986, for example, a guerrilla team made off with 92,000 sticks of dynamite, enough to keep it in business for months. Dynamite, as Guzman notes, is supplemented by weapons of various types taken from the armed forces and the police. The guerrillas have also become adept at producing Molotov cocktails, pipe bombs, and homemade grenades. The latter are made from soft-drink cans packed with gunpowder and nails. They have been known to be hurled at the target with *huaracas*, a traditional slingshot used by the highland Indians. Compared with the army, at least, Sendero is still poorly armed. The movement has managed to compensate for this shortcoming with surprise, ruthlessness, its ability to select the time and place of attack, and a penchant for daring operations.¹³

The range of Sendero's rural campaign has expanded substantially over the course of the past five years. The movement has established a base of operations in every department in Peru, with notable effect. Although a precise accounting is impossible, its annual number of attacks has increased virtually every year since 1980. Sendero, however, will not win until it is able to capture the cities. The "center" of the revolution, in Guzman's assessment, remains within the countryside, "but the center shifts for the insurrection . . . to the cities." The movement's goal, in this respect, is "to lay the groundwork to ensure that the action of the People's Guerrilla Army converges with the insurrection in the cities, in one or several of them. . . . Just as combatants and communists initially moved from the cities to the countryside," they must now begin "to move from the countryside to the cities."¹⁴ Lima, in this view, is the prize, the home not only of the central government but of one-third of the population. To lay siege to the capital, in reality and in the minds of the country's elite, is to lay siege to the country itself. As in the countryside, most of the movement's efforts in this area have been carried out behind the scenes. It is

¹²Guzman interview, pp. 20-22.

¹³This is not always true in comparison with the police, however, who are often out-gunned by Sendero. Resource limitations have so impinged on police operations that there are not enough guns and ammunition to arm every police officer during a large call-up. Police often carry empty holsters or weapons with little more than one or two rounds.

¹⁴Guzman, interview, pp. 16-18.

impossible, therefore, to know how close they are to accomplishing their objectives. Nevertheless, Lima has become a major center of Sendero operations, a trend that can be expected to continue.

THE WAR IN THE CITIES

Sendero's Lima-based campaign is of fairly recent origin. Although the movement's first operations in the capital were carried out in 1980, the city appears to have remained a secondary area of operations until 1985. Until then, the purpose of actions in the city was largely symbolic. Any operation the group conducted within the capital could be depended upon to receive maximum press coverage, "amplifying" the organization's profile at home and abroad. In line with this objective, Sendero went after high-visibility targets, such as electric power facilities; international banks, corporations, and foreign embassies; a wide variety of government offices; and such diverse targets as a beauty pageant, the meetings of the socialist international, the home of the Cuban military attache, and the Lima offices of Aeroflot. Such attacks are frequently conducted in waves under cover of a coordinated blackout. In one such operation conducted in 1982, nine million people—half the country's population—were without electricity for 48 hours. The blackout affected a 525-mile corridor on the coast from Trujillo to Ica. In the course of the confusion, Sendero teams drove through the streets of Lima throwing sticks of dynamite into shops, banks, and government buildings. Some 50 public offices were bombed in the first night of the blackout, including the Palace of Justice, the Ministry of Economics, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁵

Although such actions are peripheral to Sendero's rural base, they promote the movement's program of propaganda by the deed and remind the government that SL is a force to be reckoned with. The calculated drama of Sendero's urban operations gave the organization an immediate notoriety, an effect that could have taken years to cultivate had SL confined its activities to Peru's remote interior. These operations also struck at the heart of the cherished view that what occurred beyond the capital city was of little concern to Peru's modern, urban-based elite. Before Sendero stepped up its urban operations, the movement was viewed widely as an Indian problem, which is to say it was not viewed widely as a problem at all. By late 1983 or early 1984 this was changing. The group had demonstrated that it could not only sustain an urban presence, but could, on occasion and for a time, even

¹⁵These and other incidents, unless otherwise noted, are drawn from The RAND Corporation's *Chronology on International Terrorism*.

paralyze key urban services. Despite the psychological effect of Sendero's urban operations, however, the activities of the metropolitan committee were still a sideshow. For every operation conducted in Lima, the Shining Path carried out ten attacks in the countryside. For every person killed in the capital, 200-300 died in the villages. The real war was still being carried out in the sierra.

Several factors appear to have prompted Sendero to modify its assessment of the importance of maintaining an effective urban position. The first of these was the rise of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Front (MRTA) in 1984. Before 1984, Sendero retained a monopoly over organized political violence. Although at least two further groups, Puka Lacta-Red Flag and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) shared this mantle in principle, neither movement was particularly active, substantiating Sendero's claim to be the only militant alternative to the prevailing order. MRTA rose to challenge this claim. Then, as now, MRTA's particular forte was the "urban spectacular." The group's membership, until recently, never grew above several hundred cadre, but the high profile nature of its operations was considered to be a potential threat to the Shining Path's still limited foothold in and around Lima. By the end of 1984, Sendero's leadership was faced with the alternative of either continuing to downplay its Lima-based campaign and thereby risk losing ground to MRTA, or reorienting its priorities and stepping up this campaign in an effort to win the loyalty of Peru's urban poor. Sendero apparently opted for the latter course of action. Although the peasantry was still believed to be the "motor force" of the revolution, urban operations were designated to be a "complementary but necessary" element of the movement's struggle for power.¹⁶

This decision was undoubtedly reinforced by the dramatic growth beginning to occur in Lima's population, a factor that was itself directly related to the expanding war in the countryside. Lima, by the mid-1980s, had become a source of refuge for hundreds of thousands of highland peasants attempting to flee Sendero, the army, and the war. The swollen ranks of the city's urban poor, most of whom were relegated to a life at or near the subsistence level in one of Lima's rapidly growing shanty towns, provided Sendero with a fertile ground for recruitment. By 1985, Lima had expanded to include some six million of the country's 20 million people. Some two million of these were believed to be living in the *pueblos juvenes*. As village populations moved to the city, the Shining Path's local apparatus, if any, often moved with them. Without prospects for employment, facing severe

¹⁶Gonzalez, 1987, pp. 47-53.

racial discrimination, and separated from the traditional support structure of village life, the newly arrived peasant frequently proved to be more susceptible to recruitment than he might have been back home. It is quite understandable that Sendero would attempt to turn these developments to its advantage, regardless of its established rural orientation. Much of its chosen constituency was emigrating to the capital, often bringing the Shining Path with it. This initial presence, coupled with the opportunities the movement saw to establish a core base of urban support, probably encouraged Guzman to step up Sendero activities and operations in and around the capital.¹⁷

In the intervening years, this decision appears to have been supported by the movement's increasing interest in developing a series of legal front groups, the "generated organisms" discussed earlier. Until 1985 or 1986, the Shining Path had paid little if any attention to employing front groups as a tool of mass organization. As long as Sendero strategy was dominated by the need to establish a rural base of operations, the front group concept offered few opportunities. To succeed, the open front requires the protection of the law. For obvious reasons, this was impossible in large areas of rural Peru where membership in an affiliated SL front could well mean a quick death at the hands of one or another of the national security forces. As Sendero's presence in the capital gradually increased, however, its opportunity to employ such tactics grew accordingly. The regime once again was faced with the choice of either tolerating Sendero's legal efforts to mobilize support, even though many of the group's generated organisms were openly hostile to the prevailing order, or risk undermining its own legitimacy by instituting a crackdown on legal assembly. Reluctantly, it chose the former course, permitting Sendero to complement its clandestine activities with open efforts to broaden its base of popular support. SL's organizing efforts in Lima grew accordingly.

Sendero's interest in pursuing this course of action seems to have been further spurred by a sense that events were coming to a head for the current government of Peru. This was certainly the case by the end of 1986. Sendero's efforts to "expand the guerrilla war" were clearly taking a toll. Coupled with the deteriorating economic situation, growing civil-military tensions, and mounting popular dissatisfaction with the Garcia regime, this led many observers to conclude that the military would soon move against the government in an effort to restore order. To fully exploit such a crisis, Sendero would require an established urban presence. The overthrow of the civil government

¹⁷Smith, 1988; see also Zuckerman, 1988.

and the counterterrorist campaign that would almost certainly follow could be expected to polarize Peruvian society. The most dramatic repercussions of such an event would be felt in Lima, where large elements of the population were already believed to be in a state of revolutionary ferment. Having once gained a foothold in the capital, the Shining Path would be in a position to turn this event to its advantage and strike at the heart of the new regime. This foothold, however, would have to be established before the military intervened, while the movement was still able to extend its presence under the comparative protection of Peru's constitution. Once the takeover occurred, Sendero's organizing efforts would be driven underground, limiting the group's ability to build a mass following.

In line with this program, and in sharp contrast to Sendero's *modus operandi* in the countryside, the movement's urban strategy has placed a new emphasis on open or thinly disguised political operations. Apart from the establishment of an array of front organizations, Sendero appears to have begun a concerted effort to penetrate and radicalize the Peruvian labor movement, existing student groups, and a variety of different neighborhood and community associations. In the past, SL has vilified such organizations for their "reformist," "revisionist," or "opportunistic" tendencies. They were said to be the handmaidens of the country's "infantile [legal] left" and, as such, were condemned to irrelevance. Today, by comparison, Sendero has called on the masses to "develop the struggle for reforms as a part of the conquest of power."¹⁸ Under the rubric of this and similar proclamations, SL cadre and sympathizers have become a common feature at strikes, rallies, and protests that only a few years ago would have elicited the movement's scorn. Sendero support for such actions, if forthcoming, is announced ahead of time in *El Diario* and through the country's various news media. Although sponsorship has varied to include the movement's enemies within the left, the common hallmark of these events is a shared antipathy of the prevailing regime. Such protests contribute to the general air of disorder and discontent and provide Sendero with an opportunity to radicalize the debate and challenge the legal left for its working class base.

Sendero's stepped-up urban campaign has not been without its costs. The most serious single setback experienced by the metropolitan committee occurred in June 1986 in the course of a coordinated uprising by Senderista prisoners being held in three penitentiaries in the city. Some 260 cadre and sympathizers were reported to have been killed in

¹⁸Guzman interview, pp. 17-18.

the course of the government's effort to put down the rebellion.¹⁹ According to the government's initial report, the inmates, who were armed with dynamite, homemade crossbows, and a handful of weapons seized from the guards, were all killed in the process of regaining control of the prisons. It was later learned, however, that as many as 130 Senderistas housed in the Lurigancho and Fronton prisons had in fact been reapprehended and subsequently executed by their captors. Among the dead was Sendero's reputed third in command, Antonio Diaz Martinez. The incident created a crisis for the regime and a propaganda victory for the Shining Path. It also proved to be a major blow to Sendero's Lima-based operations, which were evidently being conceived and organized by Diaz and his group from behind bars.²⁰ This loss was felt immediately in a drop in SL activities throughout Lima. Shining Path operations in the capital, carried out at a rate of 30 to 40 a month before the uprising, were brought to a virtual halt. It was six months before Sendero was able to reorganize its urban campaign and regain its earlier level of activity.

Sendero's metropolitan-based program has come to play an important role in the movement's current operating profile and long-term planning. Operations in the capital may have recently increased at a faster rate than its rural campaign, which itself has grown every year since 1980. As many as 20 percent of Sendero's armed operations are now believed to be carried out in or around the Lima area. This figure does not include the movement's open political efforts, which have become pronounced since 1985 and are limited almost exclusively to the capital. Although Sendero has probably also experienced its greatest losses in Lima, the game appears to have been worth the candle. Despite chronic security problems, Sendero's metropolitan campaign has been successfully insulated from its rural operations and has provided the movement with a powerful political profile. The group's continuing ability to operate in the capital in strength has served as an ongoing challenge to the government of Peru. In a survey carried out recently in the capital, 15 percent of those questioned said they believed the Shining Path would eventually triumph, despite the

¹⁹Reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, June 19 and 20, 1986.

²⁰For reasons that were never explained, before this uprising, Peruvian authorities were inclined to house their Senderista prisoners together under barracks-like conditions. Organization and discipline among the group, consequently, was easy to establish. The prisoners were reported to hold regular Party meetings and would begin and end the day with chants to Comrade Gonzalo and the coming revolution. It was determined subsequently that the group's legal representation, with whom they would meet regularly, served as a courier service between the committee's prison-based leadership and its operating cells throughout the city. They also smuggled arms to the inmates before the uprising.

government's best efforts to stop them. Many more believe that even should the insurgents lose, they will have succeeded in destroying Peruvian democracy.²¹

Sendero's actions, in short, have struck at the heart of popular confidence in the government's ability to maintain public order. They have undermined a fundamental pillar of regime legitimacy. This alone would justify the decision to step up their urban campaign. In the long run, however, this is likely to be only another phase in the movement's larger urban program. Sendero's urban actions must still be viewed within the context of its general theory of victory. The urban campaign, in this respect, is still subordinate to the movement's rural operations and Guzman's five point strategy for surrounding the cities. The intermediate objectives of this plan include establishing an urban network, eroding popular support for the current regime and its democratic alternatives, mobilizing a base of mass support in the cities, and pushing the government and security forces into a desperate campaign of counterterror. Sendero must finally be in a position to pick up the pieces, turn such an opportunity to its benefit, and implement the final collapse of government authority in the capital. Although in Guzman's view the war will ultimately be won in the protracted struggle for the countryside, the climactic battle will be waged in the cities. The metropolitan committee has no doubt been charged with preparing for that day.

²¹Riding, 1988.

IV. SOME VARIABLES FOR THE FUTURE

Sendero has succeeded in maintaining its momentum by staying one step ahead of the government while methodically extending its base of support. The initiative in the insurgency continues to lie with the guerrillas. Lima, today as in the past, is still attempting to respond to a pace of war that is being set by the Shining Path, rather than attempting to force Sendero onto the defensive. This, as we will see presently, has been due to a variety of factors, ranging from a widespread misunderstanding of the threat to a lack of resources to the gross deficiencies of the Peruvian military. Abimael Guzman, in the words of one observer, "is the only man with a plan" for Peru's future. As long as this remains true, the future of the insurgency will turn not on government policy, but on the strengths and weaknesses of the Shining Path. Whether the movement succeeds or fails will be determined by how well it is able to exploit Peru's growing domestic troubles.

THE COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN

In principle, Peruvian counterinsurgency policy under the Garcia administration has involved three distinct components: a military program designed to protect key political targets, insulate local populations from guerrilla influence, and engage Sendero units in the field; an economic development program designed to stimulate rural investment and raise local living standards; and a political program designed to enhance local confidence in the central government, undermine the basis of SL support, and establish a "Peruvian identity" in the countryside. This policy, as articulated, was to be based on the tenets of classic counterinsurgency strategy. The problem, in this view, was as much a political one as a military one. Any success Sendero might achieve in the military arena was ultimately due to its political position in the countryside. To defeat the insurgency, therefore, one had to strike at the movement's political base. This, in the end, could be achieved only by attempting to alleviate the source of popular unrest through a broad-based policy of social, economic, and political reform. The military in this scheme would play a secondary role in defeating the insurgency by permitting the government to clear and hold rural areas long enough to "win the hearts and minds" of the local inhabitants.

The reality of Peruvian policy, needless to say, has been quite different. As a practical matter, the government's counterinsurgency effort has relied almost exclusively on fielding a military response. Despite the importance that was accorded to this problem in principle, little effort appears to have been made to address the underlying political and social elements of the insurgency. Indeed, it is not clear that there ever was a consensus within Peruvian decisionmaking circles about what this meant, much less what would be done about it. To its credit, efforts were made during the first years of the Garcia government to channel a greater degree of economic assistance to those areas of the country where Sendero appeared to be making the greatest headway, notably in Ayacucho and the south-central sierra. Related programs were designed to encourage a greater degree of private sector investment, improve health care, and expand local employment opportunities. Although the principle underlying this effort was a sound one, most of these programs foundered and have since been abandoned, defeated by the sheer magnitude of the problem, widescale corruption, poor organization, economic crisis, and the efforts of the Shining Path.¹

The armed forces have entered the conflict through the mechanism of the emergency zone, which provides the military with the legal authorization to engage in antiguerrilla operations. The declaration of a state of emergency suspends constitutional liberties and places all civilian agencies under the jurisdiction of the region's designated military commander. The armed forces, under these conditions, hold a firm if temporary monopoly over the reins of local government. These powers are exercised over a specified term, generally for 60 days, and are subject to extension by the central government. While the number and scope of the country's emergency zones have fluctuated over the course of the last seven years, the area and population placed under emergency rule have grown. At the present time, the government of Peru has established four rural emergency zones incorporating all or most of Apurímac, Huanaco, Huancavelica, Ayacucho, Junín, Pasco, Lima, San Martín, and 50 percent of Peru's population.²

Although the government's use of emergency zones has offered several advantages, the concept has accentuated rather than moderated

¹For discussion of these efforts see *Aid to the Andean Trapezoid Under Alan Garcia*, U.S. Embassy, Peru, 1988.

²In February 1986, the government placed Lima and neighboring Callao under a limited state of emergency. In contrast to the practice in the countryside, however, political, police, and judicial authority remained in the hands of civilians. A curfew was instituted and the military worked with local security forces to patrol city streets. If Lima and Callao are included in the total, some 50 percent of Peru's population has at one time or another been placed under emergency rule.

some of the worst features of Peru's larger counterinsurgency program. Sending the military into selected areas of the country has, on the one hand, permitted the regime to focus its limited assets against the point of greatest resistance. It has also helped keep the army busy and out of politics, muting any early incentive to find a unilateral solution to the problem. At the same time, however, the concept has further reinforced the military's dominant role in managing the insurgency. The government does not yet seem to have found a means of using the army effectively against the guerrillas while retaining control over the scope and direction of the war. Once the army has moved into an area, for all intents and purposes, it is an independent actor. It answers to its own chain of command and will tolerate little civilian interference, a tendency that appears to have grown as the conflict has intensified and Garcia's political fortunes have diminished. At the very least, such autonomy has made it difficult to establish a national strategy against the guerrillas. Policies and programs have fluctuated widely over time, across emergency zones, and among individual emergency zone commanders. It has also led to recurring human rights abuses, further undermined the government's efforts to establish a stronger political presence in the countryside, led to the neglect of those regions of the country that have not yet been placed under emergency jurisdiction, and encouraged a reactive response to a creative adversary.

The army's record of achievement has not been impressive. There are few military establishments that are less prepared to tackle the problem of a rural-based insurgency than the Peruvian armed forces. The many reasons for this might be reduced to three categories: attitude, training, and resources. If Peru's antiguerrilla experience over the past eight years accurately reflects the views, doctrine, capabilities, and constraints that shape current planning, the army has little appreciation for the dimensions of the problem it faces, little interest in or understanding of the principles of counterinsurgency, insufficient means to conduct a successful unconventional campaign, and no prospect of improving its material position in the foreseeable future. Its performance has suffered accordingly.

Armies tend to reflect the attitudes and norms of the societies from which they are drawn. The Peruvian armed forces are no exception. Despite a reformist tradition, manifest most graphically during the progressive military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975), the Peruvian officer corps shares the racial and regional biases of the country's upper and middle classes. Until recently, events beyond Lima and a handful of other Peruvian cities were of little interest to the armed forces. The sierra was desolate, difficult to access, and inhabited by a people who had nothing in common with the

mainstream of Peruvian life. What happened in the countryside, consequently, could have little bearing on life in the capital. Indian uprisings had not been uncommon in the past. As long as the brunt of any current rebellion was confined to the sierra and the native population, it would require little in the way of a military response. Even this, it was thought, was a police matter, better handled by the civil authorities than the army, which was neither trained for nor interested in the Indian problem.

Such views have made it difficult for the military to acknowledge the serious nature of the present insurgency. During the early 1980s, when the threat posed by Sendero was still confined largely to Ayacucho and the surrounding highlands, the army could dismiss the group as little more than the most recent in a long series of peasant uprisings. As an Indian-based movement, the insurgency was sure to fail. The peasantry, it was widely held, possessed neither the intelligence, the discipline, nor the organizational abilities needed to pose a threat to the prevailing order. If the rebellion did not finally recede on its own, it would be defeated when its ringleaders were eventually captured or killed. By 1984, it was clear that this was not to be the case, but old attitudes die hard. As the potential threat posed by Sendero has grown, the military has sought to find alternative explanations for the movement's success. In doing so, many within the armed forces have turned to the global struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. The insurgency, in this view, was not the work of an indigenous guerrilla movement but "another front" in the larger competition between two power blocs.³ The fact that Sendero has vocally condemned "Soviet revisionism" and has made a point of targeting Soviet assets and personnel seems to have had little effect on military thinking. Others have come to blame the drug trade, the legal Left, and a range of other foreign sponsors without which Sendero would never have survived.⁴

Apart from its reluctance to acknowledge the potential threat, the military is neither trained nor equipped to wage a rural-based counter-insurgency campaign. The army's last experience with such an action was in the mid-1960s, a far less demanding effort than the one that will ultimately be required to beat Sendero. The challenge posed by the uprisings of the 1960s pales in comparison with the problems posed by the Shining Path. The guerrilla movements of this period were small, poorly organized, and doctrinally unsophisticated. The

³Jenkins, unpublished RAND research, 1988.

⁴For an overview of this campaign, see *Peru: A Country Study*, Washington D.C., pp. 246-249, 40-47.

campaigns launched against them were brief, undemanding, and required little or no institutional adaptation. By way of contrast, the Shining Path enjoys a fairly large base of popular support, is well organized at the national level, and has a clear game plan for extending its influence and defeating the government of Peru. Even had the military sought to institutionalize the lessons it learned more than 20 years ago, the experience would prove to be of limited value. The problem, however, is notably more serious. The military has not only avoided drawing on the lessons of its earlier campaigns, it has made a conscious effort to purge these experiences from its collective memory. The results of this decision are manifest throughout service planning, in the areas of doctrine, training, force structure, and the preferred conflict scenarios that have determined military deployments.

At the present time, 60-70 percent of Peru's deployable combat power is located on or near the northern and southern frontiers. The "threat" that underlies this deployment pattern and, indeed, most aspects of Peruvian military planning is the two-front war against Ecuador and Chile. Since 1883 and the treaty of Ancon, which officially ended the War of the Pacific, the Peruvian armed forces have waited for what they believe will one day be a rematch with their neighbor to the south. This and a longstanding and periodically violent boundary dispute with Ecuador have led to the belief that Peru must prepare for a dual military challenge. The merits of this scenario are not important. What is important is that the "two-front" planning requirement has long dominated Peruvian military thinking and military procurement. This has been reinforced by the image-consciousness of the armed forces, which favor external opponents and a conventional force structure to a domestic adversary and the undramatic force mix needed to wage an unconventional rural campaign against a poorly armed, elusive opponent. As a result, the military is now ill-prepared to wage the type of war being forced upon it by the Shining Path. It has no means of systematically collecting, analyzing, and exploiting intelligence on Sendero; an overly centralized decisionmaking process; no corpus of unconventional, small unit tactics; little ability to react quickly to guerrilla actions; and chronic problems with sustaining large numbers of forces in the field.

The military, consequently, has been forced to fall back on a program of static occupation. Moving into an area, it will typically establish a major garrison in the department capital and set up secondary outposts within or around many of the department's provincial capitals. Small units are then periodically deployed to local towns and villages. These garrisons serve as strong points and periodically come under guerrilla attack. The regular army, however, spends little time

patrolling the surrounding countryside, which for all intents and purposes belongs to Sendero. What patrols are sent out tend to restrict themselves to well-known routes, operate only during the day, and, predictably, spend little time engaging the enemy. When they do meet Sendero it is usually because they have been ambushed with little prospect for backup support. In this way and others, the army has shown little understanding of how to "fight men with men." This has been aggravated by the training and traditions of the Peruvian officer corps, which discourages initiative at the small-unit level. If one had to summarize the career perspective of a typical junior officer it would be, "don't rock the boat." Decisions within the Peruvian military are not made without first contacting headquarters. Although a military organization can survive and even prosper under such guidelines in peacetime, it will be ineffective and vulnerable in an environment where speed and initiative are at a premium.

Not surprisingly, such problems also extend to the rank and file. The Peruvian army is maintained through universal conscription. As a practical matter, however, the officer corps is largely white and urban while the enlisted ranks are manned largely by campesinos drafted from the countryside. Many do not speak Spanish. With very few exceptions, officers do not speak Quechua. This gulf, which often makes even simple communication difficult, is not bridged by a professional corps of noncommissioned officers, which in the Peruvian army does not exist. The obvious problems this poses for army cohesion and effectiveness have been seriously aggravated in recent years by the discovery that Sendero (and to a lesser degree MRTA) have begun to penetrate the armed forces. The crisis this created within military decisionmaking circles came to a head in the summer of 1987 when a Sendero cell within the army assassinated a ranking officer in Huan-cayo. How far this has progressed is unknown. In an effort to address the problem the military has ceased conscription in the emergency zones and will not deploy any units in the areas from which they were recruited. The incident, however, has already had its intended effect. In the absence of any effective means of screening its recruits, the division between officers and men within the armed forces has grown. A latent fear exists that the military could turn on itself. In the short run, such sentiments will further undermine the war effort. In the long run they could undermine the army itself.

Of more immediate concern are the deficiencies in the military's logistical and support base. The horror stories are legion. The army, in many cases, is simply unable even to get to areas of the country regularly frequented by Sendero. Heavy demand for the few operational helicopters, only a few high altitude helicopters, an under-

developed road net, and the extreme topography of the sierra have made force movements difficult, time-consuming, and sometimes impossible. In other cases entire units have been pulled out of the field because they have run out of rations (the army deploys with raw food), been decimated by disease, had equipment breakdowns, or have expended their monthly allotment of gasoline and lubricants. Similar problems have been created by the military's eclectic equipment mix, serious shortages of spare parts in almost every category of major weapons system and equipment, a declining defense budget, the absence of a domestic defense industry able to supply even a fraction of the military's needs, and a growing scarcity of hard currency with which to purchase materiel, spares, and consumables from foreign suppliers. All of this has been compounded by the country's general economic crisis, which has not only cut into the share of the national product allocated to the armed forces but has ruined the military's budget through inflation. The effects of such factors have been pervasive, further undermining its ability to contain the escalation in rural violence.

For institutional and practical reasons, in short, the campaign against the Shining Path is not going well. Nor is there any reason to believe that the army's ability to contain and eventually defeat the insurgency will improve greatly in the near future. Although the army is unprepared to deal successfully with Sendero on its own terms, it is unwilling and probably unable to reorganize itself into an effective counterinsurgency force. Even if it proves able and willing to do so down the road, this process is likely to bear fruit slowly and will certainly take years to complete. The military, however, requires solutions today. These solutions, moreover, must be found in the absence of an effective political base throughout much of the countryside and in the face of the impending collapse of the country's modern economic sector. Peru already faces an advanced insurgency that can be expected to accelerate over the next few years. If a means of at least containing the Shining Path is not found, the army can be expected to escalate by striking at what many within the armed forces already believe to be the root of the problem, Peru's rural population.⁵

⁵Frustration over the lack of progress against Sendero has already led to the rise of a right wing vigilante group known as the Rodrigo Franco Command. The organization was named after Rodrigo Franco Montes, a prominent figure within APRA party circles slain by Sendero. The group is alleged to be composed of APRA conservatives and disgruntled elements of the armed forces, both active and retired. It has engaged in high-profile attacks against known or suspected supporters of the Shining Path. These have, in turn, generated their own bloody reprisals from the militant left. Such actions can be expected to accelerate as the conflict continues.

POLITICS, ECONOMICS, CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Three years ago Alan Garcia was riding a wave of popular acclaim. In May of 1985 the 36 year-old Garcia had won 53 percent of the vote in a nine-man contest to become one of the world's youngest heads of state. Imposing, handsome, charismatic, an accomplished orator with a populist message, Garcia quickly became one of Latin America's most exciting and aggressive leaders. His approval rating, by the end of his first year in office, had topped an astounding 90 percent and was still on the rise. Garcia's energy, enthusiasm, and cultivated sense of the dramatic stirred Peru's business elite and working classes alike, permitting him to build a political coalition in support of his administration that spanned the country's divided party system. He promised economic prosperity within a democratic framework that would improve the lot of every Peruvian. No one was to be excluded as the country pulled itself out of the economic doldrums to overcome the dual legacies of the Belaunde government and 12 years of military rule. To back up these promises, Garcia moved quickly to increase urban and rural employment, slash Peru's 250 percent inflation rate, reduce taxes, dramatically increase real wages, and restimulate the country's agricultural and industrial base. By the end of 1986 the Peruvian economy was growing at an annual rate of 8.6 percent, the highest in Latin America. After 17 years of economic mismanagement Peru appeared to be back on track. Alan Garcia, it was rumored, would soon propose a constitutional amendment that would permit him to run for a second term of office in 1990. All agreed he would surely be elected.⁶

The situation today has changed dramatically. The latest opinion polls place Garcia's approval rating at 10 percent. It is continuing to fall. He has lost the support not only of his traditional political opponents but of his own party, elements of which have called for his early resignation. He has alienated Peru's business community; faces a growing incidence of strikes, worker unrest, and street demonstrations; has placed himself in opposition to virtually every source of possible assistance from abroad; and pushed the government's relations with the armed forces to the breaking point. The immediate source of his troubles and those of the Peruvian political system can be traced directly to the failure of his economic development program, which has been catastrophic. The same policies that allowed him to win the acclaim of his constituency only two years ago have now proved to be his undoing, as Peru is pulled into the depths of an unprecedented economic crisis. Inflation, which by 1986 had been reduced to a manageable 63 percent per year, approached the 2000 percent mark by

⁶Werlich, 1988, pp. 13-15.

the end of 1988, slashing real wages, demonitarizing the economy, and sending Peru into the worst recession in its history. The country labors under one of the highest per capita international debts in Latin America, is on the verge of expending the last of its hard currency reserves, and will soon be unable to either import or produce most of the basic requirements of its population, including food. These trends have led to escalating social and political instability that threaten the future of modern Peru.⁷

Peru's economic condition has become a desperate one. How, when, and indeed whether the country can recover from its current plight is unclear. At the very least, Peru will require relief from its overburdening debt, a major infusion of international economic assistance, assistance in restructuring its economy, and a radical change in economic policy. Little if any of what is required is likely to be forthcoming. Few will be willing to throw good money after bad in an attempt to bail out Peru. The problems facing the Peruvian economy are, for the most part, either structural in nature or due to the ill-conceived policies of the current government. International aid cannot solve the first and the Garcia regime is probably unable or unwilling to seriously address the second. Garcia's popularity and his very political *persona* have rested on the strength and promise of his populist message. There is nothing in his performance over the past four years that suggests he is willing to preside over the lengthy and painful austerity program that will be required to bring the country back to better economic health. Any such program would require a dramatic change in both Garcia's self-image and the politico-economic philosophies he has championed since his early days in politics. It would also require him to turn to the international financial community for assistance, which he is likely to be unable to consider for reasons of both personality and politics.

Not surprisingly, Peru's increasingly desperate economic situation has undermined the authority of the central government and contributed to the growing sense that the country's democratic processes are doomed. Garcia himself has been thoroughly discredited. Once acclaimed as a leader with "*huevos*," a bold and daring individual, he is now known as *El Caballo Loco*, or "crazy horse," for his wild promises and destructive policies. Rumors questioning his erratic behavior, alleged motivations, and mental stability have circulated widely, further undermining his authority and contributing to the growing atmosphere of political unrest. Articles in the Peruvian press have speculated openly about whether the president is on drugs or looting the treasury. Others have questioned whether his recent absence from

⁷Wise, 1986, pp. 14-26; and Sanders, 1987, pp. 2-7.

public view was because he had been committed to a mental asylum or was preparing to depart the country. To substantiate this, one report indicated that Garcia had attempted to leave Peru but had been discovered at the airport and returned to the presidential palace by force. Since at least early 1988, many have argued that Garcia was attempting to prod the military into seizing power to find a scapegoat for his administration and lay the groundwork for a political comeback. Others have speculated that his intention all along was to destroy the economy and assume total power in the resulting chaos. Individually, such rumors provide a degree of comic relief. Collectively, they reveal the degree to which public confidence in the regime has been leveled by economic failure and dashed expectations.⁸

It is this latter factor that is likely to create the most serious problems for Peruvian democracy and long-term political stability. As many have observed, political unrest is often due not to simple social or economic disequilibrium but to frustrated expectations. Revolutions, as one writer has noted, "are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. . . . The crucial factor is the vague or specific fear that ground gained over a long period of time will be quickly lost."⁹ Garcia's early success, in other words, and the high expectations his election and first year in office gave rise to, could prove to be not only his own undoing but that of the current political system. Although not prolonged, Peru's apparent economic recovery was dramatic, giving rise to the widespread belief that the country could look forward to a prosperous future. Instead, three years later, Peru faces an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions, with no hope in sight, a crisis brought about by the same regime to which most Peruvians once looked for salvation. Far from meeting the public's expectations, most believe that the government has created a situation that exceeds their worst fears. This, in the view of many, is a commentary not only on the president, the quality of his advisors, and the APRA party, but on the Peruvian political system itself, which has lurched from one crisis to the next, providing little more than false hopes and idle promises.

The question for the immediate future is whether Peru's fragile political system can survive the current crisis of confidence intact, or whether the growing atmosphere of political decay will result in a military takeover. If the economy and some level of associated popular

⁸"Peru Stares into the Abyss and Sees a Reflection," *Insight*, Vol. 5, No. 5, January 30, 1989, pp. 8-12.

⁹James Davies, cited in Johnson, 1982, p. 64.

unrest were the only problems facing the Peruvian government, the current system might well be able to muddle through. Under present circumstances, however, this will be a difficult and uncertain undertaking. Peru does not face one crisis but several. The country's economic crisis is occurring in the midst of a growing insurgency. Both have contributed to a profound loss of regime authority. These problems have become interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Peru's deteriorating economic condition has fed popular discontent, played into the hands of the armed opposition, and seriously limited the level and scope of the regime's counterinsurgency program. The Shining Path, for its part, has taken a toll of Peru's economic infrastructure, prompted the diversion of a large level of scarce resources to an unproductive war effort, and contributed to a growing sense among the country's economic elite that the government has lost the ability to shape the nation's future. These events have, in turn, led to a crisis of regime legitimacy, which has exacerbated Peru's difficulties and further undermined the government's ability to do anything about them. Together, these factors have established a downward dynamic that will be difficult to break.

If the present or succeeding regime is unable to break this cycle of decline, the country will face steadily growing popular unrest. This can be expected to accelerate over time, feeding upon itself, until the current political order is pressed to the point of systemic collapse. At that time, or shortly before, the armed forces can be expected to move in an effort to reestablish public order. As Johnson has observed, "when a society is beset . . . by a loss of authority, the sole basis of interaction becomes the primitive logic of deterrence."¹⁰ In an integrated regime, in which the army serves the cause of government and is pledged to support a designated political system, the resort to force would be subordinated to and managed by the established political structure. This is not likely to be the case in Peru, which has been governed by 25 military governments since 1810, and where the armed forces have long strived to maintain a separate and distinct identity from civilian rule. Today, as in the past, the military ultimately considers itself to be the defender of the state rather than the handmaiden of any particular regime. Escalating popular unrest, in this respect, is not likely to be viewed as a simple breakdown in law and order but the result of a more serious loss of regime legitimacy. The government under these circumstances will have lost its mandate to govern. The

¹⁰Johnson, 1982, p. 99.

first problem will be dealt with by force. The second will require a change in regime.¹¹

Any such move would be made easier by the tensions in the civil-military relationship that have developed since Garcia assumed office. This relationship got off to a rocky start when on the day of his inauguration Garcia abruptly canceled half the military's order for 24 French Mirage-2000 jet aircraft, stating that the country could not afford it. Shortly afterward he refused to pay the bill for over \$300 million in repairs and upgrades for the navy's flagship, the *Admiral Grau*, then undergoing a refit in Holland. Holland, in retaliation, took possession of the ship and let it be known that they would sell it to Chile if the Peruvians did not come up with the cash. These episodes were the opening shots in a campaign to bring the military under clear civilian control. It has involved cuts in the defense budget, the elimination of many of the military's traditional prerogatives and privileges, attempts to interfere with the promotion system, harassment over the military's growing disregard for human rights, and attempts by Garcia to interpose himself in the military's operational decisionmaking process. Although not all of these efforts have met with success, they have resulted in a serious and potentially dangerous breach in the government's relations with the armed forces. This has not stopped Garcia from regularly exercising his symbolic control over the military by appearing at state functions with the sash and baton of the "Commander in Chief" and, in at least one case, in a specially made uniform denoting his status of rank.

Until now, the armed forces have been deterred from intervening, despite serious tensions in their relationship with Garcia and a long standing antipathy toward APRA. The reasons for this are in large measure Garcia's overwhelming popularity and the negative memories associated with their last experiment with politics between 1968 and 1980. Both of these factors, however, are now depreciating variables. Once heralded as one of Peru's greatest leaders, Garcia is currently an object of public derision. Similarly, with time the military's own record of service has become a distant memory. Time tends to distort the image of the past. As Peru's present situation has grown more desperate, the failures associated with the country's last experience with military rule appear less prominent. Indeed, for some Peruvians, the years between 1968 and 1980 must look good in comparison with the country's current difficulties. Although many of today's problems can be traced to the policies of Peru's last military rulers, these memories have been overshadowed by events, the incompetence of the

¹¹Komisar, 1986, pp. 174-177.

current regime, and growing uncertainty in the future. This has not resulted in a groundswell of support for a return to military government, but the barriers to such a move, in the minds of both the public and the armed forces, have begun to break down.

Ironically, one factor that probably still stands in the way of a military takeover is the state of the Peruvian economy. If the military were to assume the responsibility of government they would have to also assume responsibility for pulling the country out of its present financial and economic crisis. The army has no more clue as to how this might be accomplished than Garcia. Nor do they want to be blamed for the country's current difficulties or the stringent and thus unpopular measures that will be required to restore the economy to a state of rough equilibrium. Garcia's greatest failure, in this respect, is likely to be his best remaining deterrent against a coup. At the very least, this will buy the current government some time. What will or can be accomplished with this, however, is not clear. Should the economy improve while the security situation continues to deteriorate, the military's incentive to intervene will almost certainly grow. Should the economy continue to fall apart, certainly the most probable case, Peru's political condition can be expected to deteriorate at an accelerated rate. The army in these circumstances will be pulled into the breach, regardless of the effect this might have on the economy or its own popular standing. The decision to intervene, in either case, will be made reluctantly, driven by the belief that Peru is heading for the abyss and that the military is the only actor able to reverse this decline.

Much will depend on Garcia's ability to forestall or contain the spread of popular unrest and the degree to which the country finds hope in the national elections scheduled for April 1990. The military has certainly considered the possibility that it will be forced to intervene, and it could choose to do so at any time. The coup, should it come, could occur without warning, precipitated by some dramatic action by Sendero or an outbreak of popular unrest threatening to undermine the basis of government authority. Should the present regime survive until the 1990 election, a coup could also be precipitated by a victory of the legal left. The military has long held that the Shining Path and other armed opposition groups have infiltrated and come to dominate the United Left (IU). While a United Left victory now looks unlikely, the military's belief that Sendero and the legal left are working together, while unfounded, could prove to be a decisive consideration if IU can overcome its internal differences and win the presidency.

While a coup seems likely, it can be expected to stimulate rather than dampen political unrest, playing directly into the hands of the Shining Path, which will attempt to use the event and its outcome to mobilize a mass base of support, something it would never be able to do on its own. To win, Sendero must provoke the military into over-reacting with a wave of counterterror, polarizing Peruvian society. The revolutionary rationale for such a strategy was articulated in 1969 by Carlos Marighella in his mini-manual for the urban guerrilla. Political crises are turned into armed conflict, he noted, "by performing violent actions that will force those in power to transform the political situation in the country into a military situation. This will alienate the masses, who, from then on, will revolt against the army and the police and blame them for the state of things."¹² Abimael Guzman was thinking along similar lines in July 1988, when he observed that "as the people's war grows stronger, the countersubversive war will necessarily have to intensify, and its core will be genocide." This, in his view, will bring the struggle between Sendero and the military into "strategic balance," permitting Sendero to develop "the war to take over the cities and prepare the strategic offensive." The "reactionaries," he warned, "are dreaming when they try to drown the revolution in blood; . . . they are irrigating it."¹³

The armed forces, unfortunately, are likely to be only too happy to comply. The military's track record in the six years in which it has been actively engaged against Sendero has been a bad one. Most of the civilian casualties suffered in the war thus far have been blamed on the Shining Path, but the Army has committed the majority. Large-scale abuses have been confined largely to the emergency zones, where the security forces are often able to operate beyond public scrutiny. This will change quickly once the army is no longer working under the constraints imposed by the present government and public opinion. The military, as Brian Jenkins has noted, does not believe it has been "out-proselytized, out-mobilized, or out-fought," but rather thinks it has been "unreasonably constrained and unjustly criticized" for doing what is necessary to stem the tide of the insurgency.¹⁴ The *guerra sucia* (dirty war), in its view, is not only justified by circumstances but is the only effective means of destroying, once and for all, the roots of the rebellion. "It worked in Argentina," one hears, "and it will work here." This view is justified further by the belief that the army must fight terror with terror, a strong racial bias, the sentiment that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian," and the belief on the part of many within the

¹²Cited in Moss, 1972, p. 13.

¹³Guzman interview, pp. 19-22.

¹⁴Unpublished RAND research.

military that regardless of what they do they will be accused of excesses, so they might as well reap the tactical advantages.

SENDERO'S STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

A coup and the counterterror campaign that one must expect in its wake would provide Sendero with opportunities as well as risks. The group would gain an opportunity to greatly expand its base of support. Any national counterinsurgency campaign that failed to discriminate among the Shining Path, those who support the movement reluctantly, and otherwise nondeviant elements of the population would result in a much higher degree of opposition to the government and, ultimately, a much greater degree of sympathy for the guerrillas than at present. This will be essential if Sendero is going to make a serious bid to seize power. At the same time, however, such a campaign poses great risks. The movement would suffer a higher casualty rate; it would no longer be able to operate under the relative protection of the law; its front operations would be shut down, interfering with its efforts to expand its constituency within the legal left; and it would be pushed further underground, which would complicate recruitment, mobility, communications, and national-level coordination. Despite these drawbacks, the net effect on the movement's operations is likely to be positive. Sendero has long anticipated the coming crackdown and has prepared accordingly. While the struggle "between the people's war and the counterrevolutionary war" will be a fierce one, the movement is expected not only to survive but prosper.

The Shining Path is, indeed, operating with certain advantages. For one thing, it has shown that it is a highly cohesive organization. Cadre are highly motivated, ideologically committed, and armed with the conviction that they are in fact changing the face of Peruvian society. The movement's vitality stems from several factors. First, in form and expression, the Shining Path exhibits many of the qualities of a religious cult.¹⁵ It is founded, in a manner of speaking, on the revelations of Comrade Gonzalo, has divided the world sharply between good and evil, maintains a highly rigid belief system, and demands absolute loyalty and commitment on the part of its membership. Second, although the movement in recent years has made a concerted effort to develop a mass following, it remains in essence a "fundamentalist" organization of core party activists. It is a vanguard party. "We are completely opposed," Guzman has stated, to "the theory that everyone is a

¹⁵For a general discussion see Bainbridge and Stark, 1979, pp. 283-295.

revolutionary, everyone is a Marxist, that there is no party and that everyone simply has to be brought together in a front to guide the revolution." Sendero's role, in his view, is to organize, mobilize, and lead a broad-based worker-peasant alliance against a common foe, the government of Peru. While the Shining Path is of this class, it is not of the alliance. The latter is motivated by what Guzman has termed "the struggle for grievances." The Shining Path's objective, by contrast, "is the conquest of power."¹⁶

In pursuing this course, Sendero has attempted to find the right balance between preserving its identity and ideological purity while building a mass base of supporters and sympathizers. Only a few years ago the movement's isolation and extremism appeared to be a detriment to its ability to adapt, expand, and possibly even maintain its membership. Although the movement's rigid belief system and highly parochial view of Peruvian society are attractive to a few, they alienated many would-be supporters. Most, to be sure, still find Sendero to be a strange, uncompromising, fanatical organization, but it seems to have broadened its message in recent years, has begun to carry this message to the public, and has made a clear effort to build a constituency among Peru's urban and rural poor, without compromising the group's internal integrity. All are accepted into the ranks of its supporters. Few become party activists and eventually party members. Sendero, in short, has attempted to retain its "vanguard" status while broadening its popular appeal and following. In doing so, it has grown stronger without diluting the commitment of its core membership or exposing the movement to undue internal pressure. Sendero's growth, in this respect, has been carefully managed.

As part of this program, Sendero as an organization appears to have made a concerted effort to bring its own excesses under control. It is still renowned for its brutality and its creative use of terror, but it is clearly more discriminating than during the early and mid-1980s. Terror, as Sendero has come to realize, can quickly become self-defeating. Alone, it has rarely led to a successful revolutionary outcome. Where it has been used effectively, it has been employed as a selective component in a larger strategy of insurrection.¹⁷ Successful guerrilla movements, as a simple matter of survival, characteristically behave well toward the civilian population. If they are to persevere, much less win, they will require the active assistance of the local peasantry for material support and intelligence, and as an aid to mobility and a base for recruitment. Although they may be able to seize much of this

¹⁶Guzman interview, pp. 14-16.

¹⁷See Johnson, 1982, pp. 149-150.

assistance at gunpoint in the short run, their longevity will ultimately depend upon the cooperation of a supportive populace. This factor, organizational maturity, and the opportunities that have been provided to exploit the indiscriminate actions of the military have resulted in a reduction in SL abuses against Sendero's constituency, something for which it was well-known only a few years ago.

Terror is still an important instrument in the movement's repertoire. It is simply applied more selectively today than in the recent past. APRA, the military, and the government are fair game, to be targeted by whatever means necessary. The movement has been particularly hard on local government officials and representatives of the central government living and working in the countryside. Through physical elimination and the force of example, Sendero is intent on destroying the government's rural infrastructure, once and for all. Where the Shining Path once used terror liberally to enforce obedience or unpopular "revolutionary reforms" in areas under its control, it now speaks to the need to institute required social changes through a process of community education. Those opposing this process, it is said, are given "a warning and an explanation" and the opportunity to engage in "self-criticism." Only those who fail to heed this warning, common criminals, or those whose attitudes, actions, or class loyalties threaten the movement and the revolution are subject to "liquidation."¹⁸ Discipline and procedure, it appears, have slowly begun to replace the unpredictable and frequently indiscriminate actions of the past, contributing to Sendero's efforts to extend and strengthen its rural support base. The government, rather than Sendero, is now seen to be the villain, a sentiment that SL is both encouraging and using actively to its political advantage.

In this way and in others, Sendero has proven to be an adaptable organization, a factor that will continue to allow it to make the most of Peru's current political and economic troubles. This also has become evident only since about 1985. Before that, Sendero appeared to be as operationally rigid as it was doctrinaire. It maintained a narrow range of support, possessed a limited tactical repertoire, and was able to operate from strength in only the central and southern sierra. The movement has matured considerably in the intervening years. With certain exceptions, notably its continuing antipathy toward Peru's "revisionist left," Sendero is avoiding the trap of permitting its ideological predilections to determine and limit the scope of its struggle. Sendero now seizes opportunities wherever it can find them, exploiting local grievances and traditions, finding common ground with those on the fringes of Peruvian society, offering an alternative and an

¹⁸Smith, 1989.

instrument of revenge to those who have been victimized by the system or its representatives, and in certain cases even providing a level of security and civil order that the central government has seldom provided. The Shining Path, arguably, is waging four different campaigns: the battle for the emergency zones, the campaign for the coca-producing Upper Huallaga Valley, the campaign for those areas of rural Peru that are not yet under military rule, and the battle for the cities. Each has required the movement to adopt a very different set of tactics and adapt to a different set of constraints. That it is doing so successfully, often in the face of strong government pressure, has made the Shining Path a formidable opponent.

Above all, the Shining Path is a patient organization. Its program is based on a long-range plan to seize power. It is interested in final victory, not in winning every battle along the way. Although the movement has a well-tuned sense for the dramatic, a characteristic that was certainly in evidence during some of its operations during the early 1980s, drama and imagery are used to calculated effect, to impress would-be supporters, to induce fear among the movement's adversaries, to remind the public that the group is capable of striking anywhere at any time, and to demonstrate that the government is incapable of controlling its growth. This feature of Sendero planning, while often touted by group spokesmen, is more than rhetoric. It is an essential characteristic of the movement's modus operandi and must be fully appreciated for what it implies about SL's ability to pose a long-run threat to Peru's political stability. Sendero's operations, while on the rise, are an expression of a much more extensive political network operating beneath the surface. It is this network rather than the movement's continuing attacks per se that will pose the greatest long-term danger to Peruvian democracy.

While the Shining Path enjoys certain advantages, it is also laboring under several potentially important limitations. For one thing, Sendero faces certain organizational difficulties, a situation that has been made worse by the group's dispersion and its rural environment. For reasons of security, Sendero, like most other clandestine groups, is organized along cellular lines. Authority on matters of ideology, policy, and strategy resides with Abimael Guzman and his inner circle, but the organization itself is highly compartmentalized. Decisions are made at the top and communicated downward to cells operating throughout the country. The difficulties associated with this process suggest that on a day-to-day basis, local cells or groups of cells are self-sustaining. One must presume that they operate autonomously, within established guidelines, and play a large role in setting their own tactical agenda. A structure of this nature, as time has shown, is difficult to defeat. It is

also, however, quite difficult to control. Sendero's loose organizational structure has made it difficult for the group to conduct coordinated operations at a national level unless they are carefully planned in advance. This has restricted the nature of the threat it is able to pose to the central government, which, for all of its various problems, is still better organized to conduct a national campaign than the Shining Path. Before Sendero is able to pose a direct threat to the regime, it will have to mold itself into a *national* force.

The group also has a long way to go before it is able to mobilize the numbers required to make a move against the central government. This complicated issue strikes at the heart of the question of how governments are overthrown, the circumstances under which this is possible, and the level and character of popular support required to carry such an action to a successful conclusion. Sendero, by its own assessment, is still in a building mode. The size of the organization and its support base are still far too small to risk exposing itself in an open attack against the government, even if the opportunity presented itself. One of the greatest stumbling blocks along the way will continue to be the problem that has confronted Sendero since 1980: how to transform a passive, often apathetic peasantry into an instrument of revolutionary change. Resentment and dissatisfaction do not translate into rebellion. Nor do peasant rebellions begin under conditions of complete impotence. Despite a tradition of neglect and exploitation at the hands of the central government, Peru's campesinos must still be galvanized into action. This has had to be carried out village by village, a slow and methodical process that has taken over ten years to reach the point it has today. Should this process continue at its present pace, it will take years more to complete. Sendero's great hope, in this respect, is a military takeover, or, barring that, a legally sanctioned campaign of counterterror that will polarize Peru and mobilize mass opposition to the regime.¹⁹

The final arbiter in the struggle for Peru, of course, will be the army. An insurrection, no matter how carefully prepared, will not succeed if it must stand up to a cohesive and capable professional military establishment. Insurgent bands are no match for professional troops if the former are forced to come out of hiding and challenge the latter on their own terms.²⁰ Before Sendero is ever able to contemplate making a final bid for power, it will be forced to do just this. At some juncture, therefore, the organization must be able to make the

¹⁹For a discussion of these problems see Migdal, 1974; and Skocpol, 1982, pp. 351-375.

²⁰Guzman interview, pp. 16-18.

transition from a guerrilla movement to a force capable of squaring off with the Peruvian armed forces. Revolutionary leaders, as Katherine Chorley has observed, have tended to consider this problem on an ad hoc basis. As a result, many insurrections that might otherwise have succeeded have died in their final, unprepared attempt to take the government. No matter what else might be said about Sendero's prospects, this will not be the case with Guzman, who has evidently already given a great deal of thought to how this final hurdle might be overcome successfully. His plan apparently involves building a core "main force" capable of waging a final war of maneuver, infiltrating and subverting the Peruvian army, and tying any final move against the capital with a general, popular insurrection. Although the groundwork for such a move is being laid, there is still much to be done on each of these fronts before Sendero is ready to act. This process, under the best of circumstances, will take years. It will also prove to be a difficult organizational task for a group that has operated under a very loose tactical chain of command and has seldom moved in units of over 100 men and women.²¹

Related to this will be the question of timing. When will Sendero be ready to strike and when will such a move be propitious? The "finishing touch" in the final conquest of Peru, Guzman has argued, will be "the insurrection." Sendero, he notes, is preparing for this day "in earnest," but the "main problem is timing the insurrection, choosing the right time." One theme that emerges clearly is the concern that events in Peru could come to a climax before Sendero is able to fully exploit them. Although it seems poised to pick up the pieces from an army-sponsored campaign of counterterror, it does not believe it is prepared to take advantage of a "spontaneous explosion" of public sentiment against the regime. Such an eventuality, in Guzman's view, is possible, but it would be dangerous, exposing Sendero networks to premature attack. With events in Peru deteriorating rapidly, Guzman is faced with the ironic task of attempting to keep a lid on the country's unstable political situation in an effort to buy the movement time to prepare for the final contest. Steadily mounting discontent will work to Sendero's advantage. A popular uprising that outpaced the group's ability to either exploit or control it would not. The fact that Guzman is concerned about such a possibility, rather than expressing simple satisfaction in the regime's falling fortunes, is a testament to his professionalism and the seriousness with which he is plotting the overthrow of the Peruvian government.²²

²¹*Armies and the Art of Revolution*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, p. 11.

²²Guzman interview, p. 16-19.

This raises a final point, which is the degree to which Sendero may be vulnerable to Abimael Guzman's death or capture. The Shining Path is, in many respects, a highly personalistic movement. Guzman has spoken out pointedly against those who have argued that Sendero is based on a cult of personality, but the movement is clearly a reflection of his personality, worldview, and idiosyncratic philosophy of revolution. Until recently, it appears that little effort had been made to institutionalize the decisionmaking process or hedge against the day when Guzman might pass from the scene. This has now begun to change (the stated purpose of Sendero's first party congress was to "institutionalize the thought of Comrade Gonzalo"). How far this process has progressed and to what degree it has resulted in a more robust organization are open questions. Guzman remains Sendero's chief theoretician and leading personality. In a very real sense it remains his organization. He is much more than the movement's founder and current head, he is its spiritual leader and guiding light. The risk this poses to Sendero's vitality in his absence is aggravated by its clandestine character, decentralization, and continuing problems of command and control. These factors have not been serious problems in the past, in part because of the bond that has been established between the movement's rank and file and the man and his image. Whether the organization could survive his death in its present form and configuration is an open question.

These factors may well place important constraints on where Sendero goes in the future, but they will have little or no bearing on the movement's immediate operational profile. The Shining Path is by now an established organization. Its size, level of popular support, area of operation, and ability to influence Peru's political future have also grown steadily. Attempts on the part of the Belaunde and Garcia governments to find common ground with the movement have not succeeded and can be expected to continue to fail. Its decentralized structure, while posing problems of communication and control, has also made it very difficult to contain and defeat. Even the eventual death or capture of Abimael Guzman, while conceivably crippling the movement in the long run, would not lead to the organization's immediate demise. As martyr or legend he could remain a force behind the scenes and an example to those who would succeed him for some time to come. Whether and when the movement will ever feel confident enough to make a bid for power is much more difficult to say. As with so much about the Shining Path, it will depend on variables that in the end we know little about.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Peru is facing a compound crisis, a condition from which it will be difficult if not impossible to recover without first undergoing a period of serious political unrest. This condition has been created by the confluence of three distinct but mutually influential trends: the collapse of the modern economic sector, the slow radicalization of Peruvian politics, and the escalating threat posed by the Shining Path. The first of these trends is manifest in an accelerating negative growth rate, hyperinflation, the depletion of the foreign reserve stock, and the highest per capita debt in Latin America. The second is revealed in President Garcia's most recent approval rating, now at less than 10 percent, and APRA's increasing illegitimacy, the poor institutionalization of Peru's alternative political parties, the absence of a strong centrist alternative to the present order, and the growing incidence of organized opposition to the current regime. The most serious problem, ultimately, is the threat posed by the Shining Path, indicated by the group's growing range of operations, its new-found ability to appeal to traditional elements of the legal left, and the government's apparent inability to stop it. These three trends have resulted in a situation that is more unstable and potentially explosive than the sum of its parts.

Sendero's effect on Peruvian society has been synergistic. The movement is by no means responsible for the country's present economic condition or even the current standing of the Garcia government, but it has made a bad situation worse. The cost of the guerrilla campaign in economic losses alone is estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$10 billion. Sendero has and will continue to force a diversion of increasingly scarce national resources, disrupt the rural economy, and contribute to the general decline in popular confidence in the country's economic future. Similarly, although the regime's low approval rating is due largely to its gross mismanagement of the economy, its inability to contain the escalating level of violence has contributed to its declining fortunes and the growth in political unrest. These problems have become mutually reinforcing. Sendero has not only contributed to the country's political and economic disintegration, this decline has provided the Shining Path with new backers, new issues, and a climate of discontent.

Sendero's prospects will continue to be tied closely to the fate of Peruvian democracy, the state of the economy, and popular expectations. Its prospects consequently look bright. The social and economic

tensions that have overtaken the country have pressured Peru's governing institutions to the breaking point and have led to a crisis of confidence among a diverse segment of the population. These problems have been a long time coming. Although the current regime or its successor, with international assistance, may well be in a position to influence the more egregious manifestations of this condition, any attempt to address its basis will be difficult and painful. Popular dissatisfaction with the present order will continue to mount. Most of the political pressure associated with this mood will remain diffuse or be safely channelled through the legal Left. Some of it will find an outlet in spontaneous demonstration. In other cases, those who find themselves outside of or abandoned by the system will turn to violence. This will work to Sendero's advantage, because it is making a clear effort to broaden its base of support.

The most important variable for the immediate future is whether the military will once again attempt to take over the reins of government. Given the country's turbulent political situation, growing tensions between the civil and military leaderships, the escalating level of guerrilla violence, the military's political tradition, and the certainty that conditions will become much worse in Peru before they get better, the real question is not whether there will be a coup but when. Although rumors of an impending takeover have so far been unfounded, elements of the military's leadership have undoubtedly considered such a move and are prepared to seize power if necessary. It is conceivable that President Garcia himself would welcome a coup, which would provide him with the opportunity to escape the difficult choices that currently face his administration and permit him to shift the blame for the country's coming collapse to the armed forces.

A coup would be an act of necessity rather than choice. The military has shown no real interest in returning to power. There is little public support for such a move; and the memory of its most recent tenure in office (1968-1980), which laid the foundation for many of the country's present economic difficulties, is still fresh. The military leadership is also aware that should it seize power it will be held responsible for the economic legacy of the current regime, risk losing what little support Peru still has within the international economic community, and shoulder the burden of any unpopular measures that will have to be taken to get the economy on its feet again. These concerns, while a deterrent, will not keep the army from moving against the government should the threat posed by the Shining Path continue to escalate or should the regime prove incapable of controlling the growing level of popular unrest. The military correctly considers itself to be the ultimate defender of the state rather than any particular form

of government or administration, duly elected or not. Should the Garcia government or its successor be perceived to have placed the state in jeopardy, or the country is seen to be slipping into chaos, the military can be expected to make its move.

Should the army eventually seize power, it could well do so with some measure of (reluctant) popular support, notably from among the country's small elite and middle class. If the choice is between law and order under military rule or escalating social and political upheaval, many will opt for a military takeover. A coup could result in an immediate crackdown on public demonstrations and a stepped up, unrestrained campaign against the Shining Path. Organized violence would drop as anyone remotely suspected of having guerrilla ties was rounded up by the authorities. However, such a program would be likely to undermine its own objectives through the polarization of Peruvian society. The military, without options and easily frustrated, could be expected to respond with a campaign of counterterror. The regime, would find itself locked in a cycle of decline. The army's counterterror campaign would almost certainly generate its own violent reaction which would, in turn, require and justify a further wave of repression. Support for the regime would continue to diminish as the list of real and imagined enemies of the state continued to grow. The result would be an increase rather than a decrease in political violence and an increase in popular support for the armed opposition, including Sendero.

To succeed, the army would have to kill or incarcerate SL members and sympathizers faster than they could form. Such a campaign, whatever its ethical objections, is probably beyond the army's ability to carry out. The military, for one thing, would have to direct its effort against individuals rather than the organization, for which it has very little information. Although such an approach might reap certain rewards in the cities, where Sendero has proven to be most vulnerable to government efforts to penetrate its low-level apparatus, it can be expected to fail completely in the countryside, where the army will face the same intelligence, logistical, and operational constraints it does today, plus being forced to operate in a hostile political environment. The Shining Path has also proven to be resilient. Although it would certainly suffer losses in any government campaign, it will be capable of replacing them as long as its organizational structure is intact, its core leadership survives, and it retains its rural base. If, as I have suggested, the movement's political network is far more extensive than the number of its attacks might indicate, Sendero is likely already to have the necessary organizational base to embrace those who would be pushed into its arms by an officially sponsored program of counterterror.

An event of this nature could push Peru into a crisis slide from which it could take many years to recover. If the military's counterterror campaign were pushed to its logical conclusion and Sendero proves to be as resilient and adaptive as suggested here, it could also end in a guerrilla victory. Political polarization, while a crisis in its own right, would exacerbate an already disastrous economic situation and play into the hands of the Shining Path. Each of these trends could be expected to feed on the others at an accelerating rate until Peru is driven into the grip of a self-reinforcing process of social and political disintegration. In these circumstances the government will have lost control over its future. Its own policy of political repression will have contributed directly and indirectly to the crisis.

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