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**SENDERO LUMINOSO: A FAILED REVOLUTION IN PERU?**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Peru has been the battleground for a bloody and violent internal revolution for the past two decades. With Peru's history of military dominance and coup d' etat, widespread poverty, and an ethnically divided population, a breeding ground was ripe for revolution. One revolutionary movement has continuously fought the ruling democratic governments in Lima since 1980. The Partido Comunista del Peru en el Sendero Luminoso de Mariategui - Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariategui is a rural-based guerrilla movement seeking to overthrow the ruling government in Lima. The United States Department of State has classified the Sendero as the most violent, vindictive, and elusive terrorist organization in the Western Hemisphere.

The study examines the impact of a rural-based revolutionary movement on a democracy using Peru as the case study. The thesis of the research is that the Sendero Luminoso has been strategically defeated in Peru despite the fact the conditions for insurgency remain.



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## INTRODUCTION

Our revolution will not be an imitation or copy, but a heroic creation. We shall Peruvianize Peru.<sup>1</sup>

— Jose Carlos Mariategui

Peru has been the battleground for a bloody and violent internal revolution for the past two decades. With Peru's history of military dominance and coup d' etat, widespread poverty, and an ethnically divided population, a breeding ground was ripe for revolution. One revolutionary movement has continuously fought the ruling democratic governments in Lima since 1980. The Partido Comunista del Peru en el Sendero Luminoso de Mariategui - Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariategui (henceforth addressed as Sendero Luminoso or Sendero) is a rural-based guerrilla movement seeking to overthrow the ruling government in Lima. The United States Department of State has classified the Sendero as the most violent, vindictive, and elusive terrorist organization in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>2</sup>

In this study I will examine the impact of a rural-based revolutionary movement on a democracy using Peru as the case study. The thesis of my research is that the Sendero Luminoso has been strategically defeated in Peru despite the fact that the conditions for insurgency remain.

The Sendero evolved in a poor region of Peru, a historically exploited Indian population, an increasingly isolated university,

and a charismatic intellectual and tactical leader.<sup>3</sup> The Sendero is unique and contradictory in many ways. The movement gained strength during a period of agrarian reform in the late 1970s, which in theory would undermine a peasant revolution. After 12 years of military rule, the Sendero initiated active attacks on the government, following national elections in 1980. Despite their Maoist theory of revolution, the Sendero attack the peasants, which form the grassroots support for their movement, just as ruthlessly as they attack the government.

Structurally, this paper initially examines the conditions for insurgency in Peru, explaining a revolutionary theory somewhat unique to Peru, and presenting the Sendero as the vanguard of insurgency and peasant mobilization. Chapter Two examines the role of the military in Peru and explores the rise in effectiveness and importance of the police forces in fighting the insurgency. Chapter Three analyzes the role of the presidents in Peru, their methods and style of governance, efforts in combating the Sendero, and the impact the Sendero had upon their respective administrations. The concluding chapter examines the strategic defeat of the Sendero while the conditions, which gave rise to the insurgency, still remain. The paper also speculates about future prospects for the Sendero and its rural-based revolution.

## BIRTH OF A REVOLUTION

Many people pin their hopes on the idea that somehow the social, economic, and political problems that face nations can only be resolved by revolution. The motivation for a quick and dramatic transformation is born out of an acute sense that things have gone desperately wrong and that continuing on the present course is insane.<sup>4</sup> This buildup of frustration can be linked to the relative deprivation of a class of people. The conditions of the Indians in the southern highlands in Peru in the 1960s and 1970s have changed little over the past decades. The Indians earned little cash, existed without many basic human services, and died young. Hunger was a continuing problem as the population increased, land availability remained constant, land quality decreased, and there was little market for their crops. Even mass migrations to the cities have done little to ease these problems as many of the best workers left.

Military directed land reform in 1969 brought little change to the highlands. The landed elite lost its properties due to a 30-hectare limit on holdings and most left for the cities. The vacuum of what little organization the hacienda owners did provide was filled by government personnel who did not speak Quechua, lacked adequate funding, and had little infrastructure to support their official activities.<sup>5</sup> The military regime distributed resources and rewards to those Peruvians able to make their demands heard.<sup>6</sup> The illiterate and politically non-

participating Indians were left out. In other words, the white and mestizo benefited, the Indians did not.

In 1980, democratic legitimacy strengthened as Peru's illiterates voted for the first time in modern history. The prospect for a better life increased in the highlands. In the next few years, a severe national austerity program eased the crisis in Peru's international finances and the economy was growing. However, foreign debt payments required more than one half of export earnings, inflation was high, and less than half of the labor force was fully employed. In the countryside, this translated into widespread malnutrition, dramatic increases in poverty-related diseases, and a sharp rise in infant mortality.<sup>7</sup>

The conditions, which favored the Sendero's growth, especially in poor marginal areas in the swelling cities and the vast parts of the countryside where there is minimal state presence, remain virtually unchanged. Economic policies are having a positive impact and have improved the overall national economy. The table below shows Peruvian economic growth in the 1990s as compared to the previous decade.

Table One: Economic Growth

| CUMULATIVE GROWTH<br>GDP per capita <sup>8</sup> |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1981 - 1990<br>(percent)                         | 1991 - 1997<br>(percent) |
| -28.9                                            | +26.0                    |

However, poverty is greater in Peru than would be expected based on the country's average income per capita. This is an expression of the unequal distribution of income and wealth. Peru's economy has improved, but only to the middle and upper class. The much-touted economic improvements made by current President Alberto Fujimori have had little impact on most Peruvians' lives. The table below shows the conditions that fostered revolution in the highlands remain. Moreover, conditions have deteriorated in the cities where many Peruvians have relocated to the shantytowns.

Table Two: Urban and Rural Poverty

| THE POOR IN PERU <sup>9</sup>     |       |       |                                     |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Households below poverty line (%) |       |       | Households below indigence line (%) |       |
|                                   | Urban | Rural | Urban                               | Rural |
| 1970                              | 28    | 68    | 8                                   | 39    |
| 1979                              | 35    | 65    | 12                                  | 37    |
| 1986                              | 45    | 64    | 16                                  | 39    |
| 1992                              | 45    | 64    | na                                  | na    |

Conditions remain dismal for the poor. Both the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the World Bank define two levels of poverty: one for tightly restricted income called extreme poverty or indigence and the other for poverty in a less extreme sense. Indigence refers to income so low that it does not provide adequate nutrition even if income was entirely spent on food. Poverty in the less extreme sense is defined as a great proportion of income spent on nutrition.

Moreover, the money the government did spend on services decreased throughout the decade. Lima focused what efforts it could in the cities where the majority of the voting Peruvians lived. The table below shows that despite the economic growth, social spending for education, healthcare, and housing decreased.

Table Three: Social Spending

| <b>Social Spending per capita (1985 dollars)<sup>10</sup></b> |           |           |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sectors                                                       | 1980-1981 | 1982-1989 | 1990-1993 |
| Education                                                     | 25.9      | 23.9      | 10.0      |
| Health                                                        | 9.1       | 8.1       | 3.4       |
| Housing                                                       | 2.7       | 0.9       | 0.1       |

Since the government initiated these changes that only worsened the conditions in the highlands, many peasants viewed Lima as the cause of their problems. The peasants' feeling that they lacked any control over the economic and political operations that dominated their lives increased their overall frustration with the existing system. This frustration is caused by the relative deprivation as defined as "the perceived discrepancy between value expectations and the value capabilities".<sup>11</sup> The frustration-aggression hypothesis proposes that people who are frustrated are more likely to respond aggressively than if they were not frustrated.<sup>12</sup> This increase in the probability of aggression can be expressed by political violence. In the case of Peru, this presents a class of people, the Indians, who were ripe for revolution. They had a

revolutionary potential based on relative deprivation that only needed a direction or vanguard to unite them.

The Sendero Luminoso sees itself as the vanguard of the revolution in Peru. The vanguard provides a conscious direction and a unified core that can rapidly make decisions and ensure they are implemented.<sup>13</sup> The Sendero has its roots in the university system, as do many revolutionary movements. The social base of many Latin American guerrillas is constituted from the youth of the administrative class. For the most part, these individuals are educated persons without independent means and in need of employment.<sup>14</sup> The lack of prosperity and economic depression can ignite student activism mainly due to a fear of future unemployment. This is what occurred in the southern highlands.

The National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga was reopened in Ayacucho in 1959 after having been closed for over 70 years. The university was much different from others in Peru in that it had neither a law nor medical school and Quechua was the required language. The majority of the students who attended the university also came from the area. They were greatly influenced by the faculty at the university.

The leader of the Sendero Luminoso is Abimael Guzman Reinoso who is also known by a nom de guerre as Comrade Gonzalo. Guzman left his native Arequipa (Peru's second largest city) in 1961 to teach philosophy at the University of Huamanga. An avowed

Marxist, the then 31-year old professor soon attracted a devoted cadre of disciples among students and faculty at the university.<sup>15</sup> Guzman was a member of a number of Marxist and Maoist factions until he separated from the Maoist Red Flag movement in 1970. He claimed the Lima Maoists were insincere in the call for armed struggle and declared they favored the city while scorning the countryside.<sup>16</sup>

The school served as the starting point for Guzman to form the Sendero Luminoso. As graduates returned or moved to the peasant communities, they became an integral part of the communities. They married local women and became part of the extended family (comunidad). The lack of employment opportunities drew more students and graduates to the Sendero as the economic conditions of the area worsened.

Guzman had a unique approach in relating to the non-university peasant of the area. The peasants of the southern highlands are Quechua-speaking ancestors of the Inca empire which was centered in Peru. The peasants have a common and unique set of religious beliefs comprised of a mix of Catholicism and native Andean mythology. The mythological element of their religion view change as the outcome of abrupt, decisive events led by a messiah figure.<sup>17</sup> Guzman fits the mold of a messiah figure in that he comes from a different social background and is better educated than the rest of the revolutionary group.<sup>18</sup>

The Sendero Luminoso is strongly influenced by a Peruvian nationalist-Marxist model for revolution developed by Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930). Though he died before developing his ideas fully, Mariategui believed Peru could achieve a revolution from the countryside to the cities. According to Mariategui, the establishment of a national identity based on race, culture, and social structure of the Incas could only be achieved through revolutionary Marxism. He sought to formulate an indigenous brand of socialism based on the ancient pre-Columbian Indian communal land tenure system.<sup>19</sup> Mariategui believed the masses needed the guidance and heroic leadership of a small band of revolutionaries.

In the Maoist tradition, revolution can only be achieved by progressing through necessary stages. In 1971, Guzman outlined his plans. After nine years of preparation, a limited armed struggle would begin using terrorism to obtain arms and gain publicity. Two years later, Sendero would initiate a prolonged popular guerrilla war in the rural areas and increase sabotage in the cities. The peasant army would then encircle the cities and engage the conventional forces of the government.<sup>20</sup> Lima, as the capital and economic center of Peru, was the principal objective in Guzman's plan.

The Sendero, serving as the vanguard of revolution, used the relative deprivation of the Indians and combined this with traditional Incan mythology, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and

nationalistic revolution of Mariategui to form a unique ideology to unite the Indian peasants in a cause for revolution.

Although estimates vary widely, the Sendero is believed to have grown from about 100 militants in 1980 to 3,000 to 10,000 by 1988, to 3,000 to 4,000 armed cadres, as many as 10,000 militants, and some 50,000 premilitants (sympathizers and occasional contributors or members of front organizations) by mid-1992.<sup>21</sup> Despite its roots and ideology, in reality the Sendero is not a peasant organization. It recruits from the peasantry, and many of its activists and sympathizers are indeed landless peasants and workers. Nevertheless, at least 50 percent of Sendero's armed columns come from the social class whose parents are small landowners in the highland provinces of Peru.<sup>22</sup>

In May 1980, in accordance with the plan Guzman made in 1971, Sendero began attacks on symbols representing the bourgeois state. Police posts, public buildings, power lines, and any government-associated facility were attacked. Dynamite was readily available because of widespread mining in Peru and became the weapon of choice. In many instances, traditional Incan slingshots were used to fling dynamite in their attacks. Dead dogs, a traditional Incan warning, were hung from light poles forewarning of a Sendero attack. By May 1983, the Sendero had widened their attack to several highland departments and began blacking out Lima by destroying the electrical pylons leading to the city. By 1985, Lima declared the Sendero entrenched in 19

of the country's 23 departments. The Sendero continued to expand toward the cities and over the next several years had a widespread presence in the shantytowns surrounding Lima.

### **COMBATING INSURGENCY: THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE**

The military establishment has played an active role in many Latin American countries from the days of Simon Bolivar. Only in the last decades have many countries moved from military dictatorships to various forms of democracy. With a recent history of military rule (1968-1980), Peru is no different. The military is still deeply entrenched in the political system in Peru and has played some differing roles in combating the Sendero.

The Constitution of 1979 states that the role of the military is to protect and defend the country from external threats. The Constitution also provides that the armed forces assume responsibility for internal order under extraordinary circumstances.<sup>23</sup> While this is not too much different from the oath taken in the U.S. military to "support and defend the Constitution of the U.S. against all enemies foreign and domestic", in Peru, the domestic enemies pose a much greater threat than do neighboring South American countries. This constitutional edict also potentially provides the military with a convenient excuse to set aside a president, if extraordinary circumstances exist. This places the President in a position to

appease the military as discussed in a later section. There are many reasons why the military can almost be considered a subsociety within the Peru. They are set apart from other social classes as a powerful special interest elite with its own allegiances, identity, and missions. An elaborate infrastructure exists with exclusive services, beach resorts and hotels, housing, casinos, and schools.

The Peruvian joint service military college, called the Centro de Altos Estudios Militares (CAEM), is equivalent to the U.S. Army War College. The curriculum of the CAEM includes instruction in comparative political, social, and economic systems in the context of national development.<sup>24</sup> Further emphasis is placed on applying these studies to the wide range of social problems that confront Peru. The officers leave this school with a belief the state must take an activist role in overcoming crisis and if as a consequence of manifest failure of the civilian politicians, it is proper and necessary that the military should accept a primary role in the modernization process.<sup>25</sup> The civilian leadership of Peru is well aware of the constant presence of the military and their history of national leadership.

The officer class is recruited predominantly from men who come from middle-class backgrounds. While the middle class represents only ten percent of the population, seventy-five percent of the officers are born into the middle class.<sup>26</sup> The

sons of wealthy businessmen, large landowners, and prestigious professionals are not especially attracted to the military as a career. Given their social, financial, and educational advantages, they can confidently expect to attain more lucrative positions in the civilian sector. The Military Academy offers free higher education leading to a respectable profession, and many impoverished but good middle class fathers found this an acceptable route for their sons.<sup>27</sup> These officers come from both the cities and the rural parts of the country. A commission is generally considered a means of enhancing their economic standing and constitutes a step up on the mobility ladder. To fight against their own people, against men who are sparsely armed and trained, as are the Sendero's peasant supporters, impinges upon their professional standing, martial qualities, and heroic officer image.<sup>28</sup> Regarding the Sendero, officers were concerned that the disorderly policies of the civilian government would require them to demean themselves to act as policemen.

With this concern, the government initially sent units of specially trained police called *sinchis*, rather than the military, to fight the Sendero in the early 1980s. Lima continued to classify the Sendero as terrorists, and thus used police forces as their primary counter-terrorist force. The *sinchis* were ill-equipped and ill-trained to fight the Sendero and only made matters worse by acts of indiscriminate violence, insensitivity to the peasants' needs, and wanton behavior.<sup>29</sup>

The Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the police forces, then created a specialized counterintelligence service (DIRCOTE) in the mid-1980s, and gave it the autonomy necessary to pursue its counter-Sendero activities. This small organization had fewer than one hundred individuals and did tedious intelligence gathering, working totally out of the limelight of the military and more importantly, the country's National Intelligence Service (SIN).<sup>30</sup> The SIN was a grouping formed from the intelligence units of the military services.

One success was the formation of a civil defense organization called the Rondas Campesinas. Originally formed to stop cattle rustlers, this organization was controversial due to the risk of providing arms and training to peasants.<sup>31</sup> The Rondas helped the military by providing intelligence on the Sendero in their area and helping to defend their communities, which had limited police presence. Many analysts attribute the successes of the Rondas as forcing the Sendero to move into the cities before conditions were ready, according to Guzman's original plan. The Rondas also helped reestablish the sense of comunidad, which the Sendero had fractured in many areas.

The military always remained poised to assume control of the country should the insurgency begin to make significant advances or should the economic situation become too bleak. This is the same group that for thirty years was Peru's major trustee of a failed political philosophy of economic nationalism and

failed political philosophy of economic nationalism and protectionism. There were undoubtedly those in the military whose lust for power and personal ambitions hinged on the failure of the government to control the insurgency. This was particularly true of those members of the military who, crouching in the Intelligence Service, were reportedly planning their grab for power.<sup>32</sup> The creation of the DIRCOTE separated the military from certain aspects of the counterinsurgency effort, which was placed under the more politically reliable police forces.

The DIRCOTE enjoyed only marginal successes in the late 1980s mainly due to a shortage of equipment and personnel. The DIRCOTE efforts were geared toward intelligence work to attack key nodes of the Sendero as opposed to the widespread repressive tactics used by the military. This angered presidential advisor Vladimiro Montesinos, the de facto head of the SIN, who favored the repressive tactics. As a result of the tension, the DIRCOTE's budget was reduced despite the fact the police were already showing signs of efficiency.<sup>33</sup> The DIRCOTE also has a reputation for avoiding what are known in Peru as "scientific interrogation" techniques used by the military. Its successes were due mainly to its reliance on investigative procedures such as following Sendero visitors back from prison visits, sifting through trash, and networking. They also had a reputation for refusing to take bribes, an uncommon occurrence in many parts of Peruvian police forces.<sup>34</sup>

As the organization became better trained and obtained better equipment, the unit (now renamed DINCOTE) achieved its first major success in mid-1992. The DINCOTE raided a college in Lima and captured several members of Sendero's Central Committee, who were in charge of logistics for the entire organization. They also confiscated several of its computers and dozens of diskettes loaded with Sendero files. As Guzman himself admitted later, this was a stunning blow to the Sendero.<sup>35</sup>

The Sendero then stepped up its attacks in mid-1992. In that period, the Sendero exploded 22 car bombs, caused over 1000 casualties, paralyzed Lima with an "armed strike" of 7000 public buses, and began the use of truck bombs. These truck bombs destroyed a Lima television station (Channel 2), destroyed a bridge on the Central Highway, and were detonated in middle class neighborhoods, which spread terror throughout Lima.<sup>36</sup>

On 12 September 1992, the DINCOTE had its own shining moment with the arrest of Abimael Guzman by police in Lima. Agents from DINCOTE raided a modern two-story building in a middle class district after discovering medicine for psoriasis, the skin disease from which Guzman suffers, and cigarette stubs from a brand known favored by him in the rubbish.<sup>37</sup> Equally telling were chicken bones, for Guzman was reportedly fond of roast chicken. It was the most telling blow against the Sendero in the twelve years of the armed revolution.

### THREE PRESIDENTS AGAINST THE SENDERO

The elected civilian governments responded to the revolutionary and terrorist threats in different ways. President Belaunde (1980-1985) was more concerned with getting democracy going again after the twelve-year military regime than he was with the then highland-isolated Sendero Luminoso. In fact, the Belaunde administration did not take the increasing violent group seriously for almost three years. The President repeatedly asserted that the Sendero had foreign support and advisors, and was even directed from abroad.<sup>38</sup> As the attacks became more prevalent and publicized only then did the government declare Ayacucho an emergency zone. This was the first instance where the government recognized the Sendero as revolutionary guerrillas rather than terrorists. The significance of this government announcement was that it legitimized the Sendero with a revolutionary status.

As attacks expanded beyond what the sinchis could respond to, the military was called in to quell the uprising. The Sendero increasingly attacked all symbols of the government. They intended to destroy the legitimacy of the government by exposing its failure to protect the peasants and provide services. The Sendero also expanded operations near Lima, consistently destroying power transmission lines and blacking out the capital. This provoked the military into forceful counterattacks on the Sendero in the now expanded emergency

zones. The military did gain some success in disrupting the Sendero organizations in communities. However, there are many examples of military abuses of the largely Indian population.

In spite of promises to combine military actions with economic aid, Lima was not very forthcoming in practice. General Adrian Huaman, a Quechua-speaking native who was chief of the Ayacucho emergency zone in 1984, protested repeatedly that he was unable to win the war with the guerrillas because the promised economic assistance still had not arrived. After going public with his concerns, he was almost immediately removed from his post.<sup>39</sup> This shows that the government had a legitimate plan for fighting the Sendero with a combination of the military and economic measures to undermine the basis for the insurgency, but the economic portions of the plan were not funded.

In many ways, Peru's economy undermined the efforts at thwarting the fledgling insurgency. Belaunde attempted to deal with pent-up political demands following twelve years of military rule by appealing to the upper class to return their investment portfolios to Peru and arranging for foreign loans to underwrite his regime's projects. Crop and infrastructure damage caused by El Nino, low international prices for Peru's mineral exports, and Sendero attacks greatly increased Peru's foreign debt, prompting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to impose domestic spending restrictions on Peru as a condition for further funding.

Although the government committed to sending economic aid, little was actually provided. By the end of the Belaunde administration over 6000 Peruvians had perished in the violence, human rights violations had skyrocketed, and over \$1 billion in property damaged had occurred.<sup>40</sup> In addition, an urban-based guerrilla movement, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (named after an eighteenth century Indian leader), had begun attacks in Lima. The rise of insurgencies and economic hardships led to a change of political leadership in the 1985 elections.

The election of thirty-six year old Alan Garcia was noteworthy. For the first time in forty years, an elected civilian president handed over power to an elected successor. Garcia's forceful, nationalistic leadership initially put the international banking community on notice that Peru would be limiting repayments on its debt to 10 percent of export earnings. This contributed to long overdue domestic economic growth rates of 9 percent in 1985 and 7 percent in 1986. But the recovery ran out of steam in 1987, and the economy was further shaken by the surprise presidential announcement nationalizing domestic banks.<sup>41</sup> Inflation skyrocketed to 4-digit levels for the next three years.

Garcia's efforts at combating the Sendero were much different than his predecessor. Garcia emphasized respect for human rights by the military and police forces, an anticorruption campaign, a commission to open dialogue with the Sendero,

economic aid, and agricultural incentives.<sup>42</sup> There were measurable successes on all areas as corrupt police and military were weeded out, the commission was exploring alternatives, and several hundred million dollars were put into the region.

The Sendero responded to Garcia's peace initiatives with a dramatic spread in incidents in Lima, increased assassinations of government officials, and even an abortive attempt on Garcia himself. A prison revolt by captured Senderos was brutally repressed by the government and was condemned by human rights advocates worldwide. The government response was a dramatic shift from its early efforts. The new anti-guerrilla policy was the old Belaunde anti-guerrilla policy: military repression. Agricultural credits were virtually eliminated and the emergency zone provinces more than doubled.

Corruption and mismanagement by the Garcia administration led to a sharp deterioration of state institutions' capability to provide services and of the public's confidence in government. Garcia was widely discredited for his inability to quell the Sendero. The IMF also had declared Peru ineligible for further international loans. By the end of the Garcia administration in 1990, casualties had exceeded 20,000 and damage related to the insurgency exceeded \$14 billion. The foreign debt had exceeded \$23 billion.<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, Garcia's popularity plummeted to record low levels. Never were the conditions more indicative of the military stepping in. While rumors abounded of a possible

coup, military spokesmen committed their institutions to upholding civilian rule.

Both the Belaunde and Garcia presidencies began very positively: economic growth characterized the first two years, followed by decline and crisis. The Sendero Luminoso was a significant mitigating factor in the demise of both of these administrations by causing the government to focus resources on the insurgency instead of the economy. Damage to the infrastructure and businesses, increased military spending, and a fear by international investors all hindered economic progress. Public support for the incumbent has followed the same pattern: it begins high and then the public turns for a political alternative in each of the three successive presidential elections. The Fujimori presidency followed a different course.

The buildup of popular frustration with the previous administrations and politics as usual in Peru led to the stunning election of a political newcomer as President in the 1990 elections. National Agrarian University Rector Alberto Fujimori came from less than a 2 or 3 percent position in the polls a month before the election to an easy victory in a runoff election.<sup>44</sup> Once in office, Fujimori reversed his campaign stances and launched immediately into an economic shock program even more severe than proposed by the other candidates. The economy responded and slowly recovered but not before several million more Peruvians were pushed below the poverty line.

The Sendero continued its advances into the shantytowns surrounding Lima. As the economic conditions deteriorated for the poor, the Sendero began speaking of all-out victory before the end of the decade. Under Fujimori's authoritarian leadership, the military control over the counterinsurgency intensified, prompting further claims against the government's human rights record. Fujimori was increasingly intolerant of democratic checks and balances.<sup>45</sup>

Still everyone throughout Latin America was shocked when Fujimori's authoritarian tendencies culminated in a coup de main in April 1992. While the concern always existed about the military, Fujimori's dissolution of the Congress, Constitution, and Judiciary, and concentrating all the state's powers in his hands was a complete surprise. The immediate reactions were mixed. Popular support for Fujimori in Peru surged to almost 80 percent in some polls. Internationally, most governments suspended their economic assistance programs and the IMF suspended an almost \$3 billion package.<sup>46</sup> The United States immediately suspended all assistance except counterdrug and humanitarian.

Fujimori allowed elections in November of 1992 for a smaller one house Congress. The traditional political parties were marginalized in this reworking of the electoral process, thus giving Fujimori a congressional majority. These weakened political parties gave the Sendero new opportunities, which they

used by increasing recruitment and sustaining their attacks in Lima.

The dramatic capture of Guzman in Lima gave the government a badly needed psychological boost. Within weeks, some three hundred other important Sendero leaders had been captured, tried, and sentenced under new, stricter guidelines implemented by Fujimori.<sup>47</sup> Over the next 18 months, over 3,600 guerrillas were captured or turned themselves in.<sup>48</sup> The momentum of the conflict had definitely shifted to the government. President Fujimori declared that terrorism would end in Peru by 1995. Fujimori's popularity had never been higher. Some observers argue that the root of Fujimori's popular support is his authoritarianism, which they say is essentially a reflection of the authoritarianism inherent in Peruvian society.<sup>49</sup>

### **DEMOCRACY DEFEATED?**

The steady increase in the scope and intensity of Sendero attacks in the early 1990s led many observers to argue what had once been considered unthinkable, that a Maoist organization appeared on the verge of overthrowing a government in the late twentieth century. In the summer of 1992, businesses were preparing to close and people were leaving the country and taking their money. If the Sendero had maintained the pressure, the state would have been at the Sendero's mercy.<sup>50</sup> A planned Sendero offensive against Lima in October 1992 would have created

generalized fear as well as potential chaos and ungovernability. Whether the Sendero would have simply overthrown the Fujimori government or the military forced to step in remains an unknown.

It is unlikely that the Sendero would have taken power in Peru. Peruvians have become used to democracy since 1980. Sendero would be unlikely to win in the ballot box, no matter how desperate conditions became. The fact remains that despite the multitude of problems that face Peru, the Sendero does not offer the majority of the people of Peru an acceptable form of government. A move to an indigenous form of socialism based on a communal land tenure system would unlikely be accepted in Peru, in Latin American, or in most of the world community.

Even if the Sendero had seized power, any successes would have likely been short-lived. The military was too well armed. The potential resulting chaos under Sendero rule could possibly be comparable to that in Cambodia under the infamous Pol Pot. Many Western Hemisphere countries would feel pressured to initiate a peacemaking operation not only to stop any carnage in Peru but also to halt any regional destabilization caused by the spread of any similar revolutionary movements in their countries.

The capture and subsequent exploitation of Guzman was the turning point in the insurgency. Without the charismatic and near mythical Guzman, the Sendero lost much of its luster. Guzman's capture probably means the end of the Sendero as we know it.

Guzman has been both the head and body of the revolution and has been given semi-divine status by many of the Sendero.

Fujimori has allowed Guzman to write and speak from prison where he is serving a life sentence without parole. Guzman, in both letters and video, has recognized the authority of Fujimori and called for peace talks. The ultimate goal of this tactic by the Peruvian government was to divide and weaken the guerrilla organization by sowing dissension among the Sendero militants and getting many to abandon the armed struggle.

The Sendero Luminoso temporarily ended democracy in Peru. The Sendero revolution resulted in a coup in the form of a civilian dictator heading a military power apparatus. Fujimori provides a barely credible front, representing the semblance of democracy, so Peru can maintain ties to Latin America and reap the benefits of being a democracy in the Western Hemisphere. Fujimori is also vulnerable not to the Sendero, but to the monolithic military in Peru. The electorate voted for Fujimori in 1995 because they felt he had effectively resolved the country's two central problems: hyperinflation and guerrilla violence.<sup>51</sup> However, the underlying social problems remain with more than 85 percent of Peruvians either underemployed or unemployed. Lima's own figures show two of every three Peruvians live in what they define as critical poverty.<sup>52</sup>

The Sendero has not disappeared. The conditions for revolution remain. There has been no general retreat following

the capture of Guzman. Oscar Ramirez Durand, known as Comrade Feliciano, is the new leader of the non-imprisoned Sendero. At the time of Guzman's capture, Feliciano was the third member of the Sendero politburo and was in charge of military operations.<sup>53</sup> Guzman is critical of Feliciano as not being able to adapt to new problems or new directions. This criticism is viewed as either a smokescreen to allow the Sendero to regroup or the inability of Guzman to accept that he is no longer the leader of the Sendero Luminoso, which he founded 25 years ago.

As stated earlier, it is unlikely the Sendero will ever gain control of Peru. However, the Sendero has brought down two administrations and caused a coup by the third. Under Feliciano, the Sendero has reaffirmed its ideological commitment to popular war, has regrouped, and presents a persistent danger to Peru. Unless Lima is willing to confront the real challenges that persist and offer meaningful solutions to people's daily problems, Peru will remain ripe for revolutionary movements. The Sendero may become an example of what is now termed as "chronic insurgency".<sup>54</sup>

In the beginning, the Sendero Luminoso spoke sagely of a struggle that might take generations and calling forth images of the millenarian patience of the peasantry. The Sendero says they are in no hurry.<sup>55</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Baines, Revolution in Peru: Mariategui and the Myth (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1972) p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriela Tarazona-Sevillano, Sendero Luminoso and the Threat of Narcoterrorism (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1990) p. 133 as quoted from the 1989 "US State Department Report on Terrorism" (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989)

<sup>3</sup> David Scott Palmer, "The Sendero Luminoso in Rural Peru", Latin American Insurgencies, ed. Georges Fauriol, (Georgetown: Georgetown University Center for Strategic Studies and the National Defense University, 1985) p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Jon P. Gunneman, The Moral Meaning of Revolution (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979) p. 260.

<sup>5</sup> Palmer, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Lowenthal, "Peru's Ambiguous Revolution", Foreign Affairs (July 1974) P. 807.

<sup>7</sup> David Werlich, "Peru: The Shadow of the Shining Path", Current History (February 1984) p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and William C. Smith, ed., Latin America in the World Economy (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996) p. 24 and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Preliminary Overview of the Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean 1997 (Santiago, Chile: UN Publications, 1997) p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> James L. Dietz, Latin America's Economic Development: Confronting Crisis (Bolder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995) p. 77 and Victor Bulmer-Thomas, The New Economic Model in Latin America and its Impact on Income Distribution and Poverty (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) p. 317.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Social Panorama of Latin America, 1994 edition, p. 165-166.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Salert, Revolutions and Revolutionaries (New York: Elsevier, 1976) p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> This frustration-aggression hypothesis is proposed by Ted Gurr in his Handbook Of Political Conflict: Theories and Research (New York: Free Press, 1980)

<sup>13</sup> William H. Friedland, ed., Revolutionary Theory (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982) p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> Ernst Halperin, "Terrorism in Latin America", The Washington Papers (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishers, 1976) P. 81.

<sup>15</sup> Werlich, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p, 81.

<sup>17</sup> Gunneman, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Baines, pp. 3, 7, and 128.

<sup>20</sup> Werlich, p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> David Scott Palmer, "The Revolutionary Terrorism of Peru's Shining Path", Terrorism in Context, ed. Martha Crenshaw, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) p. 270 from his interviews with foreign service officers of the US Embassy in Peru's political section, 29 June and 13-14 July 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Max G. Manwaring, "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons" The Annals of the American Academy (September 1995) p. 160.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Nyrop, ed., Peru: A Country Study (Washington DC: US Government Press, 1981) p. xxxiii.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham Lowenthal, ed., Armies and Politics in Latin America (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976) p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Claude E. Welch, Jr. and Arthur K. Smith, Military Role and Rule (MA: Duxburg Press, 1974) p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> Irving Horowitz, Elites in Latin America (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) p. xxi.

<sup>27</sup> Luigi Einaudi, The Peruvian Military: A Summary Political Analysis (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1969) P. 5.

- <sup>28</sup> Welch and Smith, p. 55.
- <sup>29</sup> Palmer, "Peru's Shining Path" p. 293.
- <sup>30</sup> David Scott Palmer, ed., The Shining Path of Peru (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) p. 270
- <sup>31</sup> Comments from Dr. Gabriel Marcella on 28 January 1998, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA.
- <sup>32</sup> Alvaro Vargas Llosa, The Madness of Things Peruvian: Democracy Under Siege (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994) p. 32
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 79.
- <sup>34</sup> Alma Guillermoprieto, "Letter from Lima: Down the Shining Path" The New Yorker (February 8, 1993) p. 73
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Vargas Llosa, p. 79 - 80.
- <sup>37</sup> Simon Strong, Shining Path: Terror and Revolution in Peru (New York: Random House, 1992) p. 267.
- <sup>38</sup> Palmer, "Peru's Shining Path", p. 293.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 295.
- <sup>40</sup> Palmer, The Shining Path, p. 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 15.
- <sup>42</sup> Palmer, "Peru's Shining Path", p. 295.
- <sup>43</sup> Palmer, The Shining Path, p. 15.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 16.
- <sup>45</sup> Guillermo Rochabrun, "Deciphering the Enigmas of Alberto Fujimori", NACLA Report on the Americas (July/August 1996) p. 17.
- <sup>46</sup> Palmer, "Peru's Shining Path", p. 300.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, The Shining Path, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Rochabrun, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Manwaring, p. 163 from the author's interviews.

<sup>51</sup> Rochabrun, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Jo-Marie Burt and Jose Lopez Ricci, "Shining Path after Guzman", NACLA Report On The Americas (November/December 1994) p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 9. The term chronic insurgency is attributed to Colombian sociologist Eduardo Pizarro to describe countries where the conditions remain for insurgency but the insurgents can not overthrow the government but also cannot be defeated by the government.

<sup>54</sup> Guillermoprieto, p. 64.

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