

From Victims to Heroes

From Victims to Heroes
Peasant counter-rebellion and Civil War
in Ayacucho, Peru, 1980-2000

Van slachtoffers naar helden
Boerenverzet tegen Lichtend Pad in de Burgeroorlog
in Ayacucho, Peru, 1980-2000

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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To Jenny and Trystan,
and the children of Tambo

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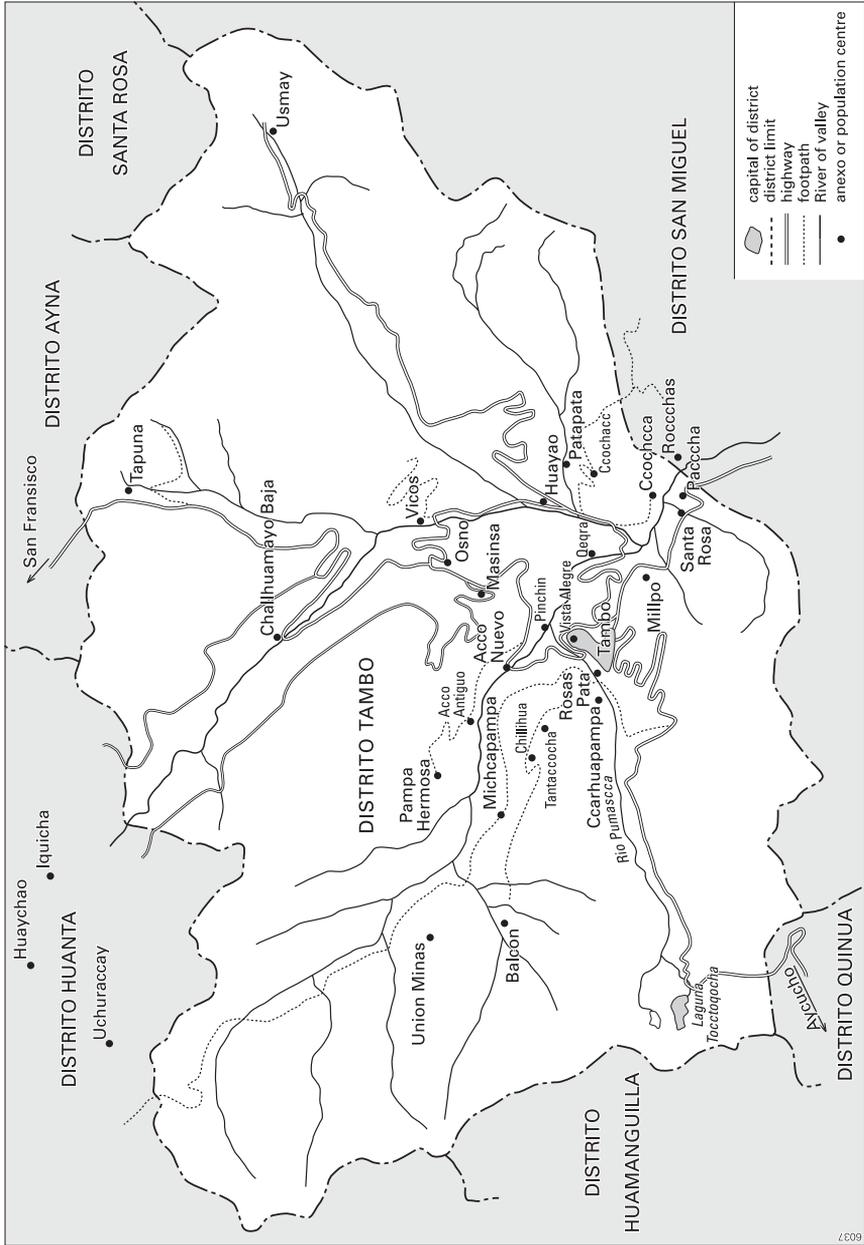
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Map 1: Peru and the Department of Ayacucho, circa 1990



Map 2: District of Tambo, circa 1999



1 Introduction

“Perhaps tonight the *terrucos* will come,” whispers Daniel, a thirty-five year old peasant war refugee from one of the many *desplazado* settlements clustered round the town of Tambo and its small, hilltop military garrison. Saying these words causes a slight grimace to form on his weather-beaten face. He stares out his attic window towards the silhouetted adobe walls of the army fort. It is not yet so late in the afternoon, but evening’s advancing darkness is already rapidly extinguishing the last vestige of an Andean November twilight.

Light drizzle patters away erratically on the corrugated tin roof, like fingertips drumming a dispirited tattoo. The effect is hypnotic and he is soon lost in his own thoughts, doubtless of the safety of his wife and young children; of this new hut with its tin roof; of the previous one, burnt to the ground in the jungle by Senderistas; and of the original family home in his that distant village, which government soldiers sacked over a decade ago and now lies abandoned. Perhaps he is also anxiously wondering if he and his family will once again become refugees on the run—if the *terrucos* come.

Ever since guerrillas boldly entered the nearby provincial capital of San Miguel three weeks earlier and audaciously executed a policeman right in the police station itself, local peasant militias in all the neighbouring districts had been on a high state of alert. Many people believe the next guerrilla strike would fall on Tambo. But when?

“The *ronderos* won’t get any sleep again tonight,” Daniel murmurs as much to himself as to me after a lengthy silence.

“If the *terrucos* (terrorists, Shining Path guerrillas) attack, the *ronderos* will be the ones to fight them,” he explains to me, his voice ringing with pride. “The soldiers and policemen will simply stay within the safety of the fort and the police station until daylight; they will not come out to fight at night. You see, it’s not really the Army who protects us. We defend ourselves.”

1.1 Significance of the study and its aims

When in 1980 the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path launched an armed revolution against the Peruvian State in the name of the peasantry and the proletarian masses, several scholars engaged in the nascent enterprise of “Senderology” quickly deemed it a peasant rebellion, and therefore an appropriate case with which to address the question of why peasants rebel. But even while the subsequent scholarship on the unfolding Peruvian civil war was producing an abundance of literature proclaiming its relevance as an example of peasant revolution, violent confrontations between the guerrillas and the very peasants they claimed to represent were becoming increasingly frequent occurrences. The widespread surprise and bewilderment these clashes caused was perhaps revealing of the extent to which scholars have long ignored the question of what causes peasants to become actively and violently *counter-revolutionary*.

Despite the prevalence of rural-based political violence over much of Latin

American for quite some time (Kay 2001), the question of peasant counter-rebellion has received surprisingly little scholarly attention from regional specialists. Granted, peasant counter-revolution—or counter-rebellion, as I mainly refer to it in this book—is a rare phenomenon. Nevertheless, its significance goes beyond the regional confines of Peru, or even of Latin America; for it is my contention that the phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion is a crucial component of the revolutionary equation. As such, it is something that must be taken into account if we wish to understand the history of past revolutionary wars and revolutionary regimes, like that of Sandinista Nicaragua; or conversely, if we seek to better comprehend government counterinsurgency strategies that attempt to forge a working alliance with the peasantry, as in the case of Peru or Guatemala; or where the outcome of guerrilla struggles is still to be decided, such as in Nepal, or in Columbia where President Uribe has recently stated his government's intention to begin organising civil defence patrols. The phenomenon of peasants or urban poor organising themselves spontaneously in resistance to communist revolutionary forces is hardly unique to Peru. Russian peasants took up armed rebellion in 1930 in an unsuccessful attempt to resist the Stalinist government's plans for the full-scale collectivisation and “dekulakization” of peasant society (Viola 1996). In the mid-1980s, disgruntled rebel defectors and local slum dwellers in the Philippine province of Davao formed armed anticommunist vigilante groups, which were rapidly able to wrestle control of this former rebel stronghold away from the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines and its New People's Army (CPP-NPA) (Jones 1989:268-275).

This book attempts to enlarge our academic understanding of the causes, structural forms, and dynamics of violent peasant counter-rebellion by presenting a case study of peasant self-defence groups in the Peruvian Andean department of Ayacucho, birthplace of both the Shining Path revolution and peasant counter-rebellion. In addition, this book also investigates the history of the Peruvian civil war from the relatively neglected perspective of peasant counter-rebellion in an attempt to understand the peasantry's everyday experiences of political violence, and their responses to it. To borrow the words of Robben and Nordstrom, the emphasis of this book is “...on how people come to grips with life under siege, on the experience, practice, and everydayness of violence....” (1995:3).

The central assertion is that peasant counter-rebellion is a form of resistance to exogenous forces, and its primary motivation is the defence of life, property, livelihood, and autonomous space for action. In recognising, however, that peasant counter-rebellion gives rise to larger consequences, and generates new social forms of interaction and processes of change, the present study also aims to gain a more detailed understanding of, firstly, how peasant counter-rebellion has contributed to the State's counterinsurgency struggle against Shining Path, and secondly, how these contributions have generated changes in the social conditions and social position of the Andean peasantry. Finally, against the backdrop of civil war, this study explores the ways that violence, racism, power and domination have shaped changing social relations and cultural identities in Ayacucho and in Peru as a whole over the past two decades.

I will approach the subject in three interconnected ways. First, I attempt to identify the social, structural, and historical conditions that created the self-defence committees in the department of Ayacucho. I seek to explain how and why the phenome-

non developed and proliferated in the department, and to account for the regional and local diversity in their formation and social manifestation. Second, I examine the significance that rural self-defence organisations came to have in the daily life of their communities. And third, I endeavour to identify the reciprocal linkages that relate self-defence groups to larger social transformations and patterns of change in the broader regional and national settings. One of the conceptual assumptions guiding this study is that the phenomenon of rural self-defence organisations should be understood with reference to both the local community and the larger society. There exists a vast literature on various aspects of the Peruvian civil war. But it is only relatively recently that a few scholarly studies have attempted to integrate more macro-level analysis with an account of how larger events and social transformations are absorbed into the life of local communities, and given social meaning (e.g. Palmer 1992; Starn 1995; Degregori 1996a; Del Pino 1996, 1998; Stern 1998).

Peru was selected as the country setting for this study because by the mid-1990s, it was already becoming clear that peasant self-defence patrols were playing a decisive role in helping to bring about the demise in that country of a once-powerful communist insurgency. Furthermore, compared with similar defence organisations in Guatemala, what appeared to differentiate those of Peru was the extent to which independent peasant initiative seemed to be playing a major part in mobilising the rural population against Shining Path, notwithstanding a considerable degree of influence from the military. These, then, were the general indications. What was required was to research in greater detail the “hows” and “whys” of the phenomenon, and to examine the precise outcomes it was generating.

1.2 The approach

This book appears in its final form more by result than by initial design. As happens to most doctoral research projects, this one has undergone a process of substantial modification along the way. This in itself is merely a reflection of the project’s unfolding, and was to be expected given the continuously changing nature of my fieldwork experiences, and the various sorts of data I was collecting or processing at different stages of research. Not surprisingly, the result is a book very different from the one I had originally imagined I would write.

I did not embark on fieldwork with the purpose of testing a preconceived theoretical hypothesis, with its attendant box-and-arrows approach. Nor did I set out with the explicit intention of contributing to any particular conceptual approach (cf. Ortner 1989:11). Rather, I started this project from the point of view that “theory emerges from experience” (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:4). First and foremost, I simply wanted to know what was happening and what had already happened, to identify the issues that the people themselves deemed to be important, and to ascertain the meaning that the things that happened had for them.

Although for the most part this research project was theoretically undirected, it was nevertheless guided by a particular epistemological approach to conceptualising, observing, and analysing human social interaction. In this regard I drew inspiration from Anton Blok’s (1974) analysis of the circumstances that created Sicilian *mafia* within

diachronic processes of social change using Elias's (1969) theory of "configuration." What I found attractive about the concept of configurations was that it "emphasizes the changing patterns of interdependencies in which individuals and groups of individuals are involved: both as allies and as opponents" (Blok 1974:9-10). It describes social transformation in terms of shifting configurations, and their interrelationship with changing events and "structured, historical processes" (ibid.). I was also influenced by the related approach of "political economy," as used by Eric Wolf to produce *Europe and the People without History*, and by Steve Stern in *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640*. Clearly, my personal academic preference was for social-historical analysis, rather than cultural analysis.

Furthermore, I held specific notions about the dialectical relationship between the individual and society; or to put it in more theoretical terms, "structure" and "agency." Like Blok, I, too, hold that the actions of individuals and groups are influenced by, and are sometimes dependent upon, particular sets of social, political, and economic structures and forces. Individuals are never completely autonomous from social-structural forces. But neither can their responses to structural pressures and constraints be construed as merely reflexive. Actors are also socially creative, innovative, and manipulative, and they compete for valued resources. Moreover, they are always confronted by choices and alternatives. In addition, having grown up in western Canada as a Filipino immigrant, I knew from my personal experience of discrimination and racism that power, resistance, violence, and empowerment have many guises, and must be looked for as much in subtle body movements and verbal utterances as in social systems and institutions.

Had I been more familiar with theoretical paradigms outside of my social anthropological background, I might have theorised my ideas about the relationship between individuals and society in terms of Giddens' (1984) "Structuration Theory." Had I been less conditioned by a graduate education steeped in dated Durkheimian structuralism, and more familiar with current anthropological developments, I might have conceptually framed this research within "Practice Theory," which draws on the works of Giddens (1979), Bourdieu (1977), and Sahlins (1981) (see Ortner 1989:11—17). Instead of Blok's configurations, I could just as well have chosen Norman Long's (1992) "Actor-Oriented" approach. The fish tank was indeed large, and I confess that in the end I pragmatically fashioned my epistemological approach out of an eclectic mix of theories which appealed to my own subjective understanding of the world around me.

1.3 Methodology

The fieldwork for this project was carried out in two trips. The first period was in 1997 and lasted eight months. The second was in 2000, and was carried out over four months. Most of the 1997 trip was spent doing fieldwork in the district of Tambo, although I took every opportunity to travel to as many other areas of the department of Ayacucho as I could. In 2000 I spent the majority of my time in Huamanga, the departmental capital, conducting participant observation in the midst of an unfolding political crisis. I also used part of that time for research in various libraries and gov-

ernmental institutions in Huamanga. The wide space of time between the two fieldwork periods permitted me to place many of my early observations into a broader historical context of process change. By spacing my fieldwork periods far apart, I have been able to make use of time's passing in order to digest and to reflect on the material I had gathered, thereby gaining a clearer understanding of the data that was not possible at the time the fieldwork was being done.

The material for this book comes from three principal sources. First, from structured and semi-structured interviews and impromptu discussions with common people, as well as with local and regional decision makers. My informants included displaced peasants, some of whom at the time were active militia members; local- and regional-level militia commanders, both active and retired; peasant community authorities, incumbent and retired mayors of Tambo, and the district governor in 1997; high-school students in Tambo and Huamanga; members of the district's *Club de Madres*; workers at the children's orphanage (*aldea infantil*) in Tambo; children of Tambo town and some of the surrounding refugee settlements and rural communities; the staff at the hospital in Tambo; Peruvian military officers, members of the police's regional counterinsurgency unit (DIVICOTE), and ordinary policemen; imprisoned guerrillas; directors, researchers, and workers of NGOs and various research institutes in Lima and Huamanga; civil servants at the Ministry of Agriculture in Huamanga; and academics at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga.

I also collected data as an observing participant, while engaged in such activities as civic actions, accompanying army patrols and military inspections of peasant militias in various rural districts, and visiting remote returnee communities with NGO workers or hospital staff. I joined numerous pro-government peasant rallies in Huamanga in 1997 and 2000, and anti-government urban marches in 2000, and used these opportunities for engaging participants in illuminating conversations.

The material for this book also derives from archival and other documentary sources published and unpublished. Of these, among my most original and important sources of information are the personal war diary of Tambo district's militia commander, the complete archive of Tambo district's central self-defence committee (CCAD), and various documents from the DECAS civil defence organisations of the Apurímac River Valley. Other primary sources of printed material include reports, pamphlets, survey data for Tambo district's rural communities, maps, quantitative and other statistical data. Secondary sources included books, pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles.

Realising that documents can be embellished and that memories can be selective and self-serving, I tried whenever possible to check the validity of the data by "triangulating" the different kinds of information I had collected; cross-checking interviews with written documents, for example (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:198-200). That is to say, when conflicting stories arose, I attempted to corroborate the information in question using other sources. If I felt I was unable to resolve discrepancies, I presented all the conflicting versions of events.

There was a significant qualitative difference in the type of information I was able to gather during each separate period of fieldwork period owing to profound changes in the political situation. In 1997, Ayacucho was still under a military state of emergency. For this reason, although I was able to elicit testimonies from particular inform-

ants once I had gained their trust and promised to guard their anonymity, it was otherwise virtually impossible for me to obtain official documents pertaining to the peasant self-defence organisations. Even militia commanders I was beginning to forge friendships with were careful not to put themselves and their families at risk by providing me with documents that the military might otherwise regard as restricted. By 2000, however, the political situation had changed substantially. The state of emergency was lifted at the start of the year, and many of communities had already taken the initiative to begin disbanding their local militias since the end of 1998. Apart from this, guerrilla violence had virtually disappeared in most parts of Ayacucho, and people claimed they were no longer afraid to talk. In fact, as though it were a form of catharsis for them, many people actually wanted to talk about their violent experiences, to relate local histories of war, to tell even outsiders like myself what had happened to them, their families, their communities. This situation made it easier for me to fill in some of the gaps in my interview data from 1997. Importantly, I was finally able to obtaining hitherto classified documental evidence.

It was during my second research period that I discovered the underlying multi-level historical “narrative” that not only interconnected, and so made sense, of the numerous sketchy and disjointed patches of empirical data I had collected in 1997. This was due mainly to the diverse sorts of archival data I was fortunate enough to obtain mainly through the trusting friendship of one of my key informants (Walter Ramírez Echacaya alias Comando Zorro), and the generosity of a fellow researcher (Roberto Córdova) with access to hard-to-get classified documents from the DECAS. Consequently, in the course of researching and writing this book, my analytical approach became more historical and less ethnographical, and more concerned with analysing dynamic processes from a wider perspective, than with conducting a local-level anthropological investigation, which was my original research proposal.

1.4 Between rumours and rifles: doing fieldwork in a Peruvian military zone, 1997

This was my first time in Peru, my first time in Latin America for that matter. Given where I was going—the veritable epicentre of the civil war—I naturally had reason to be a little anxious for my safety. I was aware that in the early 1990s, Peru was in the top of Amnesty International’s list of countries with the worst human rights record (see Amnesty International 1991). Furthermore, although the capture of most of the Shining Path’s leadership in 1992 was being widely trumpeted in Europe, North America, and Lima as the defeat of the rebels and the end of the war, the reality was that five years on the organisation was still very much alive, and still carrying out acts of violence.

I made my first trip to the Andean city of Huamanga (also known by its more modern name of Ayacucho) in mid-June. Upon my arrival I was immediately confronted with mixed impressions. I expected to find a central plaza fortified with sandbags, machine-gun pits, and teeming with armed men in camouflaged fatigues. Yet apart for the scattered presence of soldiers and policemen, coolly cradling their automatic rifles as they sauntered around the plaza or drove through the streets in their green or white

vehicles, what struck me most was the liveliness and apparent joviality of daily life in the city. Tourism had all but disappeared in the 1980s and much of the 1990s, for this was considered a dangerous destination. I was therefore a little surprised to find a sprinkling of Western tourists in the city, sipping coca-leaf maté and nibbling light breakfasts in restaurants along Jirón Cuzco, where the cheaper and more popular hotels are located. For the sellers at the busy central market, the terrifying days of Shining Path's *paros armados* (armed strikes), when most people were scared even to walk in the streets, probably seem like a distant nightmare. As I discovered later, however, these scenes of normality belied the deadly low-intensity civil war that continued in the surrounding countryside. In fact, even before the end of my first week in Ayacucho (which is Quechua for "corner of the dead") at least three armed guerrilla actions had already been reported. Nevertheless, the fact that there weren't bombings or firefights breaking out all the time gave me hope that I would be able to conduct fieldwork in relative peace.¹

Finding a Place for Fieldwork. Much of my first month in the militarised zone was taken up waiting for a letter of authorization from the supreme military authority. In the meantime, I orientated myself by discussing my research project with knowledgeable people of diverse backgrounds: military officers, academics, NGO workers. I also thought it prudent to try and affiliate myself with a local NGO as part of my "identity making."

I had initially intended to do ethnographic fieldwork in Chuschi, a peasant community about which there exists a rich body of ethnographic information (e.g. Isbell 1978). However, due to the difficulties I encountered in attempting to gain entry into what was apparently a very suspicious and closed society, I gave up on Chuschi and decided instead to do fieldwork in the district of Tambo, La Mar province. The choice seemed logical and practical to me. As far as my topic was concerned, there was hardly any better setting than Tambo; for not only had civil war grievously affected the entire province, it was also an area where the rural militias (officially called *comités de autodefensa*, or more popularly *rondas campesinas*) continued to play an active and important role in the social life of local communities. Moreover, what was working in my favour was the fact that I had already been invited to carry out my investigations there by its amiable district mayor, whom I had met earlier through my NGO contacts.

The town of Tambo is the capital of a district which the same name. There are in the order of fifty-three rural communities in the district, of which approximately thirteen are refugee settlements situated round the town of Tambo. A military fort, garrisoned by about forty conscripts, sits on top of a small hill overlooking the central plaza.

Joined later in my fieldwork by my Dutch partner Jenny, we chose to live in the town itself. We reasoned that it would be much safer for us and the data I would collect if we lived in the town rather than in one of the outlying rural communities, which could at any time be attacked by guerrillas, or visited by a military patrol which might mistaken my fieldwork data for "subversive" material. Though the chances these days of being "disappeared" were slim, we didn't want to take the risk. Apart from this practical consideration, another reason for staying in the town was that most militia activities in the district were coordinated and initiated there because prior authorisation for any militia activity always had to be obtained from the local military commander.

Presentation and Identity. Obviously, the extent to which people trusted us was directly related to their first impressions of us. Upon arriving in Tambo, our identity was immediately the subject of a variety of rumours: we were government agents, human rights agitators, *pishtacos*. We heard people occasionally mutter the quechua word *pishtaco* when we passed them in the streets or in the market, especially during our first weeks in Tambo. According to some local schoolgirls we spoke to, *pishtacos* are always tall, pale strangers who murder people in order to suck out their body fat. In order to try and dispel some of these rumours, Jenny and I intentionally cultivated and displayed a multi-faceted identity, using ambiguities to our methodological and practical advantage. Tambino society has its share of intrigues and personal animosities, antagonisms and rival factions. For practical reasons, we tried to remain amicable to *all* individuals and social groups—an attitude that was also influenced by my objective of investigating and analysing social interaction in terms of “social configurations.” Not wishing to make the same mistake as Isbell (1978:224-236), who made enemies of Chuschi’s *mestizo* teachers by purposely affiliating herself exclusively with the peasants, we made a conscious effort to keep from closely associating with any one group.

We graciously declined the district mayor’s generous offer to live in his home, and chose instead to rent a room in the basement of one of the restaurants. As a popular meeting place, it proved to be proved to be a neutral location. It later turned out that our decision to live under the restaurant instead of in the mayor’s house was a prudent one, for it subsequently became apparent that there was enmity between him and others, such as the police, some of the townspeople, and even many of his own aldermen who were resentful of his alleged habit of making important decisions without first consulting them.

Photo 1. Plaza de Armas of Tambo town, with army base on the hill



I presented myself to people as a *history student*, and said I was studying Tambo district's history, culture, and society. This made it easier for us to explain our inquisitiveness and need to collect information. Obviously, presenting my project in this way was less threatening than candidly stating that I was studying militias and the local history of political violence. Moreover, despite the fact that the then rector of the university in Ayacucho (UNSCH) was himself an anthropologist, there was nevertheless a popular belief among policemen and military officers that most anthropologists are Shining Path sympathizers,² or otherwise involved in subversive activities.³

Contrary to conventional anthropological wisdom, we thought it better to emphasize our obvious "foreign-ness," rather than trying to diminish it.⁴ Our status as foreigners afford us a measure of personal security in precarious situations (harassing foreigners, unlike locals, could get policemen into trouble). Furthermore, we later found out that the current climate of fear and suspicion generated by the civil war was such that many people distrusted fellow Peruvians more than they did foreigners.

It was to my advantage to be seen in Jenny's company. She fits the stereotype of Dutch women—blond, fair complexion, relatively tall, so obviously foreign. I, on the other hand, as a Filipino-Spanish *mestizo* was often mistaken for an urban Peruvian, and therefore a possible secret police agent. When I was with Jenny, however, people were more inclined to see me as also "*holandés*," and so were less suspicious than they would have been had I been alone or with a Peruvian assistant.

I intended at first to hire a local guide/translator who could introduce us to the inhabitants and whose companionship might elicit more trust from the people. But anthropologists sometimes forget that guides, too, have reputations in their own community. As it turned out, my unfortunate initial choice was reputed to be a thief and a disorderly drunkard.⁵ Luckily, I learned of this before further association with him could damage my image in the community. As for using a translator, I thought it would make a better impression if I represented myself, and spoke with my own voice. This, of course, presented problems when trying to communicate with monolingual Quechua speakers. In any case, such individuals were often too suspicious to even speak with me. Had I used a Quechua interpreter for interviews, I would also have found it too difficult to ascertain the accuracy of their translations and interpretations. Moreover, in light of the climate of distrust, and given some of the topics I wished to address, using a Peruvian or local translator would undoubtedly only have caused interviewees to hold back certain information (perhaps more than they were already doing).

Primarily for reasons of personal safety, we never ventured to the remote countryside communities on our own. When we went into the countryside, it was always in the company of NGO workers, or a nurse from the hospital. As a result, people came to see us as members of those aid institutions; and the trust they bestowed on those workers was also imparted to us.

My fieldwork in Tambo came to abrupt end when guerrilla activity nearby made it too dangerous for us to stay. Jenny and I therefore relocated to Huamanga in early November 1997, where I continued to meet and interview Tambinos when they came to visit CEPRODEP, a local NGO. I was pleased to discover that outside Tambo, away from the prying eyes of their neighbours and in the privacy of my hotel room, my informants were more relaxed and therefore more candid in talking about sensitive issues.

1.5 Outline of the book

Briefly, the structure of this book is as follows. Chapter 2 traces the genesis and development of Shining Path. It is concerned with showing how Shining Path's Mariategista- and Maoist-inspired understanding of the socioeconomic characteristics of the Peruvian peasantry and the nation's agrarian structure shaped the premises and objectives of its revolutionary strategy. This provides us with a backdrop against which to view Shining Path's subsequent behaviour towards the peasantry, adding to our understanding of why Shining Path cannot, in spite of its claims, be viewed as the vanguard of a peasant revolution, but rather as the object of peasant counter-revolution.

Chapter 3 begins with Shining Path's initiation of armed struggle. It then proceeds to examine the early effects of Shining Path's military tactics and strategy, not only on the peasants but also on other social actors, like the police. It is here that we see the first ruptures in Shining Path's relations with the peasantry as it pushed ahead with its quixotic adventure to transfigure Andean reality—by any means necessary, and with total indifference to existing Andean cultural values, peasant survival strategies or structural relations—into the “hyper-reality” envisaged by its rigid brand of Maoist-Mariáteguista dogma. Through its actions, Shining Path would provoke disaffection and resentment that would eventually lead to the outbreak of peasant counter-rebellion in certain sierran areas of Ayacucho. Nevertheless, it is also shown that when the military unleashed a “war of attrition,” they also took an active role in encouraging or coercing peasant communities to form civil defence patrols. Against the larger backdrop of the Belaúnde government's approach to counterinsurgency, the structural and functional characteristics of these early peasant civil defence patrols are analysed, and their effectiveness assessed. The underlying argument in this chapter is that a consideration of the range of organisational frameworks of varied peasant communities, and their connections with larger economic and political fields, offers a starting point for trying to understand the diversity of peasant responses to contemporary political violence in the south-central Peruvian highlands. The creation of self-defence committees is but one kind of peasant response to political violence.

In Chapter 4 the story moves to the Apurímac River Valley where, owing to a number of circumstances specific to the region and to the dynamics of the political violence that unfolded there, the most sophisticated and effective of counterinsurgency militias—the DECAS—were born. Against the backdrop of both guerrilla violence and the military's “dirty war” repression (first under the government of Belaúnde, and then later of García), this chapter looks at how the DECAS sought to survive by shifting alliances, and by defending or carving out spaces for autonomous action in relation to the guerrillas, the army, the police, and the drug traffickers. In addition, this chapter traces the rise and fall of Comandante Huayhuaco, a legendary militia leader who not only helped to develop the DECAS' sophisticated tactics, but also came to stand for the “dark side” of the peasant militias. Also important in this period was the debate on whether peasant militias in general should be given firearms by the State in defence of themselves and the State, which would turn them into yet another “armed actor.” Archival data provides us with insight into how the DECAS functioned as an armed force in the field. This information reveals that they were far from being simply a motley group of “thugs” or “cannon fodder,” as stereotyped by a number of outside

observers. The DECAS' military firepower (made possible by drug money), its distinct organisational structure, and the diverse strategic alliances it managed to forge with other powerful local actors (such as the narcotraficantes and the Marine Infantry) would, in the end, prove decisive in contributing to the pacification of virtually the entire Apurímac River Valley. The larger sociopolitical landscape is provided by the rise and fall of the García regime, and how a political crisis partially caused by his unorthodox economic policies precipitated a crisis in counterinsurgency, and in militia-military relations.

In chapter 5 the story returns to the Ayacuchan sierra on the wave of DECAS expansion, which was achieved by dispatching elite groups of militiamen to highland communities where they provided local patrols with training and instruction on DECAS strategies, organisation, and tactics. The focus here is on the expansion and institutionalisation of the peasant militia phenomenon as it developed and was experienced by the inhabitants of Tambo district. Another significant development described in this chapter is the rise of Alberto Fujimori to president. In particular, attention is paid to the symbiotic relationship that developed between Fujimori, the army, the intelligence service, and the self-defence committees, which served to underpin the government's new approach to counterinsurgency. The war diary of Comando Zorro provides the narrative current throughout this chapter. In conjunction with other sources of information, the vivid detail contained in the diary helps us to see the sociopolitical violence in human terms, as the people suffered and lived it. This chapter also attempts to address often neglected, intangible issues pertaining to the dynamics of the self-defence phenomenon, such as the fragility of the morale upon which rested the will to continue resisting. Moreover, the chapter also examines the profound developments and transformations within the revolutionary movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, focusing as much on rifts, disputes, and conflicts within Shining Path as on resilience and continuities. Based on data from various important unpublished studies, and my own interviews with captured rebels, this chapter gives insight into what everyday life was like for Shining Path guerrillas, and the peasant masses under their control, in remote rebel-dominated areas of Ayacucho's northern provinces. The annihilation of an important rebel column towards the end of 1993 closes this chapter, and symbolises the dawn of a new period of precarious peace in this sub-region of Ayacucho department.

Chapter 6 exhibits a different tone and pace. It deals primarily with the processes of refugee returns, reconstruction, and development. Its main argument is that because humans seek to re-establish some degree of normality in their everyday lives even in adverse situations, we should therefore recognise that socioeconomic reconstruction takes place even in the midst of war. This chapter examines the role and contributions made by self-defence committees to the process of reconstruction, and considers their possible future contributions to the process of development.

Chapter 7 is based on my personal observance of the chaotic and serious political situation that engulfed the country during the controversial 2000 presidential elections. It was, as the title suggests, a time of unexpected endings. Not only did the Fujimori regime and its secret intelligence apparatus collapse only a few months after Fujimori "won" a third term in office, the state of emergency was also finally lifted almost everywhere it had been imposed, and with this the self-defence committees

were also officially deactivated. In fact, however, throughout much of Ayacucho, peasant communities had, by their own initiative, already begun to disband their self-defence committees since the end of 1998, when it was generally perceived that pacification had been achieved, and there was no longer much risk of guerrilla violence. In this context, it was no longer self defence—which in itself also constituted a financial drain on time and material resources—but rather recuperating and reactivating neglected agricultural and other livelihood activities, which took precedence as the people's principal concern.

Chapter 8 attempts to enter into a theoretical analysis and discussion on the preceding chapters. Generally speaking, the main points of discussion are the phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion and its relation to state counterinsurgency, the significance of peasant militias in civilian-military relations, and the phenomenon's impact on the interrelated problems of democratic consolidation, nation-building, and citizenship.

1.6 Writing style and presentation

The style in which I have written this book was influenced by the sort of data my fieldwork yielded. Given the kind of material I was able to collect, and my desire to tell the story of real people instead of treating them as faceless subjects absorbed into abstract themes, a narrative account of the peasant militias seemed to me to be the best way to present the phenomenon in human terms. Like other anthropologists who have tried to write a narrative account of their subject, however, the main problem I had to confront was how to combine a narrative story with analysis. Ortner, who herself has come up against the same difficulty, captures the essence of the problem when she writes,

[t]he two forms of writing and thinking kept getting in each other's way. The story would have a certain momentum of its own, and it often seemed awkward and artificial to break into it and "do some analysis"....The secret of the problem, of course, is that what I thought of at that point as "analysis" was essentially static, a matter of understanding what things mean and how they hang together, rather than a matter of understanding how things generate other things, or derive from other things, and so forth (1989:11).

Ortner finds her solution to the problem in the bosom of "practice theory." I found my inspiration in Clifford Geertz's style of descriptive analysis which he called "process-analysis."⁶ Process-analysis presents an attractive model for combining description and analysis of social change, and Geertz's illustration of it has served as an example for me in writing this book. In contrast to what Geertz does, however, my own approach to writing descriptive analysis contains little cultural analysis, and can therefore perhaps best be described not as "thick description" but as "thick history," to borrow a phrase from Dirks et al. (1994:17). In addition to Geertz, however, I also looked for examples and guidance by reading Latin American literature⁷ and well-written history

books (particularly narrative histories of Rome),⁸ and in writing styles of anthropologists like Orin Starn and Carlos Iván Degregori.

The style in which this book has been written can thus be described as narrative history, interspersed throughout with shorter pauses for “process-analysis” of issues immediately rising from the narrative. A theoretically-orientated summarisation of the main themes of the book is left until the final chapter so as not to disrupt the narrative flow of the story. The intention was to show, in form as much as in words, that this research has not been hypothesis driven, but rather that the theoretical issues stem from the preceding empirical description.

The logical sequence of the chapters follows the story of the emergence, development, and proliferation of peasant self-defence patrols in Ayacucho, as I came to understand it; and the movement of this story is from sierra to selva, and from selva back to the sierra. The shifting developments in the history of peasant counter-rebellion (each of which is depicted in a separate chapter) corresponded more or less with periodic changes to civilian government, and with each new administration’s particular approach to counterinsurgency and national economic policy. Each separate period, then, provides the setting for the individual chapters that make up this book.

In writing this book, what was also pertinent to me was the question of *voice*. I wanted to give an account of the phenomenon which allowed the voices of the actual participants to be heard. For as Robben and Nordstrom rightly underscore, “[w]ar, rebellion, resistance, rape, torture, and defiance, as well as peace, victory, humor, boredom, and ingenuity, will have to be understood together through their expression in the everyday if we are to take the issue of the human construction of existence in earnest” (1995:6). Yet to attempt to give “voice” to those we study raises its own set of problems.

Various thinkers have drawn attention to the fact that dominant interpretations of the past are products of dominant sociocultural structures and dominant modes of expression and conceptualisation (Gramsci 1967, 1971; Foucault 1977; Guha 1994). A reciprocal influence exists among these various factors. In such a context the voices of subaltern groups are sometimes unarticulated, ignored, marginalized, or unintentionally dominated by the agendas and interests of hegemonic groups, or by the dominant mode of expression. The voices of subaltern groups are at times even appropriated by those who purport to speak for them—academics, foreign journalists, the military, Sendero Luminoso, the government, politicians. It is therefore morally imperative, as Taussig (1987) insists, that we use what power and influence we have through our academic writings to confront injustice, inequalities, and oppression. On the other hand, Spivak (1988) urges anthropologists to question their own motives, and to reflect on their place within power relationships and networks of privilege, when anthropologists (or anyone else for that matter) try to speak for others. Spivak contends that our representation of those we study will always be weighed down by our own tacit, inescapable Western assumptions.

Then there is the question of authenticity and validity. The problem is whether, by transforming observations of chaotic and complex empirical phenomena into ordered and reasoned narrative accounts, we do not distort and lose the very qualities that we wished to convey in the first place (Robben and Nordstrom 1995:12).

I do not attempt, nor do I have the erudition, to resolve these dilemmas, if ever

they could be. Perhaps it is as Robben and Nordstrom say, that these dilemmas are “part and parcel of anthropology as a research tradition that straddles cultures and hierarchies” (ibid.:12). My strongest justification for attempting to convey a story “through the eyes and voices” of the participants themselves is that this is what those who have offered me information for this project also wanted. Many people in Tambo expressed their desire that I write down their history, in their own words, to write down the names of the dead so that they and their sacrifices and accomplishments would not be forgotten by the living. Nor should the reader assume that I believe that what I have written is *the* history of the peasant self-defence phenomenon. Like Geertz, I believe that despite what we would sometimes like to think, what we are in fact doing as social scientists is not revealing *the truth*, but merely giving our own specially informed interpretation of the ontological world we observe—and more often than not, we are giving interpretations of interpretations of the truth. I think it was Bruce Lee who put it best when he said words to the effect, “Do not mistaken the finger pointing the way to the moon for the moon.”

This is a history of peasant counter-rebellion and civil war in late twentieth-century Peru.

Notes

1. In their seminal book on the experience of doing “fieldwork under fire,” Robben and Nordstrom (1995) and their various contributors raise numerous crucial points of a theoretical and practical nature with regard to conceptualising political violence, and how anthropologists have gone about studying it.
2. In my discussions with military officers and policemen, they often referred to Osmán Morote, a former anthropology graduate of the university of Huamanga and one of Shining Path’s important early leaders, in order to justify their prejudice against anthropologists. Apart from this, the blatantly Maoist-Marxist orientation of anthropological research at the University of Ayacucho (UNSCH) is evident from a brief glance at the sorts of anthropological dissertations that were produced by its students during the 1970s and 1980s.
3. Billie Jean Isbell, an American anthropologist who conducted research in the Andean community of Chuschi in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was shocked to hear the false rumour that she, another foreign anthropologist, and a group of Peruvian students, although ostensibly conducting research in the Pampas River area, were in fact revolutionaries encouraging peasants to take over the land of a neighbouring estate by force. It was even rumoured that “the group sold machine guns to villagers” (Isbell 1978:236).
4. All non-Tambinos, including the non-local Peruvian civil servants who travel from Ayacucho to work at the municipality in Tambo, are regarded to by the locals as “foreigners” or “strangers.”
5. The NGO workers recommended him to me in good faith because he had been a competent worker for them in the past.
6. Geertz provides an eloquently illustration of this approach by applying it to the case of a chaotic Japanese funeral gone wrong (1973:142-169).
7. The novels of Isabel Allende and Mario Vargas Llosa have been very inspirational to me, particularly in the way they can describe and get to the heart of complex situations without turning the story into stale bread.
8. In particular, Michel Grant’s (1978) *History of Rome*, and Peter Salway’s (1981) *Roman Britain*.
9. From the film “Enter the Dragon.”

2 Shining Path and the Peasantry

To link oneself with the masses, one must act in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from...the actual needs of the masses rather than what we fancy they need.

Mao Tse-Tung, "The United Front in Cultural Work"

Other than Power, all is illusion!

PCP-Sendero Luminoso, "Desarrollemos la Guerra de Guerrillas"

It was early in November 1997, during my final week of fieldwork in the district of Tambo, that a peasant friend came to my lodgings late one evening with the most intriguing news. Fifteen heavily armed guerrillas had entered the village of Asnapampa a few nights earlier, where they herded the terrified inhabitants into the square. But rather than holding a people's trial and executing various so-called "class enemies," like they almost always did on such occasions, they began to announce to the bewildered villagers that Shining Path guerrillas were no longer going to kill peasants, as they had done in the past. Instead they promised to limit their future armed actions to attacking only military and police personnel, and *ronderos* actively working against them. They ended the assembly by shouting slogans in praise of the proletarian revolution and President Gonzalo (nom de guerre of Abimael Guzmán, Shining Path's founder and paramount leader), and then spent the rest of the evening attempting to recruit some of the younger villagers before finally marching off into the darkness shortly after midnight.¹

I would later learn from Tambo's militia commander that over the past two months, other communities in the province of La Mar had been visited by the rebels and told the same thing.² That some of Shining Path's remaining armed forces in the field, under their new leader Oscar Alberto Ramírez Durand (alias Camarada Feliciano), were keen to let peasants know that they had changed their ways even came to be the focus of an article written by a correspondent for *The Economist*, who suggested that a resurgence in propaganda and guerrilla activity at the time was most likely "part of a two-year plan to win back lost ground" (Scrutton 1997:82). Be that as it may, what was obvious was that by putting out this message, Shining Path was not only attempting to win back disaffected peasants and so stem the relentless and irresistible advance of the village defence militias. Also implicit in the message was the Party's willingness to admit for the first time that it had committed the fatal mistake of turning violently on the very people for whom it claimed to be waging armed struggle—an error that might well have cost them the victory they once seemed close to achieving. As it turned out, Shining Path's pledge to stop killing peasants (which it never honoured) fell on a generally incredulous audience. As one displaced peasant told me, "The *terrucos* deceived us once before into supporting them; they can't fool us a second time." For the remainder of the decade, the village-based *comités de autodefensa* continued to proliferate while guerrilla forces steadily diminished, and in

so doing apparently sealed the fate of the so-called People's War.

If we are to understand why peasant villagers in the department of Ayacucho came to resist Shining Path—often by way of village-defence militias—then it is first necessary to try and comprehend why Shining Path militants were apparently prepared to butcher peasant men, women, and children for the sake of their glorious revolution. It is in order to shed some light on this paradox that this chapter addresses such issues as (a) Shining Path's political objectives with regard to the peasantry, (b) its doctrinal understanding of the motives, values, and revolutionary significance of the peasantry, and (c) the relationship between the revolutionary movement and the peasantry, and the conditions and factors that led to initial popular support for the revolution. As such it does not attempt to cover in any detail the genesis, strategy, actions and fortunes of Shining Path; that has already been extensively and much more capably done by others.³

2.1 Ayacucho: Anachronism and social change

The Communist Party of Peru—Shining Path (PCP-SL) was born not in the rural countryside but in the departmental capital of Ayacucho, within the walls of the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSCH). And the revolution that it was eventually to launch was conceived not by poor peasant villagers, but by its leadership of urban, middle-class university academics.

Founded in 1677 as the second oldest university of the viceroyalty, the university was closed down in 1855 due to the ensuing crisis in the aftermath of the War of the Pacific.⁴ Its reopening as a national university in 1959 marked a watershed in the history of an Andean region whose features seemed the very inspiration for José Carlos Mariátegui's essays. Predominantly illiterate and monolingual Quechua-speaking, a large proportion of the department's rural population still lived an oppressed and exploited existence under the weight of a slowly decaying "semifeudal" regime, dominated by a class of clerics and large landowners on the wane. As Peruvian historian Jaime Urrutia described Ayacucho department at that time:

The northern provinces [of Huanta, La Mar, and Huamanga] were territories almost exclusively of haciendas, although this name included everything from the largest latifundios of the ravine of San Miguel or of the punas, to the small fundos of the valley adjacent the city of Ayacucho. In this sea of haciendas navigated some of the largest communities of the region, converted at [the birth of] the Republic into district capitals and sources of manpower...and of conflict for the large estates: Vinchos, Socos, Quinua, Huamanguilla. To the south, from the highlands of Pampa Cangallo to Sarasara, there predominated the communities with altoandian resources and of [the] Quechua zone, untroubled by the haciendas, even though some existed in all areas (Urrutia et al. 1988:430).⁵

Apart from Huamanga's thirty-three churches and several handsome stone mansions,

Ayacucho's "golden age"⁶ was, by the mid-twentieth century, just a distant, dusty memory. Even so, at a time when man-made satellites were already circling the earth, anachronistic and humiliating relations of servitude and exploitation endured in Ayacucho and many other parts of Peru.⁷ For instance, up until the end of the 1960s the tenant farmers and herders of the high-altitude hacienda Uchuraccay, besides having to pay their rent in kind, were also obligated to perform numerous labour services (*predios rústicos*) for their patrón, regularly and without pay. These included farming the *hacendado's* fields, or tending his herds a certain number of days a week, construction work for the benefit of the *hacendado's* estate, household services (*semanero*) in the *casa-hacienda*, and so forth.⁸ The relationship between the *mestizo hacendado* of Uchuraccay and his *indios feudatarios* was a paternalistic one, whereby the social segregation and subjugation of the latter was justified by the racist convictions of superiority of the other.

As in other parts of the developing world, education and literacy in the twentieth century, along with labour migration, have offered peasants in this department (for decades considered to be one of Peru's very poorest and underdeveloped) an avenue of escape from relations of dependency and domination, social discrimination, and from "the harsh existence of subsistence agriculture and herding" (Isbell 1978:70). In Ayacucho department those with the most education were also the ones who tended to leave. Degregori argues that given the "total poverty" of the region, the educational effort seems part of the "*solución hacia afuera*"; a means of escape that leaves behind the less educated in the department (1990:40). Small wonder, then, that the reopening of the university was as much regarded by urban workers and more prosperous peasants as offering hope of upward mobility for their children without their having to leave the department, as it was viewed in the first instance by Huamanga's dominant families as bringing to the city a reinvigorating breath of respectability and prestige. Most peasants equated education with "progress" and "modernity"; and, conversely, ignorance was associated with the vices that keep the peasant downtrodden—alcoholism, coca chewing, and tobacco smoking (Degregori 1990:13-14). Educated individuals—particularly secondary and university students and educators—commanded a great deal of respect from the inhabitants of the campo (rural countryside). In short time, the university proved to be the single most important political and economic force spearheading "progress" and change in the region. As Degregori observed, "in a region like Ayacucho...the modernising element was not an economic agent (mining, industry, commercial agriculture), but fundamentally ideological: a university" (1990:17).

Within a few years of reopening its doors, the UNSCH became caught up in the political radicalism that, at the time, was sweeping universities throughout the world, particularly in the wake of the Cuban revolution, and the international craze being generated by China's Cultural Revolution of 1966-67. At the UNSCH, young men and women of rural origin came in contact for the first time in their lives with exciting, inspiring, radical, new ideas. Politically active students were drawn to the writings of Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, and Mao Tse-Tung, as well as to those of home-grown *indigenista* socialist thinkers like J.C. Mariátegui. For many of these young students, Marxist-Leninist-Maoist analysis and doctrine provided them not only with a powerfully convincing explanatory framework within which to articulate their own experi-

ences and observations of social injustice, but also with a blueprint for achieving the triumph of social justice even against overwhelming odds. In their personal lives, their exposure to radical, new ideas and theories would eventually create a generation gap of knowledge, thoughts, and aspirations between themselves and their peasant elders, which would often create friction and occasionally produce conflict.

Few individuals epitomised the generation of young, educated Ayacuchanos who dreamed of helping to bring about a just society better than the now-legendary female guerrilla commander Edith Lagos Saez. Of Lagos's years as a secondary school student, shortly before she joined Shining Path, a former neighbour recalled:

Edith's family lived in the flat below ours. She was like an older sister to me, and I often chatted with her from the window of my bedroom. She was always so polite, and very considerate. She sometimes argued with her mother, who at times could be selfish and ungenerous. Once, in the middle of a hot summer when there was a water shortage, many families in our neighbourhood had no running water for many days due to insufficient water pressure in the pipes. Being on the ground floor, however, Edith's house could still receive some water. In spite of this, her mother told everyone in their household not to share their water with the neighbours. Edith didn't agree, and so one day after her mother had gone out she invited all the neighbours to come over with empty buckets, which she then filled with water from their tap. When her mother came home and found out what Edith had done, she became so angry. But Edith didn't seem to care. She knew that what she did was right.⁹

Years later, after she had been killed by policemen in Andahuaylas on 3 September 1982, thousands of mourners—some estimate as many as 30,000—packed the streets of Huamanga to pay their last respects to one who had already become something of a legend by her nineteenth birthday. It would certainly be grossly misleading to say that most of those who took part in the procession that day were Shining Path supporters. Rather, the vast majority of mourners had come simply to bury one of their own, a Huamanguina who, in spite of how the control mechanisms of the Party had eventually transformed her, continued in their hearts to symbolise their own collective desire for enduring social justice. Although her coffin was draped with a red flag stamped with the hammer and sickle, it is revealing that her epitaph would not be a Marxist slogan, but rather passages from one of her own hauntingly beautiful poems; one that reveals that she had always expected her chosen path as a guerrilla to be a lonely and tragic road, yet a journey that was to be of momentous and lasting importance to humankind though she herself may be forgotten at the end of day.

*Yerba silvestre, aroma puro,
Te ruego acompañarme en mi camino.
Serás mi bálsamo y mi tragedia,
Serás mi aroma y mi gloria.
Serás mi amiga cuando crezcas sobre mi tumba.*

Allí, que la montaña me cobije,
Que el cielo me responda.
Y en piedra lápida toda quedará grabado.

For others, however, the lure of Marxism-Leninism lay in its promise to transform such moral sensibilities into rational, systematic, scientific thought and action. But the daunting jungle of Marxist dialectical materialism necessarily required a leader with an enlightening, guiding hand; an intellectual *caudillo*, so to speak, to interpret the bewildering ideology and jargon, and so lead those who seek it to the ultimate “scientific truth.” For young, radicalising Ayacuchanos like Edith Lagos, such a guide would come in the person of Abimael Guzmán Reynoso.

2.2 Formation and fragmentation of the Peruvian Maoists and the genesis of Shining Path

Raised in a middle-class family in the aristocratic highland city of Arequipa, Abimael Guzmán came to Huamanga to take up a university appointment as professor of philosophy in 1962. The reticent yet charismatic Guzmán always came across to those around him as the quintessential Peruvian professor: a creole (white-skinned) with thick-framed glasses who always dressed in a dark-coloured jacket and was rarely seen without a book in his hand. “At a boarding house on Pukacruz Street, later known to local pundits as El Kremlin, Guzmán delivered long talks on dialectical materialism and scientific socialism, and earned the nickname of Dr. Shampú for his ability to ‘brainwash’ listeners” (Starn 1995:404). Brainwashed or not, Guzmán had the ability to instil an intense sense of loyalty and dedication among his disciples.

One of the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet rift of 1961 was to split the Partido Comunista del Perú (PCP) into a pro-Soviet and a pro-Chinese faction. The rupture took place in January 1964. The latter assumed the name PCP-Bandera Roja (Red Flag), and came away with a little more than half of the former PCP’s members. Saturnino Paredes Macedo, legal advisor to the Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP), was elected as its secretary general. Guzmán, being an affirmed Maoist and leader of PCP’s Regional Committee in Ayacucho since 1963, naturally sided with Bandera Roja. “But the alliance was not whole-hearted, because almost from the beginning Guzmán had created with his most resolute lieutenants [a group] denominated as “fracción roja,” which began to operate cohesively [and clandestinely] within Bandera Roja” (Degregori 1990:18).¹⁰ The following year marked an important juncture in the history of the Maoist movement in Peru, for it was at the V National Conference that the PCP-Bandera Roja characterised Peruvian society as “semifeudal” and “semicolonial.” Moreover, it was also then that the Peruvian Maoists rejected Khrushchev’s “revisionist” line of peaceful transition to socialism through electoral politics. The necessity of armed struggle through a rural-based “protracted people’s war,” with the peasantry as the chief force of the revolution, was a fundamental principle that was also reaffirmed at the Conference.¹¹ Shortly after this, Guzmán left Ayacucho, to visit China among other reasons, but not before successfully establishing hegemony over the Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario (FER) and the Federación

Universitaria (FUSCH).

During Guzmán's absence, fierce internal polemics continued to rage within Bandera Roja as dissatisfaction with Paredes intensified. It was soon after his return to Ayacucho in 1968 that a sector of the Communist youth within PCP-Bandera Roja broke away and established a rival party—PCP-Patria Roja. Just before the split, Guzmán had been asked by the youthful conspirators if he would lead them. He turned them down, choosing instead to bide his time. And so the inevitable confrontation within Bandera Roja between Guzmán and Paredes loomed ever closer. It was Paredes who fired the first shot by launching a national offensive aimed at “closing off” the Party to Guzmán and *fracción roja*. In the internal “*guerra sucia*” that followed, Guzmán faction was eventually defeated and finally expelled from Bandera Roja in February 1970. Bandera Roja shattered soon after into a number of splinter groups, thus leaving it a mere shell of its former self. Undaunted by the turn of events, Guzmán proceeded to reconstitute, from within his stronghold of Ayacucho, “a new Maoist alternative: Sendero Luminoso” (Degregori 1990:169).¹²

While Bandera Roja's internal political struggle of will and words intensified over the first half of 1969, a more lethal struggle convulsed the cities of Huamanga and Huanta, which saw civilians and police clashing violently in the streets. At the root of this social unrest was the decision by the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces, headed by General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-75), to put an end to free secondary school education in the country.¹³ In its place, the government promulgated Decreto Supremo 006-69/EP on 4 March 1969, which stipulated that each student must pay a monthly fee of S/.100—a “sufficiently high figure, especially for the fathers of families from the rural Andean zones” (Degregori 1990:51). Given the poverty of the majority of Ayacucho's population and the importance that education had in their lives, it was hardly surprising that frustrated and angry secondary school students at Huanta decided to stage collective walkouts and protest meetings at the beginning of June, when the Ministry of Education in Lima showed utter indifference to the formal complaints made by parents' organisations.

As word of these actions quickly spread to other towns and cities—Huamanga, Huancayo, Cuzco, Huancavelica, and Cangallo—popular support for the students grew, and thousands of protesters began to pour into Huanta and Huamanga (Degregori 1990:64-5). Likewise, police reinforcements also began to arrive. In an attempt to break up the ensuing demonstrations, the police resorted to using teargas and firearms. The intensification of police repression merely provoked more and more violent brawls with enraged protesters in streets and plazas throughout the two cities. Whereas it was clearly the secondary students who took the lead in protest actions in Huanta, at Huamanga direction for the demonstrations came principally from the Frente de Defensa del Pueblo de Ayacucho (Defence Front of the People of Ayacucho), a collection of popular organisations that had already become the department's most influential and important broad-based front, and would continue to be so for years to come. In an attempt to quell the escalating demonstrations, the police in Huamanga tried to decapitate the protest movement by rounding up nearly all of the leaders of the Defensa del Pueblo in the early hours of the morning of 21 June, including a number of known militant lecturers and students from the university.

Among those arrested, and subsequently incarcerated for a few months in Lima, was Abimael Guzmán. But the capture of these leaders did nothing to dampen the unrest. The demonstrations intensified, with virtually the entire popular sector of the city eventually taking part. The city was completely paralysed. “The protest [escalated] until it took on the characteristics of a popular rebellion” (Degregori 1990:69).

The following morning, more than ten thousand peasants from the valley (including a small number of *puna* highlanders marching in front) advanced en masse towards the Plaza de Armas in Huanta. They were still angry from the recent news that the police had secretly transported to Lima all the peasant federation leaders they had arrested some nights earlier. As they entered the outskirts of the city, they were greeted with a volley of teargas. The vast sea of bodies wavered for a moment. But it managed to regroup and advance again, this time with the women marching at the fore, linked arm in arm. A lone, unarmed elderly peasant woman walked ahead of the crowd, obviously intending to parley with the police. “It [was] a moment of tension and silence. With her arms raised in the air the peasant woman [advanced], but a machinegun burst [knocked] her down” (Degregori 1990:71). The peasants unleashed their fury on the policemen with a hail of stones from their slings. Reinforced soon after by the arrival of a large number of local students, the peasants clashed violently with the police in the streets. By mid-afternoon the policemen had been driven back as a group into the central plaza. Fighting every step of the way, the peasants and students closed in, very likely with the intention of finishing the policemen off. The situation for the policemen seemed grave, for they were rapidly running out of ammunition. But just when it seemed they would be overwhelmed, the sudden arrival of the Sinchis saved them.¹⁴ Rushing to the aid of their beleaguered comrades, the relief column of around two-hundred Sinchis fired indiscriminately into the crowd, causing numerous injuries and deaths. The peasants and students scattered. They fled down the streets, closely pursued by policemen shooting madly after them.

With vicious and brutal efficiency, the Sinchis quickly suppressed the demonstrations, first in Huamanga and then in Huanta. Order was restored through terror, and the streets were cleared of people. A curfew was imposed and anyone wandering on to the streets risked being summarily shot. Over the following days, more arrests were made of suspected instigators.

Stunned by the degree of popular resistance to D.S. 006, the military government repealed it that very same month, but not before at least eighteen people (including two children and the elderly peasant woman) had been killed by the police, and many more wounded in the demonstrations.

The movement of '69 in defence of free education would pass into local legend, and was by far the largest and most important social movement to occur in Ayacucho between 1960 and 1980. For many of the secondary school students who would go on to become the backbone of Shining Path a decade later, the ordeal served as their baptism of fire: it was their first experience of mobilising a truly spontaneous mass movement, and their first taste of what it is like to confront the “reactionary forces” of the State. Moreover, they had united with and witnessed for themselves the formidable “revolutionary” violence and valour of an otherwise disorganised and unarmed peasantry. In the minds of many of these students, their military defeat

owing to the superior weaponry of the Sinchis confirmed what Mariategui had recognised earlier, that “To triumph, the people need arms, a programme and a doctrine” (Bandera Roja 1969:9 in Degregori 1990:238). The vicious repression unleashed by the Sinchis was branded into the collective memory of the Ayacuchanos, instilling an enduring, popular hatred for the police, on which the Shining Path would later capitalise during the years of people’s war.

It was not Guzmán’s Regional Committee, but rather the secondary students of Huanta who were the protagonists of the struggle, a fact which partly explains why the students in Huamanga were slow in taking up the fight (Degregori 1990:170-171).¹⁵ Preoccupied with their own struggle within PCP-BR, Guzmán and *fracción roja* had initially shown little concern for the tempest that was brewing in Huanta. They were thus astonished by the independent initiative exhibited by the masses of Huamanga in organising and mobilising themselves. As Degregori noted, *fracción roja* in particular, and Bandera Roja in general, would subsequently recognise that “perhaps they were not sufficiently present in the struggle for free education” (Degregori 1990:179). But even though they were not at the forefront of the uprising, most of the Regional Committee’s members were nevertheless participants, as a result of which many were arrested and eventually imprisoned by the authorities on suspicion of having instigated the riots in Huamanga. Even so, the subsequent enrolment of many of these Huantinos at the UNSCH during the next decade, combined with Shining Path’s rising hegemony within the Frente de Defensa, would eventually result in the impression of Shining Path as “the depository of the experience of 1969” (Degregori 1990:186).

Expelled from the PCP-Bandera Roja, and with many of his followers (himself included) in the Frente de Defensa captured by the police on the eve of the uprising in Huamanga, Guzmán was left with a battered power base reduced to only regional importance. Moreover, that Paredes retained, at least for the time being, a dominating influence within the Confederación Campesina del Perú meant that any political headway that Shining Path could make into the peasant movement at the national level was limited. Shining Path’s response to these setbacks was to retreat to its stronghold of the UNSCH. It attempted to turn the university into an “anti-fascist little Yenan” against the military government, leaving it up to the rest of the Peruvian left to “go to the masses” (Degregori 1990:185). Till now, the quality and degree of organising work done by Guzmán and his followers among the peasantry had been fairly limited (Degregori 1990; Coronel 1996:42-43; cf. Strong 1992:34-35). In practice, their activities tended to be concentrated mainly in Huamanga, at the university, rather than in the countryside. However, in 1969, the Regional Committee dispatched Osmán Morote, one of Guzmán’s most important and trusted lieutenants, and a small group of militants to investigate conditions of servility and exploitation among Huanta’s high-altitude communities. On the basis of this research, Morote went on to write his undergraduate thesis in anthropology (Coronel 1996:42). His arrest in 1970 on charges of attempting to sabotage the Agrarian Reform would lead to yet another arrest of Guzman, and the both of them would spend a number of months jailed up in Lima. According to anthropologist José Coronel, a native of Huanta, this latest setback paralysed the work being carried out by Guzmán’s follow-

ers in the province until about 1975. In the meantime, they maintained only very little contact with the peasantry (Coronel 1996:42).

With the bitter experience of the internal power struggle in Bandera Roja still fresh in their minds, Shining Path's leadership embarked on the task of achieving conformity in the Party's political thought by purging its ranks of "revisionists." This process would take up most of the first half of the 1970s, resulting in little political work being done in the countryside. In so far as it was imperative that the Party be prepared for its historic mission—its "destiny," as they saw it—as the organised proletarian vanguard of the imminent revolutionary war, priority was placed on preserving and protecting the integrity of the Party, its leadership, and the orthodox political line (Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought). A "profound study" of the intellectual works of José Carlos Mariátegui—the socialist, *indigenista* thinker of the early twentieth century and founder of the Socialist Party of Peru in 1928—would provide the point from which to begin the reconstitution of the PCP. It was in order to glean the wisdom and guidance of this venerated "proletarian intellectual" and, more importantly, "to continue advancing theoretically what he masterfully began,"¹⁶ that Guzmán and his cadres formed the Centro de Trabajo Intelectual Mariátegui in the early 1970s. In addition, Guzmán and his cadres took advantage of their control or influence over the administrative and pedagogical apparatus of the UNSCH between 1969 and 1973 by utilising the university as their primary means of recruiting and indoctrinating the Party's core support base of university students. For instance, as the university's Director of Personnel during this period Guzmán was able to install his followers in key positions within the institution. Antonio Díaz Martínez, renowned author of *Ayacucho: Hambre y Esperanza* (1969) and a senior Shining Path leader, held the office of Director of Student Welfare, which put him in contact with the poorest provincial students at the university. Moreover, the hegemony of Shining Path's personnel at the UNSCH was such that they were able to influence the very curriculum of compulsory introductory courses (*ciclo básico*) that were to be taught to all first-year students. In this manner, impressionable freshers with limited life experiences received an academic diet of Shining Path's political vision, passed off as scientific and therefore the only "correct" interpretation of Peruvian reality. "Soon the course on Historical Materialism replaced the Introduction to the Social Sciences, Dialectics of Nature the Biological Sciences, Dialectical Materialism monopolised the classes in Philosophy including those of Physics (matter and movement). Rapidly, similar courses presented themselves in the different study programmes, especially in Social Sciences and Education" (Degregori 1990:186). In addition, Shining Path's control of the teacher training programme throughout the 1970s provided a crucial means (via posted teachers) of disseminating its doctrine and recruiting secondary school students in Huamanga and Huanta, and in various other rural districts and provincial capitals in the provinces of Cangallo, Víctor Fajardo, and Vilcashuamán. In these areas, Party-affiliated teachers came to act as its eyes and ears, gathering information and looking out for the Party's local interests.

2.3 The Peruvian peasantry as interpreted by Mariátegui and Guzmán

What, then, was Shining Path's understanding of the political economy of peasant society, and its revolutionary significance? Why did it regard the Peruvian peasantry as the "principal force of the national-democratic revolution," the "principal contingent" of the People's War?¹⁷ And what were to be the relations of power and authority between the peasantry and the Party? Answers to these questions lie in Shining Path's understanding of what the fundamental characteristics of Peruvian society were, and of the peasantry's condition in particular. In this regard, Guzmán drew his conclusions principally from José Carlos Mariátegui's analysis and interpretation of "Peruvian reality."

Fragmented and dogmatically divided though it was by the end of the 1960s, there is little doubt that the Peruvian Marxist Left as a whole continued generally to endorse Mariátegui's position: (1) that "[it] is impossible to understand Peruvian reality without searching for and discovering the economic factor," and (2) that "the fundamental problem of Peru, that of the Indian and the land, is most of all a problem of the Peruvian economy" (1925:59). Or stated more specifically,

Any treatment of the problem of the Indian—written or verbal—that fails or refuses to recognize it as a socio-economic problem is but a sterile, theoretical exercise destined to be completely discredited....The socialist critic exposes and defines the problem because he looks for its causes in the country's economy and not in its administrative, legal, or ecclesiastic machinery, its racial dualism or pluralism, or its cultural or moral conditions. The problem of the Indian is rooted in the land tenure system of our economy. Any attempt to solve it with administrative or police measures, through education or by a road building program, is superficial and secondary as long as the feudalism of the gamonales continues to exist (Mariátegui 1971:22).¹⁸

Mariátegui perceived the condition of Peruvian society to be fundamentally "semifeudal" and "semicolonial" in so far as its economic forces were dominated and dictated to by imperialist foreign powers (like the United States and Great Britain), and its national politics and its majority indigenous population were controlled, subjugated, and exploited by the country's seigneurial class. He described the land tenure system of his time as "feudal," characterised by the existence of the *latifundio* and by the servitude of the indigenous population to the gamonal. The *gamonales* were the *hacendados*, the owners of large landed estates (*haciendas* or *latifundios*) and ranches (*estancias*) in the sierra. Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, powerful *gamonal* families had been carving up the administrative and economic territory of the highlands for themselves, and in the process controlling access both to indigenous labour and to public offices at local and provincial levels (Poole 1994b:5; Rénique 1994:230). They not only "exerted their influence, power, and authority mostly by the traditional means of paternalism and clientelism [sic]" (Klarén

2000:324). In the sierra, *gamonales* also utilised brutal violence to inscribe and reinforce relations of social and racial domination between themselves and the indigenous peasantry. In so doing, they produced a cultural system of violent exploitation known as *gamonalismo*.¹⁹ For much of the twentieth century, the geographical remoteness of Andean regions in relation to Lima placed much of the sierra out of reach of the central government's effective control and intervention, which permitted *gamonales* to assume regional dominance. *Gamonales* not only exercised power directly on their estates; they also exerted influence and hegemony over the functions of the bureaucratic, legislative, judicial, and executive organs of the state. Thus, says Mariátegui, *gamonales* exploit and cause harm both to the indigenous population and to the nation as a whole. Gamonal feudalism, he argued, is an anachronistic, economically non-productive, and parasitic condition which hampers the full use of existing productive forces, thereby impeding the possibilities and processes of economic (particularly capitalist) and political development in the country.

Mariátegui maintained that the special character of the agrarian problem in Peru was manifest in "the survival of the Indian 'community' and [in] elements of practical socialism in indigenous agriculture and life" (1971:33). Mariátegui was convinced that the Incan *ayllu*, whose modern manifestation he considered to be the Indian community, could "gradually convert itself into the basic unit of a modern socialist state" (1927b:86). The building of a new nation and social order on these "Indian foundations" would, in his view, serve once and for all to incorporate and assimilate the "Indian" into Peruvian society, thereby resolving the indigenous problem. He concluded that the "problem of the Indian" and the "problem of land" are fundamentally one and the same: indigenous emancipation in Peru could be achieved only with the total liquidation of feudalism and of *gamonalismo*; and this can only be done by abolishing the *gamonal's* source of power—the *latifundio*.

Recognising the weakness of the Peruvian bourgeoisie and its close ties with the *latifundistas*, however, Mariátegui argued that they could not be relied upon to eliminate feudal relations in the countryside, and thereby resolve the agrarian question in the interest of the indigenous peasants. That task, he said, must fall to the revolutionary indigenous masses themselves, under the guidance of the socialist workers' vanguard: the Socialist Party (Mariátegui 1929:107-108). Before he could see his revolutionary ideas and aspirations put into practice, however, his life was tragically cut short by illness just one and a half years later, after which the Socialist Party soon submitted to the hegemony of the Stalinist-led Comintern and changed its name to the Communist Party. Yet despite the transitory existence of Mariátegui's Socialist Party, it is nevertheless to his lasting credit as the distinguished founder of Peruvian Marxism that every organisation that has subsequently taken the name "Partido Comunista del Perú" (including Shining Path) considers itself the direct descendant of the party which he founded.

Why were Mariátegui's works so appealing to Guzmán? For one thing, because his approach to interpreting Peruvian society, his theoretical and analytical orientation, so easily accommodates Mao Tse-tung Thought, which in turn merely strengthened its relevance to Guzmán's own doctrinal interpretations of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Mariátegui wrote first and foremost as a revolutionist whose primary purpose was to identify and denounce the perceived evils of his day in Marxist language.

Mariátegui's interest in the indigenous community focused mainly on the extent to which it represented for him the "communistic" productive unit upon which a future socialist Peruvian state could be founded.²⁰ He firmly held the romantic idea that the "practical socialism" of indigenous agricultural life formed the essence of the "Indian" (Mariátegui 1971:34-35). His analytical treatment of the indigenous community reduces indigenous society to its barest economic essentials, and (inadvertently) practically consigns the rural masses to a life of farming. This is clearly illustrated in the agrarian policy he envisaged, whereby in his opinion "[State] action...should be directed toward the transformation of the agricultural communities into production and consumption cooperatives....The state should organize agricultural education for its maximum diffusion among the rural masses through rural primary school and practical agricultural schools, etc. The education of the children of the countryside should have a clearly agricultural character" (1927b:86-87. My emphasis). That future generations of the rural populace might develop ambitions, motives, goals, and interests that depart from the agricultural activities of their parents and grandparents appears not even to have been considered in his writings.

Peasant communities are not slaves to social structures and cultural traditions—certainly not to presumed primeval sentiments—but instead are made up of individuals who have goals and interests of their own. In spite of external pressures, peasants are nevertheless able to exercise initiative and a degree of agency. But even though Mariátegui recognised that peasant communities do adapt to transformations in their larger social environment, it is astonishing that he did not consider such processes as seasonal labour migration, market penetration in the Andes, and the numerous emerging avenues for social mobility (e.g. increased education and diversification towards commercial activities)—all of which were already evident in his own lifetime—were not only transforming peasant communities and changing the aspirations and social identities of its members, but also providing alternative, less radical avenues for escaping extreme poverty and feudal domination. Nothing could quench his conviction that only a radical socialist revolution can achieve indigenous emancipation.

Although many of Mariátegui's observations about of the country's semifeudal and semicolonial conditions, and about the feudal exploitation of the indigenous peasantry by the *gamonales* remained accurate and valid for many parts of Peru even well into the 1960s, when it came to Andean peasant culture and society he seemed to focus mainly on aspects which enabled him to develop a particular line of argumentative interpretation that was invariably directed towards class struggle, the main emphasis of his thought. For instance, he maintained that the Peruvian peasantry comprised an economic class (the "agricultural proletariat," he called them), yet he did not consider how local antagonisms, competition and internal stratification, based on economic and social differences between different categories of Andean peasants, might have diminished or stifled the existence or the emergence of a "peasant" class consciousness. Instead, he chose to emphasise the exploitation and subjugation of disparate populations by *gamonales*—as though commonly shared domination were a sufficient criteria to create a collective consciousness of kind, a class consciousness. Mariátegui was also silent about the importance of other identities—ethnic and *paisanaje*,²¹ for instance—which cross-cut class differences, and as such work against

the emergence of a broad peasant class consciousness. Even today, the majority of Andean peasants define themselves certainly not as “Indians,” nor even primarily as members of the peasantry, but rather according to their own local community identity, which is displayed with cultural markers (such as distinctive clothing styles, different dialects), and is sometimes socially reinforced through endogamous marriage.

In addition, Mariátegui also romantically depicted the *comunero* (villager) as endowed with “an established habit of cooperation” as far as common labour is concerned (1929:106-107). In fact, however, there is no evidence that collective labour in Andean communities has ever been automatically inspired or actualised by an inherent, harmonious spirit of “natural communism.” Rather, one’s ability to obtain labour rests on the capacity to utilise reciprocity networks based on and determined by the strength and extent of one’s kinship relations (Isbell 1978; Mitchell 1991; Stern 1982; Nuñez 1995). And while he waxed eloquent with admiration for a communist spirit which he imagined existed in peasant communities, Mariátegui offered no recognition or meaningful analysis of the normative principle of popular democracy that regulates Andean polities—something that in fact is often of greater social importance for Andean peasant communities than the degree of economic collectivism. Economic conditions and relations of production may have changed dramatically since the turn of the century. But today as in Mariátegui’s time, local authorities are still elected at a general assembly by all adult members of the community. (There was a break in this practice during military rule in the 1970s, when all bureaucratic positions were appointed.) Village leaders derive their legitimacy and authority largely on the support and consensus received from other village members, and on the extent to which they are able to fulfil their obligations and duties towards the community. Even today, communal property is still administered and watched over by elected authorities organised into a *Comité de Administración* and a *Comité de Vigilancia*, and matters of general community interest are ordinarily discussed and decided at community assemblies by a general democratic vote (see Isbell 1978; Mitchell 1991; Nuñez 1995).²² One might say, in short, that rather than economic collectivism, it is democratic participation and decision making that are the major normative principles regulating Andean peasant polities. Even bureaucratic governmental officials—the representatives of the State at the local level—cannot wield power despotically, for their actions and the extent of their authority are, in principle, defined and limited by Peruvian law, and indigenous standards of justice and legitimacy.²³ Indeed, the ethnographic and historical records clearly show that Andean communities attempt to preserve a measure of sociopolitical autonomy and self-determination by constantly trying to resist outsider interference in local affairs (Isbell 1978; Mitchell 1978; also Stern 1982). Democratic representation and participation, and the defence of autonomy and self-determination, are important sociocultural values for Andean communities that were also lost on Shining Path. This, as we shall see, was to have grave consequence on Shining Path’s relations with Ayacuchan peasant communities, particularly when it attempted to impose its new totalitarian order in the countryside.

In the fifty years since Mariátegui’s death, the characteristics of Peruvian society has been transformed dramatically, and the wealth of ethnographic data collected since then has increased the general scholastic understanding of the dynamics of

Andean peasant society. That many of Mariátegui's conclusions regarding peasant values has since been shown to be problematic by more contemporary ethnographic data has had no effect on Shining Path's own doctrinal understanding of peasant society. In fact, Guzmán has dismissed this scientific evidence altogether as "false," as "lies" trafficked by "bourgeois supplanters (*superadores*)."

What do these individuals do? They have the habit of accumulating data: that typical intellectual richness of the bourgeoisie....They believe that the more data one has, the better interpreter one is, ...which of course it is absurd....[But the problem]...is not a matter of accumulating data...the problem lies on the interpretation, and Mariátegui called it "Seven Essays of Interpretation," not seven essays of data accumulation. And the problem of interpretation is a problem of class position, of proletarian ideology and of dialectical materialist method....The problem with these individuals is that they lack unity of thought....They may have a great intelligence, great wit, but they lack a base. It is a like building a house that has a roof but lack of a foundation. They lack class position and that is why they cannot go further.²⁴

For Guzmán, then, Mariátegui's observations remained valid sources of inspiration and instruction, and continued to offer guidelines for the true interpretation of "Peruvian reality." It is almost certainly for this reason that Shining Path so blatantly disregarded decades of "empirical social change," and instead maintained that the fundamental Mariateguista interpretation of Peruvian society as "semifeudal" and "semicolonial" remains valid and historically consistent.

Following the doctrinal path of Mao and the interpretations of Mariateguista, Shining Path arrived at a strategic appreciation of the peasantry as the principal force of people's war by virtue of, firstly, their being the numerically largest class in the country, and secondly, of the fact that it was their class interests that were most directly and acutely at odds with those of the *gamonal* landlord class. "The peasantry is the basis of the people's war," declares an official publication of the Party. "This is a peasant war or it is nothing."²⁵ Furthermore, in so far as peasant communities are understood, according to Mariátegui, to be intrinsically communistic units of production, the Party would come to view them as natural support bases for guerrilla forces.

Even so, in Shining Path's scheme of things it would not be peasant leaders but rather the proletariat—or more precisely the proletarian vanguard, which is the Communist Party—that would politicise, control, direct, and lead the irresistible revolutionary force of the peasantry. "The peasantry [is] the main force in our society while the proletariat [is] the leading class, and...the road we must follow [is] from the countryside to the city," Guzmán once declared.²⁶ Shining Path's claim to the leadership of the revolution was based, of course, on its conviction (typical of all Marxist-Leninist parties) that only the Party has a clear understanding of the "line of march," both political and military. Armed with Marxist-Leninist doctrine, its members were convinced that only they who were capable of determining and defining what the true interests of "the people" are, of laying down what is true or false, valid or invalid in

every field of knowledge. All other conflicting opinions were to be disregarded on the basis of a failure to understand, as Guzmán himself ordained when he stated: "Society is governed by laws, but those who do not follow Marxism cannot understand those laws."²⁷ As Starn points out, "[in] this hierarchical...view of party supremacy, the poor majorities figured as the malleable objects of revolutionary truth..." (1995:408). As would become evident in subsequent years, Shining Path, just like any other Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party, never intended to conduct a revolution based on the democratic participation (both in action and in thought) of the peasant masses. There would be orders instead of discussion; unquestioning obedience in place of reflective criticism; and brutal force would increasingly be relied upon, rather than persuasion, to keep the masses in line. Of course, Shining Path's "vanguardist" orientation was by no means unique as far as communist parties go (see Geschwender 1983). But it is this persistent tendency found in all communist parties to exhibit patronising, authoritarian, totalitarian behaviour that has often led them to misread or to stubbornly disregard the people's actual historical necessities, and in so doing to alienate themselves from the masses.²⁸

Shining Path's official references to the peasantry have been almost exclusively rhetorical. When commenting about the peasantry, Shining Path's exclusive concern is to expound on its oppressed condition, its conflicts with the landlord class and bureaucratic capitalism, and about the peasantry's historical importance as a revolutionary force. It makes no mention, for instance, of the peasantry's various adaptive livelihood strategies, of the importance of migrant labour as a supplement source of livelihood to their primary activity of subsistence agriculture. Nor do Shining Path documents mention a place for Andean culture within the vaguely defined "New Democracy" that the guerrilla group aims to create through armed revolution. Among the Party's stated goals, the revindication of Andean culture or of indigenous ethnic nationality are certainly not among them (cf. Strong 1992). The word *ayllu* is absent in all major PCP-SL documents, and it is obvious from reading these that it is not the indigenous community, but rather the Party's own "generated organism" that are intended to constitute the foundations of the future Senderista state.²⁹ Andean peasant economy was assumed to be fully capable of self-sufficiency, yet whose problem was that it was being held back by the exploitative demands of the landlord and bureaucratic-capitalist class. The Party viewed the Andean peasantry's intensive interaction with the external market as characterised by subservient dependency, and regarded peasant culture as encumbered by cultural practices and traditions that are merely rooted in economic foundations and relations of domination.³⁰ Shining Path's moral code condemned coca and alcohol use, and denounced the ritualistic observation of religious cargos as a "wasteful" anachronistic practice that serves only the interests of the *hacendados*, the "parasitic" traders and shopkeepers, and the Church. The Party therefore aimed not only to demolish bourgeois and feudal culture. It also set itself the task of separating peasants from what it regarded were the superstitious and conservative aspects of their culture—a culture which the Party deemed as doing nothing more than to serve a feudal class that has dominated and to a great extent has shaped peasant thought, culture, and world view. Thus Guzmán himself declared the need to "transform the feudal-fatalist mentality" of the peasantry by replacing it with a "philosophy of struggle,"³¹ a process which, when necessary, involves "pounding the

ideas [of People's War] into the minds of [the peasant masses] with compelling deeds" (PCP-SL 1988:IV in Degregori 1989a:24). This almost certainly explains why Shining Path has shown such indifference to and outright contempt for "traditional" Andean culture.

In order to sweep the old order completely away, the peasantry must be harnessed, says Shining Path, as the principal force of an armed revolution waged under the leadership of the proletarian vanguard. In 1970, however, the onset of Shining Path's "People's War" was still a decade away. In the meantime, one of the paradoxical ironies of Peruvian history was about to take place. For while the plethora of radical Marxist organisations merely talked of revolution, the dismantling of the large estates and the nationalisation of industry was already being carried out by the very institution Marxists regard as the pillar and "reactionary arm" of the bourgeois state—the armed forces.

2.4 The revolutionary government of the armed forces and its land reform

In the early hours of the morning of 3 October 1968, the Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas (GRFFAA) calmly seized power through a bloodless coup. Fernando Belaúnde Terry, the deposed civilian president, was irreverently ushered out of the Presidential Palace, still in his pyjamas. Within a few hours he had been placed on a flight and exiled to Buenos Aires. Thus began twelve years of military rule, the first half of which would be a turbulent period of "revolution by decree" (Kruijt 1994).

The reasons behind the coup were twofold. Firstly, to prevent the likely electoral victory of an increasingly conservative APRA party, whose political machinations in Congress and its "*convivencia*" (coexistence) with the old oligarchy were obstructing the structural reforms deemed by progressive military officers as necessary in order to check the dangerous political advance of the radical Left. Secondly, to overthrow a discredited civilian government tainted by mounting corruption and scandal, and clearly failing in its efforts to bring off the promised reforms needed for achieving national development (Kruijt 1994.:25-26; Klarén 2000:323-338). The coup reflected a growing progressiveness within the younger faction of the officer corps which, ever since the early 1960s, placed ever-greater importance on the concept of promoting internal security through national development, especially in the light of the failed guerrilla insurgencies of 1965.³² In view of the apparent ineptitude of the civilian government to make progress in implementing urgent reforms, this officer corps grew "increasingly confident that they had the will, the civic responsibility, and the expertise to carry out the transformation of the country" (Klarén 2000:337: Kruijt 1994:26). Within a small circle of progressive army officer conspirators under the leadership of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, an ambitious programme of progressive social and economic reform was drawn up shortly before they launched their coup. Its name was Plan Inca. "The reforms, conceptualized as a coherent anti-poverty strategy, were to prevent another guerrilla uprising in the future" (Kruijt 1996:243).³³ Plan Inca proposed major structural reforms in the areas of government,

taxation, industry, and banking; but forming its centrepiece was a sweeping land reform.

Table 2.1: Distribution of landholdings in south-central sierra and the rest of the country (1961)

Hectares	South-Central Sierra*		Rest of Peru		
	Productive units %	Hectares %	Productive units %	Hectares %	
0-4	87.5	7.8	79.3	5.8	
5-9	6.6	2.7	11.4	3.3	
10-19	2.5	1.0	4.6	2.9	
20-99	1.9	4.6	3.5	6.2	
100-499	0.5	8.5	0.7	7.2	
500+	0.4	60.7	0.2	65.4	
communities	0.03	13.1	0.03	8.8	
	99.43	99.4	99.73	99.6	

Source: after Cotler 1994:24

* The South-central sierra region referred to here consists of the departments of Ancash, Apurímac, Ayacucho, Cuzco, Huancavelica, and Puno.

Prior to the military government’s agrarian reform, most of the country’s land was owned by a very small elite, just as Mariátegui had described it (see Table 2.1). Various reformist schemes had already made motions towards a more equitable redistribution of land from as early as the 1920s. But landed interests, represented by an oligarchy that continued to dominate Congress far into the 1960s, consistently hindered the advancement of comprehensive agrarian reform in the country—so much so that it did not even become a matter for serious governmental consideration and debate until the late 1950s (Lowenthal ed. 1975:27). The rare and scattered instances in which land reform actually took place, like the modest one attempted by the military junta of General Ricardo Pérez Godoy in 1962-63, and the *hacienda* expropriations decreed by Fernando Belaúnde Terry in 1964, were disappointing in their scope. For the most part, they “were limited to the geographical area actually suffering acute unrest” (Lowenthal ed. 1975:28). Certainly, no prior attempt at agrarian reform was as vigorous in scope and intensity as the one implemented by the military junta between 1969 and 1975, under Decreto Legislativo No.17716. On 24 June 1969, General Velasco pronounced the agrarian reform legislation in a televised speech that was meant to raise the hopes and dreams of poor and landless peasants, while simultaneously sounding the knell for landlord power in Peru:

Today, for the Day of the Indian, the Day of the Peasant, the Revolutionary Government honors them with the best of tributes by giving to the nation a law that will end forever the unjust social order that impoverished and oppressed the millions of landless peasants

who have always been forced to work the land of others....Today, Peru has a government dedicated to conquering the country's development with the definitive cancellation of old social and economic structures that no longer have any validity in our times.....Peasant: the Master will no longer feed off your poverty! (quoted in Starn et al. 1995:265-6, 269)

In addition, Velasco also decreed that the class-based term "*campesino*" (peasant) was henceforth to be used in place of the explicitly derogatory and racist label "*indio*" (Indian). Quechua was proclaimed as the second national language.³⁴ Peasant communities saw in D.L. 17716 a welcome opportunity to recover lands illegally seized in the past by encroaching latifundios (e.g. Rénique 1994). On the other hand, former workers and "serfs" (*colonos* or *feudatarios*) of sizeable estates looked forward to acquiring for themselves the plots of land which they previously had been renting or holding in usufruct. Furthermore, the reformist political and legal atmosphere that existed in the first half of the 1970s offered hope to peasants that they might finally receive a favourable ruling from courts that in the past had almost always adjudicated land disputes in favour of the landowner.

Obviously, the agrarian reform failed in its aim to prevent another insurgency. Still, one cannot deny that it drove the last nail into the coffin of a feudalistic *latifundio* regime that had, in any case, been rapidly declining in most parts of Peru ever since the beginning of the 1950s.³⁵ Yet even so, the project and the bureaucratic infrastructure that it gave rise to also exacerbated or created conflicts and contradictions that would later fan the flames of a revolutionary war (Kay 2001:748-749; Kay 1982). In terms of land distribution, the military's agrarian reform appears to have dashed many more expectations than it satisfied. According to Klarén, "[a]t the end of the reform period, only a quarter of the rural population had gained access to the land, which still...ranked Peru, along with India, as having the worst man-land ration in the world (only 0.18 hectares of crop land per person). Moreover, the reform did little to alter the poverty of peasants in the poorest parts of the country, such as in Ayacucho, where the Shining Path insurgency would emerge a decade later" (2000:348). But undoubtedly the greatest shortcoming of the agrarian reform in Ayacucho was that it simply was of little socioeconomic and political relevance to the vast majority of peasant households in the department (see Table 2.4). The reason for this was that the fragmentation, sale, or abandonment of *hacienda* lands as a consequence of the failure of Ayacucho's *hacendados* to modernise had been gradually taking place since as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century (Degregori 1990:103-104). From about 1940 onwards it was already possible for *feudatarios* and *comuneros* in many parts of the department to purchase land from haciendas without having to resort to land invasions, the general practice being to purchase large parcels of land jointly and afterwards to receive usufruct rights individually (ibid. 1990:104, fn.31).³⁶

Table 2.2: Total arable land Department of Ayacucho (1981, 1996)

Total surface area of department of Ayacucho	4,418,104 ha.
Total area of land under cultivation	211,000 ha. (1981) 212,122 ha. (1996)
Irrigated	75,000 ha. (1981) 67,746 ha. (1996)
Un-irrigated	136,000 ha. (1981) 144,376 ha. (1996)

Source: INE 1983b:x; Huamani Oré 1996:15-16

The brief appearance of the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) in La Mar in 1965, and their subsequent execution of the *gamonal* Carrillo brothers, merely quickened the pace at which the *hacendados* were abandoning their estates (Degregori 1990:104). Even in the hacienda-dominated *punas* of Huanta and La Mar, the most important peasant mobilisations in the 1960s took place not in demand for land—which they eventually obtained through Velasco’s agrarian reform anyway—but rather in protest of relations of servitude and various other forms of exploitation practised by the *hacendados* (Coronel 1996:35). In the end, it was primarily in the hacienda-dominated *punas* of La Mar and Huanta provinces that the agrarian reform would have any significant impact on the lives of the local inhabitants (ibid.:38; McClintock 1989; Kay 1982).

Thus the struggle for land never became a central political issue of peasant mobilisation in Ayacucho during the 1960s and 1970s, as it did in other Peruvian departments, like Cuzco. By far the largest and most important social movement to take place in Ayacucho during the period between 1960 and 1980 was not the struggle for land, but rather the defence of free education, described above.

Table 2.3: Total number of rural families. Department of Ayacucho (1972, 1981)

1972		1981	
Families*	Individuals	Families*	Individuals
74,507	306,904	74,544	319,704

Source: INEI 1983b:xxix ; Huamani Oré 1996:25

* These are rough approximations, calculated from census data on the rural population and the number of homes (*hogares*) for 1972, 1981.

Table 2.4: Impact of Agrarian Reform. Department of Ayacucho (1976) and Peru (1979)

Juridical status of land	Area affected	Number of families benefited
A AWARDED	96,723.13 ha.	8,427
B UNDER CONSIDERATION	228,333.80 ha.	4,809
C PENDING ADJUDICATION	235,223.13 ha.	14,927
D EXEMPT FROM ADJUDICATION	28,165.13 ha.	
AYACUCHO TOTAL (A+B+C)	560,280.06 ha.	28,163
PERU, 1979	8,599,253.00 ha.	399,576
	<i>Total expropriated</i>	<i>27% of Peru's rural families benefited</i>

Source: after Degregori 1986:219; McClintock 1984:65

For the hundreds of peasants who, just days before, had risked their lives for the sake of their children's future by clashing with policemen in Huanta, the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces must indeed have seemed capricious that it would promulgate the Agrarian Reform law on the very same day that it repealed the hated D.S. 006. The introduction of the land reform law at the same time as the people of Ayacucho were still mourning for those who had fallen in the defence of free education did nothing to ingratiate a population which had only recently been brutally repressed by the coercive forces of the government. In the light of these events, it would be accurate to say that the overwhelming mood of most Ayacuchanos (particularly its popular classes) towards the State was one of deep mistrust and suspicion.

In spite of the military government's best intentions and modest achievements, it had become apparent by the middle of the decade that the reform structures and economic policies it had put in place were frequently at odds with the priorities of the peasants communities and peasant groups (Kay 1982, 2001). The government's decision to create state-controlled agricultural and livestock cooperatives (*empresas asociativas*), "rather than to restore the land in the form of individual or communal holdings" (Rénique 1994:225), caused widespread disillusionment and resentment among peasants towards the official land reform and its administrators (see Deere 1990:234-261, Nuñez 1995:35-36, Berg 1992:87-90). As Rénique observed, "[by] taking the 'associative' option, the government sought to preserve the administration and assets of the expropriated estates while at the same time defusing and controlling peasant demands for land. What actually happened, however, was that old tensions [i.e., peasant-*hacendado* tensions] were transferred to the new units, where an administration concerned with maximizing profits clashed with peasant communities that wished to use the pastureland for their own production" (1994:227). In many instances, the peasant response to the state-organised cooperatives imposed on their communities and lifestyle was simply one of non-cooperation. In 1977, for example, of the 127 families that comprised the Cooperativa Agraria de Producción (CAP) "Gervasio Santillana" in the province of Huanta just ten worked regularly, and twenty-three

only occasionally (Coronel 1978).³⁷

Over time, rampant corruption and the exploitation of managerial positions within the agrarian reform organisations merely fuelled the resentment and growing distrust felt by the rural population towards self-serving state officials, particularly the cooperative administrators. Land conflicts would eventually also arise between agrarian cooperatives and adjacent peasants communities, with the latter coming to resent the cooperatives for functioning as a new form of *hacienda*. By the beginning of the 1980s, for instance, many peasant communities in the department of Huancavelica were already convinced that the reform had not been of benefit to them. Consequently, peasant communities in areas like Huancavelica continued to struggle for the consolidation and protection of their communal lands from cooperative appropriation (Toro Quinto 1982).

Rural tensions in the south-central highlands were further exacerbated when the commercial vacuum caused by the demise of the *haciendas* came increasingly to be filled by petty entrepreneurs, and by a small number of middle-class and rich peasants who had made money working on the coast or in the jungle. The emergence of a small class of richer peasants led increasingly to polarised differences in wealth in many villages. This, in turn, inflamed social tensions, particularly when prosperous peasants would attempt to disregard reciprocity relations with their neighbours or relatives, or to cease partaking in rituals that had traditionally served to redistribute surpluses in the village, like the civic-religious cargo system called *varas* (Mitchell 1991; Isbell 1978).³⁸ In many instances, richer peasants also changed their religion from Roman Catholicism to Evangelical Protestantism for the primary reason that the latter better suited their new economic interests and activities by freeing them from the burden of sponsoring costly Catholic-inspired festivals. Economic rationalisation by richer peasants, however, was often interpreted by poorer neighbours as expressions of greed and selfishness. That richer peasants commonly ceased to participate in traditional social relations, yet continued to retain and, indeed, use their new wealth to accumulate additional land in their villages, merely exacerbated popular resentment towards them. Such individuals were regarded by poorer villagers as “*explotadores*”—even as new *gamonales*—who refused to participate in the local moral economy but nevertheless continued to enjoy and exploit the scarce resources of the village (Berg 1992:96-97; Mitchell 1991). By the mid-1970s, then, “the *hacendados* were gone but the same relations of exploitation were reproduced by the new class of rich peasants, the new state bureaucrats who replaced the old officials, and on *ex-haciendas* by the administrators of the new state cooperatives” (Isbell 1988:63). In this way, it came to be widely believed by peasants that local *gamonal* power endured, albeit transformed into new expressions by new social actors, in spite of the demise of the landlords. In the next chapter, we shall see how Senderistas were frequently able to use anti-*gamonal* rhetoric, which many rural inhabitants of depressed regions like Ayacucho still regarded as a valid frame of reference for their everyday experiences of injustice, in order to capitalise on local class tensions and a popular distrust for agrarian reform administrators and other state bureaucrats. (This is the essence of Guzman’s thesis of “bureaucratic capitalism,” which is known within the Party as “Gonzalo Thought.”)³⁹

In spite of its problems and shortcomings, the reformist military regime nevertheless helped to create social, economic, and political conditions which enabled a

greater number of rural people to climb the social and economic ladder, perhaps more than ever before. Even so, the military's reforms did little (or could do little) to eradicate poverty; and the new prosperity and upward mobility of a minority of peasants merely exacerbated class tensions, or created new ones (Isbell 1978; Mitchell 1991). Though in some ways social and economic conditions had generally improved as compared with a decade earlier, historically neglected departments like Ayacucho remained poor and relatively underdeveloped. In 1972, Ayacucho held the undistinguished title of Peru's second poorest department, after Apurímac, on the Central Bank's "Mapa de Pobreza del Perú." A decade later, its position on the list had not changed. "Among the ten poorest provinces in the country three are from Apurímac, one from Huancavelica and two are Ayacuchan: Cangallo in the second poorest place and Víctor Fajardo in the seventh..." (Degregori 1990:32.). Nevertheless, even Marxist-Leninist theory recognises that people are hardly ever driven to militancy by poverty alone. Impoverished, uneducated, and un-politicised peasants who are accustomed to a life of poverty will not spontaneously seek to change their situation; for they know no other life, and change always brings uncertain consequences for an already precarious existence. What appears to have been a more significant motivating factor for young people to join Shining Path, or one of the other radical Marxist groups in the 1970s, was the fact that expanded opportunities for higher education, which the military's reform made possible, also awakened expectations which it failed to satisfy, above all in depressed departments like Ayacucho and Huancavelica. Expectations rose but opportunities lagged and advancement was blocked for most students and graduates of the UNSCH. Over the years, their frustration and anger at their increasing insecurity fed a growing radicalism which amounted to nothing less than a wellspring of potential support and opportunity for Shining Path.⁴⁰

2.5 Drawing strength from defeat: Shining Path's political setbacks in the 1970s

For the heterogeneous Peruvian Left as a whole, the experience of the Velasco years had a profound sievelike effect in so far as it separated those who critically supported the military regime's reform policies (like the PCP-Unidad and the labour union Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú), from those who rejected and opposed the military government altogether (Hinojosa 1998:68-69). Largest and most prominent in the latter camp was Patria Roja, and among the smallest and most obscure was Shining Path.

Initially, many leftist organisations feared being overtaken and made redundant by a military regime "that seemed to preempt [sic] the Left" (ibid.:69). They regarded the government's project of agrarian reform as a "demagogical mechanism" designed to confuse, mislead, and eventually win over the masses (Degregori 1990:189). In time, however, the junta's increasing shift to the Right and its unabashed willingness to exercise a heavy hand, especially after a gravely ill Velasco had been deposed and replaced by the more conservative General Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980), vindicated the ultra-Left's uncompromisingly belligerent attitude towards what it described as a "fascistic" regime. It was during this so-called "second phase"

of military rule that the national economy went into a tailspin, precipitating what would become the worst Peruvian economic crisis since the War of the Pacific, and unsurpassed until the crisis of the late 1980s. The nation's GNP per capita dropped by almost 10 percent between 1974 and 1980, while inflation rates rocketed from 24 percent in 1975 to 68 percent by 1979 (Figuroa 1984:102). Average incomes declined substantially for all wage-earners while underemployment rose in urban centres. It was also in the second half of the 1970s that many of the reform programmes faltered and degenerated as many state bureaucrats became progressively more interested in asserting their bureaucratic control than accomplishing the aims of agrarian reform.

The loss in real income and increased poverty hit urban workers and the urban poor much harder than it did the peasantry, who at least could adjust their consumption habits while continuing to grow food for their basic subsistence needs. Nevertheless, the peasantry were also affected to some degree by the economic crisis in a number of ways. Contrary to the common belief that peasants are, for the most part, outside the market and therefore relatively immune to national economic crises, various studies have shown that most peasant families in Peru are, in fact, deeply integrated into the national market system (Figuroa 1984; Mitchell 1991; Cotler 1994). Far from being completely self-sufficient, peasant families must participate in the market economy in order to procure basic consumer products, such as kerosene, cooking oil, metal tools, sugar, salt, rice, noodles, coca, flour, alcohol, candles, yarn and clothing. Therefore, when hyperinflation began to outstrip the income peasants gained from the sale of their commodities and labour, their purchasing power correspondingly decreased. Consequently, "relative prices moved against peasants during the inflation period" (Figuroa 1984:102). In addition, hyperinflation and higher prices in urban centres meant not only that the remittances rural migrants could afford to send back to relatives and families in the countryside became smaller, but also that the very activity of labour migration to the cities itself became a increasingly unappealing option.

When growing levels of popular discontent exploded in a spate of strikes and protests that reached its climax in the national strike of 19 July 1977, the military again responded with repression. With deepening socioeconomic crisis and growing popular protest threatening the stability of the nation, it is hardly surprising that as the turbulent decade drew to a close, Abimael Guzmán would take these cumulative difficulties and steadily sharpening contradictions to be incontrovertible proof that the situation and the masses were both ripe for armed revolution. It was much less certain, however, that the peasants of Ayacucho felt the same.

Shining Path withdrew into itself during most of the early 1970s, absorbed with its own "*aventura del pensamiento*" ("philosophical adventure") (Degregori 1990:185). The UNSCH as a whole, however, could hardly have remained a cloistered bastion impervious to the profound socioeconomic transformations taking place around it. When, after having resolved most of its internal doctrinal conflicts, Shining Path turned its attention once again to political work among the masses, it discovered that the political terrain of Ayacucho was heavily contested ground. It was "now occupied and disputed not only by the old fragments of [Bandera Roja], but new political actors

like the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) and *Vanguardia Revolucionaria* (VR), which established beachheads particularly among the new social contingents that arrived at the university and in the region. Moreover, advancing through that variable social geography, hoisting new banners, was the odious State” (Degregori 1990:187-188).

The rising influx of state bureaucrats, technicians, university lecturers and students from other parts of the country was rapidly changing the complexion of Huamanga, turning it from an sleepy, urban provincial backwater into a modernising city. Unfortunately for Shining Path, however, these demographic changes also brought political changes and rivals that would result in its loss of hegemony in various popular organisations—most significantly, within the university itself. Among the reasons for this, according to Degregori, was that “[in] the majority of cases, SL was not able to respond to the political and ideological aspirations of those new sectors...and the only thing they felt was the Senderista oppression within the UNSCH....In less than one year, between 1972 and 1973, the opposition became massive, for as much at the level of students as of professors the division between SL and anti-SL appeared like a confrontation, to a certain degree, between Ayacuchanos and foreigners” (1990:191). Shining Path suffered a series of political defeats at the university that began in mid-1973 with their eviction, after a gigantic scuffle with anti-Sendero students and staff, from the very student residences which had previously been their bastion at the university. This ultimately led to their losing control of the university’s student movement. What followed next was their loss of power first in the university lecturers’ union (SUTE-UNSCHE), and then in the executive council of the university in March 1974 (ibid.:192). It was a testing time for Shining Path, for in addition to its troubles at the UNSCH, it continued to suffer political defeats on other fronts as well. Quite significantly, its efforts to establish an influential presence in the peasant sector was foiled by rival Marxist parties, like BR and VR, which were the dominant political forces in all the major established peasant federations. Shining Path’s subsequent attempt to found a new *Confederación Campesina Peruana* (CCP) in 1975 ended in utter failure: “...not a single important peasant base in the country attended. Since then, SL disappeared from the trade-union organisation of the peasantry” (Degregori 1990:195). By mid-decade, widespread sociopolitical opposition to Shining Path in Huamanga had risen to such a point that its every effort to maintain or gain control of established popular organisations, or of the many newly emerging ones, ultimately failed. Contrary to the Party’s version of history, it was not victorious advance but rather general retreat that best describes its political struggles for control of Ayacucho’s mass movements and popular organisations throughout the 1970s.

For all the defeats and setbacks it suffered, however, the Party never lost control of its two most vital seedbeds for cadres and recruits—the university’s Education programme, and the school teacher’s union (SUTE-Huamanga) (Degregori 1990:192, fn.70). In fact, the demographic characteristics of student enrolment in the Education programme ran counter-current to student enrolment in the university as a whole:

Owing to the demographic explosion that began in 1968, the percentage of Ayacuchano students at the UNSCH diminished substan-

tially. But whereas the university as a whole opened up, the percentage of Ayacuchanos studying Education remained constant and even rose slightly: from 60.9% in 1968 to 63% in 1973 and 61.1% in 1976....Among the Ayacuchanos, the highest proportion of those who orientated themselves towards a teaching career came from Cangallo and Víctor Fajardo, the poorest provinces, where SL would initiate its armed actions (ibid.:192).

Moreover, the Party did not necessarily perceive its loss of hegemony in established mass organisations as strategically catastrophic, or even politically damaging. For even before it had been decisively overthrown at the UNSCH, Shining Path's central committee had already decided to begin creating what it called "*organismos generados*" ("generated organs"). And while it seemed to be just another one of Guzmán's "extremes of suspended common sense"⁴¹ that the Party should describe these entities as "the very movements [themselves] as organisms generated by the proletariat in the different labour fronts" in spite of their very small membership, the underlying principle by which these organisations would claim to be the true representatives of the mass movements was, once again, that of communist "vanguardism."

For Shining Path's militants, it did not matter that they were always the numerical minority. As the "vanguard," they continued to lay claim to the leadership of the masses based on their conviction that only they knew and held the true interests of the majority. And as Lenin saw it, the prime objective of the revolution is first to seize power, and then only once that is done to strive to win the support of the majority of the workers, and ultimately that of the majority of the masses. Guzmán himself says as much:

The Communist Party [of Lenin] was small, some claimed it had 'two or three hundred,' that is what a Communist Party is; ... we don't want a broad party, this is an election-mongering party (quoted in Gorriti 1999:59).

The Party is not a mass party, though the Party has a mass character. It has a mass character in the sense that while being a select organisation—a selection of the best, of the proven...—being numerically small in proportion to the broad masses, the Party defends the interests of the proletariat....But since other classes that make up the people also participate in the revolution, the Party defends their interests as well, in accordance with the fact that the proletariat can only emancipate itself by emancipating all the oppressed....The mass party, of which so much is said today, is nothing but an expression, once again, of rotten revisionist positions. Such parties are parties of followers, of officials, organizational machines. Our Party is a Party of fighters, of leaders, an instrument of war like the one Lenin himself would demand....How many Bolsheviks were there when the October revolution triumphed?: 80 thousand in a country of 150 million inhabitants.⁴²

From the smouldering ashes of each political defeat, Shining Path forged its corps of cadres, small in number but ideologically hardened and organically cohesive. One may even go far as to say, as Degregori does, that prior to launching its armed struggle, the Party had achieved the most in developing itself at the level of cadres, rather than at the level of the popular masses. Commenting retrospectively on the state of the insurgency at the end of the 1980s, Degregori noted that “in almost ten years of war SL has not returned to being the protagonist of a movement as massive, enthusiastic and voluntary as that of Ayacucho and Huanta in 1969. That time it participated in a mass movement, today it directs a war of ‘cadres’” (1990:199). Having found itself blocked out and unable to dominate existing institutions and popular organisations, Shining Path embarked on constructing its own society, its own mass organisations, its own version of history. If indeed it was to be a war of the flea, then it was a measure of Shining Path’s characteristic audacity that it should presume not only to lead the dog, but, failing that, to take its very place.⁴³

What the evidence suggests, then, was that instead of working to expanding its size and mass support base (as the rival Patria Roja communist party was doing), what Shining Path was actually bent on doing in the second half of the 1970s was to close its ranks and become increasingly more clandestine. In contrast to the rest of the Peruvian Left, Shining Path shunned involvement in the open mass protests, and as Hinojosa noted, “[its] distance from, and scant influence in, the mass movement was such that Shining Path was not even persecuted. In contrast with the other organisations, not one Shining Path leader was deported” (1998:71). While its rivals were busily engaged in strikes, marches, and other open and relatively peaceful forms of mass protests against the military dictatorship, Shining Path was intensely and secretly preparing for something altogether different.

By the mid-1970s, Guzmán was already determined to prepare for armed struggle, despite the fact that not everyone in his party was as yet of like mind. Nevertheless, Guzmán forged ahead with transforming the Party into a paramilitary machine along the lines prescribed by Lenin. Much of the preparation was, of course, done in secrecy. But from 1977 onwards, military intelligence reports began to mention small groups of young people conducting exercises in the handling of weapons, and even the occasional seizure of dynamite crates (Gorriti 1999:45-54). Other intelligence reports suggested that clandestine “grassroots schools” were being set up by Shining Path in the urban shantytowns of Lima and in Cuzco in order to “raise the consciousness of the people in preparation for popular war.”⁴⁴ It was also at this time that the Party started to dispatch political cadres into the countryside with the task of conducting grassroots schools among the peasants, although these appear to have been little more than impromptu, ad hoc chat sessions. Still, they served the purpose of spreading the word of Shining Path’s intention to fight for social justice, and in the process win widespread sympathy and occasionally even recruits from among local adolescent students. It was in this manner that the Party prepared itself for what it envisaged would be a “*guerra de campesinos*,” a “peasants’ war.”

Even so, hardly any of Shining Path militants (not to mention its leadership), were peasants, and not one of its senior or middle-level leadership was even of peasant origin. In terms of its social complexion, Shining Path was still very much an organisation of predominantly urban-based students and educators, and a few middle-class

professionals. It was this sector of society that would continue to be its principal source of recruits in decades to come. In his study of the social profile of individuals convicted of terrorism between 1983 and 1986, Chávez de Paz found that the majority of them were young, single and childless, often members of the Andean, provincial urban “elite,” though they often came from among the nation’s poorest and most underdeveloped provinces. A significant portion of these convicts were illiterate, yet more than one third of the entire group possessed a university education, and over half had a minimum of secondary education. Surprisingly, “it is in the group of women and those older than 25 years of age where one finds the highest proportion of those who have managed to get a university education and have obtained their academic degree and professional qualification” (1989:44-45). Students constituted the highest number (24.6 percent) of individuals convicted of terrorism, with peasants and agricultural workers being the second largest group (between 11.5 and 15 percent).

Of course many of Shining Path’s recruits during the 1970s were of rural background, and in this regard it was these individuals who constituted the crucial link between the Party and peasant society. Students and teachers of peasant parentage enjoyed a certain degree of prestige and political influence in their home communities, and it invariably was the more educated *comuneros* who occupied the official posts of local governance. Such individuals therefore served as crucial facilitators in securing Shining Path’s access, and subsequent expansion, into local peasant society. For example, one military-commissioned “agent report” about “subversive activities” in Vilcashuamán in October 1979, noted: “Sute [sic] teachers are the main educators on political matters because of their relationship with the parents (community members) and students as well as the community labor they also participate in without exception” (quoted in Gorriti 1999:49). Be that as it may, one must not exaggerate the ability of local teachers to garner local support for Shining Path, however. For even in areas where schools and students were numerous, teachers were not always integrated into the communities where they lived and worked. For instance, American anthropologist Billie Jean Isbell discovered in the 1960s that in the community of Chuschi—where the first flames of the *Lucha Armada* would literally be set alight—the teachers comprised a class apart. “Chuschino society,” she writes, “is polarized into two social groups: the *comuneros*, or communal members of the village, who participate in the prestige hierarchy, wear traditional dress, and speak Quechua; versus the *vecinos*, or *qalas* (literally, peeled or naked ones), who are Spanish speaking, western dressed, foreign nonparticipants in communal life....Very little interaction occurs between the two groups” (Isbell 1978:67,226). In such instances, *comuneros* may resent the attempts of radical teachers (or any “foreigner” for that matter) to influence local politics. Moreover, Shining Path was not the only leftist political organisation with a presence in the Ayacuchan countryside at the time. In rural communities there were also many activists, students, and teachers, who belonged to other (and in certain areas more popular) Marxist groups, such as Bandera Roja, Patria Roja, Vanguardia Revolucionaria, and the MIR. With democratic elections approaching, it was not uncommon for Shining Path’s militants to engage in punch-ups with its political rivals.

But in 1978-79, open and violent conflict between Shining Path’s militants and

the peasants themselves was still a thing of the future. I have spoken to many peasants who say that until the end of 1982, Shining Path enjoyed the Ayacuchan peasantry's widespread sympathy. Shining Path's cadres went from village to village preaching a war to end exploitation and poverty. It is hardly surprising that almost everywhere they went they found an approving audience. And if they did not exactly win over many converts at these spontaneous meetings, Shining Path's young, articulate and charismatic cadres nevertheless always managed to draw curious (though also often sceptical) crowds of spectators. Pompeyo Rivera Terres, a former primary school teacher and native of Tambo district, recalls the general excitement caused when Edith Lagos came to talk to the *comuneros* of Huayao.

It's hard to imagine now, but it's true. When the mythical guerrilla leader Edith Lagos commanded Sendero Luminoso in Ayacucho, the movement generally enjoyed much acceptance, and received all manner of assistance from the peasants themselves. Soon after I had just been transferred to teach at the primary school in Huayao, I remember coming home one evening and my aunt saying to me, "Nephew, this evening we have a meeting at about eight o'clock, in the school, because Comandante Edith Lagos has just arrived."

I was surprised. "A woman guerrilla commander?" I asked.

"Yes!" she replied. "A woman who they say speaks splendidly. And they also say she is fighting for the poor!"

So here was my aunt, an uneducated woman who couldn't have filled half a sheet of paper with all the writing that she knew, going off to a political meeting. She really wanted to meet Edith Lagos, so she set off at seven o'clock carrying a bowl of toasted maize in one hand, and a pot of barbecued beef strips in the other, all for Edith Lagos.⁴⁵

At the time, many older peasants regarded the zealous young militants as well-meaning but fairly harmless teenagers. Subsequent events would prove them wrong on both accounts. It was only much later, say the peasants, that they realised they had been deceived (*engañado*).

2.6 Towards armed struggle

By decade's end, two divergent trajectories had at last reached their targets: one was the nation's return to democratic civilian government; the other, Shining Path's initiation of a protracted People's War.

Mired in economic crises and beset by a growing tide of popular protest against it, the armed forces decided to salvage what was left of their dignity and tattered reputation by handing back the reigns of government to a civilian administration, and returning to the barracks. After a turbulent decade of military rule, the prospect of returning to democratic government brought renewed hope and optimism. For all its shortcomings, one could not deny that the revolutionary government of the armed

forces had “brought the demolition of old hierarchies, the elimination of historical flaws, and the incorporation of vast majorities long kept on the peripheries of national life” (Gorriti 1999:8). Most significantly, in the coming elections an amended constitution would allow universal suffrage for the first time in Peru since the Pierolista congress made literacy a requirement for voting back in 1890, and so effectively excluded the vast majority of the nation’s peasants from political participation (Mallon 1995:275).

The resumption of democratic elections in Peru—first in 1978 for the Constituent Assembly, and then again in 1980 for a new president—brought the Marxist Left as a whole to a historic crossroads. Many of those groups that entered the world of electoral politics justified their actions according to Lenin’s directive to utilise a combination of legal and illegal means to capture power and insure victory. Just as infiltration into the key positions of trade unions and citizen’s groups is crucial for turning such auxiliary organisations into transmission belts for Party influence, so too must elections and the organs of “bourgeois” government be exploited for the purpose of fanning discontent with the status quo into blazing hostility. The irony, however, was that most Peruvian leftist parties that took the step of participating in the electoral process ended up, as Hinojosa noted, “trapped within the very system they had hoped to transform (or even to destroy)” (1998:71).

“By 1978 the period of clandestine structures and leaders began to draw to a close, giving way to the era of public campaign offices and electoral candidates” (ibid.). To be sure, not all the radical parties set off down the path of electoral politics at the same time. Many of the larger, more influential leftist parties like *Patria Roja* boycotted the Constituent Assembly elections. But as the presidential elections drew nearer, even *Patria Roja*, which a short time earlier seemed by its political rhetoric to be on the verge of launching an armed insurrection, opted to take up ballots in place of bullets. *Patria Roja* would go on to form a short-lived electoral coalition with other “radical” parties, including the MIR and the VR, under the banner of the *Alianza Revolucionaria de Izquierda* (ARI), which could not manage to stay together for even two months. The “moderates,” with the PCP-Unidad and the *Partido Socialista Revolucionaria* (PSR) foremost among them, organised themselves into a rival leftist coalition known as *Unidad de Izquierda* (UI) (ibid.:73). And yet others, principally pro-Maoist parties, coalesced into the *Unión de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (UNIR), while the heterodox left came together in the *Unidad Democrática del Perú* (UDP) (Gorriti 1999:10). In the end, bitter polemic differences and personal rivalries not only to shatter coalitions, but also divided and so undermined the weight of the leftist vote. Nevertheless, although none of these parties ever formally renounced armed struggle, the very fact of their participation in the elections was taken by many as a sign that they were at last “abandoning violence and embracing legality” (ibid.). Those leftists who would find themselves elected to the posts of national and local government came to have a stake, and so a vested interest, in preserving the state apparatus and defending the constitution, if only in the hope of change it for the better.

But not all the militant Marxist groups jumped on the electoral bandwagon. Some of the smaller, more obscure organisations with little, if any, influence outside their immediate surroundings, continued to advocate revolutionary insurrection. Most

would eventually disappear, while others came to pursue armed struggle within the ranks of Shining Path or, from 1984, as members of the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA). Despite Shining Path's many open declarations that it was on the threshold of initiating armed struggle, few people, even among the Left, took them seriously, if in fact they even noticed the ominous warnings. Viewed as a small and insignificant provincial party, most other leftists who knew about Shining Path believed that they neither had the capacity nor the nerve to "go beyond painting graffiti" (former UDP leader Juan Granda quoted in Gorriti 1999:13). I once spoke to a former president of one of Huamanga's barrios who recalled that Shining Path's young militants were so naive about how to start an armed revolution that their incongruently accompanying bravado seemed more comical than intimidating.

It was at the end of April 1980, at a barrio meeting which a mixed group of young men and women had called that they told us their party was about to start a "people's war." I asked how they expected to go up against the army without weapons. "The people are able to make their own weapons," they replied. "We will use huaracas [slings], lances [by fastening knives to the tips of long poles], and we will hurl stones and pots of boiling water." It was ridiculous what they were saying, of course, and they became very annoyed when I suggested that they wouldn't stand a chance against policemen and soldiers armed with guns. One of the women came forward and gave a short sermon on the ability of the people to overcome all obstacles on the strength of their will and revolutionary spirit. "Once we begin our revolution, we will annihilate those corroding detractors, those pessimistic doubters who serve only to poison the minds of the people. And we'll start with YOU!" she roared, thrusting a menacing finger towards me. Only later did I realise that this woman who threatened me was Edith Lagos.⁴⁶

Shining Path advocated a boycott of the elections on the grounds that the people have nothing to gain from them, and risked being misled and "stultified by bourgeois legality."⁴⁷ It branded those Marxists that had entered the electoral process as "parliamentary cretins", and denounced them as "revisionists."⁴⁸ In fact, Guzmán regarded the Peruvian Marxist Left's extraordinary turn towards legal parliamentary politics as symptomatic of the growing "cancer" of revisionism worldwide, whose principal centres were the Soviet Union and China. With the triumph of Deng Xiaoping over the Gang of Four, Guzmán must have believed that the torch had now passed to him (and perhaps to less than a handful of other orthodox Maoists like José Maria Sison, founder of the Philippine Communist Party (PCP) to keep and defend the faith against the rising hordes of revisionists. "[Our] Congress has declared that we must wage a relentless and uncompromising struggle against imperialism, revisionism, and reaction worldwide," he announced in 1988. "[We've] continued fighting revisionism, not only here, but beyond our borders as well."⁴⁹ Clearly, Guzmán considered Shining Path's armed struggle in Peru to be just one theatre in a larger revolutionary war of global proportions. And so it can only be by first realising that Shining Path's

discourse, diatribes, and actions are purposely also made in reference to this larger context of “world revolution” that we may begin to understand those seemingly peculiar, exotic, enigmatic “public messages”—hanging dogs, graffiti hurling insults at Den Xiaoping and his mother, etc.—that in the minds of some observers “appeared to be incongruent and anachronistic, imported from other times and other worlds” (Kruijt 1996:248).

As the rest of the nation counted down the final two months to election day, Guzmán was absorbed in making a reckoning of his own. In March 1980, those members of the Political Bureau who still harboured doubts about beginning armed struggle were denounced by Guzmán as “right opportunist revisionists” and defeated in a series of spirited and decisive internal debates at the Central Committee’s Second Plenary Session (see Gorriti 1999:21-28). The Party would later depict this crucial confrontation on the eve of battle not as a critical rupture, but rather as a natural and expected manifestation of the inevitable “two-line struggle” inherent in all revolutionary parties; an internal struggle that, in the end, is essential for strengthening party unity and achieving unanimity.⁵⁰ Even so, the vanquished “right opportunist” could not expect to be so easily forgiven for their dissidence. They first had to be made examples of, rhetorically humiliated and forced to engage in heavy doses of self-criticism as penance for their sins. This episode, the demolition of revisionism within their ranks, ingrained the important lesson in the minds of the Party faithful that revisionism, treason, and all other threats of counter-revolution must be stamped out where they are found, without hesitation or mercy. “Targeting revisionism as the main danger,” Guzmán once declared, “is the best way the Party can ward off and prevent the emergence of a right opportunist line, which would be a revisionist line.”⁵¹ In addition, the occasion served to underscore the cardinal principles according to which all members must henceforth abide as the Party prepared to enter the vortex of class war. Namely, that they must be bound not only by an iron-clad discipline in action, but also by conformity in thought to the “correct” political line of the Central Committee (as defined principally by Guzmán, of course). Finally, the two-line struggle brought clarification to divisive ideological issues, and its conclusion signified an end to further debate or criticism of the political line.

Now that the decision to launch the armed struggle had at last been “unanimously” approved, the one remaining important point of preparation was to conduct the Party’s First Military School. This was inaugurated on 2 April and lasted seventeen intensive days. Much of the time was devoted to relating military actions to political objectives, and engaging in extended sessions of criticism and self-criticism, mainly for the benefit of the repentant “right opportunist” of the Central Committee (Gorriti 1999:29-36). The details of what took place need not be repeated here as it has already been superbly described and discussed by Gorriti. In so far as they are relevant to the theme of this book, however, I will briefly comment on some of the significant features of that unique occasion that will help us to understand the group psychology of the Shining Path militants, and their subsequent behaviour towards peasants in general and peasant self-defence organisations in particular.

Consider, firstly, the exercise of criticism/self-criticism, which, as Gorriti writes, “has become one of the most efficient methods history has known for the control of groups and individuals, especially strong and motivated ones, since the first years of

the Stalinist hegemony” (1999:30. My emphasis). It should also be pointed out that criticism and self-criticism, particularly when employed primarily for the purpose of rooting out latent sentiments of “revisionism” and weaknesses of revolutionary character, can also break down individuality, and with it a person’s moral conscience. In the process, an ideological framework is strengthened whereby flesh and blood human beings are transformed into abstract, doctrinal categories; and moral sense is replaced by the mechanical ability simply to identify what conforms to the correct political line on the one hand, versus revisionist opportunism or reactionism on the other. There is perhaps no better illustration of this shedding of all moral responsibility in the interest of class struggle than Guzmán’s own reactions to the 1983 massacre of dozens of peasants—including women and children—at the Andean village of Lucanamarca. Looking back on that incident with all the human compassion of a master dog trainer in action, this is what he had to say about it during the famous *El Diario* interview of 1988:

In the face of reactionary military actions and the use of *mesnadas* [goons], we responded with a devastating action: Lucanamarca. Neither they nor we have forgotten it, to be sure, because they got an answer that they didn’t imagine possible. More than 80 were annihilated, that is the truth. And we say openly that there were excesses, as was analyzed in 1983. But everything in life has two aspects. Our task was to deal a devastating blow in order to put them in check, to make them understand that it was not going to be so easy. On some occasions, like that one, it was the Central Leadership itself that planned the action and gave instructions....[The] principal thing is that we dealt them a devastating blow, ...and they understood that they were dealing with a different kind of people’s fighters, that we weren’t the same as those they had fought before. This is what they understood. The excesses are the negative aspect....This has been explained by Lenin very clearly. Excesses can be committed. The problem is to go to a certain point and not beyond it, because if you go past that point you go off course. It’s like an angle; it can be opened up to a certain point and no further....[What] we needed was for the waters to overflow, to let the flood rage, because we know that when a river floods its banks it causes devastation, but then it returns to its riverbed....[This] is how we understand those excesses. But, I insist, the main point was to make them understand that we were a hard nut to crack, and that we were ready for anything, anything.⁵²

He depicts his victims as the dull-witted lackeys of reactionism, who needed to be taught a lesson “by means of powerful actions that drive home the point.” Yet he fails to take into account that what had driven them to rebel in the first place was Shining Path’s decision to ban fairs and local markets, the consequence of which was to put their livelihood and their very survival into jeopardy (see chapter 3). What had led Shining Path to ban peasants from engaging in commercial activities was its distorted ideological view of peasant economy as fully capable of self-sufficiency, and therefore

having no need of “parasitic” commercial relations with urban centres and no use for capitalist-manufactured goods. It was through the intensive process of political education combined with constant self-criticism, such as took place at the Military School, that these ideas and attitudes were embedded into the minds of the militants.

A related point has to do with the principle, borrowed from Mao and taught to the young militants at the Military School, that “the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party” (Mao 1967:55). Although in this regard Shining Path’s organisational discipline exhibited a “civil-military” chain of command that would be the envy of many of the world’s governments that find it a challenge keeping their security forces subordinated to civilian governance, it did not make the Party any less prone to pursuing paths of extreme violence and terror. This is because Shining Path’s political leadership had completely subordinated morality to the interests of class struggle, and the principal goal of its armed struggle was the conquest of political power. To this end, its political leadership was prepared to employ military force so as to ensure success at all cost, no matter how excessive—and especially so when confronted with the “counter-revolutionary” mutiny of the masses. The absolute and automatic obedience of its military arm to political command posed the grave danger that even insensitive and counterproductive military tactics prescribed by higher political authorities would continue to be practiced because all moral controls have been supplanted by the paramount interest of class struggle, and the overriding objective of conquering political power. As such, the armed wing of the Party was not permitted to question the long-term impression that its strategies and armed tactics had on the population, only to assess its immediate objective military effectiveness and impact. Consequently, by blindly trusting their ideology above all empirical evidence or even their own personal experiences, the Senderistas ultimately failed to recognise that their military strategy was counterproductive in as much as it was turning the masses against the Party. Instead, they would carry on in their belief that despite any opposition along the way, final victory was already guaranteed by history. In fact, through the various mechanisms of social and psychological control employed by the Party collective, most of the militants would have already shed any empathic ability they had to appreciate real human suffering. Driven by a resolute fanaticism stemming from an initially laudable desire to obliterate all forms of social injustice, yet also conditioned to see human compassion as a sign of weakness, Shining Path’s militants were eagerly prepared to sacrifice their own lives “heroically” for the sake of the revolution and the deliverance of mankind. *And they expected no less from the peasant masses.* “In order to annihilate the enemy and to preserve, and even more to develop our own forces we have to pay a price in war, a price in blood, the need to sacrifice a part for the triumph of the people’s war,” Guzmán once declared.³³

But would the masses support armed action, and were they prepared to incur the sacrifices expected of them by the Party? Guzmán was more than convinced they were, insisting that “[the] people clamor to organize rebellion” (quoted in Gorriti 1999:28). “Ties between the party and the masses exist and are developing, particularly in the countryside.... [The incorporation of the masses] is resolved through a long process, as the armed struggle develops and the new state forms” (ibid.:24).

In the process of incorporation, the Party will inevitably come up against dis-sentiment, criticism, and disagreement from the peasant masses themselves. How, then,

was it to explain and to deal with these contradictions? “The Party...must investigate the classes so as to define who are friends and who are enemies,” declared a Shining Path publication.⁵⁴ This Party precept clearly draws inspiration from Mao’s own sharp distinction between two antagonistic categories—“the enemies” and “the people.” As Mao explained, “[at] the present stage, the period of building socialism, the classes, strata and social groups which favour, support and work for the cause of socialist construction all come within the category of the people, *while the social forces and groups which resist the socialist revolution and are hostile to or sabotage socialist construction are all enemies of the people*” (1967:25. My emphasis). In other words, any dissention or criticism of the Party and its political-military line—even simple non-cooperation—must be regarded as counter-revolutionary, and the act of an “enemy.” As Poole noted, “For Guzmán,...all contradiction is conceived as a mutually exclusive antagonism” (1994c:257). “People’s War” defined according to this criterion is rendered both universal and exclusive: universal in that everyone, every class, will be drawn into its flames; exclusive is so far as every individual must fall into only one of two great hostile camps—the People or the Enemy. As far as Shining Path’s militants were concerned, there was absolutely no room for neutrality or for diverse alternative positions in a “People’s War.”

We have already seen that in Shining Path’s turbulent formative history and Guzmán’s own personal political life, both have weathered numerous instances of what they might describe as “betrayal” or “treason” from within the group, or from trusted colleagues. I would argue that this is the primary reason why Shining Path chose during the second half of the 1970s to become even more clandestine than it already was. Furthermore, these instances of perceived betrayal not only convinced Shining Path leaders of the danger and futility of forging cooperative relations with “revisionist” political parties, they also underscored the imperativeness of iron and unquestioning discipline within the Party, and of rooting and stamping out all forms of “counter-revolution.” All “counter-revolutionaries,” no matter what their class background, were by definition “enemies of the people,” and must therefore be pitilessly dealt with in the appropriate manner. This obstinate and unyielding devotion to punishment helps us to understand why it is that Shining Path eventually turned their violence so ruthlessly against peasants communities, especially those which, through their own initiative or the pressure of others, had formed civil defence committees. In the way it has chosen to deal with “counter-revolutionaries,” Shining Path has admittedly taken to heart Lenin’s affirmation that in revolutionary war, “excesses” are inevitable and permissible in order to preserve the integrity and security of the Party. Here, then, is an explanation of the motivations and justification behind Shining Path’s seemingly senseless attacks on peasant villages—vicious cruelty that would eventually drive peasants to rise against them in counter-rebellion.

On April 19, the last day of the Military School, Guzmán addressed those who were to be the vanguard of People’s War with one of his most famous and impassioned speeches, entitled “We are the Initiators.” It summarises the historical vision and doctrinal tenets of the Party, while also reminding those militants gathered that they are the protagonists of what Guzmán promises will be a “magnificent epic of world history.”

We are the initiators. This first Party Military School is both a seal and a breach, it concludes and begins. It concludes the time of peace and opens the time of war. Comrades, our tasks with unarmed hands have concluded, and today our armed words begin: Let us uplift the masses and peasants under the unfading flags of Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse-tung Thought. One period has ended and the preparations for the new one have concluded. From here, the past deeds are sealed and we open the future. The key of the future is determined by actions, the objective is power. This we shall do, history demands it, the class urges it, the people have foreseen and want it. We must accomplish it and it will be accomplished. We are the initiators.....

The masses have been exploited, subjugated.... But through all this time, [they] have always resisted, because they have no other sentiment than the class struggle....But the laws of history that came about as a result of the development of the class struggle have generated one last class: the international proletariat....The reaction has the hyena's dreams of blood. Convulsive dreams shake their somber nights....They arm themselves to the teeth but they cannot prevail. Their destiny is weighed and measured....

It has befallen on us to live in an extraordinary epoch. Thus it is written, mankind never had such a heroic destiny. To the people of today, to those people who breathe, struggle, and fight, has befallen the task of sweeping reaction from the face of the earth, the most illuminating and magnificent mission given to any generation....

Reaction, which unleashes its bloody claws tearing the flesh off the people, continues to sow discord, embroil, and seeks to sate itself with the blood of the people....Comrades, reaction will not prevail in any form. The hour has sounded, the revolution will triumph....Victory is ours. The masses will prevail, the peasants will arise, the working class will lead, the Communist Party will command and the Red Flags will be raised forever....Comrades, in this country we are embarking upon a third epoch. The third epoch is a battle between armed revolution and armed counter-revolution, which are prepared for violence.....The masses tremble, the flood tide rises, and the storm approaches.... Comrades, revolution and counterrevolution are also contending forces in our country....The reactionaries are armed and concentrated, defending the metropolis and capitals. We are rooted in the countryside, in small villages, with the masses, especially with the poor peasants, with the force of the people, among their disorganized force in order to organize it into a powerful army....Nevertheless, the fight will be hard, long, difficult and cruel. We need to steel our spirits, be strong, vigorous, fearless and confident in our victory....

The Party is a Party of a new type. The purpose of this Party of a new type is to seize power for the working class and the people of this country. The Party can not be developed more but through the use of arms, through armed struggle....Having stated this point, we have

three conditions: First, we embark on the strategic offensive of world revolution. That is our situation. The revolutionary tide is on our side. Second, the people set out to seize power with arms. The future will be decided through the advancement of People's War. Third, the Party begins to develop through the armed struggle. Thus, the Party will become the powerful Party which the revolution needs, and since it is needed it must be forged.

Comrades, the armed struggle will be born fragile and weak because it is new, but its destiny will be to develop through change, from the variation of fragility like a tender plant. The roots we plant at the beginning will be the future of a vigorous State....[The] Party will be transformed into a powerful and recognized vanguard of the Peruvian working class, and the legitimate centre of the Peruvian revolution....

This First Military School is historic....It concludes our unarmed life and begins our People's War....Comrades, the last meeting...has burned and annihilated what among us and inside of us could have opposed. We have raised up optimism and are filled with enthusiasm....In this manner, arming the cadres and leaders for basic effectiveness, we have obviously entered the general political mobilization. Remember what Chairman Mao said: the key is to mobilize the cadres. That has been accomplished....

We are the initiators....On this 19th of April, history will state, "standing upright they expressed their declaration of revolutionary faith, with their hearts burning with an inextinguishable passion, with firm and resolute wills, and with clear and bold minds, assuming their historical obligation of being the Initiators. What they decided on April 19th took shape in autumn with boycotts and the harvest, followed through with actions against the reactionary power, aiming at local authority, continued with land seizures and with the peasant masses in rebellion the guerrillas were raised up. The guerrillas generated the powerful army we have become today, and the State based on it. Our country is free..." That is what they will say, comrades....

We will become the protagonists of history, conscious, organized and armed. Thus, the great rupture will be open and we will become the makers of a definitive dawn....

The future is in the barrels of the guns! The armed revolution has begun!

Glory to Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse-tung Thought!

Long Live the Communist Party of Peru!

Initiate the Armed Struggle!⁵⁵

Shining Path's First Military School was to its militants and leaders the long-awaited "breach" into a "new epoch." Similarly, the majority of Peruvians viewed the presidential election of 18 May 1980, and the definitive return to democratic government that it symbolised, with equal optimism as the dawn of a new era in the nation's history—one that would perhaps be less elitist and more just than those which had pre-

ceded it. Little did the nation suspect, however, that on the other side of a seemingly calm horizon there was a tempest brewing.

Notes

- 1 Author's interview with Eusebio (surname withheld by author), long-time resident of Ccarhuapampa, about the history of his settlement, on 16 November 1997.
- 2 Information provided to author by Walter Ramírez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*.
- 3 A veritable cordillera of material has been written about this topic over the past two decades. Two of the very best works of general analysis of Shining Path's emergence and formative development remain Carlos Iván Degregori's (1990) *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, and Gustavo Gorriti's (1990) classic *Sendero: Historia de la guerra milenaria en el Perú*. One of the best early investigations of Shining Path is Lewis Taylor's (1983) *Maoisms in the Andes: Sendero Luminoso and the Contemporary Guerrilla Movement in Peru*. An excellent recent analysis of the military strategy behind Shining Path's "protracted people's war" is Carlos Tapia's (1997) *Las Fuerzas Armadas y Sendero Luminoso: Dos estrategias y un final*, and an equally fine thematic and multidisciplinary study of Shining Path can be found in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, a comprehensive collection of essays edited by Steve J. Stern (1998).
- 4 The Universidad de San Cristóbal de Huamanga was founded by Bishop Cristóbal de Castilla y Zamora, son of the Spanish king Philip IV, on 3 July 1677. It enjoyed the distinction of being the second-oldest university of the viceroyalty (Degregori 1990:41).
- 5 This and all subsequent translations from the Spanish are mine, unless otherwise noted.
- 6 In its heyday, the colonial city was surrounded by relatively prosperous, tribute-paying indigenous societies, and served as an important crossroad for commercial traffic between Lima, Cuzco, and the fabulous mines of Potosí, Castrovirreyña, and Huancavelica (Degregori 1990:27, fn.4; Stern 1982:36).
- 7 As the victorious conquistadors turned from plunder to the task of consolidating imperial rule, Pizarro began to confer *encomiendas* of specified indigenous groups upon some of his privileged fellow adventurers, in the name of the Spanish Crown. Native vassals were required to provide the *encomendero* tribute (typically goods, money, and household service) and labour for his basic necessities and private enterprises (Stern 1982:27-50). In exchange, the *encomendero* lord was obligated to promote and to protect the military and political interests of the Spanish Crown in the colony, in addition to protecting and caring for the material needs of his indigenous wards while they were becoming Christianised and "civilised." The natives were to be regarded and treated as Spanish subjects, not slaves. In practice, however, this system of exploitation easily led to widespread abuses and harsh labour conditions. With a mentality typical of the *encomenderos* throughout the rest of Spain's New World possessions at the time, for instance, the twenty-five or so *encomenderos* who settled in Huamanga "saw the local Indian societies they hoped to rule as a source of labour and plunder" (ibid.:28). The home government could rarely enforce its protective regulations in its distant colonies, and *encomenderos* often treated the estate and the workers as personal property, hiring out their labour and sometimes even selling those who they were intended to protect (ibid.:34).
- 8 Author's interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta Province, on 26 May 2000. Similar information is also described in Coronel 1996:34.
- 9 Author's interview in Huamanga with Mercedes de Vivanco, former next-door neighbour of the adolescent Edith Lagos, on 27 May 2000.
- 10 "By fraction [fracción], what is meant is what Lenin taught: 'A section in a party is a group of like-minded people formed for the purpose primarily [of] influencing the party in a definite direction, for the purpose of securing acceptance for their principle in the party in the purest form. For this,

- real unanimity of opinion is necessary” (PCP-SL, “Desarrollar la guerra popular sirviendo a la revolución mundial.” *Ediciones Bandera Roja*, May 1986. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 11 Armed struggle, according to Mao’s interpretation of Marx, is the highest form of class struggle. In this regard Mao writes: “The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries” (from “Problems of War and Strategy (November 6, 1938), quoted in Mao 1967:34). Although Karl Marx recognised the possibility of non-violent revolution, he nevertheless held the basic belief that “in most countries on the Continent the lever of [socialist] revolution must be force; it is force to which we must someday appeal in order to erect the rule of the labor” (from “The Possibility of Non-Violent Revolutions,” a speech delivered at Amsterdam on September 8, 1872, reproduced in Tucker 1978:523).
 - 12 Degregori 1990 is my main source of information in this section regarding the genesis of Shining Path. The Party’s name is taken from the FER’s slogan, “*Por el sendero luminoso de Mariátegui.*” Like the vast majority of Peruvian leftists, Guzmán appreciated Mariátegui’s thought as “the political expression of the Peruvian working class” (PCP 1975:1).
 - 13 For a detailed history of this significant event in Ayacucho’s history, see Degregori 1990.
 - 14 The government sent in the *Sinchis*—the elite counterinsurgency battalion of the 48th Division of the Civil Guard, notorious for being particularly brutal—to quell the unrest.
 - 15 A number of the Huanta students were members of the PCP-BR’s Local Committee “Lenin,” which functioned autonomously from Guzmán’s Regional Committee.
 - 16 Abimael Guzmán, “To Understand Mariátegui.” Conference at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, 1969. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
 - 17 PCP-SL, “El Problema Campesino y La Revolución.” *Ediciones Bandera Roja* No. 46, August 1976. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
 - 18 In his discussions of Mariátegui’s works, Guzmán replaces the term “Indian” with the class label “peasant” (*campesino*), which is further evidence that “Indian revindication” has never been a goal of the Party, contrary to what some Western journalists in the 1980s and early 1990s (like Strong 1992) would like us—and ourselves—to believe. The Party’s official documents reject Andean culture as “folklore” and bourgeois manipulation, and scornfully make it clear that Shining Path does not consider itself to be an “Indian” movement—an *indigenista* one even less (Degregori 1990:206-207, Poole 1994b).
 - 19 “The term *gamonalismo* does not only designate a social and economic category that includes the *latifundistas* and large landowners. It signifies a phenomenon. *Gamonalismo* is not represented only by the *gamonales* themselves. It includes an extensive hierarchy of functionaries, intermediaries, agents, parasites, etc....The key factor in this phenomenon is the hegemony of the giant semi-feudal landowners in the politics and machinery of the state” (Mariátegui 1927b:85).
 - 20 Mariátegui and other *indigenistas* were convinced that “hardy and stubborn habits of cooperation and solidarity still survive [from Inca times] that are the empirical expression of a communist spirit. The “community” is the instrument of this spirit” (Mariátegui 1971:58).
 - 21 A *Paisanaje* relationship exists between “compatriots” from the same socio-geographical area. For example, two persons from the province of Cangallo, though they might not be more than casual acquaintances, might nevertheless consider themselves *paisanos* by virtue of the fact that they both come from the same area.
 - 22 The manner of creation, composition, and authority of these two committees are clearly described, for instance, in the Estatuto del Grupo Campesino Huaychao, Disposiciones Generales, 8 de Diciembre de 1979. Archivo del Ministerio de Agricultura de la Región ‘Libertadores Wari [Ayacucho]. Acta de Aceptación de la Modalidad de Adjudicación del Predio ‘Uchuraccay.’ 13 de setiembre 1973.

- 23 For example, the 1970 Community Statute legislated the creation of the General Assembly, the Executive Council, and the Supervisory Council for the purpose of regulating the administrative regime of peasant communities. According to Nuñez, “[the] Statute also established the grounds for cases of dismissal from or vacancy in communal offices: improper disposal of communal goods, unlawful use of land, and improper use of power were among these” (1995:38). When the municipal mayor of Chuschi caused trouble for anthropologist Billie Jean Isbell and a local Chuschino in 1974—by trying to levy bogus taxes, threatening to have her killed, and refusing to issue legal papers to her Chuschino compadre so he could travel to the provincial capital to register his new-born son, among other things—the commanding police officer in Pampa Cangallo urged her to file a formal complaint against the municipal mayor. “My compadre, having been threatened with jail, refused traveling papers, and denied a birth certificate for his new-born son, also filed a complaint” (Isbell 1978:235).
- 24 Abimael Guzmán, “To Understand Mariátegui.” Conference at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, 1969. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 25 PCP-SL, “El Problema Campesino y La Revolución.” *Ediciones Bandera Roja* No. 46, August 1976. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 26 Abimael Guzmán, “Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio.” *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 27 Abimael Guzmán, “To Understand Mariátegui.” Conference at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, 1969. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 28 An apt illustration of this is the huge political blunder committed by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) when it decided to boycott the presidential election of 1986 held between the incumbent president Ferdinand Marcos and the popular opposition candidate Corazon Aquino. Aquino was swept into presidential power on a wave of “People Power,” the dictator Marcos was ousted and fled to Hawaii with suitcases full of money plundered from the national reserve, and the CPP was left politically isolated by the Executive Committee’s stubborn and dogmatic refusal to participate in the election. For details, see Gregg R. Jones (1989).
- 29 This is especially apparent in more recent Party literature, such as “Linea de Masas,” n.d.. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 30 PCP-SL, “El Problema Campesino y La Revolución.” *Ediciones Bandera Roja* No. 46, August 1976. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 31 These statements were made by Abimael Guzmán during a conference in the auditorium of the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga in June 1973, and are quoted in Coronel 1996:46.
- 32 See Ministerio de Guerra (1966) for the official assessment of the emergence, organisation, operation, and repression of the MIR, ELN, and Túpac Amaru guerrilla movements, and the significant issues they raised for the armed forces. For insight into the guerrilla experience, see Bejár (1969). For an excellent theoretical analysis of the outcomes of these Cuban-inspired guerrilla insurgencies, see Wickham-Crowley (1992).
- 33 Kruijt (1994) offers a detailed and authoritative account and analysis of how the military reforms were initially conceived and directed during the Velasco years.
- 34 To this day still it is still considered an insult to call an Andean peasant an *indio*, and it is for this reason that I intentionally omit using the word Indian in this book. Besides which, Peruvian peasants themselves derive no sense of ethnic or class identity from the term Indian (see Degregori 1999c; Remy 1994). The word “Indian” is routinely used by many Westerners as an exotic image or a convenient shorthand in reference to Peru’s Andean peoples, without perhaps realising the pejorative connotations it has for the people themselves.

- 35 For a discussion of the decay of the *latifundio* system since the 1950s, see Harding (1975). See Deere (1990) for the Cajamarca example.
- 36 The soil in Ayacucho's sierra region is generally poor; and the rich lands of valley floors were not only scarce (except for the remote Apurímac river valley), but also unsuitable to sustaining profitable commercial agriculture on a large scale. The rich landowners therefore preferred the more profitable enterprise of ranching over labour-intensive commercial agricultural farming, and it is for this reason that one finds the largest estates in the department of Ayacucho situated in the high *pumas*.
- 37 For an examination of the impact of agrarian reform in Huanta, see Coronel 1979.
- 38 Anthropologists consider such cultural practices to be "levelling mechanisms."
- 39 PCP-SL, "El Problema Campesino y La Revolución." *Ediciones Bandera Roja* No. 46, August 1976. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 40 Chávez de Paz found, for instance, that 85.8 percent of those convicted of terrorism between 1983 and 1986 had an income lesser than the legal minimum wage, despite the fact that among these individuals, more than half possessed secondary education, and a third were even university graduates (1989:44,45,48, 55). His conclusion is that "the expectations of that group—privileged in relation to their environment—contrasts with the type of work and income of their initial occupation" (*ibid.*:57).
- 41 Hinojosa (1998:65) has borrowed this wonderful phrase from Josep Fontana.
- 42 In Abimael Guzmán, "Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio." *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 43 *The War of the Flea* is the title of Robert Taber's classic (London: Paladin, 1970).
- 44 SIN Report 3219, 28 December 1977, quoted in Gorriti 1999:47.
- 45 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 46 Author's interview with J.R.C., former president of barrio 'La Libertad,' Humanga, on 22 May 2000.
- 47 Abimael Guzmán, "Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio." *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>). See also PCP-SL, "¡Elecciones no! ¡Guerra popular sí!" *Ediciones Bandera Roja*, May 1990. Also reproduced by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 PCP-SL, "El Problema Campesino y La Revolución." *Ediciones Bandera Roja* No. 46, August 1976. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 55 Abimael Guzmán, "We are the Initiators," 19 April 1980. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).

3 Early counter-rebellion

*Donde la sangre del pueblo
iay! se derrama,
ahi mismito florece,
amarillito flor de retama*

– Ricardo Dolorier Urbano, “Flor de Retama”

3.1 Revolutionary war and initial peasant responses to Shining Path: 1980-83

The democratic elections of 1980 were intended to symbolize Peru’s return to civilian governance and democracy after more than a decade of military rule. But Sendero chose the very eve of the election to initiate its revolutionary war against the Peruvian state by burning ballot boxes in the rural town of Chuschi, Cangallo Province, department of Ayacucho. The seventeenth of May would thereafter be celebrated on the revolutionary calendar as the *Inicio de la Lucha Armada* (ILA); but the decision to embark on the path of guerrilla war had already been made in 1979, at the Central Committee’s IX Expanded Plenum.¹ With this first act of war, Shining Path embarked on a series of vigorous, nation-wide operations that aimed at the disruption of public life by dynamiting buildings and sabotaging national infrastructure. Its actions were also directed at making dramatic symbolic statements (like blowing up Velasco’s tomb, hanging dead dogs from lampposts, and painting political slogans on walls), and at building up its weapons arsenal by robbing dynamite from mining camps and seizing firearms and uniforms from police stations and policemen.

The death toll during the first two years of the insurgency was extremely low: six policemen and seven civilians, none of whom were peasants (DESCO 1989:43). At first, the government of President Belaúnde did not take these acts seriously, and merely dismissed the militants as “infantile terrorists,” “petty livestock-rustlers,” and “bandits.” Consequently, the responsibility for confronting the guerrillas in the first three years of the insurgency was placed exclusively in the hands of the police. During this period, the President expressed repeatedly that he was reluctant to commit the armed forces to suppressing the rebellion. Nor did he deem it a necessary measure. Even so, the political crisis eventually worsened to such an extent that the government saw no alternative but to declare a state of emergency over the entire department of Ayacucho on 3 March 1982.²

As armed clashes between the rebels and the police escalated between 1981 and 1982, it became painfully obvious that the police were unable to come to grips with the small, mobile columns of guerrilla fighters. By late 1982, Shining Path detachments were even able to occupy the city of Huanta for twenty-four hours, and to overrun the police station at Vilcashuamán. Practically helpless to prevent surprise attacks on stations in cities let alone on small posts in outlying villages, the police became increasingly frustrated and demoralised. As a matter of practicality, the Civil Guard eventually decided to abandon their more remote rural posts, withdrawing to

reinforced garrisons in major towns (Gorriti 1999:164). “Consequently, by the latter half of 1982 Sendero became the only effective authority (apart from the traditional peasant community leaders) over large areas of Ayacucho, with the police restricting their activity to non-too-frequent, heavily armed day-time patrols” (Taylor 1983:32).

Why was Shining Path able to flourish and expand its field of operations in the Ayacuchan countryside so quickly? It is often noted in the literature that, in terms of guerrilla warfare, the Senderistas were more than a match for the poorly trained and motivated policemen. This disparity in motivation and capability is hardly surprising, given that for most being a policeman was simply a matter of employment, while for the guerrillas being a Senderista was a matter of zealous conviction. But besides the apparent inability of the police to suppress the insurgency, another reason appears to have been that Shining Path enjoyed a great degree of sympathy (if not actual commitment or active support) from the rural population, at least in the beginning. According to Berg, “the movement of the guerrillas was said to be facilitated by a network of safe houses, sleeping spots and sources of supply. The guerrillas also received food, although opinions varied as to whether this was given by sympathizers or by people frightened into assisting” (1992:92). In the rural district of Tambo, I asked people to describe for me their first encounter with Sendero. “At first the Senderos came,” recalled Daniel, a displaced peasant from Huancapampa now living in one of Tambo’s *desplazado* settlements.

At first the Senderos came and told us: ‘We’re going to do this and that, we’re going to work together. If you don’t have animals, you’ll get some. Let’s kill those who have lots of animals—these we’ll give to the poor. And we’ll all have [animals] equally.’ Everyone believed what they said. In this way they fooled us, and the people had believed that that all this would come true.³

Others gave different explanations. Pascual Quispe Vargas, a displaced person and former *rondero* who was just a young teenager in the early years of the insurrection, insisted that apart from a few students and teachers, most people in Tambo town and the surrounding rural villages cooperated with the guerrillas only “through fear,” for they were initially powerless to resist or to defend themselves.⁴ Whatever the reasons behind the active assistance given, there is little doubt that the guerrillas enjoyed a large measure of sincere public sympathy. Consequently, in the first three years of the insurgency, the guerrillas proved themselves to be the proverbial fish in water—moving fluidly through the countryside, striking targets when and where they pleased, cunningly eluding the police with ease.

Shining Path’s field of operations in Ayacucho department initially encompassed the provinces of Huanta, La Mar (especially in the districts of Tambo and San Miguel), Huamanga, Cangallo, and Víctor Fajardo (DESCO 1989). The last two are poor provinces where recognised peasant communities are prevalent, and schools are in abundance. Given that teachers and students have always been the core aficionados of Shining Path in Ayacucho, this choice of operational setting was thus a strategically prudent one. In Huanta Valley, the movement gained active assistance from the young students and passive support from their peasant parents, particularly the estab-

lished smallholders (Coronel 1996:45). From 1980 until the end of 1982, villages in Huamanga Province and in the Huanta and Pampas river valleys were frequently visited by guerrilla groups preaching the message of “a new life; a government of the people, of the peasants; a New Democracy in which there would be no more exploitation or corruption, a society without the rich” (Coronel and Loayza 1992:524).

Whereas Shining Path’s vague yet passionately vitriolic rhetoric of a sanguinary class struggle to usher a new utopian social order was something that held great appeal for frustrated and discontented youths with some degree of education, the measure of sympathy they initially drew from the older, less-educated peasantry can perhaps be attributed to a number of their early concrete actions, rather than to their ideology. In particular, their daring clashes with the police received enormous popular approval. Of the various representatives of the State, the police are particularly reviled by Ayacuchanos. People in Huamanga, Tambo, Chuschi, Uchuraccay, and practically everywhere else I travelled in the department in 1997 and 2000 told me that they thought of most policemen as corrupt and exploitative, frequently abusive and inconsiderate, and often disrespectful towards civilians, particularly peasants. The stereotype is not without foundation. On the road from Huamanga to Tambo, I observed on numerous occasions the rough way in which they searched through the belongings of travellers: ripping open sacks, nonchalantly scattering items on the dusty ground, thrusting metal probes with serrated tips into bags and boxes piled on the tops of vehicles in search of cocaine paste, never asking first if they contain live chickens or guinea pigs. At random checkpoints on secluded roads throughout the emergency zone, policemen toting Kalashnikovs and wearing sunglasses so large as to obscure their faces would stop and circle menacingly round the parked vehicles, barking questions in an intimidating tone that suggests immediate suspicion. Their anonymity—and therefore their potential to enact abuse or violence with impunity—is made complete by the absence of nametags on their dark-green uniforms. It is also common at their checkpoints for them to refuse to let a vehicle through unless the driver first pays them a small bribe. Policemen in the highlands are rarely from the area where they are posted, and often not even from the department. The majority are *criollos* or *mestizos* who do not speak much Quechua, if at all, and their short posting period of about three to four months in any one place means that they rarely have the opportunity—nor do they often have the desire—to form intimate relationships with the populace. A policeman in Tambo once told me that he would be there for only three months, and so he was not interested in taking the time to know the history, culture, and customs of the locals.

The peasants’ dislike for the police is also based on the historical fact that “all across Peru, the police have been the point men for the state in containing *campesino* mobilisation. They evict land invaders, break strikes, and keep constant tabs on peasant leaders” (Starn 1989:66). Some Ayacuchano communities, like Chuschi, have even incorporated vilified and comical caricatures of the police into their ritualised celebrations.⁵ Others had gone so far as to resist police posts being set up in their locality, or even to evict existing ones from their community, as happened in the 1960s and again in 1978-79 in Cangallo, Vilcashuamán, Pomacocha and Vischongo (Degregori 1987:42; Gorriti 1999:46-53). Clearly, the historical relationship between Ayacuchanos and the police has periodically been marked by violent confrontation. A

bitter memory for many older Ayacuchanos today is the brutality with which the police quelled the movement for free education in 1969 (see chapter 2). Of the various branches of the police, the Sinchis had a particularly notorious and fearsome reputation that was to be underscored (and not for the last time) on 26 December 1982, when they burst by surprise upon a community assembly in Huancaraylla (Victor Fajardo province), firing their weapons indiscriminately into the crowd. Eight peasants were killed (DESCO 1989:90). Small wonder, then, that in the early years of the revolution, Shining Path militants had the passive acquiescence—and sometimes even the active encouragement or assistance—of many of the rural inhabitants of Ayacucho in attacking police posts.⁶

Sendero Luminoso also boosted its initial popularity by distributing confiscated goods, such as the livestock of wealthy individuals and merchandise plundered from stores in rural villages. On one occasion in November 1982, they also executed in Pacucha (Apurímac department) at least two unpopular storekeepers who were generally disliked for their wealth, and were perceived by the locals to be exploiting the local peasants (Berg 1992:93). At other times militants have even stopped lorries on roads and distributed their cargo to local peasants (e.g. DESCO 1989:89). State-run agrarian and livestock cooperatives, and abandoned *haciendas* awaiting adjudication by the agrarian court, became particular targets for the guerrillas. After invading a cooperative, the guerrillas sometimes distributed its land and livestock for collective usage to neighbouring peasant groups, or to the cooperatives' peasant members. The expensive machinery on cooperatives would often be destroyed, and their despised or corrupt administrators executed or chased away (Coronel 1996:45; Taylor 1983:28). In August 1982, Shining Path orchestrated the land invasion of Allpachaca, the UNSCH's experimental farm.⁷ According to the testimonies collected by Isbell, more than 2,000 peasants took part in the invasion, and afterwards sowed the fields communally. The farm's valuable experimental stock of cattle were butchered for meat or taken away (see Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332). "People claim that the fields were never harvested because the military arrived in full force [the next year] and prevented them from returning," writes Isbell. "Nevertheless, the Allpachaca invasion and communal planting of the fields have taken a place in the mytho-history of the short period of support given to SL activities" (1992:67). Widely approved though these actions were, the main losers in the sabotage and destruction of a cooperative and its machinery were, invariably, the peasant or proletarian members of the cooperative, for it was they who ultimately had to pay for the damage out of their own pockets (Taylor 1983:28). Ironically, these were also the very people Sendero hoped to recruit as its "mass base."

But of all Shining Path's tactics, the one that was to prove as socially divisive in the long run as it was disturbingly popular among Ayacuchano villagers in the first instance was the practice of liquidating those who in Maoist jargon were labelled as "enemies of the people," or "*shensis malvados*" in Senderista-speak (González 1984b:17; Degregori 1987:45). At first this category corresponded neatly with the archetypal villains of Andean society: bandits, thieves, and livestock rustlers. Such individuals are loathed throughout the Peruvian Andes, for they are commonly believed to prey on poor peasants by stealing their scarce resources. In the northern Peruvian department of Cajamarca, for instance, many rural villages spontaneously organised *rondas campesinas*—peasant vigilante patrols—in the mid-1970s to tackle

the problems of robbery, petty thievery, and cattle rustling (see Gitlitz and Rojas 1983; Starn 1989, 1999). By declaring the eradication of thieves, rapists, bandits, and the like to be among its objectives, Shining Path managed to strike the right chord with the peasantry. Within a short while, however, its severe administration of justice came to run the whole gamut of transgressions, from “antirevolutionary” offences to breaches of the Party’s strict Maoist-inspired moral code. As a measure of Sendero’s increasing attempts to exercise a pervasive control over the minutiae of the daily lives of peasants, “enemies” or “bad people” came to designate all sorts of persons: petty-*gamonales*, wife beaters and adulterers; drunkards, alleged homosexuals, and perceived extortionists and exploiters. The accused would first be tried by a “people’s court” before invariably receiving a sentence of either corporal punishment (e.g. flogging, head-shaving) or death by public execution. When they could, the guerrillas exploited and exacerbated age-old animosities between antagonistic villages, such as when they executed Chuschi’s first “enemies of the people” in September 1982. On that occasion the accused were cattle-rustlers from Chuschi’s traditional rival, the neighbouring village of Quispillaccta. The two communities have had a number of serious (and sometimes violent) land-related disputes over past centuries, and their legendary rivalry is known throughout Ayacucho (see Isbell 1978, 1992). Evidently, it was also known to the guerrillas.

As Sendero intensified its moralisation campaign, executions and castigations became more frequent and more arbitrary. Eventually, every peasant came to be at risk from denunciation, and villagers soon realised that they did not so much have to fear Sendero as what their neighbours might tell Sendero, or the Sinchis. Denunciation to one or the other armed actor thus became for peasants a new means with which to settle old scores. Criminality, spying and informing for the police, or otherwise providing assistance to other “enemies of the people” all served as pretexts for executing common peasants. But, as people in Tambo have told me, personal vendettas and rivalries, land disputes,⁸ a squabble over inheritance, or just plain jealousy were, more often than not, the real motives behind many of the denunciations between neighbours and even between relatives.⁹ Towards the end of 1982, the political violence had generalised to such an extent as to engender a climate of fear, distrust, and insecurity that began to tear apart the social fabric of communities. A circle of communal vengeance gripped many districts of Ayacucho, like Tambo. By attempting to exploit the chaotic spiral of violence for their own personal advantage, peasants inadvertently contributed to the escalation of violence. But worse was yet to come; for once the armed forces entered the fray, peasants would find themselves engulfed in violence of such catastrophic proportions as to become known as “*manchay tiempo*”—“a time of fear” (Starn et al. 1995:339).

3.2 Growing peasant resentment towards Shining Path

In the second half of 1982, Sendero Luminoso’s “protracted people’s war” entered a second stage that called for the encircling of Ayacucho’s major urban centres. (We should bear in mind, however, that Shining Path was also extremely active in the cities.) The aim was to cut off their supply of rural produce and labourers (Tapia

1997:85-86). Known as *Plan II: "The Campaign to open guerrilla zones and advance bases of support,"* the strategy required the peasantry to sever its economic ties with the market and the monetary economy. In addition, the rebels would block off roads in an attempt to isolate guerrilla-controlled areas from the rest of country. Peasants were henceforth to produce only for subsistence. And in order to break what Sendero viewed as their dependency on capitalist urban centres, peasants were discouraged from travelling to towns and cities. Within their zones of influence, Sendero even tried to ban the weekly local markets and fairs, which it considered to be nests of capitalistic exploitation. In so doing, Shining Path merely created the extra burden of increasing transportation costs for many peasants, who were now forced to travel to more distant places where they could sell their goods and procure basic commodities (González 1983b:20). Furthermore, its attempt to restrict traffic to urban centres merely caused disruption and harm to peasant household economies, for whom labour migration provided an important source of income. It comes as little surprise that their strategy for "starving out the cities" met with the general disapproval of most Ayacuchan peasants, for whom commodity exchange, labour migration, and participation in the cash economy played a vital part in their production strategies and consumption practices.

The problem was that while Shining Path exhorted peasants to make a fundamental change to their adaptive strategy by breaking relations with the national market, they made no attempts to offer viable alternatives. The Party was content simply to state that peasants should strive to become self-sufficient. But how? For in the words of one peasant woman from Chuschi, "We could not let them close the markets. Where would we get our salt and matches?" (quoted in Isbell 1992:66). Such a question, however, was irrelevant to Shining Path, for it took it upon itself to redefine the basic needs of the peasantry, which according to them was simply to serve the Party and its revolution. Yet the fact remains that whereas Shining Path constantly preached the ideal of economic self-sufficiency, in fact they did very little to facilitate its practice. In most of the instances when they organised collective agriculture, the Senderistas subsequently appropriated the entire harvest for themselves, as a "contribution to the revolution," instead of dividing it up among the workers (Coronel 1996:46; Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332-333). According to one former Sendero cadre, "What was planted was no longer for the community, but to supply the comrades in the field..." (quoted in Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332). By attempting to reorganise peasant modes of production to make them conform to the autarkic economy it aspired to create, Shining Path merely imposed additional hardships on precarious rural livelihood strategies, thus worsening what were already dire economic conditions for the Ayacuchan peasantry. Furthermore, the Party's assumption that the peasantry would be willing to put up with the long-term economic sacrifices demanded by their "protracted armed struggle" was also out of sync with the pragmatic interests of the majority of peasants, which were to satisfy the basic caloric minima requirements and replacement needs of their households, and to minimise insecurity and risk in their daily lives (see Wolf 1966:6). Moreover, by confiscating the fruits of communal labour entirely, the Senderistas were not only blatantly violating Andean cultural principles of reciprocity; they were also directly contradicting their earlier promise to create a "New Democracy" free of exploitation (Coronel and

Loayza, 1992:524). (In contrast, even the capitalists and merchants ordinarily paid peasants for the products of their labour.) Actions like these showed Senderistas to be not so different from the very *gamonal* exploiters whom they enjoyed repeatedly denouncing.

The transformation of the peasantry that Shining Path sought to achieve was not meant to be confined just to economic practices. The objective was also to ensure a revolutionary redefinition of Andean culture. To this end, a moral campaign to prohibit fiestas, drinking, and the use of coca was initiated by its fervent and puritan-minded militants in the early years of the revolution, although enforcement of this would become rather lax as time went on. Nevertheless, its initial consequence was to embitter an already increasingly disaffected peasantry, for it was a course of action that was insensitive to the fact that fiestas are important for the reproduction of community life by marking crucial stages in the agricultural cycle and reaffirming shared community beliefs and values (see Isbell 1978:197-220; Mitchell 1991). The militants' restrictions simply revealed their unfamiliarity with, or perhaps blatant contempt of, Andean rituals and exchange relationships in which coca and alcohol constitute the indispensable symbolic components. For all these reasons, it can be argued that Shining Path began to lose whatever degree of peasant support and legitimacy it had gained when its demands and the consequences of its actions ceased to correspond with the needs, interests, and goals of most peasants in Ayacucho.

As part of Plan II, Sendero militants also began to "*batir el campo*." This involved eradicating all remaining vestiges of the state in the countryside while simultaneously forming *Comités Populares*, which were the administrative organs of Senderista government. In the words of Abimael Guzmán himself, to *batir el campo* meant "to scour the countryside, to ignite it: to sweep away all authorities; that they may be routed from the countryside and that the ground may be cleansed on top of which the bases of revolutionary support shall be moved and shall be built" (quoted in González 1984c:19). The public adjudication and execution of state representatives did not receive equal acceptance in all parts of the department, however. One vivid illustration of this was when Bernardino Chipana, the governor of Chuschi, was captured by the guerrillas and paraded naked through the village streets in July 1982. The insurgents intended to kill him in the plaza, but when they asked the crowd to decide the man's fate, they received an emphatic reply of "No, don't kill him" (Isbell 1992:67; DESCO 1989:83). Clearly, not all people who Sendero regarded as "*shensis malvados*," or traitors and informers, were viewed in this way by their fellow villagers (see González 1983a, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). Even so, by the end of the year, most state authorities at the district level and below had either fled or renounced their posts, leaving an absence of formal government in many rural areas (Berg 1992:93).

It was also in this period that Shining Path began to repudiate peasant authorities, like community presidents and traditional authorities called *varayoccs*, "threatening them with death if they refused to renounce their post" (Coronel 1996:47). By frequently attempting to replace local peasant authorities with its own cadres, the Party gave the impression that it was trying to limit the degree of peasant leadership in the revolution, in direct contradiction to their earlier pledge to create "a government of the people, of the peasants" (Coronel and Loayza 1992: 524). Furthermore,

Sendero's increasingly violent authoritarianism simply replicated the traditional structures of power and domination that many peasant communities, like those in the high Andes of Huanta, had for decades been struggling to escape. "Shining Path had simply transformed the power structure with itself at the top and with the peasant masses, *whom it considered in need of leadership and instruction*, at the bottom" (Isbell 1988:72. My emphasis). (See discussion of "vanguardism" in chapter 2.) Using terror as its primary weapon, Shining Path came to occupy the place of the traditional Andean *patrón*, imposing a strict moral code and distributing its own brand of justice. Hence, by the end of 1982 many Ayacuchano peasants had already grown disenchanted with Sendero Luminoso.¹⁰ Alongside the other aforementioned grievances, the growing numbers of common peasants and peasant authorities being killed by the guerrillas caused deep and widespread resentment, particularly among the victims' kin (see Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332).

3.3 Early peasant counter-rebellion against Shining Path in Ayacucho

Through the cold and drizzly morning of 21 January 1983, an armed column of seven guerrillas marched into Huaychao, a village in the high Andes of Huanta Province. It was not the first guerrilla visit to Huaychao. Just five and a half months earlier, another group of Senderistas had passed through the village. On that occasion they adjudicated and summarily executed Eusebio Ccente and Pedro Rimachi, Huaychao's president and lieutenant governor respectively (Coronel 1996:48). But this time the encounter would be different. A congenial reception from the *comuneros* put the seven young men at ease—and off guard. Perhaps they did not realise they were gradually being encircled by the villagers, whose faces had turned grim; and they probably failed to notice the knives, staves, and stones that slowly slid out from under their ponchos, until it was too late.

In this, the second year of Shining Path's revolutionary war, the targeted killings of peasant authorities and commoners by guerrillas had become more frequent over the past six months. But never until now had *campesinos* in the department of Ayacucho, the epicentre of the insurgency, ever resorted to violent means to defend themselves. The news from Huaychao astounded the entire nation, which was of the general though erroneous opinion that Shining Path enjoyed near-unanimous acceptance among the Ayacuchano peasantry. Various newspapers in Lima, including Peruvian president Fernando Belaúnde Terry himself, immediately praised the community for its resolute bravery in standing up to the guerrillas. Within five days' time, however, Huaychao would be all but forgotten, overshadowed by the tragic report that eight Lima journalists and their guide, who had been trying to make their way to Huaychao to verify the astonishing news of the week before, had been mistaken for guerrillas and massacred by peasants in the neighbouring community of Uchuraccay, some seven kilometres away.¹¹ The tragedy riveted world attention on the political violence that was spinning out of control in this remote part of the Peruvian Andes, one of nation's poorest and most neglected departments. However, the tragedy at Uchuraccay should not cause us to lose sight of the significance of what had happened

in Huaychao. For it was at Huaychao that peasants demonstrated for the first time their determination to defend themselves, their scarce resources, and their way of life from guerrilla claims and attempts to dominate them.

José Coronel, a Huantino anthropologist at the UNSCH and a leading scholar on the subject of village defence committees in Ayacucho, suggests that it was Shining Path's repudiation, attempted substitution, and subsequent assassination of peasant authorities in the villages of Huaychao and Ccarhuahurán in August 1982 that drove Huanta's high-Andean communities to respond to Shining Path with physical violence. In the eyes of their communities, these murdered men were not criminals or corrupt government functionaries, but legitimate and respected indigenous authorities who were regarded as the embodiment of community values, order, and tradition (Coronel 1996:38-40). But what was more, they were also kinsmen. A strong preference for endogamous marriage was commonly practiced in these thirty or so high-Andean villages, bound together by blood into a distinct ethnic group commonly referred to by outsiders as the Iquichanos. For this reason, Shining Path's execution of a single individual in one Iquichano village created wider ripples of anger in neighbouring villages. For instance, Eusebio Ccente, the community president of Huaychao killed by guerrillas, had many relatives in Uchuraccay.

But even prior to the killings, it seems that the young rebels had already sown the seeds of discord among the Iquichanos. "Before the violence, we lived *tranquilito*," recalled Elías Ccente, Uchuraccay's current community president and a kinsman of Eusebio Ccente.

We had lots of animals [livestock] and enough food. Then the terrorists came in 1982. At first we provided them with provisions and lodgings, and approved of their aim of fighting injustice. You could say that our initial response to them was curiosity and sympathy. But soon we saw that what they said was not what they did. They behaved terribly. When they demanded provisions, they always took the best, even our local girls, some of whom they got pregnant.¹²

Six months after the guerrillas first appeared in the highlands of Huanta, the Iquichanos decided to resist them by forming village defence committees modelled on the existing *comités de administración* and *comités de vigilancia* of each community.

But why did the Iquichanos initially choose the path of violent resistance, instead of some other form of response? And why did organised, collective resistance to the guerrillas begin in this sub-region and not in other parts of Ayacucho? I would argue that an attempt to explain disparate responses to the violence of Shining Path must consider not just the experience that individual peasant households and peasant groups have had with the wider world and the kinds of socioeconomic resources available to them, but also the circumstances in which responses were made, especially as regards the intensity of guerrilla presence in a specific area.

At the start of the revolution, most rural hamlets in the department of Ayacucho—principally those of the lowlands and the valleys—already exhibited a high degree of class stratification. The members were commonly differentiated not only on the basis of wealth, but also by other factors such as level of education and

bilingualism, the experience of labour migration, and the strength of personal, informal networks in the urban world (see Mitchell 1991). Furthermore, private ownership of land, together with class differentiation and a weakening of traditional authorities whose role it had been in the past to mediate conflicts, resulted in frequent disputes and squabbles among villagers in the majority of Ayacucho’s rural communities. As McClintock points out, 71 percent of Ayacuchan peasants in 1961 were smallholders, of which “as of 1971, 71 percent of Ayacucho’s [smallholders] were engaged in boundary disputes—one of the highest percentages in the country” (1984:74). This condition undoubtedly also owes itself to existence of what Wolf calls the “*partible inheritance*” of land. That is to say, within a parental domestic group there is usually left more than one heir, and “they subdivide the established unit so that each successor receives a combination of resources weaker than the one managed by the departing head” (1966:73). It is not difficult to imagine how this could easily lead to conflicts over land, even between relatives, as I have been told is precisely what happened in Tambo district.

By contrast, at the start of the 1980s almost everyone in the Iquichano communities was still a monolingual Quechua speaker (see Table 3.1, below). Complete illiteracy was practically universal, and the vast majority of the villagers had little or no experience of having lived as migrants in towns, cities, or any other part of Ayacucho or Peru for that matter. A very few, however, had worked as itinerant labourers in the Apurímac River Valley. Unlike in other communities in Ayacucho, hardly any of the men in the Iquichano communities had done compulsory military service, the remoteness of the villages almost certainly serving to insulate them from being drafted or press-ganged into military service.¹³ On occasion, they attended the fairs held in urban centres like Tambo or Huanta to sell their highland produce and livestock, and to purchase basic supplies. Otherwise, they hardly participated in the cash economy. Instead, barter was their preferred mode of exchange. Furthermore, no long history of land disputes existed within the Iquichan communities because all the land they inhabit used to belong to *haciendas*.¹⁴ Prior to the land reform of the 1970s, the Iquichanos were *feudatarios* (*hacienda* serfs), not *parcelarios individuales* (individual parcel holders) as they are today. Consequently, the inhabitants of Iquichano villages remained relatively egalitarian and free of land disputes, and exhibited a strong sense of communal solidarity and ethnic identity that differentiated between insiders and outsiders, rather than along class lines.

Table 3.1: Percentage comparison of monolingual Quechua-speakers in valley and puna of Huanta, 1979

Community	Location	% Monolingual Quechua speakers
Chacco	Valley	30.5
Durazno	Valley	48.5
Pata	Valley	41.5
Pampachacra	Puna	95.0
Culluchaca		

Source: after Coronel 1996:39

And so whereas in many other Ayacuchan localities the presence of social cleavages and social stratification provided Shining Path with ample opportunities to create so-called “enemies of the people,” in the Iquichano communities, by contrast, greater egalitarianism and less history of land disputes between members meant fewer cleavages for Shining Path to manipulate or aggravate. I would argue, then, that the more economically stratified and internally differentiated a village was, the more prone its inhabitants would have been to factional conflicts and cleavages, thus making collective resistance to Shining Path all the more difficult to organise. In such cases, responses to guerrilla violence were often made in individually ways, rather than collectively. A family’s particular resources—like social and kinship networks in towns and cities, skills, education, cash savings etc.—presented possible alternatives. For this reason, many peasant groups in Ayacucho adopted various paths of response and resistance to Sendero Luminoso *other than* forming village defence groups. Their wider options included fleeing to relatives and friends in cities, or to the pre-war migrant settlements in urban centres, where they could enter the burgeoning “informal economy” (see De Soto 1986).

In some cases, those who opted to remain in the rural village were the poorer peasants, while their wealthier neighbours tended to leave (see Coronel and Loayza 1992; Flagg 1998). As a result, poorer villagers sometimes came to assume the leadership roles that previously had been held by richer peasants. Whereas the prior heterogeneity of a village might have prevented it from effectively organising communal defence as an initial response, Sendero’s selective killings and the subsequent exodus of the terrified richer peasants must have had a homogenising effect that later made it easier for the remaining poorer villagers to organise in defence of their lives and their resources. This is what occurred in the village of Cochas, Luricocha district, near the Huanta valley (Coronel and Loayza 1992:527-528). (Even if parents decided not to leave their rural community, it was nevertheless common for them to send their children to urban centres for safety.)

The Iquichanos, on the other hand, had less options for responding to guerrilla violence because they had fewer resources available to them. One response could have been to flee, but it seemed a difficult and unappealing one. The vast majority of Iquichanos lacked social networks and contacts in urban centres, and were deficient in skills, education, and other resources (e.g. bilingualism, literacy, cash etc.) necessary for life in urban society.

There were two other important explanations why, in the end, the majority of Iquichanos chose to fight. One was that they were fiercely protective of their land and their resources for the simple reason that they had only relatively recently acquired them through agrarian reform. Agrarian reform in the ‘70s offered former hacienda peons, like the Iquichanos, the opportunity to buy the estates on which they had lived and worked for countless generations. And so it was through this process known as *compra-venta* (buy-sell) that the inhabitants of Uchuraccay obtained their land in 1973, and the villagers of Huaychao gained theirs in 1979.¹⁵ At the time of adjudication, the peasants of Uchuraccay strongly opposed being turned into a peasant cooperative, with property held in common. Instead, they chose to become an associative enterprise whereby each family would receive individual parcel holdings.¹⁶ It is therefore not surprising that just a few years later, Shining Path’s rhetoric of communist collectivism led

the Iquichanos to fear that the guerrillas intended to take and collectivise the very land they had only recently obtained, through much effort and sacrifice.¹⁷

The second important reason why the Iquichanos decided to stay and fight was that they really believed they could take on and defeat the guerrillas. “The first *terrucos* [terrorists] we met were young, scrawny teenagers,” Elías Ccente told me. “They were few in number and not very well armed. We thought it would be easy to annihilate them with our lances, slings, knives and stones.” It would appear, then, that the Iquichanos did not realise what they were dealing with, which may partly have been the fault of the Sinchis. The Sinchis had visited them by helicopter on a number of occasions, encouraging them to kill or capture any Senderistas they encountered. But they failed to warn the peasants of the size and military capabilities of this Maoist organisation. Consequently, that the Iquichanos underestimated Shining Path would be disastrous. “After we had managed to kill a few of the *terrucos*, their comrades responded by using heavy firearms and explosives,” said Ccente. “Many more arrived, and then they began to kill more peasants. There was nothing we could do to save ourselves and our families but to abandon our communities and go far away. We lost everything else.”

It is also important to consider the specific circumstances in which peasant responses to Shining Path were made. For instance, the intensity of guerrilla presence in the Pampas River Valley and in the Iquichan highlands (two separate Ayacuchan sub-regions in which communities nevertheless exhibited structural similarities) differed markedly. In the Pampas villages of Chuschi, Quispillaccta, and Canchacancha, there were large numbers of students and teachers, most of whom openly sympathised with Shining Path. Indeed, they constituted the very nucleus of Sendero’s “one thousand ears and one thousand eyes,” making the task of organising community defence all the more difficult. A similar situation prevailed most everywhere elsewhere in Ayacucho department. Describing their initial efforts to organise self-defence militias in the district of Vinchos (Huamanga Province) in the early-1980s, for instance, militia president *Juan Pardo* recalled: “Among the communities we had organised a meeting but secretly because the Senderos were present in these zones....” (quoted in Starn 1993:43).

In contrast to the circumstances in most villages in the provinces of Huamanga and Víctor Fajardo, or in the valleys of Huanta and the Pampas River, the lack of students and a virtual absence of teachers within the Iquichano villages meant that immediate pro-Sendero vigilance was largely absent in these highland communities. And whereas the communities of the Pampas River Valley were constantly visited and sometimes even occupied by guerrilla columns in the first two-and-a-half years of the insurgency, Shining Path had comparatively little contact with the Iquichano villages. Hence, it can be argued that in contrast to the circumstances surrounding the Iquichano communities, in most other districts of Ayacucho the strong and near-ubiquitous presence of Shining Path guerrillas or its sympathisers precluded the existence of the autonomous space of action necessary for planning and mobilising armed community resistance to the guerrillas.

It is important to realise, however, that the Iquichanos’ decision to defend themselves was not an inevitable one. It was a response influenced by a variety of factors—their ability to mobilise themselves, and the relative intensity of guerrilla pressure in

the area being the most important. Had the guerrillas attacked them in 1982 as severely as they later did in 1983 and in 1984, there is little doubt that the Iquichanos would have immediately chosen to flee rather than to fight.

Like the Iquichanos, though, many Chuschinos had had enough of guerrilla presence by the end of 1982. When the security forces entered Chuschi in December that year, the guerrillas who had occupied the community took to the surrounding hills; and with them evaporated any remaining credibility they had among the local inhabitants. Their refusal to wage pitched battles against superior military forces in defence of rural villages is a standard Maoist principle of guerrilla warfare, and the Shining Path guerrillas resorted to this tactic time and again.¹⁸ However, it was invariably the defenceless villagers who were then left behind to suffer the wrath of the soldiers. Consequently, rural villagers who had once trusted the guerrillas to defend them began to feel increasingly disillusioned, exasperated, and betrayed. As one perplexed and indignant Chuschino woman put it,

Why do they not protect us, they have put us in this problem and they don't protect us; they have to protect us, they must defend us. Why have they told us that they were going to fight in front and we were going to go behind them? Where are they? Now one can't see any sign of them, they put us in this mess and they pull out, this can't be!
(quoted in Degregori 1987:46).

The soldiers became angry when they could not find the guerrillas in Chuschi, though they suspected that everyone in the community was a sympathiser. Before setting off to continue their search for the insurgents elsewhere, they blew up an elderly peasant man with a home-made guerrilla explosive in an attempt to intimidate the *comuneros* (Isbell 1992:69).

The Senderistas returned to the community soon after the soldiers left and tried to organise a victory celebration, but they were rebuked by what was now a disaffected population. They retreated once more into the hills. A couple of months later, white flags symbolising rejection of the revolution were flown in Chuschi, birthplace of Sendero's armed struggle. The Chuschinos requested that a military post be established in the community (*ibid.*).

3.4 The army unleashed

On 29 December 1982, the Peruvian armed forces were ordered by President Belaúnde to enter Ayacucho and crush the Maoist rebellion. Just the previous day, his Minister of War, General Luis Cisneros Vizquerra, had made the optimistic statement to the press that "the only thing I can assure you all is that in 1983 Ayacucho will be calm" (quoted in DESCO 1989:90). What in fact followed were two years of unadulterated violence; two years during which indiscriminate and brutal military repression was repaid in kind by Shining Path, with terrible vengeance. To make matters worse, peasant populations also began to attack each other in vicious reprisals for supposed denunciations made either to the guerrillas or to the security forces. Witch-hunts aimed

at rooting out presumed *terrucos* were unleashed on rival villages and adjacent districts.¹⁹ The result was a “dirty war” that left a multitude of orphans and widows, and a grisly trail of mutilated corpses, abandoned villages, and mass graves that continue to be discovered more than a decade later.

The fundamental problem with the military’s intervention was that Peru’s system of national defence was designed to confront military threats from its international neighbours; it simply was neither informatively nor organisationally prepared to handle an insurrection (Tapia 1997:29; Kruijt 1996). Nevertheless, the Army anticipated a swift counterinsurgency campaign of two months (DESCO 1989:91). Not realising that they were dealing with an adversary which operated according to a revolutionary strategy that was altogether different from anything they had seen before, the military expected to defeat the Shining Path insurrection in exactly the same manner as it had the Cuban-inspired *foco* guerrilla movements in ’65 (Tapia 1997:27-32; see Wickham-Crowley 1992).²⁰ Consequently, General Clemente Noel Moral, Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division and newly-appointed Chief of the Political-Military Command (*Jefe del Comando Político-Militar*) in what was now a military emergency zone,²¹ concentrated exclusively on the military aspects of the expedition while neglecting to prepare any corresponding humanitarian measures with which to attempt to win over the “hearts and minds” of the population (Tapia 1997:32). For one thing, the force assembled was made up of conscripts from coastal departments like Lima, Ica, Huánuco etc; it conspicuously excluded individuals from the emergency zone itself. As Tapia observed,

This was a grave error, as would be demonstrated later. Military personnel who did not comprehend Quechua and less the culture and idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants of the zone were not the most suitable to win the support of the population. The armed forces seemed almost a foreign occupational force and in most cases acted as such (1997:31. Emphasis in the original).

The absence of Ayacuchanos in the ranks of the military units that were dispatched to the region was a precaution taken not only because the armed forces feared a massive infiltration (Tapia 1997:31), but also because the army’s mental attitude towards the Ayacuchano population at the time was one of “presumption of subversion.” Indeed, it was widely believed in Peru that most Ayacuchanos—young and old, male and female—were already either Senderista militants or, at the very least, fervent sympathisers.²² There is ample evidence of the military’s strong prejudice against the Ayacuchanos, and its erroneous assumptions about Shining Path, at the most senior levels. For example, General Jorge Fernández Maldonado, co-founder of military intelligence, once described Shining Path as having “[come] up among the peasants” of Ayacucho (quoted in Kruijt 1994:55. My emphasis). It was mistaken and distorted notions, such as these, about the origins and composition of Shining Path that a few years later would lead one Sub-Lieutenant Telmo Hurtado Hurtado to order his army patrol to massacre of 69 villagers (including women, children, and elderly people) at Accomarca, on 14 August 1985. In the enquiry that followed, he justified his actions to the investigative commission thus:

As to the decision I have taken, I consider it to be correct....You do not go through the actions of war that we live here [in Ayacucho]. You do not have experience, nor see the situations that we endure here....*One can not trust a woman, an old man or a child....[The rebels] begin to indoctrinate them from two years, three years, carrying things,...little by little, by means of deceit, by punishments, they win them over to their cause*" (DESCO 1989:128. My emphasis).

Moreover, the long-established stereotyped image of Ayacuchanos as temperamentally bellicose and inclined to rebellion certainly did nothing to dispel doubts about their patriotism.²³ What the military chiefs feared was that once Ayacuchanos were conscripted and armed, there would be nothing to guarantee that they would not turn their weapons against their fellow soldiers and the State.

What would also prove to have significant future consequences was the fact that neither President Belaúnde nor his successors ever issued a Presidential Directive providing guidelines for the conduct of the counterinsurgency forces.²⁴ Hence, throughout the entire period of Belaúnde's presidency, each political-military commander was left to decide for himself the character of the counterinsurgency campaign (Tapia 1997:32)—and the only thing to guide them was the knowledge that the President and his military chiefs in Lima wanted to see military results. Given such unbridled latitude of action, successive *Jefes del Comando Político-Militar* and field commanders between 1983 and 1985 directed a brutal campaign of indiscriminate repression, in which tortures and massacres and disappearances were simply considered "part of the cost" of restoring peace and order. Little concern, if any, was initially paid by the *fuerzas del orden* (forces of order) to respecting human rights—as evidenced by the dramatic rise in the number of civilian casualties in the first two years of armed forces intervention.²⁵

From the moment they set foot in the region, the Peruvian Marine Infantry proved particularly vicious. The majority of these soldiers were *criollos* and *mestizos* from coastal towns, and many of them regarded the men and women of Ayacucho's rural and popular urban classes with unabashed racist contempt, derogatorily calling them *cholos* and *cholas*, which at the time was akin to calling an African-American a "nigger." Being the cream of the armed forces, the Marines were given the most challenging tasks and dispatched to areas presumed to be veritable "*zonas rojas*," namely the provinces of Huanta and La Mar, and the Apurímac River Valley. They proceeded to wreak such terror and havoc on the civilian population in those areas as to cause population displacements on a massive scale never before seen in the region.

If the guerrillas were the proverbial fish in water, then the Marines sought to drain the pond. In some parts of the designated "red zones," they compelled the inhabitants of dispersed villages to relocate to strategic district or provincial capitals (usually those in which a military base had been established), threatening to kill anyone who defied this order by remaining in the countryside. Reminiscent of the logic behind the American tactic of "strategic hamleting" in Vietnam, the Marines warned that any persons staying in the hills would be regarded as terrorists and shot (see Degregori 1996a). This tactic—which in effect amounted to a forced urbanisation—was designed to deprive the guerrilla columns of any logistical support they might

otherwise have received from the rural population. It also transformed the countryside into a “killing zone.” The idea of a “killing zone” was that upon emptying the *campo* of its inhabitants, anything found moving in it thereafter could be treated as legitimate targets and wiped out, thus making field operations less complicated. The problem was that many of the inhabitants of remote villages were understandably reluctant to leave their humble homes and fields, for without them they had nothing else in the world. Others were too old or otherwise unfit to travel. Furthermore, orders to relocate to the strategic hamlets were not always conveyed to distant communities, and the boundaries of any “killing zone” were always vague and shifting.

3.5 “Caught between the wall and the sword”: Tambo district, 1983-1984

As in other parts of La Mar and Huanta, when war came to Tambo district hundreds of frightened villagers rapidly depopulated the countryside and flocked to the district capital. “Caught between the wall and the sword,”²⁶ many fell victim to either guerrilla or military violence (see Appendix A). In the course of a decade, the number of people living in Tambo’s rural countryside would drop from around 12,912 in 1981 to 7,090 in 1993. Conversely, the population living in and adjacent to the district capital would soar from 2,409 to over 4,770 inhabitants as hundreds of displaced peasants poured in from the *campo* (INEI 1983b:54; INEI 1994b:623). Furthermore, a comparison of the census figures suggests an overall decline of 23 percent in the district’s total population between 1981 and 1993, as many town and country people fled to other places of refuge in the country. The combination of military repression—in 1983 and again in 1985—and intensifying guerrilla attacks in Tambo district compelled its once-scattered rural population to concentrate in a small number of population centres, especially around the district capital and in some of the larger villages along the Tambo-San Francisco highway.

The small rural town of Tambo, capital of the district which shares the same name, occupies a site that ever since pre-Inca times has served as an important gateway and resting point for traffic between the *ceja de la selva* or *la montaña* (the high jungle region, literally meaning “eyebrow of the jungle”) of the Apurímac River Valley and the central region of Ayacucho. Situated at an altitude of 3,219 metres, the *villa* of Tambo forms the hub at which the three main highways from San Miguel, Ayacucho, and San Francisco converge.²⁷ The town’s prosperity and importance grew during the 1960s and 1970s when the tropical valley of the Apurímac River became the only economically buoyant part of the department of Ayacucho, producing and exporting commercial crops such as fruits, coffee, cacao, nuts, and coca to neighbouring regions (Degregori 1990:31). The district has historically been dominated by large landed estates, of which there were as many as twenty-two in 1961 (Vilchez 1961:21-22). By the end of the 1960s, however, most of these had been sold or abandoned by their owners, who deemed sierra landholdings to be economically unprofitable and so concentrated instead on acquiring lucrative plots of commercial-agricultural land in the Amazonian *selva* (Villacorta et al. 1984:58-59). During the 1970s, the agrarian reform expropriated the few remaining large estates in the district, and their fields were dis-

tributed either to neighbouring hamlets, or to the former peons who lived and worked on them. By 1980, the majority of agriculturalists in the district, as indeed in the province of La Mar as a whole, were small parcel holders.

When the Marines arrived in the district of Tambo in February 1983, they immediately proceeded to round up scores of suspected terrorists in the district capital. Many townspeople, particularly youths of high school age, were arbitrarily detained by the Marine Infantry and the Guardia Civil on the flimsiest grounds, such as being unable to produce identification, or having in their possession seemingly “subversive” literature.²⁸ “Most of those people were innocent civilians,” Raúl Palacios Hernández told me in 1997.²⁹ Don Raúl, as he is commonly called, is a former mayor of Tambo, and one of the last pre-war townspeople still residing in Tambo. “The guilty ones, the real Senderistas, they would have already escaped once they heard the soldiers were coming.” The severe treatment they received at the hands of the military drove the majority of Tambo’s urban families to flee to cities like Ayacucho, Ica, Huancayo, and Lima. “They left Tambo in search, shall we say, of better refuge,” is how Don Raúl described it. “They were replaced by the people who came down from the *alturas*, and the product of their arrival were the *pueblos juvenes*.”

During the months of September and October 1983, the Marines conducted a massive sweeping operation through the western half of the district. Platoons of heavily armed Marines carefully combed the countryside, moving steadily in a northwest direction towards the highlands of Iquicha, which armed guerrilla columns were known to be routinely using as a vital corridor through which to move fighters and supplies between the provinces of Huanta and La Mar. What makes it likely that this military operation was part of a larger one aimed at impeding rebel activities in these highlands was that just a few weeks earlier, Marine Infantry officers in Huanta district began to reorganise the original Iquichano village defence groups there, which had already existed since the end of 1982, into *comités de defensa civil* (Coronel, 1996:51). As the soldiers passed through the western half of Tambo’s rural countryside they ransacked villages and set fire to homes.³⁰ They also ordered the terrified peasants to relocate to the district capital. Over the course of this military operation, peasants caught fleeing in the direction of the *pumas* of Huanta were immediately suspected of being “*terrucos*” and summarily executed, though it is impossible to say how many may have been killed. When sporadic killings turned into wholesale massacres, the trickle of terrified and dazed peasant arriving in the district capital turned into a flood as most of the western half of the district was rapidly depopulated (see Appendix A).³¹ The exodus from the countryside culminated on the morning of 29 November, 1983, in a huge crowd of frightened peasants gathering on a small *pampa*, a kilometre to the west of the town. A few had animals or some other possessions with them, but most had come with only the wet clothes on their backs. As light drizzle fell on the cold and hungry crowd huddling together tightly for warmth, the commanding officer of the Marine Infantry detachment occupying the district capital, whose name some remember as Capitán Lagarto, swaggered up the hill towards them. He cast a look of contempt and disgust at the multitude for some minutes before suddenly bellowing in Castellano:

You shits! If you want to live, if you want to remain alive, build your

houses here. Stay right here. I don't want any of you shits to escape from me because you're all terrorists, damn it! If you're not terrorists, then I want to see you all gathered together here, if you want to live, if you love your families. But if you're terrorists, if you want to die, then run off to the hills and there I'll hunt you down. And with my rifle, damn it, I'll kill you all!³²

Made to choose between life and death, the *desplazados* that had gathered there from ten separate rural communities set about constructing a new settlement that very day. From these miserable beginnings was founded the district's first multi-community *desplazado* settlement of Ccarhuapampa.³³ Over the coming months and years, the population of Ccarhuapampa would swell with the arrival of newcomers from high-land communities as far away as Uchuraccay and Iquicha.

According to the testimonies of various locals, it was soon after Ccarhuapampa was built that Capitán Lagarto ordered its inhabitants to form a *comité de defensa civil* (civil defence committee, CDC)—the very first one in the district. Although it was created at the behest of the military, it was nevertheless the inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa themselves who elected the committee members in a general assembly. Once the committee members had been chosen by the populace, Captain Lagarto endorsed the authority of the committee.³⁴ Among the various CDC authorities were eight *comandos*, each of whom was in charge of organising the defence of his own separate sector of the settlement and its perimeter.³⁵ It was a prudent measure, for once Ccarhuapampa had created a *comité de defensa civil* it was only a matter of time before the settlement began to incur Shining Path's brutal reprisals.

Photo 2. Ccarhuapampa, with its fortified inner enclosure on the high ground



In 1985 a new spate of killings in the district's northeast corner resulted in a new wave of rural displaced persons. This time the perpetrators were Army soldiers, and they were more selective in choosing their victims. Unlike what took place during the Marine military operation two years earlier, however, on this occasion the soldiers did not order the rural inhabitants to relocate to the district capital. They were mainly interested in looking for arms caches and suspected militants. Consequently, but for a handful of rural hamlets near the Ayna-Tambo border, few other villages in the district's central area were completely abandoned. Nevertheless, the violence meted out by government troops in this instance was no less vicious than the first time round. Consequently, some peasant families moved to one of the larger rural hamlets in the district, while others sought refuge in the district capital, where they founded new shantytowns (called *pueblos juvenes*), like Vista Alegre. In later years, they would be joined by households from some of the villages in the central and eastern parts of the district, seeking sanctuary this time from guerrilla violence.

Guerrilla attacks have been the other causal factor behind forced migrations in Tambo district (see Appendix A). In contrast to the effects of military violence, sporadic guerrilla incursions on rural hamlets generally resulted in population displacement not to the town, but rather to nucleated settlements in the rural countryside itself. Guerrilla violence in the district peaked in 1984, and then diminished somewhat between 1985 and 1986 before intensify once again after 1987 (see DESCO 1989, Vol.II). From 1984 onwards, fear of attracting savage retribution from the security forces resulted in a growing reluctance among rural communities to render assistance to the rebel columns that routinely passed through the district. This merely exacerbated the frequency and intensity of guerrilla attacks against peasants. The growing number of village defence groups that were being created also provoked guerrilla incursions. Rather than be displaced, however, many rural communities in the central and northeast parts of the district decided to resist Sendero, and for this reason are today commonly referred to as *resistente* communities. The populations of these nucleated *resistente* communities literally swelled in size overnight as displaced villagers from neighbouring communities relocated to these larger villages for mutual protection.

It soon became painfully obvious to these *resistente* communities that they could not always rely on the security forces to protect them. In fact, guerrilla incursions in the district continued despite the periodic military operations and patrols that were carried out in the area. Acco Nuevo, a rural *pueblo* located just 3.5 km from the district capital, was attacked three times in 1984, causing 30 of its 120 inhabitants to flee to Tambo town. And at Challhuamayo, situated some 15 kilometres north of Tambo town, three guerrilla attacks in the space of a week in September 1984 left over 50 peasants dead. Even the establishment of a military base in the district capital in 1987 failed to deter the guerrillas from continuing to attack outlying hamlets. The rugged terrain and the poor state of the few dirt roads in the district meant that the guerrilla fighters had sufficient time to attack a village and then get safely away before the soldiers or the police could arrive on the scene. Narrow footpaths and numerous precipitous drops to deep valleys also posed the danger of making it very easy to ambush military or police relief columns. The security forces realised this and accordingly left remote communities to their fate. Even if they could hear the sound of gunfire just a short distance away, the soldiers in Tambo's army base always feared being ambushed

in the dark, and so rarely took the risk of venturing out to assist a beleaguered community at night. Rural *resistente* communities thus realised that any chance they had of survival lay either in grouping together for mutual protection and organising *comités de defensa civil*, or, alternatively, in cooperating with the guerrillas and accepting them in their midst.

3.6 Strategic errors and changing patterns of political violence

The military's ferocious and indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign of 1983-84 dealt severe blows to the armed contingents of Sendero's *Comité Regional Principal*. The military repression even managed to dislodge Senderistas from some of their self-declared "guerrilla zones." According to Guzmán himself, the security forces managed to kill around 1,800 of his followers during this period (Guzmán 1988). Yet despite their high rate of kills, the security forces often made the mistake of failing to consolidate their gains in the countryside. By setting up counterinsurgency bases only in provincial capitals and a few strategically important district capitals like Tambo—this was a practical constraint dictated by a shortage of manpower—they unwittingly left vast areas of the countryside unattended and, in effect, open for the guerrillas to reassert their control. What frequently happened was that after security forces had left an area, the guerrillas invariably returned and imposed themselves once again on the population, punishing "collaborators" in the process (Tapia 1997:33-34). Thus in spite of the heavy casualties inflicted by the security forces on the rebel rank and file over 1983-84, the evidence actually suggests that they failed to effectively reduce Shining Path's scope of operations. In fact, guerrilla activity succeeded, for instance, in disrupting the 1983 municipal elections, and even prevented elections from taking place in 52 Ayacucho districts—a phenomenal expansion from the original 19 districts in which General Noel reckoned the rebels had a strong presence in December 1982 (Tapia 1997:34-35).

In addition, the harsh counterinsurgency measures applied by the security forces were to prove counterproductive in one essential respect. Namely, the brutal repression alienated the civilian population from the security forces, and so dissipated the anti-Sendero sentiment that was already growing among the peasantry even before the arrival of government troops in the department. The consequence of this was to effectively preclude or at least to delay the emergence of a popular backlash against Sendero for most of the 1980s.

A change in the political-military commander in 1984 brought a corresponding change in the direction of the counterinsurgency strategy, though only very briefly. The new military chief of the emergency region was General Adrián Huamán Centeno, a Quechua-speaking officer from Apurímac. Endowed with greater respect for the local population and with a more sophisticated insight into the socioeconomic complexities of the insurgency problem than his predecessor, General Huamán advocated a new approach to counterinsurgency which placed more emphasis on humanitarian aid and development—the "winning hearts and minds" style of counterinsurgency—and less on armed repression. He explained the philosophy behind his strategy thus in a personal interview with Dutch professor Dirk Kruijt:

The government had ordered a curfew. That meant that people should be at home from ten o'clock on. 'For what reason?' I asked myself. One of the first things I did was to get back to normalcy. People want to have the perspective of music, of dance, of a *fiesta*. Not of control. What they want is confidence restored. Well, if I give them confidence and security, I begin winning the war.³⁶

During his short time as *Jefe del Comando Político-Militar*, he regularly dispatched troops for "civic action" duty. In addition, he was particularly preoccupied with organising civilian defence patrols, and made it a point to foster any spontaneous local anti-insurgency initiatives. Consequently, the army's civil defence project received such popular support in the districts of Vinchos, Ocros, and Concepción that on 4 August, as many as eight thousand peasants gathered in Vinchos to meet with General Huamán, and to show that they had organised *rondas campesinas* in support of his counterinsurgency strategy. The General declared to the press that these *rondas campesina* and *montonero* groups had neither been assisted nor organised by the security forces, and that "they have the right to defend themselves from the assassins [Senderistas] with the arms they have in their hands" (quoted in DESCO 1989:110). Five days later, twenty thousand peasants in Ocros and Concepción produced a document stating that they had organised a Frente de Defensa Civil, a Civil Defence Front (DESCO 1989:110). Both these massive demonstrations were precipitated by a series of massacres perpetrated by guerrillas in these districts earlier that year.³⁷ By the end of 1984, Shining Path's presence in Vinchos, Huamanga province's largest district, had been effectively neutralised owing to the existence of village defence patrols (Tapia 1997:35).

For all its benefits and advantages, however, Huamán's strategy was economically costly, and with the national economy in crisis the Belaúnde government was in no financial position to adopt it (Obando 1998:389). A frustrated Huamán publicly criticised the Joint Armed Forces Command and the government for seeming to prefer a counterinsurgency plan that consisted simply of indiscriminate repressive force against Ayacucho's civilian population, particularly the peasantry. "The solution is not a military one," he declared in a television interview, "because if it were simply military, I could resolve it in minutes....But that is not the solution" (quoted in DESCO 1989:111). The purely military approach, he argued, had already shown itself to be counterproductive ever since the end of 1983, for it resulted only in the alienation of the populace. In his view, the rebellion was a symptom of fundamental socioeconomic problems that went deeper than politics.

What has Ayacucho gained from Independence and the Battle of Ayacucho? What has it gained? The only thing that has been gained is that Lima can be Peru and that in Ayacucho the people should die of hunger. The solution for me is to correct the situation that exists....The people understand perfectly when I request assistance. And it is something positive, if we take seeds, fertilisers to them.... (quoted in DESCO 1989:112).

He thus urged the government to come up with a counterinsurgency strategy that included concrete measures to alleviate the poverty and improve the living conditions of people in the war zones. Valuable and accurate though his critical insights were, General Huamán's public statements nevertheless caused embarrassment to a government that was already under fire from the international community for the flagrant abuse of human rights by its armed forces. A furious President Belaúnde sacked Huamán on 18 August, after just eight months on the job, and replaced him with his more conservative and conformist second in command, Colonel Wilfredo Mori Orzo. Almost immediately, the disappearances and military massacres of civilians resumed apace. Huamán would never again assume so senior a position of command. But his enduring legacy has been to initiate a serious rethinking of counterinsurgency strategy among senior commanders and subsequent civilian governments (Tapia 1997).

In 1985 the Marines were finally withdrawn from most parts of the department. They were replaced by the conscript soldiers of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, many of whom were Quechua-speaking youths of humble rural backgrounds from other Andean departments. In time, relations between the civilian population and the military would begin to warm up, as the latter shifted their military strategy to a much more selective repression. By the middle of the 1990s, the military's new motto would be "*Más Desarrollo, Menos Represión.*" But that was still in the future. In the meantime, more blood had to flow under the bridge.

The brutal violence unleashed on the civilian population by the military was not one-sided, however. For it was also in 1983 that guerrilla-perpetrated killings began to take on a new pattern. Unlike the selective assassinations which were the trademark of guerrilla violence in previous years, indiscriminate mass killings now became their principal way of punishing "collaborators" and "treasonous" communities that refused to cooperate, or had committed the supreme counterrevolutionary crime of forming a village defence group. The first of these massacres took place on 3 April, when guerrillas butchered forty-five *comuneros* at Lucanamarca (among them ten children) and thirty-five in Huancasancos, Víctor Fajardo Province (DESCO 1989:99,856). In the space of just two months, similar mass killings of peasants were carried out by Senderistas in Juquiza (Cangallo, 18 killed), Carhuana (Cangallo, 11 killed), Llusita (Víctor Fajardo, 28 executed), San José de Secce (Huanta, 70 to 80 massacred), Uchuraccay (Huanta, 20 to 25 slaughtered), and so on (see DESCO 1989:99-101). These atrocities succeeded in intimidating most peasants into believing that cooperation with the guerrillas was the only way to survive. But for others, such mass killings were tantamount to a declaration of war. Unable to rely on the security forces to always protect them, a growing number of rural communities in certain areas of Ayacucho began to heed the army's call to form civil defence groups.

3.7 Organisational structure and function of the peasant militias

Rondas campesinas. Comités de defensa civil. Montoneros. Defensa Civil Antisubversiva. The multiplicity of names by which these groups have been called has caused some confusion. Furthermore, Starn makes the important point of distinguishing between the original vigilante groups of northern Peru and the defence

groups of the emergency zone, since both share the name “*rondas campesinas*” but have completely distinct origins and missions (see Starn 1993:5-8). Why have the civil defence groups in Peru’s emergency zone come to be known by the same name as the *rondas* of the north? One possible explanation put forth by Starn and others is that various high-ranking government and military officials, having been stung by allegations from human rights groups of coercing peasants to participate actively in the counterinsurgency project, consequently thought to re-baptise the *Comités de Defensa Civil* with the name *rondas campesinas* in an effort to impart on them the same aura of grassroots spontaneity and organisational autonomy that characterised the northern peasant vigilante groups, which first emerged in Cajamarca in 1976 (ibid., Starn 1998:235-236). Be that as it may, the name has stuck is now part of the counterinsurgency vernacular of the peasantry in Ayacucho, who are themselves well aware of the differences between the two types of organisations. “*Montoneros*” is also a popular label adopted by many of the village defence groups that have spontaneously emerged in the Mantaro Valley and the *ceja de selva* of the Apurímac Valley. This is not so surprising given that from the La Breña campaign in the War of the Pacific to the peasant uprisings of 1923 in La Mar, “*montoneros*” is a name that armed peasant bands in Peru’s central highlands have commonly come to call themselves (see Mallon 1983, 1995; Cárdenas López 1982:83-84).

When, from 1984 onwards, the army began to take an active role in forming new village defence groups, or assuming authority over existing ones, they gave all such groups the official title of *Comités de Defensa Civil Antisubversiva* (CDCs), in unofficial recognition of the role they were expected to play in the counterinsurgency struggle. The labels *Ronderos* and *Montoneros* continued to be used in reference to the individual members of the civil defence groups. As we will see in the next chapter, however, various military commanders have at times found the idea of civil defence groups utterly distasteful, and have even actively opposed or hindered them. Their right to exist would not be assured until the following decade, when the government would pass a law officially recognising them.

The manner in which defence groups were created has been influential in the degree of voluntary cooperation between individual civil defence committees within a given area. Where civil defence groups were created by force and imposed on reluctant local populations, interpersonal or group conflicts and disputes have sometimes subsequently arisen between distinct committees. In many instances, the counterinsurgency struggle—or, conversely, the revolutionary war—has served as a convenient excuse for civilians to settle private vendettas violently, and often with impunity. In such circumstances, broader inter-communal cooperation in the tasks of vigilance and mutual defence were practically impossible, with the result being that the civil defence groups of rival communities would patrol only within their own communal boundaries, occasionally crossing over to neighbouring districts only to attack each other. But in strategic areas of the emergency zone, like Tambo, where the idea of village defence had generally come to be accepted by the inhabitants, and where the common necessity of self-defence has been able to supersede local conflicts and myriad cleavages, the military has made efforts to encourage greater coordination and mutual support between the civil defence groups of separate villages. Furthermore, in places where military base were located, the amount of moral and military assistance provided by

the soldiers to the local CDCs greatly influenced the extent to which there was local enthusiasm and support for the civil defence project. Later chapters in this book provide clear illustrations of these points.

The basic level of organisation for the civil defence committee was the rural village. A civil defence committees at this level is called a *comité de base*. Each *comité de base* was directed by a *junta directiva* whose members, at least in the early years, were often directly appointed by the local military commander. This was done either to ensure that trustworthy local individuals were leading the militia, or simply to pick leaders from reluctant villagers, none of whom would otherwise have volunteered for the job. At other times and in other places, the *junta directiva* of the defence committee was democratically elected by the populace, and its authority status within the community endorsed by the local military commander, as in Ccarhuapampa. Although in later years the rural defence groups would come to achieve a sophisticated degree of sub-regional coordination, for most of the 1980s they were neither coordinated nor did they function beyond the district level.

In my interviews with various militia commanders and ordinary peasants in Tambo district, I was often told that in the early years of civil defence in the district it was the men who normally did the patrolling, while the women and the elderly more commonly performed auxiliary tasks like food preparation, cleaning, tending animals, sewing clothes etc.³⁸ When a settlement was attacked by guerrillas, however, every member—man or woman, old or young—who was able to wield a makeshift weapon was expected participate in defending the community. Men, women, the elderly, and even older children had to make do with anything that could serve as a weapon—farming tools, sticks, stones, anything. Peasant women were even known to use slings with devastating accuracy, carrying their ammunition of stones in the folds of their skirts.³⁹ But even in the hands of courageous individuals, such primitive weapons proved no match against the modern arms of the guerrillas. Confrontations between guerrillas and *ronderos* often resulted in a staggering loss of life for the latter. In addition, the leaders of the *comités de defensa civil* and their families were specifically targeted for assassination or cruel torture by the guerrillas as an example to the rest of the community. Militarily speaking, therefore, the majority of CDCs in Ayacucho's sierra region remained weak for most of the decade owing primarily to the ineffectiveness of their homemade weapons, and little support from the army. It was for much the same reason that village defence groups generally restricted themselves to mainly defensive actions. Although the army pushed CDCs to make patrolling part of their daily activities, many *ronderos* were reluctant to do so for fear of being ambushed. Instead, they preferred to wait for an attack behind the fortified walls of their settlements, where they stood a better chance of fighting off the enemy.

3.8 The creation of Comités de Defensa Civil: consent and resistance

We have already seen that in places like the Iquichan uplands of Huanta and the districts of Vinchos, Ocos and Concepción it was the local population itself that spontaneously created their own village defence forces, without influence from the mili-

tary. Once the military had established themselves in the emergency zone, however, they began to press rural communities into organising *comités de defensa civil*, subordinated to and working in coordination with military command. The Marine Infantry were particularly zealous in this regard. Even pre-existing village defence groups were transformed into CDCs, which is what the Marines did when they arrived at the nucleated Iquichano community of Ccarhuahurán in August 1983 (Coronel 1996:50-51; Coronel 1993:49). Each of the eight distinct communities that were grouped together in Ccarhuahurán “maintained their own authorities—president, secretary, treasurer, and spokesmen, as well as their own respective *Comité de Defensa Civil*—which coordinated with those of Ccarhuahurán’s, and these, in turn, with the officers of the military base” (Coronel 1996:51).

Yet in spite of the forceful impetus provided by the army, the expansion of the civil defence groups in Ayacucho proceeded very slowly during the 1980s. For various reasons, the idea of communal defence encountered either extensive opposition or limited, lukewarm compliance in many parts of Ayacucho. This was especially so in the neighbouring department of Huancavelica. In the Huanta Valley, the emergence and growth of a civil defence apparatus was strongly resisted by the population up until 1989, owing to the estranged relationship between the civilian inhabitants and the army arising from the military repression brutally carried out in the valley during 1983-84 (Coronel 1993:49). Nor has the civil defence phenomenon really taken hold in the Pampas River region, which is an area characterised by long-established independent peasant communities. Fiercely keen to assert their independence from State authorities, the majority of Pampas communities appear to have focused instead on rallying around their established community authorities and traditional social institutions, rather than adopting civil defence committees dominated by the army. In many other parts of Ayacucho, though, the main reason for local reluctance to form civil defence groups simply boiled down to the fear of attracting savage guerrilla reprisals for doing so. With nothing to fight with except literally sticks and stones, many communities simply lacked conviction that they could actually repulse guerrilla attacks (see Coronel and Loayza 1992:528-529). It was therefore better not to attract them in the first place. As we shall see, this attitude changed a few years later when subsequent Peruvian governments began to provide the rural civil defence groups with firearms.

Of course, initial local opposition to the creation of civil defence committees did not deter the security forces from trying to coerce rural villagers into forming them. Occasionally accompanied by the militias of neighbouring communities, military patrols have been known to pressure recalcitrant villages using tactics of violence and terror (Degregori 1997:49; Isbell 1990:11-12; Americas Watch 1992:9). Neutrality was neither permitted by the military or by Sendero, and sometimes not even by neighbouring peasant communities. Any reluctance to organise community self-defence was interpreted taken by the security forces as tacit support for Shining Path (Isbell 1990:11-12; Americas Watch 1992). Some peasant communities therefore decided to organise a village defence force if only to relieve the pressure of military repression. Communities that were obliged to form self-defence patrols would sometimes try to forestall guerrilla reprisals by purposely avoiding confrontations with any Shining Path columns that routinely passed through their territory. The Maoists, on

the other hand, were not interested in coming to terms with the civil defence patrols, and it was the communities which had organised such groups that Shining Path guerrillas specifically targeted for pitiless annihilation.

3.9 Counterinsurgency advantage lost

The military's ferocious counterinsurgency offensive of 1983-84 forced Shining Path's forces in Ayacucho into a general retreat, often over the borders into neighbouring departments. But the situation was to change again over the next four years, resulting in the greatest crisis the civil defence movement would ever face. In fact, the momentum gained during the period of harsh and indiscriminate repression would eventually be lost owing to a steady worsening of strained relations between the armed forces and the new APRA government of Alan García.⁴⁰ The ensuing political crisis was such that as the civil war dragged on unrelentingly into its eighth year, the Peruvian government seemed no closer to crushing the insurgency than when it had entrusted the task to the military in the final days of 1982. From the original handful of provinces in Ayacucho that were placed under a state of emergency in October 1981, seven years later the emergency zone had grown to nearly eight departments, wherein the constitutional freedoms and guarantees of nearly nine million Peruvians remained indefinitely suspended (DESCO 1989:347-362).

The events that were to lead to an almost complete paralysis of the counterinsurgency struggle began with the inauguration of a new national president on 28 July 1985. When Alan García Pérez put on the presidential sash, he was determined to re-establish the primacy of civilian authority over the armed forces, for civilian authority had become greatly eroded during his predecessor's term in office. "[García] did not wish to fall into the same trap as Belaúnde in being seen to abdicate responsibility to the military in counter-insurgency and other matters. On the contrary, he publicly sought to assert that authority [in his constitutional role as commander-in-chief of the armed forces]" (Crabtree 1992:109). Moreover, while he affirmed his government's commitment to defending democracy against terrorism, he also solemnly pledged to end the "*guerra sucia*" (dirty war) and to respect human rights—even those of the "terrorists." To this end, he specifically called on the military to respect human rights and warned that those found guilty of violating them would not go unpunished.

It is important to point out that while the election of an APRA government may have caused some concern among a few conservative officers in the armed forces, on the whole the reception that the new government received from the military was positive. "The old military antipathy for APRA was a thing of the past, being effectively buried with the reforms of General Velasco and the subsequent collaboration between Apristas and the military during the transition to constitutional rule" (Crabtree 1992:108). The straining of relations did not take long in coming, however. One of the first triggering factors was the discovery of mass graves at Accomarca (Vilcashuamán province) and Pucayacu (Huanta province) in August 1985. The military's subsequent attempt to cover them up provided García with the opportunity to make good his pledge to crack down on any human rights violations perpetrated by his security forces. A government investigation into the massacres resulted in the sack-

ing of high-ranking military officers, namely Generals César Enrico Praeli (President of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces), Sinesio Jarama (Chief of *II Región Militar*),⁴¹ and Wilfredo Mori (Political-Military Commander of the Emergency Zone) (DESCO 1989:124-126). In reference to these incidents, President García declared in a speech before the United Nations on 23 September 1985 that “barbarity must not be fought with barbarity” (quoted in DESCO 1989:130).

Alan García’s government sought to tackle the insurgency problem by adopting a strategy that emphasised socioeconomic development rather than military repression. This approach initially found substantial support among military officers, as it did when attempted by General Adrian Huamán back in 1984. “As of September 1985 the military started to hold back on military operations and more attention was given to military public works programmes” (Crabtree 1992:110). Yet the coherent, comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy which the government promised to present to the military never materialised. As time went on, the government’s “*desarrollista*” (“developmentalist”) approach to counterinsurgency came to naught, and had in fact already petered out by the start of 1987 due to a lack of sufficient financial support from the central government.

Furthermore, the military eventually came to see itself faced not only with an indifferent and unsupportive government that seemed intent on tying their hands in the fight against subversion, but also with a President that showed no qualms about expressing what appeared to be outright sympathy for the insurgency. García’s attempts to court and to appease radical leftists—meeting, for instance, with captured MRTA leader Víctor Polay, and a delegation from the FMLN—merely incensed senior military officers (Tapia 1997:41). And the distress they increasingly felt with the President’s apparent flaccid determination to fight the insurgency was simply heightened by his expressions of personal admiration for Sendero Luminoso’s “mystique,” as García declared at the *VII Congreso Nacional de la Juventud Aprista* held in Ayacucho in 1988.

I believe that we must look at this entire phenomenon that is centred here and that from here emerged. We must look at it so as to value the good that it has, not just to insult or to confront it....Wrong or not, criminal or not, the Senderista has that which we do not: mystique....These are people who deserve our respect and my personal admiration because they are, whether one likes it or not, *compañeros*, they are militants. Fanatics they call them. I believe they have mystique and this is part of our self-criticism, *compañeros*, to know how to recognise, mistaken or not, that whoever submits to death, whoever surrenders life is one who has mystique (quoted in DESCO 1989:173-174).

Relations between García and the military soured yet further when he decided to merge the military ministries of the three branches of the armed forces—Navy, Air Force, Army—into a single cabinet post within the Defence Ministry.⁴² The possibility of ending up with a civilian minister in control of the armed forces was regarded by the military as not only a threat to their autonomy, but also as an attempt by the

government to *apristizar* the military. "The Defence Ministry issue therefore rekindled old anti-Aprista animosities, and prompted the question of whether or not the government was seeking to alter the relationship between the civilian authorities and the military, as established in 1980" (Crabtree 1992:112).

Although García's actions and policies did nothing to win the love of the armed forces, his popularity among common Peruvians nevertheless remained high during his first two years in office. For one thing, he was initially successful at reducing inflation. A boom in the demand for food in the cities, caused to a large extent by the massive influx to urban areas of war refugees from the highlands, helped to stimulate national food production. Although the sharp rise in prices for basic food crops, like potato, had little to do with the Agriculture Ministry's price support schemes, the APRA government was nevertheless able to benefit from the positive public opinion generated by an improvement in rural incomes and economic conditions. Furthermore, his populist, anti-imperialist political style charmed a population looking for an external cause on which to blame their misfortunes and miseries (Tapia 1997:40). His policy of "zero-interest" loans to the poor peasantry in the emergency zone,⁴³ in addition to the short-lived *rimanacuy* meetings with peasants to discuss their most pressing needs, were innovative new steps designed to steer the counterinsurgency strategy away from a purely military trajectory. Moreover, the marked reduction in the total number of political victims during his first two years in office brought him widespread praise, both internationally and at home. Although it may have appeared that the lower death toll in the early years of the APRA government was in correspondence to a concomitant rise in GNP, in fact it had more to do with the winding down of the military's hitherto brutal and indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign that with the coincidental general improvement in economic conditions (Tapia 1997:40).

It should not be forgotten that a high percentage of the total number of deaths in the period of high political violence in 1983-84 can be attributed to government forces. Hence the subsequent drop in the number of civilian victims between 1984 and 1985 was actually a reflection of the curtailment of state repression, rather than of a diminution of guerrilla violence. Actually, the number of recorded guerrilla attacks increased nationwide between 1985 and 1988, particularly in Lima and in the departments of Junín and Puno (see DESCO 1989:24-29). And the number of soldiers and policemen killed by Shining Path actually rose over this period, as did the total number of local authorities murdered.

The apparent decline in guerrilla activity in the northern provinces of the department of Ayacucho (previously the epicentre of Shining Path's operations) was a natural consequence of guerrilla expansion to other parts of the country. As Tapia notes, owing to the Senderista retreat to other zones of the country, where, for the lack of military presence and a combination of other factors, they managed to develop themselves counting on ample freedom of action and without the need of bloody confrontations. In this way, during those years SL began to establish itself in the department of Junín and the Huallaga Valley, although also in Puno and the sierra [region] of the departments of La Libertad and Ancash; to a lesser degree, in Piura, Cajamarca and the provinces of the department of Lima (1997:40).

In contrast to the relative economic and political stability achieved by the García

administration in its first two years in power, 1988 saw a dramatic reversal in the government's fortunes as the country began to spiral into economic and political chaos for which there would be no respite until the early 1990s. Although the opportunity had existed to generate greater benefits for the agricultural sector by capitalising on the demand-led boom for food in 1986, "the problem," as Crabtree points out, "was that lack of detailed policy coordination, coupled with the lack of forward planning for agriculture and for the economy as a whole, meant that the boom proved impossible to sustain" (1992:57). As demand for basic foodstuffs began to outstrip supply, the government feared a food shortage in the cities and responded by increasing imports. This policy not only "contributed directly to the balance of payments difficulties which surfaced in 1987," but also helped to weaken domestic production by deepening the country's dependence on imports (Crabtree 1992:57).

By decade's end the country's cash reserves were less than zero; uncontrolled hyperinflation soared, peaking at 7,649 percent in 1989 (Klarén 2000:423); widespread resentment and public mistrust towards the APRA government was growing. And whereas at first his popular "zero interest" financial loans to the peasantry seemed an effective non-military way to counter the insurgency, in the end it may actually have assisted rather than harmed Shining Path. According to the militia leader known as Comandante Huayhuaco,

The Agrarian Bank started to give money to the peasants at zero interest. But then what happened? Sendero said in the first instance, said to the peasants, 'Nobody may take money from the bank! It's a strategy of the dying reactionary government.' But then later Sendero said 'Take the money, but give one part to Sendero [as a revolutionary tax].' So they took the money indiscriminately, in an excessive way. And in this way the terrorists themselves came to be moneylenders! The government's money lending scheme became a failure...."⁴⁴

As we shall later see, it would take a new President, new political rules, and a new, radically different economic policy to drag the country out of the quagmire which was partly of the APRA government's making.

Most disturbing, however, was the fact that in 1988 Shining Path decided to significantly escalate its armed struggle in order to force a military stalemate with the armed forces—an objective which they now appeared to be on the verge of achieving. Not only had the momentum in the counterinsurgency campaign been lost when García swung to an almost exclusively *desarrollista* approach. Increasingly strained relations with what the military perceived was an unsupportive (and even antagonistic) APRA government also led them to relax their crackdown on the insurgents between 1986 and 1988.⁴⁵ In many volatile areas of the emergency zone, the military reduced their patrols in the countryside, and were reluctant to engage the rebels. Afraid, perhaps, that any action on their part might be construed by the politicians as a violation of human rights, the soldiers literally withdrew to their barracks and bases (del Pino 1993:82). "The military," observed Tapia, "felt that the government was indicating to them *what things they should not do, without receiving the indispensable directives that might define the strategic orientation of their action*" (1997:39).

Original emphasis). Amidst the political chaos, the morale of the armed forces plummeted, which precipitated mounting desertions (see Strong 1992:158-160). Shining Path took advantage of the lull in the pressure to consolidate their presence in other regions of Peru, and to win back lost ground in strategic areas of the south-central highlands (del Pino 1993b:82). It was the civil defence committees in particular that bore the brunt of intensified guerrilla violence in the immediate years after 1987 (see DESCO 1989, Vols. I & II). By 1988, the nation faced a seemingly bleak and uncertain future. Yet unbeknown to the majority of Peruvians and foreign observers, important developments were taking place in the Apurímac River Valley, the repercussions of which would change the entire course of the civil war.

Notes

- 1 In Abimael Guzmán, "Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio." *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988, and PCP-SL, "Desarrollar la guerra popular sirviendo a la revolución mundial." *Ediciones Bandera Roja*, May 1986. Both translated and reproduced by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 2 Before it was extended over the entire department, the first Peruvian provinces to be placed under a state of emergency in October 1981 were La Mar, Cangallo, Huamanga, Víctor Fajardo, and Huanta. This emergency zone embraced a population that numbered 391,883 persons, or 2.20% of the entire national population (DESCO 1989:352).
- 3 From the life history of Daniel, interviewed by author on 3 November 1997.
- 4 Author's interview with *rondero* Pascual Quispe Vargas on 17 September, 1997.
- 5 Isbell tells us that "in Chuschi during annual celebrations, dancers represent a historical even that is said to have taken place twenty to thirty years ago in which a village priest and Civil Guard captain shot into the market crowd during a drunken birthday party for the priest. The villagers attacked the parish house and captured the priest and members of the Civil Guard. According to oral tradition, they were marched barefoot, with their hands bound behind their backs, 120 kilometers or 75 miles to the departmental capital and turned over to the prefect. The priest and the captain became immortalized as vile but comical characters in a parody that was an integral part of an annual fertility ritual that initiated the agricultural cycle. The villagers of Chuschi immortalized their representation of this historical conflict year after year and thereby created stereotypes of enemies that were later utilized cleverly by Sendero" (1992:62).
- 6 Señor Raúl Palacios Hernández, a former district mayor of Tambo (1971-75), explained to me that the guerrilla attack on the Tambo police station on 11 October 1981 was condoned by many *Tambinos* because those particular *Guardias Civil* were generally seen as corrupt and abusive. They would often extort money from local migrant labourers who worked in the coca plantations of the Valle del Río Apurímac (interviewed on 25 September 1997).
- 7 For an eyewitness account of the Allpachaca invasion by a participating Senderista, see Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:330-332.
- 8 Ample illustrative cases of land disputes can be found in the archives of the Ministry of Agriculture. For primary examples of these kinds of disputes, see the references to archival documents for the peasant community of Challhuamayo, cited at the end of this book.
- 9 Evidence of land disputes between kin is presented in this book in References, Archival Sources, Archivo del Ministerio de Agricultura de la Región 'Libertadores Wari' [Ayacucho], esp. 1950.
- 10 This was consistently repeated in the testimonies and opinions given to me in 1997 by Rubén Rojas Domínguez (Mayor, Tambo district), 'Comando Zorro' (President of *Comité Central de Defensa*, Tambo), Pascual Quispe Vargas (*desplazado* and *rondero*, Tambo), District Committee of *Club de Madres* of Tambo district, Vicente Perez Cervan (*Regidor de Desarrollo Rural*, Tambo; former *CAD*

president), José Coronel (anthropologist and research fellow at the Instituto para la Paz (IPAZ) of UNSCH), and by Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres ('Comandante Huayhuaco,' former organiser and representative of the *rondas campesinas* of the *valle del río Apurímac*).

- 11 It is important to realise, however, that there is no single, consistent account of the killing of the reporters, for individual Uchuraccainos appear to remember, or choose to remember, this episode differently, and there are many often conflicting versions of the story. And as Starn points out, there are just as many different hypotheses offered by outsiders (1994:82-83). Whether in Bosnia or in Guatemala, memories of such traumatic and violent episodes are invariably conflicting, multiple, becoming diachronically shifting and "dynamic constructions" over space and time. For discussions on the topic of violence and the politics of memory, see Remijnse 2001, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999, Hale 1997, Engel 1999, Connerton 1989.
- 12 Author's interview with Elías Ccente on 26 May 2000.
- 13 Author's interview with Elías Ccente on 26 May 2000.
- 14 This information is based on author's investigation of archival documents in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ayacucho city, during April-May 2000.
- 15 This information is based on author's investigation of archival documents in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ayacucho city, during April-May 2000.
- 16 Acta de Aceptación de la Modalidad de Adjudicación del Predio 'Uchuraccay.' 13 de setiembre 1973. Archivo del Ministerio de Agricultura de la Región 'Libertadores Wari [Ayacucho].
- 17 Information based on author's interview with Elías Ccente on 26 May 2000.
- 18 According to Mao's military principles for defeating Chiang Kai-shek, two of the guerrilla's principles of operation are: (1) 'To make the wiping out of the enemy's effective strength our main objective, rather than the holding or seizure of a city or place', and (2) 'To avoid battles of attrition in which we lose more than we gain or only break even' (Mao 1948:291-292).
- 19 One unfortunate incident of this was when the Iquichan villages of Huaychao, Uchuraccay, and Ccarhuahurán unleashed a wave of inter-communal violence in the district of Tambo by carrying out a series of raids on a number of communities there—including Balcón, Osno, Acco, Vicus, Masinga, Ccarhuacc, and Cochcca—in February 1983 (DESCO 1989:98).
- 20 In this regard, Rubén Rojas Domínguez, district mayor of Tambo, made the following astute, though also politically apologetic, observations: "The army was not prepared for [the Senderistas], then. The army was prepared to confront guerrillas like those of Colombia, of Argentina, and other such groups that do not have that [Maoist] communist ideology. Therefore, at first the army committed many excesses, not out of cruelty, but out of ignorance." (Interview in Tambo, on 14 October 1997.)
- 21 By the beginning of 1983, the declared Emergency Zone comprised the five northern provinces of the departments of Ayacucho, the province of Andahuaylas in the department of Apurímac, and the entire department of Huancavelica (DESCO 1989:347-355).
- 22 "We were accused of being terrorists in a very dismissive way by Lima people," explained Cesareo Ayala, a returnee from Huambalpa, Ayacucho, who had lived as a refugee in a shantytown in Lima (quoted in Kirk 1995:357).
- 23 Peru historians and anthropologists never tire of reiterating Ayacucho's "long tradition of rebelliousness," which includes the Taki Onqoy movement in the mid-sixteenth century (see Stern 1982:51-79), the 1896 Iquichan rebellion against the government's salt tax in the provincial capital of Huanta (see Husson 1983, 1992), the violent peasant struggles in the province of La Mar in 1922-23 (Cárdenas López 1982; Vila Galindo 1978), and the massive social movement demanding free education in 1969 (Degregori 1990).
- 24 The *Jefes del Comando-Político Militar* of the zone declared under the state of emergency were:
Gral. Roberto Clemente Noel Moral (Dec. 1982 - Dec. 1983)
Gral. Adrián Huamán Centeno (Jan. 1984 - Aug. 1984).
Col. Wilfredo Mori Orzo (Aug. 1984 - Sept. 1985).

- Gral. Juan Antonio Gil Jara (Sept. 1985 - Dec. 1986).
Gral. Jorge Sánchez Manrique (Jan. 1987 - Dec. 1987).
Gral. José Valdivia Sánchez (Jan. 1988 - Dec. 1988).
- 25 The figure for the total death toll up until the end of 1985 differs according to various sources. The Comisión Especial de Pacificación del Senado (Comisión Bernaldes) places the death toll at 8,662 while The Peru Report puts the number at 8,219. DESCO gives a more conservative figure of 7,290 and the Ministry of Defence of 6,697. For an elaboration of the statistical data on victims and the various sources of this information, see DESCO 1989:46.
 - 26 This is how Rubén Rojas, Tambo's mayor from 1996 until 1998, depicted the situation of the district's rural inhabitants during the worst years of political violence.
 - 27 The town of Tambo was conferred the status of *villa* by Ley Regional del Centro No. 361, on 15 September 1920 (Vilchez 1961:20).
 - 28 See González 1983c for a general discussion of this.
 - 29 Author's interview with Señor Raúl Palacios Hernández, a former district mayor of Tambo (1971-75), on 25 September 1997.
 - 30 Author's interview with Eusebio and Felix, displaced peasants and longtime residents of Ccarhuapampa on 16 November 1997.
 - 31 Author's interview with Eusebio, *desplazado* and longtime resident of Ccarhuapampa on 16 November 1997.
 - 32 Author's interview with Eusebio, *desplazado* and longtime resident of Ccarhuapampa on 16 November 1997.
 - 33 From the original ten, the multicomunal settlement of Ccarhuapampa have grown to include twelve communities: Unión Cristal, Balcón, Polanco, Unión Minas, Tantacocha, Paria, Rayanccasa, Huantaccasa, Churrulla, Chacabamba, Puca Huaycco, and Yuracc-yacu. By 1997, at least four of these communities—Balcón, Polanco, Unión Minas, and Yuracc-yacu—had already returned, either entirely or partially, to their original rural villages.
 - 34 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000. This information is also based on author's interviews with Eusebio and Felix, longtime residents of Ccarhuapampa on 16 November 1997.
 - 35 Author's interview with Eusebio and Felix on 16 November 1997.
 - 36 Quoted in Kruijt 1991:109.
 - 37 Massacres took place in Ocos on 20 April 1983 (18 peasants killed), on 17 January 1984 (15 peasants killed), and again on 3 February 1984 (17 killed); and in Vinchos on 28 March 1984 (30 assassinated), and once again on 2 June 1984 (4 killed) (see DESCO 1989:100-107).
 - 38 Interviews with District Committee of *Club de Madres* of Tambo, and with Comando Zorro.
 - 39 Information from interview with District Committee of *Club de Madres* of Tambo, on 16 October 1997, and with a woman Senderista in DIVICOTE custody, on 13 November 1997.
 - 40 For a sound assessment of the performance of the APRA government of President Alan García in the light of the problems which it inherited upon assuming power in July 1985, see Crabtree (1992).
 - 41 The II Región Militar comprised the departments of Lima, Ica, Ancash, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Cerro de Pasco, Huánuco, and Junín (Tapia 1997:29).
 - 42 Shortly after becoming president, García also initiated a reorganization and unification of the various branches of the police force, "involving the dismissal of senior police officers suspected of corrupt activities" (Crabtree 1992:109).
 - 43 With respect to these loans, Crabtree points out that "[the] benefits of low-cost finance to agriculture tended to be more evenly dispersed than the programme of subsidies, reaching a wider range of producers....[But while] large sums were devoted to expanding rural credit, much of it continued to be channelled to those farmers with more resources, those best placed to repay" (1992:54).

- 44 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 45 In an interview with the magazine *Oiga* (No. 315, 2 March 1987), Army General Luis Cisneros Vizquerra, the Minister of War during the Belaúnde administration in the first half of the 1980s, once said of García's management of the counterinsurgency struggle: "I notice a duality between the government and the party in government with regard to the subversion problem. So as not to lose votes, so as not to lose popularity, so as not to clash with the Left, I notice that there is a political desire to coexist with the subversion, of not putting an end to them definitively" (quoted in DESCO 1989:611).

4 The DECAS and the struggle for the Apurímac Valley

Owing to its Amazonian terrain and agricultural richness, the *valle del río Apurímac* was for Sendero Luminoso a region of immense strategic and economic value. Yet it was not given up freely by its inhabitants. The inevitable result was that it became one of the bloodiest contested grounds in the entire emergency zone. Apart from this, the Apurímac River Valley would also be the birthplace of what was to become the most developed and effective form of peasant resistance to guerrilla domination: the *Defensa Civil Antisubversiva* or DECAS. The DECAS were the first militias to achieve a truly coordinated network of defence that encompassed an entire region. They were also pioneers in developing highly sophisticated and effective counterinsurgency tactics with which to beat the Maoist guerrillas at their own game. In addition, their control over an economically productive region of marketable cash crops provided them with the unique ability to acquire potent firearms and other modern weapons of war, as well as to financially support (at least in part) the eventual expansion of their organisation into other regions of Ayacucho. This chapter describes and examines the deadly struggle waged for control of this strategic region, and the development of an organisation that would ultimately prove crucial in turning the tide of civil war.

4.1 Migration, colonization, and class conflict in the Apurímac River Valley

In 1981, the population of the Apurímac Valley was approximately 40,000. By decade's end, however, the inhabitants of the valley numbered well over 85,000 (del Pino 1996:122). The vast majority of these people were refugees displaced by political violence from the Andean areas of Huanta, Tambo, and San Miguel. It really was not surprising that they ended up in this sub-tropical river valley, where the borders of the departments of Ayacucho, Junín, and Cuzco converge. Many of them already owned small plots of cultivated land in the *ceja de selva*, or had worked at least once in their life as a *peón* (itinerant labourer) on a plantation.

Coca, which grows well in the Apurímac Valley, has for centuries drawn people from other parts of Ayacucho and Peru to this region. During the colonial period, the lucrative coca market among the indigenous population did not pass unnoticed by Spanish entrepreneurs, who tried to secure a hegemonic position in its production and trade. "Already since the founding of Huamanga [in the first half of the sixteenth century], the Indians, they chewed coca; and so, the Spanish, Huamanguinos and residents of the *cejas de las montañas* of Tambo and Huanta cultivated coca...." (Vilchez 1961:44). And for most of the first half of the nineteenth century, peasants from the *punas* of Huanta possessed extensive coca fields in the Apurímac Valley and were important and influential coca traders in the Ayacucho region (see Mendez 1996, O'Higgins 1953). But it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century, with the intensification of the cash-crop economy, that the large-scale colonization of the Apurímac Valley began.

Map 3: Apurímac River Valley



Source: after del Pino 1998:165

The first highland colonists to arrive in the valley in the second half of the nineteenth century came from Huanta province. Their stay in the valley was usually temporary, and the colonists maintained social and cultural links with their highland community of origin. “The migrants, above all the men, continued linkages to their relations and to their communal obligations, conserving their cultural concerns” (del Pino 1996:124). Large landowners also began to establish themselves in the Apurímac Valley at about the same time. They started to claim huge tracts of land for their commercial plantations and, in the process, often ended up dispossessing and creating conflict with the peasant smallholders, and with the valley’s original native Asháninka inhabitants. Del Pino tells us that on these plantations “the workforce basically comprised of peons transferred from the sierran *haciendas*, since in many cases the owners of transferred *haciendas* in the valley maintained their properties in the heights of Huanta and Tambo” (ibid.).

Demand for *aguardiente* (cane alcohol) prompted a sugar cane boom in the 1920s. *Aguardiente*, along with coca, was commonly used by *hacendados* of the sierra as a form of payment to their peons. Stimulated by international market demands, the valley experienced other booms in subsequent decades. Cube, from which is extracted a chemical substance used in industrial insecticides, became the important export cash crop during the 1940s and '50s. The coffee boom of the 1960s brought a high demand for labourers, which consequently accelerated and intensified migration from the highlands to the valley. Until 1983, the valley's most important and extensively cultivated cash crops were cacao, coffee, fruits, peanut, cube, and coca.

The completion of the Ayacucho-Tambo-San Francisco highway in 1964, and the construction of two airstrips the previous decade on the *haciendas* Teresita and Luisiana, greatly improved access to the valley and enhanced its links to external markets, vitalizing the economy yet further. Del Pino notes that "The highway not only influenced the formation of new population centres and in the multiplication of the fairs, but that it generalised monetary exchange in replacement of barter. There arrived accompanying the first cars a multitude of petty traders and merchants" (1996:125). From about the 1950s onwards, the Apurímac River Valley became the unique dynamic hub of agriculture and commerce in what was otherwise one of the poorest departments in Peru (Degregori 1990:31). As such, it has long been one of the most important destinations for thousands of highland migrants in the department of Ayacucho.

Prosperity in the valley, however, was limited mainly to the elites: the large commercial landowners and the rich intermediary merchants and traders. Indeed, built where they were—on an *hacienda*—the airstrips brought substantial benefits only to the hacienda's owners and their business associates, but not the to general population. Living conditions were poor, and basic services were virtually non-existent. In fact, there existed only one rural hospital and one doctor for the entire valley up until the late 1970s (Degregori 1989b:28).

Not surprisingly, the rival interests of various competing economic actors has, over the past decades, stirred up class tensions and conflicts. For instance, wealthy merchants who had migrated to the valley from Ayacucho, Junín, and Lima in the 1960s would frequently provide cash loans to peasant smallholders in exchange for the exclusive right to purchase the debtor's harvest. The creditor would, of course, later set his own low buying price. The peasants and *peones* suffered other injustices at the hands of the merchants and the large landowners. They were routinely paid low prices or wages for their produce or their labour, and often cheated at the weighing scales. Violence was at times even used by middlemen to pressurize the peasants to sell their produce at below the normal market price (del Pino 1996:126). Class enmity would later play into the hands of Shining Path, making it easier for them to garner supporters and sympathisers among the peasants in the Apurímac Valley. But as we shall see below, these long-standing class animosities would also feed the flames of violence as antagonistic groups tried to enlist the help of either the guerrillas or the security forces in settling private vendettas.

Organized peasants formed three agrarian cooperatives between 1970 and 1971: the Unión Selvática, the Río Apurímac, and El Quinacho. Although at their peak the cooperatives came to have approximately 3,600 members between them, they appar-

ently ultimately failed to meet peasant demands and expectations. “For that reason, starting from 1980 the farmers preferred to return to selling their products to particular merchants, whose power resurged” (del Pino 1996:126). The Federación Campesina del Valle del Río Apurímac (FECVRA) was formed in May 1976. During its relatively short existence, it would grow to become one of the largest and most influential peasant organizations in the entire department, uniting more than 100 peasant unions (Degregori 1990:196). FECVRA helped to destroy the commercial monopoly of the wealthiest and most powerful cube merchants in the valley in 1982. More than just a labour organization, it also responded to government neglect by embarking on projects aimed at fostering local socioeconomic development. “The unions constructed communal areas, schools, first aid posts, repaired bridges and roads, offered training lectures, solved disputes between husband and wife. They frequently also had to confront police abuses” (Degregori 1989b:28).

When the political violence that was sweeping through the Ayacuchan *sierra* spilt into the Apurímac Valley, FECVRA found itself attacked from both sides—by security forces and as well as by Shining Path militants. Caught between these two hostile forces, the federation rapidly began to fall apart. Shining Path took to destroying the property of its members and threatening their lives when it found itself unable to seize control of the organisation from within. By the end of 1982, guerrillas had already murdered two FECVRA leaders (del Pino 1993b:56). For their part, the police—traditional allies of the large landowners and wealthy merchants—constantly harassed FECVRA members, often accusing them of being involved in drug trafficking. When Shining Path militants and their peasant supporters burned down the store belonging to Edmundo Morales, the largest cube monopolist in the small town of Santa Rosa, on 29 October 1982, the merchants pinned the blame on FECVRA’s leadership. As a result, some were incarcerated by the police, despite lack of evidence (Degregori 1989b:28). But it was soon after the federation’s president, Julio Orozco Huamaní, was disappeared in August 1983—witnesses claimed to have seen the Marines take him to their headquarters at Luisiana—that FECVRA dissolved completely (Degregori 1989b:28). By the end of the year, many of FECVRA’s leaders had been murdered, imprisoned, or had fled in fear from the valley.

4.2 Revolution, repression, and the seeds of counter-rebellion

The first Shining Path militants arrived in the Apurímac Valley in the middle of 1982. Numbering less than a dozen political cadres at first, their primary objective was to establish links between Shining Path’s forces in the highlands of Huanta and La Mar and the valley’s local population, which the Party was determined to transform into its “mass support base” (del Pino 1996:132). They fanned out through the valley, preaching revolution and trying to enlist peasant support. By the end of the year, they were joined by guerrilla fighters arriving from the sierra. The Senderistas lost no time in embarking on an aggressive campaign of bombing and burning property, and assassinating local government officials, trade union leaders, and anyone else they deemed to be impeding the advance of the revolution. In the jungle hamlet of Mongoy (Chungui district), for instance, rebels publicly executed three uncooperative local

authorities in December 1982, replacing them afterwards with their own commissaries (del Pino 1996:137). What is more, the Senderistas encouraged the population to break off all relations with the external market, to stop growing commercial crops, and to produce solely for subsistence in what Shining Path called “*economía de guerra*” (del Pino 1993b:55). “For Sendero, the production of coffee, cacao, barbasco, etc. only enriched the ‘people of wealth’” (ibid.).

Over the next two years, unimaginable terror gripped the valley. When the Apurímac Valley fell within the scope of the declared emergency zone, security forces arrived and promptly unleashed their own wave of terror. “Bodies in varying states of decay floated daily down the river” (del Pino 1995a:377). Caught between two fires, the valley’s peasants became the main target of indiscriminate violence. House-to-house searches and arbitrary arrests, abductions and summary executions became commonplace. War touched not only the adults. In the town of Santa Rosa, the inhabitants were powerless to stop the periodic forced recruitment of their children by Shining Path’s armed columns (del Pino 1996:139).¹ “The confusion of the population was immediate; but they were left with no other option than to continue collaborating for fear of the Senderista terror” (del Pino 1993b:57).

On the other hand, the onslaught unleashed by government forces in the emergency zone halted temporarily the rapid expansion that Shining Path had been enjoying ever since 1980. Rebel forces in Ayacucho were put to flight from many of their self-declared “liberated zones,” but Shining Path was far from beaten. Retreating guerrilla forces simply sought refuge in other regions where weaker military presence allowed them to nurse their wounds and recuperate their strength in tranquil secrecy. From the Apurímac Valley, rebel columns did not have far to travel for safe haven from the Marine and Army patrols that regularly combed the valley. For within the valley, the borders of three highland departments converge. Yet not all of these departments were at the time under a state of emergency. While the breadth of military operations was limited by the borders of the emergency zone, the movement of guerrilla forces was not.² And so in order to find rest and sanctuary, rebel columns in the valley needed only to cross the Apurímac River into the neighbouring department of Cuzco, which at the time did not fall within the ambit of the emergency zone. “And there the Senderistas took refuge,” militia leader Hugo Huilca pointed out (quoted in Starn 1993:44).

Government troops arrived in force in the southern portion of the valley in the first months of 1983, operating in and around the districts of Chungui and Anco in particular. As in other areas of the emergency zone, the mind-set with which they came had a profound influence on their conduct towards the local civilian population. The military arrived in the Apurímac Valley already suspecting the “*cholos*” there (as in the rest of Ayacucho) of being potential subversives, and accordingly embarked on a campaign of brutal and indiscriminate repression. Yet the extremity of the military’s reaction towards the Andean populace of Ayacucho can not be explained solely as a manifestation of *costeño* racist prejudice. Their indiscriminate acts of brutality were often also the result of their frustration at being unable to get to grips with their elusive enemy. As Gorriti tells us,

[In the beginning the] military could only conceive of guerrillas in terms of a classic Castro-style movement. The symptoms it looked for

were the presence of strangers wearing olive drab uniforms, training camps, arms deposits. It could not imagine a different style of guerrilla war; and when these guerrillas were literally under the noses of the military, it had no way to see them. It was not a case of physical blindness—all the basic information was there, it had been recorded—but intellectual blindness (1999:52).

Indeed, government forces soon realised to their dismay that the guerrillas were playing by other rules—and playing well! Even General Sinesio Jarama, Commander of II Región Militar, once sardonically observed that “while Mr. Guzmán is playing a game of chess, we are playing a game of tennis.”³ Unable to *see* their prey amongst the forest of civilian inhabitants in the valley, it was regrettable though hardly surprising that frustrated officers (lacking sophisticated counterinsurgency training and in the absence of a higher directive) would begin to lash out blindly, ordering indiscriminate acts of violence against the local population. In fact, even before the army was sent in to quash the insurgency, General Luis Cisneros Vizquerra, the then Minister of War, already seemed to realise that in fighting the Maoist guerrillas, the security forces would be reduced to using brute, indiscriminate force. In an interview with the Lima magazine *QueHacer* in 1982, Cisneros Vizquerra candidly stated:

The Police Forces know not where the Senderistas are nor their numbers, they do not know when they are going to attack. In order that the Police Forces may be successful they would have to start killing Senderistas and non-Senderistas, for that is the only way they would be assured of success. They kill 60 people and at best there are 3 Senderistas... and surely the police will say that the 60 were all Senderistas” (in Gonzalez 1983a:50).

In spite of their arrogant confidence in their own “professionalism,” the military would find itself eventually having to resort to the same tactics as the police. Rather than the conventional style of combat and clash of armies for which the soldiers had been trained, they instead found themselves in a war of shadows, up against what seemed an invisible enemy. A militia commander once described to me the great agitation and desperation felt by the soldiers when confronted by Shining Path’s guerrilla tactics.

In a synchronised and simultaneous manner, Sendero carried out its ambushes. That is to say theirs was a strategy of silence [and it] threw all the soldiers into a terrible state of desperation. [The soldiers] didn’t know what to do. Therefore, in their desperation, in their impotence, they killed savagely, torturing the innocent, the peasants. Therefore I will say to you that in the beginning...Sendero had an extremely positive [i.e. successful] strategy that the forces of order had not been able to restrain.⁴

In fact, Shining Path welcomed and, indeed, purposely sought to draw the full weight

of State repression on the population, for they had calculated that it would drive the masses into the ranks of the revolutionary movement. The Shining Path document, entitled "Let's Develop the Guerrilla War!" explained how State repression strengthens, rather than weakens, the revolution:

What [do] the anti-subversive operation[s] show? Plainly and simply that the masses reject and resist aggression; that reactionary brutality, arrogance, and violence did not dishearten them, but rather it so aroused their just class anger that they even confront with their bare hands the armed aggressors protected by the structure of the state....The police operations and all the repressive actions only confirm that the war is gaining in strength and developing, and that if we pay with our sweat, suffering, and blood, this is no more than our quota for having risen in arms in a just and necessary rebellion for the class and the people.⁵

When faced with superior force, the guerrilla columns faithfully adhered to Mao's precept of preserving one's own forces by falling back and avoiding direct confrontations with the soldiers. Rebel forces in the valley temporarily moved to the area north of Santa Rosa, or east across the river, into Cuzco Department.

According to del Pino, this brief retreat of rebel forces from the southern portion of the valley gave villagers there sufficient space for action (1996:137). Overcoming their initial fear of Shining Path, communities in the districts of Anco and Chungui (La Mar province) began to meet in council to discuss what response they should make to the acute threat posed by escalating political violence to their personal security and livelihood. By now, Shining Path had managed to arouse widespread disaffection, resentment, and disenchantment among the population. The rebels had come promising to improve the lives of the people, to help and to protect them. Instead they brought only death and economic hardship. On the other hand, the peasants were also bitterly frustrated with the inability of the security forces, when they were not also killing peasants, to provide protection from guerrilla attacks. In the end, many peasants concluded that they had no choice but to defend themselves. "We rose up when it appeared as though our lives would be extinguished progressively" a former inhabitant of the village of San Antonio told me in 1997. "We rose up because the subversives of Sendero Luminoso began to kill to the brink. In the end we asked ourselves, 'Are we going to wait our turn or are we also going to defend ourselves?' And the people cried, 'No!' with one voice. 'One has to die fighting, defending our lives!'"⁶

It has often been said that the cruel, indiscriminate repression applied by government security forces surpassed even the cruel violence meted out by Shining Path. If this was true, then one wonders why the peasants took the side of the government rather than of Shining Path. Far from having been a foregone conclusion, the evidence suggests that in some communities the inhabitants actually deliberated whether to back the government or whether to throw in their lot with the Shining Path. "Definitely, the way was free for them to go to Sendero," said Hugo Huillca, a *ronda* leader from the Apurímac River Valley. "It was said in an assembly...[that] one must

decide. Are we for defending what is ours...or are we with Sendero?" (quoted in Starn 1993:45). Indeed, anyone who wished to follow Shining Path could have tried to make their way to the nearby rebel strongholds of Sello de Oro and Viscatán. But no large-scale civilian exodus to those areas ever took place. There is little doubt that most peasants in Anco and Chungui perceived the armed forces to be more powerful than Sendero Luminoso, and therefore more likely to be the future victor in the war. This must have lent a moral boost to their resolve to resist Shining Path's increasingly arbitrary abusiveness. In the Apurímac Valley as in the sierra regions of Ayacucho, local people interpreted the "tactical withdrawals" of Shining Path forces as a sign of weakness, rather than as standard Maoist guerrilla tactics. One might even argue that the State's capacity for terror and the use of violent force was so apparently overwhelming (and, conversely, Shining Path's ability to respond, let alone to defend local populations, so obviously limited) that the inhabitants came to fear the security forces much more than they feared Shining Path. That the military might of the State appeared as the greater of the two evils, that is to say the one whose wrath struck more fear into their hearts, was doubtless one of the reasons why many peasants prudently sought a pragmatic alliance with the perceived stronger party—the security forces.

Nevertheless, intimidation and coercion on the part of the military can only ever be a partial reason why the peasantry would choose to actively support the state. For the alliance to have been as fruitful as it was, there must also have been a *genuine will* on the part of the people to assume a dynamic role in the counterinsurgency struggle; for in battle there is nothing more obvious than if one lacks the will to fight (see Keegan 1978). Even when it resorted to heavy-handed tactics, the armed forces did not always get its way. In some instances when people steadfastly refused to take an active part in the counterinsurgency campaign, no amount of pressure from the military could make them comply. We have already noted this in the previous chapter, particularly in the Pampas region of Ayacucho and throughout much of Huancavelica Department. Coronel notes that when the military tried to compel the inhabitants of the Huanta Valley to form civil defence patrols in the first half of the 1980s, the valley's independent smallholding peasants successfully resisted the pressure. It was only in 1990, after a reconciliation had more or less been achieved between the military and the peasants of the valley, that the inhabitants there finally consented to form civil defence committees (1996:49-63). In the Apurímac River Valley, pragmatic considerations were not the only things that explain the peasantry's decision to side with the State. Widespread grievances and resentment—and herein lies the underlying motivation—against Shining Path were also very real and apparent. The frequent assassinations, the increasingly common abduction of youths, the imposition of an austere "economy of war"—the cumulation of all these abuses convinced people that what was under threat was not only their way of life, but the very safety and integrity of their families.

As the years of civil war dragged on inconclusively, what became clear was that while most peasants had sympathised with Shining Path's ostensible goal of creating a new society devoid of exploitation and inequality, few peasants had imagined, or were willing to accept, the full extent of the hardships and self-sacrifice that only Shining Path's hardcore militants yearned to incur along the way.⁷ When widespread

disenchantment with the “*lucha armada*” threatened to unravel Sendero’s control over the rural population, the Party resorted to more drastic measures in order to bring disobedient peasants back into submission. In doing so, however, Shining Path unwittingly misunderstood and misjudged completely the capacity of the peasantry to organise and to mobilise for its self-preservation against external threats.

4.3 Guerrilla retreat and the emergence and proliferation of the Montoneros

“¡Hay montoneros, montoneros, montoneros!”⁸ This was the cry that spread northwards through the valley like a bushfire in the early months of 1984, fanned by the first concrete actions against Shining Path at the villages of Anchiuay and Chiquintirca, in the district of Anco.⁹ According to del Pino, these communities had already begun to assemble bands of fighters—“*montoneros*”—from as early as the end of 1983 (1993b:59-63). Soon other villages in the area started to follow the their example, organising local defence groups of their own. The inhabitants of these settlements were resolved to prevent future rebel incursions into their communities, and to protect their authorities. They were determined not to cooperate with Shining Path. “Thus, when SL wanted to return to the south of the valley, they were not able to do so because since various villages had organised to defend themselves. Its only option was to try to enter with blood and fire” (del Pino 1996:138).

The emergence of *montoneros* in villages south of the town of Santa Rosa appears to have been influenced by conditions similar to those that were conducive to the appearance of self-defence groups in certain parts of the Ayacuchan sierra at around the same time (see chapter 3). For one thing, the temporary retreat of rebel forces from the southern portion of the valley gave the villages there “space for action.” Of the seventeen officially reported guerrilla actions in the valley in 1983, nine took place in settlements north of Santa Rosa and five in Santa Rosa itself, but only three in the southern communities of Palmapampa and Chungui (see DESCO 1989).

The social organisation and structural relationships characteristic of the valley’s southern peasant communities appears to constitute a second important factor in facilitating the appearance of *montoneros*. Del Pino (1996:146) and Sala (1995) tell us that the southern portion of the valley was colonised by *comuneros* from La Mar, whereas the northern part was populated largely by independent peasant smallholders from the Huanta Valley. In the province of La Mar, the majority of legally recognised peasant communities (“*comunidades campesinas*”) are to be found in the districts of Chungui and Anco. Of the sixteen recognised peasant communities in existence in 1983, four were in Anco and four in Chungui (INDEC 1991:196). Indeed, the peasant community of Anchiuay has been legally recognised and in possession of a land title since 1952. The same is true for Chiquintirca ever since 1951, and for Chungui since 1956 (INDEC 1991:196). One of the distinguishing features of recognised peasant communities which sets it apart from other forms of peasant social groupings is the existence of a *junta directiva comunal*, responsible primarily for distributing communal land among the community’s members, and settling border disputes between them.¹⁰ Del Pino argues that the organisational experience of

comuneros in this southern region was helpful in coordinating and organising resistance to Shining Path, which was otherwise initially difficult for the dispersed independent smallholders living north of Santa Rosa to achieve (1996:146). Roberto Córdova, an Ayacuchano researcher from the Apurímac Valley who has spent almost eight years studying the history of the DECAS, offers a more explicit explanation of the dynamic relationship between structure and action. He asserts that it was the *juntas directivas* of these peasant communities that were responsible for having brought dispersed community members together at general assemblies in which *montoneros* were organised and leaders were elected.¹¹ Furthermore, given the fact that their positions of leadership meant that they were especially targeted for assassination by Shining Path, many local authorities also began to take a vested interest in organising village defence as a means of ensuring their own survival.¹² The community's *junta directiva* served as the organisational model for the village defence committees, which consisted of the following posts: (1) president, (2) vice-president, (3) secretary of acts, (4) treasurer, (5) organisational secretary (also called "*comando operativo*," operational commander), and (6) security officer ("*sub-comando*"). According to one militia commander, The "*base*," or general membership, of the defence group was made up of the able-bodied adult population of the community, all of whom were expected to participate in the tasks of community defence.¹³

From its early beginnings in Anchiuay and Chiquintirca, the self-defence movement began to expand throughout the valley, organising other villages one by one through a process of "village hopping." In this way the *montoneros* of Anchiuay helped to organise those of San Martín. San Martín helped to organise San Antonio, which organised Monterrico, which in turn helped in organising Palmapampa; and Palmapampa came to organise Pichihuillca, and so on.¹⁴ Anchiuay and Chiquintirca are peasant communities, whereas settlements like Palmapampa and Pichihuillca are *pagos* [hamlets] consisting of independent peasant smallholders. In the process of organising themselves, these *pagos* were assisted not only by the *montoneros* of other villages. They were also aided by an experience which many of these independent peasants shared in common: prior participation in FECVRA.¹⁵

The evidence strongly suggests, therefore, that the conception of village defence groups in the Apurímac Valley can not be credited to military think-tanks, nor can their creation and proliferation be attributed to coercive pressure on the part of government forces, as many commentators (including Shining Path) had assumed over the years (e.g. Degregori 1989b:29-30, Amnesty International 1991:21-22, Americas Watch 1992:9, Isbell 1990:8-13). As to what served as their organisational model, it would seem that the inhabitants of the valley drew from their own organisational forms and experiences.

The spontaneous emergence of anti-Sendero sentiments in the valley, which eventually resulted in active counter-rebellion, happened at about the same time as in other parts of Ayacucho. Similar to what Coronel observed among the Iquichano communities of Huanta's uplands, del Pino also noted that it was peasant communities which were less integrated into the market and characterised by strong community solidarity, where Shining Path had few significant linkages, that were the first to rebel against Shining Path in the Apurímac Valley (1996:147).

4.4 The role of the armed forces in the creation and expansion of CDCs in the valley

Although the will to organise the first village defence groups in the southern Apurímac Valley may have been a spontaneous one from the *comuneros* themselves, the growth of the self-defence militias throughout the rest of the valley was a process that was assisted and facilitated by the military. In places where peasants had organised self-defence groups on their own initiative the military's suspicion of the peasants was lessened, and repression was consequently slackened. This was evident in the favourable reaction to communities like Anchiway and Chiquintirca shown by a certain "Major Rick," who arrived in the valley early in 1984 at the head of a special Army unit assigned the task of organising the civilian population against Sendero Luminoso. In the process, Major Rick and his team baptised the *montoneros* with the new name "*Comités de Defensa Civil* (CDCs)" and assisted their expansion northwards (del Pino 1996:139). Settlements between Pichihuillca and Santa Rosa that had not yet organised themselves were visited by Major Rick and his underlings and given fifteen days in which to form a militia (ibid.). In such cases, the military routinely registered everyone in the community, and then appointed local authorities entrusted with the duty to organise a local defence force. Apparently, communities which had formed militias of their own accord were granted the privilege of electing their own authorities.

As happened in the sierra, it was not only the military that compelled unorganised peasant villagers to form CDCs. The CDCs of other communities have also been known to pressurise reluctant populations. In particular,

[those] of Pichiwillca continually invaded disorganised population, accusing them of collaborating and assisting Sendero. They arrived and maltreated [the locals], as happened on more than one occasion in Quimbiri, without anyone being able to intercede for them, neither the soldiers nor the policemen that one finds concentrated in front of the river, in San Francisco. They entered houses at night, masked in balaclavas, and abducted young people supposedly linked to Sendero, those same ones who in days were discovered murdered, thrown into the river or displayed in the open air (del Pino 1993b:78).

That many settlements would initially have been disinclined to form a militia is understandable. Shining Path had vowed to show no mercy to the "*yanauma*"—a Quechua word meaning "black head," which is what guerrillas called militia members, most likely in reference to the black balaclavas many of them wore. Militia leaders and their families throughout the zone of conflict were especially targeted by Shining Path, and routinely put to death with exceptional cruelty so as to serve as a warning to the rest of the community. To assume to post of CDC commander was obviously a very hazardous undertaking that not only exposed oneself but also one's family to danger. Naturally, few men willingly aspired to take on such a responsibility. Villages that refused to organise community defence risked harsh punishment at the hands of the military. It is probably correct to assume that what peasants intended by forming

a local militia was to curtail brutal military repression as much as to defend themselves from the violent incursions and authoritarian domination of Shining Path. The grim reality, as *rondero* Hugo Huillca explained, was that “in the midst of war, one is not permitted to be neutral, one must show oneself to be in agreement and once so, form their organisation....In this zone [of the Apurímac Valley] no one can neutral. They have already killed all those who were neutral” (quoted in Starn 1993:45).

With the help of the army, the CDCs were able to expand and to push Shining Path out of most of the southern section of the valley during 1984-85 (del Pino 1993b:64). Their subsequent expansion into territory lying north of Santa Rosa was facilitated by the growing presence of government forces in that area, once military bases were established in Santa Rosa, Sivia, and Llochegua in 1984.

4.5 The demographic and economic impact of political violence

One of the most evident consequences of political upheaval in the department of Ayacucho has been the displacement of thousands of people from their homes. As violence mounted, most of the valley’s large landowners and wealthy merchants fled to distant Peruvian cities. From the opposite direction came hundreds of displaced highland peasants from Huanta, Tambo, and San Miguel. They flooded into the Apurímac Valley in 1984-85, believing that it still offered a zone of refuge from the violence that was ravaging the sierra. Yet within the valley itself, political violence was causing extreme disruption to settlement patterns and livelihood activities. Despite the influx of refugees from outside the region, many established villages within the valley were depopulated or even completely abandoned, usually in the aftermath of an attack by one side or the other. In the case of Santa Rosa, for instance, only about 540 of the original 3,500 inhabitants in 1981 residents remained at the end of 1985. The majority of these people had fled in search of safety elsewhere in the department or the country. Santa Rosa’s drastic population decline was certainly caused by the high number of guerrilla attacks suffered by the town over this period. In 1984 alone, it was reported to have been attacked no less than eleven times—the highest number of incursions recorded in the entire valley that year (see DESCO 1989:882-916).

Under these conditions, the naked vulnerability of outlying rural villages and scattered homesteads became painfully evident. Consequently, fortified nucleated settlements, like those that appeared in various parts of the Ayacuchan sierra at about the same time, also began to emerge in the valley. Santa Rosa’s reduced population was replenished by displaced persons grouping together from fourteen separate hamlets, bringing the number of Santa Rosa’s inhabitants up to more than 3,590 (del Pino 1996:141). Eight dispersed hamlets merged at Anchihuay, and at Palmapampa, four. The initiative to create these so-called “*bases civiles antisubversivas*” (“civilian counterinsurgency bases) sometimes came from local populations themselves, and at other times from the military. For the army, such clustered multicommunity settlements offered a number of advantages. One was that it simplified the task of monitoring what they continued to regard as a potentially hostile population. Another was that it helped to avoid a repetition of the tragedy that occurred near San Pedro:

Fed up with all the arbitrary acts, the hamlet of San Pedro refused to collaborate and threw out the Senderistas. On 1 August 1984 the inhabitants organised into a CDC and on their own initiative decided to congregate and spend the nights in the settlement. On 15 September, an armed [guerrilla] group attacked the settlement, leaving a total of nineteen peasants dead. Word of the massacre reached the ears of the Republican Guard (GR), established in Luisiana. Along the way to San Pedro, the GR *mistook for subversives* the peasants of Wanchi, who had also been on their way to help their brothers in San Pedro, killing twenty of them (del Pino 1996:141. My emphasis).

So as to avoid mistaking friendly peasants for insurgents in the future, the army subsequently decided to resettle outlying villages, situated on the slopes of the valley, into newly formed “*bases civiles antisubversivas*” within the valley itself. Frequently forced to leave their homes at moment’s notice by military patrols, many of these *desplazados* had no choice but to leave most of their possessions behind, often to be looted afterwards by the soldiers. Despite its ostensibly altruistic intention, this resettlement policy simply added to the massive dislocation of peasants in the region. In addition, by agreeing to live in clustered settlements and organising civil defence patrols, these displaced peasants were making an unequivocal declaration of which side they chose to be on. As such, these *desplazados* knew that they would not be able to return to their own fields while Sendero controlled their home areas.

A number of displaced peasant, particularly those from the districts of Tambo and San Miguel, already owned small parcels of land in the valley, and so had the means to sustain themselves. On the other hand, those who did not, or whose fields became inaccessible owing to the dangers of travelling to them, were faced with more serious difficulties, and so had fewer options. If he were lucky, a *desplazado* might find work as a peon for a local smallholder. Those who had some money could try to rent land from local landowners. For the rest, survival was precarious at best. “The desperation grew among families overwhelmed by the lack of food and the epidemics that ravaged mainly the infant population” (del Pino 1996:141).

As daily life became more and more centred on the task of village defence, people came to have less time to devote to cultivation. Some parts of the valley were being patrolled virtually round the clock. The farming of the valley’s traditional cash crops—whose prices had already been dropping to unprofitably low levels ever since the beginning of the decade—was now being widely abandoned as agricultural production rapidly became almost exclusively orientated towards subsistence cultivation. When the spectre of famine became all too real, some of the *desplazados* of hamlets that were nucleated at Santa Rosa decided to return home, where they founded new “*bases civiles antisubversivas*” nearer to their own agricultural fields (del Pino 1996:142).

With the flight of the prosperous landowners and important merchants from the Apurímac Valley, the responsibility for civil defence fell exclusively to the local peasant smallholders and to the refugees from the sierra, namely men between the ages of 17 and 50. Historical class tensions and conflicts were undoubtedly diminished by the departure of valley’s dominant stratum, which may have made the task of organising

local civil defence easier. But the departure of the elites did not put an end to local rivalries and conflicts. Not only were unorganised settlements often bullied by those which had organised patrols, but clashes also sporadically erupted between the civil defence patrols of rival villages. For instance:

26 December 1984: In Rosario, located in the Apurímac River Valley, some 70 kilometres from Ayacucho, a fight broke out between groups called “*comités de defensa civil*” (*montoneros* or *ronderos*) that left ten dead. The clash culminated a discussion over who had greater control in the zone (DESCO 1989:116).

29 December 1984: Some 22 peasants from various communities in La Mar, in Ayacucho, are killed by those called *rondas* or anti-Senderista paramilitary groups. The victims are *ronderos* from Pacce, Pacere, Machente, Aentabamba and San Francisco (ibid.:117).

Whether they were essential to the safety of the locals or not, the militias had become just another predatory force, alongside Shining Path and the military. Rather than bringing security and tranquility to the inhabitants, the proliferation of armed actors in the valley seemed only to make the violence accelerate and spiral uncontrollably away.

4.6 Crisis and the counteroffensive of the CDCs

By the end of 1985, the CDCs of the Apurímac River Valley had managed to wrest control of a wide swathe of the valley from Shining Path, thus depriving guerrilla forces in the region of a strategically important theatre of operations. This success had been achieved with the vital support of the military, and through a ruthlessly straight-forward strategy of “pursue, capture and eliminate Senderistas” (del Pino 1993b:76). But the advance of the militias would falter in the second half of the decade. For reasons which have already been discussed in the previous chapter, mounting political tensions between the new president, Alan García, and his armed forces chiefs finally culminated in the military literally refusing to fight the guerrillas. Consequently, the counterinsurgency campaign faltered and then generally deteriorated into inactivity, or its sporadic and cautious, half-hearted actions on the part of the army. Having previously drawn much of their moral encouragement and military backing from the active presence of government troops in the region, it was only natural that civilian militias in the Apurímac Valley and the adjacent sierra districts of Tambo and San Miguel were quickly dismayed and demoralised by the military’s effective resignation from its leading role in the “war against terrorism.” That the military had already begun withdrawing to the sidelines in La Mar province since the beginning of 1987 is apparent in the considerable drop in the number of skirmishes between military patrols and guerrilla columns from the previous year (see Table 4.1). In contrast to the thirty-three armed clashes between soldiers and guerrillas recorded for La Mar in 1986, none was reported between May 1987 and May 1988.

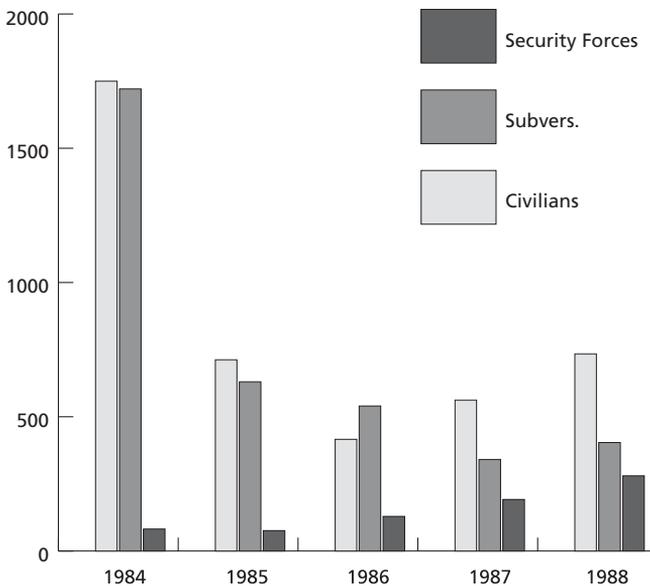
Table 4.1: Reported Instances of Armed Clashes between Military Patrols and Guerrilla Columns, La Mar Province (1984-1988)

Year	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Armed Clashes	12	9	33	14	12

Source: DESCO 1989:882-1076

Furthermore, the notably sharp drop in the number of rebel losses during the latter half of the 1980s, as compared to its highest point in 1984, was a further reflection of the relative idleness of the security forces, particularly over the period between 1986 and 1988 (see Diagram 4.1).

Diagram 4.1: Deaths Attributed to Political Violence, 1984-1988



Source: DESCO 1989:36-46

In previous years, soldiers frequently patrolled the valley alongside *ronderos*. Military officers in the Apurímac Valley even occasionally gave the *ronderos* of the area limited training in the use of modern weapons of war, such as hand grenades. They also regularly provided the *ronderos* with ammunition for their home-made guns (“*tirachas*”) and hunting shotguns, even though civilians were prohibited by law from wielding firearms without a licence.¹⁶ Hence the withdrawal of military support for the CDCs had near catastrophic consequences for the movement, for it cut the defence militias off from vital protection and munitions hitherto provided by the soldiers. “The number of assaults on the self-defence bases multiplied,” noted del Pino.

“The *ronderos* demanded that the soldiers come out to fight, to defend them....[Shining Path] butchered [the *ronderos*] in places and settlements right next to the military bases, and still, [the soldiers] did not come forth to fight” (1993b:83). According to the testimonies of *ronderos*, military officers in the valley even allowed themselves to be fêted by the guerrillas, who brought them gifts in return for freeing Senderistas captured by the CDCs.¹⁷

The decline of the civil defence movement was most evident among the settlements in the area north of Santa Rosa. These CDCs were among the last to be organised in the valley, and were therefore not as deeply established in their communities as their counterparts in the south. Shining Path was thus able to reinstate its presence in more than seventy villages, from the Samugari river to the town of Rosario (del Pino 1993b:85). The rebels killed any CDC authorities who refused to renounce their posts. In addition, they also began to infiltrate the militias in order to undermine them from within.¹⁸ The return of large numbers of *desplazados* to the highlands at the time may have contributed to the weakening of the defence movement among the valley’s northern settlements. Larger population centres, such as Santa Rosa, San Francisco, Pichari, Sivia, and Llochegua—the latter are all located along the river, north of Santa Rosa—had been important reception centres for war refugees from the highlands and the *ceja de selva* from 1984 onwards. When State repression subsided, and guerrilla activity temporarily waned as Shining Path fanned out to other parts of the country, the brief period of relative calm that descended on the Ayacucho sierra in 1985 prompted the first significant instances of refugee returns in the department. Given that their survival conditions were so dire, a significant number of the valley’s landless, destitute, and malnourished highland *desplazados* decided to return to their homes in the sierra, where they at least had their own land on which to grow food. It is therefore quite likely that the departure of these refugees from the valley’s northern settlements left many of the CDCs there undermined, and thus weakened in their capacity to perform vigilance and defence duties.

Faced with a resurgence of Shining Path forces in the valley, and given that Army units seemed to be holding back from taking any action against a renewed guerrilla offensive, many peasants understandably choose to give in to the rebels. Most settlements, especially north of Pichihuillca, were willing to forsake the CDCs and any other counterinsurgency activity if, in return, Sendero would let them be, would let them live.¹⁹ In the absence of countervailing military repression, numerous peasants came to accept this new *modus vivendi* with the guerrillas, precarious though it clearly was right from the start. Bereft of any assistance from the military, those inhabitants who chose to continue resisting Sendero Luminoso were forced on the defensive. Patrols were drastically reduced as *ronderos* opted to wait behind their fortified *bases civiles antissubversivas* for the terrifying guerrilla assaults, which inevitably came.

One of the most important moments in the history of Ayacucho’s *comités de defensa civil* unfolded on April 13, 1988. It had been raining heavily for three days and three nights. When the downpour finally ended, the rain clouds parted to reveal the faint light of a waning crescent moon suspended in a glittering mantle of stars. On the ground, forty heavily armed guerrilla fighters accompanied by over four hundred peasants drafted for the job from settlements throughout the valley, burst out sud-

denly from the darkness of the jungle to attack the CDC's principal base at Pichihuillca. Led by one Camarada Benjamin, leader of the Comité Popular "Sello de Oro, the assault was intended to break the back of the CDCs in the Apurímac River Valley once and for all (del Pino 1993b:85). They undoubtedly would have succeeded had it not been for the valiant and stubborn defence put up by a hundred outnumbered *ronderos*, armed with home-made firearms, a few antiquated hunting shotguns, and a small number of hand grenades that had earlier been left behind by a military patrol. Their indomitable leader was Antonio Cárdenas Torre, alias Comandante Harry (de Althaus and Morelli 1989:5). Upon hearing that Pichihuillca was under attack, hundreds of *ronderos* from the CDC base at Anchiuay rushed immediately to the aid of their comrades, accompanied by a platoon of Marine Infantry that coincidentally had bivouacked nearby. The sudden arrival of these reinforcements took the guerrillas and their peasant foot soldiers by surprise. In the terrible firefight that ensued, "blood flowed like water" (del Pino 1993b:85). Overpowered and outgunned, the Senderistas broke their attack and fled into the jungle, leaving behind their peasant conscripts and twelve guerrillas dead. But the *ronderos* and their Marine allies were not satisfied with victory on the battlefield. For the next fifteen days and nights they pursued and succeeded in nearly wiping out what was left of the guerrilla column. The successful defence of Pichihuillca marked a turning point in the struggle for the Apurímac River Valley. "From that occasion, the actions of the *rondas* gained importance and vigour once again. The victory in the confrontation with Sendero permitted them to revitalise themselves and to initiate the counteroffensive; inaugurating a new stage in the history of the war and in the development of the *Comités de Autodefensa*" (del Pino 1993b:86).

4.7 Comandante Huayhuaco

After repulsing the guerrilla attack on Pichihuillca, the counterattack immediately launched by the combined force of militiamen and soldiers gained momentum and eventually managed to recover twenty-seven other hamlets from the clutches of Shining Path. Among the masses of people "liberated" was one Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, the man who would later perhaps become the most influential and controversial militia leader to emerge in the history of the civil defence movement.

It was with the help of the chief editor of the daily newspaper *Expreso* that I was able to arrange an interview in central Lima with Rivera Terres, more popularly known by his alias of Comandante Huayhuaco, in December 1997. My middle-class Limeño friends expressed their deep concern that I was about to come face to face with a man generally depicted in most newspapers as a notorious drug trafficker, and an authoritarian violator of human rights. Whatever his views on the advantages of "dirty war" tactics—and he certainly was not ashamed to expound for me his views on the subject—I found the 51-year-old Rivera Terres to be polite, personable, and calm. He was taller than most indigenous Peruvians, yet his facial features unmistakably reflected his Andean ancestry. He lacked the robust, barrel-chested physique typical of highland peasant accustomed to labour, and he had mournful eyes. But he possessed the clear and commanding voice of one used to giving orders. It occasionally

faltered with what seemed to me to be sincere emotion when we broached sensitive topics, like his imprisonment in the early 1990s and the fate of the many widows and orphans of *ronderos* who had been killed in action. When I asked him to show me the pistol that former president Alan García had given him, I was surprised that he still carried it. That pistol almost landed him back in prison for the illegal possession of a firearm in 1993. But he continues to carry it on his person wherever he goes, with nostalgic pride—though now he has a valid license for it. He lives in constant fear of assassination by Senderistas or drug traffickers. Though once fêted by a Peruvian president, Rivera Terres has also made some powerful enemies over the years. After finishing the interview, he kindly offered to accompany us to a taxi, his pistol tucked into his belt, mindful of the fact that in the reputedly seedy neighbourhood where we now found ourselves after dark, my conspicuously *gringa* partner might attract unwelcome attention.

Rivera Terres was born in the small rural hamlet of Huayao, Tambo district. He spent his youth between the sierra and the *selva*, for his peasant parents owned small plots of land in both Huayao and in a hamlet called Marintari, in the Apurímac River Valley. Unlike many rural inhabitants of his generation, Rivera Terres gained a level of education that eventually led to a career as a primary school teacher. He has taught at various schools in the Apurímac Valley, in the communities of Rinconada Baja, Manitea, Piriato, and Simariba. Later in life, he also began to work as a dental technician, though possibly an unlicensed one.

Rivera Terres himself has offered at least two differing accounts of how he became the operational commander of all the militias in the valley, second in command to Antonio Cárdenas. In one version, he claims that after the events of Pichihuillca, Antonio Cárdenas visited the newly liberated hamlets in the vicinity, and reproached their inhabitants for having collaborated with Shining Path. Cárdenas then invited them all to join Pichihuillca in fighting against Sendero by organising civil defence. “We rose up against Sendero on 15 May 1988,” Rivera Terres told me.

I started off just as a simple foot soldier. It is true that at that time others were leading [the CDC] organisation. There was Antonio Cárdenas. It was General Jorge Sánchez Manrique, Chief of the Political-Military Command, who designated [Cárdenas] supreme leader of civil defence in the Apurímac River Valley. Next there was Comando Susy, Delio Gavilán, Chomba, and many others. These were among the principal figures. Unfortunately, these *compañeros* did not have much education. They did not have preparation of any type. They had studied up to the first grade, and though they had the best intentions, could not go further. And after initiating actions against Sendero Luminoso, it was on the battlefield itself, during an operation in the area known as Sello de Oro, that these leaders came together and said, ‘Fine, here is a person who can lead us. He knows more than we do, and so he could be our leader, our “guide.”’ They decided this amongst themselves, and then they called me and nominated me as general coordinator of antisubversive actions in the Apurímac River Valley. And as president there was, then, Antonio Cárdenas.²⁰

At other times, particularly after having bitterly fallen out with other militia leaders like Antonio Cárdenas and Jorge Choque, he claims to have ended up as a militia leader through an entirely spontaneous and independent way. In 1996, for instance, he told the newspaper *El Sol* that he had first decided to oppose Shining Path after finding out that they intended to conscript him, along with other men from the hamlet of Rinconada Baja. In the meantime, he secretly met with a small group of young local men, all of whom had also been marked out for recruitment and therefore trying to come up with a plan to organise the local population against Sendero. “We only need a person who can direct us and we think that you are such a person, professor,” they purportedly told him (quoted in Alvarado 1996:9A). According to Rivera Terres, they then pooled together some money, which he claims to have taken to Lima and used to buy shotguns and pistols from clandestine weapon stores in the Surquillo district, and along Jirón de la Unión (*ibid.*). Hiding these firearms in large cushions, he furtively transported them back to Ayacucho by Ormeño coach.²¹ He claims that with these weapons, he and the other conspirators began their counter-rebellion. “The first combat was on 15 May 1988, precisely when [the Senderistas] were due to arrive in his community to take away the new recruits” (*ibid.*). The figure of Antonio Cárdenas is conspicuously absent in this version of the story.

Rivera Terres is not a *licenciado*; that is to say, he has never done military service. He told me that he acquire most of his knowledge regarding the use of firearms and military tactics while at secondary school and enrolled in a training course known as “Pre-Military Instruction” (IPM).

During IPM I demonstrated my capacity. I won shooting competitions using the Mauser rifle. I was a champion. And, well, I learned about ambushes, some tactics, the handling of firearms. So, when they elected me maximum leader of the rondas of the Apurímac Valley, I selected the best of the ex-soldiers [*licenciados*], with whom I shared this sort of military knowledge, and similar beliefs about how to fight the terrorists. Gradually, through the practical experience of battle, I learned how to handle all existing manner of firearms.²²

Del Pino, however, suggests that like a number of other *ronda* leaders, Rivera Terres was, in fact, a “*terruco arrepentido*” (a repentant terrorist) who had once held an official post within Shining Path (1996:149, fn.27, also 1998:169). This might explain Rivera Terres’s intimate knowledge of Shining Path’s guerrilla tactics and organisational structure. If this is true, then he had to have been a Shining Path member before 1983, or (perhaps again) in 1987. The reason is that Rivera Terres was caught in possession of one-and-a-half kilos of cocaine paste on 7 February 1983 (*La República* 1990:13). He languished in police custody for two years, another victim of the notoriously sluggish Peruvian legal system, before being convicted and sentenced to ten years imprisonment at San Pedro de Lurigancho prison, on 20 December 1985. (It is quite possible that he came in contact with Senderista inmates at Lurigancho and, if he was not already a prior member, recruited and given political education and instruction on guerrilla warfare while still in prison. It is a well known fact that imprisoned Shining Path members often tried to recruit other prisoners.) He was

released on 14 March 1986, however, on condition that he pay by instalments an exorbitant fine of two million soles while serving the remainder of his sentence at a halfway house in Lima for former inmates (El Nacional 1990:16-17). Rivera Terres broke his parole in 1987 and made his way back to the Apurímac River Valley, where he apparently resumed work as a dental technician before bursting on the scene as Comandante Huayhuaco in 1988. He acknowledges having treated Senderistas for dental problems, and openly admits that prior to his joining the civil defence movement in May 1988, he had “*compañeros senderistas*” as clients in Rinconada Baja. But he flatly denies ever having taken part in Senderista politics, insisting that “during my conversations with [my Senderista patients], I went along with what they said so as not to make any problems for myself” (quoted in Alvarado 1996:9A).

Whatever the truth of how Rivera Terres came to join the civil defence movement, or his past relations with Shining Path, what is certain is that soon after joining, he rapidly rose to a position of senior leadership within the organisation. By December 1989, Rivera Terres had even managed to win the support and sympathy of President Alan García himself. The name of Comandante Huayhuaco had first reached the ears of President García after the *Expreso*, a Lima newspaper, published an interview in which Rivera Terres boldly declared “*Denme 500 fusiles y libero Ayacucho en un año*”—“Give me 500 rifles and I will liberate Ayacucho in one year” (see de Althaus and Morelli 1989:5-6). The article made Huayhuaco both a national celebrity and a target for hostile, scathing criticism. His expressed approval for the earlier heavy-handed counterinsurgency approach of Belaúnde and General Noel appalled the sensitivities of many Peruvians, leaving them with the repugnant impression that the man was nothing more than a brazen promoter of “dirty war.”²³ Yet the news that dozens (and eventually over a hundred) of villages throughout the Apurímac Valley were joining together under the leadership of men such as Huayhuaco, forming DECAS and forging a truly regional defence network, greatly impressed García—a president whose term in office was marked by a general failure on the counterinsurgency front. In his final months in power, García took it upon himself to support this form of popular resistance to Shining Path in whatever way he could.

4.7.1 HUAYHAUCO’S STRATEGY AND TACTICAL INNOVATIONS

We have already seen from the discussion thus far that the existence of a certain degree of mutual assistance between CDCs in the Apurímac River Valley already existed prior to 1989. Even so, it was during the leadership of Comandante Huayhuaco, however, that the CDCs achieved a regional level of coordination under one central command (Sede Central), with headquarters located at Pichihuillca. From that moment on, the goal of civil defence in the valley would no longer just be the protection one’s own village, but the security of an entire region. In addition, the CDCs would come to assume a new name: *Defensa Civil Antisubversiva*—the DECAS.

The defeat of Shining Path at Pichihuillca marked a watershed in the history of the civil defence movement in this region. What now unfolded was the so-called “reorganisation” of the entire Apurímac River Valley by the DECAS. This reorganisation advanced steadily northwards along the valley, and had the backing of the Marine Infantry. In the district of Santa Rosa the DECAS were quickly able to reor-

ganise the rural villages and hamlets. But they met stiff resistance from the CDC president of the town itself, who stubbornly refused to affiliate his organisation with the DECAS. According to Roberto Córdova, what then happened was that DECAS intelligence agents went to the commander of the Marine Infantry garrison at Santa Rosa and informed him that this president was secretly conniving with Shining Path. It was because of this that he refused to participate in the general reorganisation of the valley—or so they claimed.²⁴ According to Córdova's sources, this denunciation subsequently led to this CDC president being disappeared. According to witnesses, the man was paid a visit one night by a small group of Marines, who proceeded to drag him out of his house. They stuffed him into an empty oil drum, and although there was some commotion, few of the neighbours came to see what was going on. By now the people were used to assassinations and disappearances, and were wise enough not to intervene. The few onlookers were told by the soldiers to shut their doors and windows, and to forget what they had just seen. The drum was then loaded on the back of a pickup truck and taken by the soldiers to Rinconada Baja, "*tierra de Huayhuaco*" (Huayhuaco's territory), as the village had come to be popularly known. The man was never seen again. The kidnapping and disappearance of this CDC president opened the way for Antonio Cárdenas and Huayhuaco to enter Santa Rosa, and to reorganise its militia. From there, the DECAS expanded north to San Francisco, and then on to Sivia. Though most communities voluntarily chose to reorganise their militias, those which refused were coerced into compliance. Once again, neutrality was not permitted. The militiamen were prepared to do what it took, no matter how dirty and underhanded, to get the job done; and they justified their actions as the unfortunate yet necessary and inevitable costs of eradicating "terrorism." As Comando Zorro, the militia leader of Tambo district once admitted to me, "So that a zone will organise itself, one must always use a little force; in order to get information [out of someone], we have to use a little bit of force. In such cases, perhaps, we have probably committed some abuses. But not much, not much."²⁵

The expansion of the DECAS north of Santa Rosa proceeded under Huayhuaco's direction. In his capacity as its very first operational commander, he was to have a profound influence on the development of DECAS strategy and tactics during the organisation's formative period. In contrast to the predominantly defensive posture of the earlier CDCs, under Huayhuaco's guidance the DECAS initiated a relentless strategic offensive. As he saw it, "the constant and immediate persecution, day and night, of Sendero so as to neutralise its actions until the very end is the only way to overcome the subversion."²⁶ Huayhuaco's early operations employed hundreds of *ronderos*, mobilised from dozens of communities and deployed en masse to comb the valley in search of guerrillas, infiltrators, and collaborators. But he eventually came to recognise that this strategy of "persecution," utilising massive numbers of *ronderos*, was far from efficient. Years later, Rivera Terres admitted to me the folly of his early tactics, and explained how he eventually changed them:

At first I was mistaken with the tactics I employed. I began by throwing into battle huge quantities of men, in suicide fashion. I lacked experience then. I used to assemble 2,700 to 3,000 men, many of whom often lacked training. Sometimes there were mishaps with

firearms, and some of my own *ronderos* were killed by the accidental discharge of their comrade's weapon. I therefore said to myself, 'this strategy of persecution isn't working.' So instead I began to make a careful selection of individuals, as they do in the special forces. I selected 400 men instead of 3,000, of which I placed 200 on active duty and the rest in reserve. I constantly trained these 200 on active duty, and they were never left idle. I would deploy them as a group under the cover of darkness, and positioned them in places where Sendero routinely passed. In this way we dispensed with the need to hunt them down in the mountains. Instead we just waited to ambush them in their haunts, which gave us a greater chance of liquidate them completely. And laying in ambush we often remained for four, five, up to eight days, with nothing but cold rations. All that was required was for the terrorists to present themselves, and we'd cut them down. It was war, really war.²⁷

It was the *Expreso* that was largely responsible for turning Comandante Huayhuaco into a national celebrity, depicting him as a humble yet battle-savvy strategist, the leader of hundreds of valiant *campesinos* fighting and dying to cast off the yoke of Senderista oppression in defence of democracy. President García himself would come to describe the counter-rebellion of the peasant militias as "*insurrección democrática*"—democratic insurrection. Rivera Terres's brief fame, particularly among the popular classes, encouraged *Expreso* to publish a prolific stream of articles, editorials, and personal interviews through which he was given the chance to air his own counterinsurgency blueprint.

Huayhuaco's strategic objectives were twofold: first, the conquest of the so-called "liberated guerrilla zone" of Sello de Oro, in the province of La Mar; second, the eradication of Shining Path in the entire department of Ayacucho.

His idea for conquering the Sello de Oro called for the formation of an elite militia unit, and the creation of a "mobile militia base" that would advance as militia forces pushed forward, thereby providing required security in the middle of a hostile territory for both the *ronderos* and for peasants returning to areas liberated by the DECAS. He envisaged this elite militia unit as being made up of all the *licenciados* in the sixty-two or more organised communities in the valley. The group, according to Huayhuaco, would be at Luisiana, where it could coordinate its operations with the Marine Infantry headquarters stationed there, in addition to receiving military training and logistical support.

He intended this elite militia unit to spearhead the "liberation" of the Sello de Oro. But for it to become the effective military force that Huayhuaco imagined, he argued that its members required "*armamentos de largo alcance*" (high-powered rifles) for use during field operations. To this end, Rivera Terres would spend a considerable amount of time appealing to the government to distribute firearms—namely Mauser rifles—to the militias. The weakness of the *ronderos*, said Rivera Terres, lay not in their bravery but in their weaponry. Armed at the time mainly with hunting shotguns and home-made single-shot firearms, the DECAS had little choice but to develop close-combat tactics which placed the *ronderos* at great risk, and often result-

ed in heavy casualties. This was one important reason why *ronderos* preferred to be accompanied on their military operations by a platoon of Marines. Their serious disadvantage in weaponry also explains why the early DECAS operations needed to mobilise as many as 3,000 men. Such huge concentrations of *ronderos* would be divided into separate task groups, each of which was then deployed to pre-determined locations. When contact with the enemy was made, the *ronderos* resorted to the daredevil tactic of first pinning down their adversaries, and then provoking them to shoot at them so to use up their ammunition. "We didn't approach them but rather encircled them," Huayhuaco explained (quoted in de Althaus and Morelli 1989:6). It was only when the enemy appeared to have expended their ammunition that the *ronderos* moved in to finish them off with their .16-calibre hunting shotguns, which were reasonably effective weapons in combat at very close-quarters.

Were the DECAS to receive the high-powered rifles he requested, it was Huayhuaco's intention that they be placed under the strict control of the Marine Infantry commander at Luisiana. "In no way are we seeking that they give us arms to be freely used as we please," he told *Expreso*. "What we want is that a military base, in this case the Marine Infantry, [be put in charge of issuing] the arms we need when carrying out operations. Nothing more. Our arms would be issued to us and at the end of the operation the arms would be returned. Moreover, we don't want to operate alone, but with them" (quoted in *Expreso* 1989a:3). Huayhuaco argued that apart its military advantages, creating an elite unit of militiamen armed with high-powered rifles would permit him to do away with having to mobilise huge numbers of men for field operations. The rest could then go back to focusing on agricultural work, which is their main source of livelihood. "By having firearms we wouldn't need to mobilise 3,000 men but a smaller quantity of people instead...In that way, we would be able to save because mobilising 3,000 men for 8 days costs a lot of money and economically we in the zone are almost worn out" (quoted in *Expreso* 1989a:3). An improvement in the socioeconomic condition of the population would, by implication, also help to enlarge the DECAS's war chest, for much of the money and the provisions which sustained the DECAS came from monthly donations given by every family in every organised settlement in the valley.

As a matter of routine practice, Huayhuaco prescribed the rooting out of Shining Path's clandestine cadres from every "occupied" village as the first step the DECAS should take whenever entering a guerrilla zone (de Althaus and Morelli 1989:6). These cadres were responsible for informing Shining Path's "special detachments" who among the locals collaborated with the security forces, and therefore deserved to be executed. These "occult" cadres were integrated members of the community, and therefore difficult to spot. Huayhuaco's method for uncovering these moles was to send his own peasant operatives to infiltrate a community. "We are able to infiltrate, we are native to the environment. Each time we capture a *terruco*, we interrogate him. They tell us who are the *responsables* [Senderista authorities] in each community. The Marines are sometimes not able to interrogate because they don't speak Quechua" (quoted in *Expreso* 1989b:4). Within the DECAS organisation, Huayhuaco pioneered the use of secret operatives, and was responsible for creating the organisation's very own intelligence branch. "The way to break down Shining Path's organisational structure is not only with force, but through careful intelligence work," he told me.²⁸

Huayhuaco maintained that the eradication of Shining Path in Ayacucho could only be achieved through a concerted effort made by both the military and the civil defence organisations, working in close cooperation and coordination. He therefore called for the creation of “*cuerpos especiales*” (special corps) composed this time of both military and militia personnel, inconspicuously dressed in peasant clothes, whose tasks would be to reorganise districts throughout the entire department of Ayacucho along the lines of the DECAS, and to provide leadership and training to all other civil defence militias in the department. The operational methods of such groups, as defined by Huayhuaco, were to include the following attributes:

- (1) They should not have fixed or stable barracks. Theirs must be mobile bases, (2) Their deployment must be by foot and, generally, at night and by different routes, (3) The security forces integrated in this group or force should, preferably, be persons born in the region where they are operating and should know how to express themselves in Quechua, Aymara, etc., (4) In the intelligence work, carefully chosen peasants of both sexes and of different ages have got to take part, (5) The advance must be gradual, starting from a steering antisubversive centre functioning in each district (Huayhuaco 1991:23).

Huayhuaco’s calls for greater and more active civilian participation in the counterinsurgency struggle, and for the forging of closer working relations between peasant militias and security forces, was aimed not only at making counterinsurgency more effective. He also believed that closer cooperation between civilians and the military was the only way to foster greater trust between them, and so reduce the chances of peasants falling victim to State repression as a result of misunderstandings and misperceptions. He was well aware at the time that most government troops in Ayacucho still had little rapport with the local people. “A cordial and intimate interrelation between soldiers and Andean peasants does not exist,” he once wrote in an *Expreso* editorial. “Sometimes, the peasants are not well treated and there is a popular idea that the peasants of the emergency zones are terrorists” (Huayhuaco 1991:23). It was for these reasons that he maintained that “the alliance of civilians and soldiers would enable pacification to be achieved with a minimum costs of lives, would preclude excesses and, in the short and medium term, would attain the yearned-for peace” (ibid.). Opposed to the civil defence militias being relegated to the sidelines of the counterinsurgency struggle, Rivera Terres sought to have them firmly placed at the very centre of it (see *Expreso* 1989b, 1989c).

4.7.2 OPERATION HALCÓN: THE INITIAL EXPEDITION TO THE SIERRA

According to Huayhuaco’s strategic plan, the logical extension of the reconquest of the Apurímac Valley was DECAS expansion into the Ayacuchan sierra. This began on the evening of 9 August 1989, when a group of 203 well-armed DECAS militiamen set off from the jungle town of Santa Rosa. Code-named Operation Halcón, the prime objective of this important military operation was “to reorganise in a peaceful and democratic manner the different villages of the district of Tambo and San Miguel which according to our secret [intelligence] service are dominated and terrorised by

the criminals of Sendero Luminoso.”²⁹ Pretext aside, Operation Halcón was also intended by Huayhuaco to gain an important foothold in the districts of San Miguel and Tambo, from which the DECAS could expand their unique organisational system and counterinsurgency strategy throughout the rest of the department.

The evidence shows that this initial foray of the DECAS beyond the borders of the Apurímac River Valley was not entirely opportunistic, but rather was an action that in fact had been requested by a number of highland communities. By mid-1989 the DECAS had already made a reputation for themselves throughout Ayacucho and the south-central highlands as an effective civilian counterinsurgency organisation. It was therefore not surprisingly that they began to receive urgent appeals for assistance and protection from districts as far away as Vinchos, in Huamanga Province:

SEÑOR COORDINADOR DE BASE DE DEFENZA [sic.] CIVIL DE RINCONADA BAJA DE RIO APURIMAC [Comandante Huayhuaco].

The undersigned authorities of the communities that constitute the Headquarters of the Uprising Against Terrorism of Qasanqay, Vinchos District—Humanga Province, Department of Ayacucho. Before you with due respect we present ourselves....;

Firstly. – The undersigned communities: Qasanqay, Ranracancha, Accomachay, Qasacruz, Huayllapampa, Qanqayllo, [etc.]..., we turn to your respectable office to solicit on behalf of the jurisdiction of the District of Vinchos, that you visit our organised communities, to carry out, [with] the assistance of the [militia] personnel of Rinconada Baja, the furtherance of the development of the [civil defence] organisation in the Struggle against Terrorism....

Thirdly. – The aforementioned communities are to be found very well organised in Civil Defence Committee permanently [engaged] in nightly and daily Peasant Patrols and we are determined to combat against these evil Subversive elements, but in moments when we are attacked the Members of the Civil Defence Committee find ourselves at a disadvantage counting only on our own arms such as slings, poles, stones and other simple arms [*“armas rústicas”*] up against the arms wielded by these [subversive] elements, and it is for this reason that we require your personal assistance....

ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH HAS BEEN PRESENTED:

We ask you, Mr. Coordinator of Civil Defence [i.e. Huayhuaco], to accept our petition which we hope will be promptly realised for the sake of the tranquility of the nation—and our native land that is Peru.

Vinchos, 31 July 1989.³⁰

Cramped into nine vehicles, the *ronderos* travelled along the Tambo-San Francisco highway throughout the night until they reached the rural village of Patibamba, San Miguel district, high in the Ayacuchan sierra. The group then divided into four companies designated “*Pantera*,” “*Zorro*,” “*Tigre*,” and “*Puma*.” Three of these pressed on to the neighbouring district of Tambo, where they positioned themselves in the villages of Challhuamayo, Acco, and Millpo. From these dispersed locations, the militiamen

proceeded on 11 August to create or to reorganise civil defence committees in all the other communities in the district. This arduous task was completed two days later and was celebrated with a patriotic civic parade at Patibamba, which was attended by virtually the entire adult population of San Miguel and Tambo Districts. Among the honoured guests were the political-military commander of La Mar Province, the province's civilian sub-prefect, the civil defence president of Sede Central-Patibamba, and the new militia authorities of forty-three communities. Four days later a general assembly was convened at Patibamba, and a pact was signed between all the local civil defence authorities and the DECAS commanders which contained three key provisions:

- (1) "That the Sede Central of Patibamba may coordinate its actions with the Sede Central of the Apurímac River Valley, at Pichihuillca,"
- (2) "The general reorganisation of the various civil defence bases in the districts of Tambo and San Miguel, under the Control and verification of the Sede Central of Patibamba,"
- (3) "The Authorities and all the Presidents of the local civil defence committees of Tambo and San Miguel solicit the *Sede Principal* [Principal Headquarters—Pichihuillca] of the Apurímac River Valley for assistance by way of breech-loading firearms and .16-calibre ammunition, likewise...that all actions of a countersubversive character be realised with the knowledge of the political-military commander of the corresponding area."³¹

After their work in Tambo and San Miguel was done, the four DECAS companies began the next stage of the expedition—Operation Rastrillo—on 16 August. Operation Rastrillo was a five-day long combat mission that required the DECAS companies to make their way back to the Apurímac Valley, on foot, through the dreaded guerrilla zone known as Sello de Oro. The main objectives were to kill or capture any rebels they came in contact with along the way.

Later that evening, as the forty militiamen of Comando Vikingo's company were preparing to bed down for the night in the village of Suca, they were suddenly startled by the excited cries of a comunero that the village was being surrounded by six armed subversives. While some of the militiamen manned the fortified towers and sentry posts, others began a frantic hunt through the undergrowth along the perimeter of the village. As a kind of defensive posturing, the *ronderos* began to shoot indiscriminately into the air in an attempt to frighten away their would-be attackers by making it known that they were armed. Everyone eventually realised that it had been a false alarm. But as the shooting died down, *comuneros* and *ronderos* alike were horrified to discover casualties. In the midst of all the shooting, one villager had been hit in the right forearm, and an eight-month-old child had been killed by a stray bullet to its head. The local political-military commander was immediately notified and the following day Comando Vikingo and his entire group were disarmed and apprehended by a detachment of Army soldiers. They were held in custody at the Army base in San Miguel while the case was investigated by both the base commander and the civilian sub-prefect of La Mar Province. After about six hours, the *ronderos* were eventually released and permitted to resume their operation, thanks largely to the vil-

lage authorities of Suca, who testified that the death of the child had been accidentally caused. However, a number of employees at San Miguel hospital would not let the issue rest, condemning the killing and demanding that a more thorough investigation be conducted with some sort of punishment for those guilty—namely, the DECAS militiamen. Comando Vikingo avoided further problems that day by hustling his men as quickly as possible out of San Miguel.

While the four DECAS companies made their way back to the valley, another contingent of eighty-nine militiamen set out from Sede Central-Pichihuillca on 17 August. The objective of this group was to rendezvous with their returning comrades at the village of Verde Verde, situated on the border of the *ceja de selva*, and escort them safely back to the *selva*. It was a dangerous assignment, as Comando Cacharro, the leader of the detachment, explained in his post-operations report to the Marine Infantry commander at Luisiana, since the zone between Verde Verde and the *selva* was regarded as rebel territory

populated entirely by senderista elements where in addition they have plantations and considerable stretches of...[crops], and in order to enter this hazardous zone one has to [engage the enemy] in places where previously they have caused us many losses, where the senderistas are always accustomed to using high-powered firearms, no-one of the Civil Defence Patrol dared enter with just breech-loading shot-guns, on account of which I requested that I be lent the two Fales [FAL automatic assault rifles] recovered in the Canaire sector..., a petition [in response] to which the authorities of the *Sede Central de Defensa Civil* agreed to lend me [the FALs] for the aforesaid operation.³²

As planned, the DECAS companies met up at Verde Verde on 19 August. Comando Vikingo's men were all exhausted, and many were also very ill. It was clear they were in no condition to carry on with the operation. Hence, to Comando Cacharro's escort detachment passed the unenviable task of patrolling the extremely dangerous areas of Carcel Huaycco, Uchuyyunca and Celes Huerta. Unfortunately for them, their guide proved to be unfamiliar with the area, and they soon lost their way. At one point, after having marched for hours, the Cacharro's group discovered to their horror that the guide had inadvertently led them down a narrow, dead-end valley. Fearfully aware that they were vulnerable to ambush, the *ronderos* retreated as fast as they could back up the way they came. Heavy clouds and fog on the surrounding mountains disoriented them, and it was not until 21 August that they finally stumbled across the dirt road leading to the *selva* town of Machente, and on to San Francisco. But their ordeal did not end there, as Comando Cacharro explained in his report.

[At] the place known as Ayna we were intercepted by the Army Patrol of Machente [which] confiscated the two firearms [the "Fales," FALs] referred to previously, along with .22-calibre and .38-calibre revolvers, hand grenades, wristwatches, shoes and cash[.... We] were also submitted to inhumane punishments that even captured senderistas themselves don't deserve, on the same day at approximately four

o'clock in the afternoon they freed the entire Patrol [which arrived] at San Francisco barefoot and some even without clothes as a consequence of the intervention of the Army of Machente.³³

Given the various ordeals they went through, the militiamen who took part in Operation Rastrillo must have felt a sense of great relief each time they passed through DECAS checkpoints on the outskirts of villages like San José, Asunción, and Ciole Puncu, for these reminded them that they were once again in friendly territory. "On 21 August we arrived at Marintari...[and] reincorporated ourselves later into our bases of origin."³⁴

In the entire operation, it was only Comando Tatún's company that ran into rebels. At a pass called Puncu, Comando Tatún's patrol skirmished briefly with an armed column of around thirty guerrilla fighters. They suffered no casualties and even managed to capture a woman guerrilla, alias Camarada Alina, whom they retained in their immediate custody for interrogation. We are not told what eventually became of her. But we do know that it was, by this time, already a customary practice for the DECAS to "rehabilitate" and eventually give amnesty to repentant Senderistas, rather than turning them over to the police or the army. This innovative and alternative method of dealing with captured rebels arose out of the frustration militiamen felt at having seen many of the presumed Senderistas they had captured and handed over to the authorities released a short time later by the courts, supposedly for "lack of evidence," only to rejoin their guerrilla comrades to fight the *ronderos* again another day. "We captured them right in the thick of battle, after they had been shooting at us!" Rivera Terres told me, choking slightly with indignation. "How can the judges therefore say there was no proof?"

Ronderos, policemen, and soldiers alike had long shared the opinion that the real reason why judges routinely absolved suspected Senderistas was fear of reprisals.³⁵ Along with the security forces, the *ronderos* also maintained that it was not always possible to fight subversion within the existing law, particularly when the justice system in Peru had routinely proven itself to be so incapable of effectively handling cases of terrorism.³⁶ It is in the light of these problems and concerns that we may view the DECAS practice of "rehabilitation" and "repentance" as an original and inventive response to a legal system that they perceived was failing to protect the personal safety and interests of peasants. Hence, whereas in their frustration soldiers have been known to summarily execute "presumed terrorists" rather than submit them to the courts (which they believed would probably free them anyway), an alternative method followed by the DECAS was to place these so-called "*arrepentidos*" (repentant rebels) under strict observation and constant supervision until such time as it was deemed that their repentance was sincere. Like ritualistic tests for new religious converts, the *arrepentidos* were given opportunities to prove their loyalty and sincerity, mainly by participating in patrols and military operations. "Of course we would always put them on point duty in all the operations," said Rivera Terres (quoted in *Expreso* 1989b:4). Indeed, guerrillas captured in battle were generally considered by the militiamen to be more valuable alive than dead, for it was from the *arrepentidos* that the DECAS obtained much of their intelligence information concerning the strength and movement of guerrilla forces, and, most importantly, the identity of the

clandestine *responsables* in each of the rural communities.

Written by the actual field commanders of Operations Halcón and Rastrillo, and previously kept as restricted documents in the archives of the Sede Central at Pichihuillca, the post-operation reports from which the narrative above has been reconstructed provide us not only with a valuable, detailed description of how the DECAS' *Comandos Especiales* operated and armed themselves, but also a unique insight into the dynamic configurational interactions between various local actors.³⁷

Aside from the information they contain, however, the very existence of the written documents is in itself revealing. Few outsiders would have expected to find these peasant patrollers engaged in record keeping as they are so often depicted as illiterate yokels. American anthropologist Orin Starn received a similar surprise while researching the *rondas campesinas* of Peru's northern Andes when he discovered that they exhibited the same obsession with formal paperwork as did the town-based government bureaucrats. "Nothing I had read said much about writing having a place in village life," he admitted (1999:125). "These were supposed to be oral, even preliterate cultures" (*ibid.*). In the case of the DECAS, nothing could be further from the truth. Imitating official jargon and formalism in writing, these documents, complete with personal seals and elegant signatures, underscore the deep importance DECAS leaders ascribed to observing formality, particularly in their official correspondence with military authorities. Obviously, one reason for adopting the procedures and protocols of the official system was so as to be taken seriously, for the seal and signature constituted the symbolic vestiges of legitimate authority. The writing of memos and reports, aside from the obvious practical purposes of imparting information regarding activities and events, also served as a kind of insurance that not only proved that one's activities had prior authorisation from higher powers, but also to ensure the cooperation and compliance of intermediate authorities. For instance, prior to initiating Operation Halcón, Antonio Cárdenas and Huayhuaco wrote a memorandum to the political-military commander of La Mar Province, a Lieutenant-Coronel in charge of the Army battalion garrisoned at the provincial capital San Miguel, detailing the objectives and logistical details of the intended operation. It also explicitly states that the DECAS personnel taking part in the operation would be "armed" (with firearms). Mindful of the hostile attitude of local and provincial Army commanders towards the DECAS, however, Cárdenas and Huayhuaco were careful to mention that the operation had already been authorised by none other than the chief of political-military command of the emergency zone himself, Brigadier-General Howard Rodríguez Malaga.³⁸

But even after having secured prior authorisation, DECAS operations evidently still had to contend not only with guerrillas, but also, on occasion, with hostile Army patrols. The ill-treatment of Comando Cacharro's men at the hands of the Army patrol of Machente was particularly shocking. Apparently, the soldiers were not satisfied with simply robbing and physically abusing the militiamen; they were clearly also intent on humiliating them, perhaps in order to put them back in their place, especially after Huayhuaco's audacious announcements to the national press that the DECAS were itching to become the "*centro piloto*" of the counterinsurgency struggle (*Expreso* 1989c). Ironically enough, whereas Army soldiers at the time routinely displayed antagonistic

behaviour towards the DECAS, on the other hand, Marine Infantry detachments in the valley showed them a genuinely sympathetic attitude. In fact, by 1990, the Marines had already managed to forge an exceptionally supportive and cooperative working relationship with the DECAS. In contrast, most of the civilian population of the valley were already convinced that the Army had effectively abandoned the counterinsurgency struggle. DECAS units, on the other hand, regularly patrolled and conducted operations alongside Marine Infantry platoons. It was also with the full knowledge and consent of the Marines that the DECAS continued to utilise modern military hardware, such as automatic assault rifles, mines, and grenades. Why the Marine Infantry in the Apurímac River Valley chose to support the DECAS, while the Army seemed bent on opposing them, may have boiled down to a difference in the political objectives and attitudes of these two rival branches of the armed forces. After all, it was not the Navy that had been humiliated in the political aftermath of the Accomarca and Pucayacu massacres, committed by the Army. Furthermore, given that General Howard Rodríguez evidently disliked the militias, it is hardly surprising that his Army field commanders would faithfully follow their leader's example. What is also likely was that the Marine Infantry, being a more professional and less rigidly class-divided institution, was, in contrast to the Army, less preoccupied with protecting symbolic trappings and prerogatives—such as the monopoly of the use of arms—and more concerned with the practical matter of encouraging and actively assisting a general civilian insurrection against Shining Path.

Yet one also cannot but notice that the activities of Operation Halcón were pregnant with political symbolism. The general *desfile* performed at the end of it was meant to underscore the patriotic, and therefore morally just, nature of the undertaking. And the attendance of various military and civil authorities confirmed the legitimacy of the entire venture. The pact signed by the Sede Central of Patibamba and the Sede Central was intended not only to specify mutual goals and obligations; it also served to formalise and legitimise DECAS expansion into San Miguel and Tambo. Having carefully constructed the symbolic aura of legitimacy and popular endorsement behind its actions, the DECAS were then in a position to denounce any opposition it ran into as “unpatriotic,” or even downright “subversive.” Returning briefly to the case of the denunciations made against the militiamen by hospital staff in San Miguel, Comando Vikingo's special report to the Marine Infantry commander at Luisiana (SCDECAS 1998f) dismisses these complaints as having been generated by persons of “subversive” character with “subversive” relations, whose only purpose for making a fuss was to create unnecessary trouble for the DECAS:

....Although the relatives of the aggrieved girl and of the wounded man did not seek sanctions against those responsible for the act, because they understood that it had been a regrettable and unintentional act, there arose from the bosom of the Ministry of Health, from the Hospital at San Miguel, the family [of] GAVILAN PEREZ who comes to be the first cousin of Camarada “BETO” called LUIS ALBERTO PEREZ, son of the Epiphanic PEREZ BENDEZU who owns a commercial establishment in the *Plaza de armas* of San Miguel, who in turn visits his parents as though he were a conscientious and honest citizen thus mocking the authorities of San Miguel who do not suspect that he is

a delinquent subversive that to date has caused many deaths and at present holds the post of Leader (Military Commander) of the [Shining Path's] 91st Company in the Sector or Zone of Santo Domingo and Quiteni (Ene River Valley).

As I have stated previously *Sr. Comandante*, this demonstrates that the tentacles of the subversion are infiltrating the different sectors of the State y from there they defend, shelter the senderistas and in many cases fulfilling or functioning as ideologues.

This is all I am able to report you Mr. Commander.

COMANDO "VIKINGO" OF OPERATION HALCON"

"Silencing has been a modality of power in Peru as far back as Spanish rule," writes Orin Starn (1999:130). This example neatly illustrates how, under conditions of martial law and in circumstances of political emergency, the accusation of "subversion" can be a convenient rhetorical cudgel for silencing opposition.

Finally, what do these documents tell us about the process of DECAS expansion, and in particular the manner and form in which the organisation provided assistance to districts outside the Apurímac Valley? It appears that DECAS expansion into the sierra unfolded not by direct "conquest" and "occupation," but rather through the process of creating pacts, or alliances, with newly established Zonal Headquarters of districts reorganised along DECAS lines. In this manner, expansion of the DECAS system resulted in something like a confederation of equal and autonomous Sedes Central. By creating an interlinked regional defence structure between the sierra and the selva, what the DECAS were managing to create was a considerable degree of inter-zonal and inter-regional coordination and cooperation in counterinsurgency operations that was unprecedented, even among the various branches of the police and armed forces. In fact, for much of the 1980s, "[the] military chiefs in the Emergency Zones—first Ayacucho, then most of the Andean departments—acted on their own in the absence of a coherent strategic concept. Most of the local and regional activities were carried out without the slightest coordination with other military chiefs in the regions!" (Kruijt n.d.:9).

The apparent equality between Sede Central Committees was, in this case, indicated by the fact that the pact stipulated that the Sede Central of Patibamba would receive military assistance—not orders—from the Sede Central of Pichihuillca. Nevertheless, it was certainly to be expected that Pichihuillca would continue to occupy a place of central importance and influence within this vast and expanding network of civil defence. For one thing, the fortified militia base of Pichihuillca functioned as a kind of central armoury for DECAS in general, in charge of dispensing heavy weaponry, such as grenades and even modern automatic assault rifles recovered from guerrillas, which in principle should have been turned in to the military. Once again, Pichihuillca appears to have been given authorisation by Luisiana's Marine commander to keep and use these sorts of modern weapons of war. But besides storing weapons for the organisation, the evidence suggests that the Sede Central of Pichihuillca was also responsible for providing firearms to local defence committees in other parts of Ayacucho, with money raised by the villagers of those communities (e.g. SCDECAS 1989b). Indeed, this was stipulated in the pact as one of Pichihuillca's

obligations towards the Sede Central of Patibamba. And as the next chapter will show, the DECAS would eventually go on to provide direct assistance to sierra districts by dispatching “special advisors,” and eventually sending detachments of its own elite personnel, the *Comandos Especiales*, to live and work in various sierra districts for extended periods of time. In most of these developments and achievements, Huayhuaco played a prominent, influential role as both administrator and mastermind.

4.7.3 ARMS TO THE PEASANTRY?

To his sympathisers and admirers (like the *Expreso*), Comandante Huayhuaco was nothing short of a legendary hero; the leader of a popular “crusade” against the violence and terror unleashed by Shining Path. In the eyes of his critics, however, his professed admiration the counterinsurgency strategy of the early 1980s merely reinforced their view of the man as a repugnant and brazen advocate of dirty war. Many of his critics also regarded the proliferation of civil defence groups as a sinister step towards the further militarisation of civilian society.

Whether admired or despised, the important point is that Huayhuaco’s outspoken views, popularised in print and on television appearances, catapulted him into the very heart of the debate on how to bring Shining Path to heel, just when all other approaches seemed to have come to nothing. There was one issue that Huayhuaco’s alternative views on the proper counterinsurgency strategy ultimately raised above all others: *whether or not to arm the civil defence militias*.

Where President García stood on this issue was made clear when, on 9 December 1989, in front of numerous Peruvian and foreign reporters, he personally presented the civil defence committee of Rinconada Baja, Rivera Terres’s adopted village in the Apurímac River Valley, with two hundred shotguns. The President even went so far as to declare Comandante Huayhuaco a “public defender of democracy” and his very own “personal representative” in the counterinsurgency struggle being waged in the Apurímac Valley (IDL 1989:11). As already mentioned, the President even gave the militia commander his own pistol as a symbol of this assigned responsibility.

García’s action received the consent of almost all his ministers. Army general Julio Velásquez Giarcarini, the Minister of Defence, responded immediately to the criticism of *ultra vires*, voiced mainly by the legal Left, by pointing out that what the President had done “constituted an act of assistance to the social classes that are organising in order to defend themselves from the subversion” (quoted in IDL 1989:10). He added that “I do not understand any sort of polemic in this respect, since the action was taken within legal borders. The arms which have been distributed are breech-loading shotguns that any citizen is able to acquire and use legally” (ibid.). Huayhuaco’s request for firearms had already been favourably received some months earlier by Armando Villanueva del Campo, the President of the Council of Ministers, and by Senator César Delgado Barreto, the Justice Minister (see *Expreso* 1989a). Support for García’s initiative was also forthcoming from a broad spectrum of newspapers that were ordinarily at odds with one another. *El Comercio* and *La República* praised all acts of grassroots defence against Sendero, as did the presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa, who declared that were he to become president he would “support resolutely the constitution of *rondas campesinas* and of organisations of self-defence so

that the civilian population may be able to collaborate with the Armed Forces in the fight against extremism” (quoted in IDL 1989:10). But newspapers like *El Comercio* also cautioned against increasing civilian participation in the counterinsurgency struggle, insisting that the government must not allow the Armed Forces to retreat or to relinquish their function and central role in it (IDL 1989:10). *La República* urged public vigilance, lest any one political party try to manipulate the civil defence militias for partisan politics (ibid.). And Justice Minister Delgado Barreto recommended that the integrity of the intended recipient groups for government-donated firearms should first be investigated. “We must be certain that these instruments [firearms] are going to serve a defensive purpose y will not end up in the hands of the terrorists,” he stated to the press (quoted in *Expreso* 1989a:3).

Yet Peruvian society was clearly divided on the issue. From other sectors, criticism was voiced not only at the President’s act of giving out arms to peasant, but also for the very idea of permitting the peasantry to form defence militias in the first place. While, on the one hand there was general consensus that that peasants should be protected, and do have a right to defend themselves, on the other hand, there existed strong disagreement regarding the manner in which this should be undertaken. Henry Pease, the presidential candidate for the Izquierda Unida (IU) party, argued that arming peasant militias was not a realistic measure which will defeat Shining Path. He and other leftist critics, besides questioning the legal basis of the President’s actions, also maintained that the only way to defeat Shining Path must be through democratic political parties and independent popular organisations (e.g. peasant unions), rather than through peasant militias, which they believed to be directly controlled and manipulated by the armed forces. It was a viewpoint typically “*desde la capital*” (“from the capital as a point of departure,” to borrow a phrase from Hinojosa). As such, it was a view that was out of touch with the realities of the Ayacucho emergency zone where, because of the political violence unleashed by both the army and Shining Path, political parties and peasant unions had all but disappeared. It was a perspective that was also oblivious to a significant sociopolitical development in the country, which was that by the end of what had been a tumultuous decade, the majority of Peruvians had already begun to turn away from traditional party politics, and were looking instead for new, less formal political and organisational alternatives (Palmer 2000). It is obvious that the IU’s extreme apprehensiveness towards the *rondas campesinas* or *comités antissubversivos* arose from their suspicion that such “paramilitary groups,” as they referred to them, were often either controlled by rival political parties (particularly by the APRA),³⁹ or in the service of the armed forces, and therefore a potential danger to their own party members. The IU was certainly justified in regarding the armed forces with a great deal of suspicion and apprehension, for senior military officials had often aired in public their distrust of the IU. For instance, retired army general Luis Cisneros Vizquerra once declared to the Lima magazine *Oiga*: “In some measure, the IU is the legal voice of Sendero and I believe that one must check the activities of particular leaders of the IU who have demonstrated a primary vocation in defending Sendero” (quoted in DESCO 1989:611).

Another outspoken early critic of Huayhuaco and the civil defence organisations was Carlos Iván Degregori,⁴⁰ who wrote the following retort to the “*Denme 500 fusiles*” article:

The experience of Apurímac River teaches us that once the logic of war is imposed, it is very difficult to reverse it. For that reason what is crucial is a strategy that takes into account the different regional situations and that, in those which have not succumbed to runaway violence, one has as an axis the fortifying of social organisations....In any case, it would be much more decisive to say: give me five-hundred independent unions or communities, democratic and with a perspective of a peace with social justice; return alive Julio Orozco and many other leaders who have fallen, and then I shall have greater possibilities of defeating the subversion (1989b:30).

It is always a morally admirable approach to seek to defeat subversion—indeed, to oppose violence in general—by way of social justice, and through the peaceful efforts of independent, democratic grassroots organisations. But it can sometimes be a naive example of wishful thinking; one that expresses idealistic personal convictions rather than a sober assessment of harsh realities. For one thing, the conditions in which such an approach would have had some chance of working—that is to say, a situation of democratic stability, along with a true civil society—did not even exist in the country, let alone in Ayacucho. Nor was Shining Path willing to permit it to exist, or to respect peaceful, democratic opposition. How, realistically speaking, can one defeat, by peaceful and democratic means, an enemy so committed to violent revolution, and enemy for whom “Stalin’s position—willing to raze his own land, destroy his country’s infrastructure, and absorb the most shocking human losses in order to defeat the Nazi invader—was the example it had to keep in mind”? (Gorriti 1999:27). Furthermore, as a leading expert on Sendero Luminoso, Degregori must have been aware that Shining Path was able not only to infiltrate and so control, through violence, labour unions and independent communities, but also to threaten and intimidate into submission, and to eliminate if necessary, even leftist critics of the revolution. This is precisely what happened in the popular Lima shantytown of Villa El Salvador (see Burt 1998).

But criticism and opposition emanated not only from the so-called “progressive camp.” For once, the armed forces in general were of the same opinion as the legal Left in expressing concerns about the idea of armed peasant militias. In spite of the Defence Minister’s declared backing for the idea (which was itself in fact a reversal of his earlier position⁴¹), within the armed forces as a whole—and especially within the Army—the notion of arming the peasant militias was met with strong disapproval. In fact, from as early as June 1989, Army general Howard Rodríguez had already been voicing his emphatic opposition to the idea:

We must not fall into the mistake of providing arms to the peasants. We would be promoting the creation of an army parallel to our own. Has one thought of the risk signified by giving this type of armament to the peasant? What would happen if these groups are infiltrated by Sendero and use the arms that the State has given them to fight against us? (quoted in IDL 1990:130).

But apart from these practical sorts of concerns raised by General Rodríguez, criticism from the military must have also stemmed from their apprehension for any step perceived as weakening their monopoly of the means and exercise of legitimate violence. They are, after all, the national institution constitutionally charged with maintaining law and order, and so in the minds of some senior officers, what was at stake was not only national security, but also the honour and the constitutional prerogative of the armed forces. To arm peasant militias “would be to recognise the incapacity of the State to defend itself,” insisted Rodríguez (quoted in *Expreso* 1989e:17). For the armed forces, the wielding of arms and the maintaining of law and order were their exclusive, constitutionally ascribed prerogatives that must be jealously preserved and guarded (Fitch 1998; Stepan 1988).

In the end, Rivera Terres did not obtain the 500 Mauser rifles he requested (the Minister of Defence steadfastly refused to grant this wish). As a political compromise, however, he received directly from the President a sizeable donation of (albeit less potent) shotguns and ammunition, some of which may have later been sold to sierra communities. Most importantly, his lobbying managed to win not only powerful political recognition and support for the cause of the peasant militias—in particular, for the idea of providing them the firearms with which to combat and defeat subversion. While there can be little doubt that President García’s gesture of dispensing two hundred shotguns to peasant militiamen was a strong symbolic indication of his government’s approval of the peasantry’s resistance to Shining Path, it went little beyond that. No official policy or presidential directive to the armed forces were ever formulated as the acquisition and legal use of firearms by peasant militias was concerned. However, as the remainder of this chapter will show, the DECAS were never really entirely dependent on the military or the government for its arms. They had other sources. What Huayhuaco was really after was an officially recognised, statutory right for the militias to wield firearms, for the existence of such a law would have enabled the DECAS to surmount a number of practical problems, of which the routine confiscation of the firearms they already possessed by Army soldiers was foremost. The way would then have been open for Huayhuaco to put his larger civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy into practice. Instead of the magna carta he sought, however, what Huayhuaco got from García was merely a token of his personal endorsement of popular, grassroots counter-revolution. As head of a crisis-ridden Aprista government in its last months of power, the severe limits to García’s ability to assist the civil defence movement in any meaningful way was recognised by Huayhuaco. It was undoubtedly for this reason that he decided to throw his political support (and naturally that of the DECAS) firmly behind FREDEMO’s presidential candidate, Mario Vargas Llosa (see *Expreso* 1989d:3). Ultimately, though, it was García’s successor—not Vargas Llosa but rather Alberto Fujimori—who would come to formalise armed peasant militias into the “fourth branch of the armed forces” (Kruijt 1996:246), and as such, legally entitled to wield firearms.

4.8 Autonomy and order under the DECAS

By the end of 1989, the DECAS has succeeded in “pacifying” and reorganising virtually the entire Apurímac River Valley, from Anchiway in the south right up to the Boca Mantaro in the north (del Pino 1996:136, 150). Unlike the military, which was incapable of providing a sustained presence in most areas of the countryside, the DECAS, by contrast, were careful to consolidate their gains. This was achieved through constant patrolling, coordinated defence, and the imposition of strict discipline and authoritarian leadership in the everyday lives of the communities that was geared towards self-defence.

The pressures and complexities of administering such a vast area led DECAS leaders in 1989 to divide up the valley into nine administrative zones, which they called “sectors.” Additional zones were created in step with DECAS expansion, such that by 1993, there existed twenty-two “sectors,” from Chungui to the Ene River Valley (see del Pino 1993b:172-177). Each zone, or sector, was controlled by its own militia president-coordinator (*presidente coordinador*), who had autonomous authority over matters of local and zonal concern. Rivera Terres took control of the *comité zonal de defensa civil* of the Luisiana zone, comprising 18 hamlets, each of which had its own *comité de base*, or local defence committee. Antonio Cárdenas Torre presided over the DECAS in the Palmapampa sector, made up of 17 settlements. “Each zone was autonomous and [it had been agreed that] military intervention between *ronderos* was not permitted” (Huayhuaco 1994:22). However, matters of general and common interest, such as larger-scale operations, continued to be handled by the *Sede Central del Comité Defensa Civil Valle del Río Apurímac*, the central headquarters and maximum authority of the civil defence organization in the entire valley, at Pichihuillca. Antonio Cárdenas remained the president of the Sede Central, and Rivera Terres continued to hold the post of *Presidente-Coordinador de Acciones Antisubversivas* until shortly before his imprisonment in February 1991. “Antonio Cárdenas was in charge of the logistical end, of obtaining the necessary materials for the war. I was responsible for the strategic part, for directly military affairs,” Rivera Terres explained to me.⁴²

Contact and communication between each individual *comités de base* in this extensive and complex network was maintained through bugle calls, and a system of “*chasquis*,” or runners. It has been claimed that through *chasquis*, the DECAS were able to mobilise between one and two thousand *ronderos* within seven or eight hours (see de Althaus and Morelli 1989:6).

According to Rivera Terres, the peasant smallholders were generally the ones who took part in the field operations, not the peons; for it was the peasant smallholders who wanted to recuperate their lands, and who therefore had a stake in ridding themselves of Shining Path domination. A labourer may on occasion, however, take the place of his *patrón* in an operation if, for instance, his *patrón* were ill. But he had to be well remunerated for it (de Althaus and Morelli 1989:6).

In 1990, each zonal committee began to form special groups of professional militiamen, called “*Comandos Especiales*.” These elite militia units—the inspiration for which can apparently be attributed to Huayhuaco—were specially created to undertake the organisation’s military operations, thus permitting the majority of peasant men to rehabilitate their agricultural and other livelihood activities. The *Comandos*

Especiales were well trained, well armed, and were paid a monthly salary. (More will be said in the next chapter about these and similar groups that were to emerge over the next few years in other parts of Ayacucho.) Nevertheless, every able-bodied member of a community was still expected to contribute in an auxiliary capacity to the logistical needs and financial expenses of the defence organization. Each man who was fit enough, whether peon or patron, was obliged to take turns guarding the village, and patrolling the perimeter. "Every evening, every morning the people had to form up," I was told by Comando Zorro, who for many years served as a *rondero* in the Apurímac Valley. "The *comando* and the president of the *ronderos* summoned everyone to form up with a whistle or a bugle, and everyone would gather: men, adults, children, women, everyone. The women had their own commander, apart from the men. It was a woman, and it was they who controlled the women. The women were commanded by women, the men by men. They all had their list of duties, such as vigilance in the daytime, at night, these sorts of things."⁴³ Daily routines were governed by rules, and geared towards a state of constant war. "There were also sanctions, which were very severe," recalled Comando Zorro. "In the past, the [DECAS] organisation was extremely drastic because one had to obey the orders given by the *comando* and the president of the civil defence committee. If one did not obey, they flogged you with a whip. With this whip they could bloody you completely."⁴⁴ Access to the valley, and travel between settlements, also came to be strictly controlled:

Unknown persons were not permitted to enter. Even known individuals couldn't just come and go as they pleased. One has to have the appropriate documents, apart from which one had to have family in the valley. If one is coming to stay for three, two, or one month, they have to be guaranteed by family members who own land in the *selva*. If you need to travel from one community to another, the civil defence authorities of your community must first issue you with a special pass, called an 'Authorisation of Transit,' signed and stamped by the local *comando* or the president of civil defence. And so you must travel with this document, and only with this document are you permitted to pass through the control points. All your other documents meant nothing, not your voter's identification card nor your military service card. And so it was. In the *selva*, the control was very strict.⁴⁵

Certain zones, like Luisiana and Palmapampa, were even placed out of bounds for the police and the Army without their patrols having obtained prior authorization either from the zonal DECAS authorities, or the valley's political-military authority, which was the commander of the Marine Infantry garrison at Luisiana.

If push came to shove the DECAS had the military muscle, owing to their access to firearms, to defend these spaces of autonomy. And there were indeed some occasions when the DECAS clashed violently with the army, the police, even the DEA (U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency) (see del Pino 1996:169-170). As Comandante Huayhuaco and Comando Zorro both explained to me, these stringent rules of access to certain sectors of the valley were intended as security measures to foil guerrillas, who sometimes disguised themselves as military or police personnel, from gaining

access into the communities. In addition, they were also aimed at maintaining autonomy from the Army, which at the time the DECAS rightly perceived as taking every opportunity to undermine the civil defence organisation. That the DECAS were able to maintain this remarkable degree of autonomy in the valley was owes itself partly to their close association with the Marine Infantry forces in the area, who acted as a sort of powerful patron, holding at bay the hostile actions of the Army. In some areas, however, militia leaders were virtually independent even of the Marines by reason of their alliance with another powerful yet inconspicuous actor, whose influence was growing steadily in the region—the Colombian-based drug traffickers.

4.9 DECAS and drug traffickers: an alliance of convenience

Although *narcotráfico* (drug trafficking) has existed in the north of the valley since at least the early 1980s, it was only towards the end of 1989 that narcotics traffickers and a small number of civil defence commanders came to forge a symbiotic alliance. The retreat of the army from the counterinsurgency struggle had left the DECAS largely on their own and unprotected. It was under these circumstances that some of the civil defence commanders in the Apurímac Valley began to seek an alliance of convenience with local *narcotraficantes* (narcotics traffickers) linked to Colombian drug mafias, who now emerged as the most obvious source of cash, arms, and supplies.

For centuries, *erythroxylum coca*—the coca leaf—has been central to both the ritualistic and the mundane lives of Andean peoples. In the late twentieth century, the innocuous-looking coca leaf has gained international notoriety as the raw material of cocaine. Soaking coca leaves in vats of petrol or kerosene draws out the plant’s powerful alkaloid stimulant. The leaves are later mashed and then mixed with sulphuric acid, which acts as a filter, creating a gooey, brown mixture known as cocaine paste. The cocaine paste is then further refined in special laboratories into the white powdered drug we know as cocaine, whose street value per ounce in the United States is worth much more than the average Peruvian peasant’s yearly earnings.

For any farmer wishing to make fast dollars and lots of it, cultivating coca held a number of attractions. Firstly, as compared with the financial return on the sale of other established cash crops grown in the valley—like cacao, coffee, peanuts, cube, fruits, etc.—coca remained more profitable than all the rest of these, in spite of the fact that the price of cocaine paste was far lower by the end of the decade was what it had been at the beginning of the 1980s, owing to the fall in the world price of cocaine. The attractiveness of coca farming in areas such as the Apurímac Valley received an additional huge boost when the international prices of other commercial crops took a nose-dive in the latter part of the 1980s.

Table 4.2.: Value of Cocaine Paste in Peru, 1980-1993 (US\$/Kg)

Year	'80	'81	'82	'83	'84	'85	'86	'87	'88	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93
Value	7,200	6,800	6,800	2,500	3,400	2,700	2,500	2,000	1,200	900	435	615	712	400

Source: after DESCO 1994a:11

A second advantage in cultivating coca in the valley was that it required minimal attendance and, unlike coffee, which can only be harvested once a year, can be harvested up to four times annually. Furthermore, coca grows well in the shallow soil of the high jungle. These agricultural characteristics of the crop made it ideally suited to the new routine of peasant militiamen who, over this period, had come to spend more time patrolling than farming. According to del Pino, “only 3 days were dedicated to working the land and the rest to patrolling” (1996:146).

The notorious sub-region known as the Upper Huallaga Valley, in Huánuco department, has been among the largest and most important coca-growing zones in the world, and a major source of income for Shining Path. According to the U.S. State Department, the Huallaga Valley accounted for almost 40 percent of the world’s supply of coca (Kawell 1995, fn.3). The second most important, though much smaller, region of coca cultivation in Peru is the Apurímac River Valley. The significant difference of social configurations between the two regions is that whereas in the Upper Huallaga Valley *rondas campesinas* are absent, and a pragmatic alliance has developed between *narcotraficantes*, coca farmers, and Sendero Luminoso, in the Apurímac River Valley the pact was between the *narcotraficantes* and the DECAS.⁴⁶

Until the end of 1983, the centre of narco-trafficking in the Apurímac Valley was in its more remote northern part, around the town of Llochegua, where the presence of the police and ENACO (the state-run National Coca Company) was small or non-existent (del Pino 1996:143). But from about 1985 onwards, the centre of cocaine paste processing moved steadily southwards down the valley, finally arriving at previously had been the small, insignificant, and underdeveloped hamlet of Palmapampa. *Narcotráfico*’s change of location was possibly induced by the army’s particularly brutal oppression of the inhabitants of the northern towns of Llochegua and Sivia in mid-1984, which caused a massive depopulation of the area (del Pino 1996:148). Del Pino argues that the transplantation of *narcotráfico* to the very heart of DECAS territory would eventually produce a vital symbiotic relationship whereby the *narcotraficantes* would provide “coca dollars,” modern weapons, and various other supplies to the DECAS in return for armed protection—not just from Shining Path but also from the police, the military, and anyone else who threatened to disrupt narcotics production and coca cultivation in the valley. “The ronderos had the obligation to keep the zone “clean” in exchange for the economic assistance of the drug traffickers” (del Pino 1996:170).

It is important to keep in mind that, for obvious reasons, it is extremely difficult to collect detailed information about this subject, and is often almost impossible to corroborate the existing evidence. According to Huayhuaco, the DECAS organisation’s first contact with the *narcotraficantes* occurred in 1989, when he sent three DECAS commanders north to the zone of Canaire, in the Ene Valley, to lend assistance to the civil defence groups there in the aftermath of a guerrilla massacred of *ronderos*. While in Canaire, two of the commanders were allegedly recruited by Colombian drug traffickers looking for protection from Sendero, which had already eliminated three of the narcotics gangs in the region. Huayhuaco was subsequently told by these two DECAS commanders that the Colombian *narcotraficantes* were offering to provide money for arms in exchange for protection, and wanted to meet with him. But Rivera Terres claims to have declined the offer. “I never had direct con-

tact with them [the Columbians], since no sooner did they try to talk with me than they encountered my intransigent position [not to deal with them]" (quoted in *Expresso* 1994:8). Whether this version of events is true or not, what was clear was that by 1990, some DECAS commanders had already linked themselves to local drugs traffickers, and as a result were reaping the financial benefits of it. Some of the zonal militia commanders were regularly seen driving around in new 4x4 pickups. They also began to buy tractors, and constructing various clandestine airstrips in the jungle. The most infamous of these airstrips was constructed in December 1989 at Palmapampa, which Rivera Terres is careful to point out is the zone controlled by Antonio Cárdenas and Jorge Choque. Before it was shut down by the Army and the Air Force in 1993, light aircraft laden with cocaine paste flew frequently in and out of the Palmapampa airstrip. According to Rivera Terres, each flight carried a cargo worth between 6 and 7 million dollars. And according to the former authorities and *ronderos* of Palmapampa who were interviewed by del Pino, the DECAS of Palmapampa charged the *narcotraficantes* a tax of between 5 and 10 million dollars on every flight out. "In 1993 an average of five flights were recorded per month. According to unofficial versions, the money collected was spent on the purchase of firearms, munitions, food, community works, official trips to Ayacucho and to Lima" (del Pino 1996:170). For the local population of Palmapampa, drug money made possible the infrastructural improvements—schools, an electrical generator, etc.—that no government in the past had ever bothered to provide.

"By 1990, the *rondas* of the Apurímac Valley had become polarised into pro-narco- traffickers and those openly against them," Huayhuaco told me.⁴⁷ This volatile situation, and the internal conflict that it was causing, threatened to tear the DECAS organisation apart. For the time being, Huayhuaco's influence and overbearing personality managed to hold the organisation together, and to keep dissention to a murmur. But even he was aware that sooner or later, increasingly strained relations between himself and some of his zonal commanders would bring matters to a head.

4.10 The fall of Huayhuaco

Fortunately for the organisation, the worsening internal tensions and personal rivalries between Huayhuaco and the other DECAS leaders never deteriorated into internecine violence. External political forces and events intervened to facilitate the fall of Comandante Huayhuaco, and he would soon find himself ousted from the DECAS and the Apurímac River Valley.

Interestingly enough, his downfall would begin in Lima. Deeply alarmed by the proliferation and expansion of the DECAS, leftist congressmen there had begun to delve into the background of this so-called "Chief of the *Rondas Campesinas*," whom the government had seen fit to furnish with firearms. It did not take them long to find the skeletons in Huayhuaco's cupboard. In mid-December 1989, IU and PUM congressmen, following Senator Javier Diez Canseco Cisneros's lead, made public announcements to the press concerning Rivera Terres's past criminal record, ultimately censuring and taking a political dig at Alan García for having armed the "*rondas paramilitares*" of a "convicted drug trafficker" (see *La República* 1989:4,

1990a:13). Over the next few years, Rivera Terres would find himself in and out of prison or police custody, charged with various crimes including breaking the conditions of his parole, bodily assault and murder, abduction, and the possession of a firearm without a license. But perhaps the most ruinous denunciation against him was that the peasant militias under his command were involved in the illegal cultivation of coca, and had become the bodyguards of the *narcotraficantes* in the region. And though he has always been absolved of these accusations—for “lack of evidence” ironically enough—or has had charges dropped on account of the intervention of powerful political friends, the real damage caused was to his reputation, and eventually to his standing within the DECAS.

According to Rivera Terres himself, his frequent absence from the Apurímac Valley between 1990 and 1991 owing to his numerous arrests permitted his rivals among the zonal militia commanders to plot and to turn the population of the valley against him.⁴⁸ This must certainly have been facilitated to a great extent by the fact that, for some time, Huayhuaco’s power base in the valley was already being eroded through the arrests or imprisonment of many of his friends and followers among the militia commanders. That he had made a practice of publicly lambasting the Peruvian courts and justice system for being their ineptness in dealing with cases of terrorism had already made him, and the DECAS organisation he represented, a considerable number of political enemies in Peru’s legal establishment. In the tale of his personal downfall, bad press did the rest. His many political opponents, particularly among the legal Left, waged a successful propaganda campaign that helped transform his public image from “defender of democracy” to “jungle warlord” and “drug-trafficker,” the very embodiment of all that is sinister about the civil defence movement (e.g. *El Nacional* 1990:15,17, *La República* 1990:13, *La República* 1991a:27, *Starn* 1993:44, *Starn* 1998:241). When, in December 1990, it was disclosed by his fellow DECAS commanders that he had made off with thousands of dollars worth of donated funds raised by the people of the valley for the civil defence movement (*El Popular* 1990:5), he was formally denounced by the organisation and totally discredited in the eyes of many of the inhabitants of the Apurímac Valley. When later he tried to return, he was, according to Comando Zorro, “thrown out of the valley by the people themselves.”⁴⁹ However, the high esteem in which he continued, for a time, to be held by peasants in other parts of the Ayacuchan Andes was vividly illustrated when, in March 1991, more than two thousand *ronderos* from the districts of Quinua, Tambillo, Chiarra, Acocro and Vinchos protested in the central plaza of Ayacucho, demanding that he be released from police custody after having been charged with drug trafficking and assault (*Expreso* 1991:4). During the demonstration, delegates and representatives of the DECAS were conspicuous by their absence.

Huayhuaco has obviously been an major figure in the history of the DECAS, particularly during the formative years of the organisation. His contributions to its success and to the stimulation of popular counter-revolution among the peasants of Ayacucho are undeniable yet, owing to his now discredited image, often also overlooked or dismissed. Nevertheless, the fact that the organisation did not collapse but rather continued to flourish even after his departure, is clear proof of its institutional resilience and organisational durability. And here lies its greatest strength. Contrary to the exaggerated claims of the *Expreso* (which has been his most steadfast apologist

and political supporter over the years), the *rondas campesinas* of the Apurímac River Valley were never “created” by Huayhuaco, or by any other single individual. Although his story is integral to an understanding of the early history of the DECAS of the Apurímac River Valley, the existence of the latter was never ever determined by the fortunes of one individual, no matter how powerful or influential. As we have already seen, the DECAS (and before them the CDCs) had already weathered many crises, and had an internal dynamic of its own. Although the scandalous fall of Huayhuaco may have somewhat dented its reputation and hurt morale within the ranks of the valley’s *ronderos*, his loss to the organisation appears to have had no ill effect on the ability of DECAS commanders to pursue their civilian-based counterinsurgency struggle. There were other, equally capable and less controversial leaders, like Jorge Choque, to take his place. In fact, as the next chapter will show, the phase of sustained expansion into the sierra, through a policy of providing direct assistance to Andean districts, only really got under way after Huayhuaco’s expulsion from the DECAS.

Notes

- 1 With regard to the coerced recruitment of the rural youth by the insurgents, del Pino writes: “The cases of coercive recruitment might occur as much in the communities of the sierra as of the selva. The sympathetic youth are obliged to joining the struggle. In contrast to the cadres and militants of the first generation, who assumed the political line as “total subjection”, these new militants, in many cases, participate under pressure and for fear of the reprisals” (1995b:9).
- 2 On this point, Tapia writes: “the scope of counterinsurgency operations carried out by the Armed Forces remained confined to the limits of the respective Zones and Sub-zones of Security. As one knows, those limits correspond with the limits of the departments. As one understands, the Senderista action did not respect any of these limits. Still, its columns moved precisely between [the different zones]....Before, it was enough that a Senderista column from the province of La Mar, in Ayacucho, should cross over the Apurímac River—for example, from San Francisco to Pichari—so as to exit the territory declared in emergency corresponding to the II Military Region and find themselves in the province of La Convención of the department of Cusco, which belonged to the IV Military Region which had not been declared in emergency” (1997:58-59).
- 3 Words spoken by General Sinesio Jarama, director of the Centro de Altos Estudios Militares in the late 1980s. Quoted in Kruijt 1991:104.
- 4 Author’s interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias “Comandante Huayhuaco,” on 11 December 1997.
- 5 Comité Central del Partido Comunista del Perú (Sendero Luminoso), “¡Desarrollemos la guerra de guerrillas!” setiembre de 1981/marzo de 1982. (Translated into English, Reproduced and Distributed by Movimiento Popular Perú (MPP) and The New Flag, on www.blythe.org.)
- 6 Based on author’s interview with Leoncio, president of one of Tambo’s surrounding refugee hamlets and former inhabitant of San Antonio, Apurímac River Valley, on 6 November 1997.
- 7 According to Gustavo Gorriti, “Guzmán emphasized that only by agreeing to accept for themselves and especially for strangers to them higher casualties and much more intense level of suffering than the enemy could the party erase the tactical and material disadvantage it had with the enemy and forge a “combat machine” able to grow and build itself on the nourishment provided by the old order’s collapse and destruction” (1999:26-27). In fact, however, there was nothing at all glamorous about guerrilla life, exciting and attractive though it may have been for some young people. According to Julián, a young peasant farmer who often was forced to accompany armed rebel

- columns, “one had to go during one or two entire days to remotes places, sometimes hungry, bare-foot, we told ourselves that we have to suffer in this way in order to liberate ourselves” (quoted in del Pino 1993b:74). It is perhaps no wonder that, as the civil war dragged on, many Senderistas deserted its ranks. For an important examination of the “the quota of blood” demanded by the Party from its members, see Chapter 8: The Quota, in Gorriti (1999).
- 8 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May, 2000.
 - 9 Del Pino (1996:135-137) appears to have mistakenly situated the communities of Chiuqintirca and Anchiuay in the district of Chungui, whereas in fact they are peasant communities in the adjacent district of Anco (see INDEC 1991:196).
 - 10 Other forms of peasant groupings include the *pago*, which are independent smallholders living in dispersed homesteads and commonly found in the *selva* of Ayacucho. Another is the *caserío*, which is a hamlet or a clustering of homes; neither of these are administered by a *junta directiva comunal*. The maximum authority in *pagos*, on the other hand, is the *teniente gobernador*. Based on author’s interview agricultural engineer Elias Palomino at the Oficina de Información Agraria, Ministry of Agriculture, Ayacucho, on 18 May 2000.
 - 11 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May 2000.
 - 12 Based on author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 6 November 1997.
 - 13 Based on author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 6 November 1997.
 - 14 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May 2000.
 - 15 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May 2000.
 - 16 Evidence that the military provided *ronderos* with this form of assistance can be seen in the transcription of a letter, written by the *Comité de Defensa Civil* of the village of Iribamba, formally requesting more shotgun ammunition and hand grenades from the commander of the Marine Infantry base at Luisiana, reproduced in del Pino 1996:182, Appendix 2.
 - 17 “In ’86, ’87, Sendero returned to retake the valley with the consent of the army,” said Susy, the CDC commander at the village of San Agustín, Monterrico. “[They came] as far as Rinconada, territory of Huayhuaco. At one time (1986) those from above and those below were already despondent. The army included, they supported the Senderos. [These guerrillas] came with whatever present, with affection, [the soldiers] covered up the event and later set the Senderistas free” (quoted in del Pino 1993b:84).
 - 18 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May, 2000, and Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 6 November 1997.
 - 19 According to Roberto Córdova, Shining Path promised at this time not to kill anyone who was not actively involved in counter-revolutionary activities, such as informing to the police or participating in militia patrols.
 - 20 Author’s interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias “Comandante Huayhuaco,” on 11 December 1997.
 - 21 Ormeño is one of the large and very popular Peruvian coach line companies.
 - 22 Author’s interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias “Comandante Huayhuaco,” on 11 December 1997.
 - 23 Rivera Terres once told journalists that he would like to adopt the same [“dirty war”] policy as that of Belaunde and Noel. Obviously taking unlicensed liberty to speak for his fellow *ronderos*, Rivera Terres also stated in respect to the Belaúnde government: “how much we would have wanted that government to return. There was General Noel in Political-Military command in Ayacucho in that period and there were no longer any Senderistas left” (quoted in de Althaus and Morelli 1989:5).
 - 24 Based on author’s interview with Roberto Córdova on 22 May, 2000.
 - 25 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando*

- General of Tambo District's Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 26 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 27 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 28 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 29 SCDECAS 1989c.
- 30 SCDECAS 1989a.
- 31 SCDECAS 1989e.
- 32 SCDECAS 1989d.
- 33 SCDECAS 1989d.
- 34 SCDECAS 1989d.
- 35 In this regard, it would not be so far-fetched to presume that Rivera Terres's acrimonious criticism of the judges, as published in the *Expreso*, has played some part later on in influencing Fujimori's decision to create the controversial "faceless courts."
- 36 In fact, most Peruvians were already fed up with the court's apparent ineptitude and softness when it came to convicting insurgent "terrorists. Take, for instance, the case of Osmán Morote, a self-confessed Senderista and one of the top leaders of the organisation, who was acquitted in 1988. The newspaper *Expreso* captured a popular sentiment when it declared: "The unbelievable absolution of the Senderista Osmán Morote, on the one hand, and the unjust conviction, to say the least, of two Iquichano villagers for the murders at Uchuraccay, on the other, does nothing except to confirm that the Peruvian judicial system is to be found submerged in a profound crisis. Justice in Peru is not only slow and onerous but also—in the light of these examples—non-existent" (quoted in DESCO 1989:717).
- 37 I should like to extend my deepest gratitude to Roberto Córdova for sharing these unique documents with me.
- 38 SCDECAS 1989c.
- 39 As in the case of the Comando Rodrigo Franco (CRF), allegedly linked to APRA. See DESCO 1989:251-258 for a chronological history of this paramilitary group, and its hostile relations with the Peruvian Left.
- 40 Perhaps as a result of finally realising the exaggerated idealism with which he assumed that peaceful, independent, democratic, socioeconomic syndicates were sufficient to defeat a ruthless adversary such as Shining Path, it is ironic that some years later Degregori would not only apparently reassess his moral evaluation of the civil defence militias, but also go on to write a book—*Las rondas campesinas y la derrota de Sendero Luminoso*—which celebrates the crucial role they appeared to be playing in the defeat of Shining Path.
- 41 Velásquez Giarcarini was initially opposed to the idea, Rivera Terres recalled. "In 1989, on the 14th of November, I was invited by Alan García Pérez to meet with the entire Council of Ministers in order to explain and to solicit for the needs of the *rondas*. I principally requested that the government provide us, on loan and under the supervision of the military command that controls the region, Mauser rifles, which are armaments already considered obsolete, and are no longer used. There present were General Julio Velásquez Giarcarini, the Minister of Defence, and Agustín Mantilla, the Interior Minister. They were offended that I, a civilian, would presume to arm myself as for war, when the army is there present in the emergency zone. Consequently they refused to grant me these Mauser rifles." Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 42 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 43 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando*

- General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 31 May 2000.
- 44 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo District's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 45 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 31 May 2000.
- 46 For detailed descriptions and analysis of the relationship between the *narcotraficantes* and Shining Path in the Huallaga Valley, see González (1989), Kawell (1995), Tarazona-Sevillano and Reuter (1990).
- 47 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 48 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, alias "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 49 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, Tambo District, on 31 May 2000.

5 From Selva to Sierra

The reaction has two ways to crush guerrillas: (1) to win the masses, (2) to liquidate the leadership, because as long as it remains, it will return....¹

Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso

5.1 The Comandos Especiales

In September 1991, DECAS militiamen were once again in the district of Tambo. In the twenty-four and a half months since they first came to the district during Operation Halcón, civil defence organisation in most of Tambo's rural communities had yet again disintegrated. Back in August 1989, Tambo's rural communities apparently exhibited a common determination to oppose Shining Path. In spite of this, however, strong guerrilla presence in the district persisted, chipping away at, and so demoralising, the peoples' will to resist Shining Path. The periodic armed incursions; the frequent levies from rural villages of provisions and recruits (including children) to replenish rebel ranks; the chilling execution of "enemies" and "traitors" immediately following a "people's trial" (*juicio popular*)—all these served as constant, violent reminders to the peasants of the terrifying hold that Shining Path had on their daily lives. By mid-1991, most of the villages that had previously reorganised themselves with the help of the DECAS during Operation Halcón had once again deactivated their self-defence committees. It had become apparent to them that their *comités de autodefensa* not only attracted cruel reprisals from the rebels, but also were quite incapable of realistically deterring rebel attacks, particularly given their pitiful weaponry and lack of support from the army at the time. The local army garrison, securely sheltered in a fortified base on top of the small hill adjacent to the town's central plaza, showed little interest in engaging the guerrilla columns or risking themselves in protecting the rural populace. Their nonchalant attitude caused local resentment and merely heightened the demoralisation of Tambo's rural communities. Many peasants interpreted the army's reluctance to fight or to carry out routine patrol duties during the second half of the García regime not as a political decision, but as simple cowardice. "The soldiers, they were frightened of the *terru-cos*," was what many peasants in Tambo thought at the time.

Historian Steve J. Stern once wrote, "peasant societies, to survive, are notoriously sensitive to changes in power balances" (1982:30). This certainly held true in respect of Tambo's rural peasant communities, especially at this juncture. At the start of the new decade, Sendero's strength in most parts of the emergency zone seemed to be growing, while the army's appeared to be diminishing. Thus, it was as a matter of survival that most Tambinos came to the conclusion that it was more sensible to appease, or at times even collaborate with, the guerrillas, than to oppose them. Only a very few villages continued to resist Shining Path through self-defence committees, foremost of which was the multi-community *desplazado* settlement of

Ccarhuapampa. For reasons that later are discussed, it was only the civil defence committee of Ccarhuapampa that had remained solidly organised since it was formed at the end of 1983.

It was in this context of a general stagnation and demoralisation of the civil defence movement in Tambo district that the handful of *comités de defensa civil* that continued to function there appealed to the DECAS of the Apurímac River Valley for help. Jorge Choque Quispe, President of the DECAS of Pichihuillca, responded by sending a detachment of Pichihuillca's *Comandos Especiales* to Tambo.

Under cover of night, this elite and well-armed company of fifty-three seasoned militiamen arrived in the village of Osno on 14 September. From there, they proceeded, one by one, to reorganise or reactivate the *comités de defensa civil* of Tambo's rural villages. Once the civil defence patrol of Masinga had been reorganised, the *Comandos Especiales* reorganised those of Challhuamayo, Mahuayura, and Tapuna. Then they moved on to Vicos, Huayao, Patapata, and Millpo. "From Millpo we then entered Qeqra," Comando Zorro, one of the two *Comandos de Operativos* in the group, recalled years later. "Qeqra was the principal support base of Sendero [in the district]. It was a village where everyone—children, adults, everyone—was committed [to the subversion]. It was a control centre where they planned and organised assaults, incursions."²

Situated in a fertile valley some four kilometres east of Tambo town, Qeqra presented an ideal base for guerrilla operations in the sub-region. The village is in conveniently close proximity to the town, yet distant enough to avoid drawing the attention of the army garrison or the police detachment. Consequently, Qeqra became for Shining Path a "principal support base." Not only did the rebels draw freely from the material and human resources of the village itself, they also utilised Qeqra as a sort of central depot for food supplies gathered from surrounding areas. These were then transported by pack animals along mountain footpaths and used to re-supply guerrilla forces dispersed throughout the Apurímac and Ene River Valleys, the sierras of La Mar, Huanta, and Huamanga, even as far away as Huancavelica.³ For these reasons, the capture of Qeqra became the first important strategic objective of the *Comandos Especiales*.

The *Comandos Especiales* eventually succeeded in dislodging the rebels from Qeqra, and took control of the village in October. "We drove Sendero out of the community of Qeqra, and then set ourselves up there, in their very base. This infuriated them, and thereafter we found ourselves harassed every late afternoon, every evening, for it had been their base and it was as if we had thrown them out of their own home!" Comando Zorro recalled years later with brimming satisfaction.⁴ The *Comandos Especiales* established themselves in Qeqra, using it as their own base of operations. Apparently, this early triumph was achieved not so much by a clash of arms as through careful intelligence work, which had resulted in the capture of specific individuals suspected either of being the important local Senderista authorities, and their willing collaborators. This was made possible, according to Comando Zorro, because the DECAS had their own informants and spies within the rural villages—"our own ears and our own eyes, just like Sendero" is how he described them.⁵ It was with the aid of these individuals that the *Comandos Especiales* were able to detect and deactivate Sendero's clandestine political-military cells within Tambo's

rural communities.

By returning to the district, it was not the intention of the *Comandos Especiales* merely to repeat the transitory success of Operation Halcón. This time, the militiamen had been mandated by DECAS chiefs in Pichihuillca to remain in the district for an entire year. This decision was made by DECAS commanders in Pichihuillca in the light of the fact that the organisational efforts of Operation Halcón had failed to prevent the eventual degeneration of Tambo's local civil defence committees. They concluded that what was necessary was some form of direct and prolonged presence of DECAS militiamen in Tambo district, if there was to be any hope of strengthening and consolidating the civil defence initiative there. To this end, the *Comandos Especiales* came fully prepared for the task in hand. The majority of the men in the group were seasoned fighters, and all were well armed. Should one be killed, a replacement would be sent from the Apurímac Valley to take his place. Furthermore, arrangements had been made so that the *Comandos Especiales* would be financed entirely by the DECAS organisation of the Apurímac River Valley for the duration of their tour of duty in Tambo. "The people of the selva who had coca crops—all of them—they gave a monthly tip [*propina*] of two hundred nuevos soles per person, and we lived on that," explained Comando Zorro. In principle, the *Comandos Especiales* were entitled to this remuneration for one year, if available funds could be made to stretch that long.⁶ This impressively sophisticated arrangement owes itself to the fact that, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter, the DECAS of the Apurímac Valley were in a unique economic position to finance to a certain extent the expansion of the civil defence movement in the department of Ayacucho. Their exceptional capacity to do so was largely made possible by the financial support they received from the *narcotraficantes* in the Apurímac Valley. "That money was what we used to finance the countersubversive struggle in that zone," Comando Zorro admitted to me.⁷

5.2 Facilitating conditions for the expansion and institutionalisation of Civil Defence Organisations in the Zone of Emergency

The election of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) as the next president of the Republic initiated a dramatic transformation in the nation's political situation. For one thing, it led to a fresh, bold counterinsurgency policy on the part of the government and the army.⁸ In Fujimori the armed forces finally found a supportive and sympathetic president and commander in chief, determined to do whatever was required—at whatever cost—to defeat the subversion once and for all. Although at first it took some time before Fujimori and his military chiefs could agree on exactly how to proceed, "some months after initiating his government, Fujimori accepted the proposals of the Armed Forces. The positive thing was that he assumed the risks and costs involved in making the struggle for pacification one of the central points on the country's agenda" (Tapia 1997:61). One of the immediately apparent effects of this change in civil-military relations was a vigorous resumption of the military's counterinsurgency efforts. In the department of Ayacucho, government troops stepped up their patrols in the countryside, and the persecution of Shining Path guerrillas was renewed. Significantly, the Army began once again to encourage peasant defence initiatives.

Despite the changes in their attitude, however, the army discovered that it would nevertheless take some time before they could gain the trust of the rural population. During the last two years of the García government, when the military relaxed its crackdown on Shining Path, peasants were left feeling abandoned and alone to fend for themselves. Consequently, anti-Sendero peasant resistance at this time turned to the DECAS as an alternative source of moral and military assistance. The DECAS reacted to the many appeals for help from many parts of Ayacucho by rendering aid similar to that which they provided to Tambo. For instance, Julio Talavera, President of the *Comité de Autodefensa Civil* in Ayahuanco, a district in Huanta province, recalled the effect of when a number of communities in his district banded together for mutual self-defence:

Sendero attacked even more; they struck in Ayahuanco, later in Viracochan, also in Qocochac and in Lamas. In those circumstances we could no longer maintain ourselves and we communicated with the Defence of the Apurímac River Selva, which was well organised and had good arms. We had already seen that the Army was inoperative.... From the selva came more than five hundred men in 1991, and they reorganised all the communities once again. They removed several rebel infiltrators and then things began to calm down. They provided us with twenty men for each hamlet for eight months (quoted in IDL 1996:67).

Based on such evidence, then, it would be fair to say that the initial expansion and consolidation of the civil defence movement in many Ayacuchan provinces between 1989 and 1992 owed itself more to the direct efforts of the DECAS than to any action on the part of the government or the armed forces.

Even so, for its part the new government turned its attention towards developing political and legal conditions that would foster the proliferation of civil defence organisations throughout the entire zone of emergency. By contrast, Alan García had recognised too late (if at all) the great potential for counterinsurgency that lay in the peasantry. Apart from his single symbolic gesture of distributing shotguns to Huayhuaco's militiamen, there is really no evidence that he even tried to develop any official policy towards the village defence groups. Granted, it was during his time in power that the Peruvian Congress passed Ley Nro.24571 (*Ley de Reconocimiento de las Rondas Campesinas*) on 7 November 1986, giving official recognition to "the pacific, democratic and autonomous rondas campesinas...that contribute to social development and peace" (reproduced in SER 1993:27). The law defined *rondas campesinas* as organisations that have as their primary objectives "the defence of their lands, protection of their livestock and other property, cooperating with the authorities in the elimination of any criminal offence" (cited in SER 1993:27). But by its wording, however, it is obvious that what the legislators had in mind when drafting this law were the vigilante peasant organisations indigenous to particular northern Peruvian departments. As such, the legislation was wholly impractical for the realities in which the rural civil defence militias of the emergency zone operated.

Unlike García, President Fujimori realised very early on that peasant militias, if

given adequate government backing and encouragement, had the potential to become an invaluable instrument for counterinsurgency. Fujimori was convinced that the various grassroots anti-Sendero initiatives in the country deserved greater government assistance than they had received in previous years, and he was determined to harness the counterinsurgency potential of the civil defence organisations. His first step in this regard was to promulgate Decreto Legislativo No.741 on 12 November 1991, which gave legal recognition to all accredited rural defence organisations in the zone of emergency. According to this law, such groups were thereafter to be officially known by the generic name of *Comités de Autodefensa* (CADs). Moreover, the preamble of the legislation revealed that the new government felt a sense of duty to lend moral and material support to grassroots counterinsurgency organisations, when it stated: “That numerous sectors of the population, free and spontaneously, come organising to defend themselves from the aggression and violence of terrorism and drug trafficking, and to defend the validity of the Constitutional State, for which it is appropriate that the State favours, assists and equips with the necessary means these aforementioned organised sectors” (El Peruano 1991: 101687. My emphasis).

The reader will probably have already noticed one glaring contradiction in this sentence: namely, that it disingenuously depicts CADs as generally having been organised “freely and spontaneously” by the population in defiance of Shining Path. Preceding chapters of this book have already shown, however, that over the years and in various parts of Ayacucho, the military has also played a hand in encouraging peasant villages to organise CDCs, even resorting to coercion to force reluctant communities to comply. In one widely publicised case, the army compelled the *comuneros* of Chuschi to form a civil defence committee on 14 March 1991. The community had initially refused to do so, but complied only after a number of Chuschi’s elected local leaders were disappeared.⁹ In spite of detailed cases like this one, the premise from which the government wanted to begin was that the emergence of village defence committees of the emergency zone was entirely a voluntary process, the natural outcome of spontaneous peasant counter-rebellion. The great hypocrisy was that the emphasis that this piece of legislation placed on *spontaneity* and *voluntarism*, as conditions for the creation of CADs, would still not put an end to coercive force being applied in the creation of new civil defence organisations over subsequent years. Indeed, as recently as 16 August 1996, CAD commanders at a general assembly of Central Committees held at “Los Cabitos” army barracks in Huamanga were still being exhorted by army officers to “re-impel the organisation and Instruction of new Comités de Autodefensa in those areas where the population has not yet been organised, particularly in the Department of Huancavelica in order to contribute to the elimination of the REMAINDER of the Sendero Luminoso terrorist organisation in the SZSNC-8” (CCAD-SJB 1996:1).¹⁰

For the most part, D.L.741 merely perpetuated established relations and practices, with the crucial difference that they now held the weight of law. For instance, the decree placed CADs under the comprehensive supervision and control of the military, which had the responsibility of accrediting, coordinating, directing, and arming them:

- ARTICLE 2: The Comités de Autodefensa will be accredited by the corresponding Military Command, subject to prior expressed authorisation of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces (*ibid.*).
- ARTICLE 3: Their functioning will be geographically framed under the control of the respective Military Command (*ibid.*).

Yet the military's established authority over the civil defence organisations is something that has always been taken for granted ever since they were first formed in the early 1980s. In addition, D.L.741 also gave authorisation to CADs to use firearms, thus transforming into legislated policy what hitherto had merely been a presidential prerogative exercised by both García and Fujimori.

- ARTICLE 4: The Comités de Autodefensa located within the territorial scope of the corresponding military authority, will be able to acquire by purchase, donation on the part of the State or private individuals, hunting firearms of the 12 GAUGE calibre type, breech-loading, shot for shot version and munitions of the type double or triple zero, or others subject to prior authorisation of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces (*ibid.*).

Although according to the Fujimori government considered, CADs were to be regarded as transitory organisations, whose principal purpose was to help achieve pacification, and which would be deactivated once the state of emergency was ended, critics nevertheless viewed D.L.741 as an ominous move towards the legislated militarisation of Peruvian society. In fact, some months before the promulgation of the decree, human rights groups, intellectuals, and leaders of national agrarian organisations were already voicing deep concerns about what appeared to be an increasing trend in government policy towards the deepening militarisation of civilian society. In an interview with the journal *Ideele*, for example, the National Secretary of the *Confederación Nacional Agraria*, Walter Sacayco, stated that in his opinion, that arming the peasantry was not an effective means of pacifying the country, for it would only exacerbate the spiral of violence (IDL 1991a:15). "The government must reduce military expenses and finance agrarian assistance programmes for peasant communities as a whole," Sacayco insisted (IDL 1991a:16). To this statement, Juan Rojas, Secretary General of the *Confederación Campesina del Perú* (CCP),¹¹ added that in so far as the *comités de defensa civil* were controlled by the military, they constituted a violation of the autonomy of the peasant community (*ibid.*:15).

In spite such criticism from the various opponents of the legislation, however, D.L.741 nevertheless came to be revered by many rural people—especially those whose daily lives were being profoundly affected by violence—as a kind of charter of CAD rights, and of the state's obligations and responsibilities towards them and their communities. For one thing, it settled once and for all the question as to the legality of the existence of civil defence organisations. Most important for the peasants, it confirmed the right of peasant communities to defend themselves with lethal force and with firearms, thus helping to convince many peasants that here was a government that was finally interested in helping to give them a real fighting chance against the rebels. Moreover, the legislation appeared to hold out the promise that the gov-

ernment would provide material resources and assistance to CADs fighting in defence of their communities and the Peruvian Constitutional State, or *Estado de Derecho*. Consequently, rural people have grown to expect, for instance, that the government would one day recompense *ronderos* crippled in the line of duty, and the widows and orphans of *ronderos* killed in action. (Whether the government has met its obligations in this regard is a topic of discussion which we will return to later in the book.)

The decree held other attractions. For young rural men of conscript age, an especially appealing provision was set forth in Article 6, which states: "The Comités de Autodefensa, in coordination with the respective Military Commands, will select young men of military age, so that they may serve in the Comités for a period of one year, considering this term as completion of the Obligatory Military Service" (El Peruano 1991:101687). The seventeen to twenty year old members of *Los Condores*, Tambo district's *Patrulla Especial*, once told me that they supported D.L. 741 because it gave them the opportunity to discharge their obligatory military service at home, within their own communities, for the direct benefit of their relatives and friends. Some of the young men told me that they would not have relished the idea of being sent off to faraway corners of Peru, or perhaps sent to fight somewhere along the northern jungle border with Ecuador. For decades, it has been a common practice in the sierra for roving press gangs of soldiers to "recruit" young men for military service by simply abducting them (Erausquin and Escobar 1999:38; see Starn 1999:74). The unfortunate conscripts would be taken to the local military base, processed, and then usually posted away from their home region. Sometimes families would not know for months what had happened to their son. Furthermore, the appalling conditions and the brutal training and treatment of conscript soldiers in the army was something that was well known in Peruvian society, and widely dreaded. Conscript soldiers could expect to face a miserable regime of forced labour and maltreatment at the hands of their NCOs and officers. Moreover, the chronic inefficiency of the army's logistical organisation also meant that malnutrition or even near-starvation were not unheard of in the ranks. In the history of the Peruvian army, it has always been the under-educated underclasses that have borne the discriminatory burden of conscription. University students were exempt from military service, apart from which, as Starn points out, "most families of any means paid off a doctor for a medical excuse or a lieutenant for a deferment. This meant the children of slum dwellers and peasants filled the ranks" (1999:74). It is therefore not surprising that the chance offered by D.L. 741 to discharge one's obligatory military service at home, and close to one's family, made participation in local CADs very appealing to young men. (That said, many of *Los Condores* were nevertheless also ex-soldiers, having been nominated by their communities to serve once again in the district's *Patrulla Especial* because of their prior military experience.)

Whatever D.L. 741 meant to its critics and supporters, what was immediately clear to everyone was that in passing it, the Fujimori government, in effect, was legally committing the Peruvian peasantry to actively participating in the counterinsurgency struggle. Government policy in this regard, combined with local initiatives like those taken by the DECAS, had the net result of facilitating the rapid proliferation of CADs during the early 1990s. Totalling less than 700 in 1989, the number of rural defence committees in the south-central Andean departments of Apurímac, Ayacucho,

Junín, Huancavelica and Pasco had grown to more than 1,200 by 1991 (Starn ed. 1993:6; IDL 1991b:28). Six years later, their numbers would increase, according to military sources, to some 2,500 recognised *comités de base* (village committees), representing over 120,000 *ronderos*, in the departments of Ayacucho-Huancavelica and the Cuzco districts of Pichari-Quimbiri alone.¹²

5.3 First steps towards the institutionalisation of the Civil Defence Movement in Tambo District

The two most important developments in the institutionalisation of the civil defence movement in Tambo district took place within the first six weeks of the *Comandos Especiales*' being in the district. The first was the creation of a *Junta Directiva* to coordinate the district's revamped defence network of 26 *comités de base* in what was the newly constituted *Zona Rural de Tambo* (CCAD-SJB 1994). The presidents of all the *comités de base* nominated from among themselves the members of the *Junta Directiva Zonal* (Zonal Directive Committee).

It was perhaps as symbolically fitting as it was a practical choice that the Zonal Committee's first *Coordinador General*, a man known as "Comando Colca," came from Ccarhuapampa. To that community belongs the venerated reputation for belligerent and obstinate resistance to Shining Path in the district. As already noted in chapter 3, Ccarhuapampa was a settlement populated mainly by displaced peasants from the *punas*, many of whom have lived there since its founding in December 1983. In addition, the vast majority of its *desplazado* inhabitants were among the poorest inhabitants of the district, and among them are impoverished refugees from as far away as the highland Iquichano communities of Huanta.¹³ The settlement is renowned for being the first in the entire district to organise community defence in the early 1980s, and remained the bastion of anti-Sendero resistance in Tambo ever since. With a tone of admiration in his voice, Comando Zorro spoke to me of Ccarhuapampa's celebrated resilience, even while the civil defence movement in the district experienced periods of stagnation and demoralisation:

In spite of the fact that all the communities in the district had already been organised for civil defence, for lack of moral support on the part of the military, the district of Tambo became disorganised since '87. It was a red zone, totally red! The only community which had remained organised since '83-'84 was the community of Ccarhuapampa, and no other! No other community had resisted the blows of the subversion. When in '91 we set out from the selva, the only organisation we found more or less similar to our own was Ccarhuapampa, because people who travelled from Ccarhuapampa to the selva came with these ideas, and vice versa.¹⁴

The resemblance in the organisational structure between the civil defence systems of Ccarhuapampa and of the DECAS may, as Comando Zorro suggests, indeed be a reflection of the interchange of ideas that accompanied the circular movement of eco-

conomic migrants between the two settings. The idea makes sense. However, Ccarhuapampa is not the only settlement in the district where peasants migrate back and forth between Tambo and the Apurímac Valley. Nonetheless, Ccarhuapampa was the only settlement in Tambo that consistently remained organised against Shining Path over the years. Why and how was this possible? What were the motivations behind Ccarhuapampa's unremitting attitude of tenacious resistance to Shining Path, and what sustained its spirit of resistance when all other settlements in the district seemed to have succumbed to guerrilla domination? The answer may be found in its socioeconomic circumstances and distinctive past experiences.

Of Tambo's population centres, Ccarhuapampa was among the hardest hit by guerrilla violence. As the first settlement to form a civil defence force in the district—at the behest of the Marines, it should be remembered—it was also the very first to incur the terrible punishment meted out by Sendero to communities deemed as having betrayed the revolution. Eusebio, a long-time resident of Ccarhuapampa, once remembers his settlement's painful experiences of violence and terror:

Ccarhuapampa has been despised by the Senderos because it was the first to rebel against them. For this reason the terrorists always came. Always the confrontations continued and so died the authorities of the civil defence. At night they came, they invaded, and they tried to finish off the people. When they gained entrance into the community, the Senderos butchered with axe, with knife. There is one woman, she's still alive, whose breast they even cut off. In Ccarhuapampa when the Senderos attacked, they burnt the houses. Murdered fathers, mothers, children. They always left people dead, widowed mothers, orphans.¹⁵

Eusebio's account is typical of many related to me by various inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa. Embittered hatred is therefore the only way to describe their feelings for Sendero Luminoso. It was the Marines, let us not forget, who ordered the inhabitants to Ccarhuapampa to form a civil defence committee; but it was Shining Path who continually inflicted terrible violence against the community. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that with so much blood under the bridge, the idea of dialogue or reconciliation with the guerrillas has long been unthinkable for the inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa.

The inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa also blamed Shining Path for disrupting their agricultural practices, the consequence of which was to cause worsening livelihood crisis and deepening impoverishment for the *desplazados* who live there. "For years, owing to this violence, we did not return to our fields," a displaced peasant told me in 1997. "It was only during the day that we would go to work for four or five hours. But we always made sure to return by late afternoon to Ccarhuapampa, which is where we always spent the night."¹⁶ A constant fear had long existed among the inhabitants of being killed or abducted in the desolate areas of the countryside by lurking guerrilla columns, and this has served to discourage most of Ccarhuapampa's *desplazados* from even periodically making trips to their villages of origin. This has stymied the resumption of normal agricultural practices, even as late as 1997, when

the violence had apparently already subsided. This experience was not endemic to the people of Ccarhuapampa, and was also evident in other peasant *desplazados* throughout the district, and in other parts of Ayacucho. As one displaced peasant from Vicos once remarked me,

The economy of the peasants has been heavily affected by the subversion because it has not allowed them to work. Before the appearance of the subversion, the people worked a lot because there were no displaced communities. Now the peasants cannot take their products to market...because the terrucos have pressurised people [not to do this]. People are permitted to produce only what serves the subversion.¹⁷

In the case of Ccarhuapampa, though, guerrilla activity in the countryside meant that the vast majority of its inhabitants could not even return to or work on their own lands. For the displaced peasants of Ccarhuapampa, they could never hope to recuperate or return to their own lands so long as Shining Path controlled or was active in the countryside. This fact makes their tenacious resistance to the guerrillas understandable.

In spite of such adversities, however, it seems that the effect has been to draw the inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa closer together in spirit. Their social and economic hardship, for which they largely blamed Shining Path as the primary underlying cause, became a bonding experience that merely strengthened their determination to jealously guard their scarce resources against any attempts by the guerrillas to take or to steal them. They took pride in pointing out to me that they have consistently resisted Shining Path's attempts to turn them into a *masa*—a mass base of labourers, consigned to the drudgery of producing and preparing food for the combatants (the *Fuerza Principal*) of Shining Path, and used as a human reservoir from which young people were drawn to replenish the ranks of the Popular Guerrilla Army.

In the face of Shining Path's constant attempts over the years to subjugate the people of Ccarhuapampa, their primary mechanism of defence was the CDC. Defence arrangements were always taken seriously in the settlement. For instance, it became established practice to post lookouts on surrounding hilltops during the day, where from camouflaged huts they keep vigil, while villagers worked in their small plots on the hillsides overlooking the settlement from the south and the west. When suspicious signs of possible guerrilla presence were spotted in the distance (such as smoke from a cooking fire), the settlement's defence commanders would rapidly mobilise a patrol to investigate, occasionally accompanied by a detachment of soldiers from Tambo's army base. Upon nightfall, sentries were posted in the watchtowers at each corner of Ccarhuapampa's fortified inner enclosure, while others did a weekly turn on the nightly patrols round the settlement's perimeter. In the years when they were prohibited from legally using firearms, Ccarhuapampa's *ronderos* armed themselves with farming implements, slings, lances, and homemade guns they called "*tirachas*" or "*hechizos*". But by the second half of 1989, though, they had managed to purchase a few hunting shotguns from the DECAS. The close proximity of the Apurímac Valley to Tambo district made it possible to purchase arms from the DECAS, and was a much quicker and more secure way of securing firearms than attempting to smuggle

through police checkpoints all the way from Lima. Evidence that Ccarhuapampa got its firearms in this way can be seen in a bill of sale, written and signed by Comandante Huayhuaco himself, which reads:

ON THIS DATE I RECEIVED FROM THE DIRECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY OF
CCARHUAPAMPA, DISTRICT OF TAMBO, THE SUM OF TWO MILLION INTIS (1/
2,000,000)¹⁸ AS DEPOSIT FOR THE PURCHASE OF SHOTGUNS

Rinconada, 27 of August 1989.

HUAYHUACO

Presidente-Coordinador de Acciones

Antisubversivas Valle Río Apurímac.¹⁹

In addition to strong group solidarity reinforced by a consciousness of common hardship and injustice suffered at the hands of the subversion, Ccarhuapampa's ability to maintain the integrity of its civil defence organisation over the many trying years also owed itself to brave and intelligent leadership. "Ccarhuapampa was well organised," recalled Comando Zorro. "They had the good leaders for it. They had people like Señor Manzanilla...and various other friends who we met when we came in '91."²⁰ Despite the risks involved in becoming a CDC member, there were always courageous men to be found in Ccarhuapampa who were willing to assume the most dangerous posts of President and *Comando* (combat commander). Finally, it is also likely that Ccarhuapampa's spirit of continued resistance to Shining Path was sustained by the very fact of its huge population. With more than 1,400 inhabitants, Ccarhuapampa was by far the largest single population centre in the entire district. As such, this large population constituted as much an important source of morale for its inhabitants (i.e. *security* in numbers) as it was of manpower (i.e. *strength* in numbers) for the settlement's defence force.

The second significant achievement of the *Comandos Especiales* was the creation of a *Grupo Especial*, modelled after the *Comandos Especiales*. Comando Zorro, who said that the idea came to him while contemplating what would happen after the *Comandos Especiales* leave the district, claims the credit for this initiative.

'Who is going to remain permanently to control the communities,' I asked myself? Will they become disorganised and live alongside Sendero again, like in '87? Better to form a special group or patrol, a special group that can patrol the uplands permanently. In this way, the communities will stay organised. It was for this reason that I organised the *Grupo Especial* in October of 1991²¹

The *Grupo Especial* was made up of volunteers, one man from almost every organised village (*comité de base*) in the district. "It was group of *muchachos*," wrote Comando Zorro in his war diary.

They received instructions and they decided to fight together with us for the pacification of their community and their country, armed with

tirachas, shotguns, and other home-made weapons that each community acquired for defending itself; we managed to form a group of 22 personnel from the zone of Tambo.²²

Each member was remunerated by his own community, and it was because every member of the group received a “*propina*” (“a tip”) of between S/.150 and S/.200 nuevos soles per month that they came to be known as “*rentados*”—hired guns. “The *rentado* is exclusively at the service of self-defence, for the security of each community,” Comando Zorro explained to me. “He dedicates himself entirely to keeping vigil, to patrolling, and verifying other civil defence committees so as always to maintain the unity of a *comité de base*. There are some communities with few *comuneros*, so two communities may join together to pay for one *rentado*.”²³ As del Pino has observed in the case of the DECAS’ *Comandos Especiales* in the Apurímac Valley, participation in the *Grupo Especial* of Tambo “thus became for the young people a source of work in the midst of economic crisis” (del Pino 1996:154).

The *Grupo Especial* was at first dubbed *Los Halcones*; but its name was later changed to *Los Condores* due to a tragic event that is described below. Although the group received instructions from the *Comandos Especiales* and was also based at Qeqra, it nevertheless was free to operate on its own (though always in coordination with the *Comandos Especiales* and the local army commander), and was not subordinated to the control of the *Comandos Especiales*. “This groups followed our examples and decided to work independently,” Comando Zorro noted in his diary.²⁴ The *Grupo Especial* had its own field commanders, and they often worked closely with a platoon of soldiers from the local army base in providing security to motorists on the dirt road that snakes across the *punas* high above the town of Tambo. In fact, the *Grupo Especial* was made up of two smaller squads, each of which had its own commander, and performed separate tasks. For example, while one squad was engaged in guarding the road, the other might be busy patrolling somewhere in the countryside. When the *Grupo Especial* took over many of the routine tasks of defence and security in the district, the *Comandos Especiales* were freed up to concentrate on strengthening and consolidating the district’s village defence network, in addition to performing the more dangerous job of hunting down the armed rebel columns that were still operating in the area.

When the *Comandos Especiales* left Tambo district in September 1992, their former duties were assumed by the *Grupo Especial*, which became the new vanguard of the civil defence system in the district. The group also relocated its base from Qeqra to Vista Alegre, a *desplazado* settlement on the east side of town, in order to be closer to the military base. By 1997, the *Grupo Especial* had grown to between thirty and thirty-three members, many of them *licenciados*. It continued to function most of the time in two squads, with Zorro as the supreme militia commander in the district. They had modified their mode of operations so that when one squad went off to work in the countryside, the other was placed in Vista Alegre, where it remained on a high state of alert, ready to react at a moment’s notice to any emergency. The two squads (each one is called a *Patrulla Especial*) took turns patrolling the district for five to fifteen days at a time, but would combine into a single unit—the *Grupo Especial*—for larger combat operations. The entire group regularly came together on Sundays for



Photo 3. A *Patrulla Especial* (“Los Condores”) of Tambo district, 1997

intelligence debriefings and weapons training at the local army base. The group’s sense of solidarity and identity became so strong that they even came to have their own special uniform: a navy blue tracksuit with a red and white stripe (the colours of the Peruvian flag) down the side of the trouser legs, and across both sleeves. By 1997, all its members were armed with Mauser rifles.

The creation of the *Grupo Especial* did not end the general population’s obligations to perform civil defence duties, however. Each rural village in the district was still expected by the central committee to maintain a *comité de base* (the basic organisational level). In addition, ordinary villagers were still obliged to carry out patrol and vigilance duties within the immediate perimeter of their own villages. Although in every rural settlement only a few men at any given time would be regarded as “active” *ronderos* of the *comité de base*—they are called “*integrantes*” (“members”)—every rural adult was nevertheless still considered to be a *rondero*. As such, they had a duty to back up and assist the *Grupo Especial* when necessary, particularly in the event of clashes with the guerrillas. Even so, for the rural population at large, the creation of the *Grupo Especial* definitely helped to lighten the degree of their active participation in community defence. “Previously, when there were no *rentados*, the *comuneros* themselves—men and women equally—they had to go out every day and night to keep watch in turns,” recalled Vicente Perez Cervan, a *desplazado* and for-

mer president of Tambo's *Comité Central de Defensa Civil*. "The obligation touched everyone right down the list. We sacrificed much. We spent a lot of time keeping watch. Therefore it became more convenient for the peasants once they had appointed the *rentados*."²⁵ With the *Grupo Especial* and the *Comandos Especiales* maintaining a constant vigilance in the district, many peasants were finally able to devote more time to working in their fields, and doing other essential chores during the day and in the evenings.

In the eyes of their communities, the vigorous and determined young men of the *Grupo Especial* embodied their deepest hopes for peace and security in the district. Trained by and working in coordination with their esteemed DECAS counterparts, the *Grupo Especial* was the best the district had to offer, and as such was the pride of Tambo's rural communities. No one could have imagined that just three short months after the group was created, half of its members would already be dead.

5.4 The annihilation of Platoon III

While the *Grupo Especial* provided security to travellers on the road and to peasant villagers in the countryside, the *Comandos Especiales*, for their part, focussed during their final months in Tambo on consolidating the district's reorganised rural defence network. "Comando Sombra," the *Comando General de Coordinación* of the *Comandos Especiales*, regularly dispatched inspection teams to the rural communities to check that *comités de base* stayed organised and continued to perform vigilance duties. Security in the district was enhanced considerably over the course of the year, for while rural villagers patrolled within their own community borders, both the *Grupo Especial* and the *Comandos Especiales* constantly patrolled throughout the rest of the district. The *Comandos Especiales* would occasionally uncover clandestine caches while patrolling the uplands, or even discover small guerrilla combat units holed up in murky mountain caves, or camped in one of the many deserted villages in the *puna* and in the western half of the district.

On 24 November, Comando Sombra and forty-two members of the *Comandos Especiales* set off on a seven-day reconnaissance operation to the remotest areas of the district. The security of Qeqra was left in the hands of Comandos Zorro and Kipo (Kipo was the second in command of the *Comandos Especiales*), and the other remaining *Comandos Especiales*. Early the next morning, Zorro and Kipo set out with a small party, made up of twelve *Comandos Especiales* and a few of the local *ronderos*, to lend the soldiers a hand in guarding the stretch of the main road that ran alongside Toccto Lake—a notorious spot where guerrillas frequently ambushed passing motorists. They expected to be back by early evening, leaving a skeleton garrison of a single *Comando Especial*, called Pichiclito, and two local *ronderos* to guard Qeqra. The patrol first stopped in at the army base in Tambo town "in order to coordinate with Captain Rancing Lopez," the local army commander. It was already mid-morning by the time their meeting with the military officer finished, so they first ate a quick breakfast of "rancho frío" (cold rations consisting of biscuits, bread rolls, and tinned tuna or sardines) before catching a lift to Toccto Lake in three passing civilian vehicles. They arrived at their destination at around 11.00 a.m., where they found the soldiers relaxed-

ly manning a checkpoint they had set up on the road. While some of the soldiers were busy trying to get a better reception on their transistor radio, others were sitting on the ground and the sandbag barricade, basking in the intermittent sunshine or taking a nap. After coordinating with the sergeant in charge, “we decided to continue our patrol by scaling the rocky heights above Toccto Lake, in the direction of Rasuhuilca [mountain] and from there to assist in providing security and to search for traces of the Senderistas,” Zorro writes in his war diary.”²⁶ It was almost 1.00 p.m. by the time the twelve men reached the peak of the high, craggy ridge. They collapsed to the ground, fatigued by the steep, breath-shattering climb that had taken them to altitudes of over 4,000 metres. First rested for a few minutes, they then dug ravenously into their *rancho frio*, their hunger making them indifferent to the light drizzle that now began to fall. When they had finished their lunch, they paused just long enough to chew some coca before setting off once again. They headed east towards the adjacent mountain, where they hoped to be able to see Ccarhuapampa somewhere down on the opposite side. Along the way, a 30-year-old *rondero* nicknamed “Occe,” recalling that when he had gone on patrol with the Marine Infantry in 1986, they skirmished with guerrillas on more than one occasion in that very area, warned Comandos Kipo and Zorro to proceed with caution. It was as though a prophetic warning, for when they approached the next summit they suddenly encountered “the fresh tracks of Senderistas and scattered leaflets announcing an Armed Strike [*Paro Armado*]. A red flag had been planted on the crest of the hill.”²⁷ The rain began to fall once more. It was now around two o’clock. Comandos Kipo and Zorro divided the group into two squads, and they all began to creep cautiously towards the fluttering red flag. Comando Zorro narrates in his war diary the sequence of events upon climbing the hill:

Taking note of the red flag, we saw below us a vast lake called Yanacocha and a great gorge known as Qenuamonte....We decided to cross and in so doing arrive at the other mountain where we made use of a horse trail created by the Senderistas. We spread out and begin our descent, covering each other two by two. Upon arriving at the gorge we found a Senderista camp, caverns abandoned just a short time earlier, the ground littered with animal bones from the Senderistas’ last meal. Continuing on our way we passed through a marsh while crossing from one mountain to another. When we reached the next rocky outcrop, we rested for some minutes. It was almost 3.30 in the afternoon....It was already late. We continued on our way. We were already lost in the mountain....Hail began to fall after a torrential rainfall. And there we were, lost. It was almost 4 p.m. in the afternoon and we continued to scale the rocky slope of Qenuamonte amidst a shower of hail and lightning flashes. Halfway up we found another DD.TT. [Delinquent Terrorist] camp with subversive graffiti painted on the rocks saying: “*Viva el Presidente Gonzalo*” among others. But nevertheless we decided to forge on through the ichu grass, the boulders, and the snow, whereupon the two personnel we sent to scout ahead suddenly signalled to the rest of us to be on guard...gesturing that they had spotted a group of armed, unknown

persons...We immediately ordered all our personnel to go to ground and take cover. The Senderistas passed to the other side of the mountain. They numbered approximately 48 persons and [included] a group that was carrying water. We could do nothing because it was already late and, in addition, we were exhausted, and we were few in number, and we were not familiar with the territory. We decided to leave them in peace because they were not aware that we were watching them; and we ended up resting in one of the caves we found. It was already 5.30 in the afternoon; Kipo and Zorro began to coordinate and then to give orders to the personnel. We proceeded to make ourselves comfortable and to pass around our *rancho frío*. Afterwards we began to plan our attack for the morning of the following day.²⁸

The militiamen were awake before the break of dawn. Most of them had very little sleep, if any at all, given the need throughout the night to remain alert, and the gnawing anxiety they all felt about what the coming day might bring.

We were scared and anxious because we had made the decision to attack. We were all resolved and with faith in the Lord, we made ready to go. It was 4.30 a.m. Covering each other two by two, we headed off towards the summit so we could organise our attack from there. But when we got there we saw that at the summit was a SL sentry smoking a cigarette. Nevertheless, we managed to elude the sentry and we rapidly organised the attack. We concealed ourselves so as to study the entrance and to realise our action before dawn broke. We selected nine individuals and divided them into two groups, among them Zorro and Kipo as the leaders of the assault, where participating in the first group were: Comando Kipo, Comando Zorro, Barantos, Vaqueta, and Maton; and in the second group: Araña, Angel, Tatung, and Occe, an auxiliary personnel. Meanwhile we left a third group as our rearguard under the command of Acchi, and two auxiliary personnel with instructions to climb to the summit of the hill, where the sentry was.²⁹

The two groups carefully inched forward, like hunters stalking prey. One advanced quietly along the lower slopes of the mountain, weaving around boulders and clumps of wild, knee-high ichu grass, while the men of the other group, crouching like apes, proceeded down a rough footpath they had seen the guerrillas using the day before. Large snowflakes falling on a light wind worked in their favour to conceal their approach. Apart from the lonely whistling of the wind, all was quiet. Comando Zorro sent Vaqueta up ahead to reconnoitre. It was now almost 5.45 a.m., and the eastern horizon had become visible as a bluish band. From a short distance away, Vaqueta gave a sign that he was directly above the Senderistas holed up in the cavern.

The five of us took up strategic position from which to attack the DD.TT...We waited a moment for the second group to catch up so we

could begin the attack when suddenly we saw two DD.TT. holding weapons in their hands. [The weapons] were G-3.³⁰ Both DD.TT. were having breakfast and preparing to relieve the sentry, close to whom our other group later appeared.³¹

It was now approximately 6.30. When the rearguard had managed to draw up close to the guerrilla sentry on the mountain peak, and the second group had got to within a few metres of the two other guerrillas eating breakfast at the mouth of the cave, Kipo and Zorro gave the signal to attack. An ear-splitting volley of gunfire, like the crack of a gigantic whip, was simultaneously unleashed on the rebels.

The [guerrillas]...began to shoot at us and there were others who had been sleeping inside the cave. All were alarmed. Upon hearing the sound of firing, they started to rush out of the cave. We were busy with those with weapons and the other group [of *ronderos*] with those who were shooting from inside the cave. We started to advance little by little so as to capture the DD.TT. alive. But they were shooting at us and so we had to shoot back, shouting for them to surrender. But some began to escape and at the same time the DD.TT. sentry [on the peak] began to shoot down at me and my group. I yelled for them to take cover. Meanwhile the other group [of *ronderos*] were annihilating without pity all those who were issuing from the cave including women and children, and when we were in the thick of the fight, a boy of almost 8 years old approached me pleading for me not to do anything to him. I told him to be calm and he wouldn't get hurt. When we resumed firing [on the other rebels] the boy started to escape for fear and I just let him because I had no time to worry myself about him. The firing continued and one of the SL suddenly appeared in front of me, firing his weapon, and in order to defend myself I shot at his head, grazing it. He fell wounded, bleeding. He dropped his G-3 and I ordered one of my men to get it.³²

Taken completely by surprise, the rebels soon found themselves in serious trouble. But the two assault groups of *ronderos* poised themselves for a final assault on the cave, they suddenly came under heavy gunfire from the summit above. They were momentarily pinned down and prevented from taking the cave. Apparently, the rearguard had not yet succeeded in taking out the sentinel on the peak, as the *ronderos* below had assumed. After a few tense moments, the rearguard finally overpowered the sentinel, and so began to give covering fire to the *ronderos* below. Zorro and two *ronderos* advanced cautiously towards the mouth of the cave. When they had got very close, three women suddenly burst from the dark entrance. One blazed away with a .38 calibre revolver while another rushed forward with a grenade in her hand. At this critical moment, Zorro's Mauser rifle jammed. He knew that he had no time to run away, no cover behind which to turn. As the woman pointed her revolver at him, however, one of the other *ronderos* shot her, and covering fire from the *ronderos* on the slope and peak above them brought down the other woman with the grenade.

Both women fell to the ground, and the third turned to run away. The woman with the grenade had already pulled the pin, however, and Zorro and his men barely had time to throw themselves on the ground before a deafening explosion convulsed the earth beneath them. Stunned for a couple of seconds, the militiamen quickly jumped to their feet and charged forward through the smoke. They found two of the women alive but badly injured. The third was unhurt but stunned. In the meantime, the second squad of militiamen stormed the cave,

...where they found all the [Senderistas] killed. There were 17 dead, both men and women. It was by now around 7.00 a.m. in the morning. We began searching carefully through their belongings. We found military grenades, homemade bombs, electrically detonated land mines, cassette recorders, walkie-talkies, 1 breech-loading shotgun. We also recovered 2 G-3, 1 revolver, 1 large binocular, FAL cartridge clips, munitions, clothes, medicines and other objects....³³

During the firefight, three of the guerrillas managed to escape. They were probably now on their way to fetch reinforcements. (Recall the larger company of guerrillas spotted the previous afternoon.) The *ronderos* had been unbelievably lucky, for in spite of the heavy exchange of gunfire not a single militiaman had been killed or even wounded. The only problem reported was the disturbing frequency with which their Mauser rifles jammed during the skirmish.³⁴ Nevertheless, this time the *ronderos* had triumphed, having had the advantage of surprise on their side.

Zorro and Kipo walked over to where the guerrilla that Zorro had shot in the head was lying. He was wounded, but still defiant. The *ronderos* began to question him.

...he was the military commander of Platoon III. His nom de guerre was "*MELQUIADES*" and the other dead man who was the political cadre of the same platoon [was] "*JAVIER*"; we were unable to carry him, [for] he was grievously wounded. We got some information from him and later he left us no alternative but to put a bullet in his head because he spat in our faces and called us "*Yanaumas* [Blackheads], Miserable Dogs of the Government."³⁵

After some minutes, their lookout on the peak sounded the alarm that he had spotted another group of Senderistas heading their way. The *ronderos* quickly collected as much of the rebel equipment as they could carry and made a hasty and orderly retreat back up the footpath, "everyone overjoyed at having triumphed safe and sound, without a loss on our part."³⁶ To make it more difficult for their pursuers, they dispersed into smaller groups of three or four individuals upon entering a wide valley. They were slowed down somewhat by having to take turns carrying the three captured women, whom they had decided to take with them. But they had got a good head start on their pursuers, who were gradually outdistanced by the strong legs and sure footing of the serrano militiamen. The Senderistas eventually gave up the chase. The two injured women had already lost a lot of blood, but they managed neverthe-

less to walk by themselves when the exhausted *ronderos* were no longer able to carry them. After walking for more than an hour, the militiamen finally entered familiar territory. Seven *ronderos* went ahead to fetch help from the community of Acco, leaving the rest of the personnel behind to tend to the wounded women. When they got to only a short distance away, the *ronderos* suddenly found they were being fired upon. They feared at first that the guerrillas had somehow overtaken them. In fact, they were being shot at from two sides by *ronderos* from the civil defence patrols of Acco and Ccarhuapampa, who had come to investigate

...because they had heard gunshots at dawn, besides which they had been told that we had been lost in the mountains. [Upon seeing our group and] given that we had 3 women with us, they mistook us for Senderistas coming down to resupply themselves, and so they had concealed themselves, ready and waiting to engage us. Furthermore, we descending wearing ponchos that we had taken from the Senderistas. At that point, I sent two personnel ahead to identify ourselves and we all began to shout, “We’re the Patrol from Pichihuilca, the *Comandos Especiales!*”³⁷

Upon realising their mistake, the *ronderos* of Acco and Ccarhuapampa stopped firing and rushed to assist the *Comandos Especiales*.

Leaving the rest of the group in safe hands of these *ronderos*, the advance party of the *Comandos Especiales* pressed on ahead. When the seven men reached Qeqra, many of the *comuneros* gathered at the entrance of the village suddenly burst into weeping. For seeing only seven *ronderos* returning, the people immediately assumed that the rest of the group had been lost. But their cries of sorrow became tears of joy upon learning that not only was the rest of the group returning without a single casualty, but that they also had prisoners and a large cache of captured equipment with them. When the rest of the patrol had returned later that day, the militiamen and the *comuneros* of Qeqra celebrated their victory with a party that lasted well into the early hours of the morning. The next day, Comandos Kipo and Zorro and all the personnel of the patrol went to the army base at Tambo to receive the personal congratulations of the military commander. The militiamen turned over to the base commander all the firearms and equipment they had captured—but not their prisoners. And what became of the three Senderistas captured in battle? In his diary, Zorro writes:

With regard to the 3 captured girls, we sent the 2 wounded ones to the Red Cross [in Huamanga] for their recuperation and later they were returned to our Central Base of Operations. They had grown accustomed to living with us, cooking, going so far as to help us with washing our clothes. And we in return bought them their clothes. Some months later, two of them, Dina and the Gringa came to be reunited with their relatives....But the other girl (Nancy) was touched by a bad destiny. In one of the operations she escaped and returned again to the ranks of Sendero in January '92; and in the month of

February '92 they raided our base, managing to kill one of our personnel and afterwards we heard nothing more about her.³⁸

5.5 The tactics of the *Comandos Especiales*

The details of this episode offers insight into how the *Comandos Especiales* operated and functioned in the field, particularly their tactics. In most of their routine operations, the *Comandos Especiales* worked in small squads. They moved through open terrain two by two, with sufficient distance between each pair to make it more difficult for the enemy to ambush the entire party. When contact with the enemy was made, Zorro and Kipo wisely took into account a number of factors before deciding whether to attack: the terrain and weather conditions, the deployment and numerical strength of the enemy, how late it was in the day, the physical condition and morale of their men, and whether they held the advantage of surprise. Having determined that their men were too tired, that it was already getting dark, and that the Senderistas were dispersed into various groups which together outnumbered them, Kipo and Zorro prudently decided to allow their men to take a few hours of rest in a cave before attempting a pre-dawn attack, when it would be more likely that the element of surprise would be in their favour. The next morning, Zorro and Kipo divided up the party into three separate assault teams, and then simultaneously deployed each one to positions that would enable them to provide mutual covering and suppression fire when advancing on the rebel stronghold in turn. Here we have a vivid example of militiamen using *offensive* tactics, which, as we saw in the last chapter, was the tactical trait that distinguished the DECAS from all other earlier or contemporary civil defence organisations in Ayacucho.

Clearly, the *Comandos Especiales* understood and systematically used sophisticated military tactics. In fact, militiamen and guerrillas alike have even remarked to me that the DECAS consistently employed many of the same guerrilla warfare tactics used by Shining Path. This was explained to me in 1997 by Camarada Juanita, a guerrilla from Viscatán who had been captured by the army and handed over to DIVICOTE³⁹: “The *ronderos* and the Party are almost equal because the *ronderos* were once also support bases [*“bases de apoyo”*]⁴⁰ and participated in the armed actions [of the guerrillas]. For this reason they fight in the same manner”⁴¹

It was this emergent “professionalism” in the civil defence movement, spearheaded by the DECAS and reflected in the sophisticated military tactics they utilised in the field, which would prove largely responsible for turning the peasant militias into a potent counterinsurgency force during the 1990s. Nevertheless, most *ronderos* also readily admit the importance of receiving active support and assistance from the military as a significant morale factor in the rural population’s resistance to Sendero Luminoso. When talking about the general combat performance or moral fortitude of the army, however, many *ronderos* tend to view their powerful patrons as somewhat naive, ham-fisted, and occasionally rather less than courageous. And as far as policemen were concerned, peasants had long ago already dismissed them as cowardly and corrupt bullies. “The only thing that the police do,” Comando Zorro once remarked to me, “is practically to dedicate themselves to robbing, no? From each driver they

extort one sol. There's no control over such personnel. In this way, when are we ever going to put an end to the subversion? There are times when a policeman with private financial problems would receive a bribe from one of those subversive, and he'd set them free.⁴²

As we have already seen in an earlier chapter, the popular image of the police as corrupt, undisciplined, and brutal was an important reason why peasants initially applauded and heartily encouraged guerrilla assaults on police stations and policemen in the early years of conflict. Furthermore, when it came to fighting, the popular opinion was that policemen are vastly inferior to Senderistas or to *ronderos*. In fact, for the military strength that Sendero came rapidly to acquire in the early years of armed struggle, both peasants and external observers more often than not blame the police (Kuijt 1996:248). As Zorro explained to me,

The subversion armed itself through the police. Because [the policemen] would come and go without taking care, without exercising much responsibility and security. They believe themselves to be superior to us. However, in reality, seeing them in action, they're not superior to us. Because we, strategically speaking, are familiar with the subversive movement or that which the subversion utilises. In a fight, perhaps [the police] know how to perform certain manoeuvres, but you can't use these when the subversion surprises you, for the subversion confronts you by surprise, and not as though on a battlefield.⁴³

Similarly, by the mid-1990s, many *ronderos* in the Ayacuchan provinces of Huanta, Huamanga, and La Mar genuinely deem themselves to be more proficient and effective in combat than even the army. *Ronderos* are not hesitant to state this publicly, and can be quite candid about it. "[The soldiers] carry out operations constantly, but it seems they're not so productive," CAD president Julio Talavera once told the periodical *Ideele*.

What happens is that they are not familiar with the zone. They put people from the coast who are not used to walking [long distances], and it's a very difficult zone. On the other hand, the subversion knows all of this very well and go on ambushing them frequently. Furthermore, they have radio communications [and can listen in on army transmissions] and so they know where the soldiers are going. Those whom [the guerrillas] are unable to locate are the *Defensa [Civil]*, they don't know if we're going or not. They can only find out about our movements through some informers that they have in the communities.... There's a difference between [the Army] and us. They protect their arms and their people quite a lot. Therefore, they make their patrols in groups, whereas the *Defensa* is fluid. That's to say, in our patrols we spread out in groups of no more than three or four people and so we cover great distances of territory. In this way, it's very difficult to ambush us. They can attack one small group, but the others will immediately come to their aid. That is our tactic. Previously we

worked like the Army, that's to say, we walked together in platoon formation, but we suffered a lot casualties. They detected us, surrounded us and easily attacked us (quoted in IDL 1996:67).

Comando Zorro deems the counterinsurgency efforts and achievements of the army to be, for the most part, praiseworthy. Yet, at the same time, he is also critical of the abuses committed in the past by the military. "The Army has fought considerably," he told me. "We have recovered villages with the Army. Therefore I don't want to say anything bad about them." Nevertheless, in the privacy of his war diary, Comando Zorro expressed his personal disappointment with indolent army patrol commanders who shirk their duties, and are afraid to clash with the enemy:

The first operations realised with the personnel of the Peruvian Army did not have a beneficial result because the leaders of the army patrol put us under their command. And they would even go so far as to deceive their superiors. Like, for example, the time when we headed out of Tambo in the direction of [various "red zones"], we only went as far as the community of Huayao. There [the soldiers] installed their radio transceiver. Calculating the amount of time it would take for them to get to the place where they had been ordered to go by their superiors, they later radioed saying that they hadn't encountered anything out of the ordinary, nor had they come across any trace of the delinquent terrorists. Afterwards they called all the *comuneros* together and forced them to butcher their chickens or sheep to feed the soldiers. In the meantime, the civil defence personnel have lost time and the subversion takes advantage of this.... At other times, when [the soldiers] are about to arrive at a place where they suspect there are terrorists, they fire shots into the air as if to say "Take off! Here we come!" and so the terrorists would escape.⁴⁴

Obviously, the *ronderos* were comparatively disadvantaged when it came to firepower or access to technical equipment, like radios. Nevertheless, when it came to the intangibles that are crucial to success in battle—courage, cunning, a superior knowledge of the terrain and Shining Path's tactics, and the will to win—the general opinion among rural people was that the *ronderos* held a considerable advantage over the army and the police. And despite their hatred of the *ronderos*, even the Senderistas have begrudged them a greater degree of respect as fighters than they do the military or the police. "It's true, the *Rondas Campesinas* have combated Sendero the most," Camarada Juanita admitted to me. "The Party has no fear of the *ronderos*. But yes, it is more careful of the *ronderos* than of the government soldiers, or of the police, because it is the *ronderos* who persecute them constantly."⁴⁵

In recent years, the *ronderos*' pride in their proven effectiveness and for the part they have played in the counterinsurgency struggle has lifted the rural population's morale, and raised their self-esteem. "In reality, it has been the *ronderos* who have brought about the pacification, it hasn't been the Army or the Police," Comando Zorro told me in 1997.⁴⁶ In the course of the 1990s, the popular depiction of civil

defence organisations as those truly responsible for the “defeat” of Shining Path and the pacification of the countryside helped to foster the a national phenomenon which can be referred to as “*cholo* pride.” This greater self-esteem on the part of the indigenous population has contributed to growing feelings of “*cholo* power,” which as we shall discuss in a later chapter, reached its fullest expression during the general elections of 2000.

5.6 On reconnaissance patrol with auxiliary *ronderos* of Ccarhuapampa

While it might indeed be true that *ronderos* tended to exhibit more courage and fighting spirit than policemen or conscript soldiers and their officers did, it must also be said that overconfidence and over enthusiasm, particularly among inexperienced or rash auxiliary personnel, have at times led to disaster. The following episode in our continuing look at the history of the self-defence movement in Tambo district illustrates one tragic instance of this.

Despite the annihilation of Platoon III and the capture of some of its members, other guerrilla forces in the sub-region nevertheless continued to attack and hijack private and commercial vehicles, particularly those travelling through the area of Toccto-Quenamonte. (The guerrillas who had given chase to Zorro and his group were probably the ones behind these subsequent actions.) The rebels, in what must have been meant as retaliation for the assistance that Zorro’s patrol received from those Acco and Ccarhuapampa, also stepped up raids on the livestock herds of Acco and Ccarhuapampa. The guerrillas could not afford to be seen as having been crippled by the destruction of Platoon III, though in practical terms they most probably were. It was in the light of this escalation of guerrilla activity in the district that a patrol of *Comandos Especiales* decided to set out in mid-December to reconnoitre the area along the western border of the district in the hopes of finding and eliminating more Senderista columns. They were joined on this operation by a group of auxiliary personnel from Ccarhuapampa.

Once again, the patrollers made the gruelling climb up the rocky heights above Toccto Lake, where they inspected some caves. The patrol then split into two companies of forty *ronderos* each, with Comando Zorro in charge of one and Comando Kipo leading the other. They were supposed to proceed in tandem a short distance apart, but the two groups quickly lost sight of each other once they entered a thick shroud of low cloud that enveloped the crest of the ridge. Each company continued on its own, hoping to link up later in the day at the prearranged rendezvous point at Vizcacha. But Kipo’s group lost its way and never made it to Vizcacha. It had instead marched so far as to have crossed over into the district of Huamanguilla, in neighbouring Huanta province. At that time of year, the *punas* are frequently covered in heavy, drifting fog that severely hampers visibility. Under such conditions, even seasoned guides have been known to occasionally lose their way.

Meanwhile, Zorro’s group trekked on for hours until someone suddenly spotted, through a break in the fog, a number of dark figures making their way slowly down the rocky slope of a jutting peak. The individuals were perhaps a couple of hundred metres away. Judging from the fact that they were travelling in twos and deployed

about thirty metres apart, there could be no doubt they were Senderistas. Fortunately for the *ronderos*, the guerrillas had not yet spotted them.

We hid ourselves and observed where they were heading, so as to capture them. But in this, the auxiliary personnel of Ccarhuapampa were excited, and expressed their desire to rush ahead and seize them. However, the operation was under our control... We waited until the Senderistas had disappeared. They were approximately 3 women and 9 men. They had not noticed we were following them. We lost sight of them after they entered the other gorge called Huarmihuañusca.⁴⁷

Comando Zorro and four of his *Comandos Especiales* scurried ahead. They caught sight of the Senderistas once again, and shadowed them from a distance of about two hundred metres. The rest of the *ronderos* followed about a kilometre behind.

This was the first time military operation in which the *Comandos Especiales* were accompanied by a large number of *ronderos* from one of Tambo's communities. On this occasion, many of the overenthusiastic *ronderos* from Ccarhuapampa were proving difficult to control. It was obvious to Zorro they were spoiling for a fight when they became terribly disappointed when the *Comandos Especiales* kept them back from charging ahead to capture the Senderistas coming down the mountainside.

Stalking the unsuspecting Senderistas, Zorro and his advance party eventually came to a shallow depression between two hills, in which stood the roofless ruins of a number of circular stone huts. The area was known as Balcón, and this hamlet was one of a number that had been abandoned by their inhabitants at the height of political violence in the first half of the 1980s. While the guerrillas laughed and joked with one another as they busily loaded some packhorses and mules, the *Comandos Especiales* closed in to ambush. Zorro and Chale crept to within a few dozen metres of the guerrillas; three other *Comandos Especiales* positioned themselves behind some boulders and carefully aimed their Mauser rifles at their selected targets. With fingers on the trigger, they waited just a few moments longer to allow Zorro and Chale to get a little closer.

"*There they are!*" someone suddenly bellowed from behind them, shattering the air as violently as though it were a gunshot. Startled and thinking themselves being attacked from behind, the *Comandos Especiales* spun around, ready to open fire. Meanwhile the guerrillas in the camp threw themselves on the ground, unaware of how close they had come just moments before to being killed.

It was our auxiliary personnel catching up. They appeared, charging and screaming, "*There they are!*"....The entire group of auxiliary personnel rushed down the slope with the intention of capturing the Senderistas alive. They didn't carry any firearms, for they were serving only as auxiliary personnel and guides. But the Senderistas started to shoot without pity. We who were close by also began to fire so as to give cover to those people. In all of this, one of the DD.TT. threw a grenade that landed some 3 metres from us. We dove to the ground to save ourselves but the explosion hurled us on to our sides. We

thought we were dead. The terrorists were escaping up the far slope. It was becoming dark so fast. Just then, one of the Senderista bullets smashed into the body of one of the *ronderos campesinos*. Wounded, he fell to the ground. The rest of the auxiliary personnel fled, abandoning us. They had run away, frightened by the firefight.⁴⁸

The *Comandos Especiales* gave chase to the guerrillas, but the Senderistas had already vanished into the hills, dragging their precious pack animals away with them. It was already late in the afternoon, and to pursue them now, into the deepening gloom with so few men, would be to risk being ambushed. The wounded man lay on the ground, writhing and howling in pain. He had been hit in the arm close to his shoulder, and judging from the heavy bleeding the bullet must have hit an artery. Deserted by their guides and auxiliary personnel, the *Comandos Especiales* were as good as lost in the dark. Being unable to return immediately to Tambo town, they could do nothing more for the casualty than to staunch the wound with a rag and carry him to a cave nearby. There they all spent a tense and sleepless night wondering if they would be attacked. Meanwhile the wounded man moaned pitifully and drifted with every passing hour ever deeper into shock. At dawn, the auxiliary personnel came sheepishly back to the *Comandos Especiales*. Zorro ordered them to carry their wounded comrade, and the group returned to Tambo town as fast as it could. “We descended the mountain in the direction of Tambo with misfortune because the casualty was gravely wounded and later died when en route to the hospital in San Miguel.”⁴⁹

Unlike many Shining Path guerrilla columns, the civil defence patrols lacked medics in their ranks.⁵⁰ This small detail is a stark reflection of the social stratum from which the militiamen were almost exclusively drawn; they were, for the most part, rural peasants with a little or no education, let alone knowledge of first aid. Unlike the guerrillas, who have no qualms about kidnapping doctors and nurses, the civil patrols were not permitted to conscript medical professionals against their will for their operations and patrols. Moreover, I have never heard any mention of medical personnel from the local hospital in Tambo ever volunteering to go out on military operations with the CADs. Lack of adequate battlefield medical care therefore always posed a formidable disadvantage for the militia patrols. Even the most seasoned and educated of the militiamen, like Comando Zorro, were still practically ignorant of basic medical treatment. In fact, the great majority of militia patrols I met in Ayacucho department were not even equipped with a simple first-aid kit. Therefore, a critically wounded *rondero*'s best chance of survival (if unaccompanied by an army platoon, which were often equipped with basic medical supplies and its own medic) depended on getting to the nearest health post within the first hours of injury—something that is virtually impossible when lost in the dark in a remote part of the *punas*, as Zorro and his party were that night.

Reckless though it was, the behaviour of the auxiliary *ronderos* of Ccarhuapampa during the encounter was nevertheless understandable. Their self-confidence during the operation was undoubtedly bolstered by the presence of the armed *Comandos Especiales*. They probably had also been eager to jump at the chance to equal or better the earlier success of Zorro and Kipo's patrol by also capturing some Senderistas alive. Their actions, however, suggested that they had little prior experience in com-

bat operations, and less familiarity with the tactics of stealthy surprise attack. As with most *ronderos* in the sierra at the time, these auxiliaries were probably more accustomed to fighting defensively from behind Ccarhuapampa's fortified ramparts, than actually going out to hunt down the enemy down. The DECAS' offensive tactics and guerrilla-style of fighting were most likely new to them. (It was, after all, the first combined operation between the *Comandos Especiales* and the *ronderos* of Ccarhuapampa.) In any case, the experience taught them the bitter lesson that against a mortal adversary like Sendero, zeal without tactics and discipline will almost certainly result in defeat. Nevertheless, such tragic incidents did not immediately deter auxiliary *ronderos* in Tambo district from taking part in future combined military operations with the *Comandos Especiales*, for it was only by participating in such operations that they could learn to become competent and effective militiamen like the *Comandos Especiales*.

The rural population in general certainly appears to have accepted reverses and losses over the years as the unavoidable hazard and cost that came with battling Sendero Luminoso. As one of Tambo's *ronderos* remarked to me in 1997, "We continued to participate [in civil defence] because we believed that it's better to die courageously fighting than to passively await our fatal turn, as in the case of others who have been executed after those so-called people's trials."⁵¹

5.7 First capitulation of guerrillas to *Comandos Especiales* in Tambo District

A most astonishing sight met a patrol of *Comandos Especiales* one cold and misty morning in December 1991. While crossing a peasant's field, they suddenly spotted an unarmed man standing a short distance away, waving a white rag above his head. After some minutes, the man began to walk slowly towards them, despite the certain knowledge that the suspicious militiamen had their rifles aimed at his body. When he had got quite close, he stopped and announce in a strong voice that his name was Romulo Cordova Quispe, a political cadre with the pseudonym Camarada Roger, and that he and his companions wished to surrender to the *Comandos Especiales*.⁵² After receiving guarantees from the patrol leader that they would not be harmed, the Senderista waved the white rag in the direction from which he had come, in answer to which four figures cautiously emerged from behind the large cactuses and ichu grass, and walked slowly towards their captors.

It was the first voluntary capitulation of guerrillas to the *Comandos Especiales* in Tambo district, and it immediately raised the spirits of the local population and the *Comandos Especiales*. This small band of guerrilla combatants had come from the "liberated zone" of Sello de Oro, situated northeast of Tambo, in the *ceja de selva* of La Mar province. They had deserted while on nighttime patrol duty, and had marched all night before spotting the milita patrol. With them, the guerrillas also surrendered the large amount of materiel they were carrying: "home-made bombs, AKM munitions, hand grenades, dynamite and fuses."⁵³

According to the deserters, the hardships of guerrilla life had become unbearable for them, and for this reason they decided to surrender to the *Comandos Especiales*.

All were suffering from malnutrition and various illnesses owing to hard years spent alternating so often between the freezing, high *punas* and the humid, subtropical *ceja de selva*. Indeed, the demands of guerrilla life were such that when not engaged in combat with government troops and civil defence militiamen, one nevertheless had to contend with a constant struggle for basic existence. Illness, disease, fatigue, poor diet and even famine gnawed at them every minute of each day. Over the next two years, survival conditions for the guerrillas and their *masas* would progressively deteriorate to a wretched state of hunger and acute shortage as more and more communities in La Mar and Huanta provinces stopped providing Shining Path with aid and tribute, and instead organised themselves into village defence committees. Even the lorry drivers who plied the road between Huamanga and San Francisco formed an *Asociación de Transportistas* in the final months of 1992, pooling money together to hire their *rentados* to protect drivers and their cargo.⁵⁴

By 1993, the majority of peasants had already lost their fear of Sendero Luminoso, and great swaths of an increasingly hostile countryside had already closed up to the guerrillas. A growing anti-Sendero resistance now hampered their movement in the *campo*, and with it their ability to resupply themselves with manpower and resources. Camarada Juanita explained Shining Path's deepening crisis to me:

From the moment that the comités de autodefensa were formed, the Party could no longer enter just like that.... They no longer could easily penetrate the communities because they knew that certain villages were already organised, and that at any moment, against any threat, the entire village was prepared to come out fighting, no? That's to say, the patrollers, more than anything. Therefore [the guerrillas] were no longer able to enter. Why [if not for this reason] have [the guerrillas] abandoned [Support] Base 14? Why have they abandoned Base 21, and Base 7 too. These were, as they say, "bastions of iron" which were difficult to move because [Sendero's] entire force was concentrated there. But when the moment came for the formation of Comités de Autodefensa, the Party had to retreat its forces to conserve itself, as we say; its personnel, the people it had, no? Because in those moments, when the Comités de Autodefensa were formed, the Party's people began to be defeated everywhere—the guerrillas, the platoons that they deployed, as well as the *Fuerza Local*, their territorial network. That's to say, the small organs of the Party that they sent out to politicise the masses. They could no longer do this political work in La Mar, neither in the city nor in the countryside, when the communities began to form Comités de Autodefensa.⁵⁵

Guerrilla forces in the northern half of Ayacucho thus found themselves pushed back to more marginal areas of the department. They were forced to relinquish vast cultivated territories where hitherto their *masas* toiled to grow food for them. But rather than allow their unharvested crops to fall into enemy hands, the vengeful retreating guerrillas sometimes took the trouble to burn and so destroy immense hectares of food and cash crops behind them, just as Stalin had done to thwart the

German Army's rapid and deep advance into Soviet territory in 1941.⁵⁶ For in so far as Shining Path was concerned, that they were waging was nothing less than total war.

"The combatants of the *Fuerza Principal* were forced to retreat to the Ene River Valley and to the zone of Viscatán—virtually inaccessible areas where they could better maintain a secure hold on their masses," wrote Comando Zorro. The retreat of Shining Path's forces from rich agricultural regions, like the Apurímac Valley and the district of Tambo, intensified subsistence difficulties for combatants and their *masas* alike. Based on numerous testimonies collected from surrendered combatants and *masas* from three of Shining Path strongholds in Ayacucho, Ponciano del Pino has been able to describe what daily life was like in the Sello de Oro in its final years:

In contrast to the first years of the war, when the base had been able to survive without great sacrifices, by 1988 the families were living in plastic tents, exposed to the weather, and without sufficient clothing. Nutrition was the most serious problem. In the last few years, the families virtually stopped consuming salt, sugar, vegetables, and stews. Their diet was limited to what they produced: yucca and pitus, in ever-decreasing quantities. Children were the most vulnerable victims....At the moment that Sello de Oro turned itself in (October 1993), 100 percent [of the children] suffered from anaemia, and many were afflicted with tuberculosis, acute bronchitis, and malaria....[As] Senderista forces became more vulnerable, survival more difficult, and the families more decimated, it was not only mothers who felt the pain of the children. Even the mandos of the base force eventually saw reason and lost faith in Shining Path (1998:177; also see del Pino 1995b).

Worsening living conditions and dwindling supplies of food ignited long-simmering discontentment and internal dissensions within the *masas* controlled by Sendero. The Party reacted by tightening its "system of internal control and domination by increasing punishments and exemplary violence within the People's Committees" (del Pino 1998:167). It tried to shore up its image of power and terror by resorting to increasingly cruel punishments. Yet, as del Pino pointed out, "[more] than power, this violence reflected fear; more than recovery and strength, it reflected exhaustion and weakness" (del Pino 1998:168). And even within the privileged *Fuerza Principal*, cadres and combatants alike began to nurse serious misgivings about the growing contradictions within the organisation, and the course being taken by the revolution. Camarada Juanita's simple account of the onset of her own disillusionment captures the disenchantment felt by many of the guerrillas themselves:

When I was integrated into the ranks of the Party, they inculcated in our minds the Party's political line, which was that, yes, we truly are fighting for the people. In other words, one organises the people, one fights in defence of the interests of the people, of the great majority, which are the peasant masses, no? For, indeed, the force of the peasantry is the principal force that directs the people's war; this is what

they say, no? Therefore, they always “conscienticise” you. From the moment they inculcate their politics in you, you get the idea that if you truly love your family, you must fight for the poor. But they themselves have committed abuses and have failed to respect the people, even though they say: “Fight for justice, fight for the people.” Yet they have done more to destroy the people than to construct something for the people. It is because of this that they are constantly clashing with the *ronderos*. It’s true; the *ronderos* loathe the Party because the Party has caused more damage to the peasants than to the city people. [The guerrillas] have demolished their crops, annihilated their livestock, have murdered their children, because the majority of the actions carried out here by the Zonal Committee of Ayacucho have been in the countryside.⁵⁷

The capture of Abimael Guzmán in Lima by DINCOTE on 12 September 1992, was immensely demoralising for the members of Shining Path. It was the most serious political setback for the movement to date, and accelerated the waning of what remained of Shining Path’s popular support throughout the country. Yet by no means did the occasion mark “*la derrota del terrorismo*”—“the defeat of terrorism”—as many of the Lima pundits triumphantly and prematurely were quick to declare; nor did it end political violence in the country. Indeed, under the new leadership of Oscar Alberto Ramírez Durand (alias Camarada Feliciano), the Party embarked on an orgy of violence that approached new levels of madness and cruelty. In Ayacucho, escalating terror swallowed Shining Path along with their erstwhile victims as the Party turned ferociously on its own ranks in a purge so terrifying as to cause hundreds of militants and civilian supporters to desert the organisation between 1994 and 1996. This dark chapter in the history of Shining Path in Ayacucho remains unknown to most outsiders.⁵⁸ The story told within Shining Path, according to Camarada Juanita, is that the purge began soon after the execution of the political secretary of *Base 33* (a village in the Ene River Valley) by his own comrades-in-arms, in 1994. The man had been accused by Party leaders—it is even said by Feliciano himself—of being a military agent, an *infiltrado* who had been plotting to lead the *masas* under his control to rebel against the Party. That the man was a *licenciado* (ex-soldier) provided the circumstantial evidence for his judges to convict him of having secret contacts with government forces in Masámari and Satipo. Whether or not he was indeed a military agent, the case generated within Ayacucho’s Regional Committee a paranoid fear of widespread infiltration within the organisation. It did not take long for the ensuing panic to spiral out of control. Suspicion fell first on the *licenciados* in the rebel ranks, and Camarada Juanita claims that all were tried and put to death as a precautionary measure. The terror came to be known within the Party ranks as the “*purgación política*” (“political purge”), and its victims would include not only suspected infiltrators, but also anyone else who voiced dissent or was suspected of harbouring counter-revolutionary ideas. “They generalised and linked individual personal problems to all the other [larger] problems the Party was experiencing during that critical situation,” said Camarada Juanita. “Within the ranks themselves, they killed anyone who complained or disagreed with the way things were.” Rather than cleansing the organisa-

tion and restoring it to its former formidable self, the bloody purge served only to plunge morale and spread panic in the ranks. It encouraged desertion, and, for many of those who remained, to initiate an intense (and invariably private) self-examination of their own participation and future in the so-called "People's Revolution."

Ever since '95, the moment that the Party began this "purge" as they call it within the Party, many people from its very ranks were executed. Therefore, it caused you to think that your life wasn't worth anything. All this regardless of the fact that you have served the Party, that you've given it the best years of your youth,...that you've invested in the Party, and have willingly ruined any normal life outside the Party. Therefore, I began to analyse things from the moment I began to live certain contradictions. For instance, when they killed the *licenciados*; and later when they began to kill, instead of cure, those who were ill. They even killed people just because they were no longer able to walk. They killed children, the elderly, women, and men. In addition, because there wasn't any more food to eat, nothing, if you were caught stealing a cob of maize, they'd kill you. If you ate more than others did, you were also killed. Anyone who did not follow the internal rules they laid down was put to death. Therefore, from that moment I started to think, "Why did we assault the vehicles, or attack a village, then? All of that only served to benefit the leaders. If there was a little bit of sugar, that was only for the leaders. When you captured a town, the best things, the best clothes were only for the leaders, for his wife, for their closest friends, no? They have also announced that the Party is no longer going to kill the people, that the Party would only request the voluntarism of the people, that they give assistance voluntarily. But in the end, when you robbed a vehicle and you threw everyone on to the pavement, you still robbed them of everything. And so we sometimes talked among ourselves. "What is going on is not good, one should instead do it like so." Now, from [captivity] one sees things in a different way, that it is a struggle that is totally absurd. It serves only to ruin the lives of the people who are still in their grip, because everything that one has had to suffer [as a guerrilla] is not just a trifle, no? To live in extreme poverty, with nothing to eat, nothing to clothe yourself with. All this. *And what for?* Only to benefit one's superiors, the leaders.⁵⁹

Despite many good reasons to desert the Party, however, the decision to do so was never easily taken by those who gave the idea serious thought. For vigilance was always tight,⁶⁰ and they were deterred by the especially cruel punishments that they knew would be meted out to recaptured deserters and their kin. "If within a family one of its members surrenders or deserts the ranks," explained Camarada Juanita, "the entire family would be executed. Therefore, one cannot desert. They had to put up with that life until they died. That's how things were."⁶¹ Paradoxically, in spite of its severe shortage of manpower, the Party would rather kill not just the deserters but

also their entire family, simply to make an object lesson of them. Clearly, in having relied for so long on *violence* as the primary mechanism by which it sought to coerce, dominate, and punish the population at large, the Party could now think of no other means to tackle internal dissension than with violence. (See the discussion on the Party's ideas regarding violence and punishment in chapter 2.)

Regardless of such terrifying deterrents, mass desertions continued during these years, particularly within the *Fuerza Principal*. In contrast to the *masa*, which was made up largely of families, most members of the *Fuerza Principal* were young people who had no family ties within the "guerrilla zone" where they lived. Many of these youths had been abducted from villages outside the "guerrilla zones"; others were orphans taken after Shining Path had killed their parents. Part of their indoctrination involved conditioning them to shed their affective ties to anyone or anything except the Party (see del Pino 1998:172-174). Camarada Juanita's experience, for instance, is typical among many of the young people who ended up in the *Fuerza Principal*. She was fourteen and had just finished her third year of secondary school when she was abducted in 1994 while playing volleyball in a village close to the town of Satipo.

When you are recently recruited, and they take you away, they do not trust you. You are always watched, always guarded. But then from the moment that you give your commitment and you promise to live with them and to take on that life, everything changes, no? They come and—it's always so—they formally present you at a Party ceremony, as they call it. For instance, the 19th of June, which is the "Day of Heroism," or the 7th of October, which is the "Day of the Founding of the Party." So they take you to a tent where they have a table draped in a red flag with hammer and sickle, on which are laying some tins of red and yellow flowers, everything. During the ceremony, you have to sign their act [acta], in a large notebook, and by signing you then pass, or rather, you become incorporated into, the ranks of the Party. For that reason, it may be said that a person's admission into the Party is sealed with a pledge of one's commitment to it. For this reason, if they escape...and they are captured, they are killed. Well, from the moment that I became a Senderista, then, I always read [the Party's] philosophy, no? They educate you in that. You had to know the political line of the Party because [as a test] they would sometimes ask you to repeat it.⁶²

Ironically enough, this sort of psychological conditioning meant that Shining Path's method of discouraging desertion—i.e. threatening to exact revenge on family members left behind—may actually have had little effect on many of the young people in the *Fuerza Principal*, who either had no family within "liberated zone," or had shed all other affective ties except for the Party. On the other hand, those for whom the punishment of annihilating one's family members continued to serve as a potent deterrent were the wretched *masas*. Even so, in spite of the signs that the Party was becoming weaker, the persistent and almost paranoid fear of the Party's omnipotence,

the fear that Shining Path could and would hunt them down wherever they went, was often enough to discourage even those without family ties in the guerrilla zone from trying to escape.

What often came of rebels who surrendered themselves? We should first note that most rebels were usually reluctant to give themselves up to the police or the military (who might first torture and then summarily execute them), and preferred instead to surrender to the rural militias. As we have already noted in the previous chapter, the DECAS already had their own system of “repentance and rehabilitation” for captured insurgents. Peasant militias often gave repentant rebels the chance to reintegrate themselves into the community and its defence organisation. As we have noted earlier, it was also from such individuals that the militias got their valuable information about Sendero’s strength and movements. For this reason, it was important to protect rebels who had recently surrendered or been captured from the reprisals or rescue attempts of their former guerrilla comrades. Consequently, these individuals would normally be lodged at the CDC’s zonal or central headquarters, which were well-defended sites where they could be guarded well and kept under constant surveillance.

In 1992, the Fujimori government adopted this practice by passing Decreto Ley No. 25499 “Ley de Arrepentimiento,” or Repentance Law, on 12 May. This piece of legislation offered *arrepentidos* (repentant insurgent) certain benefits, including either (1) a *reduction of the sentence* for those who voluntarily and definitively sever their ties with a “terrorist organisation” (i.e. MRTA or Sendero Luminoso), and confess their participation in “terrorist crimes,” or (2) an *exemption from the sentence* for those who, in the course of the criminal trial, voluntarily provides useful and truthful information which gives authorities the ability to undermine a “terrorist organisation,” such as information regarding the identity of its leaders or the details of its future actions, or (3) a *remission of the sentence* for condemned persons already serving their sentences who subsequently provide the pertinent authorities with the same sort of information as for those who qualify for the previous benefit. The legislation, however, was not intended to extend to national or regional-level rebel leaders, nor to the *mandos militares* (military commanders) of the guerrilla organisations. This was an illogical inconsistency, of course, for it was precisely such individuals who possessed the greatest amount of vital information about their organisations (Tapia 1997:81, fn.45; Rivera 1992:39). “This was solved,” as Tapia noted, “by making the application of the criteria flexible in some cases” (1997:81, fn.45).

The *Ley de Arrepentimiento* was ever only available for a limited time, and was repealed on 1 November 1994. By then, however, it had served its primary purpose, which was to substantially weaken the will of rank-and-file militants of the MRTA and (though to a lesser extent) Shining Path to continue armed struggle against the State. Official government sources claim that up to five thousand rebels turned themselves in under the Repentance Law, although, as Tapia suggest, this seems an exaggerated estimate (Tapia 1997:81).⁶³ Even so, the legislation might very well have been responsible for dealing the deathblow to Shining Forces in the Sello de Oro. Soon after they killed Elizabet (the leader of the People’s Committee), and some of her lieutenants, the disaffected *masa* and combatants of the Sello de Oro guerrilla zone surrendered to the Army on 24 October 1993. Thus collapsed what once had been one of the most important and feared Shining Path strongholds in the region.⁶⁴

5.8 The ambush of 'Los Halcones'

For 'Los Halcones,' Tambo's *Grupo Especial*, the morning of 26 January 1992 began just like any other day. Half of the group, twelve *Halcones*, caught a ride up to the notorious stretch of highway that ran past Tocctoqocha Lake where, as usual, they would spend the day assisting a platoon of soldiers at the checkpoint. On that particular morning, however, the militiamen arrived to find that the soldiers were not there, having been sent by their commander that day to another zone on a military operation. The militiamen set up a checkpoint all the same, and worked until about 3.30 p.m. before deciding to pack up and head back home. They hoped to catch a ride back to Tambo in a passing vehicle, but after waiting for almost an hour, it appeared unlikely that any more vehicles would pass by that day. They had no choice but to walk back to Tambo. Although it was already beginning to get dark, the militiamen felt no reason to worry. They knew that by going down into the Yanamito Ravine and walking alongside the Pumascca River, it was possible to reach Tambo town faster on foot than in a vehicle, which would have to drive slowly down the treacherously narrow switch-back dirt road above the town. By walking, they could be in Tambo within an hour. The patrol started down the valley at a brisk pace. The young men were relaxed, listening to music from a transistor radio and laughing among themselves, unaware that they were being watched. In fact, a squad of guerrillas had already been observing them for quite some time, and was now closing in to ambush them. As the militiamen entered a narrow part of the ravine, their leader, a 34-year-old *rentado* called Jaibol, was starting to say something when his head suddenly snapped back, as though reeling from the punch of an invisible fist. Even as he stumbled backwards, with blood pouring down the side of his face and neck, the ravine was abruptly filled with the deafening staccato of automatic gunfire punctuated by shotgun blasts. The bodies of some of the militiamen twitched and contorted grotesquely in the murderous cross-fire, while others were lifted into the air by the impact of the bullets before dropping dead or wounded to the ground. A few tried to run away, but the steep slopes of the ravine on either side of them made for a perfect trap. In less than five minutes, the cream of Tambo's civil defence movement had been annihilated.⁶⁵

Saved by the rapid advance of darkness, one of the militiamen miraculously escaped from the trap by crawling through the rocks and undergrowth, and his dead and dying comrades. Once he had made it out of the trap, he ran down the ravine as fast as he could, and so brought news of the disaster to the *Comandos Especiales* in Qeqra. Despite the risks of setting out in the dark, the *Comandos Especiales* requisitioned vehicles from some of the merchants in Tambo town and rushed as quickly as they could to the ambush site. When they got there, all they found were the sprawling, broken bodies of *los Halcones*, strewn about like the carcasses of slaughtered game. It was, as Comando Zorro describes in his diary, a scene of gory carnage. Apart from their gunshot wounds, many of the corpses had been grossly mutilated by the rebels as a terrifying warning to the defence organisations of Tambo: "The Delinquent terrorists, despite already having killed them, also blew up many of the bodies with dynamite."⁶⁶ The guerrillas had even crushed the heads of some of the corpses by dropping small boulders on them. They must have done so in anticipation of the added distress that such gruesome disfigurement would cause to

the *ronderos*' relatives when it came time to bury the bodies. The *Comandos* counted nine dead; the corpses of two *Halcones* were missing. When an extensive search of the immediate area failed to locate them, the militiamen could only conclude that they had been taken away, perhaps alive as prisoners. "We pursued them so as to try to recover the two captives, but it was already night-time and we couldn't do anything. Their tracks led off in the direction of Rasuhuillca."

With help from the soldiers of the army base and medical personnel from the town hospital, the *Comandos Especiales* and the remaining members of *Los Halcones* returned the next morning to retrieve the bodies of the dead men. The tragedy immediately provoked a widespread panic and despondency among the peasants in the district, and the *Comandos Especiales* found themselves faced with a grave crisis of confidence. "It was a huge blow to the [defence] organisations of Tambo," Zorro wrote in his diary. "[The peasants] began to lose heart and morale dropped completely because the *Grupo Especial* that we recently had formed had failed owing to the inferiority of the arms with which they were expected to engage Sendero. It is impossible to advance in this war with arms such as they were given. [Consequently], the communities wanted nothing more to do with the organisations."⁶⁷ At a general assembly in Qeqra, the very future and survival of the district's defence movement was heatedly debated by representatives of Tambo's rural villages. The peasants of Ccarhuapampa desired revenge, and urged the others to assemble a large company of armed men to hunt down the guerrillas. Most peasants from other villages, however, had been thoroughly disheartened by the massacre, and many now wanted to scrap the defence organisations altogether. It was futile and a waste of their lives, they argued, to try to stand up to the better-armed and better-trained guerrillas. Why did they ever think they could? Perhaps it was better, many remarked, just to rely on the local army garrison to protect them. That day, the *Comandos Especiales* had to do all in their power to persuade the peasants to continue with the civil defence organisations. In the end, the assembly agreed to reconstitute the *Grupo Especial*. It would be renamed *Los Condores*, and this time placed under the command of an experienced *Comando Especial* called Jergón. Most importantly, the *Comandos Especiales* had to promise to find a way to acquire Mauser rifles for *Los Condores*.

5.9 Mausers

First manufactured in Germany and first adopted as the standard issue rifle of the German army in World War I, the bolt-action Mauser *Gew98* and its subsequent model variants is an outstanding rifle, but are today collector's items and museum pieces in Europe.⁶⁸ When I lived in Tambo in 1997, I noticed that the Mausers the peasants there had bought with their hard-earned cash were all in poor condition. Many lacked sights, and some even had their wooden stock and barrel held together by nothing more than scotch tape and string. But whatever their condition, the Mausers were still highly desired by the *ronderos* because the firepower and range (though not the rate of fire) of this weapon is comparable to the modern assault rifles used by the guerrillas.

There are conflicting arguments as to exactly how *comités de autodefensa* have

managed to obtain their Mauser rifles. Comando Zorro told me that in the aftermath of the massacre of *Los Halcones*, “the communities began to acquire their firearms by selling their sheep, their pigs, chickens. Everyone contributed something. They gathered all this money together and bought Mausers.”⁶⁹ According to him, these rifles were “contraband merchandise,” bought by the communities from arms traffickers with whom the DECAS had put them in contact. He said he did not know the background of these dealers, whether they worked for the military, the *narcotraficantes*, or for themselves. On the other hand, Captain César Vásquez, the *Jefe Militar* (Military Chief) of the *Comités de Autodefensa* in the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica, told me in 1997 that it was the State, through the army, that supplied the *comités de autodefensa* with Mauser rifles, in addition to their Winchester and Mossberg shotguns. When I asked him if peasants had to purchase them, he insisted “No, no, no. All are donations.”⁷⁰ Could it be that some of the Mausers in the possession of the self-defence committees were donations from the state, while others were bought from arms traffickers?⁷¹ Not in the case of Tambo district, Zorro maintained.

The Mausers [we have] are *not* donations. They are arms that we ourselves have acquired, that we have bought to defend ourselves. This is because with those firearms presented to us by the government—that is to say the Winchester and Mossberg shotguns⁷² donated by the Army—we were unable to pursue the subversives because they have a lethal range of only forty, fifty metres, no more. The weapon that has benefited us the most has been the Mausers, which are weapons of war, no?

Julio Talevera Merino, Ayahuanco’s CAD president, told *Ideele* magazine much the same thing.

Each village began to form self-defence groups and to arm themselves, as individuals and also as a village, collecting dues. All the communities bought firearms. It was only in this way that one has been able to take out the subversion....Recently in 1991 [the villages received firearms from the army], but not all. Only six villages received five Winchester shotguns for each one. They were arms that served for making ambushes or for guard duty within the community, but not for clashes with the subversion (IDL 1996:66).

Even though the appearance of Mausers on the black market was counted by the *ronderos* as a blessing, the fact that they have had to pay anything for them at all was seen by many militia leaders as a disgraceful and an injustice on the part of the government. Comandante Huayhuaco expressed indignation to me in this regard:

In 1989, in the month of November, I met with the entire Council of Ministers principally to request them to supply us with Mauser rifles, which are already considered obsolete weapons, in disuse. However,

the result was that they did not want to give me the rifles. Yet when Alberto Fujimori became President of the Republic, those Mausers—and I don't know how—suddenly entered the informal [i.e. black] market, and been sold to us. Is it just that a civilised country, in circumstances of social-political crisis, should sell arms to their own citizens? It's a horrible shame that, as a matter of necessity, so as to defend themselves from Sendero's attacks, the communities must sell their pigs and their cows in order to buy those Mauser rifles.⁷³

Moreover, even on the black market, Mauser rifles are expensive. "Each one costs S/.1500 nuevos soles,"⁷⁴ Zorro told me, which was similar to what American anthropologist Orin Starn discovered that villagers in Puros, a community in the *pumas* of Huanta, had paid for their Mausers (Starn 1994:82). Given the exorbitant prices fetched by these antiquated and often dilapidated rifles, it is evident that some individual or some group (undoubtedly in the government or in the army) had been profiting enormously over the years from the climate of fear; a fear that drove peasant families to sell their livestock, scarce food supplies, and whatever other meagre possessions they had in order to pool enough money together to buy a weapon that they feel gives them better protection. More shocking still, Comando Zorro told me in 1997, "we are obliged by the army to arm ourselves. Obligatorily, each community *must* have two Mausers."⁷⁵

The arming of the rural militias with Mauser rifles has undeniably transformed them into a truly potent counterinsurgency force. Even so, it is important to note that the CADs' reliance on these weapons has also deepened their dependence on the army, and, conversely, has strengthened the army's influence over the CADs. We can be almost certain that this dependency was intentional on the part of the military. By equipping them with Mausers, they have helped to turn the peasant militias into an integral and effective force in the counterinsurgency struggle. But the comparative obsolescence of these weapons, coupled with the peasantry's dependence on the military as their main supplier of ammunition, all serve to enable the military to control the peasantry's capability to become an autonomous armed actor. And such controls helped to diminish the threat of an armed peasant uprising in the future, which is exactly what many senior military officers initially feared when the idea of arming the peasantry was first broached at the end of the 1980s.

Based on the evidence, it is quite certain that the majority of Mausers that were in circulation for most of the 1990s had originally come from Peruvian military stores in Lima.⁷⁶ There is little doubt that some branch of the military or the national intelligence service had been given the green light by higher authorities to place a large quantity of these weapons on the black market, where they could be sold to peasant self-defence organisations. The source of these weapons, however, is a question that is less important than that of exactly *how* they have ended up in the hands of the CADs. For at the heart of this matter is the crucial issue of *ownership*. The issue of *ownership* is itself central to the question of what will become of these firearms in the future. The official position of the military, as explained to me by Captain Vásquez, is that *all* of the Mausers, and most of the other firearms in the possession of the CADs, are all donations on loan from the military. It is for this reason, said Captain



Photo 4. Army officer (left of center) supervising distribution of shotgun ammunition to ronderos in Tambo

Vásquez, that they must all be returned to the military once pacification has been achieved.⁷⁷ Indeed, in this regard, Decreto Supremo No.077, the piece of legislation that regulated the organisation and function of the *Comités de Autodefensa*, stipulated that upon the dissolution of the *Comités de Autodefensa*, “the shotguns and munitions that the *Comités de Autodefensa* may have received shall be returned to the competent authorities” (El Peruano 1992:110355, Article 80). Clearly, Article 80 referred only to state-donated *escopetas* (shotguns), and as such makes no reference to the other types of firearms that have come into the hands of the *Comités*—notably the Mausers. What about them? Captain Vásquez insisted that they, too, had one day to be returned. However, peasant communities in rural districts like Tambo and Ayahuanco maintained that they have sacrificed too much in order to buy most of their firearms, particularly the Mausers. For this reason, they expressed that they had absolutely no intention of relinquishing them. According to the peasant militias, these firearms may be officially registered with the police and the military, but are considered by villagers to be community property. “Why are they going to take them away if we have paid for them?” Julio Talavera asked rhetorically. “They are registered with

DICAME. I don't believe that any community would give up the weapon that has cost it much sacrifice to obtain" (quoted in IDL 1996:68).

Militiamen in Tambo and other rural districts even told me that they were prepared to resist anyone who tried to take away their firearms, for it was only with firearms that they felt they could defend themselves against those who would otherwise try to harm or rob them, like the guerrillas or even abusive policemen. "If the military or the police tries to take away our firearms by force, there may be trouble," one *rondero* in Tambo remarked to me. In 1997, I noted that so long as this issue remains unresolved, it may loom as a potentially serious problem that could lead to future confrontation between the peasants and the State. The significant contribution that peasant self-defence organisations have made towards helping to defeat Shining Path—or at the very least to weaken it severely—speaks for itself. But by allowing the fragmentation of its monopoly of the use and means of legitimate force, the State has perhaps opened a Pandora's box that in coming years will prove difficult to close.

5.10 The guerrilla attack on Qeqra

Just three and a half weeks after the ambush of *Los Halcones*, the rebels struck again; this time, at the very heart of the civil defence movement in Tambo—they attacked Qeqra itself. Whether it was deliberately planned or merely coincidental, the attack caught the *Comandos Especiales* at their most vulnerable moment.

It was the time of Carnival, and it was customary for the *comuneros* to celebrate by holding a *corte monte*—a ritualised tree cutting festival.⁷⁸ The *Grupo Especial* had not yet been reconstituted, so the *Comandos Especiales* found themselves overextended in their ability to provide security to the revellers, while also guarding a number of capitulated or captured Senderistas in their custody. And if things were not difficult enough, the *Comandos Especiales* received word from Pichihuillca that twenty of their number were to be discharged because money to maintain them had finally run out. The fall in the price of coca during the early 1990s, coupled with an intense military crackdown on the drug trade (including coca cultivation in areas like the Apurímac River Valley) in accordance with a new anti-drugs accord signed between the United States and Peru in May 1991, meant loss of vital funds for the DECAS. "From then on, the [DECAS] organisation could afford to keep only a small number of personnel," recalled Zorro.⁷⁹ Those *Comandos Especiales* who had been ordered to return to Pichihuillca were accompanied back by Comando Sombra. He expected to be away for a week or two, and he left Comandos Zorro and Kipo in charge of the fifteen remaining *Comandos Especiales* in Qeqra. They were now critically undermanned, and this made Zorro uneasy. "The only thing I could do was to suspend the night-time *corte montes* and to redouble the men at the watchtower because it was known that they were going to attack us at any time, for on one of the operations to Rasuhuillca the Senderista [Nancy], whom we had captured on the 16th of November, escaped."⁸⁰ The militiamen assumed that she had returned to her old comrades with vital information regarding the defences and weaknesses of the *Comandos Especiales* in Qeqra.

Late the following afternoon, Comando Kipo set out with four other *ronderos* to

help sort out a domestic dispute in the community of Huayao. A man from that village had become engaged to a local woman, but the problem was that she was still married and living with her current husband in Qeqra. The issue had become a source of juicy gossip and hilarious amusement for the locals of both villages, but it made the *Comandos Especiales* worry that it might end in a violent altercation between the two men. Comando Kipo said that he would not be away for very long, though he also intended to make a short reconnaissance patrol on his way back to Qeqra. Zorro was understandably concerned when, by 10 p.m., the patrol had still not returned. He had just crawled into bed and was listening to his transistor radio when, suddenly, he heard automatic gunfire. "The [gunfire] was different from ours, because we don't have automatic weapons," he later wrote in his diary. "I immediately jumped out of bed. I ran to the Command Post to raise the alarm. I ordered all my personnel to man their posts and the sentries in the watchtower to stand fast."⁸¹

The sound of gunfire outside of the ramparts grew heavier, causing panic among the villagers inside the encampment. The *Comandos Especiales* soon began to fire back. The *comuneros* were running about the central plaza in terrified confusion, not knowing what to do or where to go. Eventually, one of the militiamen herded them together into a safe corner of the square, and told them to stay put until the attack had finished. As the firefight between the *Comandos* and the guerrillas intensified, the missing patrollers unexpectedly burst forth out of the darkness. They threw themselves on the ground at the foot of the front gate and pounded on it to be let in. "They've killed Kipo!" one of them cried. At about that same moment, the guerrillas lobbed a pair of hand grenades over the wall. A terrific explosion destroyed an adobe building on the far side of the fortified enclosure. The grenades had obviously been meant for the command post, and it was immediately clear that Camarada Nancy had given her comrades information about the layout of the buildings, and what was in them. Fortunately for the handful of captured Senderistas who normally were housed in the command post, the *Comandos Especiales* had had the foresight to relocate it only a few days earlier to another building on the other side of the square—a routine precautionary measure in case of attack. Had the guerrillas managed to hit the right building, they probably would have blown up the entire encampment, since the command post is ordinarily packed with crates of ammunition, dynamite, and hand grenades.

The sound of battle was heard from as far away as Tambo town, some three and a half kilometres distant. Immediately realising that the *Comandos Especiales* were under attack, Captain Rancing Lopez, the commander of Tambo's army garrison, hastily assembled and dispatched a flying column to relieve the defenders. When the army trucks got to within sight of the village, the soldiers poured out and charged headlong down the road. They were shouting fiercely and firing rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) at the flashing gunfire that gave away the position of the guerrillas, hidden in the dark fields around the protective walls of Qeqra. Upon realising that army reinforcements had arrived, the militiamen in Qeqra let loose wild shouts of elation, punctuated with blasts from their Mauser rifles and Mossberg shotguns aimed in the direction of the guerrillas. But just as the soldiers got to within about fifty metres of Qeqra's gate, one of them stepped on a land mine that had been planted earlier in the road by the guerrillas. The explosion sank hot shrapnel into soft flesh

and hurled bodies high up into the air. The soldier who had stepped on the mine died immediately, and four of his comrades were seriously injured. The counterattack was stopped cold, and the guerrillas took advantage of the ensuing moment of chaos and confusion to break off their own attack and steal safely away. Leaving a scene of pandemonium behind them, they need not worry about being pursued.

5.11 Creation of a CAD ‘Zona Urbana’

The attack on Qeqra dealt another heavy blow to Tambo district’s defence movement. Following rumours that some of Tambo’s townspeople had participated in the attack, the *Comandos Especiales* launched an investigation and took some people townspeople into custody. “They began to implicate various Tambinos, teachers, electrical technicians and nursing technicians, but only the two who had participated directly in the attack were brought to justice.”⁸² The attack on Qeqra provided the *Comandos Especiales* with an excuse to organise the town of Tambo itself. “We eventually discovered that Sendero was in the town, not in the countryside,” Zorro told me years later.

A strong organisation of Sendero existed in the town itself. There were sympathisers, mostly teachers, and the intellectuals. When we organised the district in ’91, we only organised the [rural] communities, that was all. Therefore Sendero continued to attack us. The military base was a neighbour to the [local guerrilla] leaders without knowing it. When we started seizing the Senderista ringleaders, it was then that the commander of the military base realised this. He said, “What? I myself have been living all this time beside Sendero?” This is what happened.⁸³

To neutralise Shining Path’s presence in the district capital, the *Comandos Especiales* organised the town and its surrounding barrios and *desplazado* settlements into a new defence zone, designated the “Zona Urbana.” A *junta directiva* was formed for the new zone, as were *comités de base* in all of the barrios and settlements. Thus were the adult inhabitants of the urban centre incorporated into the district’s civil defence network. “For the first time, even the townspeople had to take their turn on night patrol,” remarked Zorro.⁸⁴

The town and its barrios had not suffered any serious guerrilla incursion ever since the local army fort was built through communal labour, in countless *faenas* between 1986 and 1987. Many of the urban inhabitants looked to the soldiers of the garrison to defend them, and so did not see the need to organise themselves into a *ronda urbana*. Consequently, when the *Comandos Especiales* began to organise the town, even the urban inhabitants not linked with Shining Path began to resent this new intrusion on their lives. Consequently, some of the town’s elites, according to Zorro, brought accusations of rape, assault, robbery, murder, and human rights abuses against members of the *Comandos Especiales*. But the police did not take these allegations seriously, and nothing ever came of them for lack of evidence.

Why they met with such antagonistic defiance from some of the townspeople was explained to me by Zorro in rather conventional terms: that perhaps those people were Senderistas or their sympathisers; or that maybe “those gentlemen wanted to live untroubled, without having to do vigilance duty, without, perhaps, needing to perform the obligations of a *rondero*.”⁸⁵ But there is possibly another explanation. In a country where racism and attitudes of social superiority still shape social interaction, two other likely reasons why Tambo’s elites resisted being incorporated into the *rondas campesinas* organisation was *racism and class chauvinism*. In Tambo as elsewhere in Peru, the urban elites believe in their intrinsic superiority of status. Firmly convinced of the superiority of “development” and “modernity” (Western style), urban elites ordinarily place a higher importance on their own professional or entrepreneurial occupations over the peasantry’s “backward” rural economic activities of subsistence cultivation and herding. Even peasants and their children believe this too; hence, the importance that education holds for them as essential for upward social mobility. For the child of peasant parents to become an urban professional marks an important transition from “*cholo*” identity and culture to that of the “*mestizo*.” Any respectable upper-middle or upper class family shuns menial and manual labour because those with money are expected by their peers to hire persons from lower classes to do such tasks for them. Consequently, the common view of most urban elites I asked in Tambo and in other parts of Ayacucho department where I visited was given that *rondas campesinas*, or *comités de autodefensa* are rural in origin, their membership should likewise remain rural in composition. In their opinion, then, patrolling is a task that should be delegated exclusively to the peasants. “It’s not for nothing that they’re called ‘*rondas campesinas*,’” a hospital nurse once quipped to me. Indeed, some educated urban people I spoke to even deemed patrolling an activity that was beneath their social status—akin to doing *faena* as the obligatory communal labour is known, from which the urban elites are also exempt.

Given its rural origins, it was perhaps inevitable that as the civil defence organisations expanded to include district capitals, new structural conflicts and configurational tensions would begin to emerge between peasants and townspeople. How, then, were Tambo’s urban elites incorporated into the civil defence organisation? In what manner did the different classes of Tambo’s urban and semi-urban centre “participate” in the organisation? Back in 1997, Zorro maintained that every adult in the district, rural or urban, is a *rondero*. That entails, according to D.S. No.077, an obligation “to discharge one’s patrol service in a state of impartiality” and “to participate in *faenas* and other communal activities of development” (El Peruano 1992:110352, Article 19). “In Tambo district, we are all *ronderos*,” Zorro insisted, “because we all participate in the organisation. There are no exceptions made for professionals. Teachers, doctors also, even the priest, everyone. *We are all ronderos*.”⁸⁶

If, indeed, Tambo’s elites were ever recruited as “*ronderos*,” against their will, when the Zona Urbana was organised in February 1992, then it could only have been for a short time. For Article 28 of D.S. No.077, which was promulgated some nine months after Tambo’s *Zona Urbana* was created,⁸⁷ clearly states that “The First Level or Base Committee [*Comité de Base*] is comprised of persons who *freely associate themselves* in order to fulfil the tasks characteristic of self-defence and development in a community or a congregation of small communities (*Pago, Aldea, Caserío,*

Poblado, Asentamiento Humano, Barrio, etc.)..." (ibid.:110352. My emphasis). And as the title of Article 17—"Those who may become members of the Committees"—also reveals, participation is not assumed by the legislation to be compulsory or universal; in principle, membership is not automatic but rather based on voluntary choice. Through my numerous conversations with Tambo's townspeople, it became obvious to me that they were quite aware of these facts, unlike the majority of peasants, who either believed that it was compulsory for them to be *ronderos*, or were otherwise reluctant to press their right to refuse to participate. During a conversation with a group of teenagers, I asked why one of them was a militiaman (he was carrying a rifle) while the two others were not. The two replied: "because we're students. To become a *rondero* depends on you, depends on one's own choice. Sometimes, for economic reasons, one joins the [rentados] because they can earn something monthly."⁸⁸

In fact, my own observations did not bear out Zorro's assertion that even Tambo's urban elites could be counted as "*ronderos*." In all the months I lived in Tambo town in 1997, the only individuals I ever saw patrolling the streets at night, or participating in *faenas*, were men of rural background from the adjoining barrios and *desplazado* settlements. The *ronderos*—that is to say, those who patrolled—never included the professionals or members of the Tambo socioeconomic elite. When I asked Zorro if he considered the men of the Cabrera Family—Tambo's wealthiest entrepreneurs and traders—to be *ronderos*, he replied in the affirmative, but qualified his answer thus:

Well, they too are *ronderos*. They form part of the organisation. Fine, sometimes they, because of their work, are not able to patrol, no? Therefore, what they do is give us assistance.... Sometimes they give us some food; they give us tins of tuna when we go on patrol, candies. They give us provisions or meals. In this way, they help us. But when it's their turn on watch, their obligation is to go on watch. Yet sometimes when they don't do it, fine, perhaps they hire someone else to do it, saying: "You know? I'll pay you a wage if in my place you discharge my obligation." And that person is then obliged to carry out the duties of the one who has paid him.⁸⁹

This statement neatly captures the gap between the belief and the practice, while at the same time illuminating the class contours of participation and the division of labour associated with the civil defence endeavour. Whereas the dogma of the civil defence movement assumes that *all* adult inhabitants of organised rural villages and organised urban centres are, by definition, "*ronderos*," in actual practice the participation of urban elites is often mediated and mitigated by their wealth, class status, and professional backgrounds. The truth in the case of Tambo was that the professional townspeople and urban elites—entrepreneurs, merchants, etc.—did not carry out *rondero* duties as a matter of course (nor were they really expected to), though they occasionally gave donations or provided the corresponding service of their occupation to the active *ronderos*. It also appears that even before legislation was passed that clearly established the principle of voluntary individual participation, those with money could buy their way out of having to carry out civil defence duties by simply

paying someone else to do it for them. As we saw in the last chapter, this was already a common practice in the Apurímac River Valley. In the end, participation in the urban defence force of Tambo town was determined along class lines. In contrast to the principle of universal participation, then, among the inhabitants of the *Zona Urbana*, it was only the peasants, the itinerant labourers, the *desplazados* who live in the barrios and the *desplazado* settlements (commonly referred to as *pueblos jóvenes* or *asentamientos humanos*)—in short, only the poorer strata of Tambo's urban society—who could, in fact, rightly be called *ronderos*.

But why, if by law individual participation was to be on a voluntary basis, did one commonly hear in the countryside and in the *asentamientos humanos* that “*all are ronderos*,” as though people had no choice? To a large degree, it was because most rural people simply did not know their legal rights. They just took it for granted that to take part in the local defence organisation—whether it was to patrol regularly or just to cook and sew for the active *ronderos*—was to participate in community life. Anyone who chose to refrain from contributing something to the organisation, however small, would, in effect, be shunning village society and refusing to share sacrifices just like everyone else. That person would then be regarded as an outsider, and excluded from the benefits of the collective, including mutual defence. What was at work in these organised village societies, which ensured universal adult participation, then, was not legal coercion, but tacit peer pressure.

The pressure of public opinion among villagers is great and often confounding. It can sometimes make an individual decision influenced by subliminal group pressure seem like the “voluntary” outcome of individual choice. This ambivalence was vividly illustrated in a statement made to me by a former president of Tambo district's Central CDC:

In the countryside, the majority [of the adults] are *ronderos*; from sixteen to sixty years old, more or less, they are all *ronderos*. The women as well. They, in a voluntary way, in every community, are all *ronderos* because self-defence is a common concern. Over there, nobody is permitted to say “I will not take part.” In an assembly, they voluntarily profess, “We are going to defeat [Sendero Luminoso], we are going to work.... As regards the individuals who do not want to participate, the others would say they are terrorists, they are infiltrators, no? [They would say] “Why can't they participate?” [Other villagers] would therefore call them “Senderistas.”⁹⁰

With social ostracism and denunciation as the likely consequences that non-participation would attract, it is hardly surprising that involvement in the civil defence organisation was near universal in the *campo* and within the *pueblos jóvenes*.

In the end, the definitive answer to my question of *who* were to be regarded as CAD members—in other words, who in the population were *ronderos*—was provided to me by the military, by virtue of their supreme authority to recognise (and so also to define) CAD membership. In September 1997, Captain Vásquez came to Tambo district to register the inhabitants for a “*rondero* identity card,” which he intended to issue them eventually. The entire week before his visit, CAD authorities throughout

the district made certain to notify every person between the ages of 16 and 70 (cf. Article 17 of D.S. 077) that it was compulsory for them to register; failure to turn up incurred a fine of S/.5 soles. As it was, each person had to pay Captain Vásquez an administration cost of S/.5 soles for their *rondero* ID card. Over the course of three long days, over 7,000 people in the district out of a total population of approximately about 13,000 were registered by the military as “*ronderos*.” As Alberto, the registration team’s computer specialist explained to me, the identity cards were to be issued “to those who pertain to the *rondas campesinas*; that’s to say no-one else but *ronderos*.” With this in mind, the question of whether Tambo’s urban elites and professionals are also considered *ronderos* in the eyes of the military authorities was definitively answered for me by their conspicuous absence at the registration desks.⁹¹

5.12 Militia-military relations

The months immediately following the organising of Tambo town witnessed a surge in counterinsurgency activity, both in the district and in the highland region straddling the Huanta-La Mar border. DECAS intelligence suggested that Shining Path was planning to hold a General Assembly or a Congress in the rebel stronghold of Jarjacha, situated near Rasuwillca Mountain. *Mandos políticos* and *mandos militares* from all over Ayacucho would be present at such an important gathering. Thus, it presented security forces a unique opportunity to bag a number of important rebel leaders, perhaps even “Presidente Gonzalo” himself. Due to the immensity of the Jarjacha guerrilla zone, however, neither the army nor the militias could do the job alone. The army did not have enough men and the militias did not have the firepower to assault such a strongly defended area, whose broken, rocky features were ideal for concealment and ambush. What was required was a combined civil-military operation, perhaps larger than any ever attempted in this region of Ayacucho.

While DECAS chiefs from the Apurímac Valley and the Political-Military Commander of the emergency zone, General Ronald Rueda Benavides, drew up plans at Los Cabitos military base for a joint operation, militia committees throughout the provinces of Huanta, La Mar, and the northern districts of Huamanga set about mobilising their *ronderos*. Under the direction of their respective *comités de base*, communities throughout the two provinces began to collect the necessary provisions for what was to be a ten-day operation. In Tambo, donations from every household in the district produced a small mountain of food supplies and soon a large contingent of militiamen from all the rural and urban defence committees in the district gathered in the town. In the late hours of an evening in March, they were given the order to set off, accompanied by a platoon of soldiers from the local garrison.⁹² Horses and mules carried the heavy sacks and crates of supplies and munitions that the militiamen and soldiers would need over the coming days. They marched all through the night and arrived at the fastness of Jarjacha shortly before dawn the next morning. Numerous other army units and militia groups from all over Ayacucho’s northern provinces had been arriving from several directions throughout the night. The officer in charge of the operation deployed his forces in an attempt to create, as best they could, a cordon around a large area where they suspected various rebel

groups would be. As the sky grew lighter, the counterinsurgency forces moved forward to tighten the noose. As with all such guerrilla strongholds, however, the natural barriers and obstacles of rocks and ravines around Jarjacha made their advance slow and difficult. When the soldiers and militiamen of Tambo began an attack up a steep ridge, guerrillas interspersed and dug in among the rocky outcrops and ledges fired down upon them. It was by now around 6.30. The sound of sporadic gunfire cracking away in the distance signalled that the contingent of soldiers from BCS-42-Jano had also commenced their assault on Leon Ranra, another of the rebels' defensive complexes nearby.⁹³

The guerrillas around Jarjacha were dug in so well that even an army helicopter firing rockets failed to dislodge them. Throughout this and the next day, soldiers and militiamen had no choice but to engage the guerrillas in nightmarish close-quarters combat in order to clear them cave-by-cave, tunnel-by-tunnel, barricade-by-barricade.

In his war diary, Comando Zorro refers to these rebel strongholds in the sierra as "military bases," but not in the sense of a collection of buildings and other surface structures guarded within a defensive compound. Rather, Senderista "bases," as he explained to me, often consisted of an interconnected network of caves and tunnels sunk into craggy heights, not unlike the famous Viet Cong tunnels of Cu Chi (see Mangold and Pencyate 1997). These subterranean spaces were used as storehouses, temporary living quarters, and even as makeshift hospitals and armouries. "The *terrucos* could travel unnoticed from one place to another by using these underground tunnels," Zorro told me.⁹⁴ The unique feature of Senderista strongholds was that they were never guarded by static garrisons. In contrast to the *foquista* strategy characteristic of Cuban-inspired guerrilla warfare (see Wickham-Crowley 1992), Shining Path strategy involved never committing its military forces in the defence of fixed positions. Rather, its military units always remain mobile and never tied down to one place. Nevertheless, these strongholds—like Viscatán or Sello de Oro—were often places located in remote and nearly inaccessible areas, and invariably endowed with their own natural defences. Furthermore, Zorro warned that "in the hills around the bases, you have to walk very alert because the subversion has utilised formidable tactics: land mines, for example; hidden pits with sharpened [punji] stakes, like in the Vietnam War."⁹⁵

The details of this episode are sketchy and fragmented. Zorro's war diary is, once again, my primary source of information. He describes the passage of events as best he could, naturally limited though he was to his own range of vision and personal experience of the military operation. Nevertheless, Zorro's keen abilities of observation and of writing clearly and with great detail provides us with an insight into the mechanics of combined militia-military combat operations, which became more common during this period of the 1990s. Naturally, the overall operation was under the command of army officers. Yet the militiamen seemed nevertheless to have been given considerable freedom of action and manoeuvre during the numerous combat encounters. The impression one gets from reading Zorro's account is that the militiamen and the soldiers exercised an efficiently high level of battlefield cooperation and coordination, providing, for instance, covering suppression fire for one another's attacking teams. For the most part, the militiamen functioned as light auxiliary troops. They operated in small groups, fighting skirmishing actions to keep the guerrillas busy

while the heavy infantry positioned themselves for decisive assaults. At other times, agile teams consisting of four to five militiamen would try to outflank the entrenched rebel positions, while the government soldiers kept the guerrillas pinned down with heavy suppression fire from their automatic weapons.

Little by little, the engagement intensified. [The guerrillas] did not permit us to advance. I took 3 of my men to climb up the other side of the hill while the soldiers covered us. NCO Lobo and Lieutenant Chaveta of the [Peruvian Army] advanced with a group of [their soldiers], along the other flank—a rocky mountain—Comando Sombra was doing the same to gain altitude. Meanwhile other groups covered us from the *pampa*.⁹⁶

It was perhaps in order to minimise confusion while on the move—particularly in view of the differences in their armaments and tactics—that army troops and militiamen fought as separate teams, under their own combat commanders, instead of in mixed companies. What became immediately apparent to me while reading Zorro's account was that during this operation, the militiamen of Tambo executed numerous important tactical actions under the leadership of their own field commanders. To say that militiamen were simply "*carne de cañón*" (cannon fodder)—as human rights groups so often assumed was their inevitable fate in all such joint civilian-military endeavours would not only be a gross oversimplification. It would also be a failure to pay credit to the vital contributions made by militiamen during such operations, and to their ability to fighting as independent, tactically thinking actors on the battlefield.

Further details of the actual fighting are not important for our analysis. After two days of heavy fighting—during which the highlights were when an army mortar team managed (by sheer luck) to hit a tunnel packed with ammunition, killing an undetermined number of rebels holed up inside; and when the guerrilla known as "Estrella Roja," the political commander of Platoon XV in the Ene River Valley, was captured and subsequently killed while "trying to escape"—the main body of guerrillas slipped away during the night, taking their dead and wounded with them. Zorro recalled that when they entered the underground complexes of Jarjacha on the morning of the third day, "we only encountered fresh tracks of blood, FAL and AKM bullet casings and MAG cartridge belts, clothes, blankets and provisions left by the Senderistas when they fled"⁹⁷ For all its logistical magnitude, the operation does not seem to have produced the results hoped for by its planners. Even so, its double importance to our historical analysis are that, firstly, it was the first major militia-military combat operation in which all the *comités de base* of Tambo district took part, and secondly, it vividly illustrates the new relationship of cooperation and coordination that was developing between the militias and the Army in the early 1990s.

The strained and often antagonistic relationship between the civil defence organisations and the Army in the 1980s warmed into a much more cooperative and accommodating rapport soon after Alberto Fujimori became President. This was due, for one thing, to a change of personnel among the Army chiefs whereby those were unreceptive towards defence militias were replaced by others more sympathetic towards them (see Tapia 1997:49-50). The subsequent change in attitude at the sen-

ior level filtered down and also influenced the junior officer ranks. In addition, the sympathetic disposition of the government towards the rural militias also helped to bring about a reconciliatory attitude on the part of the military, which began to make greater efforts in fostering a better relationship with the militias and the rural civilian population as a whole. The Fujimori government's new pacification strategy placed greater emphasis on winning the hearts and minds of the rural population in order to harness not only the growing wave of grassroots counter-rebellion against Shining Path, but also their immense importance as a source of political support. In this new scheme, the CADs were scripted to play the leading role, as one of Tambo's militia documents clearly indicates: "the preponderant role that the State has assigned [to the CADs] is to achieve in the most rapid way the Consolidation of National Pacification" (CCAD-SJB 1996:1). But while the government was granting new powers to the civil defence organisations in the early 1990s, it was also taking parallel measures to strengthen its power and control over them through the army. We have already seen examples of these new mechanisms of control, such as the promulgation of new CAD legislation. There were others.

On 2 June 1993, the military commander of 42nd "Moquegua" Battalion, stationed at BCS-42-Pichari, issued to the CADs within the zone of his authority a new standard operating procedure designed to create more accountability by regulating their actions more strictly during patrols and military operations. It required CADs to complete, for every settlement they visited, a very detailed official declaration form, the (somewhat amusing) contents of which are reproduced below.

THE AUTHORITIES AND *COMUNEROS* OF [state name of community] DISTRICT OF [state name of district] WHO BELOW HAVE SIGNED AND PLACED [an imprint of] OUR DIGIT FINGER, DECLARE THAT ON THE DAY OF ____ IN THE MONTH OF ____ OF 1,99 ____...WE HAVE RECEIVED THE VISIT OF A PATROL(S) OF THE ANTISUBVERSIVE BASES OF THE SELF-DEFENCE COMMITTEE OF [state name of district] IN THE HOURS OF ____ WHOSE MEMBERS HAVE REALISED ORGANISATIONAL WORK, VIGILANCE AND PROTECTION IN THE COMMUNITIES AND/OR HAMLET(S) [state their names]. IT WAS SUCH THAT THE SAID ELEMENTS COMPRISING THE AFOREMENTIONED PATROL(S) HAD CONDUCTED THEMSELVES CORRECTLY, RESPECTING OUR BELONGINGS WITHOUT HAVING EFFECTED ROBBERY OF ANIMALS, MONEY OR OTHER BELONGINGS, THE WOMEN OF THE COMMUNITY(-IES) HAVE NOT BEEN THE OBJECT OF VIOLATIONS OR ABUSES, THERE IS NO CAUSE TO COMPLAIN AGAINST THEM (CCAD-SJB 1993).

The introduction of bureaucratic formality such as this into the routine of patrolling was almost certainly aimed at dampening international criticisms of human rights abuses directed at Peru's security forces (including the militias). In the early 1990s, Peru topped the list of most international human rights groups for having the worst human rights record. Yet it seems that this regulatory procedure of making militia patrols more accountable was not only an attempt to pre-empt criticisms from international human rights organisations. It must have also been related to the military's larger aim of winning the hearts and minds of populations that had thus far been

reluctant to organise CADs or to cooperate with them, such as in the department of Huancavelica. It is indeed ironic that the army should assume to lecture and instruct the civil militias on human rights, given its own record of accomplishment. But this they did, and classified official documents show that throughout most of the 1990s, the political-military command in Ayacucho-Huancavelica routinely urged CAD members to eschew committing “excesses, abuses, wrongdoing, against the population, because it would be committed against Human Rights” (CCAD-SJB 1996:12). It is also paradoxical that the military’s ostensible steps towards respecting and protecting human rights in the declared zone of emergency—it was, at the very least, lip service—were being made at the same time as democratic rights and freedoms were being eroded nationally by an increasingly authoritarian civilian government.

“It is the obligation of the *juntas directivas* of the three levels [of civil defence organisation] to obtain information and to report it to the nearest Countersubversive [military] Base,” states another official directive from the army (CCAD-SJB 1996:11). Through regular meetings and information debriefings with CAD leaders, the military was able to establish and ensure a close supervision of the militias, and hence a continuous influx of information about goings-on in the rural countryside. As I observed it in 1997, it was obligatory for the *Patrulla Especial* and all the CAD *juntas directivas* of Tambo district to meet with the garrison commander at the local army base every Sunday. In addition, the Secretary of the Self-Defence Central Committee was required to submit a written report every month detailing the activities of, and the information gathered from, the various *comités de base* in the district over the past four and a half weeks.⁹⁸ In return, the *ronderos* received new orders and taskings, weapons training and instruction, and, on occasion, material donations from the State. Although such meetings invariably took up a good part of the day, the *ronderos* did not seem to mind. In fact, many told me they looked forward to it, for, like a “men’s club,” they enjoyed the spirit of camaraderie, and the sense of official purpose that it gave them.

The CAD-military relationship was tightened with the creation, in 1994, of the official military post of *Jefe de los Comités Central de Autodefensa de la Sub-Zona de Seguridad Nacional Centro No. 8*—Chief of the Central Committees of Self-defence in the Sub-Zone of National Security Centre No.8. The purpose behind it was to facilitate a more efficient and closer coordination between the military and the CADs in *Frente Huamanga*. Equivalent posts were also created in Junín department and the Huallaga Valley.⁹⁹ It was during one of my visits to the Los Cabitos barracks, while requesting a letter of authorisation from the *Jefe del Comando Politico-Militar*, that I first met Captain (now Major) César Vásquez Guevara on 27 June 1997. A tall, muscular man with a commanding baritone voice and an overt sense of self-importance, Captain Vásquez had heard that I wanted to study the CADs. He therefore thought it only appropriate that he, the *Jefe CCAD SZSNC-8* since 1996, should be the one to inform me of their history. He immediately invited me to accompany him on an inspection tour of a number of CADs in Huamanga province. We set off soon after midday in two hired civilian pick-up trucks, with a heavily armed escort riding in the back, on what proved to be a whirlwind visit of communities in rural districts such as Acocro-Matará, Chiara, Tambillo and Quinoa. As our small convoy bounced and swayed along like a camel caravan on the potholed dirt road, Captain Vásquez pro-

vided me with an intermittent commentary that was an entertaining mixture of useful information and public-relations announcements for the Army. It became immediately clear to me that he was keen to demonstrate that the Army (through him) had established a close rapport with the rural population (through the CADs). I was surprised when he openly admitted to me the impossibility of truly pacifying the countryside without the help of the *comités de autodefensa*. “The Army does not have the sufficient capacity to provide security to all the villages,” he told me. This certainly made sense. Looking out my window just then and actually seeing for myself the rugged Andean topography, with its high rocky mountains and equally deep valleys, with its prickly vegetation and its pitted, winding, treacherously narrow dirt roads, I realised for the first time how truly difficult this countryside would be to pacify. It made me think of Afghanistan, and how the Soviets found it impossible to control that other ruggedly mountainous country. Even if the Peruvian Armed Forces were five times its present size, with as many helicopters as it could wish for, a doughty guerrilla adversary like Sendero Luminoso could still make it difficult, if not impossible, for the army on its own to control these highlands. “Therefore the peasants themselves provide their own security,” Vásquez continued to say.

Besides, who is the terrorist? It’s the peasant who has been duped by the subversion. And who are the *ronderos*? The *ronderos* are also people of the village. I, for example, could not spot a terrorist easily. But the people themselves can. For this reason, the Army needs the help of the peasants, of the *comités de autodefensa*, in order to combat and defeat the subversion.

I was indeed surprised to be hearing this, for I had not expected to a military officer give credit to the peasants, even where it is due.

Yet on that as on other occasions I spent in the company of Captain Vásquez, I gained a deeper insight into civilian-military relations less from the things he told me (most of which was common knowledge anyway), than from just watching his personal interaction with CAD leaders and ordinary peasants. On this occasion, his main reason for travelling through the countryside was to inform CAD leaders and any group of peasants he encountered of their duty to participate in the military-sponsored “March for the Peace and Development of Ayacucho” planned for the coming Sunday. He chatted to the peasants with easy familiarity, though also frequently using paternalistic expressions like “*hijo*” (“son”) even when addressing older men. At the village of Matará, after I had finished talking with some of the locals, I went and found him in a *bodega* (store) sitting at a table with the CAD authorities and his sergeant. They were drinking from four immense beer bottles but sharing a single drinking glass, which was passed from one person to the other. Despite the Captain’s lack of inhibitions in rubbing shoulders with the locals, the hierarchical relationship of power and authority between him and them was nevertheless immutable, and always evident in the constant authoritarian tone of his voice. He permitted himself to be familiar with them; they were not permitted the same license with him. Consequently, I noticed that CAD leaders and community presidents doffed their hats whenever he approached, and they always appended a reverential “*mi Capitán*” at the

end of everything they said to him: “*Muy buenos días, mi Capitán.*” “*Pasamos por acá, mi Capitán.*” “*Sí, mi Capitán.*”

On our return trip to Huamanga later that afternoon, we met the district mayor of Tambillo, working in a *faena* with other men to repair an irrigation ditch. Captain Vásquez rolled down his window and started chatting with him. As we began to drive away, the Captain reminded the mayor to come next Sunday, with all the *comuneros* of Tambillo, to Los Cabitos, the starting point of the big march. The *alcalde*, clearly uncomfortable with having to contradict the Captain, began meekly to explain that the march coincided with the district’s anniversary. He suggested that in amongst the hundreds of peasants that would attend from all over Ayacucho department, perhaps the delegation from Tambillo would not be sorely missed. The truck jolted to a halt, and through the window the mayor undoubtedly saw that Captain Vásquez had immediately become agitated. Suddenly changing his ordinarily pleasant chat voice into the monotone drone of a uninterested bureaucrat, he proceeded to sermon the *alcalde* at length about his obligation as a representative of the state, and the importance of showing support for the “*lucha por la paz y el desarrollo,*” which in his opinion was much more important than a district anniversary. As we slowly drove away, we could hear the humbled *alcalde* stuttering a promised to show up on Sunday.

That was not the last time I witnessed what seemed like the Captain’s habit of brushing off local concerns. While I was interviewing him in his office—the so-called “*Casa de Los Ronderos*”—at Los Cabitos one day in November 1997, a group of peasants shuffled up to the open doorway and tapped lightly on the doorjamb. Captain Vásquez immediately recognised one of them as Anco’s CAD president and warmly invited them all to come in and state their business. In a meek voice, one of the community presidents explained that the purpose of their visit was to ask him for assistance in forming more CADs in Anco district (La Mar province). They had recently suffered some Senderista incursions, and they would be grateful if he could come and distribute government-donated shotguns. But before the man could finish everything he obviously had carefully prepared in advance to say, Captain Vásquez interrupted him to say that he would not give a single firearm, not a single sack of provisions, nor even visit their district until its communities had organised themselves, and every *comunero* in Anco has come to Los Cabitos to register and to pay for his or her “*carné de identificación*”—the *rondero* identity card costing S/.5 nuevos soles. And as if to entice the peasant delegation, he repeated a number of times that he had fifty shotguns stored in the armoury, just waiting to be given away. When the peasants tried to explain that most families in Anco did not immediately have the money available to pay for the ID, let alone the bus to Huamanga, Captain Vásquez remained unmoved, replying something to the effect of: “Too bad! Find the money! If you want my help, pay for the *carnets* first!”

In my mind, Captain Vásquez embodies in many ways the very essence of civilian-military relations as I witnessed it in Ayacucho in 1997. Of course, the relationship has greatly improved over the course of the 1990s. Certainly, by now the Army gave recognition to the valuable contributions made by the CADs in the counterinsurgency struggle. Nevertheless, the Army’s attitude towards the peasantry remained, to great degree, authoritarian and paternalistic. Army officers in particular were obstinately convinced that the Army knew better than the peasants what was

need to improve their lives and their security—an arrogance not so unlike that of Shining Path cadres, in fact. Had Captain Vásquez bothered to listen a little longer and more closely to what the peasant authorities had to tell him, then he might have come to understand that the main reason why Anco's population was so hard up for money just then was that blight had decimated their entire potato harvest some months earlier.¹⁰⁰ Then again, perhaps he still would not have cared.

There is a riddle wrapped inside an enigma here. Captain Vásquez himself of peasant parentage, though, judging from his education and physical appearance, it is likely that his family was relatively prosperous. He claims to have grown up in a rural village in Cajamarca, which is known throughout Peru as the “birthplace of the *rondas campesinas*.” He never failed to point out to me every time we met that it was because of his own “humble” background, as the son of *campesinos*, raised in the birthplace of the original *Rondas Campesinas*, that he understands the CADs better than most other people do. Moreover, he argued that they, in turn, felt content and happy to have him as their military jefe, for he is “one of them.” Nevertheless, I observed numerous occasions when his supposed apathy for the peasants was placed at such variance with his insensitive disregard for local problems and concerns. His personal interaction with CAD or community authorities was a portrait of the army's “authoritarian tradition” interfacing with what Starn calls the rural villagers’ “culture of servility” (1999:129). Even so, Vásquez seemed to be genuinely respected and admired by regional CAD leaders. In 1998, they even petitioned the *Jefe del Comando Politico-Militar* to reappoint him as their *Jefe CCADD SZSNC-8*.¹⁰¹ To the CADs that did their job well, Captain Vásquez acted like a generous *patrón*. For instance, Comando Zorro once told me that “for the good work we have done, like the capture of various terrorists and the recuperation of good firearms, Major Vásquez presented us with ammunition, and to each community he delivered donations of track-suits, donations of shoes, shirts, school packets, sometimes blankets, pillows.”¹⁰² Indeed, Captain Vásquez's tough, *macho*, authoritarian demeanor was a badge of authority widely admired by many of his military and civilian subordinates, and CAD leaders expected nothing less from their *Jefe*.

Despite appearances, Captain Vásquez was not a “*caudillo*” in the traditional sense of the word. He was not, according to my observations, working to build up a personal power base for his own private ambitions. His own personal success and professional advancement depended on his faithfully carrying out the orders of his superiors, who themselves received their directives from an executive branch of government that came to wield near-absolute centralised power (see Cameron 2000, Mauceri 2000, Youngers 2000). Though it may seem that Vásquez was busily engaged in cultivating his personal power, he was, in fact, merely an administrative facilitator within a vast clientelist system being built up ever since the *autogolpe* of 1992, the primary purpose of which was to advance the President's political interests. Garnering political support, strengthening political control, information gathering and surveillance were foremost among these interests (see Kruijt and del Pilar Tello 2002, Youngers 2000). Despite appearances, then, Captain Vásquez's actions cannot really be said to have been primarily motivated by personal gain. Indeed, his mandate for most of the things he did and ordered done were explicitly to be found in CAD legislation. Many people in Tambo assumed, for instance, that the entire matter of the

rondero identity cards was nothing more than a dishonest moneymaking scheme hatched up by a triumvirate of corrupt civil and military officials. “The Captain, the mayor, and Zorro, the president of the Self-defence, are doing business,” an exasperated Tambino quipped when I asked what it was all about. “They’re asking 5 soles for each of those identity cards. What is 5 soles times 9,000 voters? That money, where is it going to end up?” Whether or not there was a degree of dishonesty in the administrative process is ultimately irrelevant to the official nature of the project itself. For Article 56(a) of D.S. No.077 stipulates that all members of self-defence committees must be issued with an identity card (*carnet*) signed by the relevant military authority—in this case, Captain Vásquez.

Whether distributing donations to CADs or ensuring popular participation in political marches, the implementation of these programmes and activities by the servants of Fujimori’s government was almost always done in such a way as to beholden or to collect debts from recipient sectors. Aid and favours were regularly given out by the government in return for political support and, at the crucial moment, for votes. The success of this system of rewards was in the pudding of Fujimori’s over-

Photo 5. Illiterate member of Mothers’ Club with placard at the army-sponsored “Marcha por la Paz y el Desarrollo de Ayacucho,” Huamanga, 29 June 1997



whelming support from the rural masses, which helped to get him re-elected twice (allegations of fraud aside). That all levels of the armed forces have long played a direct role in the preservation, administration, and operation of the government's clientalist system is yet further evidence of the extent to which the Armed Forces of Peru had become politicised under the Fujimori regime. At the same time, civilian society became progressively more militarised. What was ostensibly supposed to be a "*Marcha por la Paz y el Desarrollo de Ayacucho*" on 29 June 1997 turned to be nothing less than a massive political rally. Its intention was to show visiting journalists (who were primarily drawn to Huamaga by the guest appearance of Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani at the urban *desfile* earlier that same day) that the peasantry solidly supported the Fujimori government. Approximately three thousand members of CADs and *Clubes de Madres* (Mothers' Clubs) from all over the department of Ayacucho—many of whom were dressed up in distinctive local costumes or uniforms and carrying firearms, tools, and babies—marched in file round and round the Plaza de Armas. (The coaching they must have received beforehand at Los Cabitos shone through.) They carried banners and placards on which were written slogans that many of them could not even read, much less have written: "*CHINO! PUQUIO TE AGRADECE POR LA PACIFICACION. GRACIAS POR TUS OBRAS,*" and "*SEÑOR PRESIDENTE ESTAMOS CONTINGO PARA DEFENDER LA DEMOCRACIA,*" or more imaginatively "*ABAJO LOS OPOSITORES CONTRA EL GOBIERNO DEL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE ALBERTO FUJIMORI PARA QUE VIVA LA RONDA CAMPESINA DEL PERU.*" In a move that was undoubtedly calculated to ensure that the entire affair had the appearance of grassroots spontaneity, the army—the very organiser of the event—was careful not to be present at the rally.¹⁰³ For his part, I noticed that the district mayor of Tambillo had turned up with his *ronderos* to demonstrate their desire for peace and development in Ayacucho. But I did not see the charismatic Captain Vásquez anywhere.

Besides the large degree of autonomy that CADs enjoyed in planning and executing their own operations, it was obvious that the army exercised *de facto* control over them, the legitimacy for which was largely to be found in the relevant legislation. But despite the contradictions and potential conflicts within the relationship, the reason why CADs and the military have nevertheless been able to get along is because most of the existing problems between them have largely been left unarticulated and undisputed. Whereas I perceived the nature of the military's interface with the CADs to have been marked by regulated authoritarian control, CAD leaders preferred to view their relationship with the military as one of "close coordination and cooperation." So far, this *modus vivendi* has suited everyone.

5.13 *Ronderos* and policemen: tension and antagonism

While on the one hand civilian-military interactions have vastly improved since the start of the 1990s, the same can hardly be said about relations between the CADs and the police. I was told by *ronderos* in Tambo that, unlike with the military, the CADs did not have much working contact with the police. In fact, they alleged that there was no cooperation or coordination whatsoever between the two groups on coun-

terinsurgency matters. This is hardly surprising, given that tense social relationship between policemen and civilians seems to be the norm in Peru. Many citizens, and rural people in particular, still regard policemen as generally corrupt and abusive. On one trip from Tambo to Huamanga, the *combi* or minivan in which I was travelling was stopped four times because the driver had refused to pay the bribe at the first checkpoint. As we drove away from each checkpoint, many of my fellow travellers muttered insults at the policemen behind their backs, calling them of “*rateros*” (thieves) and “*perros abusivos*” under their breath.

This sort of everyday animosity between civilians and policemen spills over easily into the interaction between policemen and *ronderos*. *Ronderos* claim that they are often harassed by policemen about such things as firearms permits, or the arrests they make. “They’re always trying to accuse us of human rights abuses, those hypocrites!” said Comando Zorro, spitting out the words.

There are a few good ones, but only a few. They are replaced every three months, and each one has his own way of working. There are times when we don’t understand each other. Perhaps they envy us. Other times when we catch a thief or a livestock rustler, and we turn them over to the police, they set them free. It’s because they believe themselves to be superior to us. When we try to solve those problems, they say to us: “That’s not your responsibility.” On the other hand, some police chiefs come and tell us, “One has to work together, no?”¹⁰⁴

I interviewed a few policemen to get their side of the story. One of them was José, a policeman at DIVICOTE-Ayacucho and a member of the DINCOTE team that captured Guzmán in Lima. It caught me a little by surprise when José began by praising the CADs for their efforts and achievements. Like Captain Vásquez, he too pointed out the crucial importance of having *rondas campesinas*, particularly in remote and isolated parts of the hinterland, where neither the police nor the military maintain a presence.

Therefore, in so far as they knew those places better [than we do]—the terrain, the people—they were a great help to us, because they informed us rapidly, opportunely. They are the ones who fight best against Sendero, for of those who are members of *rondas campesinas*, fifty percent used to be *tucos* [terrorists]. For that reason they know more than we or the Army do.¹⁰⁵

Despite such words of praise, José nevertheless listed for me a few of the problems he saw in the civil defence movement. Firstly, he pointed out that the vast majority of *ronderos* fight primarily in defence of their families, their animals, their land. As such, he contends that they fight largely without any understanding of a higher moral purpose or reason for fighting, such as that Shining Path is “wrong” or “bad.” It is this lack of a higher moral sense, José argues, that makes it possible for them to be easily controlled by the army, or even enticed back by Sendero if they should change their

tactics (which is exactly what Feliciano seemed to be trying to do in 1997). Another problem, he says, is that when firearms are given to peasants without proper instruction on how to use them responsibly, these weapons are sometimes used to settle old scores, such as long-running family feuds, or for criminal acts. “Sometimes there are *ronderos* who say: ‘I have a firearm. I’m now stronger, and I can also attack.’ There was once a case in Huanta where *ronderos* attacked a vehicle and tried to pass it off as an attack by *tucos* [terrorists].” In addition, José also pointed out that sometimes when a peasant gets drunk, he may remember an old family feud—many are about land disputes—and then use his rifle to settle it with lethal force. When I was in Tambo in 1997, precisely such a case had happened in one of the rural villages. As a result, the local garrison commander confiscated the Mauser rifle used by the accused, pending a criminal investigation. This problem must have been frequent enough to cause the military, at a general assembly of CCAD leaders, to issue a directive to avoid using “the firearm in a state of intoxication and for confrontations between communities and against the Population because this attitude is at variance with morals and good behaviour” (CCAD-SJB 1996:12).

Apart from the fact that many rural inhabitants generally dislike policemen, it nevertheless seemed to me that the CADs of the zone of emergency did not have to confront many of the same frictions and problems in their dealings with the police that the *rondas campesinas* of northern Peruvian departments had encountered—problems such as conflict of authority, or the legal right to possess weapons and firearms, or the police’s opposition to the idea of peasants organising themselves into vigilante groups and creating their own alternative system of justice (see Starn 1999). There are a number of obvious reasons for this. Firstly, the existence of armed CADs has, as we already know, been already legally recognised by the government since 1991. The scope of authority given to CAD leaders, the function and tasks of the militias—all were clearly laid out in the relevant legislation. Secondly, ever since about the end of the first half of the 1980s, the police no longer had any administrative presence in the countryside of Tambo, and those in town very rarely ventured into it. Therefore, the CADs have become the *de facto* authority in the *campo*. Questions of *policing* and *local justice* were thus left to the *comuneros* to sort out for themselves. If police assistance became necessary, the quarrelling parties had to bring the dispute to the police post in town. A third reason for the relative lack of conflict between the CADs and the police since the early 1990s is that the CADs enjoyed the backing of the military—the political-military authority in the emergency zone—and so were generally shielded from the more abusive arbitrary acts of police harassment.

Moreover, their possession of firearms, and the declared willingness of some *ronderos* to use them against abusive policemen, provided many of the CADs with real power to confront the police if necessary. Illustrating this point is an incident that took place in the selva town of Sivia, on 26 January 1993. On that occasion, anthropologist Ponciano del Pino observed for himself the power that CADs could wield with guns in their hands and the army backing them up. It was while he was at Sivia’s traditional Monday market that news suddenly arrived of an unspecified number of policemen having been spotted in the vicinity of San Francisco. Almost immediately, more than ten armed *ronderos* issued from Sivia’s *Base Civil Antisubversiva*, firing into the air as they rushed to intercept the policemen. Del Pino describes what happened next:

After about ten minutes, around thirty *ronderos* entered the town [of Sivia] bringing five “captured” policemen. Other *ronderos* captured five more policemen along the banks of the river. They led them to the centre of the plaza through the crowd that struck at them, shouting: “to jail.” The insults and the blows given by the women increased, giving the sensation that the episode would end in slaughter. The *ronderos* argued that the police had neither authority nor right to enter the zone without permission, either theirs or the Army commander of the Pichari base. They said that [the policemen] came only to steal: “habitual thieves”. With the arrival of Commander “Ronco” and more than 20 military personnel from Pichari, spirits calmed down. After several hours the policemen were released after some agreements like the prohibition against entering without the respective authorisation, because the *ronderos* would not take responsibility for what could happen to them (1996:170).¹⁰⁶

The policemen had come to Sivia with the intention of arresting some *narcotraficantes*. What is interesting to note in this anecdote is the configurational alliances between the army and the militiamen, and, although they do not appear in the account, the *narcotraficantes*, whom, according to del Pino, the militiamen were presumably protecting by ejecting the police from the zone.

This episode is not common. In fact, it seems there was ordinarily very little contact between the CADs and the police. As the ‘90s were coming to an end, I came to the conclusion that given that the state of emergency would not last forever (it was, in fact, finally lifted in January 2000), it was likely that neither would the military’s backing. As I saw it, if the CADs intended to continue into the future as an integral part of any local system of peasant justice, like the *rondas campesinas* of northern Peru, they would have to arrive at some form of cooperative working relationship with the police, if many the same problems that exist between *rondas campesinas* and policemen in the north were to be avoided. As chapter 7 shows, however, these musings were made purely academic by certain unexpected developments at the close of the decade.

5.14 The departure of the *Comandos Especiales* from Tambo District and the guerrilla massacre at Huayao

By September 1992, the time had come for the twenty-eight remaining *Comandos Especiales* to leave Tambo district and return to Pichihuillca. Over the past twelve months—undoubtedly the busiest and most testing time in the history of the district’s militias—the *Comandos* had succeeded in helping to strengthen Tambo’s civil defence organisation, while also helping to weaken the power and presence once held by Shining Path in the area. This is not to say they were leaving behind a civil defence organisation free of problems and worries. Ever since August, certain members of Tambo’s Central Self-defence Committee (CCAD) had been experiencing mounting popular pressure to resign after the *Presidente* and his *Comando General* were both

incriminated in livestock theft in the district. However, the *Comandos Especiales* could leave that as a problem for the people of Tambo to sort out for themselves. DECAS expansion in the sierra was now coming to an end. But its legacy would continue through young, capable and intelligent commanders like Zorro, for whom civil defence had become a full-time occupation and a way of life.

A few days after receiving the euphoric news that Abimael Guzmán had been arrested in Lima, the *Comandos Especiales* prepared to board a minibus returning to San Francisco. While the militiamen were saying their goodbyes to the large crowd of people that had gathered in the central plaza, a combined delegation of civilian officials representing the town and the rural villages—among them the district mayor and the governor—walked up and asked Comando Zorro if they might have a word with him. “They said to me: ‘You know what, Comando Zorro? We can’t be left alone. You must remain here, in his zone. We will give you a salary. Work and be the commander of our *Patrulla Especial*. Apart from this, I had my beloved. I was already in love with she who is now my wife, who is from Tambo,” he recalled.¹⁰⁷

The minibus drove away without Zorro in it; he found himself standing on the pavement, waving farewell to his former comrades in arms. Tambo’s civil defence organisation was now on its own. But Tambo had found their *Comando*, and Zorro had found a new home.

If this was a form of adoption, then it proved to be mutual. For his part, Zorro quickly felt at home in Tambo, settling down with his wife and two children in one of the *pueblos jóvenes* adjacent to the town. Furthermore, as a full measure of the popularity and respect he came to receive from the populace, he would go on to become Tambo district’s longest serving, popularly elected CCADD president. In March 1993, he retired from his post as *Comando General* owing to his worsening arthritis, which made patrolling in the cold and the damp a painful ordeal. But a month later, he was invited to a general assembly of the entire district, where the people of Tambo unanimously elected him as President of Tambo district’s Central Self-defence Committee. Touched by the outpouring of affection shown to him at that meeting, Zorro agreed to take up the post. With his education, Zorro proved instrumental in drafting the petition and documentation necessary to for the Tambo’s self-defence groups to obtain legal recognition. Hence in May 1993, Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo “San Juan Bautista”*—consisting of twenty-six *bases* organised into five zones—received official recognition from the *Jefe del Comando Politico-Militar* in Huamanga.¹⁰⁸ Zorro became the first and only president of Tambo’s officially recognised CCADD before finally retiring in August 1998.

Born in a dusty shantytowns on the outskirts of Lima on 5 May 1970, Comando Zorro, whose real name is Walter Crisóstomo Ramirez Echacaya, is the son of peasant migrants who had moved from Ayacucho to the Peruvian capital in search of a better life. Despite having had to face numerous obstacles in his early life that threatened to cut short his education, he nevertheless managed, through hard work and sheer determination, to complete secondary school, graduating in 1989. His alcoholic father had abandoned the family five years earlier, leaving Walter to become the sole provider for his mother and sisters. Yet he refused to leave school for good. While still a student, he spent his long vacations working in the Apurímac River Valley as a peon, saving all his earnings to take back to his family. It was in this way that he was exposed

to the DECAS, in which he participated as a “simple auxiliary personnel” between 1985 and 1987. In 1989 he moved his family to the coastal town of Pisco, where work was more plentiful and wages higher. He dreamt of continuing his studies—and perhaps of even entering university—but this was eventually crushed by the reality of his family’s poverty.¹⁰⁹ It was the abduction of one of his sisters by guerrillas in 1990 that made him decide to return to the *selva* of the Apurímac Valley, where he joined the DECAS to dedicate himself to the counterinsurgency struggle, and to his continuing search for his sister. In the DECAS, Walter’s diligence and intelligence shone through. He worked his way up until he became the secretary of the Intelligence Section of Pichihuillca’s DECAS, the post he held before being sent to Tambo.

A few days after the *Comandos Especiales* returned to the Apurímac Valley, a man by the name of Zonobio Anaya Rojas (Comando Vicuña) was elected as the new president of the district’s Central Self-defence Committee, with Zorro as *Comando General of the Patrulla Especial*. Though fortunately not a livestock rustler like his predecessors, the problem with the new president, as Zorro wrote, was that “Señor Vicuña was a person with no experience because he was new to the organisation. The *terrucos* took advantage of this situation and once again seized the zone of Yana Orjo, Jarín Orjo, Sello de Oro, and Rasuhuillca over the months of September and October.”¹¹⁰ During these two months, the frequency of livestock thefts attributed to rebel bands rose, as did the number of abductions of peasants and herders from Acco, Vicos, and Huayao. One of the peasants kidnapped by the rebels, a shepherd from Vicos, managed to escape and warn Zorro that the guerrillas were mainly interested in obtaining information: “they asked about the type of arms the *Patrulla Especial* had and about the coordinating authorities, and also about the departure of the [*Comandos Especiales*] of the Apurímac River Valley.”¹¹¹ Though it seemed like another case of random conscription, the rebels had actually chosen their captives carefully. Unbeknown to the *ronderos* of Tambo, the Senderistas were busy planning what was to be one of the bloodiest rebel incursions in the history of the civil war in Tambo district.

Although the emergence of CADs throughout the provinces of Huanta and La Mar posed serious logistical and military problems for Shining Path forces in the area, the small, lethal, mobile combat units of the guerrillas’ *Fuerza Principal* nevertheless continued to roam the countryside. They persisted in ambushing CAD patrols and military convoys, stopping vehicles on the roads and looting their cargo, even occasionally raiding villages deep in areas now considered to be militia strongholds, like Tambo district.

According to José of DIVICOTE, guerrilla forces always prepared their combat actions carefully, following a standard and systematic plan of action. The first step, after the type of action (i.e. ambush, assassination, incursion, etc.) and the participants has been selected, is to observe or to reconnoitre the target, taking note of its social and geographical surroundings. It was undoubtedly for this reason that the guerrillas were abducting and interrogating peasants from specific villages over the months of September and October. The next step is to decide the means by which to execute the action; that is to say, determining which sort of weapon is appropriate for the job. Step three involves planning the order and timing of the various phases and

objectives of the operation. Guerrilla attacks on settlements, so peasants told me, were usually executed at night, between 10.00 p.m. and 2.00 a.m., when most everyone was asleep. "They carry out their actions until about two o'clock at night, because if they don't retreat until four o'clock in the early morning, it gives time for neighbouring communities to organise a counterattack and so catch them," Zorro explained. "Therefore, at night, after they realise their misdeed, they go far away, into the dark."¹¹² And as former CAD president Vicente Perez also pointed out to me, a favourite tactic of the guerrillas was to attack settlements when they were in the midst of a fiesta. For in these situations, virtually the entire adult population would be helplessly drunk, and therefore vulnerable. "They enter by surprise. They enter with the intention of killing or capturing the [CAD] leaders in order to destroy that organisation."¹¹³ Once the operation had been carried out, said José, it would be followed up by "the assessment, the study that they make after the action, to see what were the errors they had made so as not to repeat them and so that it would be better the next time."¹¹⁴ Such was the careful planning which guerrilla forces made in preparation for striking at the village of Huayao.

On 10 October 1992, the sounds of festive music, singing and laughter filled the evening air around Huayao. Everyone in the village, except for the children, had already been celebrating and drinking continuously since the day before, when the *comuneros* attended a wedding in Qeqra. Many of the *comuneros* had already passed out, either in their own homes or on the very spot where they had collapsed to the ground. The two *ronderos* on sentry duty at the entrance to the village that night were also drunk. As some of the survivors would later recall, it was sometime between 10.00 and 11.00 p.m., while a few of the *comuneros* continued to celebrate, that one of the sentries noticed movement in the gloom. He shouted a challenge. The reply that came back from the shadows was, "We're Zorro's *Patrulla Especial*," followed by a bullet that ripped into his chest. The other sentry shot once and then, perhaps in a desperate attempt to keep his weapon from falling into enemy hands, hurled his Mauser into the darkness before he too was shot dead. (The *Patrulla Especial* later recovered the rifle lying in a little stream nearby.) A large band of guerrillas then rushed through the gate. Once inside the compound, they proceeded to shoot, stab, bludgeon or hack to death anyone they came across. They threw hand grenades and homemade explosives into houses, killing entire families. By the time the raiders had left some two or three hours later, forty-three men, women, and children lay dead or dying. The seriously wounded numbered eleven.¹¹⁵

It was around 5 o'clock the next morning when Zorro was roused from his sleep by frantic knocking at the door. He had just spent the past two days patrolling the district with the *Patrulla Especial* and was exhausted. They were to resume their patrolling in another part of the district the next day, so he had allowed all his men to return to their own homes and billets in Vista Alegre to get a good night's rest. Upon opening the door, he was greeted by a sight that immediately drove away the drowsiness from his head. It also left him totally stunned. A small group of people were sprawled all over the yard or leaning up against his fence. Every one had gaping wounds, some quite terrible. Straight away, two *comuneros* began to describe in rapid speech what had happened, apologising for disturbing his sleep when they had finished giving their story. They had at first gone to seek help at the army base, but the com-

mander was asleep and so the sentries would not open the gate. They were told to come back later.

Zorro grabbed his Mauser and rushed as fast as he could to Huayao, some ten kilometres away. Along the way, he collected some of his personnel.

Thereupon I arrived at the community and the survivors were weeping. The dead were [lying] here and there, shot on the ground, on the mud banks where they tried to escape. The charred bodies of children were among the dead, entire families annihilated in their own homes with grenades and home-made bombs, while the shoulders, heads, and stomachs of many other corpses had been hacked open by hatchets, picks, machetes and knives. It was all a disaster. Livestock killed by the impact of stray bullets and houses gutted by fire. Meanwhile the DD.TT. had retreated to Sello de Oro.

The peasants and some of the peasant survivors came up to me, weeping, and saying to me, "Comando, it was the fault of you all that they entered. They have massacred us. You left us alone so that the terrorists could carry on killing us." The only thing I could do was to weep with them and to help the wounded.¹¹⁶

Soldiers from the garrison arrived at the village later that morning and helped transport the remaining wounded to the hospital in Tambo town. Bad weather prevented a helicopter from coming to evacuate the casualties to the hospital in Huamanga, leaving no choice but to transport them by ambulance and other assorted local vehicles. For the wounded, the jolting and gruelling overland journey of over two and a half hours along a badly rutted dirt road must have been yet another nightmare. Meanwhile, back at Huayao the sad and gruesome tasks of collecting and identifying the bodies of the dead continued until dusk.

Both Comando Zorro and the commander of the military garrison, Captain "Shavor," noted that throughout the attack not a single CAD from the neighbouring hamlets came to Huayao's assistance. The village of Pata Pata is only a hundred metres away. Captain Shavor wrote in his official report that the "situation became a little suspicious, seeing the proximity in which one finds both villages practically living together" (CCAD-SJB 1992:2). Perhaps he was implying that the guerrillas might have had the collusion of the *comuneros* of Pata Pata in carrying out the attack. For their part, the inhabitants of Pata Pata claimed that they became frightened once they heard the sound of heavy gunfire nearby, and they fled and hid in the surrounding hills (*ibid.*).

News of the terrible massacre spread throughout the country. A month later, President Fujimori himself paid a visit to Huayao, where he distributed twenty Winchester shotguns to the CADs of the district. Moreover, as Zorro writes, "upon seeing the reality in which we lived he programmed the creation of various works in this community."¹¹⁷

5.15 Shining Path into the 1990s: crisis and resilience

The capture of Abimael Guzmán did not appear to have had any immediate disruptive effect on the Party's operational capacity at the regional level. Indeed, as we have just seen in the case of Tambo, the rebels were actually able to intensify and to realise their most audacious and devastating military activities in the area, in spite of the capture of their paramount leader. That this was possible owes itself to an organisational structure characterised by a chain of executive committees at every level—from the Central Committee, to the regional committees, right down to local committees at every *base de apoyo*—that was designed to withstand the death or capture of its leaders. As Kruijt observed in the aftermath of Guzmán's arrest, "some sixty percent of Shining Path's Central Committee is behind bars.... [But at] the regional level, most of the fighting machine of Shining Path [remained] intact: only the Comité Norte [has] been 'neutralised,' whereas the four others [are] virtually undetected. The same [could] be said about the zonal and subzonal committees" (Kruijt 1996:252-253).

After Guzmán's capture in September 1992, Oscar Ramírez Durand, the celebrated Camarada Feliciano, assumed command of all Shining Path forces in the field. The son of a retired Army general, Feliciano first made a name for himself (and in the process got a bullet in the leg that has left him lame) as the leader of the audacious attack on Huamanga Prison, on 2 March 1982. That action succeeded in liberating around 247 prisoners, 78 of whom had already been accused and convicted of terrorism, including the legendary Edith Lagos. Before he became the new PCP chairman, Feliciano was for many years the Committee Secretary of the *Comité Regional Principal*, a strategically important zone comprising the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica, and the provinces of Andahuaylas and Chincheros in neighbouring Apurímac department. Among his enemies and within the Shining Path, Feliciano is widely known as a man of action, a clever strategist, and an uncompromising orthodox Maoist.

It was yet another triumph for the Fujimori government when, in September 1993, Abimael Guzmán and fellow inmate Elena Iparraguirre produced a handwritten and signed letter (and televised statements soon after) expressing their new desire to begin negotiating peace terms with the government. It astounded the nation. The real reasons why Guzmán decided to make such an abrupt about-turn is known only to him, though journalist and Sendero expert Gustavo Gorriti was perhaps correct in saying: "I have to suppose that his decision has to be seen more with his personal situation than with the war he began" (quoted in Valenzuela 1993:19).

Feliciano showed his utter rejection of Guzmán's conciliatory overtures to the government by continuing to carry out armed actions. The so-called "*carta del Acuerdo de Paz*" ("letter of the Peace Agreement") sparked off a heated and virulent internal debate on the correct strategic line, which in time caused a crippling schism within the Party. It has been a bitter row in which the Disciple has come to be seen as more devout to the orthodox faith than the Messiah himself. On one side, the Guzmán faction comprised the majority of incarcerated Senderistas. Its leadership took the name "*la Dirección Central del PCP*," and denounced Feliciano as a "usurper" and (ironically) a "revisionist" who represents the "*Línea Liquidacionista de Izquierda*" ("Left Liquidationist Line") (DESCO 1996b:9). Conversely, Feliciano's fol-

lowers were made up of most of the Senderistas still operating in the field. Most significantly, they maintained control of the *comités regionales* (regional committees) and the Party's entire military apparatus. For the Feliciano faction, which called itself Sendero Rojo, there was no substitute for the primacy of armed struggle in a protracted people's war, just as Mao had taught. They designated their leadership the "*Comité Central de Emergencia*," and have condemned Guzmán's position as the "*Linea Oportunista de Derecha*" ("Right Opportunist Line") (ibid.). Although both sides initially claimed that there was no rupture within the Party, rather simply another "two-line struggle," the intensity of hostilities that subsequently emerged between the two factions suggests otherwise. For instance, rebel documents captured by DINCOTE in July 1994 revealed that one aspect of the Feliciano faction's imminent campaign, dubbed "*En defensa de la jefatura contra la dictadura genocida*" ("In defence of the leadership against the genocidal dictatorship") was a plan to initiate, at the beginning of November, an armed offensive aimed at liquidating Guzmán's supporters (DESCO 1994b:2-3).

It is not necessary to examine this "*lucha de dos líneas*" ("two-line struggle") between the factions of Guzmán and Feliciano in any greater detail here. What is important for us to recognise is that the capture of Abimael Guzmán and most of the Central Committee did not immediately bring an end to, or a substantial weakening of, the Party's military capabilities, much less its defeat as many observers at the time prematurely assumed. In fact, Feliciano would continue to direct the armed struggle until his capture in the town of Cochas-Jauja, department of Junín, on 14 July 1999. With all the tenacious resilience of a mythical hydra, Shining Path has proven to be a beast against which lopping off its heads is not enough, by itself, to destroy the body. Indeed, other heads have emerged to take the place of those that have fallen, and the body tries constantly to replenish itself through the recruitment and abduction of young people. When in December 1994 del Pino asked Píter, a 25-year-old combatant who had escaped from Viscatán, what he thought was the future of the guerrillas in that region, Píter replied: "Well, I see, it appears that they are going to maintain themselves over there, everything is still normal, they are going to maintain their position, obviously they are not going to advance, little by little they are going to break down....[But no], they are not going to disappear easily....Yes, they'll continue recruiting in other zones" (quoted in del Pino 1995b:123).

The total defeat of the rebel organisation could only be achieved by destroying its military and support apparatus piecemeal; and that could only be done by inducing wholesale desertion within its ranks, or by annihilating its armed columns in combat. Senderologists had for so long built up the personage of Abimael Guzmán to the mythical and mystical proportions of their own making that many of them were immediately convinced that his capture ushered the inevitable end to Shining Path as a guerrilla organisation. To assume this not only exaggerates the "cult of personality" at the cost of underestimating, or even ignoring, the resilient ability of the Maoist organisational structure to survive these kinds of setbacks. It also wrongly presumes that most combatants were just slavishly following *the person* of Guzmán, rather than also fighting because of their own critical consciousness and for ideals such as social justice. As Gustavo Gorriti astutely pointed out, it is important to recognise that there exists "a difference between the imprisoned Guzmán Reinoso and the so-called

‘Guzmán thought’” (quoted in Valenzuela 1993:19). Recognition of these facts helps explain why many Shining Path combatants (of the Feliciano faction) chose to continue armed resistance in spite of the incarceration of Guzmán, and in direct defiance of his exhortations to engage henceforth only in peaceful political struggle. It is my contention, therefore, that the gradual collapse of the movement since 1992 was caused not primarily by the capture of Guzmán and most of the original Central Committee, but rather by a combination of this and other factors. These include (1) a number of serious mistakes committed by Shining Path itself, which aggravated an already widespread disaffection among the popular masses as well among many of its own supporters, (2) improved military and intelligence capabilities on the part of the State, in combination with ruthlessly effective antiterrorism legislation, and (3) the extirpation of guerrilla forces by security forces in combat, particularly by the *Comités de Autodefensa*.

5.16 The fall of Camarada Benjamin

As Zorro walked across Tambo’s central plaza in the early morning of 2 February 1993, four men approached him. They introduced themselves as peasants from the village of Mahuayura. They had come to ask if he could give security to the *desplazados* of their village who wished to till some of their more distant fields over the coming two days. Zorro replied that the *Patrulla Especial* could escort them to their *chacras*, and that he also would provide additional sentries to guard the village during the day while all the men were away. Zorro had to travel to Huamanga that day to collect army donations of supplies and munitions for the *Patrulla Especial*, so his *sub-comando*, “Tarzan,” was left in charge of making the security arrangements for the inhabitants of Mahuayura.

Tarzan decided it would be most efficient if the *Patrulla Especial* spent the next three nights in Mahuayura, thus making it easier to get an early start in the morning. It was by sheer coincidence and luck, then, that the *Patrulla Especial* was at Mahuayura when it came under guerrilla attack later that evening. Expecting to encounter only ill-armed villagers, the rebels were surprised and dismayed to find themselves suddenly up against the seasoned *rentados* of *Los Condores*. The attack was easily repulsed, but that was not to be the last time the militiamen were prevented from going to sleep that night.

Mahuayura is a large village made up mainly of *resistentes* and *desplazados*, with the Huamanga-San Francisco road running right through it. For this reason, Mahuayura also serves as a gateway to the district for all traffic coming from the Apurímac selva. While the nightly, district-wide curfew remained in effect from six o’clock in the evening to three in the morning, vehicles arriving from the jungle had to remain on the outskirts of the village, for as a precaution the soldiers and the *ronderos* allowed no traffic to travel during those hours on the stretch of road between Mahuayura and Tambo. Trucks would continue to arrive outside Mahuayura’s gate throughout the night, however, and most mornings would find a long queue of parked vehicles stretching down the road towards San Francisco.

In the early hours of the morning, a distraught driver who had just driven in noti-

fied Sub-comando Tarzan that a group of guerrillas had been busy stopping vehicles a few kilometres down the road. He said that they gave political sermons and looted vehicles, and then headed off in the direction of a hill known as *Cerro Yana Orjo Chico*. Tarzan knew the area well and could guess where the guerrilla column was heading. He ordered the *Patrulla Especial* and most of the able-bodied men of Mahuayura to arm up and to move out straight away. They would try to ambush the guerrilla column.

By taking known short cuts and few pauses, this large company of *ronderos* managed to reach the intended ambush site just as dawn was breaking. They positioned themselves among the rocks and waited. A few hours later, the rebels still had not appeared. It was by now almost 8:30 in the morning. The men were cold and Tarzan decided it was time they returned to Mahuayura.

At this point the mist began to envelop them and at the same as they were advancing, passing through the place known as Yawarccochoa, the *Patrulla Especial* suddenly came, face to face, with the Senderistas, who were climbing up from Tapuna to Yana Orjo Grande with sacks of food. Thereupon the engagement began. A group of 5 personnel [of the *Patrulla Especial*] had climbed to the top of the hill, and the rest made their way down the path towards the DD.TT.. Thanks to these personnel who were situated at the crest of the rocky hill [they gave] cover to the rest of the personnel. Meanwhile there were around 20 Senderistas and some began to take cover and others to escape.¹¹⁸

According to Tarzan, the firefight was fierce and a number of his men were quickly hit. Nevertheless, having gained the heights faster than their adversaries, the militiamen held the advantage. They were able to bring heavy suppression fire down on the guerrillas, which allowed the rest of the *ronderos* to advance and attack. With five of their men shot dead, and being unable to hold the *ronderos* off any longer, the rest of the Senderistas turned and ran. The militiamen chased after them, shooting down many more before the few surviving guerrillas finally disappeared into the rolling mist. One of those trying to escape, but lagging behind, was a wounded guerrilla carrying two FAL assault rifles and a walkie-talkie. One of the *rentados* ran forward to capture him, but the guerrilla spun around firing his weapon. The other *ronderos* had no choice but to shoot him dead. Upon closer inspection of the body, a number of the *ronderos* claimed to recognise the man as none other than Camarada Benjamin, the elusive leader of the Comité Popular “Sello de Oro.”¹¹⁹

Having heard the shooting in the distance, a platoon of soldiers from BCS-42-Jano came to investigate. They came on the scene just after the firefight finished, whereupon they proceeded to confiscate the large pile of equipment recovered from the rebels, on the pretext that civilians are not permitted to keep “*materiales de Guerra*” (“war materiel”). To the indignation of the militiamen, they would later find out that these soldiers turned all this paraphernalia in at the army base in Pichari, “saying that it was they who had recuperated the mentioned materiel from the Senderistas.”¹²⁰ The soldiers may have robbed them of official credit for the captured

equipment, but the *Patrulla Especial* and the *ronderos* of Mahuayura knew the truth, and were no less proud of the smashing victory they had won that day. As Zorro later wrote in his war diary, “with the fall of this group of subversives in this zone, Sendero was given a heavy blow because the ringleader [Benjamin], who during various years was in control of this zone of La Mar and the selva of Ene, had been deactivated. A few months later the news reached us that a Senderista known as ‘La Gringa’ [Elizabet] had taken the place of Benjamín, managing to take revenge on the lorry drivers....and withdrawing to the selva of Sello de Oro.”¹²¹

In fact, neither Elizabet nor the “guerrilla zone” of Sello de Oro had very much longer to live. For the CADs of Tambo district, the mutiny and subsequent capitulation of Sello de Oro’s *masa* in October 1993 brought one chapter in their struggle against Shining Path to a close. The conclusive deactivation of that once-feared guerrilla zone ushered a comparatively long period of respite from political violence, enabling the new stage of “Reconstruction and Development” to begin. It is to this theme that we turn in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 This passage, quoted in Gorriti (1990:57), appeared in a flyer entitled “La celebración del Primero de Mayo por el Proletariado Revolucionario,” released on 1 May 1980. The document was signed by the Movement of Labourers, Workers and Peasants (MOTC), one of its front organisations, but was in fact authored by Shining Path.
- 2 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 3 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 4 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 5 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 6 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000. Two hundred nuevos soles is equivalent to about \$112 American dollars according to the 1991 rate of exchange (See Wilkie 1996:1006).
- 7 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 8 For details on the new counterinsurgency policy initiated during the first Fujimori administration (implemented in accordance with tough, new antiterrorism legislation), see Tapia 1997:62-77.
- 9 For details, see La Republica (1991b:12-15).
- 10 SZSNC-8, also known as *Frente Huamanga*, comprises the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica, and includes the districts of Pichari and Quimbiri in Convención province, Cuzco department.
- 11 The presence of the CCP and other peasant federations has been very weak or absent in much of the countryside of Huamanga, La Mar, and Huanta provinces ever since the mid-1980s.
- 12 Based on author’s interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in Convención province, Cuzco department), on 20 November 1997.

- 13 Based on author's interviews with Eusebio and Felix (surnames withheld by author), long-time residents of Ccarhuapampa, about the history of their settlement, on 16 November 1997, and on a group interview held on 25 October 1997 with the representatives of seven of the twelve displaced communities that make up the population of Ccarhuapampa.
- 14 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 15 Author's interview with Eusebio, long-time resident of Ccarhuapampa, about the history of his settlement, on 16 November 1997.
- 16 Author's interviews with Felix (surname withheld by author), long-time resident of Ccarhuapampa, about the history of his settlement, on 16 November 1997. In contrast to the situation of the *desplazados* of Ccarhuapampa, making a living for most other peasants in Tambo district has been comparatively much easier. Fewer rural villages (and hence their fields) in the central and eastern parts of the district were totally abandoned, and even for *desplazados* from these areas who had moved to the town, their agricultural fields are much nearer and so easier to get to than those of Ccarhuapampa's *desplazados*.
- 17 Author's interview with Vicente Perez Cervan, a displaced peasant from Vicos, former President of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Defensa Civil* and former *Regidor de Desarrollo Rural*, on 13 October 1997.
- 18 Two million intis are equivalent to about \$970 American dollars according to 1989 rate of exchange (see Wilkie 1996:1006).
- 19 SCDECAS 1989b.
- 20 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 21 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 22 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.30.
- 23 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 24 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.31.
- 25 Author's interview with Vicente Perez Cervan, a former President of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Defensa Civil* (1992) and former *Regidor de Desarrollo Rural* (1996-1998), on 13 October 1997.
- 26 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.3.
- 27 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.3.
- 28 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.3-5.
- 29 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.5-6.
- 30 Heckler & Koch G3, 7.62 (NATO) calibre, automatic assault rifle.
- 31 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.7.
- 32 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.7-8.
- 33 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.10.
- 34 The cause of these sorts of jamming problems was likely a combination of cold temperature, the poor condition of the vintage rifles, and a possible lack of proper oiling.
- 35 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.11.
- 36 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.11.
- 37 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.13.
- 38 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.15-16.
- 39 DIVICOTE (División Contra el Terrorismo) is the regional-level division of DINCOTE (Dirección Nacional Contra el Terrorismo), the special anti-terrorist branch of the National Police. DIVICOTE's organisational genealogy can be traced back to the Sinchis, the infamous elite counterinsurgency battalion of the old Civil Guard's 48th Division.

- 40 “*Bases de Apoyo*” refers to guerrilla-controlled rural villages, each of which was designated with a number, such as “*Base 14*.”
- 41 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 42 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 43 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 44 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.26-27.
- 45 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 46 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 47 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.18.
- 48 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.19-20.
- 49 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.20.
- 50 As Lewis Taylor pointed out in an early essay on Sendero Luminoso, “Every cadre is given instruction in general first aid, with one member of each cell normally possessing slightly more advanced medical skills. Sendero have a number of doctors and nurses in their ranks...” (1983:14).
- 51 Author’s interview with Faustino Allpacca, peasant and Tambo district’s *Vocal Desarrollo de Sede Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 25 October 1997. A similar sober opinion was expressed by Julio Talavera, President of Ayahuanco district’s CAD: “In the end, all of us are going to die, so I am already reconciled to dying, but fighting, not kneeling down” (IDL 1996:68).
- 52 The other members of the group were Jacinto Sulca Quispe (a *mando militar* or military official known as Camarada Guido), Mery Huamán (Camarada Mary), her brother Yover Huamán, and Marcelino Cordova Quispe (Combatiente Justo). From Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.29, and CCAD-SJB 1994.
- 53 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.29.
- 54 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.64.
- 55 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 56 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.53. Shining Path’s burning of crops was also mentioned by Claudia Vila, one of the capitulated *masa* members of the Sello de Oro, in an interview with Ponciano del Pino in January 1994: “[In the selva]...there is neither coca nor cube, the Senderistas have burnt it” (del Pino 1995b:58).
- 57 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 58 For further details concerning this purge within the Party and its masses, see del Pino 1998:158-192.
- 59 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 60 As *arrepentido* Claudia Vila explained to del Pino: “When they took us we were very confused, we were not accustomed, we thought of going to the town, but we were well guarded and watched, there was nowhere to go, we could not escape” (1995b:56).
- 61 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 62 Author’s interview with Camarada Juanita, a captured Senderista from the guerrilla bastion of Viscatán, at DIVICOTE headquarters in Huamanga, on 13 November 1997.
- 63 According to the official records of the 2nd Infantry Division, forty-three rebels surrendered themselves under the Repentance Law to army bases and the police in Ayacucho department in

- 1993 and 1994 (CCAD-SJB 1997:5).
- 64 Information from del Pino (1998:172) and Camarada Juanita. "This groups of senderistas totalled 184, including 107 children and youth, 46 women, and 31 men" (del Pino 1998:172).
- 65 The dead include Sócrates Gómez Cárdenas, Samuel Nevarro Miguel, Falconí Figueroa Escobar, Lucio Huaraca Espino, Dionisio Yaguillo Atao, Eduavil Cisneros Ayvar, Víctor Amiquero Bendezi, Narciso Huamán Yanasupo (CCAD-SJB 1994:1).
- 66 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.32.
- 67 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.33.
- 68 The Mausers that the CADs of Tambo owned bore stamps indicating they were Belgian-manufactured Mausers (Model 1935), of 7.65 mm caliber, unlike the 7.92x57mm calibre German-made Mausers. (Mauser rifles were licensed for production in many countries outside Germany, in many variant models.) The 7.65x53mm cartridge is sometimes also referred to as the "Argentine Mauser" cartridge, after the cartridge used by the "Modelo Argentino" Mauser Carbine (1891). It is also likely that many of the Mausers acquired by the CADs have been re-barrelled for NATO 7.62 mm calibre to accommodate the FAL cartridge. For more detailed information on Mauser rifles of the world, see Robert Ball (1997, 2000).
- 69 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 70 Author's interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in La Convención province, Cuzco department), on 20 November 1997.
- 71 Writing about the short-lived Marxist rebellions in the 1960s, authors Michael F. Brown and Eduardo Fernández suggest that one of these groups, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), negotiated with the fugitive Nazi Klaus Barbie, who was in Bolivia at the time, for the purchase of some Mauser rifles and ammunition (1991:92-93). If this is true, it is possible that some of these rifles eventually ended up in the black market.
- 72 According to the Peruvian Ministry of Defence, by February 1996 the Armed Forces had distributed some 16,500 shotguns to *comités de autodefensa* throughout the entire country (DESCO 1996a:13).
- 73 Author's interview with Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres, "Comandante Huayhuaco," on 11 December 1997.
- 74 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 75 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 76 Until it was replaced by more modern firearms in the late 1950s, the Mauser continued to be used as the standard issue carbine of many other Latin American armies, like Brazil's, Chile's, Ecuador's, and Argentina's, for example. It is almost certain that the Peruvian armed forces have Mausers in store for emergencies, namely foreign invasion by Ecuador or Chile. In such an event, obsolete equipment would probably be distributed to the civilian population, which would be formed into a national militia.
- 77 Author's interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in La Convención province, Cuzco department), on 20 November 1997.
- 78 For a description and discussion of the *corte monte* ritual, which is commonly celebrated in many parts of Ayacucho during Carnival, see Isbell 1978:190-191.
- 79 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.

- 80 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.35.
- 81 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.37.
- 82 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.40.
- 83 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 84 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 85 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 86 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 87 *Decreto Supremo No. 077* was promulgated on 11 November 1992.
- 88 Author's conversation with Nelson and Reynaldo, secondary students at Colegio San Martin, Tambo, on 24 September 1997.
- 89 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 90 Author's interview with Vicente Perez Cervan, a former President of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Defensa Civil* (1992) and former *Regidor de Desarrollo Rural* (1996-1998), on 13 October 1997.
- 91 According to Captain Vásquez and Ruben Rojas, the District Mayor at the time, the purpose of the identity card was twofold: (1) to help prevent the infiltration of the comités de autodefensa by rebels, and (2) to provide a record of who is a *rondero* so that it will be easier in the future for the state to make indemnity payments to the families of *ronderos* killed in the line of duty. (As already noted, to date the state has not made a single payment to any deceased *rondero's* widow or family anywhere in what was the emergency zone.) During 23-25 September 1997, Vásquez's team registered the names of almost every adult male and female between the ages of 16 and 70 living in the Zona Rural and Zona Urbana of Tambo district. Besides their names, a photographic portrait of each *rondero* was taken and stored in a computer database. I was told by members of the registration team that the army plans to issue the ID card to all CAD members throughout the entire Peruvian emergency zone, beginning in the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica.
- 92 Comando Zorro did not specify the date of departure in his diary.
- 93 *BCS-42-Jano* stands for *Base Contra Subversiva*, of the 42nd "Moquegua" Battalion, Jano district. In April 1992, the 42nd Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Division established their new headquarters at Pichari, the capital of the district with the same name, on the Cuzco side of the Apurímac River Valley. Known as *BCS-42-Tambo*, the army base in Tambo district is also garrisoned by soldiers of the 42nd.
- 94 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 95 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 96 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.44-45.
- 97 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.48-49.
- 98 Information based on the complete archives of the *Comité Central de Autodefensa 'San Juan Bautista' del Distrito de Tambo*, a copy of which was provided to me by Walter Ramirez Echacaya, 31 May 2000.
- 99 Author's interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in La Convención province, Cuzco department), on 27 June 1997.

- 100 See *La Calle*, 25 de febrero de 1997, p.1.
- 101 Based on author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, on 31 May 2000. By the mid-1990s, the CADs had become CADDs: *Comités de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*.
- 102 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 103 In what was undoubtedly a security precaution in a situation in which a large number of peasants were present in the city with their firearms, I saw small but heavily armed groups of Army commandos, with their faces coloured with camouflage paint, stationed at each of the four main entrances to the *Plaza de Armas*. I wondered whether this reflected the extent to which the army in Ayacucho still did not completely trust the *ronderos*.
- 104 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 105 Author's interview with *Teniente* José (surname withheld) of DIVICOTE, on 24 November 1997.
- 106 According to the *ronderos*, the guerrillas were in the past able to gain entrance to local communities by disguising as policemen or soldiers. Hence, the strict restrictions placed on the entrance of policemen into the area existed to prevent such a thing from happening again (del Pino 1996:170, fn. 53.).
- 107 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa*, on 31 May 2000.
- 108 CCAD-SJB 1993. The application requirements for official recognition appear in Article 55 of *Decreto Supremo No.077*. The other original members of the *Junta Directiva* of CCAD-SJB included Eduardo Prado Curé (*Vice-Presidente*), Humberto Sánchez Vargas (*Secretario de Actas*), Isaac Vilcatoma Lapa (*Secretario de Economía*), Valentín Domínguez Quispe (*Secretario de Organización*), Donato Huicho Ayvar (*Vocal de Seguridad*), and Félix Vivanco Vizcarra (*Vocal de Desarrollo*).
- 109 But Walter Ramirez never lost his love of learning, which he has instilled in his children. The old, rickety cabinet in his house, stuffed full of all kinds of books and reading material always impressed me. Walter is an insatiable reader, and seems to have a natural talent as a writer, to which his personal war diary attests. I used to watch his children at play practicing their mathematics and script writing on a home-made chalkboard hanging outside on a wall of his house.
- 110 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.58.
- 111 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.59.
- 112 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
- 113 Author's interview with Vicente Perez Cervan, a displaced peasant from Vicos, former President of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Defensa Civil* and former *Regidor de Desarrollo Rural*, on 13 October 1997.
- 114 Author's interview with *Teniente* José (surname withheld) of DIVICOTE, on 24 November 1997.
- 115 I have reconstructed the details of this massacre based on two sources: (1) CCAD-SJB 1992, the official report of the massacre written up by the local commander of Tambo military base, and (2) Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.58-63. The dead include: Virgilio Quispe Bendezu (65), Mauro Miguel Joras (19), Hipolito Morillaco (20), Freccedes Yauli Soto (38), Alejandro Navarro Quispe (33), Martín Laurente Lujan (50), Avilio Perez Lujan (14), Faustino Anyosa Lujan (60), Floirán Curo Quispe, (18), Arturo Elso Torre Miguel (1), Gilberto Malhuayza Urbano (33), Rubén Iiapa Huicho (7), Mariano Humán Quispe (70), Fortunato Huicho Palomino (50), Claudio Huamán Huillo (15), Herminia Torres Vela Vargas (53), Lourdes Torres Torres (12), Elisa Navarro Hualppa (11), Delia Torres Torres (15), Ricarda Sulca Quispe (40), Marcelina Kiwi Ccance (20), Sebastiana Ccance Kiwi (45), Ignacia Quispe Hualppa (33), Rosa Yucra Vargas (50), Victoria Miguel Quispe (38), Prudencia Cordero Muñoz (35), Dorotea Ccance Lapa

- (30), Griselda Lapa Mucha (32), Rosa Yucra Lapa (13), Isabela Huicho Mucha (14), Aurelia Huicho Jeri (31), Ambrosia Mucha Jeri (38), Nelva Perez Mucha (4), María Mucha Joras (33), Zenaída Palomino Huicho (8), Paulína Medina Navarro (20), Dionicia Aguilar Curo (60), Natalia Torres Aybar (47), Benedicta Yucra Calle (35), Trinidad Taype Cordero (56), an unidentified boy (approx 3 yrs.), an unidentified boy (approx 8 yrs), an unidentified girl (approx 1 yr.).
- The wounded survivors include: Marcelina Kiwi Alvarez (50), Martín Gutierrez Guillen (14), Lucio Joras Rojas (60), Raúl Palomino Juarez (8), Demetrio Huicho Palomino (40), Justina Yauce Lapa (30), Constanca Gutierrez Estela (35), Agripina Lapa Quispe (45) (CCAD-SJB 1992:2).
- 116 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.62.
- 117 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.63.
- 118 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.66-67. Based on debriefing of Sub-Comando “Tarzan.”
- 119 According to Comandante Huayhuaco, Camarada Benjamín’s real name is Víctor Carbajal Urbano (in de Althaus and Morelli 1989:6). Based on the testimony of a capitulated member of the Sello de Oro, del Pino offers the contrary view that Benjamín had abandoned Shining Path as early as 1989, when he allegedly fled from the Sello de Oro with his girlfriend (del Pino 1998:184; the original testimony of Claudia Vila appears in del Pino 1995b:62).
- 120 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.69.
- 121 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.69-70.

6 Reconstruction and development in the twilight of civil war

6.1 The critical turning point in the counterinsurgency struggle

By 1993 rebel forces had suffered crippling political and military setbacks to such a degree that the Shining Path seemed in the final stages of collapse. The tide had turned at last. Though Sendero Luminoso would endure into the new millennium—in part a testament to the stubborn resilience of its few remaining members—it seems unlikely that it could ever recover the strategic initiative it once enjoyed at the height of its power in 1990. With the capitulation of the Senderista stronghold of Sello de Oro in October 1993, there descended in the province of La Mar and in the Apurímac River Valley a period of relative calm that had not been felt in the region for almost a decade. Once guerrilla attacks were no longer imminent in Tambo and adjacent districts, local populations were finally free to concentrate on the daunting tasks of rebuilding their broken lives, their dispersed households, and their shattered communities.

The critical reversal in Sendero's fortunes was not isolated to just this region, however. Although guerrilla forces continued to mount military strikes, the power and influence that Shining Path had previously enjoyed over large parts of the country now seemed to be crumbling as their remaining forces were increasingly being contained, eradicated, or driven back to their few remaining strongholds in such remote areas as the Upper Huallaga Valley. By the end of the third year of Alberto Fujimori's first term in presidential office, it was sufficiently clear that the threat of a revolutionary takeover of the Peruvian state—seemingly imminent in the final months of the García government—had been conclusively averted.

On 5 April 1992, President Fujimori executed a bloodless self-coup, with the complicity of the armed forces. He suspended the Constitution, and dissolved a Congress dominated by his political opponents because, allegedly, its incessant bickering was hindering his efforts to deal effectively with rampant terrorism and the worsening economic crisis.¹ Rather than provoking popular resentment and opposition, however, the self-coup “proved to be widely popular with most Peruvians, who seemed to agree that the country needed a stronger government to deal with the ongoing crisis. Public opinion polls indicated that an astonishing 70 percent of the population supported the self-coup” (Klarén 2000:413-414). To the millions of ordinary Peruvians who were tired of living in fear of violence, and had had enough of seemingly incompetent and ineffectual politicians and political parties, it mattered little that Fujimori's dictatorial tendencies were widely criticised abroad.

It was only when important donor countries threatened to suspend economic aid to Peru that Fujimori was finally pressured into promising to rewrite the Constitution, and to hold congressional and municipal elections in the near future. Notwithstanding the promises of change he gave to the international community, at home he proceeded to rule by decree, backed up by the armed forces (Klarén 2000:414).

Underpinning Fujimori's iron grip on state power was his control over the armed forces, which he achieved by co-opting the upper ranks of the Army, Navy and Air Force (Kruijt and del Pilar Tello 2002), and the dismissal or forced retirement of suspected political opponents in the upper ranks of the officer corps. In particular, he and his shadowy intelligence chief Vladimiro Montesinos, head of the *Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional* (SIN), took to meddling in the process for promoting regional commanders and for choosing the chiefs of staff, replacing a time-honoured practice based strictly on academic rankings with one based on personal appointment. This was how General Nicolás Hermoza Ríos came to be promoted to the post of President of the Joint Command, which he held from 1991 to 1998. "New appointments in the upper ranks of the armed forces were made directly by Montesinos, who as a result inspired both fear and loyalty within the armed forces" (Cameron 2000:4). This apparent "de-professionalization and politicization" (ibid.) of the Peruvian armed forces, combined with the perceived "un-constitutionality" of the *autogolpe*, rankled some senior military officers. It even provoked General Jaime Salinas Sedó (recently forcibly retired) to plot a military coup against Fujimori, which was planned for 13 November 1992. This plan failed, however, because the armed forces as a whole remained loyal to the President and to Hermoza Ríos, and because the SIN was able to discover and arrest the conspirators before they could cause any trouble. Apart from the formidable mechanisms of internal surveillance and tight control designed by Montesinos to keep the armed forces in line, it is also important to keep in mind that Fujimori came to command the support (if sometimes begrudgingly) and loyalty of most middle and senior ranking officers as a consequence of a number of other key arrangements. For one, he expanded the political and judicial power of the armed forces in return for its unwavering support throughout the entire decade he was in power. In addition, he enacted a series of tough antiterrorist laws, many of which were promulgated as presidential decrees, which provided the security forces the necessary legal basis upon which to begin tackling the insurgency on their own terms—something that they have been demanding from government for years. Furthermore, in response to what had been a notoriously low conviction rate of suspected terrorists by civil courts (Klarén suggests a figure of just 10 percent), Fujimori created special military tribunals for trying cases of terrorism. These courts were presided over by "faceless" judges who, in order to guarantee their personal security, were permitted to conceal their identity by wearing hoods over their heads. Needless to say, the number of convictions shot up immediately, and this pleased the security forces to no end, for it gave them the feeling that their counterinsurgency efforts were no longer made in vain. In the months immediately following the *autogolpe*, the government's new pacification campaign gained steady momentum, not only in military terms, but also in the morale it generated.

Fujimori's anti-terrorism legislation was specifically designed to undermine the insurgency by demolishing its organisational and institutional bases of support in civilian society. For example, Decreto Legislativo No.726 gave the armed forces and the police legal authority to enter university campuses. This made it easier for the security forces to stamp out Shining Path in the universities. Prior to this, many universities function, in Fujimori's own words, as "true trenches of terrorism," where the radicals, despite being the minority, were nevertheless able to impose their will on the

majority by threatening fellow professors and students with physical violence (Fujimori 1995:444). In stark contrast to the terrifying and brutal incursions made by security forces into Ayacucho's university campus and student residences in 1983-84, this time military intervention was peaceful. Consequently, the general sympathy of faculty and students lay with the security forces. As Tapia observed,

Immediately the military effectives dedicated themselves to the cleaning of the installations and the painting of walls. The support of public opinion facilitated the measure. More than a repressive action that sought to arrest activists, it was about a typical psychosocial action, which had as its objective to demonstrate a new governmental will to combat terrorism. The effects were noticed immediately. After the bewilderment and the surprise, there consolidated a majority of students that, although with serious objections, supported the presence of the Army on the university campus (1997:78).

Another effective anti-terrorism measure was Decreto Legislativo No.734, which made it possible for the Ministry of Justice to call for the intervention of the armed forces in restoring order and discipline in national prisons. This move at first seemed destined to repeat that earlier, notorious incident of army intervention that ended in slaughter, scandal, and the martyrdom of dozens of Senderistas at Lima's El Frontón prison in June 1986. Whereas then, Alan García had been widely blamed and his pledge to uphold human rights discredited, Fujimori's actions now, though similar, surprisingly met with popular approval (Tapia 1997:77). Perhaps the difference was that whereas on the one hand, García came to be widely perceived as simply reacting frenetically to events as they came, without any clear policy, particularly towards the end of his presidency, Fujimori, on the other hand, always gave the convincing impression of a decisive man with a real plan. On 6 May 1992, security forces entered prisons in Lima to quell riots sparked by Senderista prisoners who were demanding improved conditions, and a continuation of the previous government's informal policy of allowing them to administer their own cell blocks. Seventy-two hours of bloody clashes later, forty rioters lay dead, and the surviving Senderista prisoners were separated and transferred to various prisons throughout the country (ibid.:77-78). Thus was Shining Path's hitherto formidable political control within the prisons demolished. Until then, the prisons had served as places of indoctrination and, allegedly, even as strategic command centres.²

In 1995, Fujimori's pact with the military was further strengthened when the outgoing Congress passed a general amnesty law for all soldiers charged with human rights crimes. But his crowning glory was, beyond doubt, the capture of Guzmán, for which he took full credit despite the fact that it was the culmination of an ongoing intelligence operation brilliantly directed since 1990 by DINCOTE chief, General Antonio Vidal. On that auspicious day, DINCOTE netted not only the mythical "Presidente Gonzalo," but also the organisation's master computer files. This information led to the swift capture of 90 percent of the movement's highest-ranking leaders (Klarén 2000:415). Perhaps most importantly, Guzmán's arrest and subsequent caged exhibition irreversibly shattered his aura of invincibility, and that of his organ-

isation. “Now we have definitely lost our fear,” Tambo’s district mayor once remarked to me in 1997. “Before it was the time of fear, when no-one was permitted to say anything bad against Sendero. But now we can freely say that terrorism is not the way to progress, but to destruction.”³

Like his predecessors, Fujimori promised the nation that he would smite terrorism. Unlike his predecessors, Fujimori delivered the goods—and such a prize beyond everyone’s highest expectations. In the years to come, he would promote a public image of himself as a strong, undaunted leader, uncompromising in the face of terrorism; a “hard-working” man of few words but of decisive action, whose essential quality is summed up by the catch-phrase that was to become his campaign slogan during the 2000 presidential elections: “*Fujimori. Sí Cumple!*”

6.2 Reconstruction in the midst of violent upheaval

After personal security, the most important concern in the minds of virtually all the peasants I spoke to in Ayacucho was socioeconomic reconstruction. But before we begin to consider the process of reconstruction that followed Peru’s period of protracted civil conflict, it is first important to recognise that, generally speaking, even at the height of war, the dynamics at work are not only those of sociocultural, economic, and political disintegration; conflict also engenders new, enduring patterns of social living. People adapt to their circumstances *even during* war, and life goes on. In this regard, we might even say that in the context of war, *reconstruction* is an ongoing process that happens alongside social disintegration and political conflict. It is not something that kicks in only after violence has effectively ended. With this in mind, I have tried to understand not only how political violence has destroyed ways of life in Tambo and elsewhere in Ayacucho, but also how conflict and violence have led to the construction of new social structures and new forms of social interaction. Perhaps the supreme irony in the case of Peru is that a civil war that has brought a significant loss of life and property has also given rise to fresh, lasting strategies of adaptation. An examination of these new processes, strategies, and patterns provides the essential context for understanding the role that *comités de autodefensa* have played in the reconstruction and development of local societies and local economies devastated by protracted political violence.

6.2.1 FORCED DISPLACEMENT

As the preceding chapters of this book have shown, the process of violence-provoked internal displacement reached its peak in the south-central highlands of Peru between 1983 and 1984 (INEI 1998b:9; cf. Coral 1994:15). Owing to its magnitude and prolonged duration, however, no comprehensive or systematic quantification of the phenomenon was ever attempted. For this reason, estimates of the total number of “internally displaced” persons vary widely. For instance, the Centro de Promoción y Desarrollo Poblacional (CEPRODEP) estimated in 1994 a figure of 120,000 as the total number of displaced families in the whole of Peru, representing at least 500,000 persons (Coral 1994:11). The Programa de Apoyo al Repoblamiento (PAR) put the number of Peru’s displaced population at around 600,000.⁴ The Comisión Episcopal

de Acción Social (CEAS) provided a much lower figure, estimating that as of July 1992, the displaced had reached approximately 311,000 individuals, or 62,200 families (Comisiones de trabajo 1993:34).

It is possible to divide the history of forced displacement in Peru into roughly three periods (Coral 1994:15, MRSDA 1997:8). The first period spans between 1981 and 1985, when those displaced were predominantly Ayacuchanos fleeing the military's harsh counterinsurgency repression. During this time, many *desplazados* sought refuge outside the department, particularly in places like Lima, Ica, and Huancayo. The years 1986 to 1989 marked the second significant wave of displacements. Those heavily affected at this time were people in a number of south-central Andean departments. This was also the period in which forced displacement became most widespread in the country,⁵ impelled by the violent actions of various armed actors—the military, Shining Path, civil defence patrols, and paramilitary groups like the Rodrigo Franco Brigade (Coral 1994:15; cf. INEI 1998b:9). The third and last significant episode of displacement took place between 1990 and 1992, of which the primary cause was guerrilla aggression. The vast majority of people displaced during these years sought sanctuary within their own region, and often just within their own district.

The official figures suggest that between 1981 and 1985, as much as 60.4 percent of all internally displaced Peruvians came from Ayacucho department, with around 39.1 percent originating from the neighbouring department of Huancavelica (INEI 1998b:9). From 1986 to 1990, Apurímac department registered the greatest number of displaced people. Within Ayacucho department itself, the Mesa Regional Sobre Desplazamiento Ayacucho estimated the total number of *desplazados* between 1981 and 1993 to have reached approximately 156,575 persons (around 36,000 families). Of this, approximately 73,996 (18,048 families) were displaced to zones of refuge within Ayacucho department, and around 82,579 persons (17,952 families) to areas outside the department (MRSDA 1997:2). The fact that the department's population was 503,392 at the time of the 1981 census, but 492,507 twelve years later, suggests that almost a third of the department's total population may have been involuntarily uprooted between 1981 and 1993 (INEI 1998a:176).

In spite of their superficial similarities, it has been commonly pointed out that there exists a qualitative difference between the massive economic migrations that occurred in Peru during the '50s, '60s and '70s, and the "forced migrations" of the '80s (Coral 1994:9, Degregori 1993:12). The earlier economic migrations occurred within the context of a desperate search for employment and a better life, impelled by the social pressures brought by a demographic explosion. Life in the cities for economic migrants coming from rural areas was anything but easy, and was marked by constant competition with established urban sectors, and with other migrants. There was stiff competition for scarce jobs, and for access to basic services and sources of income. There was also intense competition for adequate living space within the densely populated shantytowns and urban slums, and during the many free-for-all invasions of vacant land. Yet, in spite of the challenges and hardships, and many disappointments that they encountered along the way, hundreds of thousands of economic migrants flocked to cities like Lima-Callao, Chimbote, and Huancayo. They were led by the belief that they were moving towards progress and more opportuni-

ties, and a better quality of life. Far from embarking as though on a haphazard adventure, however, most economic migrants planned their journey carefully. They saved money and resources well in advance of their trip, and utilised whatever personal network was available to them to facilitate their search for a job and their adaptation to urban life. Isbell observed almost three decades ago that as a survival strategy, most “migrant must call on a wide network of kin and co-villagers for survival in the competitive urban environment. Furthermore, the threat of failure motivates migrants to maintain strong ethnic and economic ties with their places of origin” (Isbell 1978:179). Thus many migrants maintained a dual life: working and living in the city, but also periodically returning to their rural village to tend one’s fields and livestock, to participate in village festivals, or to get married.

By contrast, *political violence* was the principal driving force that caused thousands of highland Peruvians to flee from their homes during the turbulent 1980s and early 1990s. Unlike the economic migrants of previous decades, many *desplazados* have had to leave their homes in a hurry, without any prior planning, “untimely obliged to abandon their villages of origin, without the minimum conditions to begin a prolonged and uncertain journey, having to locate and to relocate themselves numerous times” (Coral 1994:9). Forced to flee at short notice and to leave most their worldly possessions behind, *desplazados* sometimes arrived at their destination with nothing more than the clothes on their backs (see chapter 3).

The general pattern of forced displacement in Peru was characterised by (1) relocation from small to larger neighbouring rural communities, and (2) the movement of individuals from the *campo* to urban population centres, such as district, provincial, and departmental capitals. The level of security they expected to find, in addition to the material and social resources available to them, were what often influenced *desplazados* in their initial choice of refuge (Coral 1994:15). Living an existence fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, many displaced peasants have had to move from place to place several times before finding a place where they felt safe enough to stay. Such was the experience of Daniel, a *desplazado* from the now-abandoned village of Huancapampa, Tambo district.

In '85 my family members died. The soldiers killed my godfather and my brothers, and they carried away our animals. Oh, we were clearly destitute. We had nothing. We escaped and I went to the selva with my wife, with my children. We stayed there with my [other] brothers. In the selva we lived calmly for three months. Then there appeared a group of Senderistas. They began to kill people. They murdered my patron. So I fled with my family and two brothers to Pichari. After two weeks, Sendero appeared again, in Pichari, and so we had to escape to San Francisco.”⁶

Of course, not all *desplazados* were peasants. Also among those displaced by political violence were urban professionals, including teachers, engineers, and bureaucrats. Nevertheless, according to the experts, peasants made up around 70 percent of all *desplazados* (Coral 1994:15).⁷ Whatever their social and class background, however, the condition of life for thousands of Peru’s displaced persons in their chosen

areas of refuge provides the necessary context for understanding why it is that many eventually opted to stay (*inserción*) in their new setting, whereas others chose to return (*retorno*) to their rural villages of origin. Such decisions were influenced not only by the political situation at home, but also by the quality of life one had managed to eke out at their place of refuge. Beginning with the large urban centres, let us briefly examine what life was like for *desplazados* living in diverse conditions.

6.2.2. THE DESPLAZADO'S LIFE: LIVELIHOOD CRISIS AND ADAPTATION IN A CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE AND FEAR

Notwithstanding the apparent numerous advantages of living in or near a large urban centre like Lima, the quality of life for *desplazados* in semi-urban areas has not always been better than what it had been at home. Faced with problems like overcrowding, undernourishment, and terrifying disease epidemics, life in the urban slums and shantytowns for many internally displaced persons turned out to be much worse.

Most of the first wave of *desplazados* who fled to the cities went directly to the areas already settled by prior economic migrants from their community, knowing that these kinsfolk and friends could help them. Naturally, like the economic migrants before them, the *desplazados* tried to utilise the same support networks to find jobs and lodgings; and in this, they were largely successful. The problem, however, was that over the years, as more and more *desplazados* descended on the cities in the wake of growing political violence in the highlands, the established support networks, the adaptation strategies, the existing infrastructure, and the available living space were all eventually saturated and overwhelmed by new demands. The established strategies simply were unable to assist, accommodate, and absorb the vast numbers of displaced persons. Daily subsistence was, of course, everyone's most important concern. With no immediate area to cultivate, the majority of urban *desplazados* had no other choice but to buy much of their food. Moreover, with hyperinflation soaring between the late 1980s and the end of 1992, food purchases came to take up an increasingly large proportion of whatever income they could manage to scrape up.

Coping with life in the city was worse for *desplazados* who arrived destitute and with no links to any of the support networks of earlier economic migrants. Their subsistence options were therefore that much more limited. Over time, intensifying competition for scarce material resources and inadequate sources of income eventually led to conflict and animosity between the established migrants and the increasingly unwelcome newcomers. As Lima and other cities became saturated with *desplazados*, compassion began to dry up even among other popular urban sectors. Moreover, although urban life seemed to offer the promise of greater possibilities, such as the chance for one's children to get a better education than in the countryside, the pressures of everyday survival often rendered such opportunities impractical and irrelevant. The Catholic Church and various human rights groups observed, for instance, that "many children are obliged to go to work as itinerant street hawkers and in the end to give up their possibilities to study. School absenteeism is high and the children suffer yet more discrimination for being considered underdeveloped" (Comisiones de trabajo 1993:35).

In the urban setting, *desplazados* from Ayacucho had to contend not just with economic hardship and hunger. Discrimination and marginality, the distrust and suspi-

cion of authorities and of neighbours, and even the very stigma of being Ayacuchano (and so blamed for starting all the current troubles)—all these were additional factors that made *desplazados* feel excluded and marginalized. For many, social alienation simply deepened their longing to return home. The experiences recalled by one *desplazado* from Huambalpa is typical enough of displaced persons from other parts of Ayacucho:

Our arrival in Lima was filled with sadness. Our first attempts to forcibly settle unused land were repressed, and when we thought we had found a place, Army soldiers began to follow us and threaten us. Many of our fellow Ayacuchans had to beg to survive. Others worked as street vendors and a few in construction. We were accused of being terrorists in a very dismissive way by Lima people (quoted in Kirk 1995:357).

In the squalid, overcrowded *desplazado* settlements and shantytowns, where running water and a proper sewage system are virtually nonexistent, diseases spread rapidly. The cholera epidemic that ravaged Peru in 1991 was emblematic of the health crisis of the nation's poor, destitute, and displaced. Those hit hardest were the inhabitants of shantytowns and of the poorest urban neighbourhoods. Health risks came in other guises. Whereas respiratory and gastro-intestinal illnesses are extremely common in the *pueblos jóvenes*,⁸ the largely neglected (yet no-less-crippling) psychological effects of war, such as mental trauma, shock, grief and anguish were also pervasive problems among *desplazados*. In addition, many lived in constant fear of persecution—fear that their name would one day turn up on the blacklist of the police or of a Party cadre. Still, “[the] highest barrier to dealing with the psychological trauma,” said Ana María Rebaza of the Catholic Church’s Episcopal Conference for Social Action (CEAS), “is the overwhelming material need for food and shelter” (quoted in Kirk 1995:362).

For *desplazados* living in Ayacucho’s rural districts, on the other hand, their conditions of existence exhibited its own characteristics and dynamics. There were, of course, some similarities with displaced people living in big cities like Lima, but there were also marked differences.

In the province of La Mar as in Lima, political conflict has clearly been a driving factor in hastening the pace of urbanisation over the past two decades. The province’s urban population of 10.8 percent in 1972 had grown slightly higher to 11.8 percent by 1981. By 1993, however, the figure had jumped to 28.8 percent, and rising steadily.⁹ Even so, the increasing pace of urbanisation in La Mar was a misleading indication of overall demographic trends in the province. For whereas its population had been growing at an annual rate of 1.7 percent between 1972 and 1981, the subsequent years of violence saw the total number of inhabitants in the province fall from 77,477 in 1981, to 72,924 by 1993.¹⁰ Hence, whereas on the one hand, some of Peru’s major cities were undergoing a population explosion that was being fanned or intensified by political violence, on the other hand, most of its provincial hinterlands were experiencing an overall population decline, in spite of the growing population

congestion in many provincial and district capitals.

Another distinctive consequence of protracted violence in predominantly rural Andean hinterlands, like Ayacucho, was the ruination of an agricultural economy that was already in a state of crisis even before the outbreak of civil war (Degregori 1986, Huamaní Oré 1996). Indeed, ever since the 1970s, there has been a marked and steady decline in the department's gross internal product, in its overall output of agricultural crops, even in the production of potato,¹¹ the staple food crop of the region's inhabitants. Poor soil quality, extensive land erosion and progressive soil exhaustion were just some of the factors contributing to the agricultural troubles that had already plagued Ayacucho for decades. In addition, an uncompetitive, under-capitalised, and largely un-commercialised agricultural sector, coupled with a lack of credit and technological assistance from the government, were also to blame. In addition to these long-term factors, the agricultural crisis in the countryside of Ayacucho also owes itself to the phenomena of population displacement and instability caused by political violence.

Taking the example of Tambo district, we see that a prolonged climate of fear had two immediate effects with regard to agricultural production. Firstly, it caused a dramatic drop in the number of individuals actively working on the land, from 3,599 persons (2,746 males, 853 females) in 1981 to only 1,960 (1,751 males, 209 females) by 1993 (INEI 1983b:436; INEI 1994b:631). Secondly, the severe disruption it caused to daily work patterns led to a significant constriction in the total area of productive land being cultivated for food by the district's inhabitants. This led to severe and prolonged food shortage in the district. We have already seen that as guerrilla violence against peasants intensified in the course of the 1980s, most peasants became simply too frightened to venture out into the countryside to work. In what became a common pattern throughout the department, many peasants in Tambo stopped visiting and cultivating their remotest *chacras* (fields) altogether. According to the Ayacucho-based development organisation TADEPA, "in 1981 135 thousand hectares were sown [in the department]; on the other hand in 1985 only 53 thousand hectares were sown" (1992:20). As can be expected, the disruption caused to agricultural activity in Tambo effected a sharp drop in food production. The impact this had was made all the more serious by population pressure arising from the heavy concentrations of displaced people in small areas, such as in nucleated *resistente* communities or within the district capital. By the end of the 1980s, most people in Tambo—along with those in other parts of the department where similar circumstances existed—found themselves faced with famine and a livelihood crisis that would continue to well into the next decade. Physical evidence of this was unmistakable. At the departmental level, official sources estimated that in 1993, at least 67 percent of all rural primary school students suffered from chronic malnutrition (INEI 1997:81). We may reasonably infer that the highest levels of malnutrition were to be found in the worst hit rural areas of the department, like Tambo district. In 1997, the local civilian authorities of Tambo's suburban *desplazado* settlements with whom I spoke all referred to the critical food shortage and acute levels of chronic malnutrition in their communities. In addition, although a measurement of malnutrition has, as far as I know, never been attempted in Tambo, the visibly emaciated and undersized bodies of the adults and children there was at the time proof enough that chronic malnutri-

tion had indeed become a severe problem in the district.

How, then, did Tambo's inhabitants try to adapt their livelihood strategies to their rapidly changing, adverse circumstances? Let us first begin by looking at the *desplazados* that lived in large suburban settlements encircling the town. All of these densely populated settlements occupy land borrowed from or donated by local small landowners, or peasant collectives. Ccarhuapampa, for example, has been built on land owned by a peasant cooperative called Nueve de Octubre, which has its origins in the Agrarian Reform of the 1970s. In Ccarhuapampa as in most other *desplazado* settlements in and around the town, unused land remained scarce, though every *desplazado* family was ordinarily allocated a tiny plot by the *junta communal* of their settlement. Once a family erected their shelter, there was often very little land left even for a small garden. There was certainly not enough land within the settlements to grow enough food to sufficiently feed every household. The gravity of the subsistence problem was exacerbated by population growth: by the mid-1990s, the population of each of Tambo's semi-urban *desplazado* settlements was between 650 and upwards of 1,700 persons.¹² In addition, the fact that most of the fields surrounding these settlements remained private property and were still being cultivated by their original owners meant there was limited opportunity for the *desplazados* to utilise the existing arable land around them. With the threat of famine looming towards the end of the 1980s, many displaced peasants—mainly the men—felt they had no other option but to risk travelling to their own distant *chacras* to work during the day. But, as already noted in chapter 5, they always made sure to return to the safety of their settlements before dark.¹³

Despite improving security conditions in the region over the past decade, I discovered in 1997 that most *desplazados* were still too frightened to spend the night in their abandoned villages, even if to do so would have made it easier for them to get an early start on work the next morning. They feared being found and killed in the night by the “*terrucos*.” Or worse, by “*pishtacos*”—terrifying creatures usually in the form of tall, pale gringos dressed all in black, who are said to be paying off the nation's overseas debt by selling the fat extracted from their murdered victims to rich foreign countries, where it is used to grease factory machinery.¹⁴

Those for whom this labour pattern proved as exhausting as it was largely unprofitable were peasants with agricultural plots located far away from their *desplazado* settlements. Particularly affected in this regard were the inhabitants of Ccarhuapampa, whose distant, outlying villages are situated in the western half of the district. By 1997, a road had still not been built through that sloping and rugged area. Consequently, the villagers of Unión Minas, one of the displaced communities living in Ccarhuapampa, faced a gruelling four-hour hike uphill, on steep footpaths and obscure mule tracks, just to get to their fields—and half that time again just to get back. Although the village lies only 17 kilometres away from Tambo town, the amount of time it takes to get there on foot is more than the time it takes to make the 80 kilometre journey from Tambo to Huamanga by car. Ccarhuapampa's other *desplazados*, like those from the remote, deserted villages of Paría or Huantaccasa have had to abandon their fields altogether, being simply too far away to make a return trip possible in one day. As for those peasants of Ccarhuapampa who were able to work in this manner, they nevertheless had to spend between four or five hours a

day walking to and from their remote fields. This often left little time to actually get much work done upon arriving at one's *chacra*, apart from which the peasant would have invariably arrived already exhausted by the long uphill trek. Moreover, the further away the field and the fewer number hands available to help with bringing back the harvest, the less food a household would eventually have to feed itself.

However, not all *desplazados* had it as hard as those of Ccarhuapampa. The *pueblos juvenes* situated at the other end of town, like Vista Alegre on the east side, and El Porvenir, Viscachayocc, Túpac Amaru to the south of the central plaza, are populated by *desplazados* from nearby villages, located in the district's central and eastern rural areas. Many of those *desplazados* had fields within comfortable walking distance. It was even possible for those with *chacras* in the central part of the district to hitch a ride for at least part of the way on passing vehicles, for the main dirt highway to San Francisco runs through that area. Furthermore, many of these *desplazados* had relatives still living in rural *resistente* communities with whom they could lodge during planting or harvesting time, thus making efficient use of their time and energy. Consequently, *desplazados* from Tambo's central and eastern were generally at an advantage as compared with those of Ccarhuapampa. All the same, years of terror and fear generally deterred most of Tambo town's *desplazados* from venturing too often into the *campo*.

Those peasants who could afford it preferred to rent nearby fields from the municipality of Tambo, for which, in 1997, they were paying between 60 to 100 soles per month for one hectare of land, and an additional 60 soles if it was irrigated.¹⁵ Other displaced peasants worked as field hands or sharecroppers in return for food, or in lieu of paying rent. Given this context of livelihood crisis and labour disruption, and based on the available data and my own personal observations, it would not be an exaggeration to say that even as recent as 1997, over 90 percent of all agricultural production in the district was destined for household subsistence consumption, with very little absolute surplus being produced for commercial sale.¹⁶

Before the conflict, it was common for most peasant households in Tambo district to sell at least a small amount of surplus periodically in the market as a supplementary way to make ends meet. The women predominantly did the selling. With the ever-worsening disruption caused to agriculture over recent years, however, petty commerce and menial wage labour came to replace agriculture as the primary means of subsistence for many *desplazado* households. (With this, the role of women as the principal earners in their household rose in importance.) Worst off among the *desplazados* were those who could not produce enough of their own food to feed their households, let alone a surplus either to provide sufficient seed for next year's crop or to sell in the market.

Such were the economic problems and the living conditions of the urban *desplazados* as I observed them in 1997. On the other hand, the inhabitants of *resistente* communities situated in the countryside itself seemed not to have been afflicted by a subsistence crisis to quite the same degree as those living in or adjacent to the town. For one thing, many of the rural *resistentes* were still able to travel regularly to work in at least some of their fields, though they too always made sure to return at the end of the day and spend the night in the safety of their fortified multi-community hamlets.

According to a survey done by CEPRODEP, some of the inhabitants in a few of the *resistente* villages were even able to set apart as much as 20 percent of their harvest for commercial use, which led to regular *ferias* being held in some of the larger *resistente* villages.¹⁷ *Resistente* villagers also had the additional advantage of being able to sell their produce on the highway to passing travellers and traders on their way to the *ceja de selva*, although not always at prices which the villagers considered fair. At the main Sunday market held in Tambo, however, the *resistentes* participated only rarely.

Even though Tambo's economy remained fundamentally agrarian throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the agrarian subsistence crisis during this period contributed to the burgeoning of the "informal" commercial sector as an important alternative source of

Photo 6. Market day in Tambo



livelihood in the district. In previous decades, Tambo's so-called tertiary sector was comprised mainly of commercial, entrepreneurial, and mercantile activities dominated by the town elites—which is to say those who had the requisite literacy and numeracy, financial capital, and entrepreneurial sense to engage in business.

As already explained earlier, Tambo had long been an important commercial centre in the past by virtue of being as an important gateway and resting point between the *ceja de selva* of the Apurímac River Valley and the central sierra region of Ayacucho. Ever since colonial times, itinerant merchants from all over Peru have come to Tambo's Sunday market to buy and trade the products of the region (Vilchez 1961:24; Palomino 1971:165). And although the majority of the district's rural inhabitants were only marginally involved in the commercial economy, since the early 1970s many of them have nevertheless been selling to the traders at least some quantity of the various kinds of tubers and cereals they grew, these being in great demand by Andean migrants living in coastal cities. The peasants then used the small amount of cash they earned from the sale of their produce were to purchase from the essential manufactured commodities they need: metal pots, soap, cloth, noodles, cooking oil, matches, salt, and cane alcohol called *aguardiente*. Among themselves, however, instead of using cash, the rural inhabitants used *trueque* (barter), as the common form of exchange. High-altitude crops, like tubers, were traded by the peasants of the *alturas* for vegetables and fruits grown by the lowland valley peasants and by the farmers of the *ceja de selva*, thus ensuring a reasonable balance in the diet of people living in disparate ecosystems.

The past two decades, however, saw the town lose importance and vitality as a rest station and regional commercial centre. This fact is vividly apparent in the sharp drop in the number of persons employed in the town's hotel and restaurant sector: from 43 individuals in 1981, to only 21 by 1993 (INEI 1983b:437; INEI 1994b:631). The number of transporters and storekeepers, or their employees, also shrunk by almost half over this same period (ibid.). Military repression and frequent guerrilla actions in the district were, as we have already noted, responsible for frightening away most of Tambo town's oldest, most prominent families, many of which were also the local merchants and entrepreneurs of the district. A symbiotic (if not always fair and equal) relationship had long existed between the town elites and the local peasantry whereby the peasants provided a source of cheap produce and labour for the urban entrepreneurs in return for the cash they needed to make basic purchases of manufactured goods. Civil conflict rapidly ended this relationship, for with the departure of most of Tambo's urban entrepreneurs, an important source of cash and wage labour for the peasants disappeared. In time, the resulting socioeconomic vacuum was filled by a new wave of urban dwellers, recently arrived from the countryside. Unlike the earlier urban economic elites, however, the vast majority of *desplazados* who eventually entered the tertiary sector had very little capital. It is not surprising, therefore, that the service sector of impoverished rural districts like Tambo came to be dominated in the late 1980s and the 1990s by underemployed and unskilled wage labourers, and by informal street sellers—the latter being an economic activity that requires relatively little start-up capital. As Huamaní Oré observed,

The major part of the commercial activities and the presentation of

services is realised at a micro-enterprise level, without credit assistance or help from the government, with the result that they have limitations in their development and they generate low interest for the urban population. However, it is the only alternative for the majority who are unemployed and lack resources, like the migrants from rural areas, who out of necessity have generated the phenomenon of “informality” based on self-employment. In this way, the informal sector is the most important component of the urban economy and with the greatest potential for future development if favourable conditions are created (1996:51).

However, in spite of its apparent dynamism, a number of general factors—or unfavourable conditions—serve to limit the extent to which Ayacucho’s informal sector can further develop in the future. For one thing, most of the activities which make up this sphere of the economy—like ambulant peddling, taxi driving and transportation, unskilled labour and cleaning, etc.—have become saturated over the years. There are simply too many people trying to make a living out of doing the exact same thing. Stiff competition caused by under-pricing one’s competitors has resulted in a buyer’s market, bringing the prices of goods and services down to almost unprofitably low levels. Every informed consumer knows what the going prices are, and even then, prices often can still be haggled lower. With so many informal vendors fighting for the same customer, and only too willing to offer a better price for their goods or service than their competitors, anyone wishing to make a living in the informal sector is forced to price low or risk going completely hungry.

Yet in urban centres as in rural areas, prices (and therefore profits) are kept low not only by intense competition. Weak consumer purchasing power also ensures that vendors charge only the low prices that their potential customers can afford, or are otherwise willing to pay. The problem is that the explosive growth of the “informal” sector over the past two decades, particularly in Peru’s urban centres, has not been accompanied by a similar rise in per capita income. This is especially so in impoverished rural towns like Tambo, where my own estimate is that the average monthly household income of *desplazados* in 1997 was only around S/.80 nuevo soles, or about \$30 American dollars. In Tambo as elsewhere in Peru, an “economy of *sencillo* (small change)” is the norm, where only small amounts of money change hands daily, and little profit is made which can be reinvested to improve the quality or increase the quantity of the goods sold and services rendered. The vast majority of people in the district live hand to mouth, and work at subsistence level. The poverty of most people in Tambo was made evident to me by the fact that vehicles coming from the *ceja de selva* of the Apurímac Valley almost always passed through the town, rarely ever stopping to sell their cargo of fruits. This is understandable, given that few local people could afford to pay the price that the fruits would otherwise fetch in Huamanga. For most of the past two decades, lack of money or credit, or low financial returns for their meagre surplus of poor-quality produce, has left many peasants in Tambo unable to buy fertiliser, pesticides, or even seeds for the following year’s planting. This in turn has led to a further deterioration in the quality of their produce, thus placing them at a disadvantage in the open market, which in turn meant an ever-

declining cash income and an ever-lessening chance of obtaining the chemicals they required to improve their crops—and so on in a vicious circle. I heard many peasants in Tambo complaining that they did not receive fair prices for their produce, and so would rather just eat what little they produced instead of selling a part of it, even though they were always in need of money. To state their dilemma simply, Tambo district's peasants (*desplazados* and *resistentes* alike) are placed under rising pressure by the monetary consumption that has become part of the new conditions of their everyday existence, but they are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the cash they need.

In 1997, Tambo's municipal authorities made an effort to try and revitalise the moribund agricultural economy by promoting the district as the "*papa nativa*" (native potato) capital of Ayacucho department—an allusion to a bygone era when Tambo was, indeed, renowned for the large variety and high quality of its tubers. However, a comparison of the quality of produce sold at Tambo's Sunday market with the agricultural produce on offer at Huamanga's central market was clear proof of how far the reality had to come in order to catch up with the marketing image the district authorities were trying to advertise. In fact, the generally poor quality of agricultural produce from many of Ayacucho's rural districts has, over the years, resulted in local production becoming increasingly restricted to local rural markets, while the largest and most lucrative urban market in the region—that of Huamanga's—has come increasingly to rely on importing better-quality produce from outside the department.¹⁸

The analysis of commercial traffic demonstrates that approximately 98% of the industrialised products that Ayacucho consumes comes from other cities; only 2% is produced internally, which means a high dependence on extra-regional [food production] industry. On the other hand, the only products for exportation to other departments are small volumes of agricultural products from the sierra and a considerable quantity of agro-industrial products that come from the *ceja de selva*. It indicates that commercial activity in Ayacucho is based on the movement of merchandise that come from other departments, less on the employment of internal production which is small (Huamani Oré 1996:51. My emphasis).

Given that on the one hand, most manufactured commercial goods and foodstuffs in the department were increasingly imported throughout the 1990s, and on the other hand, that locally produced goods were generally perceived to be of comparatively inferior quality (and thus of lesser value), barter as a common method of exchange between peasants, or between peasants and traders, has consequently come to lose much of its viability in the sierra. In most instances, it has been completely replaced by cash transactions, and this has left *desplazados* in particular at a serious disadvantage in the following ways.

In the semi-urban *desplazado* settlements of provincial districts like Tambo, the "monetization' of needs and obligations," to borrow a phrase from Stern (1982:186), has radically altered social relationships and strategies of household production.

Everyday existence in an urban (or semi-urban) context brought many of Tambo's displaced peasants numerous essential cash expenses hitherto almost unknown when they lived in the *campo*. Most of these cash-based needs were drawn from what Wolf refers to as the peasant's (in this case, the *desplazado's*) *replacement fund*, which is the "amount needed to replace his minimum equipment for both production and consumption," thought of "not merely in technical terms, but in cultural terms as well" (1966:6). One notable example is the purchase of school uniforms and supplies for one's children. While living in Tambo in 1997, it never ceased to impress me that come Monday morning, the weekend's multitude of grimy children in threadbare clothes were always miraculously transformed into students in crisp, immaculately clean uniforms. It seemed that every parents' desire was to be able to outfit all of their children in school uniforms. At an average cost of about S/.80 soles for an entire set of shoes, trousers, socks, shirt and jumper for boys, or blouse and pinafore dress for girls, it is no small accomplishment for those parents who indeed are able to do so. Besides the fact that school uniforms are mandatory at most urban schools, not having a school uniform also causes children to feel socially excluded and ashamed. Indeed, once while watching a group performance of uniformed school children at a school anniversary ceremony, I asked some of the students and teachers sitting beside me why a handful of dejected-looking children were sitting in the corner of the plaza, not participating in the activities. "Those are children recently arrived from the *campo*," I was told. "They are kept separated for the time being because they still have to learn to speak Castellano, and they have no uniforms because their parents cannot yet afford to buy them." The social pressure placed on parents to provide their children with uniforms is greater in Tambo town, where almost all the schoolchildren have uniforms, than in the countryside, where it is rare to see children in school uniforms.

Still other important and unavoidable cash expenses include the cost of medicines, particularly antibiotics. Given the unsanitary conditions and overcrowding of the suburban refugee settlements, antibiotics have become increasingly in demand. Intestinal and respiratory ailments are prevalent among the refugee population. In Tambo town, I often saw young children playing in the water of the very same street gutters in which I also commonly saw peasants urinating. Women and children regularly bathed and washed clothing in a small, polluted stream that flows between the barrio of Rosas Pata and Ccarhuapampa, and also drew their drinking and cooking water from it. A small water reservoir provided piped water to the town and to some of the *pueblos jóvenes*, but the water was neither filtered nor safe to drink without first boiling it. After even light rainfalls, mud from surrounding hillsides would flow down and into the open reservoir, transforming the water into a muddy soup contaminated with vegetal debris, human and animal faeces, and tiny, white worms. People have not learnt to use cloth to filter their tap water. When struck with a bacterial intestinal infection, then, a treatment of antibiotics was often one's only salvation from days of excruciating abdominal pain, dangerously high fever, and life-threatening dysentery. According to the chief physician in charge of Tambo's hospital in 1997, dysentery and subsequent dehydration were the principal causes of death in the district, especially among children and young people. "It's because the parents either have no money for a full treatment of antibiotics, or are reluctant to use what

little money they have on medicine, choosing instead to wait and see what happens, or to seek the services of a *curandero* [curer],” he once explained to me. He went on to say,

Medical care in Peru is free, but medicines are not. Just the other evening, a peasant man brought his young wife to the hospital. She had meningococcal meningitis and was already close to dying when they came in. We gave her antibiotics in the morning and by the evening she was walking around again; but she was still very weak. I told her husband that it was important for her to carry on taking the full treatment of antibiotics for a few more days, so she can recover completely, but that the medicine would cost him 18 soles. He said he would try to get the money, but they never returned. The problem is that these are ignorant people who don’t understand that antibiotics must be taken over an entire treatment period, even if the patient already begins to feel better. If they stop, they will suffer a relapse, and the bacteria will probably become resistant to the antibiotic, which can be dangerous for everyone else. We would like to provide medicine without charge but we are simply not permitted. There’s no money for it. Even in developed countries like the United States or in Holland, people have to buy their medicines, no? The only medication we can use at no cost to the patient are those donated by the Medicos Sin Fronteras. But they haven’t been back here for months.¹⁹

The economic crisis affected the district’s inhabitants not just physiologically, but also mentally. Most *desplazados* I spoke to, especially the young, complained that there were no jobs for them in either the district or anywhere else in the department. For this reason, they—and especially those lacking education—saw a bleak and difficult future for themselves and their families. Even the young people with education were pessimistic about their prospects. Many expected to be underemployed at best, but more realistically to be forced to return to a life of subsistence farming just to support themselves and their families. The life story of Pascual Quispe Vargas is typical in this regard.

My parents and I are *desplazados* from the countryside, and we came to live in Vista Alegre in 1987. Through the grace of God, I was able to continue my studies and even to enter the university in Ayacucho. I studied agronomy at the UNSCH and graduated in 1992. But afterwards there was no work, so I worked for a year as a *rentado* in the *Patrulla Especial* here in Tambo. That way at least I could make some money. That was in about 1994. Then I had the luck to find a job with CEPRODER. That was good, the pay was good. Better than what I was making as a *rentado*. But then that job ended—maybe the money ran out, I don’t know. So I returned to Tambo, to Vista Alegre. I got married last year, and now we have a four-month old baby. Now I work primarily as a peasant; I have some fields not far away. There I grow

my family's food. Sometimes I drive my sister's pickup truck, taking passengers back and forth between Tambo and Ayacucho. Sometimes the people at CEPRODEP come and hire me to drive them to the communities in the *campo*. That can bring me as much as 50 soles per day. But that doesn't happen very often. I hope to work for another NGO like CEPRODEP again in the future so I can put my education to use. Right now things look bad in Peru. There's no work. So I'm back to being a peasant.²⁰

Although not always obvious, the economic and political situation of the past two decades has caused many people to suffer periodically from bouts of severe depression. The culture of *machismo* places added pressure on a man to fulfil the role socially expected of him as the breadwinner of his family. Given the dire economic situation, however, most men are unable to fulfil this expectation, while women, as I have already noted, have grown in recent years to become the main income earner in many households through their resourceful "informal" commercial activities. Yet although most men recognised the vital importance of women's contributions to the maintenance of the family, some nevertheless resented this reversal of roles, for they felt that it diminished their status (especially in the eyes of their neighbours) as the head and main provider of their household. For many men, their mental anguish led them to look for comfort in a bottle of *aguardiente*.²¹ Many *desplazados* found in drinking a means of escaping their problems as well as their obligations. Unfortunately, though, as various policemen and hospital staff told me, the majority of reported cases of domestic violence were related to the alcoholism or the heavy drinking of one's husband or father.

Economic hardship, especially among the *desplazado* population, has also caused the break-up of families, and the abandonment of children (see IER "JMA"/UNSCHE 1987:13-98). It was not only widows and widowers of political violence, but also single mothers, abandoned wives, or destitute couples, left with too many mouths to feed, who are frequently forced to abandon some of their children. In Tambo, the more fortunate of these children are taken to the local orphanage—the *aldea infantil*—by their parent(s) or relatives, and left in the care of the nuns and workers there. And even though the orphanage is small and has limited resources, its staff members also periodically try to take as many orphaned or abandoned children off the streets as they can find in Tambo town and in nearby rural communities. Sadly, however, the majority of abandoned or orphaned children end up on the streets to fend for themselves. Many find their way to the cities where they attempt to survive by begging, or through petty crime. For the duration of what for most of them is often a short life, almost all street children in Peru can expect to suffer such adversities as sexual abuse, forced prostitution, substance addiction, physical violence and constant gnawing hunger.

6.2.3. CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND RECONFIGURATION AMID VIOLENT UPHEAVAL

Political violence has also had a profound impact on cultural activities. Surprisingly, however, in spite of the population displacements, communal disintegration, the escalating political violence and the deepening poverty over the years,

traditional festivities and religious rituals have not completely lost their relevance and importance in people's lives. As can be expected, in many rural areas violence seriously disrupted the Andean calendar of festivities. Nevertheless, time and again people in Tambo, as in other parts of Ayacucho, have shown a stubborn desire to continue observing, whenever they can, the ceremonial activities which they hold important for maintaining or strengthening the solidarity of their community. Death has sometimes come with cruel irony at the very moment of ecstatic celebration or profound worship, such as when eight members of the Presbyterian Church were dragged out in the middle of a church service and summarily executed by Marines in the peasant community of Callqui Nisperoc Niyocc, Huanta province, on 1 August 1984 (DESCO 1989:109). Or when peasants were massacred by guerrillas at Huayao while celebrating a wedding. Such pressures have made performing ceremonials not only difficult and irregular, but have also brought the risk of a general crisis of faith and confidence in religion and traditional values. Nevertheless, it seems that many of those who have suffered most have nevertheless held tenaciously on to the festivities and ceremonial they deem most pertinent to their lives.

Public festivities and ceremonial activities in the department of Ayacucho can be grouped into three types: (1) religious fiestas, (2) renewal and fertility-related rites, and (3) secular village-specific celebrations.²² A number of new village-specific celebrations of a secular variety have appeared over the past decade. Of these, what is particularly important to *retornantes* is the anniversary of their return to their once-abandoned villages, for it represents the physical and symbolic recuperation of their lands and the reconstitution of their communities. In Marccaraccay, a village situated in the cold *punas* of Huanta, Orin Starn noted, for instance, that "the anniversary of the return has replaced the feast of Saint John as the principal date. It is an indication of how even the ritual calendar can be altered by variable circumstances" (1994:78-79). Other important dates which were commemorated by communities throughout the department included the anniversary of the founding of their local *Club de Madres* and *Comité de Autodefensa*, which in Tambo were celebrated on 22 November and 24 May respectively.²³ These two new institutions were celebrated because they came to be associated in the collective consciousness with the people's triumph over Shining Path, and were further envisaged to play a significant future role in the reconstruction and development of the district.

In recent years, school anniversaries have also become important village-specific celebrations. In Tambo, the anniversary of one the large primary or secondary schools situated in Ccarhuapampa or Vista Alegre—Tambo's two main *desplazado* settlements—is more than just a sentimental exercise to honour the school. A school's anniversary also serves to remind the people of how fortunate they actually are to have the opportunity to give their children an education. For parents (most of whom are illiterate) as much as for students, schools symbolise modernity and progress, a hope of a better future for the next generation. The education that schools provide offers an avenue of escape from the harsh existence of the *campesino*. Parents in Tambo realise that had their lives remained in the countryside, their children could not have received the same level of schooling that they do today, living in a semi-urban *desplazado* settlement. It is indeed ironic that in this instance, the situation of displacement caused by political violence has provided youths of rural origin an

opportunity that they otherwise would not have received had they continued living in the *campo*. Furthermore, the establishment in these *desplazado* settlements of their very own school—which, by the way, are not one-room shacks, as in the *campo*, but large multi-storey buildings—provides inhabitants with a possible point of reference around which to begin constructing a broader collective identity for what, in fact, is a heterogeneous *desplazado* population made up of households from diverse local communities.

When I was living in Tambo in 1997, I was once invited by some teacher friends to join the anniversary celebrations of the Colegio San Isidro, in Vista Alegre. The celebrations began the evening before the anniversary day with a solemn procession of students and faculty members, lighted candles in hand, through the streets of Tambo town and Vista Alegre. Leading the crowd was a brass band and the local Catholic priest. At the back of the pack, however, a small group of rowdy students lit off fire-crackers, and called for people to come out of their homes and join in. After walking a few times round the town, the procession wound its way to the central plaza, where a live band on a stage began to play *huayno* music for the large crowd that had gathered. The students and a few older townspeople danced and flirted in the plaza to the sound of happy music well into the early hours of the morning. The celebrations resumed early the following morning, which was the anniversary day itself, with yet another lively parade, this time of the students dressed in their school uniform. Once again, they marched a number of times around the town plaza before making their way back to the large football pitch at Colegio San Isidro. A large throng of parents and other invited guests also filed into the school. On the pitch, the students formed ranks while the spectators sat themselves down in the stands. The programme got under way first with the singing of the national anthem, followed by speeches from the district mayor, the school's headmaster, and the school's two best students, a boy and a girl. The common theme in all the speeches was the end to violence and the importance of reconstruction. The main entertainment that day, however, was a traditional-dance competition, for which students from communities all over La Mar had come dressed in colourful traditional costumes to perform the folk dances of their region. Some groups performed dances from the selva, and others the dances of *puna* communities.

The event was not only entertaining for the audience and the performers. At a time when the young people in Tambo and elsewhere were more interested in the latest salsa hits from Lima and abroad than in the cultural traditions of their parents or grandparents, the dance competition also engaged the students in a piece of their own cultural heritage. Specially for the occasion, the students had to learn the folk dances and to don the traditional costumes previously worn only by their parents and grandparents. What will probably happen, however, is that in years to come, these traditional dances, costumes, and music will survive as quaint cultural artefacts paraded for the enjoyment of cash-wielding tourists. Nevertheless, it would not be surprising if the ritualised and cultural framework from which they originally derived their social meaning will disappear as young people increasingly come to embrace the more valued and attractive “modern” popular culture of Lima and the outside world.

There are also the religious festivities, often held in honour of patron saints, of which Tambo district's is San Juan Bautista (Saint John the Baptist). The festival in

this saint's honour is celebrated from 24 to 27 June, and his icon is housed the rest of the year in the town church. Not all icons have been so lucky, however. In the hasty flight of villagers under attack, religious images were often left behind, and at times subsequently destroyed by either the guerrillas or the soldiers. The loss of these icons sometimes meant that the fiestas associated with them were abandoned, or at least suspended for a time until they could be recovered. Fortunately, such a fate did not befall the icons of village of Balcón. Despite the devastating guerrilla incursion on 20 June 1984 that finally emptied the village of its remaining inhabitants, its three most important religious icons—la Virgen Amparadora, el Niño Jesús, and el Pírsu Cur—were taken by the fleeing *desplazados* with them to Ccarhuapampa, and thus saved. In September 1997 I had the opportunity to attend the annual fiesta dedicated to these three images which, ever since Balcón was abandoned, has been celebrated annually in Ccarhuapampa amid solemn processions, comical bull-fighting, riotous music and dancing, and unrestrained drinking.

The district's other important traditional religious holidays that have come through the period of violence—disrupted and inconsistently celebrated though they have been over the years—include *Todos los Santos* (1 November) and *Día de los Muertos* (2 November), *Inmaculada Concepción* (8 December), *Carnaval* (in February or March), and *Semana Santa* (Easter Holy Week).²⁴ These occasions invariably start with the parading of religious images in sober procession, and culminate in drunken revelry.

Given the direct relationship that exists between ecological renewal and fertility rites on the one hand, and the crucial periods of the agricultural cycle on the other, the disruption of one necessarily affects the other. When political violence depopulated the countryside and transformed many places into no-go areas, irrigation canals had to be abandoned for a time, and so too the observance of *Yarcca Aspiy*, the important rite of cleaning the irrigation system in September that signalled the beginning of the rainy season and the time for planting. Similarly, in some years, the personal risks placed on peasants during harvesting time left no opportunity for the *Trilla*, the normally carefree harvest festival often celebrated in July, in which horses are made to trample the harvested wheat or maize to separate the grain from the stalk. Other ecological renewal or fertility rites that were discontinued during the years of violence, but have since been revived in Tambo include the *Herranza*—the ritual branding of livestock in August that culminates in offerings being made to the local *Wamani* or mountain deity—the *Corte Monte* (mentioned in the previous chapter), and the *Toro Watay* (September).

In the Peruvian Andes, religious festivals have historically been interrelated with local indigenous prestige hierarchies. Namely, it was the members of prestige hierarchies who sponsored the fiestas by footing all costs associated with providing music, food, coca, and abundant amounts of *chicha* (corn beer) and *trago* (cane alcohol) for the participants. Nevertheless, civil-religious hierarchies were already declining throughout the Ayacucho region ever since the 1960s, due to the great deal of effort, goods, and money expended in sponsoring a saint's fiesta. As noted by Isbell at Chuschi in the early 1970s, "Migrants and governmental agencies are frustrated by the amount of time, energy, and resources that are expended in supporting traditional rituals" (1978:220). For these reasons, some of the rural nouveaux riches—Andean

economic migrants in particular—found conversion to Protestantism to be spiritually and instrumentally conducive to their interests in as much as it allowed them to bypass the traditional cultural levelling mechanisms that stood as hurdles in the way of their social advancement and personal enrichment. “With the Protestant ideology of personal advancement, *comuneros* can escape the obligations of participation in the complex of reciprocity and displays of generosity that consume so much of their economic surplus,” (ibid.:240). As we have already seen in an earlier chapter, such self-interested social and cultural distancing by an upwardly mobile and economically successful minority often provoked social fragmentation, and resentment from their communal neighbours. This usually resulted in the weakening of community solidarity, which later only played into the hands of Shining Path. Although religious fiestas are very occasionally still celebrated in Tambo, lean times over the past two decades have made for fiestas that are much less extravagant than those that were given in the distant past. It can generally be said that these days, when a saint’s feast is celebrated, the sponsor does so for personal reasons—such as giving thanks for a saint’s blessing or so that one’s prayers are answered, or so as to gain votes in a political election, etc.—rather than as an obligation associated with membership in a community’s cargo prestige hierarchy, which have now all but disappeared in Peru.

These examples help to illustrate that individuals are not slaves to their customs and cultural systems. They often are, in fact, consciously selective and self-interested when interacting with or adopting cultural identities, cultural symbols and practices. For instance, Isbell (1978) witnessed how the *comuneros* of Chuschi voted in 1970 to abolish the public observance of rituals and of cultural institutions—namely the *hatun varayoc*—that did not directly relate to their fundamental beliefs regarding the social and natural world. Yet a few years later, they voted to resuscitate some of these very same “obsolete” cultural structures in response to changing political circumstances, and because it served their new political interests to do so (ibid.:238). Changes to individual circumstances and socioeconomic context often lead people to reaffirm, re-evaluate, or to redefine their cultural systems and behaviour. The recent rapid growth and popularity of evangelical churches in the Peruvian Andes underscores this point.

Although Protestant missionaries have been in Peru ever since the early decades of the nineteenth century, it was not until the 1980s that the population of Ayacucho department began converting in large numbers. Comprising only 4.33 percent of the department’s total population in 1981, by 1993 11.42 percent of Ayacuchanos had become Protestants, or “evangelicals,” representing a wide spectrum of non-Catholic sects (Gamarra 2000:279). Protestantism in Ayacucho first established itself at the beginning of the twentieth century in the department’s principal urban centres of Huanta and Huamanga, slowly expanding from there into the *campo*. Starting in about the 1950s, those most responsible for spreading Protestantism were migrants from the countryside, who were exposed to these new churches while living in urban shantytowns. They eventually brought the evangelical message back with them when they returned to their rural villages of origin. The advance of the evangelicals in Ayacucho department received further impetus towards the end of the 1960s when the old order, dominated by the landed regional elite, broke down and finally collapsed. For this demise in the power of the landowning elite also undermined the power and the privileges previously enjoyed by the Catholic Church, which was itself

one of the largest and most powerful landowners in the country.

Growing political awareness also took its toll on the public image of the Catholic Church, causing it to lose much of the popular respect and reverence it had enjoyed and taken for granted ever since the Conquest. In the politically charged context of the late '60s and early '70s, politicised rural activists began to denounce the Catholic Church as an institutionalised exploiter of peasants. Furthermore, recognised peasant communities received sympathetic support from the revolutionary Agrarian Reform Office in their efforts to recuperate communal lands seized in generations past either by the Church or by encroaching *haciendas*. In this popular assault on the status quo, the Catholic Church—one of the pillars of the old order—was not only losing power, but also fast becoming discredited. As the 1970s ended, the presence of the Catholic Church in Ayacucho's countryside became "limited to sporadic visits by priests who paid privileged attention to the administration of sacraments" (Gamarra 2000:279). By contrast, many evangelical pastors, most of whom were themselves Andean migrants, lived and worked with the poor and marginalized sectors of society. In 1997, I was often told by rural people that in the initial years of Sendero Luminoso's armed struggle, priests and nuns abandoned the countryside and fled to the cities, whereas the evangelical *hermanos* stayed (and sometimes died) with the people (see del Pino 1996).

Jefrey Gamarra, an academic lecturer at the UNSCH, explains the widespread religious conversions and the rapid expansion of Protestantism during the years of political violence as the result of the evangelical churches' ability to help provide "a minimum of community cohesion in the exile areas so as to guarantee access to resources in the expulsion areas" (Gamarra 2000:272). In contrast to the ritual-orientated practices of Catholicism, the moral code of behaviour preached by the evangelicals was better suited to the realities of a modern low intensity conflict. In the words of one of his informants,

...before we celebrated the Feast of the Cross, the feast of Santiago,...we had bullfights, dances and drank a lot. Sendero took advantage of that because when we were drunk and fought each other, the terrorists came and attacked us. They took the old people and the children away. Now we don't have those parties anymore. We don't drink, we are sober and ready to defend ourselves from the terrorists ("Jacinto" quoted in Gamarra 2000:282).

Furthermore, the emphasis placed by evangelical pastors on Biblical scriptures that spoke of the trials and tribulations of Israel in exile, its images of violent cataclysms heralding the apocalypse and Last Judgement, provided their followers with a point of identification and a relevant meaningful framework with which to render comprehensible the chaos and suffering in their own lives (ibid.:282; also see del Pino 1995a:381).

Apart from the functional advantages and material benefits that made joining an evangelical church appealing, however, we should not underestimate the emotional sincerity and religious conviction of its adherents. As Ponciano del Pino has argued, instead of running away, evangelicals in the Apurímac River Valley willingly placed

their lives on the line by declaring war on Shining Path, which they came to view as the Antichrist incarnate (1996:167). “The Senderos have persecuted us the most,” the evangelical *desplazado* Daniel once said to me. “Do you know why? It’s because the Senderos do not believe in God. For this reason they hate us, and want to exterminate all evangelicals. But at this moment God is also protecting us.”²⁵ The evangelicals’ resistance to Shining Path in the valley took on the appearance of a holy war, and guerrillas eventually found themselves faced with an undaunted enemy for whom death held no fear; an enemy for whom, like the most zealous Maoist militants themselves, dying for the sake of one’s beliefs was not only accepted, but at times even welcomed.

With time, however, the level of political violence in Ayacucho would subside and everyday life would begin a slow return to normality. According to Gamarra, in the context of post-violence social reconstruction, the strict social and moral order imposed by evangelical pastors on their followers—so well suited to survival in times of war—would prove incongruent with changing outlooks, attitudes and interests.

The totalitarian narrative [of evangelicalism] serves to diminish the risks of fragmentation in a situation of conflict but not during stable periods. The evangelical version of the struggle against Shining Path was effective only to the extent that people were on their guard, and engaged continually in defensive actions. But with the passage of time, *Sendero* platoons became less frequent and so did the intensity of their attacks.... The returning and resistant communities no longer had to choose between the Bible of evangelism or the *Sendero* sword to ensure their survival and memory.... Everyday life changed gradually. The feeling of precariousness disappeared...[and the] habit of praying at night gave way to lively conversations by shop fronts. On weekends, music and dancing were the new forms of entertainment for community youngsters. Life returned to the communities and with it an enjoyment of drinking—practiced surreptitiously to prevent criticisms from the staunchest converts and evangelical leaders.... As violence diminished, the communities tended to engage in less religious behaviour and have now started to draw the line between evangelism and community interests (Gamarra 2000:284,287).

Among a number of high-Andean communities in Huanta, Gamarra has also observed professed evangelicals performing or participating nevertheless in non-evangelical Andean rituals, like the *Herranza*. Yet such instances, he argues, do not necessarily mean that evangelicalism was now being rejected by its adherents. Rather, as with Roman Catholicism that preceded it, within the cultural universe of its adherents, evangelicalism was simply undergoing that Andean tendency towards syncretism with pre-existing local indigenous religious beliefs and rituals.

6.2.4. DESPLAZADOS RETURN

When Fujimori became President of the Republic in July 1990, he inherited not only a critical political situation but also an economy wracked by his predecessor’s failed heterodox experiment. As an indication of the extent of the economic crisis, by

1990 the GDP had fallen to the 1950 level, and as much as 80 percent of the national population was either unemployed or underemployed (Klarén 2000:408). Real wages had dropped to what it was two decades earlier and poverty levels soared. Upon assuming presidential power, Fujimori sought to tackle the nation's disastrous economic situation. He did this by implementing a severe economic austerity programme—"far harsher than anything that Vargas Llosa had contemplated" (ibid.:407)—that immediately caused unprecedented rises in the price of food and other essentials, wage cuts, and job losses. Between 1990 and 1992, "a conservative estimate was that 54 percent of the total Peruvian population were living in poverty" (ibid.:408). In time, the inflation rate was brought under control as the restructuring measures of the "Fujishock" took effect. Public sector spending rose as international financial loans flowed into the country once more. Foreign investment began to increase cautiously. Although these austerity measures brought new hardships, the general mood towards Fujimori's policy solutions remained one of optimistic tolerance, undoubtedly sustained by his early victories against the insurgency, and by the general impression that, for the first time in a long while, here was a government that was doing what had to be done to resolve the crisis, no matter how painful (Cameron and Mauceri 1997). Besides, people had grown to expect cumulative problems from government, and already stoically hardened to it. For solutions to life's everyday problems, they turned not to the state but to themselves.

Throughout the south-central Andean departments, one of the most significant effects of worsening economic crisis in the cities coupled with waning political violence in the countryside was to encourage large numbers of peasant *desplazados* to return to their villages of origin, many of which had lain abandoned for over a decade. With food prices rising to as much as 500 percent in the wake of "Fujishock", returning to the home village to resume cultivating one's own land was, for many *desplazados*, the only possible way of supporting one's family. Unlike in previous years, expanding pacification made this option viable. The *retornos* or returns (also called "*replamamientos*") were organised for the most part by the people themselves, rather than by government, and as such may be regarded as the most important spontaneous, popular initiatives for socioeconomic reconstruction to occur in the past decade.

The official government statistics regarding the percentage of displaced persons who have opted to return home is unclear. Based on its study of 437 districts in the departments of Ayacucho, Apurímac, Huancavelica, Junín, Huánuco and Ancash, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática concluded that by 1997 "57.6% [of the total population interviewed in the districts] declared having changed residence for reasons of violence and had returned to the place of census as a consequence of the process of pacification. The remaining 42.4% constituted the [*resistente*] population that did not change their place of residence" (1998b:9).²⁶ What is not provided in the INEI study, though, is the percentage of the entire *desplazado* population that did not choose to return home, deciding instead to remain displaced for the time being, or to settle down for good in their place of refuge. An indication of this can be found in other studies. The Mesa Regional Sobre Desplazamiento Ayacucho, for example, suggested that in 1997, "of the 36,000 families [156,575 persons] displaced at the departmental level, to date, 8,246 families [approximately 35,864 persons]

have opted for Return. The absolute majority has opted for insertion (27,754 families), especially in the city of Lima” (1997:2). INEI’s findings do, however, provide us with a more global picture of refugee returns, which is that 59 percent of all *retornos* took place in Ayacucho, followed by Junín and Apurímac departments, representing 14.9 and 12.9 percent of refugee returns respectively (INEI 1998b:9). As a national phenomenon, the number of refugee returns began to pick up in 1991, reaching their peak between 1993 and 1994, and gradually diminishing thereafter (ibid.:10).

A third of all *retornantes* interviewed in a government study into displacement and return cited improved security in the countryside as their main reason for returning home (INEI 1998b:10). Around 33.6 percent indicated their desire to recuperate their property as their primary reason for returning, and a slightly smaller percentage said they were motivated to return home by the need to search for work. A lesser number of people said they returned because of family reasons (ibid.). It is more likely, however, that individual decisions to return were influenced not by one, but rather by a combination of many of these factors. (It logically follows, for example, that one cannot recuperate property or attend to family business until the area has been pacified). The level of security in an area, the amount of time away, the distance to one’s village, the quality of life attained and opportunities found at one’s place of refuge as compared with what one can expect by returning home—these are some of the key factors that, over the years, have influenced *desplazados*’ decision whether to return or not.

From as early as 1984, internal refugee returns have occurred in response to those random occasions when political violence appeared to wane. For example, the apparent diminution of guerrilla attacks in the countryside of Huanta province between 1996 and 1997 prompted some alto-Andino villagers—notably those of Huallhua, Culluchaca, Iquicha, Huaychao—to return home for a time. Their optimism was dashed, however, when the resumption of rebel activities throughout the entire region, from 1988 onwards, eventually forced almost every single one of these early *retornantes* to flee their homes once more (Coronel 1996:58-61). Besides security, Flagg et al. (1998:12) have identified other important interrelated factors that have influenced people’s decisions whether or not to return. These include:

- Extent of improvement/worsening of living conditions in the displacement area
- Extent of social, cultural and economic integration in the area of displacement
- Access to education and other services in the displacement area
- Family linkages in the district/village [of origin]
- Possibilities of social and economic development opportunities in the original villages as opposed to the area of displacement
- Access to financial aid and other types of support from government by deciding either to remain displaced or return to their villages
- Geographic distance of displacement area from village of origin & Economic means at the moment in which the return is considered as an option
- Length of time spent away from the village and age of the potential returnees

With regard to persons who had sought refuge in distant urban centres, the pattern that emerged was that those most recently displaced were also the ones most like-

ly to return to their rural villages of origin. Or in other words, the longer the time away, the lesser the likelihood that the *desplazado* would want to return to his original home (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Duration of Displacement of Return Population

Duration of Displacement %	
Total	100.0
Less than 6 years	39.6
6-10 years	36.6
11-15 years	22.7
More than 15 years	1.1

Source: after INEI 1998b:24

One explanation why the majority of long-time *desplazados* seldom chose to return is that in most instances, having come earlier, they were able to secure the best of the scarce resources, space, and opportunities available at their place of displacement. The livelihood conditions of most of the earliest, most settled *desplazados* were therefore generally superior to those of more recent refugees. Furthermore, long-established *desplazados* have also had more time to feel settled in their place of refuge. It is therefore hardly surprising that *inserción* was often the option of choice for such individuals. Isabel Coral argues that a large percentage of these people would, under normal conditions, probably have become traditional economic migrants anyway, had their lives and plans not been disrupted by war. “The violence expelled them before their time. In general, definitive insertion is considered by those who have achieved a certain stability,” writes Coral (1994:29). These were mainly people who possessed the necessary linguistic skills and education, economic resources, and personal support networks with which to integrate relatively easily into their host (urban) society. Consequently, their goals and actions were directed at permanently settling down where they were, and their global strategy was to promote the general development of the *asentamiento humano* in which they lived. By contrast, those *desplazados* who failed to adapt to urban life have generally chosen to make at least a partial return. Predominant among this group were peasants from Ayacucho’s high-Andes region (*puna*), and displaced natives from the Amazon.

Another likely reason for not returning was that many *desplazados* who had been displaced for 11 years or more simply believed there was probably very little for them to go back to. They supposed that after so many years away, their homes and all their livestock and seed stocks would almost certainly have already been plundered or destroyed. For them, a return was viewed as a waste of effort and resources; besides which the idea of returning to backbreaking agricultural work held little appeal. For many *desplazados*, that it was highly probable they had nothing left to go back to served to discourage a decision to return.

Many other *desplazados*, on the other hand, were determined to return and make a fresh start, whatever the hardships involved. This was apparent to me in 1997 when

I visited Unión Minas, a return community in Tambo district. Situated in the frigid *puna* at an altitude of around 3,500 metres, the village was considered by the municipality to be “*muy pobre*.” However, even that assessment did not fully prepare me for the appalling living conditions I would find there. Most of the village’s 170 or so inhabitants lived in a tight cluster of low, damp, turf-walled huts, with roofs constructed from the wild *puna* grass called ichu. Only a very few huts had roofs of corrugated iron sheets. The inhabitants had returned to Unión Minas from Ccarhuapampa almost two years earlier, and there was still neither a local school nor a health clinic built in the village. Every single inhabitant was suffering from one form of health problem or another, from skin infections to a wide range of respiratory and gastro-intestinal illnesses. As honoured guests, the health worker I was accompanying and I were served the best food the villagers could offer, which were blackened, withered potatoes. They apologised for the condition of the potatoes, blaming *rancha* (a fungus) for blighting their crops. They had no money for fertilisers and pesticides, let alone for healthy seeds. Yet, in spite of all this, the *retornos* of Unión Minas at the time of my visit remained undaunted and optimistic. “At least here we have our own land,” many told me. Indeed, many of the surrounding hillsides were once again under cultivation after having been unattended for so many years.²⁷ The men expressed to me their optimism that the municipality would eventually build a road to the village; that one day soon it would provide them with electricity and potable water, construct a school and perhaps even a health clinic. Although secretly I could not share their optimism that the future would bring the degree of development that they patiently awaited, I nevertheless wished them the best of luck and left with my small plastic bag of mouldy potatoes and a great degree of respect and admiration for their tenacity and hopefulness.

In the department of Ayacucho, the very nature of the cause of displacement also proved a significant factor in the regional patterns of *retorno* or *inserción*. The evidence suggests that the greater part of *retornantes* came from provinces where internal population displacement could be attributed primarily to Shining Path aggression; of these, La Mar and Huanta registered the largest number of returns (see Table 6.2. MRSDA 1997:3).

In comparison, the vast majority of *desplazados* from the department’s southern provinces—Lucanas, Parinacochas, Huancasancos, Víctor Fajardo, Vilcashuamán, Paucar de Sara Sara—have chosen for insertion, “owing, among other factors to [the fact] the Armed Forces, who was the principal cause of displacement in these zones, remains in control of them” (MRSDA 1997:3).

The vast majority of *retornantes* were those who had fled only to neighbouring rural villages, or to district capitals—that is to say, fled to rural places of refuge not too distant from their home villages. Proximity makes returning to one’s original home easier, both physically and psychologically. By contrast, the vast majority of displaced persons who fled to Lima and other major cities have not returned.

Generally, more *retornantes* were male than female, with 25 to 39-year-olds of both sexes constituting the largest age group (INEI 1998b:43-45). The INEI study discovered that they also tended to be individuals with only a very basic level of education, if any at all: “...85,3% [of the population interviewed] mentioned working in

Table 6.2: Internal Refugee Returns, Ayacucho Department, by Province and District, as of 1997

Province	Number of Families	Districts Principally Affected
Huanta	3,575 (13,727 persons)	Ayahuanco, Santillana, Huanta, Sivia, Luricocha, Huamanguilla, Iguain.
La Mar	2,003 (8,012 persons)	Anco, Santa Rosa, Ayna.
Huamanga	738	San José de Ticllas, Santiago de Pischa, Acocro, Chiara, Vínchos, Acosvínchos, Pacaycasa, Quinoa, Ocros.
Vilcashuamán	625	Umaru, Vischongo, Pomatambo.
Cangallo	275	Icaraccay, Huahuapuquio.
Víctor Fajardo	263	Huamanquiquia, Asquipata.
Lucanas	389	Santa Ana de Aucará, Andamarca, Chipao.
Parinacochas	250	Pacapausa, Upahuacho, Incuyo.
Sucre	188	Chalcos, Pampamarca, Belén.

Source: after MRSDA 1997:3-4

occupations connected with agriculture and farming qualifications. As well, 8,3% declared themselves to be unskilled labourers, ambulant peddlers and such, the other group of 1,8% claimed to be professionals and intellectuals” (ibid.:51).

Table 6.3: Level of Education of Returnees Interviewed by INEI

Level of Education	%
Very little or no education	18.5
Primary education	57.6
Secondary education	21.4
Higher education	2.5

Source: after INEI 1998b:47

A reasonable explanation for this pattern is that there were generally more opportunities for higher-educated individuals in urban centres than for the lesser educated, and also greater and better opportunities for the higher educated in the cities than in the *campo*. Moreover, individuals who already possessed or have recently gained a comparatively high level of education often regarded themselves as socially superior, and certainly as belonging to a separate social class from those with much lesser schooling. Consequently, such higher-educated *desplazados* probably came to have the attitude that nothing less than an urban lifestyle befits their social status, and that a life in the *campo* is only for the “*cholos*” and “*chutos*.”²⁸

Comparatively few refugee returns have been planned and organised with the

assistance of the government, the army, or non-governmental groups (see Table 6.4). The government's Programa de Apoyo al Repoblamiento (PAR) claims that by 1997, it had assisted in organising 7,723 instances of return.²⁹

Table 6.4: Modes of Return in Ayacucho, Junín, Apurímac, Huancavelica, Huanuco, and Ancash departments.

Mode of Return	%
Total	100.00
Own Decision	88.8
Organised by Government (PAR)	5.4
Organised by Armed Forces	3.7
Organised by NGO	1.2
Other	0.8
Organised by the Catholic Church	0.1

Source: after INEI 1998b:38

The Mesa Regional Sobre Desplazamiento Ayacucho noted, however, that “the return marches organised from Lima by PAR generally result in failure a few months after the referred to return” (MRSDA 1997:9). Why? Uncertainty about security and living conditions owing to a lack of contact with their home villages, and even distrust of the government’s motives, were just some of the reasons why many government-organised returns failed.

In contrast, the vast majority of returns—PAR estimated their number to be around 50,000—have been spontaneous actions organised by the returnees themselves, though always with the authorisation of the local or regional political-military commander either before or very soon after the return. *Retornantes* made the return journey home either as individuals, as separate households, or with other co-villagers as a group. Moreover, rather than making a total return to the countryside, many families opted instead for a “partial return,” whereby the family members would divide their time living and/or working both in their urban *asentamientos humano* (human [refugee] settlements) and in their rural villages of origin. *Retornantes* to villages close to their *asentamientos humanos* have been understandably reluctant to give up the modern conveniences of urban life they have become accustomed to, like running water, electricity, schools, etc. Such individuals therefore often return to their rural villages only when they need to work in their fields, and otherwise preferring to maintain their place of residence in an urban setting.

The decision to return was sometimes literally made “on the spot” by many communities, such as in the case of Huico, a community in Acocro district, whose displaced members “met in Ayacucho on 28 September 1995 and decided to return together on the very same day” (Flagg et al. 1998:8). Other *retornos* were achieved only through the vision, initiative, and vigorous effort of a few individuals.

Few return stories are as dramatic as that of Uchuraccay’s, the alto-Andino community that achieved widespread notoriety after eight reporters were brutally mur-

dered there by villagers in January 1983. Throughout the rest of that dreadful year and into the following one, Uchuraccay and its neighbouring communities frequently experienced intensely devastating guerrilla attacks for being the first of Ayacucho's peasant communities to counter-rebel. The violence took its heavy toll, and by the end of 1984, Uchuraccay lay completely abandoned. Its villagers had fled to different destinations. Many went to live in Huanta, Huamanga, and Tambo, while others moved to as far away as Lima. Wherever they went, the Uchuraccayños took care to conceal their true identity in an attempt to escape the stigma of having come to be known throughout Peru as "*los mataperiodistas*"—"the journalist killers." During their long years in exile, the scattered villagers never attempted to reunite as a community, and very few tried to contact old neighbours beyond immediate relatives and close friends. Nevertheless, many often thought back nostalgically to how much better life had been before the war, before they became *desplazados*. Many reminisced about their "*vida de tranquilidad*," when they were able to grow enough food to feed themselves, and had vast livestock herds to meet the rest of their subsistence needs.³⁰ Although the so-called "Iquichan" alto-Andinos were commonly regarded by their fellow Peruvians as among the "poorest" of peasants (e.g. Degregori 1999a:67), the Uchuraccayños, for their part, measured their wealth in terms of the size of their herds, and so had actually thought themselves quite well-off. However, when their animal herds were annihilated or were forcibly taken from them by Shining Path guerrillas, and their homes burnt, the Uchuraccayños fled and eventually arrived at their various places of refuge completely destitute. Given that at the time of their displacement the vast majority of alto-Andinos were virtually uneducated and spoke only Quechua, those lucky enough to find sporadic work were limited to performing menial jobs as domestic servants and manual labour as peons. Even then, such work did not necessarily bring monetary income, as Elías Ccente, Uchuraccay's president, explained to me years later. "They didn't pay us. We worked for our patrons for nothing. We worked only in return for food, nothing more. Therefore we didn't have money to make purchases."³¹ Less fortunate Uchuraccayños had no other choice but to beg for food or money in the street. Over the years, however, the *desplazados* of Uchuraccay learned to speak Castellano. With occasional help from friends like José Coronel (a Huantino anthropologist and lecturer at the UNSCH), and from some evangelical and humanitarian institutions, they managed to make a new life for themselves. In time, the various *desplazados* living in the city of Huanta were able to form, with the assistance of one or two NGOs and a few sympathetic individuals like Coronel, a self-help organisation that pooled together the scarce cash and food resources of its members. Few Uchuraccayños imagined it would ever be possible for them to return and, according to Elías Ccente, many no longer even wanted to. Consequently, organising a return proved a tremendously difficult undertaking. Not only did he first have to track down his widely dispersed co-villagers throughout the country; he also had to convince them that it made sense to return. "It was difficult to reunite my *paisanos*," he told me.

For example, they were very suspicious and very ashamed because of the problem that had happened in Uchuraccay on 26 January, when the journalists were killed. Therefore, the peasants didn't want to return. And so we have searched for *paisanos* here and there, even as

far away as in the city of Lima. I have personally gone to invite [them to reunite], spending my own money, emptying my own pockets, no? Therefore, little by little we have reunited, with difficulty. We succeeded in reuniting only twenty-eight families in '92 and '93."³²

The return date to Uchuraccay had been set for 20 July 1993, but this original plan fell through. "Regrettably the people had not returned, and there on the moor I stood alone, all by myself," Ccente recalled with some amusement. It had been arranged beforehand that the commander of Huanta's Castropampa Army Base would lend security by providing the *retornantes* with a military escort. Rumours, however, transformed this security measure into the very source of their fear as many Uchuraccainos came to believe that the soldiers meant to sell them. (Sell them to *whom*, nobody really knew.) (It is interesting to note that this fear of bodily abduction is similar to that which has inspired the *pishtaco* legend.)

There had been comments, then, which my *paisanos* heard, that said, 'Don't return because there are perhaps bad people who are going to take you away to sell you.' Or 'Anything can happen. You are all fine here, what do you want to return for? Why do you want to go back?' That is why my *paisanos* did not come the first time, then, because they were thinking that perhaps the soldiers were going to take them away to sell them, and so it was better [not to return and] to stay [where they were].

The community that *did* make a return to the high *punas* on 20 July was San José de Santillana Marccaraccay. Pointing to Marccaraccay's successful return as an example, Ccente was finally able to convince many of his *paisanos* that their fears and apprehensions were unfounded, and a new date to return was set. And so it was that on 10 October 1993, around 70 families returned home at last to Uchuraccay, after an absence of almost a decade. They have since been joined by many others who have made their way back to the village. As if to break with the bitter events of the past, the new village is located on a slope some one hundred metres above the old village square, where the reporters were killed, the site of which is today commemoratively marked by a single white cross.

Though we may associate refugee returns with social renewal, it is true that in some instances they have also engendered new tensions, rivalries, and competition. As such, refugee returns can also be viewed as having had a disruptive effect on local social and political relations. Indeed, in many areas of the department where *retornantes* have come back to live alongside *resistentes*, ensuing social and political discord has frequently been reported. Whereas the most common tensions and conflicts between *desplazados* and *resistentes* often involves the issue of land entitlement and whether *desplazados* who might never return to the village should be permitted to retain land, the tensions that have arisen between *retornantes* and *resistentes*, by contrast, have often been about local political power. For instance, Flagg et al. observed, "in Pampamarca a certain amount of tension existed between the resistant members of the community and the returnees, not over land as much as *political power*."

Returnees are generally the younger more educated generation who...had been sent away to the city for their schooling. They therefore tend to have different ideas concerning possible developments for their community vis a vis the *resistentes*" (1998:10). The authors also go on to point out that social and political tensions between *retornantes* and *resistentes* were sometimes exacerbated when community funds were involved: "...in Pampamarca...great disputes arose when the community tractor was sold to raise funds to buy a parabolic aerial for television (there is no electricity in the area at the time, although there will be soon). This raised the issue of who is really responsible for this money and how many *comuneros* must be present at the meetings which decide how to spend it" (Flagg et al. 1998:40).

The dynamics of *retornante-resistente* relations differ from district to district, although at the root of most tensions and conflicts is contested political power. The objective of most returnees was not simply restricted to recuperating the material property they had lost, or to returning to the life they had before their displacement. Rather, the majority of *retornantes* brought back with them new ideas and expectations aroused by their urban experience, and they wanted to rebuild their communities according to the image they had in mind. It is hardly surprising that problems arose when the village they wished to transform was inhabited also by *resistentes*. This is not to imply that *resistentes* were against change. Of course, even *resistentes* who had never lived outside their community (or have only had limited migratory experience) also desired material and infrastructure development for their village. The problems between the two groups usually arose, however, when it came to deciding the manner and the direction of the community's future development. Many *resistentes* I spoke to in Tambo district maintained that they should have a greater say than recently arrived *retornantes* in deciding the affairs of their community on account of the many sacrifices they had made in defending the village over the years. On the other hand, *retornantes* told me that they felt more capable than their "more traditional" and "less experienced" *resistente* neighbours in planning, deciding, and managing their community's future development.

Resistente-retornante friction can arise within individual village populations, but also between villages. At the district level, *resistente* villages in Tambo district have often appealed to the *alcalde* that they should have priority over repopulated *retornante* villages in receiving developmental and reconstruction assistance (CEPRODEP 1997). They maintained that it was not only their due as *resistentes*, but also that it was more reasonable to put scarce resources to use in aiding and developing existing needy villages, rather than reviving those that had long ago been abandoned or completely destroyed.

I cannot predict how these sorts of conflicts and tensions between *retornantes* and *resistentes* will develop in the future, for these processes are still unfolding. We must not forget that what are often involved here are communities in the process of becoming, where individuals and households with diverse backgrounds and experiences are having to used to living alongside one another once again after years of separation and social disruption. But whatever the outcomes will be, the most encouraging sign that Tambino society as a whole had made an important break with the past was that people were keen to make it clear to me that they were determined to resolve their problems and differences by peaceful means, rather than with violence.

6.3 The significance of the CADs in the process of return and reconstruction

It was the *security* that village-defence militias were able to bring to many rural areas that made it possible for displaced people to begin returning and rebuilding their economic and social lives. We have already presented numerous illustrations of this. In the previous chapter, for instance, we saw that the round-the-clock vigilance provided by Ccarhuapampa's active *ronderos* enabled other community members to cultivate nearby fields in safety. We have also seen the example of the *Patrulla Especial* of Tambo escorting peasants who wanted to work the fields they had in more remote and possibly dangerous corners of the district. In more recent years, the *Patrulla Especial* was also used to provide security for workers on various infrastructure construction projects in the district, such as the new Tambo-USmay road. In addition, it was the pacification of vast areas of the emergency zone, achieved through the efforts of civil defence groups, that helped to convince thousands of displaced people to return and repopulate villages situated in areas that were once considered unsafe.

Apart from the general socioeconomic reconstruction they engendered, refugee returns were fulfilling another important function. Namely that in as much as they repopulated strategic areas of the countryside with communities hostile to Shining Path, refugee returns also served as an effective instrument of pacification. This being so, the Fujimori government, in coordination and conjunction with local military and civilian forces, put its full support behind the return process, undoubtedly as much for its counterinsurgency value as for humanitarian motives.

It is indeed amazing how much military attitudes had changed in less than a decade. In 1984 the army generally viewed Ayacucho's peasants with deep suspicion, and thus adopted a strategy that sought to empty the countryside by concentrating local populations into clustered settlements—the objective being to deprive the enemy of its presumed peasant support base. By 1993, however, the government's new pacification strategy involved repopulating abandoned areas of the countryside with communities organised into self-defence committees, and through them expanding the presence and influence of the State.

In Tambo district, the civil defence committees themselves apparently took the lead in initiating the return process. Comando Zorro writes in his war diary: "We decided to organise, from the month of December 1993 onwards, in the district of Tambo, the Repopulation [of abandoned villages], supporting them by offering security and organising community works so as to rebuild vanished communities."³³ (See Appendix A.) Every repopulated village in Tambo district was obliged to form a *Comité de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, and to provide Comando Zorro with a register of the names of all its members. Over the following months and years, PAR and a small number of NGOs would lend assistance to Tambo's *retornante* communities by providing them with donations of food, tools, seeds and building materials, like corrugated iron sheets (*calaminas*). For its part, the army periodically provided humanitarian assistance by way of civic action projects, and military assistance by dispensing shotguns and ammunition. In fact, local army garrisons throughout the emergency zone were, by this time, making more serious efforts to foster better and closer relations with the local population. One way was to periodically organise cultural enter-

tainment and sporting activities, like dances and friendly football matches. In the province of La Mar, the Pichari garrison's 35-piece army brass and drum band was a regular feature at all its *acciones cívica*, providing music and entertainment as well as momentary protection to the rural beneficiaries of the army's goodwill. Schoolteachers would often also accompany civic action excursions, handing out school supplies ("*paquetes escolares*") to *retornante* schoolchildren. Usually also on hand was an army barber or two giving free haircuts, and civilian nurses and doctors to perform checkups, distribute donated medicines, and to try and educate peasant men and women about contraception. In fact, civic actions were not unlike fairs, and on the occasion I was able to participate in one, it was obvious to me that the *retornantes* present were clearly enjoying themselves.

From 1994 onwards, Tambo's *Patrulla Especial*, in addition to routinely inspecting all the rural communities in the district to ensure that they continued to maintain a functioning self-defence committee, also came to assume the responsibility of organising and supervising *faenas*. The task of ensuring that all able-bodied men and women participated in the *faenas comunal* fell on the patrol's members, who punished absentees and malingerers with a fine of two soles, or with extra work. Just as participation in community defence had been compulsory, so too was it made mandatory to take part in the realisation of community work projects of reconstruction. A typical CCADD report to the local military commander in Tambo, following a routine inspection of the communities, would read: "Verified the following: general registration of the population, armaments, communal *faenas*, and later proceeded to sanction the loafers who did not collaborate in the *faenas* of the programmed tasks, like cleaning their reservoir and irrigation canal, the construction of their communal house [*casa comunal*] and latrines" (after CCAD-SJB 1995:2).

There is little doubt that the degree of socioeconomic and political reconstruction that has taken place in the Ayacuchan countryside to date would not have been possible were it not for the increased ability of the CADs, together with the army, to guarantee a reasonable level of security from about the end of 1992 onwards. Not only did this process of pacification enable the government to initiate extensive reconstruction and development projects, it also stimulated the return to the countryside of NGOs and the crucial aid they bring. In addition, the decline in political violence in recent years also gradually encouraged local individuals to assume bureaucratic offices once again, even in rural areas with little or no police or army presence, so long as there were CADs. It also helped convince existing district authorities to return from the urban centres to which they had fled. Ever since the early 1980s, the threat of assassination by guerrillas impelled most district-level government officials—like *alcaldes*, *jueces de paz*, and *gobernadores*—to administrate from a distance; that is to say, from the relative safety of cities like Huamanga or Huanta. With the gradual achievement of pacification in the surrounding countryside, thanks largely to the efforts of the CADs, municipal officials began to return to their district capitals from 1991 onwards, thus effectively undoing the earlier success of Sendero's campaign to "*batir el campo*" (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: Deaths caused by Political Violence, according to social category, 1989-1998

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Presumed										
Subversives	553	320	218	377	323	53	152	56	51	20
Army 95	56	69	181	69	29	71	40	18	17	
Governor	8	5	3	4	5	0	0	0	0	0
L. Governor	20	12	9	10	11	6	4	5	2	2
Judge	17	6	2	11	2	0	0	0	1	1
Prov. Mayor	7	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Dist. Mayor	37	17	16	15	12	4	0	1	1	0
L. Mayor	8	2	3	5	4	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,971	1,477	1,177	1,718	1,129	324	428	211	130	83

Source: INEI 1999:47

6.4 Agents and visions of reconstruction and development

In 1991, the government took the first steps to trim a bloated bureaucracy by auctioning off state-owned enterprises. The domestic political and economic instability at the time, coupled with sceptical international opinion about the uncertain fate of the country, ensured that the privatisation venture got off to a slow start. But the government's competent and rapid ability to bring both the insurgency and the rampant hyperinflation problems under control helped to bolster foreign investor confidence. So much so, in fact, that "[by] the end of 1994, the government had sold or was set to sell most of the private companies that had been nationalised during the period of military rule from 1968 to 1980. The total inflow of these revenues to the treasury exceeded \$3 billion by the middle of 1995" (Klarén 2000:418-419). Furthermore, tax reforms initiated soon after the new government came to power also helped boost the Central Bank's reserves, which the García government had left with a deficit of \$143 million (ibid.:420). Additional revenues also came in the form of substantial foreign financing and credit. The consequence of all this was to enviably endow the Fujimori government with ample, fresh revenues at its discretionary disposal. The President prudently chose to allocate at least half of this windfall to new governmental social programmes, ostensibly aimed at improving the lives of the urban and rural poor and working classes. It was a wise decision given that these classes formed the backbone of his electoral support. Even before the political opposition even began to think about preparing for the next general elections, the Fujimori government was already fully engaged in waging a calculated political campaign to win hearts and votes.

The way in which the government's social programmes of reconstruction and development were applied merely reflected the structure of power laid down by the *autogolpe*. That is to say, "budgetary allocations became more concentrated in the

Ministry of the Presidency.... The upshot was that Fujimori could now effectively micromanage the government's social programmes, targeting specific areas and sectors of the population for maximum political impact. In effect, the Ministry of the Presidency had assumed a monopoly over public works and social projects" (Klarén 2000:420). The mainspring of the Fujimori government's social assistance and development programme was FONCODES, the Fondo Nacional de Compensación y Desarrollo, financed by the World Bank. FONCODES funded an array of infrastructure and poverty-focussed initiatives ranging from the construction of roads, water reservoirs, and public latrines, to projects dealing with health and nutrition matters. Schools across the country were built with financial aid from INFES, and FONAVI brought electrification to many *asentamientos humanos* in the emergency zone. As has already been mentioned, in the government's campaign against poverty and perennial neglect, the army managed to improve its relations with the local population—and so too its public image—by conducting an increased number of civic action initiatives. As I have already explained, these *acciones cívica* put soldiers to work on infrastructure construction or repair projects, or had them distributing emergency rations and other basic items provided by PAR, PRONAA (Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria), or some other government agency or ministry, to returnees and to impoverished rural communities. (It should be noted that the army-sponsored civic actions of the 1990s were by no means original initiatives. It was General Huamán who had first advocated them in the early 1980s as an important component of his own counterinsurgency vision.) The military's expanded civic action role in the 1990s, along with the fact that it came to assume both the tasks of organising most pro-government rallies in the emergency zones, and of routinely shuttling the President around the country from one public relations function to another, led many observers to conclude that under the Fujimori regime, "the armed forces had become the principle institutional vehicle to deliver these services and the related political message" (Klarén 2000:420-421).

One of the most important government aid agencies to operate in the conflict-torn Andean emergency zones was PAR, whose mission was, firstly, to organise and supply provisions for the return of displaced populations to "areas affected by terrorist violence," and secondly, to assist in establishing for such *retornantes* their "basic conditions sustainable human development" (PAR 1997:4). In the returns organised under its auspices, the returnees were always provided with a standard donation of food, tools, clothing, cooking utensils, and provisional identity/electoral cards. Once on a visit to the peasant community of Trigopampa to inaugurate public works financed by PAR and the Swiss government, President Fujimori himself handed out provisional identity documents to the villagers in the presence of visiting representatives of the Swiss embassy. "This action is being made not only in regard to the repopulation, but also to grant identification to each of the citizens who has lost them during the time of terrorism or did not have the opportunity to obtain his voter's card," Fujimori then announced to the press. "We calculate that from now until [the year] two thousand we will be able to give more or less half a million provisional identity documents, which are later going to result in a voter's card so that displaced persons may recuperate their civic rights totally. This is a continuation of the process of pacification...." (quoted in La Calle 1996:4).

There is no doubt that on this as on other similar occasions, the inauguration of public works and the issuing of provisional identity-cum-electoral cards were interconnected events—a “coincidence” calculated for political ends. Beneath the civic-rights rhetoric expounded for the benefit of the press and the Swiss diplomats, the President’s political message to the locals, conveyed more by his actions than by his words, was simple and clear: “*The next time you’re at the ballot box, remember what I have done for you and your community.*” Indeed, for most of its ten years in power, the Fujimori government never permitted local communities to forget what benefits it had brought them. Throughout Peru, one could not miss the large billboards, painted in bright orange, which were planted beside every public work subsidised by the government. These signs not only stated, among other things, the project’s objective, the sponsoring governmental agency or ministry, and the total cost. They were also mental markers that served to remind local beneficiaries daily of the government’s patronage and generosity, and, concurrently, of their moral and political debt to “El Chino.” On Election Day 1995, Fujimori was not to be disappointed. His landslide victory that year marked the high-water mark of the symbiotic political relationship between the populist president and the underprivileged masses, which were his most numerous political supporters and thus the main beneficiaries of his aid and pork-barrel projects.

Although in recent years the government came to assume a more prominent role in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment in the country’s urban shantytowns and in the Andean countryside, it had not always done so in the past. During the last years of President García’s administration, for instance, the mismanaged, bankrupt, and corruption-ridden government was more preoccupied with forestalling its own disintegration and collapse than with initiating poverty alleviation programmes.

Photo 7. Civic Action at Usmay, Tambo District, 1997



It was therefore of little surprise that in Peru, “[as] government programs failed to meet basic needs, NGOs multiplied with special speed..., promising more efficient, innovative, and democratic ways of improving poor people’s lives” (Starn 1999:193). In fact, many of the projects implemented by foreign-funded Peruvian NGOs and by the Catholic and Evangelical churches over the years prefigured many of Fujimori’s own social assistance initiatives. These NGO-supported initiatives included providing various sorts of assistance in order to facilitate refugee returns; (re)building local infrastructure like irrigation canals, potable water systems, health clinics and schools; donating machinery and tools, setting up orphanages and providing assistance to destitute widows and street children; and supporting grassroots movements, like the *clubes de madres* and the *rondas campesinas* of Cajamarca. Yet whereas the government’s programme focused almost exclusively on providing *material* assistance, Peru’s diverse community of NGOs and church-related groups tried instead to offer a wider variety of projects aimed not only at meeting basic material needs, but also at addressing deeper social issues and promoting social justice. Particular emphasis was placed on reaching out to the most marginalized and “muted” sectors of society (like orphaned and abandoned children).

The escalation of political violence during the 1980s created conditions that made it extremely difficult, and eventually impossible, for NGOs to continue working safely in the countryside. NGOs offices and personnel throughout the emergency zone found themselves caught in a vicious crossfire that put them at risk of being bombed, assassinated, kidnapped or disappeared by one or both sides (see Smith 1992). They were, on the one hand, denounced as “counter-revolutionary” by Sendero Luminoso, which regarded the work they did as both diverting the peasant masses from recognizing the imperativeness of the “armed struggle,” and serving but to prop up the “rotten” state and status quo. In addition, NGOs have found themselves assailed on the other flank by the State. Successive presidents from Belaúnde to Fujimori have accused NGOs of disparaging the Peruvian government and its security forces, mainly about human rights abuses, and of allegedly serving as fronts for diverting funds to the insurgency movement. In one of his particularly acerbic denunciations of NGOs and their foreign sponsors, President Belaúnde stated: “Our Police Forces, they are confronted at the present time...[by] the mistaken ideologies that [the insurgency is] trying to introduce to Peru, sometimes concealed by pompous names of scientific or humanitarian institutions which, as we have been able to prove, receive hundreds of millions of soles not so as to exalt or to raise the standard of life in the country, but to sow misery and chaos, and to try to drown this nation in a sea of blood and tears” (quoted in DESCO 1989:402-403).

And so, whereas between 1980 and 1983 there had existed in Ayacucho no less than twelve non-governmental institutions, by 1984 most had abandoned the countryside and retreated to Huamanga. The majority of them would eventually close down, leaving only four NGOs functioning in the entire department.³⁴ Very little work could be done by the remaining NGOs in the *campo* during the 1980s, and even then only in easily accessible areas, close to Huamanga. Moreover, given the hostility and deep suspicion shown towards advocates of human rights by successive governments, NGOs working in the emergency zone prudently restricted themselves to addressing exclusively technical-economic issues in order to avoid persecution from

the security forces. As TADEPA points out, “[a]ny ample meeting, in a community or a hamlet, always has to rely on the previous authorisation of the security forces (police or army)....” (1992:120). And if an NGO wanted to obtain military authorisation to continue working, it had to appear “politically neutral” (ibid.).

Even so, abandoning political work and restricting themselves to technical and economic tasks was not without its attendant benefit. By focusing their work on addressing urgent economic needs, some of these NGOs were consequently able to forge strong links with local communities, and to win the trust and crucial support of the population (ibid.). The progressive pacification of the emergency zones from 1993 onwards brought a concomitant easing of some of the implicit political restrictions on the sorts of work NGOs were permitted to do by the security forces. Consequently, many old and new NGOs returned to once again take up the task of informing local populations of their human rights, which is one aspect that is noticeably absent from the Fujimori government’s own civilian-led social development programmes—not surprising, of course, given the regime’s own appalling human rights record.

As the idea of “promoting local government” became a increasingly fashionable guiding principle of many North American and European humanitarian aid financiers during the 1990s, NGOs in Ayacucho came increasingly to work closely with municipal mayors (*alcaldes*). This situation has, in turn, helped to enhance the social and political importance of *alcaldes*, while at the same time serving to offset, to some extent, the central government’s absolute control over the transfer of state revenues.

Municipal funds are generated primarily by renting out municipal land or machinery, property taxes, through fines, tolls, and fees for professional services (e.g. registering births, marriages, and deaths), and by managing wisely whatever other local revenues and resources are at their disposal. As can be expected, then, the municipalities of impoverished populations are likewise poor, and must therefore depend on the central government for financial assistance. Yet this raises its own set of problems, for reliance on the central government has historically been plagued by rampant clientelism and political favouritism, which reached new extremes during the Fujimori era. As Nickson explains,

In 1994, without prior consultation, President Fujimori assumed direct control of the FPM [Fondo de Promoción Municipal, or development tax], the main source of central government transfers to local government. Henceforth 20 percent of FPM proceeds would be transferred to provincial municipalities and 80 percent of district municipalities, *but the allocation among municipalities was left to the discretion of the presidential office* (1995:245. My emphasis).³⁵

The *alcalde* of Tambo district once described to me the government assistance his district received as a “ridiculous [sum] with which to attend to the numerous needs of our population” (MDTLM 1996a:1)—a sentiment generally shared by municipal mayors throughout the country. Fujimori’s self-assumed discretionary prerogative, while tightening the executive branch’s control over state revenues, was also widely interpreted by his opponents as a means to keep potential political rivals financially weak and opposition-controlled municipalities dependent on the central government.

For this reason, NGO support, when it could be obtained, offered *alcaldes* a preferable alternative way of obtaining developmental assistance for their municipalities without having to rely exclusively on currying favour with the Fujimori regime. The financial assistance provided by NGOs allowed municipal authorities to exercise a greater degree of autonomy in initiating the development and reconstruction projects of their municipalities, though the optimal strategy was to obtain a combination of governmental and private developmental aid. For example, Rubén Rojas Domínguez, Tambo district's municipal *alcalde* from 1996 to 1998, was able to bring electrification to most of Tambo's semi-urban *desplazado* settlements with financial assistance from the governmental agency FONAVI. From the Swiss government he was able to secure funding for the construction of water reservoirs and for the reactivation of irrigation canals. And a financial donation from a German organisation—Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau—helped build a road running from the village of Huayao to the community of Usmay, thus providing many of Tambo's remotest eastern communities with easier access to the town and the world beyond (MDTLM 1996a).

In the so-called "*Lucha por la Reconstrucción y Desarrollo*" of Peru's war-torn society, the accomplishments of the central and local governments, in conjunction with NGOs, had been extensive and undeniably remarkable. By mid-1994, FONCODES was funding and managing some 4,760 social assistance projects and 23,000 jobs (Klarén 2000:420). In 1997 it allocated the equivalent of \$251,183,279 American dollars to 6,046 projects throughout the country (INEI 1998a:206). Similarly, PAR could boast of having organised more than 7,700 instances of refugee returns in Ayacucho by the end of 1997. And a host of NGOs could lay claim to having improved the quality of life of country folk through their implementation or sponsorship of diverse projects, like the construction of irrigation canals and latrines, the setting up of communal shops and micro-credit schemes, the provision of practical training and information on issues of health, agriculture, livestock engineering and family planning, women's literacy courses, the promotion of gender equality, local initiative, self-reliance, and so forth (see CIDRA 1996).

However, impressive figures on paper, prodigious activities résumés, and outstanding progress reports belie the numerous serious problems that have plagued the reconstruction and development mission as a whole. For a start, most of the government's projects were unmistakably motivated principally by political interests, and aimed at strengthening the electoral base of Fujimori's populist regime (see Kruijt and del Pilar Tello 2002). Furthermore, the central government's method of dispensing aid had been harshly criticised over the years, not least by municipal mayors, for simply handing out goods to politically loyal constituencies rather than providing training that would be more beneficial to the local populations in the long term. As Federico Salas, Huancavelica's *alcalde* and a future presidential candidate, once explained to the magazine *Debate*: "[The] State has the resources, at present it is giving away food. It is giving them fish but it is not teaching them how to fish. The peasant has the will to work, he does not want too much assistance nor too many gift, because we know that it is temporary; what we want is the power to develop ourselves, to produce" (Dávila 1997:9). Government handouts, combined with continuing unemployment, simply promoted political clientalism to the regime, and engendered among local populations both dependency and the loss of the will to find or

create even “informal” sorts of employment. Many common people I spoke to in 1997 and 2000 believed that the government should not restrict itself only to handing out goods, but must also help to create jobs and, most importantly, to open up or to seek out new domestic and overseas markets for local produce and labour.

There were other common problems: the mismanagement of projects and inefficiency in their execution, the incompleteness of work contracts, and, of course, graft and corruption of public funds, particularly at the municipal level. It was not uncommon to hear stories of mayors who had plundered their municipal coffers, leaving the next *alcalde* no available funds with which to start his three-year term in elected office. In 1997 alone, at least twenty-five serving and former municipal authorities from various districts and provinces of Ayacucho were either being investigated, pursued, detained, or jailed by the police for embezzling or absconding with municipal funds originally intended for local social development projects.³⁶ The result was a lack of public trust in the integrity of political officials—hardly a new sentiment, in fact. “Most men want to become *alcalde* only so they can plunder the municipal funds, and rob from the district,” a Tambino once commented to me. “That’s the way it’s always been, and that’s the way it will always be.”³⁷

But most frustrating for local populations had been what appeared to be a lack of general coordination between governmental institutions and aid agencies, different levels of government, and the various projects they envisaged or were actually implementing. There was no more convincing proof of this than FONCODES, which, as Nickson points out, “came under direct presidential control, with little involvement by local government” (1995:245). As regards the central government’s social programmes, Mayor Federico Salas opined to the magazine *Debate* that “they are not coordinated with the [local] authorities or with the local population, they are directed from its ministries in Lima, and therefore they do not get to satisfy the needs of the population of the interior of the country” (Dávila 1997:8). Surprisingly, this view was shared even by some of the programme directors themselves. For instance, Victor Torres Cornejo, PAR’s zonal director for Ayacucho wrote in an internal report:

Governmental agencies have been created for this purpose: FONCODES, SIERRA CENTRO SUR, PAR. These Agencies and others of the public sector still do not articulate their actions organically, acting in practice in isolated ways, at times duplicating activities, for want of a Plan that orientates their actions in an organic way. Some 60% of those [returnees] who with the assistance of PAR returned to their communities come to abandoned it once again because of the lack of economic opportunities that satisfy their urgent needs. This is partly due to the slowness in the maturation of the projects and to the absence of decentralization and de-concentration of the state apparatus (Torres Cornejo 1997:17).

There is little doubt that the absence of a common plan of action when it came to development strategies in general stemmed from the fact that different state institutions and agencies had conflicting ideas of the best way to “develop” Ayacuchan society. For instance, according to a number of army officers I spoke to in 1997, the mil-

itary intended to assume a leading and directing role in any future process of national reconstruction and socioeconomic development within the emergency zones. Rather than providing basic services to every village, however, the military envisaged a cost-effective plan that would require small, remote rural communities to congregate at a centralised place where they would get road access, electricity, and potable water. "They will only need to return to their fields to work, but they will live in nucleated settlements" an army officer explained to me.³⁸ "This is the only way to develop rural society. There is nothing for them in their abandoned villages, and when they realise this they will want to live in the nucleated settlements." This vision of post-war development seemed to me to be nothing more than a continuation of the "strategic hamleting" initiated by the military during the 1980s, which had already succeeded in creating nucleated, semi-urban refugee settlements like the ones around Tambo town. Moreover, such a plan was obviously at variance with PAR's mission to encourage and to assist as many displaced people as possible to return to their rural villages of origin, no matter how remote. More importantly, the army's vision was, at the time, wholly incompatible with the deep desire of many internal refugees to return home.

Evidently, the true picture of developmental achievements and institutional efficiency was not as bright as the government would have foreign donors and the international community believe. Yet a similar lack of coordination and common effort was equally apparent among Peruvian NGOs, in addition to which was the more general question of whether the projects executed by NGOs are always compatible with, and attuned to, real needs and local demands (Foweraker 2001:851-852). TADEPA, a local NGO, pointed out the subsequent problems that had arisen between non-governmental institutions: "The presence of [the ONGs and organs of the State] in the countryside with distinct methodologies and absence of coordination, in practice, generates confusion and even conflicts between the inhabitants of the microregion, even reaching unnecessary internal divisions through parallel projects that weaken communal development" (1992:122).

Persistent operational inefficiency and the general lack of coordination between projects and between the organisations themselves leads one to simply wonder whether these problems were permitted to persist in order to serve particular base interests. An idealistic though disillusioned NGO staffer once told me in 1997: "The ideal of *desarrollo social* of the 1960s and '70s has today been replaced by the pursuit of *desarrollo personal*. It seems to me that many aid workers intentionally try to be inefficient in their work because if they eradicate poverty quickly, they would only be putting themselves out of a job." A cynical view, perhaps, but there may be some truth in it nonetheless. One must face up to the bitter fact that during the course of the 1990s, the project of poverty alleviation had become somewhat of an industry in Peru, as in many other parts of the developing world (Foweraker 2001:852, 860). Thousands of educated, middle-class Peruvians earned their daily bread working for social development organisations, and, as Starn points out, "To start an NGO was a way to work on social issues, and even to make a living at it, a matter of no small urgency for all but the wealthiest Peruvians in the hard times of the 1980s" (1999:202). During the developmental aid boom of the mid- and late-1990s, it seemed that the funds flooding in to Peru were limitless. To many people—both aid

workers and peasants alike—the state seemed to possess bottomless financial coffers. This, of course, was not true, and became all-too-evident when the Peruvian economic bubble burst towards the end of the decade. Unemployment began to rise once again, and the government began to cut drastically its amount of social spending. Moreover, on the international priority list, Peru can expect to face stiff competition from the Balkan and African countries for the developmental aid it will continue to receive from the European Community from 2000 onwards. That Peru has not been able to do more with the generous amounts of funding it had already received from foreign donor governments may have caused some donors—like the Dutch government—to reassess the degree of financial assistance it provides to the country.

6.5 CADs in the process of economic development

What, then, has been the role of *comités de autodefensa* in the complex and problematic process of economic development described above? Before addressing this question, I believe it is first necessary to draw a distinction between the so-called “process of reconstruction,” and the “process of development.” As I have already argued, the process of *reconstruction* can take place even in the midst of war, for even in adverse situations of political violence, people still strive to restore some sort of normalcy in their lives. Reconstruction in this sense consists mainly of small-scale local activities which utilise local labour and resources, the objective being to recuperate as much as possible that which was destroyed by war. Of course, the rebuilding of such things as sabotaged bridges, bombed power lines, roads, and the like, can also be defined as *reconstruction*. But in the case of Ayacucho, which as a department has suffered decades of chronic underdevelopment and neglect on the part of the central government, much of what has been built in recent years never existed before, and therefore was never previously destroyed. It would thus be more accurate to describe the recent flurry of infrastructure construction and expansion in the department as projects that are a part of the *process of development*, rather than of *reconstruction*.

Based on this rough, conceptual distinction between the process of *reconstruction* and the process of *development*, then, it can be concluded that CADs have clearly made valuable contributions to the process of socioeconomic reconstruction in the department. Examples of this were provided above, in section 6 of this chapter. In contrast, their role and accomplishments in regard to the economic and infrastructure development of the department over the last decade is more difficult to assess, and in fact appears to have been fairly marginal, and certainly much more limited in scale and scope than their contributions to departmental reconstruction. More specifically, the contribution of peasant militias in government or NGO-sponsored development projects has often been limited to providing the unskilled, manual labour force for construction work. There are, of course, some small-scale community development projects that have been organised almost exclusively by the committees of local defence groups, such as the construction of a “*parque de la pacificación*” (“park of pacification”) in almost every village. These simple, dirt plazas (which can be handily transformed into a football field) not only have the symbolic significance

of honouring *ronderos* and soldiers who have been killed in the line of duty. Where they have been built, they also form the new social and spatial centre of Andean villages. They are symbolic spaces where community assemblies are held, where the Peruvian flag is raised and saluted, where the national anthem is sang—where, in short, the rituals of *patriotism* are celebrated.

In regard to the larger process of developmental transformations in the department, however, the primary directing and managing agents have been (1) the central and municipal governments, (2) the Peruvian NGOs and their foreign donors. Surprisingly, apparently included in this group are the *clubes de madres*, which for years have dedicated their energies precisely to the tasks of economic and domestic survival, reconstruction and development, and which are now popularly regarded by the NGOs as one of the most important grassroots vehicles for channelling aid to local communities, particularly from a “gender perspective,” which is another of the fashionable principle among NGOs today. Contrary to what their official title might suggest, *Comités de Autodefensa y Desarrollo* have never played a directing role in any major development project executed in Tambo district,³⁹ nor in any other AyacuCHAN district for that matter. One of the main reasons for this is that CADs have been unable to define any meaningful contribution they can make to the process of development that is not already being done by one organisation or another. Apart from their proven capacity for organisation, and their proficiency in mobilising the local inhabitants as a work force, the CADs controlled no other means of production with which to generate more ambitious development projects on their own. Unlike district mayors, whose access to various sources of financial assistance gives them the ability to create new jobs for locals, CAD leaders controlled few locally derived resources, besides organised labour. Thus in order to execute developmental projects beyond basic infrastructure construction, CAD leaders “[needed] outside support to be successful” (Palmer 2000:19). However, CAD commanders had found it difficult to forge links with NGOs because their subordination to military authority had given them somewhat of a bad public image in Lima and abroad. The general impression among foreign donor agencies that finance local NGOs was that the CADs were nothing more than army-manipulated “paramilitary groups,” and as such were almost never seriously considered as grassroots institutions through which foreign aid could be channelled to local populations. Foreign-funded NGOs have instead preferred to work through other organisations and social entities deemed to be civil in nature, like *clubes de madres* and municipal governments.⁴⁰

Another reason for the marginalisation of CADs in AyacuCHO’s process of development was that in spite of the professed goal of governmental and non-governmental agencies to promote “grassroots empowerment and participation,” what in fact has more commonly happened is that agencies continued to practice a top-down approach. Development aid projects, in other words, were conceived, planned, and managed by these agencies themselves, with little participation from the local population in the decision-making process. This is perhaps not surprising, given that these agencies and organisations were almost all administered by educated middle- and upper-middle class professionals from Lima, many of whom still held paternalistic attitudes towards the peasantry that often manifest itself in what Starn describes as the “infantilization of villagers” (see Starn 1999:197-198). Thus, local peasant lead-

ers, including CAD commanders, were almost never given the responsibility of making important decisions in development projects, and rarely even consulted. This fact was brought home to me in 1997 while I was participating in a military-sponsored civic action in the remote upland community of Usmay. At the site of the old village, I congratulated the local CAD president on the health post that was being built there in the *puna*, with the financial assistance of FONCODES. He replied: "Yes, but nobody consulted us about the location. At night, we all sleep in the old army base, half a kilometre away, not here, because the *terrucos* still move through through these hills after dark. When this health post is built and stocked, the *terrucos* will just break in, steal everything, and burn it down." Sure enough, six months later, a band of guerrillas raided the health post. They painted subversive graffiti on the walls before making off with everything of value that was inside.⁴¹ Though it was not burnt down, the hospital remained empty and unused ever since.

Irrelevance and marginalisation was therefore the fate that befell the self-defence committees in the process of socioeconomic development in Ayacucho. It was possible, of course, that given time and with skills training for its members, the CADs might have been able to transform themselves into appropriate vehicles for the pursuit of developmental priorities, and so obtain financial and organisational support from external aid donors and the local non-governmental agencies they sponsor. But as the decade drew to and end, and the twilight of civil war gave way to a new dawn of peace on the edge of which dark clouds of uncertainty and crisis still loomed, a reorientation of sociopolitical and economic agendas, priorities, and strategies would ultimately bring the story of the CADs to an unexpected ending.

Notes

- 1 Fujimori's infamous national security advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos, explained to the journal *Comando en Acción* (1994:40) the justification for the *autogolpe* in the following terms: "When the Executive displayed the required initiatives to implement this new strategic design, it came up against a negative obstruction from the political opposition that, under the inconsistent argument that [the Executive] wanted to militarise the country, [the opposition] proceeded to trim or to repeal the Legislative Decrees issued (....) Faced with this situation of entrapment and mindful that above all was the interests of the nation, on 5 April 1992, one entered a new stage in which the Government of National Reconstruction, apart from various important measures, put into effect the Decrees for National Pacification that had previously been sabotaged (quoted in Tapia 1997:69. Tapia's emphasis). For further details and analysis of the *autogolpe*, see Rospigliosi 1996.
- 2 According to Tapia, during the clashes the Special Forces sent in to quell the riots killed every member of the Central Committee they encountered, except for Osmán Morote (Tapia 1997:78, fn.42). The prison intervention thus gave the armed forces a tremendous opportunity to weaken the revolutionary organisation yet further. During his Independence Day address to the Democratic Constituent Congress on 28 July 1993, Fujimori had this to say about the judicial and penal system that his government inherited:

Until April 5 we had a national government and a criminal force that was challenging it in an increasingly evident balance of armed power that we could not allow. Within that context, the previous judicial branch was unable to mete out justice to the terrorist criminals. Following legal proceedings that were a farce, the terrorists returned to the streets to rejoin annihilation cells. For over a decade prisons stopped performing their fundamental duty of confining criminals to protect society. Terrorists enjoyed unbelievable opportunities in jail that allowed them

- not only to train their cadres but also to coordinate from there attacks and other criminal operations because of the submissiveness and inaction of the authorities (quoted in Starn et al. 1995:439).
- 3 Author's interview with Rubén Rojas Domínguez, *Alcalde*, Tambo district, on 14 October 1997.
 - 4 Torres Cornejo 1997:3.
 - 5 The peak in the number of internally displaced individuals, however, occurred in 1983-1984.
 - 6 Author's interview with Daniel, a *desplazado* living in Vista Alegre, Tambo district, on 3 November 1997.
 - 7 According to Isabel Coral and CEPRODEP, approximately 20 percent of *desplazados* were from marginal urban sectors, whereas around 10 percent were from higher classes (Coral 1994:15).
 - 8 The Ministry of Health for the sub-region of Ayacucho lists the top three causes of death in the department between 1995 and 1997 as (1) respiratory illnesses, (2) intestinal infections, and (3) illnesses of the digestive system (see INEI 1998a:186).
 - 9 OPRLW 1996:20.
 - 10 OPRLW 1996:20.
 - 11 The output of potato production in the department was 70,475 kg in 1962, but this had fallen 17 percent to 58,592 kg by 1991. Between 1983 and 1984, production plummeted to the low points of 20,502 and 24,933 kg respectively. The only other year that potato production fell to a lower point in the '80s was in 1987, when output dropped to 20,032 kg (Ministerio de Agricultura 1992:281).
 - 12 During the first half of the 1990s, each mother in Tambo still had an average of 5 surviving children (see INEI 1994b: 623), a comparatively high figure—the national average for rural women in 1990 was about 4.2 (TADEPA 1992:15)—that was nevertheless confirmed to me by members of Tambo's local *clubes de madres*. Large extended families are common among Tambo's *desplazados*, which also places greater pressure on the producing members of the household.
 - 13 Peasants were not the only ones apprehensive about travelling through the countryside. The medical staff of Tambo's hospital was also always terrified of having to make trips into the *campo*. In past years it was common for the staff of Tambo's health centre to make regular or emergency visits to the rural communities. However, these visits ended when the political violence escalated in the early 1980s. The guerrilla incursion on 15 May 1982, the purpose of which was to loot the hospital, must have only served to heighten the fear felt by the health workers. Furthermore, even when periodic health visits to rural villages were resumed in Tambo in 1997, the continuing climate of fear in the district encouraged medical personnel to make the amount of time they spent in the *campo* as short as possible. As a result, it became common practice for the visiting health workers to place one of the village authorities, or even the ill persons themselves, in charge of administering the medication. The danger, as one retired *técnico en enfermería* (nursing technician) explained to me, is that this sort of uncontrolled dispensation and administration of medication—they are often antibiotics donated by *Medicos Sin Fronteras*—can lead to the emergence of drug-resistant diseases, which could have a devastating effect on the local population in the long run. This information is based on author's interview with Miguel Casorla Casorla (retired *Técnico en Enfermería II*), Tambo district, on 23 October 1997.
 - 14 For a more detailed discussion of the *pishtaco* legend, see Anson 1989 and Weismantel 2001. When my partner, Jenny, and I first came to live in Tambo in 1997, our identity immediately became the subject of a variety of aspersions and rumours: we were government agents, human rights agitators, *pishtacos*. We heard people occasionally mutter the word *pishtaco* at us in the street or at the market, especially during our first weeks. After a time, we were eventually able to persuade a girl called Marlena to describe for us what a *pishtaco* looked like and how it behaved, so that we could recognise it if we happened to come across one. According to Marlena: "*Pishtacos* are often white-skinned, though not always. They wear black clothes and can speak Quechua. [She did not know why this is so, but she immediately knew that we were not *pishtacos* because we were

unable to converse with her in Quechua!]) Male and female *pishtacos* both wear dark sunglasses and long black skirts [*faldas negras*]. They carry long knives which they use to kill their victims.” Some say that *pishtacos* are always strangers to the communities they visit, and haunt desolate places such as abandoned rural villages. Others claim that they are known individuals who have somehow been transformed into the frightening creature. Why should they appear as *gringos*? An Ayacucho friend later suggested that it was because in the late 1980s and early ‘90s, masked Senderistas (many of whom were Caucasian in appearance) visited the villages periodically and recruited or kidnapped young people to fill their ranks. According to her, most parents in the highlands of Ayacucho tell their children that all *gringos* are *pishtacos* to keep them from approaching strangers. And the sunglasses and black clothing? The most conspicuous wearers of sunglasses and dark camouflaged clothing are the police and army officers (most of whom are again Caucasian or *mestizo*). It is hardly surprising to find these latent memories of the horrendous atrocities committed against rural civilians by the Sinchis (the civil guard’s counterinsurgency unit) and the Peruvian Marines in the 1980s, also incorporated into the image of *pishtaco*. The legend is undoubtedly pre-Hispanic, but the hybrid characterisation is unmistakably contemporary. It would appear that parents use the *pishtaco* myth as a parable for why one must distrust and avoid all strangers. Each generation takes the fears and nightmares unique to its own experiences of man-made cataclysms and symbolically personifies them in the fiend they call *pishtaco*. It is an example of how the people of Tambo are using cultural symbols to teach and warn their young about contemporary social dangers.

- 15 CEPRODEP 1997, Grupo 5, Tema II ‘La situación de la Producción Agropecuaria, el Comercio y el Empleo.’
- 16 CEPRODEP 1997.
- 17 CEPRODEP 1997, Grupo 3, Tema II ‘La situación de la Producción Agropecuaria, el Comercio y el Empleo.’
- 18 Of Tambo’s urban *desplazados* who have surplus to take to market, almost all sell their produce at the town’s Sunday market and nowhere else (CEPRODEP 1997).
- 19 Author’s interview with Jorge, Centro de Salud, Tambo district, on 29 September 1997.
- 20 Author’s interview with *rondero* Pascual Quispe Vargas on 17 September 1997.
- 21 Author’s interview with the Junta Directiva of Comité Distrital del Club de Madres, Tambo district, on 16 October 1997.
- 22 A general description of most of the rituals and festivities I mention here can be found in Vilchez 1961, Isbell 1978, Mitchell 1991.
- 23 As we have already seen, the self-defence phenomenon emerged in different parts of the department at different times, and so it is as if to simplify this varied history that the armed forces has declared May 28 the official *Día del Rondero* in the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica. Local *CADs* must celebrate the day at the nearest military base, whereas *Sede Central* authorities are obliged to attend more lavish celebrations at Los Cabitos.
- 24 Most of these traditional festivities and celebrations are described in Vilchez 1961:55-68.
- 25 Author’s interview with Daniel, an evangelical *desplazado* living in Vista Alegre, Tambo district, on 3 November 1997.
- 26 The INEI (1998b) data is based on a survey of approximately 76,389 *retornantes* from these 437 districts.
- 27 As is commonly known, it is not harmful for agricultural fields to lay unused for many years. Fallowing is, in fact, an important practice especially in the cultivation of the otherwise unpromising soil of the Andes. Elías Ccente told me that in Uchuraccay, the peasants there employ a pattern of what Wolf terms “sectorial fallowing” (1966:20-21), whereby plots are planted for two or three years, and then allowed to regenerate for another seven before being replanted again. That is why in these highland communities, agriculture and pastoralism are complementary livelihood activities, each of which is often insufficient by itself to maintain a family.
- 28 “*Chuto*” is a derogatory term sometimes used by lowland peasants and city people to refer to the

- peasant highlanders, particularly of Huanta and La Mar provinces, signifying *primitive*, *uneducated*, and *uncivilised*. The label “*cholo*” can be regarded as simply meaning anyone who is non-white, or an indigenous person of “recent upward social mobility” (Isbell 1978:250), usually of peasant heritage. Its everyday usage, particularly by “non-*cholos*,” however, usually contains racist and contemptuous overtones. “To be straight with you, the *cholo* is like an animal for me,” a Lima *criollo* and former Marine once voiced to anthropologists during an interview (quoted in Degregori and López Ricci 1990:345).
- 29 Torres Cornejo 1997:3.
- 30 Sufficient animals and enough food to feed themselves is how Elías Ccente defined the satisfying condition of “*tranquilidad*.” Sendero altered their life of “*tranquilidad*,” he told me. Their source of cash income came primarily from the sale of animals, rather than of agricultural crops like potatoes, in towns like Huanta,
- 31 Author’s interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000.
- 32 Author’s interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000.
- 33 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), p.71.
- 34 These four remaining NGOs were CEDAP – Centro de Desarrollo Agropecuario, IER – Instituto de Estudios Regionales ‘José María Arguedas,’ CCC – Centro de Capacitación Campesina, and TADEPA – Taller de Promoción Andina.
- 35 For a detailed overview of local government in Peru, or in Latin America for that matter, see Nickson 1995.
- 36 See La Calle 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997e, 1997f, 1997g.
- 37 Author’s conversation with Yuri Calle, Secretary of Acco, a peasant community in the district of Tambo, on 24 September 1997.
- 38 Author’s interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in La Convención province, Cuzco department), on 27 June 1997.
- 39 Author’s interviews with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997 and on 31 May 2000.
- 40 Author’s discussion with Jan Kees Verkooijen, *Primer Secretario Cooperación Técnica*, Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, Lima, on 9 May 2000.
- 41 This guerrilla incursion is reported in CCAD-SJB 1998:1.

7 Unexpected endings

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert....
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings.
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

7.1 The presidential elections of 2000 and the fall of the Fujimori regime

Falling debris from a government building engulfed in ravenous sheets of flame was the last image of Peru that I saw on an airport-lounge television screen, just before boarding my return flight to Amsterdam in July 2000. "What is happening to my country," the portly Peruvian passenger standing close behind me whispered to himself, in a voice that seemed to echo the nation's general mood of utter confusion and despair. In spite of having come through the years of revolutionary terror, when the sound of exploding car bombs and sudden bursts of gunfire were so common as to become a part of daily life in what seemed to be a nightmare with no end, Lima and other Peruvian cities were ablaze once again. And the nation appeared to be heading once more into the yawning abyss of rampant violence and chaos. It was indeed ironic that the political wildfire that now ravaged and threatened to consume the nation right down to its very soul had been kindled not by the forces of terrorism, but by those of democracy. Fire, death, and destruction was the climax of what would perhaps go down as *the* most turbulent, controversial, and divisive general elections in the nation's history.

Few people expected the April 2000 elections to have to be decided in a run-off, so entrenched and omnipotent did Fujimori's power appear. Needless to say, he strategically campaigned on the twin themes of pacification and public works, which, of course, were the success stories of his two previous administrations. Although stabilising the economy was also one of his notable achievements, from 1998 onwards the rising unemployment, underemployment, lack of employment, steadily dropping income levels and a stagnant job market—in short, a general worsening of the economic situation—must have caused him to avoid emphasising his government's earlier fiscal and economic accomplishments as a campaign booster. Nevertheless, few would dispute that by the year 2000, he had succeeded in substantially improving the quality of life of many poor Peruvians. For years, his government poured significant resources into infrastructure development. It had also succeeded in decreasing the number of Peruvians living in "extreme poverty," mainly through its extensive food

aid programmes. As Youngers points out, "...42.5 percent of all Peruvian households receive food aid. In the countryside, 65 percent of families depend on food provided by the government. Amongst the poorest Peruvians, the donated food they receive represents over 20 percent of their per capita income" (2000:14). Furthermore, for the most part, Fujimori had made good his pledge to crush terrorism and restore security in the country. By decade's end, Abimael Guzmán and Victor Polay Campos were both languishing behind bars. The vast majority of Shining Path and Túpac Amaru (MRTA) militants were either imprisoned or dead. The dramatic seizure of hundreds of hostages in the Japanese ambassador's home in Lima by MRTA guerrillas, on 17 December 1996, was successfully ended four months later by a highly professional and flawless rescue operation mounted by army commandos, thus reinforcing Fujimori's image as an unflinching and uncompromising opponent of terrorism. The police captured "Camarada Feliciano," Guzmán's controversial successor, in July 1999, just in time to make a calculated impression on the electorate (it did, but proved short-lived). By the start of the new decade, then, pacification had essentially been achieved where once there was pandemic political violence; and now Fujimori vowed to deliver on his promises of shared economic prosperity for the nation, should the people elect him for an unprecedented third term.

However, the rising public discontent with his leadership manifest itself in an inconclusive first-round election result that would require a run-off before the outcome could be decided. Of course, at the outset of voting many people had hoped for a democratic miracle that would put an end to what they perceived as a corrupt and increasingly callous dictatorship. The strongest opposition to Fujimori from within the electorate would come from Peru's urban classes, particularly the thousands of disgruntled and disaffected people who had lost their jobs and pensions, and had become impoverished as a result of "Fujishock" and the government's subsequent neo-liberal economic programme. In addition, with internal security largely restored, a growing number of citizens looked beyond the issue of personal safety and concluded that it was simply time for a political change after Fujimori's "*decenio*." Many were fed up with Vladimiro Montesinos and his underhanded machinations. They were sick and tired of his growing influence and power in the political life of the nation, especially since Hermoza Rios's retirement in August 1998 "contributed to a greater concentration of power in the hands of Montesinos and Fujimori" (Cameron 2000:5). Many also had enough of the "dark side" of the Fujimori government, which Coletta Youngers describes as characterized "by systematic intimidation, harassment and blackmail in order to maintain political control and eliminate or discredit those who threaten it," and "by efforts to manipulate the courts and electoral apparatus" (2000:41).

Nevertheless, most Peruvians believed that Fujimori was bound to win through a combination of both "legal" and unscrupulous means. Indeed, ever since the *autogolpe* of 1992, he had been busy stacking all the cards in his favour. Constitutional rules regarding re-election were bypassed or interpreted to his advantage; the Constitutional Tribunal was politically manipulated to ensure a pro-Fujimori composition; Congress repeatedly undermined all grassroots initiatives to hold a referendum on the "re-re-election" issue. All this helped to pave the way for Fujimori's bid to become president for a third consecutive time (see Cameron 2000, Youngers 2000).

In the months immediately leading up to the elections, opposition candidates complained that despite the government's advantage of having a formidable electoral apparatus at its disposal, it nevertheless still resort to "dirty tactics." These took the form of defamation campaigns waged through state-owned media, harassment and intimidation of opposition leaders and supporters by the military and by what were widely believed to be SIN agents, the falsification of over 1 million signatures in the registering of Fujimori's Peru 2000 party, and the withholding of public works funds from opposition mayors (Cameron 2000:10-12, Youngers 2000, Transparencia 2000a, 2000b). Furthermore, it was also frequently reported that State resources, like ministry vehicles and food donations, were systematically utilised by pro-Fujimori authorities in conjunction with Peru 2000 propaganda activities. For its part, the pro-Fujimori tabloid papers—which is what most poor Peruvians read, if anything at all, and which are "widely believed to be subsidized and heavily influenced by the intelligence services" (Youngers 2000:66)—waged a relentless campaign to discredit opposition politicians (see Appendix B).

In reference to the first-round results, I asked Gabriel Carrasco, regional coordinator in Ayacucho for the independent and respected election monitor Transparencia, to comment on any significant patterns in the voting (See Appendix C). "The first point," he said, "is that Fujimori received a greater number of votes in Ayacucho's rural zone than in the urban zone, and Toledo gained more of his votes in the urban centres than in the countryside. On average, the ratio of votes was three for Fujimori to every one for Toledo."¹ It is worth noting that the Avancemos party gained a significant percentage of the rural opposition votes in the department, and Carrasco suggested that this could be attributed to the presence of Susano Mendoza on the party's list of congressional candidates. Other possible reasons why some rural inhabitants who opposed Fujimori may have chosen to vote for Federico Salas's party instead of Toledo's were, so I was told by my *desplazado* friend Eusebio (who himself had voted for Avancemos), because of widespread rumours claiming that Toledo was sympathetic to the *terruocos* (hence *red* as his campaign colour). Moreover, it was also rumoured that he intended to disarm the communities and to abolish grassroots organisations and initiatives, such as the *Clubes de Madres* (Mothers' Clubs) and the *Vaso de Leche* (Glass of Milk) programme, should he become president.² It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the source of these rumours, though it is not unreasonable that suspicion should fall heavily on the government and its military-intelligence branch. Whatever the source, the rumours had their probable intended result of helping to turn rural voters away from Toledo. Another notable pattern in rural areas of the department was that most of those who voted for Toledo were men, while women in general tended to cast their votes for Fujimori. As an explanation for this, Carrasco hypothesised that it may have been a reflection of a fundamental difference in interests. The men who voted *against* Fujimori did so, he suggested, because they felt it was time for a political change, while the women who voted *for* Fujimori did so for the pragmatic reason of wanting to ensure the continuation of the various government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes that help to feed their children (eg. the *Vaso de Leche* programme, PRONAA's popular kitchens and food distribution initiatives, the military's civic action programmes, etc.).

Given that in the past, CAD leaders had grown to play a central role in mobilis-

ing the population for pro-government political rallies, I expected to find them operating as key agents of the President's electoral machinery in the countryside of Ayacucho. I was therefore surprised to discover that this was not entirely the case. Numerous independent observers had reported on the prominent role that governors, lieutenant-governors, and district mayors played in trying to generate political support in the *campo* for Fujimori in the months and days leading up to the first round of voting.³ "Until the middle of March, practically the only source of information for the orientation of votes in rural districts, in general, were the lieutenant-governors; and they, for the most part, along with other state functionaries, orientated the peasant votes exclusively in favour of Fujimori," Carrasco told me. Yet, interestingly enough, Ayacucho's CAD commanders, as a group, did not appear to have been among the incumbent president's principal electoral protagonists in the countryside. This may simply have been because the ending of the state of emergency on 1 January automatically resulted, at least legally, in the simultaneous deactivation of *comités de autodefensa* everywhere. However, it was also true that Fujimori did not command the unanimous good will and loyalty of all CAD leaders and CAD members in Ayacucho. Indeed, Susano Mendoza, *ex-alcalde* of Quinua and once the General Coordinator of the *Comités de Autodefensa* of *Frente Huamanga*, was running as a congressional candidate not on Fujimori's Peru 2000 ticket, but as a member of one of his rivals, Federico Salas's Avancemos party.

What possible explanations are there for this apparent reluctance among some high-ranking CAD commanders, at least in Ayacucho, to provide active support for Fujimori's electoral campaign, especially given that in past years the CADs had served as the very core of Fujimori's "grassroots" political support in the south-central Andean departments? It has been suggested that within the CADs, affection for Fujimori had already begun to diminish since about 1998, owing mainly to the fact that the government had, to date, failed to deliver on long-time promises to indemnify militiamen (or their widows) killed or made invalid in the line of duty (Chávez Duran 2001). In addition, Fujimori's attempt to claim full credit for defeating Sendero—utilising this as a central theme in his campaigning—generated substantial resentment among militiamen, like Comando Zorro. "Fujimori was not the one who brought about this pacification," he told me with unconcealed indignation. "It was *we* who fought and *we* who died to defeat the terrorists, not he. It was *we* who have had to sell our own animals to buy our Mausers."⁴

All the same, it was "El Chino" who garnered the most votes out of all the presidential candidates on April 9, just as everyone had expected. Yet even though he had won re-election in a landslide victory in 1995, this time he unexpectedly confronted stiff opposition in the figure of Alejandro Toledo, a Stanford-educated economist of humble rural background, who seemed to come from nowhere in the final weeks before election day to become Fujimori's main contender. Playing up his indigenous ancestry, the anti-Fujimori electorate gradually recognised him as the strongest opposition candidate in the field, and the one most capable of giving the President a run for his money. Consequently, Toledo obtained a little over 40 percent of the total number of votes. In contrast, Fujimori's tally of votes was a hair's-breadth short of the "50 percent plus one vote" needed to declare him the absolute winner with a majority of votes. To everyone's surprise, Toledo's challenge succeeded in forcing

Fujimori into a second round of voting, scheduled for May 28.

In the weeks leading up to the runoff, enormous street protests and demonstrations rocked cities throughout the country. It was soon apparent that a political crisis, and the most serious democratic challenge to President Fujimori's power yet, was rapidly unfolding. Toledo repeatedly rallied tens of thousands of supporters to Lima's Plaza San Martín, where he accused the government of running fraudulent elections and urged the people to boycott the runoff. By now, Toledo's campaign had become more than just a bid to become president; it had also shaped up into a personal, self-declared moral crusade to "restore democracy to Peru." Although he called for peaceful civil disobedience, violent clashes nevertheless erupted between police and protesters in Lima, Arequipa, Iquitos, Chimbote, and other major cities. Government buildings were attacked and sometimes burned, and opportunists used the chance to loot and vandalise local shops. In the city of Huancayo, a temporary curfew was declared and hundreds of violent demonstrators arrested. (Toledo never publicly denounced any of these destructive acts of mob violence.) In Huamanga, institutions and organisations like the Frente de Defensa del Pueblo de Ayacucho, the SUTE-Huamanga, and the UNSCH, jointly planned a general strike and civic mobilisation for 25 May, reminiscent of the massive demonstrations in defence of free education in '69. The violent protests literally touched even the President himself: after a campaign rally in Huamanga on 18 May, a few dozen students pelted Fujimori's jeep with stones and vegetables as it drove out of the main plaza on its way back to the airport. The local police, many of whom were also disgruntled with the government on account of their low salaries, seemed to take their time in chasing the students away.⁵

Why was it that people had submissively endured an authoritarian regime for close to ten years, and only now decided to protest so vigorously? There are numerous cumulative and interrelated reasons, of course. One might consider these anti-dictatorship protests as a sort of delayed response, the popular backlash that perhaps should have materialised in the wake of the government's emasculation of the Constitutional Tribunal in 1996, but didn't. But clearly it was also an outpouring of anger, pent up for so many years, at frustrated expectations and the progressive deterioration of the quality of life for so many of Peru's middle and lower-middle classes.

While Toledo cried fraud and boycotted the second round of voting, Fujimori went ahead with what had now become a farcical one-man runoff, shunned even by international monitors. Voting in a Peruvian election is mandatory, and failure to vote incurs a hefty fine. Yet even those of Toledo's supporters who could not afford to boycott nevertheless spoiled their ballots by casting blank tickets, or by scribbling the words "No to Fraud" on them. When official reports showed that he had won over 50 percent of the votes with just over half of the ballots counted, Fujimori was declared the winner. His opponents responded with ever larger street protests, which culminated with over 80,000 demonstrators converging on central Lima on 28 July, the President's inauguration day, in what was cleverly titled the "*Marcha de los Cuatros Suyos*," in reference to the four corners of the ancient Inca Empire.

Clearly, Toledo had astutely recognised the powerful symbolic resonance that his humble indigenous background could have on the urban electorate, and accordingly used it to the full. Indeed, he had already become a natural role model for many of the younger, poorer, urban Peruvians of indigenous ancestry. On the one hand, he

could lay claim to being the legitimate leader of the Peruvian people by virtue of his ostensible “*cholo*” identity; on the other hand, his impressive educational credentials and professional accomplishments plainly broke the stereotype of the “stupid and lazy Indian.” Ridiculing Fujimori’s penchant for donning ponchos and *chullus* (knitted caps), Toledo once bellowed to a massive crowd in Lima’s Plaza San Martín: “I don’t need to dress up to look a Peruvian. Just look at my face!”⁶

All the same, at the start of his third term, Fujimori’s hold on power, though shaken, seemed nevertheless to be as firm as ever. He had the continued backing of the armed forces, and his supporters in Congress once again held a majority of seats after various opposition members defected to the government’s side. In addition, he still remained highly popular with most peasants and poor shantytown inhabitants. Despite the persistence for a short time after his inauguration of scattered (though much-diminished) street demonstrations, the deaths of six employees at the Banco de la Nación, after it had been set on fire by protesters on July 28, had done great damage to the opposition’s political and moral image. Fujimori’s supporters in Congress even threatened to lay criminal charges on the organisers of the *Marcha de los Cuatros Suyos*, including Toledo, for having “irresponsibly” rallied more than 80,000 protesters to Lima.

In the months that followed, Peru settled down to an uneasy calm, and most opponents appeared to resign themselves to the political reality. But then the most astonishing and unlikely sequence of events unfolded. Less than two months after taking the oath of office, Fujimori made the shocking announcement that he planned to call early elections in which he himself would not run. Although the ostensible reason he gave for this decision was that he did not wish to make himself “a destabilising factor, still less an obstacle to the democratic process,” in fact, what had prompted it was something altogether less altruistic. A most unsavoury scandal slowly came to light. It turned out that one of the opposition leaders had got his hands on a secretly filmed videotape showing Vladimiro Montesinos handing over a thick wad of cash—\$15,000 to be exact—to an opposition congressman, so as to entice him to cross over to Peru 2000 during the recent general elections (Faiola 2000:A01).⁷ In responding to the public outcry, Fujimori subsequently promised to shut down the SIN and to put Montesinos on trial, though some time would pass before he finally ordered the arrest of his former chief of intelligence. That after so many years of amassing thousands of compromising videotapes and files on prominent Peruvians, Montesinos himself should be brought down by his own sordid and underhanded methods was, in the minds of most Peruvians, nothing short of poetic justice.

This bribery scandal not only discredited Fujimori. It also exacerbated what were already deep divisions within the armed forces, between those who supported Fujimori, those who continued to back Montesinos, and those who thought the best thing to do was to get rid of both men altogether and to have new elections. Furthermore, a number of Peru 2000’s congressmen, extremely disturbed by this latest evidence of deep-seated corruption in the government, began to defect from the party, and instead sat as independent members of Congress. His own vice-president, Francisco Tudela, submitted a letter of resignation to Congress when Montesinos was permitted to re-enter the country in October, after failing to obtain asylum in Panama. In what would have been an unimaginable scenario six months earlier, the once-

formidable regime that Fujimori and Montesinos had so carefully built up around them was now rapidly crumbling down. In anticipation of the President's inevitable exit sometime in the near future, various political actors—politicians, senior military officers, opposition leaders—began to strategically manoeuvre themselves in preparation for the coming power struggle.

To everyone's surprise, the final act of this Shakespearean drama was played out not in Peru, but in Japan. At the Tokyo hotel where he was staying, on what had been a stopover during a return trip from an Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Brunei, a tired-looking Alberto Fujimori announced at a press conference that he wanted to stay in Japan indefinitely. His Japanese parentage would eventually entitle him to Japanese citizenship; and Japan's lack of an extradition treaty with Peru would ultimately ensure that he remained safe from impeachment and prosecution under Peruvian law.⁸ On 20 November, the Peruvian Congress received his official letter of resignation, and with it a remarkable yet turbulent and thorny era in Peruvian history came abruptly to an end.

7.2 “Informal politics” in a post-violence context

What about the peasant militias? How were they affected by the fall of a regime that had for all practical purposes become their patron during much of the past decade? Has peasant society merely been reacting to these recent dramatic events, or has it also been able to design its own processes and outcomes?

In answer to these questions, perhaps it is helpful to turn to David Scott Palmer, who proposes the useful analytical concept of “informal politics.” Palmer argues that informal politics offers a way to understand the behaviour of citizens who organise themselves in search of alternatives to satisfying their fundamental political and economic needs when the formal political system becomes unresponsive and falls into crisis.⁹ They do this “outside of such formal political entities as political parties, unions, or government organisations” (2000:7). For Palmer, the formation of peasant self-defence committees and of mothers' clubs were initiatives developed by the local population for “protection, survival, and the advancement of basic needs” (ibid.:6), and as such are examples of “informal politics.”

Though the armed self-defence committees were widely condemned in the late 1980s as “manipulated” organisations “imposed” by the military on local peasant populations (e.g. Degregori 1989b), by the mid-1990s most commentators (including former critics) had turned to praising them. By the second half of the 1990s, it became common to hear CADs being described as having been “interiorised,” “assimilated,” “integrated,” and “institutionalised” into the social life of the Andean communities from which they came (Starn 1998:245; Coronel 1996:106-109; del Pino 1993b:53). However, given their close working relations with the army, and the existence of legislation that regulated their organisation and function, one of the main questions in my mind at the end of my first fieldwork in 1997 was: “If the state of emergency were to be lifted, would the *comités de autodefensa y desarrollo*, as an institution, cease to exist?” At the time, I was fairly convinced that the answer to this question was “No, they would not disappear.” I believed that, as their very title sug-

gested, their justification for existence was based on more than just providing security. It seemed to me that in addition to the task of civil defence, the government had envisaged a role for them in the unfolding process of socioeconomic development and national reconstruction—a process that I reasonably assumed would continue even after pacification has been achieved. It seemed that this was also the wish of the local people themselves, many of whom have told me they would like to see the CADs continue into the future, but free of military control. In addition, I was fairly convinced that, as with the original *rondas campesinas* of Peru's northern departments, the CADs of the emergency zone would also develop into alternative policing and dispute-resolution bodies to what was still generally perceived as a corrupt police force. This, in fact, was already happening in many parts of the emergency zone during the second half of the 1990s. We have already seen in the last chapter, for instance, that in addition to their defence activities, CADs in Ayacucho districts like Tambo were also becoming more involved in such things as sorting out domestic conflicts, dispensing fines to villagers who neglect their communal duties and chores, even organising and supervising *faenas comunales*.

Ayacucho was a hive of grassroots activities when I left the field in 1997. I was therefore stunned upon my return in April 2000 by the extent of the changes that had taken place. It was while visiting the local INEI office on Jirón Callao that I once again ran into Captain—now Major—César Vásquez, military chief of the CADs of Ayacucho and Huancavelica. From him I learned that the state of emergency was officially ended on 1 January 2000 (except for a small area around the Huallaga Valley), and that consequently the CADs had officially been automatically dissolved, as the relevant legislation stipulated must occur at such time.¹⁰ Surely, I thought to myself, they are probably continuing in an unofficial capacity, so active and immersed were they in the political life of their communities just short years earlier.

A bigger surprise awaited me in Tambo, where from Comando Zorro I was stunned to learn that a general decline in the peasant militia movement had occurred throughout the department. In Tambo district, the CADs had, in fact, already ceased to function ever since the end of 1998, when he retired and the *Patrulla Especial* was subsequently disbanded. Throughout the rest of my short stay in Ayacucho that year, I observed for myself the clear signs everywhere I went in the countryside of the general decline of the peasant militias in the department. Most significant, though, was the fact that the decline had already set in even months before the government took the step of officially dissolving them, along with the emergency zone. At Uchurraccay, I met a polite, young *comando* who, although he still took it upon himself to check the identification of any visitors who comes to the community, was in fact only one of three young men who continued to patrol on a voluntary basis once a month. "It's been like this for the past half year, and we no longer assemble the villagers regularly, as we used to," he told me.¹¹ It was the same story in Quinua, previously a regional centre of coordination for the CADs. There former militia members told me that it had been many months since they last went on patrol, or called a CAD assembly. As amazing as it seemed, however, this organisational deterioration was not unique in time and space to the CADs of the former emergency zone. In 1997, Orin Starn observed a similar thing happening in the Chota Valley, among the original *rondas campesinas* of Cajamarca (1999:263-275).

Was this the end of the story of Peru's peasant militias? If so, how could the dedication and enthusiasm for it, which I had witnessed just two and a half years earlier, have dissolved so thoroughly and so rapidly? Major Vásquez, for one, seemed reluctant to close the book on the peasant defence committees. "True, the *Comités de Autodefensa* no longer officially exist. But in their place we're going to create *Comités de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo*," he told me, with all the eagerness of a true zealot. "But we need funding. Perhaps you can put in a good word for us at the Dutch and Canadian embassies?" Given that I knew that Dutch and Canadian diplomats back in Lima regarded the CADs as simply army-controlled "paramilitaries," I should have told him not to hold his breath.

Yet, I also doubt that most peasants would share his enthusiasm for a new civilian-military project such as the one he envisioned, since inevitably it would once again subordinate them to the demands and to the authoritarian direction of the military. Perhaps the story of the "*rondero* ID cards" best illustrates why a renewal of close working relations with the military would, for most of Ayacucho's peasants, most likely be wholly undesirable. When I asked him about the cards, Vásquez sadly replied, "We had to terminate the project when the state of emergency was ended." What he didn't tell me, which I learned later from the Tambinos, was that most of the people in Tambo (and probably elsewhere in Frente Huamanga for that matter) never received their ID card, nor were they ever reimbursed the S/.5 nuevos soles that each of them had been obliged to pay for it in advance. Peasants were therefore understandably horrified when I told them Vásquez had told me that the military hoped to begin a new *carne*-issuing campaign again very soon—this time to issue peasants with "*Comités de Desarrollo*" identity cards, and again at their own cost! If this was a taste of what they could expect from organising *Comités de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo* under the tutelage of the army, then it was hardly surprising that the peasants I spoke to in Tambo showed little enthusiasm for embarking on such an endeavour.

Whereas the *comités de autodefensa* began a steady decline in the final years of the '90s, the *clubes de madres*, by contrast, continued to expand, becoming one of the most important and certainly the largest women's movement to emerge in Ayacucho (perhaps even in Peru) in the past two decades. A comparison of these two organisations thus provides valuable insight into the logic and dynamics of "informal politics" in Ayacucho. This, in turn, might help us to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the decline of the *comités de autodefensa*, and an indication of what the future may hold for the *clubes de madres*.

Like the peasant militias, *clubes de madres* are the products of civil war. For although men comprise the vast majority of those killed by political violence in Peru, women were also among the war's most vulnerable targets. As Isabel Coral reminds us,

They were victims of physical abuse and psychological torture, they were obligated to witness alongside their children the executions of loved ones, and they were raped.... Profoundly affected and sensitized, the women became the principal protagonists in the defence of human rights. They were spurred not only by the painful process of

burying the dead, seeking the disappeared, and trying to free prisoners, but also by the desire to preserve the physical integrity and lives of those who remained with the women (1998:355-356).

For peasant women, rising political violence and a deepening economic crisis also threatened the integrity of their families. At the same time, however, women's social roles and responsibilities were also being transformed and expanded in relation to the changing circumstances. The loss of their menfolk through displacement or to political violence forced women to assume "greater responsibility for leading and preserving their families in a highly destructive context...." (ibid.:356). However, because they were often unable to shoulder the added responsibilities on their own, many women banded together with kin and neighbours to share the tasks of food preparation and childcare. In order to sustain their families, these women relied on their own initiative and creativity to obtain external assistance and new ways to generate income. "They implemented food services, workshops to produce commodities, and communal gardens" (ibid.:357). In rural areas, widows and women whose husbands had gone away assumed the role of heads of their households, and with it much of the responsibility for the family's productive activity as well as the right to take part in decision-making assemblies. Far from acting as the weaker sex, women toiled alongside the men at communal work projects; and women grieving over the loss of their husbands, children, and other family members came together to share information and to console each other.

It was against the backdrop of political violence and socioeconomic turmoil that the *clubes de madres* gained importance in the 1980s and 1990s. Their two main concerns were, firstly, to defend human rights, and secondly, to "struggle for economic survival" (ibid.:359). In 1988, the Federación Provincial de Clubes de Madres de Huamanga was founded for the purpose of linking and coordinating all the existing local mothers' clubs in the department. From the original 270 mothers' clubs that attended that inaugural event, the organisation would grow to 1,200 affiliated mothers' clubs, representing 80,000 members by 1995 (ibid.:359). The vast majority of members were poor, illiterate peasant and shantytown women. Shining Path and the military, which regarded them as harmless and apolitical, initially tolerated the *clubes de madres*. As a result, they were able to consolidate their organisation in peace, such that when Shining Path finally attempted to infiltrate and gain control of the federation in 1988, it found itself effectively blocked out by the organisation's members (Coral 1998:360).

Over the years, Ayacuchan women have had to struggle against not only political violence and economic crisis, but also against machismo within their own families and communities. For one thing, the division of labour between men and women in household production has come to lose some (or perhaps most) of its pre-war complementarity. As one of the members of the District Committee of Tambo's mothers' clubs told me, men have used the theme of political violence to justify their own idleness during the day, with reasons such as that they are sleeping or resting in preparation for *ronda* duties later in the evening; or that they can do nothing but sit around because the guerrilla threat prevents them from working in the countryside.¹² Meanwhile, women were still expected by their husbands to perform the traditional

tasks of cooking, laundering, cleaning, and childcare in the home—even engaging in petty commercial activities in order to make ends meet. I was also told by women that most men still expected their wives to hand over to him all the money she makes selling produce at the market. “If he discovers that she is secretly keeping a part for herself, he beats her,” another member of the mothers’ club told me.¹³ Domestic violence is common, and often exacerbated by an explosive mix of psychological trauma, alcohol, and access to firearms.

Apart from their own physical labour, creativity, and willpower, the *clubes de madres* control few other internal resources. Yet by pooling together their ideas, skills, and scarce resources, they have been able to initiate fundamental survival activities, such as the creation of communal kitchens (*comedores populares*), or of communal gardens for growing produce that can then be sold to generate income for other subsistence projects. Furthermore, mothers’ club leaders have proven themselves extremely adept and successful at weaving webs of beneficial contacts with State institutions and non-governmental organisations, thus securing access to a broad spectrum of donors and programmes concerning poverty alleviation, food, health, and education. The State agency PRONAA, for instance, provided well-organised mothers’ clubs with donations of food for their communal kitchens. In conjunction with municipal mayors, mothers’ clubs were also the ones that managed the Fujimori government’s *Vaso de Leche* programme.¹⁴ (The district *alcalde* received special funds from the central government with which to obtain the milk power, which he then had to pass on to the president of each community’s mothers’ club.) Furthermore, with help from NGOs, mothers’ clubs have obtained information and training concerning micro-development and family health projects, like credit and income generation, childcare and nutrition. Clearly, their accomplishments in finding ways to feed their families and to preserve the integrity of their households against adverse odds have been impressive; and in this sense it may even be argued that in armed conflict situations around the world, it is organised women such as these that “form the last vestiges of civil society” (RAWOO 2000:9).

In recent years, with the assistance of NGOs, *clubes de madres* in Tambo district have organised education seminars on issues such as domestic violence, family planning and contraception, and women’s rights, in which men are encouraged to participate and learn. “It sometimes feels like a daunting struggle, but little by little we are helping to change men’s attitudes,” a district committee member once told me.¹⁵

Throughout their history, peasant militias have always been male-dominated organisations whose governing committees comprised exclusively of men. Even so, we have also seen that women have made major contributions to the civil defence effort. For years, they performed a vital (if often uncelebrated) supporting role in maintaining the *comités de autodefensa*, by cooking for the active members, provisioning them, mending and washing their clothes, caring for the ill and the wounded, burying the dead—all this in addition to their own daily chores. In some zones, women at certain moments have even shouldered the same responsibilities as the men, sometimes having to patrol alongside them, or to guard the community while the men are away. Even so, the characteristic tasks associated with the *comités de autodefensa* and the *clubes de madres* nonetheless have also served to reinforce stereotyped gender roles

for both men and women: namely, that men are physically stronger and therefore did the patrolling and the fighting, while women performed the household tasks and looked after the children.

In many rural areas of Ayacucho over the past twenty years, the pressures brought by war have served to disrupt the balance of power between the sexes, sometimes to the disadvantage of women. In this regard, the civil defence institution clearly created and underscored power inequalities between the sexes. Women were excluded from civil defence committee meetings and therefore had virtually no voice in village defence matters, though they were nevertheless expected to abide to decisions made, such as the common sale of private livestock in order to raise communal funds to purchase firearms. And in so far as the defence committees came to dominate the political affairs of their communities during the war years, women often became marginalized and, in a sense, socially invisible when it came to discussing and deciding community issues. But instead of trying to make direct inroads into the male-dominated political sphere of their communities, women created their own autonomous space of discussion and action in the form of mothers' clubs. In so doing, they were able to respond to the most pressing socioeconomic needs of their families and communities "without having to rely on the (male-orientated) village authorities" (Flagg et al. 1998:13).

Like the CADs, the *clubes de madres* are directed by committees (*juntas*) from the local all the way up to the departmental level. "Each committee is composed of seven posts elected every two years: President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary and three vocals, which in turn co-ordinates with the district, provincial and ultimately departmental committee FEDECMA (*Federación de Clubes de Madres*)" (Flagg et al. 1998:38). Unlike the village defence committees, however, which historically owe their existence either to local initiative or to the active assistance or coercion of the military or of other defence committees, the *clubes de madres* were entirely and autonomously created by women, without any influence or interference from the army or any other external agent. Even though they depend heavily (though also not entirely) on outside financial and economic support in order to operate, and though in the past the army has sometimes exploited their propaganda value by compelling them to participate in pro-government peasant rallies, mothers' clubs have nevertheless managed to maintain a greater degree of political and organisational autonomy from the state and the military than the *comités de autodefensa*. There are, for instance, no regulatory laws that govern them, or that explicitly subordinate them to the authority of the state, unlike in the case of the CADs. This has helped to paint an attractive picture of the *clubes de madres* in the eyes of foreign funding agencies and the local NGOs they sponsor, who have consequently come to regard mothers' clubs as true grassroots organisations through which to provide aid to local communities.

How, then, does the future look for the *clubes de madres*? Obviously, they have been playing an important intermediary role between their local communities and external aid organisations already for quite some time. They are clearly well suited to the tasks that lie ahead in what will certainly be a protracted process of post-war development. Given their institutional strengths—like their positive "grassroots" image, their extensive networks with non-governmental humanitarian assistance organisations, and their autonomy from state authority and control—and provided

that they maintain clear and relevant objectives and do not become embroiled in divisive partisan politics, we can reasonably expect that they will continue as an important grassroots-level institution of reconstruction and development for some time to come.

The example of the CADs and the mothers' clubs clearly illustrate that self-protection and economic survival were the overriding logic behind "informal politics" in Ayacucho, and most probably in the rest of the emergency zone. Yet, changes in political-economic circumstances as well as in social configurations have impelled transformations in the dynamics of informal politics. The disintegration of the village defence organisations, in stark contrast to the continuation of the mothers' clubs, is simply one of the realities of life in a post-war context. By 2000, it was obvious that the climate of fear that had gripped districts like Tambo for so long had dissipated at last, and that most peasants were finally convinced that the countryside was pacified and truly safe to return to. With the threat of guerrilla attack no longer imminent, rural people could once again dedicate themselves entirely to the livelihood activities that for years they have had to neglect.

There certainly have been compelling economic reasons why the peasants should choose to discontinue their militia activities. The peasant militias have been both a blessing and a burden: a blessing for obvious reasons of security, and a burden for the financial and economic pressures they have created. We have seen that as guerrilla attacks on peasant communities intensified from the second half of the 1980s onwards, everyday life became increasingly orientated around the exigencies of communal defence, to the detriment of agricultural and other livelihood activities. Villagers have to sustain their own *ronderos* by provisioning them when they set off on lengthy patrols and military operations. Additionally, ever since the start of the 1990s, communities were not only forced by necessity to hire "professional" militiamen (i.e. the *rentados*), but also to pool their resources together in order to purchase high-powered rifles (i.e. Mausers)—exorbitantly expensive and antiquated, but considered essential nonetheless. Moreover, let us not forget that every *rondero* killed in action usually leaves a widow and orphaned children behind, often with no one to provide for them. For almost fifteen years, then, local peasants communities have been subjected to the financial and economic tensions and pressures produced by the requirements of civil defence, against which they have had to try to balance their own subsistence demands. It is in this regard that mothers, being the ones who in wars are always left to worry about the well-being of their children and the everyday survival of their families, have been among the most outspoken critics of the burdens that CADs have brought. Teodora Ayne, president of the *Federación de Clubes de Madres de Ayacucho*, once explained the dilemma thus:

I believe that the rondas campesinas keep Sendero away; since we are already organised we can defend ourselves, they cannot enter. But the rondas also produce more poverty, for there are many orphans, women whose husbands have been killed or have been disappeared by one side or the other [Sendero or the military]. These women cannot go out into the countryside to work because in the morning they must

form up, in the afternoon they must form up; so for this reason they are unable to go to their *chacras* to work; this is what produces more poverty, more need and hunger” (1993:54).

The conclusion to which the evidence strongly points is that the CADs had already declined and disintegrated even before they were officially abolished because in the context of a post-war society, they were proving to be both redundant and an unnecessarily prolonged economic burden on their communities. As we have seen in the previous chapter, their inability to take the lead or to make fundamental contributions to the process of development has rendered them virtually irrelevant in this new environment. Indeed, it appears that CADs of Frente Huamanga went into decline despite the fact that in order to secure governmental and non-governmental support for development projects, it was increasingly becoming necessary for districts and individual communities to present an image of themselves as coherently and strongly organised. This contradictory situation—which the comparison between CADs and mothers’ clubs aptly illustrates—merely strengthens the argument that their decline was the direct result of being perceived by the local population as increasingly extraneous, inappropriate vehicles with which to pursue developmental priorities. They were created for a purpose—self-defence—and that purpose has now been achieved. People thus turned their attention and their energies to other forms of organisation and to other strategies more in keeping with their changing objectives and interests.

Let us not forget that in spite of all the academic talk of their expanding functions in recent years, the *raison d’être* of the CADs had always remained one of counterinsurgency. It is true that while political violence was prevalent, CAD commanders came to assume an important leadership role in local governance, so long as everyday life continued to centre around the task of defence. We have seen that amidst escalating political violence and population displacement, particularly during the period between 1985 and 1995, militia leaders were frequently the only authority figures that remained within resistant communities, the bureaucratic state officials having either fled, been murdered, or renounced their office. In such a situation, it was of course to be expected that militia commanders should become the dominant authority in their communities, in addition to assuming some of the functions of the absent civil authorities, like the conflict-resolution role of the *juez de paz* (justice of the peace). Civil authorities at that time, if any remained at all, were, in the words of Comando Zorro, “*un rondero nomás,*” just another *rondero*¹⁶ But this has changed in recent years, with the steady advance and consolidation of pacification. Amongst the thousands of displaced persons returning to their rural villages or district capitals of origin during the 1990s were many state officials, ready to reassume their posts of authority. Militia commanders have therefore had to relinquish to their rightful functionaries the responsibilities they earlier had provisionally taken over. Hence, the importance that militia commanders assumed in the political life of their communities *during the period of civil war* subsequently diminished with advancing pacification, and with the gradual return of civil authorities. Moreover, the ending of the state of emergency meant that former militia commanders no longer had the official authority to order their fellow villagers to do anything, not even to participate in communal work projects, if it was against their will. Any moral pressure or sanctions

to induce villagers to engage in cooperative ventures for the good of the entire community would thereafter have to come from the community as a whole, or its legitimate civilian authorities.

7.3 The end of an institution?

As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, in the transition from a situation of war to one of reconstruction and development, it was the ability to network with NGOs and government aid agencies that becomes not only the overriding objective, but also the criterion by which a local authority's efficacy and social relevance were judged by the local population. In this regard, militia commandos and defence committees found themselves at a disadvantage as compared with district mayors or local mother's clubs. District mayors (and to a lesser degree governors and lieutenant-governors) had generally proven to be more adept than militia commanders at securing external resources and developmental assistance, and it was therefore natural that they became increasingly more important than CAD leaders in running the political affairs of districts.

It is likely that this shift in local power was partly because the majority of militia leaders were *resistentes*, with not a great amount of education, with limited networking skills beyond their districts and limited experience beyond the sphere of civil defence. Consequently, they were often less confident and less experienced in communicating and negotiating with external governmental and non-governmental agencies than the new generation of civilian bureaucratic officials, who typically were young *retornantes*, fluent in Castellano, with higher levels of literacy and education, and substantial urban experience and know-how. For instance, Ruben Rojas, 37 years old (in 1997) and Tambo's *retornante* district mayor from 1995 to 1998, has lived in Lima, Ayacucho, and Trujillo, and was running a small business in addition to studying part time at UNSCH to become a lawyer. He often travelled to Lima to negotiate with representatives of European aid donors. In contrast, the majority of CAD commanders I met in Ayacucho were men who did not possess more than primary education, whose primary skill was subsistence farming, and had never even travelled outside the department.

However, the relegation of the CADs to the sidelines in the unfolding chapter of post-war development has not stopped certain more talented or educated CAD commanders from pursuing a political vocation, and thus a continuation of their political and social ascendancy. Susano Mendoza Pareja, as we have already mentioned, became a congressional candidate in the elections of 2000. When last I saw Comando Zorro, he had hung up his militiaman's rifle and was instead setting his sights on becoming Governor of Tambo district. Clearly, the experience of leadership in the militias has raised the self-confidence and stirred the personal aspirations of some individuals with otherwise underprivileged backgrounds, like Comando Zorro. Their participation in community defence, in leadership roles, has thus opened doors of opportunity that they might otherwise never have had. The rank and file CAD members, on the other hand, have generally gone back to their peasant way of life. For reasons already explained, the vast majority of peasants have little time for, and show lit-

tle interest in, doing what they now perceived to be village defence's unnecessary and time-consuming routine tasks, like patrolling. In this new chapter of Peruvian history, patrolling and other security-related tasks are no longer the overriding priority.

The decline and apparent disappearance of the peasant militias in departments like Ayacucho is but another step in Peruvian society's return to civil society after so many years of obstructive political violence and living under a state of emergency, and a decade of anti-democratic dictatorship. With the ending of the state of emergency and the dissolution of the CADs as a legal entity, the army's ability to exercise authority over the civilian population or to interfere directly in its daily social and political affairs appears also to have been substantially weakened, and this can only serve to invigorate the resurgence of civil society in the countryside.

Are the self-defence committees gone forever? Does their decline and eventual disappearance in regions such as Ayacucho suggest a story of failure? I should not think so. Although it has been common for Westerners to view the Andean peasantry as a repository of timeless traditions, the reality is that peasant institutions are hardily set in stone. As we have seen in our discussion of cultural transformations and continuities in chapter 6, Peru's south-central Andean peasants are, in fact, much more flexible and pragmatic than we often give them credit for. As I contemplate the decline of the *Comités de Autodefensa y Desarrollo* in Ayacucho and Huancavelica in the closing years of the twentieth century, I arrive at the conclusion that their physical existence was perhaps not as important as the organisational experience and lessons they had embodied, and the self-confidence they had engendered among a peasantry whose members had succeeded in transforming themselves from victims to heroes. For as long as the CADs continue to exist in living memory, the possibility will always exist for their reactivation. As Comando Zorro reminded me at our final meeting in May 2000, "If in the future we are once again threatened, we will reorganise to defend ourselves."

Notes

- 1 Author's interview with Gabriel Carrasco, Coordinador Regional Huamanga, Transparencia, on 16 May 2000.
- 2 Author's conversation with Eusebio, longtime resident of Ccarhuapampa, on 22 April 2000. Gabriel Carrasco, Coordinador Regional Huamanga, Transparencia also noted these sorts of rumours.
- 3 Author's interview with Gabriel Carrasco, Coordinador Regional Huamanga, Transparencia, on 16 May 2000.
- 4 Author's interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district's *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.
- 5 Based on author's own observations and subsequent discussion with *Felix*, a local police sergeant, on 19 May 2000.
- 6 Jason Webb, Reuters dispatch received by NewsEdge Insight on 28 May, 2000.
- 7 Fernando Olivera, leader of the Frente Independiente Moralizador party, of which Fujimori's ex-wife Susana Higuchi was a congressional member, made the videotape public.
- 8 Richard Lloyd Parry, "Fujimori turn Japanese to evade Peruvian justice," *The Independent*, 13 December 2000, received by NewsEdge Insight on 20 December 2000.

- 9 This theory of “informal politics” would appear to fit very well with Norman Long’s “actor-oriented” approach, which we briefly discussed in Chapter 1.
- 10 Information provided to author by Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara, on 24 April 2000. Article 3 of *D.S. No.077* describes CADs as organisations “transitory in character,” to be dissolved automatically upon the revocation of the state of emergency automatically. Fujimori had publicly announced on 27 December 1999 his intention to run for a second re-election. Hence, there is little doubt that ending the state of emergency zone was intended as pre-election propaganda, a symbolic statement meant to underscore that he has restored internal security in the country, as he had promised he would. Why he chose this moment to lift the state of emergency was because it was in his political interest to do so, just as it had served his political ends to maintain it for this long.
- 11 Author’s conversation with Uchuraccay’s Comando Gavilán, on 27 April 2000.
- 12 Author’s interview with the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of Tambo’s *Comité Distrital de Clubes de Madres*, on 16 October 1997.
- 13 Author’s interview with the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of Tambo’s *Comité Distrital de Clubes de Madres*, on 16 October 1997.
- 14 The *Vaso de Leche* programme was initiated Lima’s Marxist mayor Alfonso Barrantes (IU) in 1984 but, as with other similar grassroots initiatives, was taken over by the Fujimori government in the 1990s and incorporated into its own general programme of executive-administered social development.
- 15 Author’s interview with the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of Tambo’s *Comité Distrital de Clubes de Madres*, on 16 October 1997.
- 16 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo district’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 31 May 2000.

8 Reflections

This book has explored and attempted to account for the genesis and outcomes of armed peasant resistance to Shining Path in the Peruvian department of Ayacucho. More generally, I have tried to use the phenomenon of peasant village-defence groups as a critical lens through which to examine the impact of sociopolitical violence on the peasants of Ayacucho, and their varied responses to it.

The detailed information presented in the preceding chapters has admittedly been thick, and the risk at this point is that the reader comes away with the feeling of having by now lost sight of the forest for the trees. The purpose of this final chapter, then, is to try to balance the perspective by drawing out some of the broader social and theoretical implications of the story. However, rather than simply presenting a comprehensive analytical summary of the preceding chapters, I will instead attempt to offer conclusions by addressing some topics and issues on the subject about which there presently is little written in what is otherwise a sizeable body of scholarly and journalistic literature on the Peruvian civil war and its various aspects. In this way I hope to contribute to filling in some of the gaps within the existing Shining Path/civil war literature, specifically with regard to more general theoretical debates on (1) armed revolution and State counterinsurgency, (2) civilian/militia-military relations under conditions of war, (3) and the interrelated and overlapping themes of post-conflict democratic consolidation, civil society, and citizenship.

Before proceeding, however, I would like to enter a cautionary note. Even though the story I have presented is framed with a specific period, and is tidily wrapped up with an episodic ending, it would nevertheless be a mistake to assume that the processes and struggles described here have run their course. The overall impression I should wish to leave the reader with in this final chapter is not of definitive conclusions, but rather of open-ended processes which will undoubtedly take many surprising turns as they evolve in the future. Of Peruvian politics and society, Stern once observed: “[i]mportant events seem to fall from the sky, in an unpredictable yet steady stream of happenings.... The sense of a chaotic world buffeted by accident and surprise becomes increasingly difficult to resist” (1998:6). On the one hand, the political landscape of the country has changed almost unrecognisably since the fall of Fujimori and his Rasputin-like intelligence chief, Montesinos. On the other hand, even as the nation sets up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission—hitherto unimaginable in the time of Fujimori—in the hopes of identifying responsibilities for atrocities and promoting national reconciliation, unmistakably ominous signs point to a possible resurgence of Shining Path not only in the Ene, Apurímac, and Huallaga valleys, but also in Lima itself.¹ Clearly, despite appearances, democratic transition, peace, and a revitalised civil society all still rest on shaky ground, for the chances of a durable peace and democratic consolidation are seriously threatened by enduring and worsening economic problems, which, as a wellspring for resentment and frustration, can all too easily translate into a new round of violence and political turmoil.

8.1 Rethinking Shining Path through peasant counter-rebellion

In the early 1980s, most urban dwellers and external observers held the common and mistaken view of the revolution waged by Shining Path as an “indigenous peasant insurrection,” that stood for “Indian revindication.”² The mistake was understandable, given that very little was known at the time about the revolutionary organisation, and given that “a picture of a peasantry in opposition to the state appealed to the desire of radical intellectuals in Lima and abroad to imagine the dedication of the downtrodden to overthrowing the status quo” (Starn 1999:66).

That the Peruvian military also shared this interpretation of Shining Path as a peasant-based revolution was to have grave consequences for the highland peasantry.³ As we saw in chapter 2, it was this presumption of “indigenous subversion” that informed and propelled the brutal strategy of repression that the army subsequently unleashed upon the rural population (see Tapia 1997). As Remy points out, the campaign of indiscriminate repression was also fuelled by paranoia and intense racism:

An *indio* (and if from Ayacucho, all the worse) was identified as a real or potential member of the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*). In this context the army attacked and occupied peasant population centers. Fear and distrust of the “other” led any soldier seeing a *puna* Indian wearing a poncho to suspect that weapons might be hidden under the poncho, and would first fire and find out later. The army was an army of occupation (Remy 1994:124).

Armed with greater information, scholars would later establish that the Shining Path party and the revolution it was waging were initiated and led by privileged, urban, middle-class teachers and intellectuals from the UNSCH, none of whom were of peasant background. In fact, “dark-skinned kids born in poverty filled the bottom ranks under a leadership composed mostly of light-skinned elites” (Starn 1998:229; see Chávez de Paz 1989). We have seen in chapter 1 that before initiating armed actions, Shining Path had “little influence among the regional peasantry” (Degregori 1998:128) owing to the dominance of other, more mass-based Marxist political parties which had stronger links with the peasantry (see Hinojosa 1998; Gorriti 1999). This is not to say, however, that the Shining Path did not eventually manage to attract significant support from a number of social sectors, such as the educated rural youth, or to win at least the passive acceptance, if not the full and active assistance, of much of the regional peasantry. Fear was certainly a motivating factor that ensured peasant compliance to guerrilla claims (see Degregori 1996a). However, as shown in chapter 3, to put it all down to fear belies the fact that in the early years of armed struggle, Shining Path *did* succeed in finding a reservoir of sincere sympathy and support among the peasantry. In its early years, many peasants viewed it not just as an arbiter of local justice and an enforcer of moral order, but also as a viable vehicle for personal advancement and social change, in spite of its benign authoritarianism (Degregori 1998; del Pino 1998; Manrique 1998; Starn 1998). At a more psychological and affective level, Shining Path’s appeal can also be pinned down to the fact that, like other political parties, it provided its rank and file members with a group

identity, a feeling of collective solidarity and camaraderie; and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of higher purpose and a reason for being—and power over life and death. Even its authoritarian discipline and its insistence on violence and sacrifice were attractive to those politicised and educated youth and radical sectors disillusioned with the democratic experience and the decadence of the dominant *bourgeois-criollo* national culture (see Hinojosa 1998:77).

As the 1980s was drawing to a close, Shining Path indeed appeared extremely close to toppling the inept and corruption-ridden government of Alan García—a president whose various methods of attempting to assert civilian control over the military only succeeded in disaffecting and alienating the armed forces (Crabtree 1992; Tapia 1997; Klarén 2000; del Pino 1993b). In hindsight, though, it is clear that by insisting on extreme sectarianism and ideological “orthodoxy” (as defined by Guzmán), and by completely rejecting the need to forge alliances with what it disparagingly referred to as the “revisionist” parties of the Marxist left, Shining Path created its own severe limitations to ever winning power. Moreover, in the rural countryside, Shining Path’s attempts to apply and expand its strategic blueprint would eventually give rise to an increasing number of tensions and contradictions in its relations with the peasantry, as we saw in chapter 3. This Maoist-inspired guerrilla strategy involved breaking the peasantry’s links of “dependency” on the capitalist market economy by preventing them from taking and selling their rural agricultural produce in urban centres. Shining Path’s strategy also required local peasant populations to provision armed guerrilla units by labouring communally to plant and harvest crops, which were eventually levied as “revolutionary tax,” often in their entirety, and irrespective of time-honoured Andean principles of reciprocity or the more practical consideration that the peasants were then left with less, or nothing at all, to eat. In time, Shining Path’s revolutionary strategy would also include the assassination of local civilian authorities if they could not be intimidated to renounce their post, and replacing them with their own “commissars” appointed by the Party without the prior approval of the local population. The unpopularity of these policies and actions, due largely to their incompatibility with peasant cultural values and livelihood goals and practices, bred intense resentment and disaffection that ultimately erupted into open conflict and widespread peasant resistance to the revolutionary movement.

It was in the *punas* of Huanta, among the so-called Iquichano ethnic group of peasant communities, that violent peasant counter-rebellion against Shining Path was born. In chapter 3, I described and inferred the possible reasons behind the counter-rebellion of Iquichano villages, like Uchuraccay and Huaychao. These need not be repeated here. What is important to note is that apart from the congratulatory praises of President Belaúnde for the villagers of Huaychao, the news that these remote villages had begun to capture or kill suspected guerrillas was greeted with suspicious disbelief by most outsiders, including foreign scholars. As Orin Starn once remarked to me,

in the mid-1980s, just about no-one, me included, imagined that the peasants in Huaychao could actually have risen up against [Sendero Luminoso] more or less of their own accord—and all assumed that there was some kind of army/government conspiracy to conceal the

truth. That failure, exacerbated by the fact that it was almost impossible to get into rural areas to see the truth, certainly reflected the [academic] assumptions and tenor of the times.⁴

It was just such an attempt to get at the truth that led eight Lima journalists to travel to the *punas* of Huanta, where they were apparently mistaken by the villagers of Uchuraccay for guerrillas and killed. This tragic event not only focused outside attention on the political violence escalating in Ayacucho; it also brought awareness, however incredulous at first, that there indeed were peasant communities that were unwilling to accept Shining Path, and ready to resist the guerrillas by violent means (Pease 1983:49). These outbreaks of peasant counter-rebellion would eventually force scholars and journalists to begin rethinking many of their common assumptions about Shining Path, its motives and ideology, and its relations with the peasantry. “The few Shining Path documents that came to light refuted any indigenist [sic] or culturalist [sic] interpretation: a dogmatic radical Maoism was behind its strategies and objectives” (Remy 1994:124). Later studies of peasant self-defence patrols would reveal that these organisations were not just products of products of army manipulation, while also exposing the full extent to which Shining Path actually depended on violence to secure the compliance of the peasantry (see Degregori 1996b; Coronel 1996; Coronel and Loayza 1992; del Pino 1996; Starn 1993, 1996).

In the course of nearly twenty years of war, Shining Path would consistently fail to recognise and rectify its errors, remaining stubbornly convinced that since it understood the “correct line of march” it was therefore infallible. Besides, believing violence to be the midwife of history, Shining Path’s leaders were certain that final victory was historically assured, regardless of the tactics employed. The Party therefore refused to change or revise its unpopular claims, strategies, and tactics, dismissing mounting peasant grievances as simply “manipulated by the reaction.”⁵ Thus, seemingly concerned more about ideology than about people, Shining Path eventually “...delegitimized [sic] itself in the eyes of its own peasant ranks and in the eyes of those social sectors that potentially could have supported it in the cities...” (Degregori 1999b:252). All evidence seems to point to the conclusion that Shining Path did not recognise or adequately respect the seriousness of this intensifying popular backlash until it was too late for them to change the course that the war had taken.

8.2 Conceptualising peasant responses to political violence

8.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF RESISTANCE

How can we theoretically approach the phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion, or other peasant responses to political violence for that matter? In what way can our findings contribute to theories of mobilisation and revolution?

Based on the evidence presented in chapter 3, it is first important to note that peasant counter-rebellion was by no means an automatic and inevitable response to guerrilla pressure by disaffected and aggrieved peasants. Nor would it prove to be the *only* way for peasants and other citizens to resist Shining Path. In the districts of Andarapa and Ongoy in Andahuaylas province, peasants resisted Shining Path by rely-

ing on their traditions of strong peasant mobilisation and community organisation (Tapia 1977:35). And in Puno, a constellation of civil society forces—including pastoral agents, the Church, political parties, leftist activists, NGOs, peasant leaders and peasant federations, professional and intellectual sectors—would for a time effectively contest Shining Path’s expansion in the southern sierra, though in the end even this “third path” would crumble apart due to internal disputes (see Rénique 1998).

In Ayacucho, peasant groups responded to political violence in a variety of ways. Some communities decided to fight the guerrillas. Many were caught between the crossfire of State repression and guerrilla violence, and chose instead to flee from their villages. Yet, others adopted what Degregori (1998) refers to as “resistant adaptation” by attempting to comply with the demands of each opposing side, and in so doing trying to remain however neutral in a war where neither of the two main antagonists was prepared to permit neutrality. In actuality, though, the villagers of any given community usually responded in complex ways, often resorting to or combining all of these basic forms at different times, as situations changed. In circumstances of internal political conflict, counter-rebellion will be seen (if indeed it is considered at all) as simply one course of action out of what Tilly (1978, 1979) calls a “repertoire” of perceived possibilities and potential options for individuals under extreme pressure.

Chapters 3 and 6 established some of the various factors and interrelated conditions that had significant bearing on the way peasants responded to the pressures of political violence. But whether the response was fight, flight, or resistant adaptation, what appears to me to be the dominant (though by no means exclusive) concerns for peasants when responding to a perceived external threat was not only protecting life and property, but also, whenever possible, *creating and defending spaces of autonomy*. Autonomy for action, retaining some control over their lives, for pursuing their own interests and goals, even while they contend, accommodate, interact with impinging exogenous forces and pressures. Indeed, that I and others (e.g. Isbell 1978) have noted that the phrase “we defend ourselves” is one that is commonly asserted by Ayacuchano peasants reveals this to be an important principle orientating their disposition towards outsiders.

A possibly fruitful way to conceptualise such disparate responses as fight and flight, and the underlying concern for spaces of autonomy, is in terms of resistance. If we assume the point of view that social practice is always embedded in relations of power and inequality (Giddens 1979; Bourdieu 1977), yet regimes of power can never be totalising and wholly determining, nor people completely powerless and bereft of agency even in the most adverse situations (Scott 1985; Long 1992; Dirks et al. 1994), then we may suppose that “there is resistance...in places we would not expect and in forms we would not recognize” (Dirks et al. 1994:19). Power “...comes from everywhere,” writes Foucault, and “...where there is power there is resistance” (1978:93). Moreover, resistance in its everyday cultural forms can also be “weapons of the weak,” as Scott (1985) argues. Everyday forms of resistance may be subtle, and embedded in other actions (see Lüdtke 1993). Furthermore, not all practices of resistance immediately threaten—in their effect or in their aim—the stability of existing hegemonic orders. Neither are all forms of resistance immediately or apparently confrontational, nor are all confrontational practices necessarily violent. Actions that can

be regarded as forms of resistance often vary in their intentions and goals, and concern may simply be limited to “defending spaces of autonomy *within* oppressive social orders” (Gledhill 1994:92). Such a perspective on power and resistance makes it possible for us to consider even the most seemingly abject action, like flight, as a strategy of resistance. Let me present a brief illustration of these points in concrete analytical application. Population displacement, for instance, seems, on the face of it, hardly to be evidence of resistance, but rather an expression of utter defeat. Yet it is well known that during the civil war, peasant mothers commonly sent their husbands and teenage children to live in urban centres to protect them from the risk of being disappeared by the security forces, or being drafted by the guerrillas. This example clearly illustrates how a response of “flight” takes on an aspect of everyday resistance in so far as it not only checks an immediate threat to personal safety, but also thwarts both the army’s hunt for “subversives” and the guerrillas’ search for new recruits. In fact, sending away those of its members who were the most immediate targets of military repression and guerrilla violence or abduction became a survival strategy used by peasant communities in the hope of being left in peace—and sometimes they were.

In recent years, historians and anthropologists interested in Latin America have turned their conceptual focus on *resistance* as a tradition or ethos serving as “the basis for defining an authentic indigenous [Andean] culture” (Poole 1994b:3), particularly in the light of the region’s historical record of violent conflict and relations of domination. Poole, however, points out that the problem with this new historiography has been its tendency to place emphasis “on the *ethnic parameters* of both the resistant population and the culture of resistance which their practices presumably reflect, ...[thus reproducing] in disturbing ways [a misleading polarity]...between indigenous and non-indigenous (or *mestizo*) spheres of cultural and social interaction” (ibid. My emphasis).⁶ Clearly, Poole has identified an important problem in the way some historians may have characterised and analysed the history of resistance in Peru. As such, though, it is more a remark about the use which some have made of the concept of resistance, rather than a reflection of the appropriateness and heuristic usefulness of the concept as a tool for interpreting analysing human action. Arguably, such problems can be overcome if we start from an understanding of *resistance* as “social practice” (Ortner 1989) rather than as a cultural trait, and if we view abstract terms like *resistance* not as reified things but “bundles of *social and historical relationships* embedded in economic, political, and ideological contexts” (Wolf 1982. My emphasis).

8.2.2 WHY PEASANTS COUNTER-REBELLED

The question of why peasants in Ayacucho counter-rebelled is best tackled in two steps. The first relates to the question of the social sources of counter-rebellion. Given that there are so few recorded instances of peasant counter-rebellion, it probably comes as little surprise that while there is an abundant body of social-scientific literature on revolution in general—and peasant revolution in particular, also according to region—there is as yet very little written about the phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion.⁷ Nevertheless, I suggest that by synthesising and modifying a number of relevant paradigmatic theses on peasant revolution, it is possible to fashion an effective theory of peasant counter-rebellion that can account for its manifestation in Ayacucho.⁸

James C. Scott's thesis, which was largely prefigured in the works of Eric Wolf (1969) and Barrington Moore Jr. (1966), is that the origins of peasant radicalism lies in their perception that certain world-historical transformations³ have caused changes which violate their "moral economy" (Scott 1985:13-26). Furthermore, Scott argues that subsistence crisis is what lies at the root of peasant revolution; for in his view, the subsistence minimum constitutes the guiding moral principle according to which peasants accept or reject the actions of landlords and State officials. Popkin (1979), who advocates a political economy" approach, criticise Scott by contending that grievances are a constant factor among peasants, and as such "there is no clear relationship between subsistence threat (or decline) and collective response" (Popkin 1979:245). Jeffery Paige (1975), who also offers a critique of Scott's "moral economy" perspective, takes the view that certain agrarian structures give rise to particular types of peasants—namely landless sharecroppers—who are more disposed than others to becoming radicalised and revolutionary, particularly in situations where they also exist alongside a landholding class that derives its income from controlling land. Addressing these diverse points of view, Wickham-Crowley points out that there may be a host of different conditions that produce the same social outcome, and therefore none of these different scholars of revolution can claim to have unearthed the paramount or unique structures and conditions that produce revolutionary peasantries. "[We] entertain the possibility that our multifarious social life harbours functional alternatives" (1992:93).

How, then, can theories of peasant revolution help us to understand peasant counter-revolution? The answer appears to lie with McClintock. Drawing her inspiration from Scott's theoretical argument that *subsistence* is the peasantry's guiding moral standard, McClintock sets out to demonstrate that a crisis of subsistence among peasants in the southern Peruvian highlands during the early 1980s was the "*sine-qua-non* element" behind the emergence of Sendero Luminoso (1984:82). More specifically, her contention is that "if a state plays an active part in agricultural policy making...and a subsistence crisis occurs, the peasantry is likely to assess the government's policies and possibly blame them. These policies thus become an important component of the revolutionary equation" (ibid.:49). She maintains that despite their theoretical differences, most scholars of revolution and social movements would undoubtedly agree that peasants "will *consider* rebellion when they judge their right to subsistence to be seriously threatened" (McClintock 1984:58. My emphasis). The question is, *rebellion against whom?*

The evidence presented upon which this study rests suggests that Shining Path generated extensive and considerable resentment when it attempted to impose on the peasantry, by violent force, a revolutionary strategy (already described above) which not only threatened personal security, but also exacerbated the very economic hardships that had brought the rebels a large measure of popular sympathy and support in the first place. We therefore find that McClintock's theory accounts surprisingly well for the empirical evidence of peasant disaffection and counter-rebellion in Ayacucho. By following her logic and modifying her theory, a hypothesis of peasant counter-rebellion can be stated thus: *if a guerrilla movement applies a revolutionary strategy that includes a major restructuring of the peasants' livelihood practices, and their actions and strategy is perceived as critically disrupting and exacerbating the peasants'*

established livelihood strategies and insecurities, thus objectively worsening subsistence conditions, the peasants will be likely to assess the revolutionary movement's course of action and blame it. The actions and strategy of guerrilla movements thus become an important component of peasant disaffection, and of the counter-rebellion equation.

Such a response as counter-rebellion is perfectly intelligible when considered against the backdrop of the peasantry's distinct conditions of existence. As a social category, peasantries the world over exhibit a bewildering degree of variation (see Wolf 1966). That is, peasant households and peasant communities are often differentiated according to such features as community structure, wealth, outlook, access to education, migration experience, and degree of involvement in the external market, to name but a few. Notwithstanding such differences, however, what seems "generic" about all peasants is that their mode of subsistence is a precarious one that continually exposes them to impinging "differential and differentiating pressures," which challenge their very existence and make them vulnerable (Wolf 1966:78). Peasants consequently tend to gravitate towards livelihood and survival strategies that minimise risk and insecurity in their daily lives. It therefore stands to reason (and the empirical evidence presented in this book appears to back this up) that if the effect of guerrilla policies and actions is merely to violate the "moral economy" of local peasants by increasing their risks and insecurities without providing transcendent benefits in return, then such policies and actions will certainly cause disaffection and grievance among the peasantry (see Scott and Kerkvliet 1977). In the extreme case, they may even provoke violent counter-revolt.

However, as this study has demonstrated, the transition from the "passive recognition of wrongs" (Wolf 1966:289) to widespread disaffection and, ultimately, to violent counter-revolution, is neither inevitable nor immediate. Peasants will ordinarily turn to violence as a last resort, and if they can help it, they will avoid committing themselves to situations or endeavours that involve a prolonged period of severe trial. Therefore, it can be argued that when peasants decide whether to avoid or to engage in political struggles, they do so after a conscious deliberation of the relevant political and economic conditions and choices—and always with the goal of defending and preserving their families and their livelihood foremost in their minds. Peasants live a vulnerable existence, and "...to survive, peasants are notoriously sensitive to changes in power balances" (Stern 1982:30).

Another important provoking factor in the counter-rebellion equation was the execution of common peasants by guerrillas, usually following a so-called "people's trial." Most peasants in Ayacucho will usually cite these extra-judicial killings as the principal triggering factor behind their decision to counter-rebel. Yet what is often left unsaid is that common peasants were initially not necessarily adverse to indulging opportunistically in the physical violence, provided they were the wielders and not the targets of that violence. As we saw in chapter 3, the summary execution of live-stock rustlers, thieves, rapists and other "antisocials" were not only tolerated in the beginning, but also welcomed. Moreover, some of the peasant testimonies I obtained also reveal that in many districts of the emergency zone, the peasants themselves attempted to exploit for their own ends—mainly through rumours and denunciations, and invariably in connection with personal feuds and inter-village conflicts—the vio-

lence being meted out by either Shining Path or the military.¹⁰ In these ways, more than a few peasants showed themselves to be rather less adherent to the supposed Andean ethic of “punish but don’t kill” than Degregori would have us believe (1996b:199). In practice, “kill the rich and share out their possessions” seems to have been the more common motivation of many Ayacuchano peasants embroiled in the political turmoil, at least before the escalating violence became more random and arbitrary. As the violence spiralled out of control, some communities decided to lay aside their personal feuds and to act collectively on their latent grievances and repudiation of Shining Path, using “the killings” to underscore their growing perception that Shining Path was, in fact, hostile to the interests of the peasantry.

Peasant counter-rebellion would eventually spread throughout Ayacucho, and even into neighbouring departments. Nevertheless, it was in the highlands of Huanta, among the Iquichano communities, that peasant counter-rebellion first erupted. Like peasant communities in other parts of Ayacucho, the Iquichanos also were afflicted by Shining Path’s “people’s trials” and acts of summary justice. The executions of local leaders by guerrillas immediately provoked resentment within the “closed corporate” communities (to use Wolf’s term) of the Iquichanos. Not only were these victims regarded as legitimate and highly respected leaders by their fellow *comuneros* (Coronel 1996). Within this close-knit ethnic group of highlanders, which to this day still commonly practice endogamous marriage, the victims had many kinsmen in other Iquichano communities who were unwilling to let the deaths go un-avenged.¹¹

These killings were not the first or the only incidents to provoke outrage. Popular indignation within the Iquichano communities was also inflamed when a number of the young men of the first group of guerrillas (all students from Huamanga), allegedly got some of the local girls pregnant.¹² Additional offence was caused by the guerrillas’ proclivity for regularly taking and consuming local resources (such as food) without paying for them.¹³ But besides these obvious violations of the Iquichano peasantry “moral economy,” another significant reason behind their decision to counter-rebel was that many of the Iquichanos feared that the guerrillas meant to “collectivise” their plots of land, their harvest, and their livestock herds.¹⁴ This can be understood in relation to the Velasco regime’s agrarian reform.

Concerning the relationship between land reform and peasant radicalism, various scholars of revolution have noted the importance of agrarian systems as a causal factor behind rural violence and revolutions. Kay’s view is consistent with Paige’s when he asserts that “...a highly unequal agrarian system, the associated exploitative social relations and the exclusionary modernisation processes are important factors, in some cases the most prominent ones, in explaining conflicts and violence in rural Latin America” (2001:764). Kay concludes that to resolve the land question by way of a land reform that mainly benefits the landless and poor peasants is a crucial first step to defusing or averting rural violence. Wickham-Crowley concurs with the view that government efforts (or non-efforts) at land reform have an important effect on peasant radicalism, and adds that “the by-now established Marxist fear [is] that a bourgeois land reform will turn otherwise radical peasants into conservative “kulaks” (1992:119). Many of these points were clearly understood by the Peruvian armed forces, and was in fact the driving logic behind why General Velasco and his officers placed such great emphasis on agrarian reform (Kruijt 1996:243, Kruijt 1994:4).

That the Party launched its insurgency *after* a major agrarian reform leads some students of revolution to conclude that “Sendero Luminoso, the most profoundly sectarian mass revolutionary movement Latin America had yet experienced, was trying to overthrow a state and a series of elected governments in the wrong nation at the wrong time” (Wickham-Crowley 1992:298).

How, then, did the consequences of Velasco’s land reform relate to the outbreak of peasant counter-rebellion among the Iquichanos? As I have explained in chapter 3, the Iquichanos’ determination to defend their property can be traced back to the fact that they were relatively recent recipients of their land, being among the very few peasants in Ayacucho who benefited from the Velasquista agrarian reform. The agrarian reform of the 1970s had transformed them from *hacienda* serfs to owners of their own land, and they were now fiercely determined to defend it. It is also significant to note that during their land reform adjudication, the *comuneros* of Uchuraccay opposed the idea of receiving property in common, and instead demanded to be awarded individual parcel holdings.¹⁵ In the light of this evidence, it is therefore quite obvious why Shining Path’s perceived attempts to collectivise individually held land and livestock herds was aroused the suspicion of the Iquichanos, and promptly resisted.

In rounding up this section, we can revisit the question: How can peasant counter-rebellion contribute to existing theories about peasant revolution? Based on the discussion thus far, I would argue that to approach the topic of peasant revolution from the opposite perspective of peasant counter-rebellion is to reassess the common though mistaken assumption. Namely, that self-declared “popular” revolutions are ordinarily waged by the “revolutionary proletarian vanguard” in a way that advances the interests of the peasant masses they purport to represent, as the peasants themselves define those interests to be. This error appears to be an inevitable corollary to the fact that many scholars of revolution (e.g. Wolf, Skocpol) have long taken for granted that peasants, when roused to political action, will almost invariably take the side of a revolutionary movement in opposition to the State. The phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion in Ayacucho clearly shows otherwise. The Iquichano highlanders, who anthropologists and historians have described as possibly the poorest, most “traditional” and “backwards” of Ayacucho’s peasants, proved neither to exhibit the “collective” ethos nor the “natural” affinity for the armed communist revolution that Senderista leader and ideologue Osmán Morote had expected. Instead, they turned out to be the most conservative and belligerently anti-revolutionary peasants in the whole of Ayacucho (Coronel 1996:43).¹⁶

8.2.3 HOW IQUICHANO PEASANTS COUNTER-REBELLED: MOBILISING FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

The mere resolve to counter-rebel is, by itself, insufficient to translate into action. This relates to the general problem of mobilising collective action, about which theorists have suggested various models (Tilly 1978; Pinard 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Olson 1965). Borrowing eclectically from these theories, let us consider how Iquichano peasants were able to mobilise counter-rebellion by analysing the phenomenon in terms of (1) motivating factors/interests; (2) conducive factors, like the structure of social organisation; (3) resource mobilisation; (4) facilitation or the absence

of repressive external control; or in other words space for autonomous action.

Motivating factors. So far, we have already reviewed the main grievances that would eventually lead to resentment of or armed resistance to Shining Path. In the specific case of the Iquichanos, they perceived a threat to their personal security, to their property, to their kin, and their way of life (see chapter 3). However, there are two other important internal motives to consider. Firstly, the evidence suggests that that the Iquichanos as a whole perceived no other viable alternative to responding to the guerrillas other than with violent defensive action. Alternatively, to put it in Tillyan terms, their “repertoire” of viable responses was extremely limited, as will be explained in detail shortly. The second important motivating factor was that the apparent physical and military weakness of the first group of ill-armed, adolescent rebels they came in contact with led the Iquichano peasants to believe that they could easily kill or capture these “*muchachitos*,”¹⁷ and so put an end to the disruptions to the “*tranquilidad*” in their lives. Furthermore, they were also encouraged in this course of action by the Sinchis, an elite anti-terrorist police force, who visited them periodically by helicopter. To their eventual detriment, the Iquichanos did not realise the full power of Shining Path when they embarked on their counter-rebellion.

Conducive factors: Social Structures and Available Resources. Based on the evidence presented in chapters 3 and 4, it is my contention that the structural and organisational characteristics of the Iquichano communities facilitated their ability to mobilise counter-rebellion. This organisational structure resembled what Wolf termed as “closed corporate” peasant communities, in contrast to those which could be described as “open non-corporate” communities. Wolf’s conceptual model is helpful for two reasons. Firstly, it corresponded closely to the empirical realities of rural society in Ayacucho, as it existed before the massive social upheavals of the mid-1980s. Secondly, it also derives analytical usefulness and flexibility of application in its treatment of peasants as actors whose dialectical interaction with exogenous forces is influenced not only by cultural referents, but also by the kinds of resources which they have access to. The model defines different types of peasant communities not in terms of cultural characteristics, but “in relation to market and state” (1986:325).

Of the assorted structural variables to consider, the scope of economic and social resources—and therefore alternatives—available to a community and its members must be counted among the most important ones affecting the manner of response, and the ability to organise counter-rebellion. The Iquichano communities were peripherally located. Their members were mainly monolingual Quechua-speaking members who had very limited intercourse with the cash economy, and little if any migratory experience. Consequently, there was little wealth-based class differentiation between individual Iquichano peasants that the rebels could have exacerbated. It is important to note that at this early stage in the civil war, the guerrillas had not yet heavily attacked the Iquichanos. Therefore, the idea of abandoning their villages and displacing to a town or city was an unappealing option, particularly in light of the fact that the vast majority of Iquichanos lacked the skills, education, and other resources (e.g. bilingualism, some degree of literacy, cash) necessary to survive in urban society.

Though they had relatively few resources, the Iquichanos nevertheless possessed that which is most crucial to mobilising counter-rebellion—*strong social solidarity*. This owes itself primarily to the fact that the “closed” Iquichano communities

retained many “traditional” cultural practices and values,¹⁸ which merely contributed to the maintenance of a strong sense of community solidarity (Coronel 1996:47). That the various Iquichano communities agreed to put up a unified resistance to Shining Path must have also bolstered the general morale of the villagers. Each community knew it was not alone, and could count on the assistance of its neighbours.¹⁹

In contrast, “open” peasant communities, such as those found in the Pampas sub-region of Ayacucho, exhibited a marked degree of socioeconomic stratification, and were wracked by private quarrels. It was owing to such chronic internal cleavages that these communities proved too internally divided to organise a common defensive response to guerrilla abuses and incursions. Moreover, age-old resource conflicts between peasant communities—the rivalry between Chuschi and Quispillaccta is the quintessential example—initially precluded the possibility of intra-communal cooperation. Instead, the members of such internally fragmented communities tended to respond to the escalating political violence in individual ways, according to the particular social networks and economic resources available to each family (see Flagg et al. 1998; Isbell 1988).

Facilitating conditions. In addition to the organisational and social structures that facilitated its actuation, the ability to organise collective resistance also depended on freedom from repression, which depended on the intensity of guerrilla presence in the area. It is almost impossible to mobilise for action under the close vigilance of one’s overseers or enemies, as Wolf argues is the reason why landless wage labourers being watched closely by their employers are unable to mobilise politically (1969:290). In the case of the Iquichanos, the sporadic presence of the guerrillas in their communities, coupled with a virtual absence of teachers and students, meant that Shining Path’s “one thousand eyes and ears” were largely absent in their communities. This space for autonomous action, which communities in other parts of Ayacucho did not have, enabled the Iquichanos of dispersed villages to hold meetings to plan and organise a common course of action.²⁰

In sum, the material presented in chapter 3 suggest that peasants may consider violent counter-rebellion not only when they sense their welfare and physical security threatened. They will also consider it when they feel they have no other viable alternatives for response (owing to the limitations of their social and economic resources), and can expect that their attempt to resist that threat will be successful. The irony is that while it was the poorest and most “traditional” of Ayacucho’s peasant communities that were most likely to rise up in counter-rebellion, in the long run, it was they who were also least able to absorb the economic costs of counter-rebellion.

8.2.4 POLITICAL TERROR, GUERRILLA WARFARE, AND PEASANT RESISTANCE

The Iquichanos may have been the first to rebel against Shining Path. But when guerrilla abuses, pressures, and aggression assumed intolerable levels, other peasant communities in Ayacucho would eventually also rise up spontaneously against Shining Path (chapter 3). Shining Path’s reaction to this growing, spontaneous, popular resistance was not to change its unpopular strategy, but to mete out ever-greater extremes of violence and brutality.

It is indeed puzzling why revolutionary movements often use violence against the

very people they purport to represent. One is thus led to ask, What is the place and role of physical violence and political terror in guerrilla warfare, particularly in relation to the very masses the revolutionary movement purports to lead? Greene rightly points out that “[w]hatever its range or intensity...violence is a common thread running through all revolutionary movements, whether on the left, center, or right” (1990:105). Not just an abstract theory, Greene’s observation is confirmed by the words and actions of guerrillas themselves. For Abimael Guzmán, the periodic application of physical violence against the masses was essential for keeping them under control. Taking his lead from Lenin, Guzmán also acknowledged that “excesses”—i.e. massacres of civilians—may be committed justifiably by the revolutionary armed forces in certain circumstances, and as such are a necessary and acceptable price of People’s War.²¹ On the other hand, “Tayacán,” author of the CIA’s instruction manual for the Nicaraguan contras entitled *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare*, takes a more prudent view on the use of terror in guerrilla warfare. Tayacán makes a crucial distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* terror.

A guerrilla armed force always involves implicit terror because the population, without saying it aloud, feels terror that the weapons may be used against them. However, if the terror does not become explicit, positive results [i.e. support] can be expected.

In a revolution, the individual lives under a constant threat of physical damage. If the government police cannot put an end to the guerrilla activities, the population will lose confidence in the government, which has the inherent mission of guaranteeing the safety of citizens. *However, the guerrillas should be careful not to become an explicit terror, because this would result in a loss of popular support* (Tayacán 1985:51-52. My emphasis).

This fundamental conceptual distinction between implicit and explicit terror is based on the understanding that revolutionary guerrilla warfare is, first and foremost, *political-psychological warfare*, with its primary targets being the minds of the population, the enemy’s included (Tayacán 1985:33; Greene 1990:106; Bulloch 1996). As the above passage suggests, the implicit terror generated by the mere *threat of violence* may be used to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the population such as to further one’s strategic political objectives. The key, according to Tayacán, is not to overstep the fine line between implicit and explicit terror, the consequences of which are sufficiently clear in the Peruvian example. In retrospect, one can say that Shining Path’s leaders had seriously miscalculated the peasants’ capacity to accept and endure “excesses.”

Reality, however, is not so clear-cut, and immediate actions on the ground cannot always be informed with the benefit of hindsight. Guerrilla movements will invariably need to exercise some degree of explicit terror (however small) in order to generate the myths that underpin its requisite fearsome reputation, and thus its intimidating aura of implicit terror.²² As Greene points out, however, insurgents “must choose their targets with care in order not to alienate the very sectors of the population essential to the further development of the movement” (ibid.:107). In other words, guerrillas

must take care not to become *too much* of an explicit terror, for this will invariably result in a loss of popular support. It is the apparent or the foreseeable social implications of violent actions, of course, which determine what, exactly, amounts to “too much” explicit terror. It can therefore be said that Shining Path began its armed struggle as an implicit terror in the eyes of the peasantry, executing only very specific “enemies of the people,” particularly unpopular policemen and thieves. The Party turned into an explicit terror, however, when it escalated its violent tactics from 1983 onward by starting to massacre entire peasant communities, mainly as punishment for yielding to pressure from the military to form civil defence committees. In time, Shining Path guerrillas also began targeting the leaders of peasant unions and other leftist organisations, which they denounced as “revisionists.” Thus, in contrast to the strategy that propelled the Sandinistas to power in Nicaragua in 1979 (Wickham-Crowley 1992; Greene 1990), Shining Path has adamantly eschewed forging functional alliances or a broad popular front with other organisations and forces of the political left (see Stern et al. 1998). In the long term, Shining Path’s sectarian intolerance and increasingly indiscriminate violent actions resulted in an almost complete loss of popular sympathy and support, especially from the very peasantry in whose name it claimed to be waging “people’s war.” Stern sums it up best when he writes “*Sendero Luminoso demonstrated an astonishing capacity, in its political practices, to blend extreme astuteness and extreme ignorance*” (1998:471). Thinking that they could pound a passive peasantry to their will by means of “violent dramatic deeds,” the rebels were in fact unwittingly sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

By contrast, the Peruvian military raised political terror to new levels by unleashing a ferocious campaign of indiscriminate repression in 1983. In the course of two decades of war, however, it would gradually make a surprising shift towards a more moderate strategy of targeted killings, combined with a greater emphasis given to intelligence work and civic action programmes (Starn 1998; Rénique 1998). What is more, there is evidence to suggest that by the early 1990s, a number of senior military commanders had become greatly worried that accusations that the army had perpetrated “genocide” against the Andean peasantry during the 1980s was progressively tarnishing the professional image of the armed forces. Consequently, they began to give explicit orders to forces under their command to uphold standards of human rights.²³ It can be argued, then, that the military’s transformation from explicit to implicit terror caused an improvement in its relations with the civilian populace of the emergency zone, which in turn helped to bring greater popular support for the State’s counterinsurgency programme during the course of the 1990s.

On the face of it, it indeed seems astonishing that that the indiscriminate brutality of army repression in 1983 and 1984 did not drive Ayacuchano peasants into the ranks of the guerrillas on a large scale. Rather, throughout the history of the civil war, the most common reaction of the peasants to State terror was massive population displacement to the relative safety of urban centres. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, it is well to bear in mind that peasants, like us, make informed decisions based, among other things, on their interests and power in relation to other actors. Most peasants in the emergency zone were immediately awed by the army’s immense firepower and unbelievable ferocity, and so initially thought it quite unlikely that the guerrillas—armed mainly with edged weapons, a limited number of light

firearms, and dynamite—could ever be capable of bringing down the Peruvian State. Given the glaring disparity in power and military capability between the two opposing forces at the outset, peasants immediately realised that it was suicide to make an enemy of the army by actively supporting the revolution. Thus most peasants sought to remain neutral if they could (they were frequently denied this freedom both by Shining Path and the army), or, if forced to, then to side with the State in spite of, *or perhaps precisely because of*, the ferocious military repression and the terrifying psychological intimidation it effected. It may even be argued that the logic behind the peasantry's gravitation towards what they perceived as the stronger party is not so unlike that which generally underlies relationships of patronage (see Davis 1977:132-150). Indeed, in time the relationship between the peasant militias and the army (representing the State) would develop many characteristics of patronage, in the course of the 1990s (Starn 1998, 1994). Secondly, the guerrillas' tendency to avoid head-to-head confrontations with superior enemy forces, or to defend "fixed positions" (like rural villages) against army attacks—both are standard Maoist guerrilla tactics—gave peasants the impression that the guerrillas were afraid or unwilling to defend them as they had promised. This merely confirmed their assessment of Shining Path as militarily weaker than the Peruvian armed forces (Degregori 1998:141; cf. McClintock 1999:227). A third probable reason is that while on the one hand, peasants are generally not adverse to agrarian revolts or other movements advocating reform and the recognition of their rights, on the other hand, they are in general much less frequently in accord with the more radical idea of toppling the State through armed struggle (see Paige 1975). Peasants are quite aware that revolutions have uncertain outcomes, and may simply bring a worsening of their livelihood conditions and leave them poorer than before. Furthermore, it is also not unlikely, given the Peruvian Andean peasantry's long-held tradition of respect for higher authority (Starn 1999:103), that the majority of them also thought of revolution as "incorrect" conduct.

For all its rhetoric about the utopian "new society" it would create, it soon became obvious to most peasants that Shining Path was unable to present an alternative viable and preferable society to the one they were presently living in. In fact, as has already been suggested, Shining Path's policies did much more harm than good to the subsistence and security conditions of the peasantry. For thousands of peasants, Shining Path's "people's war" was only making them poorer or destitute, and as such was inadvertently creating a window of opportunity for the State to beginning winning the peasantry over to its side.

8.3 Counter-rebellion and counterinsurgency

For years the peasant self-defence committees were depicted in much of the academic, journalistic, and human rights literature as entities concocted by the Peruvian military, and subsequently imposed on a largely unwilling peasant populace (Degregori 1989b:29-30; Amnesty International 1991:21-22; Americas Watch 1992:9; Isbell 1990:8-13). On the contrary, we have seen in chapters 3 and 4 that independent peasant initiative was also responsible for the emergence of village defence groups in various districts of Ayacucho at different times. In fact, many of the earliest village

patrols were formed without the direct influence of the military, and often even before government soldiers arrived in the area (Coronel 1996:50-51, 1993:49; see Starn 1993; DESCO 1989:110). An interesting contrast can be made in this regard with the Guatemalan case. According to Remijnse, there, the military took the lead in creating the *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* (PAC) in the countryside (2001:456).

But despite the fact that many of the earliest self-defence patrols emerged in Ayacucho out of spontaneous peasant initiative, it is indeed true that the military has also played a crucial part in the creation and proliferation of peasant defence committees, just like in Guatemala. In fact, ever since the introduction of Peruvian troops to the emergency zone at the start of 1983, the military encouraged—even actively compelled—peasant communities in general to organise what were dubbed as “civil defence committees” (CDCs). These, along with any pre-existing anti-guerrilla village defence groups, were all placed under the authority of the military.

The army’s initiative in forcing communities to create CDCs provoked an extremely vicious reaction from the guerrillas, who made it a point of launching punitive attacks against villages and rural refugee settlements that had obeyed army orders and formed civil defence patrols. In some cases, these guerrilla attacks merely reinforced the peasants’ will to resist the guerrillas, resulting in a vicious circle of more civil patrols being created, and more punitive guerrilla attacks in response. In other instances, fear of attracting guerrilla attacks caused peasants to tread a fine line between Shining Path and the military by adopting a survival strategy of “resistant adaptation,” such as, for instance, deferring to Shining Path guerrillas when they were present in the area, and reactivating their CDC only when army patrols came to visit (see Degregori 1998:142-143).

That peasant self-defence organisations in Ayacucho have come into being either through independent peasant initiative or through the instigation or compulsion of the military underscores the need to make a crucial distinction between counter-rebellion and counterinsurgency. Characteristically, peasant counter-rebellion in Ayacucho was localised in scope, encompassing only a few neighbouring villages or those of a single district at most. In the process of organising themselves, counter-rebellious peasant communities often referred to existing indigenous organisational structures, such as the *junta directiva*, *comité de administración* and *comité de vigilancia*; as models for their self-defence committees; they did not need to depend on the army to provide them with an organisational model, or with guidance on how to organise themselves. It was also noted in chapters 3 and 4 that many of the earliest village defence committees to emerge in Ayacucho consciously drew inspiration from the *montoneros* tradition of peasant guerrilla resistance to foreign invaders (i.e. against the Chileans in the War of the Pacific) and abusive *gamonales* (i.e. the 1923 peasant uprising in La Mar province, Ayacucho), which survives in the collective memory of rural inhabitants throughout the central and south-central Peruvian highlands. It is also possible that, as with the *rondas campesinas* of northern Peru (Starn 1999:75-80), the Ayacuchan communities situated on former haciendas borrowed the idea of a village defence patrol from the *hacendado*’s armed retainers and hacienda patrols of old, though I did not find evidence of this in the living memory of any of my informants.

The principal concern of peasant counter-rebellion was, pragmatically enough,

one of self-defence. Hence, the sole objective of patrollers (*ronderos*) was to protect the lives and property of community members, not to take chances with their lives. (The abstract notion of the “patriotic defence of democracy and the motherland” was certainly not one of the foremost initial motivating factors behind peasant counter-rebellion, if indeed it ever entered their minds.)

For much of the 1980s, peasant counter-rebellion in Ayacucho was militarily weak. They were also not particularly effective in preventing guerrilla attacks, and exhibited a tendency towards inertia which was manifest in the inclination to fight defensively, preferably behind protective village ramparts, instead of acting offensively and going out to attack, to ambush, or to hunt down guerrilla columns. There are two major reasons that account for the counter-rebellious peasantry’s initial disinclination for offensive combat tactics. The first was their severe disadvantage in weaponry as compared with the guerrillas; the second, their lack of offensive tactical knowledge and experience. Moreover, peasant counter-rebellion was often vulnerable to a rapid disintegration of morale—a common occurrence particularly in the aftermath of devastating guerrilla attacks (see chapter 5). For these reasons, sustaining a peasant counter-rebellion was an extremely difficult undertaking, especially without the assistance of a powerful patron, such as the army or the highly organised and well-armed peasant militias of the Apurímac River Valley—the DECAS. In the end, the survival of peasant counter-rebellion in Ayacucho depended on cooperation and efficient coordination between neighbouring communities or districts, on securing both a powerful patron and effective weaponry, and on competent leadership.

Counterinsurgency, on the other hand, refers to the State’s strategy and operational methods, military or otherwise, for defeating an insurgency movement (Bulloch 1996; Fall 1998; Wickham-Crowley 1992:60-91). A counterinsurgency programme tries to link local level operations with national-level strategic and security objectives, and in this regard, its organisational and operational scope will ordinarily be wide-ranging and multi-levelled. Generally speaking, the goal of counterinsurgency is to isolate, destroy, and/or convert the insurgents, and to discredit the political message that the revolutionary movement presents (Greene 1990:112-116). There are differing ideas as to how this is to be achieved, however (Bulloch 1996; Greene 1990:112-116). In the case of Peru, the three successive governments from 1980 to 2000 each formulated and implemented its own distinct approach to counterinsurgency, achieving varying levels of success or failure. In turn, a brief summary provides the backdrop against which to reflect, in section 8.4, on how peasant-military (or militia-military) relations have changed over the past two decades.

8.3.1 THREE STAGES OF COUNTERINSURGENCY IN PERU

Counterinsurgency during the administration of President Fernando Belaúnde Terry placed emphasis on all-out repression—an approach known as the “attrition theory” of counterinsurgency (Bulloch 1996:4). The notion of winning “hearts and minds”—the golden rule of modern counterinsurgency thinking—was completely lost on Belaúnde and most of his field commanders.²⁴ Rather, the “gentleman” president ordered the army to the emergency zone, where it then sought to crush the Maoist insurgency through a murderous cocktail of “surveillance, disappearance, torture, massacre and arrest without charge” (Poole 1994c:261). Thus began a “dirty war”

that would continue in varying intensity for the rest of the decade.

Without deeper research into the question, we can only speculate why it is that the Peruvian armed forces opted for this particularly brutal approach, in spite of there having supposedly taken root within the institution since the early 1960s a new strategic doctrine “which linked internal security with national development” (Klarén 2000:320; Kruijt 1994). One possible explanation is that after his return to presidential power in 1980, Belaúnde immediately sought to replace from positions of active command many of the (progressive-minded) Velasquista officers, whom he blamed for having played a key role in ousting him in 1968. (In fact, a shift towards right-wing conservatism within the military command already began earlier under General Morales Bermúdez, Velasco’s usurper and successor.) President Belaúnde’s new commanders, those whom he deemed to be more loyal, were possibly also more concerned with currying his favour than with pursuing military doctrine. For Belaúnde, the measure of success in putting down what he regarded were mere “terrorists,” “livestock thieves,” and “bandits,” was the body count.

To be sure, absolute repression has at times been effectively employed in certain conflict zones in the world, such as in Iraq, where it has been Saddam Hussein’s strategy of choice for quelling the uprisings of the Kurds in the north and of the Marsh Arabs in the south of the country (Bulloch 1996:4). However, in general, military force can never be the solution to political war, for it does nothing to address the social and economic grievances that are usually at the root of the popular support that revolutionary movements are sometimes able to garner. Absolute repression certainly did not work in putting an end to Shining Path. For unlike the Kurds and Marsh Arabs, Shining Path forces were not concentrated in one discrete geographical location. Rather, they were dispersed throughout a wide area. In addition, because the majority of guerrillas were from the region, they could inconspicuously mingle freely and easily with the civilian population of the emergency zone. Contrary to the Peruvian army’s stereotyped preconceptions about what guerrillas should look like, the Shining Path rebels did not dress in military fatigues (except for the purpose of deception), like the guerrillas of Cuba, Colombia, or Chiapas (Gorriti 1999:52). The Senderista guerrillas were therefore difficult to spot simply on the basis of their clothing or physical appearance.

To adopt a strategy of straightforward attrition in the absence of a clear target carries with it the high risk of causing harm to large numbers of innocent civilians, in addition to guerrillas. This is precisely what happened in Ayacucho, where it soon became painfully obvious that the security forces neither knew nor understood their enemy. They did not know the identity of many of Shining Path’s principal cadres and leaders, not the way in which it was politically and militarily organised, nor its tactics and method of operation. Moreover, the soldiers and policemen proved thoroughly incapable of distinguishing between their guerrilla enemy and innocent peasants, and were often unable to pin down the elusive and highly mobile guerrilla columns, which in comparison seemed capable of ambushing them at will and then slipping away with ease. As their feelings of apprehension and frustration mounted, government troops began to lower their criterion for the application of lethal force, becoming increasingly indiscriminate and arbitrary in their killings. Not surprisingly, it was in the first two years of military intervention that the number of victims claimed by political vio-

lence reached its peak. While it is true that Shining Path's forces suffered their heaviest casualties during this period, the human, social, and political cost of the military's campaign of repression nevertheless proved counterproductive in the end, for it resulted in the alienation of the bulk of the rural population. (It is important to note, however, that this alienation did not necessarily translate into greater support for Shining Path.)

The election of Alan García as president in July 1985 opened a new and very different chapter in the counterinsurgency campaign. At the outset, the Aprista president made it clear that his government intended to deal with the insurgency problem in an altogether different manner from what had gone on before. García chose to follow what is known as the "developmentalist" approach to counterinsurgency. His vaguely conceptualised plan was to focus on initiating economic development programmes, in addition to putting an end to the Argentine-style "dirty war" by restraining the armed forces and upholding human rights. However, for all the popular optimism with which these proposals were greeted, in the end they would prove of little substance, and not much more successful in undermining the revolutionary movements than Belaúnde's repressive crackdown had been. For one thing, the government did not, or could not, follow through on most of its promises to provide socioeconomic aid to the poorest departments. This was due mainly to the failure of García's "heterodox" economic programme, the consequences of which were a rapid deterioration in the national economy and a sharp rise in inflation during the second half of his administration. Moreover, García's attempts to reassert civilian control over the armed forces—one of his first actions in this regard was to dismiss a number of senior commanders for the army's role in a massacre of peasants at a rural village in Ayacucho—merely caused heightened tensions between his government and armed forces commanders. The military establishment came to perceive him more and more as an unsympathetic and unsupportive president who, on the one hand, was keen to tell them what they *could not* do, yet on the other hand, was incapable of formulating a coherent and comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. The armed forces protested their dissatisfaction by becoming increasingly apathetic and idle in their military functions (del Pino 1993b, 1996), drastically reducing their patrols and operations in the countryside for fear of being accused of human rights violations. Consequently, the earlier counterinsurgency momentum of the Belaúnde period was lost, and morale plummeted among the officers and men (Tapia 1997:39; Strong 1992:158-160).

There is little doubt that Shining Path's organisational recuperation and steady operational expansion during the García years owed itself as much to the government's neglect of the military dimension of the counterinsurgency struggle, as to the Party's genuine military successes. Nevertheless, vital advances were happening within certain quarters of the security forces that would bear fruit in the following decade. For one thing, greater budgetary assistance from the Aprista government enabled the intelligence branch of the national police force to continue enhancing its intelligence gathering capabilities. By the end of the 1980s, police intelligence felt that it had enough information to set its sights on capturing Shining Path's principal leaders. Within the armed forces, the Army General Staff embarked on a profound process of introspection and analysis to try to extrapolate fundamental lessons from its past tactical,

strategic, and conceptual errors. The result was the creation of a manual that laid out a sophisticated, new counterinsurgency concept whereby carefully aimed military actions would be coordinated and consolidated with social, political, economic, and psychological lines of operation (see Tapia 1997; Ejército Peruano 1989). Once the new counterinsurgency approach had been formulated, all that was left for the military chiefs to do was wait for favourable political conditions so they could put it into action.

The election of the political neophyte Alberto Fujimori to the Peruvian presidency marked a watershed in the history of the country, and a turning point in the counterinsurgency struggle. As explained in chapters 5 and 6, most Peruvians tired of elitist, inept, and constantly squabbling politicians immediately found Fujimori's direct, pragmatic, neo-populist and no-nonsense style of government, along with his image as a political and ethnic outsider (i.e. non-*criollo*), refreshing and appealing (Oliart 1998). His determination to cut through partisan politics, together with his resolve to unwaveringly support and defend the conduct of the armed forces in the face of increasing international human rights criticism, cemented the crucial backing from the military establishment that would be the underpinning of his regime for the rest of the decade (Tapia 1997:60; Obando 1998).

The counterinsurgency vision that Fujimori was responsible for putting into motion made full use of existing advances in the intelligence work and strategic thinking of the military and the police. The shrewd president also took advantage of the political space for unbridled political action, which was made possible by his self-coup in April 1992 and by his high approval rating among ordinary Peruvians, which he continued to enjoy despite the hardships caused by his economic austerity package. The new counterinsurgency doctrine emphasised, for the first time in a decade of civil war, a unity of effort in the coordinated employment of both military and civil actions; and its essence was captured in the army's new slogan: "*Más Desarrollo, Menos Represión*."²⁵ Military force—so abusively employed under Belaúnde, and curtailed or applied in erratic fashion under García—was now to be used "softly" in a controlled and selective manner, and always in conjunction with mutually supportive socioeconomic and psychological measures carefully designed to create the political conditions for the insurgency's political defeat.

In addition to the military and socioeconomic measures, the government also introduced new, draconian anti-terrorism laws that were applied mercilessly by "faceless" courts. The aim was to break down the guerrilla rank and file by sealing off the possibility of judicial acquittals of captured "terrorists" (a common complaint made by security forces during the García period). Furthermore, the limited offer of a repentance law in the mid-1990s served to encourage the capitulation or defection of large numbers of guerrillas in the field. What is more, the maximum use of intelligence yielded the capture of many important insurgent leaders in the first half of the 1990s, including the paramount founding leaders of both the Shining Path and the MRTA.

On other fronts, Fujimori's success in re-establishing economic stability in the country through a harsh yet effective austerity programme resulted in the revival of foreign investment. This, along with the generation of comparatively vast revenues through the privatisation of unprofitable State-run companies, and a fundamental

reform of the tax system, provided Fujimori with the sufficient resources to finance and sustain the “developmentalist” component of his counterinsurgency strategy (Klarén 2000:418-421). The new plan involved a combination of civic action and social assistance programmes designed to address many of the underlying sources of support for the revolution, and to begin winning hearts and minds, particularly the peasantry’s.

Perhaps most importantly, instead of just handing out social assistance to the peasantry, the Fujimori government proceeded to incorporate the peasantry officially into the counterinsurgency struggle by providing statutory recognition to the peasant self-defence groups, thereafter known by the official title of *Comités de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*. It was a pivotal step that would change the entire complexion and direction of the war.

8.3.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COUNTER-REBELLION TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

It is by recognising *guerrilla warfare* as *political warfare* that the vital significance of counter-rebellion to counterinsurgency becomes clear. As political warfare, then, the first objective of a guerrilla war is not to militarily destroy the armed forces of the State, of which a guerrilla movement is initially thoroughly incapable. Rather, it is to “establish a competitive system of control over the population” (Fall 1998:46),²⁶ especially in parts of the countryside where guerrilla action has succeeded in all but neutralising the State’s political presence. If we understand this, then it becomes clear that the central importance that peasant counter-rebellion has to counterinsurgency is not in terms of military power (peasants are initially almost always militarily weaker than guerrilla forces), but rather in its *ability to contest with an insurgency for political and psychological control over the population*. As illustrated in previous chapters, counter-rebellion’s unparalleled advantage over government and guerrilla forces is that as an “indigenous” force generated from within the population itself, it was much less likely to be regarded by locals as illegitimate and so rejected as a “foreign” presence. Moreover, in contrast to government forces, counter-rebellious villagers were invariably more likely to possess superior knowledge of the terrain, of the habits and tactics of the guerrillas, and sometimes even their identity.

In theory, as far as the State is concerned, the peasant militias represent the “active minority” with which it can attempt to instigate and foster general counter-rebellion within the rest of the population (Tapia 1997). To this end, an intelligently formulated counterinsurgency strategy will attempt to incorporate this “active minority” into the broader counterinsurgency activities of the State, using it, in addition, as a bridge for fostering mutual trust and improving relations with the local population. It will also charge this “active minority” with the main task of mobilising and organising the “reluctant (or neutral) majority” so as gradually to create a hostile environment for guerrillas everywhere they operate. Furthermore, as far as it is often logistically impossible for security forces to occupy every single village or to maintain a constant presence in every part of the countryside,²⁷ it falls on peasant defence groups fill the security and governance vacuum caused by political violence and population displacement.

In ten years of civil war, Fujimori’s government was the only one that fully understood and appreciated the value of incorporating peasant counter-insurgency into a

counterinsurgency campaign, making the military and financial support of the peasant self-defence militias official government policy. Nevertheless, as will be further explained below, the process that transformed parochially orientated peasant counter-rebellion into an effective counterinsurgency force was instigated not by Fujimori or the military, but by the indigenously generated *Defensa Civil Antisubversiva del Río Apurímac*, or DECAS. Civil defence groups in the Ayacucho-Huancavelica emergency zone became truly potent, effective counterinsurgency vehicles only after they adopted a number of fundamental tactical ideas and organisational structures first developed by the DECAS. Namely, (1) the use of firearms; (2) the creation of a hierarchical, three-tier “segmentary” command structure that integrated and coordinated the actions of defence committees from the local level all the way up to the sub-regional level; (3) the adoption of offensive tactics, using the same tactics of stealth and ambush employed by the guerrillas themselves; (4) the formation of elite “special commando” groups in every zone or district, consisting of a score or more young men, most with prior military experience, and every one armed with a Mauser rifle. For its part, the Fujimori government adopted and included most of these features in its CAD legislation, and by so doing merely legalised a situation that already existed.

8.4 The shifting configurations of militia-military relations

Throughout the 1980s, the attitude and the behaviour of the army towards the peasant self-defence groups vacillated between support and antagonism, and not always at times and in ways one would expect. Even while the Belaúnde government exercised brutal repression, the formation of CDCs by Ayacucho’s rural population was actively encouraged—in many instances even coerced—by the military. In this period, however, the objective seems to have been more symbolic than strategic: to exact from a suspect peasantry an explicit declaration of their patriotism and loyalty to the State. In addition, knowing full well that peasant communities with CDCs were especially targeted by Shining Path for their perceived collaboration with the security forces (Americas Watch 1992:9; Isbell 1990:8-12), the army’s intention by impelling the latter to form civil defence committees it may very well have been to polarise the Shining Path and the peasantry (Americas Watch 1992:9). Even so, no attempt was made by the army to train, provision, mobilise, or to utilise the CDCs in any systematic way for a larger counterinsurgency role. Rural defence groups were sometimes forced to patrol with army units, poorly armed though they were with makeshift weapons (Isbell 1990:12). They were used simply as a sort of *carne de cañón*—made to march a short distance ahead of the troops in order to flush out any rebels possibly waiting in ambush (del Pino 1993). Beyond this, the army did not see it worth their time and effort to develop the capabilities of the CDCs, nor to create more sophisticated mechanisms of control over them. In the eyes of the army, the CDCs were simply a way of establishing a rudimentary and tentative control over the rural population as a whole. Because, however, the government did not completely trust the peasants to begin with, the army’s preferred way of controlling the peasantry was by concentrating dispersed rural populations into large, strategic settlement clusters—“strategic hamletting,” as it has sometimes been called—where they could more easily be placed under the supervision

of a local military garrison. Thus, the CDCs remained militarily insignificant throughout this early period, and their counterinsurgency potential went untapped.

The García government promised to pursue a more humane counterinsurgency approach, yet the pendulum swung to the other extreme as relations between the CDCs and certain branches of the armed forces progressively soured. Indeed, a number of Army political-military commanders became openly hostile to the defence groups, and some officers even attempted to disband them. This deterioration in military-CDC relations was partly fallout from the larger row between García and the armed forces (particularly the Army). However, it must also have been motivated by a crisis of morale within the armed forces. The existence of the CDCs must have caused resentment among some military officers, who were reminded by their existence of the army's inability to protect the State and its citizens.²⁸ As public opinion began to grow that peasants were perhaps more capable than soldiers of providing for their own defence, and as the government began to consider ways of facilitating this, certain military commanders became concerned that the result would be an erosion of some of their prerogatives—a typical militaristic fear (Fitch 1998; Stepan 1988). Foremost of these was their monopoly of the legitimate means of violence. Small wonder that officers like Army general Howard Rodríguez were among the staunchest opponents of the government intention to begin providing firearms to the peasant militias at the end of the 1980s.

Chapter 4 shows that the Army's withdrawal to the sidelines of the counterinsurgency struggle, and its growing capriciousness towards the civil defence groups particularly during last year of the García presidency, caused many rural communities in the sierra to disband their CDCs. After reassessing the situation, most peasants concluded that the prevailing winds of power now blew in the direction of Shining Path, and thus reacted accordingly by opting to accept or to accommodate the insurgency into their daily lives.

Paradoxically enough, it was during this period of crisis that the DECAS rose to become the most organised, most sophisticated and militarily powerful of civil defence organisations. It is not surprising that the DECAS emerged and developed in the Apurímac River Valley, the most highly commercialised agricultural sub-region of Ayacucho, where peasant federations, like FECVRA, had previously been most active. By the mid-1980s, however, the valley's peasant federations had all disintegrated, and most of their leaders had fled or disappeared owing to both military repression and guerrilla violence. Even so, the legacy of the federations was the organisational experience they left behind, and which lived on in their former members. This would later manifest itself in the sophisticated organisational character of the DECAS.

In the later-García period, the DECAS sought an alliance with the Colombian-linked drug traffickers in the valley who, in return for protection from the police and the guerrillas, provided the DECAS with money and guns (del Pino 1996, 1993a). (Similarly, in the Huallaga Valley Shining Path forged a lucrative, symbiotic relationship with the *narcotraficantes*.) In addition, the DECAS also managed to forge an especially close working relationship with the Marine Infantry detachments in the valley, who in spite of having been incongruously described by various writers as the most "racist" branch of the armed forces, nevertheless came to act as a kind of protector for the DECAS against the hostile actions of the Army.

“Configurational” alliances are not always based on commensurable interests. In this case, the goal of the peasant members of the DECAS was to overthrow Shining Path domination in the valley in order to recuperate their farmlands. Conversely, the focus of the Marine Infantry command was to destroy rebel forces, pacify the area, and thus restore national security. In spite of their differing motivations, then, both the DECAS and the Marines nevertheless shared a common goal in neutralising rebel forces in the Apurímac Valley.

Actively supported and even supplied with limited amounts of modern weaponry by their Marine Infantry allies, the DECAS developed into a powerful and effective counter-insurgency organisation in the second half of the 1980s. Enjoying relative autonomy of action, and jurisdictional protection provided by local Marine Infantry political-military commander, DECAS leaders were able not only to pursue their own counterinsurgency activities (though always in coordination with the Marine Infantry commander) and to develop their own strategies and battlefield tactics. They also created their own internal norms and rules designed to enhance the security of their local communities. Through the strength of their arms, the astuteness of their leadership, and their advantage in having the support (military and moral) of their Marine Infantry allies, the DECAS were eventually able to push Shining Path out of the entire Apurímac River Valley in an epic process that is poetically referred to by *montoneros* as the “Reconquest.” The result was that the DECAS became the first rural militias to achieve a coordinated network of defence that encompassed an entire sub-region (i.e. the valley). Their effective control of this economically productive region of marketable cash crops—particularly coca—provided the DECAS with the unique ability to finance the expansion of their organisation into other regions of Ayacucho, which they achieved by dispatching small, elite units or *grupos especiales* to carry out organisational and counterinsurgency work among the peasant communities of the Ayacuchan sierra. The “Reconquest” was the DECAS’ high water mark, and their decision to throw their political support behind the presidential candidacy of Mario Vargas Llosa in 1990 provides graphic evidence that they were also beginning to realise their own political potential.

The proven success of the DECAS, together with a fundamental change in the military’s appreciation of the counterinsurgency potential of the self-defence groups, would bring yet another shift in military-militia relations in the 1990s. Not only did the Fujimori government finally sanction the militias’ legal use of specified firearms (thereby creating a new source of dependency), it also passed legislation that clearly outlined the rights and obligations of the CADs vis-à-vis the military, which concomitantly also formalised and tightened the military’s control over them.

Apart from harnessing the power of counter-rebellion for the purposes of his government’s counterinsurgency strategy, it is not unreasonable to suggest that by institutionalising the military’s authority over the militias, Fujimori was attempting to hinder the emergence of *caudillos* or “warlords,” a tendency that was already apparent among DECAS leaders (recall Comandante Huayhuaco, chapter 4). In addition, placing the militias under strict military authority was certainly also a control measure designed to prevent the armed CADs from possibly falling under the control of political rivals, particularly political parties, as had happened in the case of the *rondas campesinas* of northern Peru (Starn 1999).

We have seen throughout this book that the military has always exercised varying degrees of control over the militias. In this hierarchical relationship, the military invariably claimed superior status, justified by the conviction that they are the “professionals” when it comes to the art of war, whereas the peasant militiamen are merely laymen.²⁹ Militia members and leaders frequently received direct orders from military officers; yet, for a militia commander to give an order even to a private soldier was unthinkable. In any joint civil-military patrol or combat operation, military officers were always the ones in command. Furthermore, it was the military, in accordance with legislation, that in practice defined the many details regarding the composition and functioning of the civil defence patrols, such as membership and weaponry. However, the State’s control of the CADs existed not only in statute, it was also inscribed and underscored through routine actions. CAD commanders, for instance, were obliged to liaison with higher military authorities, and to coordinate their actions closely, particularly with the special officer designated as the *jefe de los Comités de Autodefensa* of the emergency zone. In recent years, the military also began to create a detailed register of CAD members, in addition to compiling a computerised catalogue of the quantity and types of firearms and ammunition in the possession of the militias.

As Peru entered a tentative phase of “post-violence” reconstruction and development in the second half of the 1990s, the Peruvian army’s “new professionalism” (Stepan 1978, 1976) moved to assert itself in the new social processes beginning to unfold. It began by symbolically declaring a “*Lucha por la Reconstrucción y Desarrollo*.”³⁰ Like other so-called “political armies,” the Peruvian armed forces exhibit an ethos of “professional militarism.” That is to, it has ascribed itself the providential mission—or “destiny,” they might say—to take charge of nation-building by virtue of their belief that they are the only institution with the expertise, the vision, and the “competence” to assume political and administrative responsibilities for the purpose of solving the nation’s greatest problems.³¹ It was of little surprise that in the second half of the 1990s, the political-military command began to voice its intention of playing a leading and directing role in the process of “post-violence” reconstruction and development within the zones of emergency (see chapter 6). In this, however, they were hindered by their own lack of resources and institutional autonomy, given the hegemonic power that the Executive had come to assume in national government and politics.

As we also saw in chapter 6, the military’s attempt to realise its unique vision of post-violence rural development was also stymied by the conflicting interests and visions of other State organisations, like PAR and FONCODES, which came under the direct control of the President himself. Any realistic intention the military might have had to steer the process of rural development in the former war zones was also complicated by the reappearance and proliferation in recent years of NGOs, whose foreign funding provides them with a large measure of autonomy from both the State and the military. Overall, however, the military in Ayacucho showed a willingness to try to cooperate with NGOs and with governmental reconstruction and development organisations. During the Fujimori era, the army, besides providing security to people at civic action events, also became a sort of conveyor belt within the government’s vast clientalistic web for distributing handouts to strategic sections of the electorate.

Within the zones of emergency, the army was the dominant actor in civil-military relations. The supreme political authorities in the emergency zones, we should remember, were military, not civilian, administrators. Even so, a more detailed examination of military-militia relations over the years reveals that in spite of extensive, formal military control, the CADs and their communities were nevertheless able at times to influence a reconfiguration, a reshaping, a negotiation of power relationships with the military. Over the course of this relationship, its internal dynamics of control and autonomy, have varied and shifted, not just geographically, but also at each separate phase of counterinsurgency struggle, according to the degree of importance attributed to the militias within the context of the larger counterinsurgency vision. What is important to understand is that the military's control over the peasant militias, though sometimes very great, was never ubiquitous, nor completely dominating. The militias were not always the helpless marionettes manipulated by the military, which many outsiders have assumed them to be. Despite their great dependence on the military for many things, peasant militias nevertheless also sought autonomous spaces, both spatial and mental, to expand, defend, reshape, and construct. This can be seen in the belief that many militiamen came to have of their superiority over the army and the police when it came to combating Shining Path. The example of the DECAS also vividly illustrates peasant agency and ingenuity at its most creative and dynamic. Indeed, that the organisational structure of the DECAS became the prototype of the CADs, and not the other way around, is graphic evidence enough that rural communities in the Apurímac Valley had sufficient power and space to develop autonomously from military influence (see chapter 4).

In spite of the army's close control over the CADs throughout the 1990s, and despite their reliance on the material and moral support of the State, what is important to recognise is that Fujimori also came to depend on the continued goodwill and loyalty of the CADs—at least for as long as he continued to need the peasantry as the backbone of his political and electoral power. The necessity to transform his own need into *their* dependence, was probably one of the underlying reasons why Fujimori took such great efforts to deepen the counter-rebellious peasantry's social, material, and military dependence on the government. Consequently, Fujimori's need to maintain the political backing and indebtedness of the peasantry empowered the latter with at least some degree of leverage to make certain demands (or at least petitions), pertaining mainly to the reconstruction and development of their rural communities.

The military's domination and control over the peasant militias should not be exaggerated, however. Actually, the daily administration and control of the CADs and their communities were ordinarily left in the hands of the local or zonal CAD commanders, not the army. The army, whose presence in the countryside was mainly confined to periodic patrols or to small, fortified outposts in a few of the more strategically important district capitals, had neither the manpower nor the interest in controlling the day-to-day affairs of the local population (Degregori 1998:147).

The peasant self-defence organisations of Peru bear a number of striking similarities and contrast with the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC) of Guatemala. Given the limited space remaining, I will touch on only a few points of comparative interest. First, whereas in Peru spontaneous community initiative and army instigation have

both played a part (sometimes simultaneously) in the emergence of the village defence organisations, the evidence suggests that in Guatemala the military took the lead in creating the PAC (Remijnse 2001:456). In other words, it appears that the phenomenon of peasant counter-rebellion did not take place in Guatemala, and that the emergence and spread of the PAC can be explained exclusively as one of the State's counterinsurgency initiatives. That is not to say, however, that military control meant that the PAC and their commanders could not exercise any degree of agency; rather, as Remijnse noted, "they evolved over time into a local power player in their own right" (2001:454). That the civil defence patrols of Guatemala were a result of imposition by the military perhaps goes to explain why local people have been, and still are, so frightened of them. By comparison, many of the village-defence patrols in Ayacucho were generated by the population itself, and as such are partly the product of internal, local initiative. This explains, firstly, the widespread acceptance they had among the local communities, when they were not the result of external imposition. It is interesting to note that whereas in places like the northern provinces of Ayacucho, the *rondas campesinas* were widely embraced by the peasantry as its venerated institutional mechanism for self-defence, in Guatemala, by contrast, people are generally frightened of "a possible return to the violent past, through the revival of the civil patrols...." (Remijnse 2001:467-468).

In both national contexts, self-defence organisations have been linked to human rights abuses. Yet in the Peruvian case, most of these occurred in the first half of the war, and "to a far lesser extent than those carried out by the civil patrols in Guatemala" (Degregori 1999b:256). Unlike in Peru, an ethnic dimension also seems to have played a part in fuelling local level political violence. That is to say, in Guatemala, the *ladino*-dominated PAC operated as part of the State's terror apparatus, tacitly encouraged by the military to kill and sow terror among the Maya ethnicities.³² In Peru, by contrast, the civil war never assumed the same kind of ethnic features that it did in Guatemala, between the *ladino* and the indigenous Maya populations. The fact is, the majority of the combatants on either side of the conflict in Peruvian departments like Ayacucho were culturally and racially indistinguishable from each other. The Marine Infantry unit that was initially dispatched as "shock troops" to Ayacucho in 1983 was, indeed, composed mainly of coastal *criollos*. But the rank and file conscripts of the 2nd Infantry Division, the principal military force stationed in Ayacucho, were themselves mainly youths of peasant parentage, though from other Andean departments. Similarly, the rank and file of Shining Path and of the village-defence committees were completely from the same social and racial background. Furthermore, in stark contrast to Guatemalan security forces (Schirmer 2002), Peruvian soldiers actually came to exhibit "greater respect for human rights" over the course of the 1990s (McClintock 1999:242). Ironic though it seems, we saw evidence in chapter 6 that the Peruvian military in provinces like La Mar eventually even took measures to ensure that the peasant patrols would not violate human rights.

Another interesting point of comparison concerns the creation or defence of spaces of autonomous action. In the Peruvian case, village defence initiatives were commonly directed towards corporate, collective goals. Furthermore, though in the early years many civil defence authorities were selected by the military from among *comuneros* it regarded as loyal, as time went on it became the norm for communities

to elect their own militia leaders at a general assembly. Moreover, the goal of civil defence in Peru was not only to provide immediate security to one's community, but also to society as a whole so as to enable the return of much-sought-after aid and development institutions—such as NGOs—to the countryside. In contrast, through the lasting fear they engendered, the PAC helped to sow popular distrust towards NGOs and their initiatives (*ibid.*). In addition, Remijnse tells us that PAC commanders—many of whom were unpopular, violent men to begin with, and thus resented by the rest of the local population—were ordinarily hand-picked by a military officers, instead of chosen by their fellow villagers (*ibid.*). This obviously must have had an important influence on the degree of legitimacy with which their communities regarded such leaders, which in turn helps to explain the lingering climate of fear for such men. Moreover, the PAC example seems to suggest that the principal concern of many patrol leaders was to create autonomous space in order to enhance their own personal power at the local level (Remijnse 2001:461). Indeed, many former PAC commanders have literally transformed themselves into local *caudillos* by expanding both their power base and the fear that this inspires among their neighbours (*ibid.*:465-466). To be sure, the Peruvian civil defence organisations also had their share of “bossism” (Starn 1998), yet not to the same degree as in Guatemala, it would seem. We have already noted some of the reasons that account for this. Appointment by election was one way to prevent the rise of *caudillos* among the Peruvian civil defence groups. Another reason was the strict controls and legislated measures taken by Fujimori's government to ensure that the CADs did not become politicised, or develop into a political movement, or give rise to local “warlords” that could challenge State power at the local level.

These features have resulted in a significantly distinct legacy in the two country contexts. Since the widespread demobilisation of the CADs at the end of the 1990s, former CADs and their *rondero* members have apparently not attempted to perpetuate themselves by turning into criminal gangs, or into private “armies” for local power holders (*cf.* Schirmer 2002). Nor does it appear that former CAD leaders have sought to become new, mafia-like violent strongmen, or leaders of criminal gangs, as has happened in El Salvador and Guatemala. As a possible reason for this, Degregori suggests: “The former *rondas* members did not find a market for their newly acquired military skills, given the social structure in the countryside of the Peruvian Andes where no large landholders exist; land reform and the peasant movements themselves had put an end to them” (1999b:255). Yet I saw no evidence that former *ronderos* were even looking for a market for their lethal skills within the post-conflict context. Rather, what I observed was that once the need for village defence no longer took precedence, many CAD leaders and *ronderos* were generally eager to return to their more pressing task of subsistence farming.

8.5 The challenge of democratic reconstruction: between civil society and armed actors

By their efforts to secure pacification and guarantee security in the countryside, CADs may be said to have made significant contributions to a transition from a war to a

post-war scenario. How, then, might we appreciate the contributions and the place that CADs have had in these processes of democratic and civil-society reconstruction? It is to this question that we now turn.

8.5.1 DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION AND ARMED ACTORS

In the mid-1970s, the bulk of Latin American countries still languished under military dictatorships. By the end of the decade and into the next, however, these “political armies” had already begun a collective retreat to the barracks, thus setting the stage for a promising transition from authoritarian to democratic governance for the entire region (O’Donnell et al. 1986; Silva 2001; Koonings and Kruijt 2002a, 2002b).

Nevertheless, in most countries, this fundamental shift was far from smooth, and the consolidation of democracy remains, in most instances, incomplete. As a number of scholars have recognised, although these newly democratising countries have assumed a written constitution and an electoral system, the consolidation of political democracy rests on more than its trappings (Pinheiro 1997). For as Bollen suggests, political democracy refers to “...the extent to which political power of the elites is minimised and that of the non-elites is maximized....Where the non-elites have little control over the elites, political democracy is low. When the elites are accountable to the non-elites, political democracy is higher” (1991:5). The legacies of the authoritarian past; the persistence of elite privileges and a clientelistic political style; corruption and a lack of accountability; enduring social and economic discrimination; limited citizenship participation and representation; the State’s failure to control illegal violence—all constitute not just formidable obstacles to creating an open, unrestricted democracy (Pinheiro 1997; Stavenhagen 1990), but also serve to erode democracy’s legitimacy in the eyes of the population. It is likely that their distorted taste of an unresponsive, poorly performing democratic system is what has led electoral majorities, such as in Peru and Venezuela, to seek an alternative by supporting neo-authoritarian, populist, civil-military hybrid regimes, whose political and economic agendas would ultimately prove hostile to the fundamentals of democratic civil society (Cameron 2000; Koonings 2001a).³³

Pinheiro (1997:263) and others also point out that beyond such structural and institutionalised obstacles, democracy may also flounder in societies without a democratic tradition which respects values like the formal separation between State finances and private expenses, or the resolution of disputes and conflicts through the rule of law rather than with brute force (O’Donnell 1994). The case of Peru seems to bear this hypothesis out, for of the 74 Peruvian governments between 1821 and 2001, only 26 were the results of pure elections, of which only 5 (beginning in 1980) were carried out under conditions of universal suffrage (see Kruijt 1994:181-182). The vast majority of Peruvian governments were formed through military coups and rebellions, and it is not surprising that Peru is among the Latin American countries with a strong “authoritarian tradition” that pervades politics, society, and culture (Palmer 1980; Larraín 1999; Silva 1999).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, democratic transitions have also been jeopardised by the continuation or outbreak of political violence and armed revolutionary opposition (Koonings and Kruijt 1999; Kay 2001), as well as by inter-institutional power struggles between civilian governments and the military. These two problems

often come hand in hand because the perceived threat or the actual presence of sociopolitical violence invariably provides justification for the persistent interference of political armies in the affairs of government and internal policing on the grounds of “national security” (Fitch 1998; Zagorski 1992). In declared situations of “national emergency,” political armies invariably exhibit a tendency to take charge of protecting the nation by subordinating civil rule—a logic that combines the “competence principle” with the “national security doctrine” (Koonings 2001a; Koonings and Kruijt 2002a, 2002b). Nowhere is this sort of scenario more evident than in Peru, where Shining Path’s initiation of armed struggle on the eve of elections provoked a repressive reaction from the government and the military, the overall consequences of which were to derail the nation’s transition to a viable democratic system.

Where democratic governments fail not only in their ability to control both the proliferation of illegitimate violence and its own repressive apparatus’s arbitrary use of violence; where democratic governments fail to maintain public order and to guarantee the safety of its citizens; when democratic governments fail in these respects, one can expect to see the emergence of extra-legal, non-legitimate “armed actors”—death squads, self-defence militias, private armies, vigilante groups etc.³⁴ The expansion of violence that accompanies the proliferation of such armed actors serves to erode yet another cornerstone of democracy: the monopoly of violence (Pinheiro 1997:263; Koonings 2001a). In such situations, militarisation subordinates democratisation, “uncivil” society supplants civil society, and frontier justice takes the place of the rule of law (Payne 2000; Huggins 1991; Koonings 2001a:404). Even the rhetorical phrase “rule of law” is often perverted and used by security forces and vigilantes as a pretext for using violence in the pursuit of private interests or extra-legal goals (ibid.). What usually occurs is that both formal armed actors (i.e. the army or the police) and pro-State informal armed actors end up forging a “symbiotic relationship,” as has happened in countries as diverse as Peru, Guatemala, the Philippines, Kosovo, and East Timor .

Ayacucho’s peasant militias are a clear example of armed actors. But, theoretically and philosophically speaking, what sort of status did they have as armed actors vis-à-vis the State? As we have clearly seen, the outbreak of peasant counter-rebellion was the direct consequence of the State’s inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to protect peasants from guerrilla violence. To say that in this sense, peasant counter-rebellion has contributed to the erosion of the rule of law belies the fact that they were not only encouraged by the police to kill or capture presumed subversives, but also praised by President Belaúnde himself when they actually did so (see chapter 3). In other words, by virtue of the instigation given by the State to the peasants to use violence against Shining Path, such violent actions on the part of the peasants cannot therefore be completely regarded as “unlawful.”

Peasant patrols and individual *ronderos* have also been accused of committing crimes and human rights abuses (Amnesty International 1991:21; Americas Watch 1992:9), but certainly not to the extent attributable to the security forces and to Shining Path (Starn 1998:244-247). Moreover, the State has not hesitated to lock up self-defence patrollers for crimes committed in the course of carrying out their duties. Yet members of the armed forces have generally enjoyed the impunity afforded to them by military courts, or by threats made to public prosecutors and human rights

groups (Amnesty International 1991), and by a general amnesty law enacted by Congress in 1995.

In addition, although the military had played a key role in the creation and proliferation of many civil defence groups throughout the militarised emergency zone all through the war, that opposition was nevertheless voiced by some senior officers to the idea of distributing firearms to the peasant patrols reveals a hypocritical contradiction in the understanding that certain senior officers had of the State's monopoly on violence. That is, it is fine and well for authorised peasant militias to kill presumed "terrorists," so long as it was not carried out by means of manufactured firearms. If this was indeed the position held by individuals such as General Howard Rodríguez, then it sees the state's monopoly on violence as pertaining principally to the *means* of inflicting violence, and not necessarily with the subject of violence itself. Accordingly, the rule of law can be bent and manipulated to justify the extra-legal or abusive use of violence in the interests of "protecting society," whatever that may be conveniently taken to mean (see Pinheiro 1997; Huggins 1991).

As armed actors, what status did peasant self-defence organisations have in relation to the State and the military? As we have already seen above, their status throughout the 1980s was semi-formal, and their relationship to the military was often wrought with ambiguities and contradictions. Chapter 4 has clearly shown the "schizophrenic" pendulum swings of an army that at one moment was assuming an active role in creating and giving encouragement to peasant civil defence committees, and at another had plainly become hostile to such groups. Ambiguities concerning their status and place in the counterinsurgency struggle were resolved once and for all in the 1990s, when the Fujimori government passed legislation that formalised their status as the "fourth branch of the armed forces," (Kruijt 1996:246), legally permitted to use specified types of firearms. In this way, they came to assume a military status akin to that of reserve or National Guard forces existing in many developed countries; and their hitherto extra-legal, vigilante form of violence was transfigured into "legitimate violence," at least in the eyes of the government (cf. Amnesty International 1991). Finally, it is important to clarify that unlike the Rodrigo Franco Command (CRF), the peasant patrols were not politically motivated "death squads." The CRF was a shady, clandestine organisation, allegedly created by APRA and elements of military intelligence, "with the aim of revenging murdered military and civilian officials," and used terrorist tactics (Amnesty International 1991:20; Obando 1998:391, 407 n.15). In contrast, peasant militias were "public" entities created primarily for defending their communities.

Obviously, the violence utilised by the *rondas campesinas* has certain justifications—self-defence is the strongest—and its institutionalisation by the State placed them in the category of armed actor belonging "squarely in the public domain"; and as such a tool "of the use of legitimate coercion" (Koonings 2001a:404). The next question, then, is whether we can conceptually situate these peasant patrols in the realm of "civil" or "uncivil" society.

8.5.2 CIVIL AND UNCIVIL SOCIETY

Numerous theorists consider civil society to be a prerequisite for democracy, as well as constituting a counter-hegemonic check to State power and militarism.³⁵ Civil

society is the organising domain in which diverse, pluralistic public interests are put forward.³⁶ Civil society makes claims on the state, and operates within a legal order guaranteed by the State; but—and this is the crucial point—*civil society is autonomous from the State* (Diamond 1999:221-233; Koonings 2001b). Dagnino (1998:51) recognises the importance of civil society as a “crucial [space] of political struggle for the building of citizenship.” Extending Dagnino’s point, Baierle (1998:118) makes the complementary observation that “popular movements,” which are of course one of the constitutive elements of civil society, are “strategic spaces wherein different conceptions of citizenship and democracy are debated.”

According to Radcliffe (1999:204-205), a number of characteristics distinguish social movements from other political groups, like unions and political parties. Firstly, they have a cyclical and transitory character. They may even disappear once the goal(s) of the social movement has been achieved. Their permanence lies not in institutional structure, but rather in “the formation and transferral of collective memory of practices, discourses and meaning [which] may serve as a resource for later social actors and their movements” (Radcliffe 1999:204; Alvarez et al. 1998). Secondly, social movements do not utilise the same institutionalised channels as political parties and unions, but rather use “social mobilisation as power” (Radcliffe 1999:204-205). Sociopolitical changes may blur the boundaries between these groups, however. Thirdly, “in whatever context, social movements need to define their terms and agendas, and provide some closure around their projects.... Such closure is provided by the movements’ cultural resources, as well as by the political, economic, and social context in which they operate” (ibid.:205). Furthermore, through self-reflection, the original central concern of a social movement may, and often do, grow into wider concerns and objectives. Along with these characteristics, however, what is central about social movements is that they exist within civil society, organising and mobilising people certain interests and demands.

Given these concepts, can we relate peasant self-defence organisations to the realm of civil society? Given that their existence has come about through a combination of grassroots initiative and government intervention, can we regard Ayacucho’s peasant self-defence organisations as having been a “social movement,” as defined above? Or were they simply an extension of the armed forces? According to Foweraker, “[m]ost studies of social movements explain them in terms of civil society and confine them to civil society. But, in fact, social movements have developed in continual and intimate interaction with the state” (2001:842). This can certainly be said about the peasant militias. However, intimate interaction does not necessarily mean the loss of autonomy, does it? Looked at from Foweraker’s and Radcliffe’s perspectives, the *rondas campesinas* of the emergency zone would appear, at first blush, to meet the criteria for a social movements. On the other hand, Dagnino (1998:) would probably not agree, for she asserts that the basic reference of social movements is the democratisation of society as a whole. This certainly was not the principal objective or motivating factor behind peasant counter-rebellion.

Can we not argue that it was the actions and internal dynamics of the CADs, rather than their overt characteristics, that reveal them either to be a new social movement or not? Is it not so that they made valuable contributions to an apparent rebirth of civil society in war-torn areas such as Ayacucho, as we saw in chapter 6?

Let us consider the evidence. A notable aspect about the CADs is that they ever fully became a political movement, with a political agenda. There were a number of reasons for this. The most influential was Fujimori's efforts to crush traditional civil society, partisan politics, and the power of the traditional parties and unions, particularly within the militarised zones of emergency. In fact, the *Comités de Autodefensa* were explicitly forbidden by the special CAD legislation from engaging in partisan politics.³⁷ Even the northern *Rondas Campesinas*, which had long been associated with various leftist parties, were brought by the Fujimori government under the same prohibitive controls as the CADs through the promulgation of D.S. 002-93-DE/CCF-FAA.³⁸

What is important to understand, however, is that even before the advent of Fujimori, the combination of political violence and the Belaúnde government's decision to impose a state of emergency (the consequence of which was to suspend rights and freedoms within its ambit) already did much to demolish civil and political society, almost in its entirety, within the militarised emergency zones. In south-central Andean departments like Ayacucho, the demise of traditional civil society can squarely be put on the shoulders of the two main protagonists of political violence: the Armed forces and Shining Path. On the one side, Shining Path increasingly targeted popular leaders, grassroots unions, and parties of the legal left, in accordance with their strategy "to eliminate competing organizations and forces in the national arena of popular and left-wing political struggle and to polarize the political situation such that the only two political agents are the PCP-SL and a militarized Peruvian state" (Poole 1994c:255; see Burt 1998). On the other, security forces automatically assumed that all leftwing parties and popular organisations were Shining Path sympathisers or front organisations, and did not hesitate to attack any group or individual they deemed "subversive." The result of this crossfire on civil society was the demise and virtual disappearance of hitherto powerful peasant federations, peasant-orientated political movements, and traditional political parties in the department of Ayacucho, all before Fujimori assumed power and administered the *coup de grâce* (Smith 1992; Kruijt and del Pilar Tello 2002).

Consequently, the self-defence organisations of this region have developed, for the most part, without collaborating with or being influenced by political parties.³⁹ With the brief exception of the DECAS at the close of the 1980s, the peasant militias of Ayacucho-Huancavelica remained un-politicised and un-partisan throughout their entire history.

Rather than attributing it all to the act of one man, or as entirely the consequence of political violence, however, the "de-politicisation" of society is in fact a larger process that has been unfolding over the entire region over the past two decades. According to Silva, the de-politicisation of a growing number of Latin American countries can be traced back to the population's political experience of the former authoritarian regimes, when physical repression was employed for the purpose of "forced depoliticization." (Silva 1999:54). Military governments in a number of Latin American countries "attempted to convince the population that 'politics' was synonymous with subversion, chaos, decadence and corruption" (ibid.). This certainly describes what the military did in Ayacucho, particularly during the first half of the 1980s. Silva goes on to say, however, that the military governments were only tapping

into a popular disenchantment already existing among the population, “as a result of the general political and economic crisis which preceded the arrival of the military to power” (Silva 1999:54). After the transition to democracy in most Latin American countries which had military regimes, the impunity afforded to the military by the new civilian government as a condition for regime transfer, coupled with a deepening economic crisis which traditional politicians and political parties seemed incapable of solving, served merely to exacerbate the depoliticisation of society (ibid.:55).

The past two decades have certainly seen a dramatic decline in the importance of political parties, peasant organisations, and labour unions in Peru (Palmer 2000:5-6; Mauceri 2000:29). In the midst of a political and economic crisis, the focus of a vast majority of the peasants shifted from political issues, like land, to issues concerning livelihood and everyday survival and livelihood (Klarén 2000; Palmer 2000).

As we already discussed in the last chapter, Palmer (2000) suggests that the emergence in recent years of often-autonomous and self-generated citizen responses, without the mediation of parties, can be characterised as the new phenomenon of “informal politics” (see chapter 7). From about the second half of the 1980s, traditional civil society in places like Ayacucho has largely been replaced by what Palmer and others describe as “new, non-traditional civil society,” made up of community-based organisations like Mothers’ Clubs, Glass of Milk committees, neighbourhood organisations, and Self-Defence Committees. What characterises this new civil society is that its constituent entities engage in “informal politics” (Palmer 2000:6). Consistent with the de-politicisation that Silva has observed taking place throughout Latin America, Palmer notes that what is distinctive about these non-traditional entities is that they tend to shun formal politics and political parties. In Tambo, for instance, he discovered that as far as many people were concerned, “from their perspective, political parties, far from being relevant or responsive to their needs, are seen as serving only to sow divisions within the communities of the district” (ibid.:13). For these reasons, along with the fact that the “dirty war” taught people not get involved in anything that seems even remotely “political,” much of the grassroots mobilising in Ayacucho over the past decade fifteen years has focused on the politics of civil defence and on practical livelihood issues, while avoiding altogether conventional political issues, like human rights issues and partisan politics (see chapter 6).⁴⁰

De-politicised though the landscape of Ayacucho has been over the years, some scholars have argued that we nevertheless have seen a gradual re-emergence of civil society. According to this argument, the most significant contribution that peasant militias have made to the resurrection of civil society has been to restore a sufficient degree of security in the countryside such as to enable apparent civil society entities, including civic-orientated NGOs, to return and forge ahead with much-needed reconstruction and development initiatives (Palmer 2000:12-14; Starn 1998:245-247). As we have also seen in chapters 5 and 6, the peace that peasant militias helped to restore over large areas of the emergency also helped to encourage municipal authorities to return to outlying district capitals, and *comuneros* to begin taking up posts of local authority once again. Ever since the early 1990s, militias had also been instrumental in organising and/or facilitating locally sponsored refugee returns to abandoned rural communities. In addition, where the militias had established a prominent presence in the emergency zone, they often assumed a key role in local reconstruction activities

(Starn 1998:245). In the second half of the 1990s, Tambo's elite group of patrollers (called "*patrulla especial*") became a standard feature of civil-military sponsored civic actions, along with representatives of NGOs, government aid agencies, and local military and civilian officials.

Can it therefore be argued that the peasant militias, rather than "thwarting" the "build-up of grassroots civil structures" and contributing to an "uncivil society" (Koonings 2001b:19), have not only played an indispensable part in resuscitating and strengthening civil society in many war torn areas of Peru. In fact, they have also been an integral component of that civil society.

The debate on civil society is large, and often quite convoluted. Nevertheless, I would argue that the crux of the question in this case depends, in fact, on the question of whether the peasant militias can be said to have existed in a *context* of a functioning civil society, as I have defined it above. The answer, as is the evidence clearly show, is *no*. Arguably, the continuation of the state of emergency, which suspended rights and freedoms, and instated a military officer as the maximum political authority in the region, effectively obliterated the "autonomous public space" required for the existence of a true civil society.⁴¹ The apparent resurgence of civil society entities is perhaps better described as taking place within a liminal phase, whereby an unruly, chaotic society at war is being left behind, and a society at peace, in democratic transition, with a functioning civil society is being approached.⁴²

I contend, therefore, that although the peasant militias appeared to exhibit certain characteristics that liken them to a social movement participating in civil society, the context of a militarised emergency zone, in addition to their close relationship with the military and the government, ultimately typified what Payne (2000) has described as an "uncivil movement" in an "uncivil society" (see Koonings 2001a:404-405, 2001b:19).

Obviously, all this is theoretical. In reality, no one can deny that their actions have contributed invaluablely to social reconstruction, and so have facilitated the transition towards democracy and civil society. This journey took a gigantic step forward when, on 1 January 2000, the state of emergency was finally lifted for the first time in almost two decades. Unfortunately, though, by that time, the peasant militias had already begun to disband on their own, and so it now remains to be seen whether they might return in some altered form in the future, as a social movement, integral to a healthy civil society.

8.6 The legacy of civil war and the peasant self-defence experience

8.6.1 POLITICAL VIOLENCE, CHANGES AND RENEWAL

A notable feature of the contemporary Peruvian civil war is that it has impelled contrary social processes. Ironically enough, the forces of disruption and destruction have also been responsible for inadvertently accelerating many of the most significant processes of social transformation of preceding decades. Massive population displacement due to political violence hastened and escalated the process of urban migration that had already been taking place for decades. The result was a dramatic growth in the marginal urban population of major Peruvian cities as thousands of

rural refugees flocked to shantytowns, where they swelled the ranks of the pre-war economic migrant population already living there. In the Andean provinces, sleepy district capitals like Tambo literally burgeoned overnight as huge numbers of peasants fleeing military repression or guerrilla violence built new, suburban refugee settlements on the outskirts of town. In the countryside by contrast, disperse villages were forced to cluster together for safety, and in doing so not only created new communities, but also initiated a process of proto-urbanisation in the rural areas themselves.

Such dramatic demographic shifts have intensified the process that over three decades ago Cotler described as “urban ruralization [sic] and rural urbanization.” This process is characterised by the reciprocal flow of people between the coast and the highlands, the urban centres and the rural areas, giving birth to new ideas, cultural forms, identities, aspirations and expectations, and patterns of political and social behaviour (1970:432-435). In the process, urban-rural relations have become more fluid, less deeply delineated, and traditional social hierarchies have been transformed.

The growth of the marginal urban population of major Peruvian cities in recent decades has been accompanied by the dynamic phenomenon of “cholification,” which refers to the cultural, socioeconomic, and political process by which members of the indigenous population assume new economic and social roles, and become upwardly mobile (Isbell 1978:20; Oliart 1998:413-415). According to Cotler, the growing “cholification” of the indigenous peasantry through the decades has been one of the significant factors behind the deterioration of the indigenous peasantry’s “structural and normative dependence” on the mestizo, and the elimination of long-established patterns of caste-like social stratification (1970:436-440). Furthermore, cholification has also engendered its own heterogeneous popular culture known as “*chicha*” (Degregori 1999c:166), which is the dominant cultural form in the urban *pueblos jóvenes*.

Until recently, though, the social relevance of the identity of “cholo” was more at the level of the individual, than at the level of an entire population (Isbell 1978). However, this has changed significantly over the past decade. For one thing, the election of a *nisei* president in 1990 had a profound effect on the psyche of common Peruvians (Oliart 1998). In other words, the election of Fujimori, a non-*criollo*, to the position of president contributed to the general perception among the nation’s excluded and marginalized social strata that the structures of power in the country were indeed opening up, and that the ascendance of the masses who had long been outside mainstream politics finally becoming a reality.

In Ayacucho, the achievements of the peasant patrols over Shining Path forces have helped raise the pride and self-esteem of a population in which the boundaries between the categories of *campesino*, *cholo*, and *mestizo* have become increasingly blurred owing to the profound social changes of the past two decades (Starn 1998; Degregori 1999c; Remy 1994). As various authors have pointed out, despite the large indigenous population of the country, it is only very recently that “indigenusness” has become a basis for mobilisation and organisation, principally in the “Inca heartland” of Cuzco (Remy 1994:107). To date there is no evidence of popular indigenous activism, or of a pan-indigenous discourse or movement. Unlike in other countries such as Ecuador or Colombia, Peru’s indigenous people have historically not valued “indigenusness”; neither have peasants shown much enthusiasm for the State’s “*indi-*

genista” policies, such as education in Quechua or Aymara (Remy 1994; Degregori 1999c; Assies et al. 2000:8). In the past, especially during the era of General Velasco, the notion of “*indio*” was given expression in purely class terms as *campesino* (peasant). Consequently, given the pejorative connotation associated with the term “*indio*,” it is perhaps not surprising that the *rondas campesinas* have never assumed the image of an indigenous movement.

Nevertheless, in spite of blurring sociocultural borders in general, the civil defence experience has also served to underscore identity and social boundaries, such as the rural urban dichotomy; and the politics of categorisation has “fortified a sense of peasant identity” (Starn 1999:147). In Ayacucho’s CADs as in Cajamarca’ *rondas campesinas*, active participation was generally viewed as “the mark of membership in the peasantry” (ibid.:147), and the issue of the “rondero identification card,” described in chapter 5, serves to illustrate this point. In some parts of Peru, as in Cuzco or on the island of Taquile on Lake Titicaca, indigenous communities have, in recent decades, begun to recognise the benefits of emphasising their indigenous identity, especially in relation to tourism. This reveals a conscious understanding of the strategic and selective uses of ethnic symbols in pursuit of socioeconomic interests (Baud et al. 1996).

In Ayacucho, however, community identity continues to define one’s ethnic identity. In cultural terms, this is often expressed in distinctive ways of dress (though perhaps less so today, given the growing popularity among peasant men for Western-style clothing). In social and emotional terms, it is with one’s fellow community members that the strongest sentiments of affinity, the deepest feelings of affection, and the most personal relations of consanguinity and reciprocity are established. Individual peasant communities compete with one another to secure scarce resources, and petitions for material and financial assistance are made to the municipality on behalf of one’s community. In this regard, the peasant militia experience, given that its *raison d’être* has always been defence of community, has certainly served to strengthen village identities and loyalties.

Even so, context is key to understanding ethnic identity in Peru. In the second half of the 1990s, the controversy surrounding Fujimori’s place of birth, and therefore his true nationality, developed into a larger public debate on Peruvian national identity. The subsequent emergence and rise of a disturbingly nationalistic and racist discourse, which celebrated the “indigenous authenticity” of *cholos* to the exclusion of non-indigenous Peruvians (the Japanese immigrant population in particular), helped to elevate even more the self-esteem and social relevance of *cholos*. This was undoubtedly one reason why Toledo’s tactical decision to emphasise his “*cholo*-ness” *did* have widespread resonance among the literate, urban, politically conscious *cholo* electorate (see Appendix C).⁴³ We may even surmise that by the time Toledo became president in 2001, “*cholo*-ness” had become, at least in the collective psyche of the majority of the population, the basis for a new definition of the Peruvian nation.

Traumatic though the displacement of rural people to urban centres has been, it has nevertheless had the unforeseen beneficial consequence of providing young people of peasant parentage more opportunities to gain better education, and to extend services such as healthcare to a wider population. And for better or worse, disruptions caused to agricultural activities impelled people in urban and rural areas to learn new

skills and to search for new, creative livelihood strategies in the “informal” sector, thereby increasing their integration into a market economy that, even in war, continued its steady penetration into the nation’s hinterland. What the evidence suggests, then, is that the peasantry’s involvement and active participation in civil war has resulted in their far greater integration into the national framework than perhaps would have been possible had they just been left in peace.

8.6.2 FROM VICTIMS TO CITIZEN-HEROES

The various evidence we have seen of accelerated social, cultural, and attitudinal change in Peru over the past two decades suggest that a profound citizenship revolution has been gradually unfolding. That the *ronderos* have come to be portrayed, in both popular literature and scientific discourse in Peru and abroad, as “patriot-citizens who defend Peru and their community” (Stern 1998:475, caption) is compelling testimony to the extent to which peasant militias had come to be seen (by outsiders as much as by the peasant participants themselves) as platforms for claiming political citizenship.

De-politicised though much of Peruvian society has become over the past two decades, this has not stopped peasants from first petitioning, and later making demands and claiming rights. These included, in more or less chronological order, guarantees for safety, which would later develop into the language of human rights (Muñoz 1998); the right to defend themselves, which was first confirmed and endorsed General Huamán, a political-military commanders of indigenous background (see chapter 3); the right to the *means* to defend themselves, which President García not only articulated, but also validated in action by distributing shotguns to the DECAS (see chapter 4); claims for economic and material assistance to *ronderos* and their families; and more recently, of financial compensation. Drawing an idea from Dagnino (1998:48), it may argued that for peasants in Ayacucho and elsewhere, one of the significant consequences of the common experience of political violence and civil defence has been a perception of themselves as subjects bearing rights.

Recognising their own invaluable contributions to the counterinsurgency struggle, CAD leaders from Ayacucho mobilised in April 1999 for the explicit purpose of claiming the compensation they had been promised by Fujimori and the CAD legislation, and in so doing were attempting to stake out a political claim to citizenship. What precipitated this action was that some months prior to this, the government had promulgated Decreto Supremo No. 068-DE/SG, which stipulated the eligibility conditions, the requirements for making a claim, and the amount to be paid as indemnity to *ronderos* crippled or killed in the line of duty. However, many of the requirements were unrealistic and impossible for individual *ronderos* to satisfy—like having to secure a certificate of autopsy, which is especially difficult in remote areas where there are no doctors, let alone a health post. This condition was also impractical given that the bodies of *ronderos* killed in ambush were sometimes never recovered (see chapter 5). “Because of this situation,” Comando Zorro wrote in his war diary,

a commission of 80 *ronderos* was formed from the districts of Tambo (La Mar) and Santillana (Huanta) to travel to the city of Lima with the objective of asking the Government to enlarge this Supreme Decree,

and the reduction of the requirements, and the recognition of the [current] commanders and the former leaders, many of whom are now to be found abandoned and psychologically ill as a result of this dirty war.⁴⁴

Their effort was partially rewarded by the creation, on 8 May 1999, of a draft proposal to modify the indemnity law, for which they obtained the support of Congresswoman María Jesús Espinoza Matos.⁴⁵ With their objective apparently brought to a successful conclusion, the elated *ronderos* returned to Ayacucho, and the commission was dissolved. It was not kept together to press for other rights, and it did not become the basis for a future social movement of *ronderos*.⁴⁶ When I returned to Ayacucho in April 2000, however, not a single indemnity payment had yet been paid, and the draft proposal was still entangled in bureaucratic red tape. Meanwhile, the *ronderos* continued to wait patiently for positive developments.

Given the change of government in 2001, however, it is likely that the new Congress has scrapped the proposal, along with the other legislative flotsam of the discredited Fujimori government. With the CADs now officially dissolved, *ronderos* like Zorro will find it more difficult to press their case with the present government of Alejandro Toledo. Furthermore, in so far as the resurgent and worsening economic crisis in Peru has left rural people with little time for anything other than trying to eke out a living, it seems unlikely that former *ronderos* and CAD commanders will devote any more time or their scarce personal resources to pursuing this issue. However, in this, only time can tell.

For most of the history of Peru as a modern nation-state, its indigenous population has been denied many of the political rights of citizenship. For instance, it was only at the very end of the 1970s, when the discriminatory electoral regulation stipulating that “only literate individuals [had] the right to elect or be elected” (Cotler 1970:422) was abolished, that the vast majority of peasants were finally entitled to vote. Prior to this, the overall electoral irrelevance of the peasantry meant that most of their claims on the State were ignored, or repressed when they resorted to direct action. Very few peasants understood the abstract political principle of a Peruvian nation, and even fewer felt a part of it.

The contributions that CADs have to the citizenship revolution goes far beyond the role they have had in facilitating the peasantry’s access to the political and material trappings and practical benefits of citizenship. It may, in fact, be argued that the greatest contribution of the peasant militias—and thus quite possibly their most profound legacy—has been to bring an unprecedented level of awareness whereby they now see themselves, and are conversely seen by the government and the rest of society, as Peruvian citizens with rights. In my view, the starting point of this journey was peasant counter-rebellion, and the point it has reached is the retrospective recognition that as Peruvian citizens, peasants have the right to organise and defend themselves. And if it is true that overt demonstrations of patriotism serve as a moral indicator of one’s deservedness of citizenship, particularly in times of crisis, then it may be further suggested that the direct military participation of peasant militias in the counterinsurgency struggle has, at least in their own eyes, proven their patriotism—and consequently their right to citizenship—beyond all doubt. This, in turn, has

prompted peasants to demand that the State give official recognition to their contributions and sacrifices in the form of rewards and benefits which they feel they are entitled to as citizens: schools, hospitals, and roads for communities in war-torn regions where peasant militias were most active, or more poignantly, financial compensation to *ronderos* or their families, as mentioned above. Just as important, the success of the peasant militia experience, and the growing perception among peasants that it was they who were principally responsible for the counterinsurgency victory, has helped to engender a greater sense of self-esteem.

This dramatic process whereby citizenship has been extended to the lower classes, or other hitherto excluded social strata (including women) through participation in military service, is by no means unique to Peru. In fact, military institutions have played a central role in the evolution of parliamentary democracy in many of the developed nations of the world, and military service has correspondingly been an integral component of citizenship. As Janowitz observed, "From World War I onward, citizen military service has been seen as a device by which excluded segments of society could achieve political legitimacy and rights" (1975:77-78). An interesting parallel in this regard may be made between the case of indigenous people in Peru and that of African-Americans in the United States.

During World War II...blacks continued to serve in segregated units, performing primarily quartermaster, construction, and transportation functions. Even the black combat units that did exist were used largely as a source of unskilled labor. *The demand for recognition of the "right to fight" became a major slogan of black organisations that wanted the willingness of the black community to fulfill [sic.] citizenship obligations demonstrated* (Segal and Segal 1983:243. My emphasis).

The gradual racial integration of the American armed forces prefigured the gains that the civil rights movement would eventually achieve "towards racial integration and equality in American civil institutions" (ibid.:244).

The success of the peasant militia experience, when considered against the fact that the long-established practice of conscription was recently abolished in Peru, raises the possibility (or is it more of a certainty?) that in the future, recruitment for Peru's armed forces will be based on voluntarism, as occurred in the United States in 1973. It is also possible that Peru's armed forces will become a defence organisation consisting of a core group of professional soldiers, supplemented by citizen militias, as in the case of Canada's armed forces. If so, this may have significant consequences for the way the Peruvian military defines its professional qualities and mission, and for the way the armed forces as a whole comes to perceive its relationship with civilians and civilian institution.

The implication of these two profound developments—(1) "cholo" as a new definition of Peruvian nationality, and (2) the unprecedented and uncontested extension of citizenship to the peasantry by virtue of their patriotic defence of the Republic—is that the indigenous peasantry of Peru are more integrated into Peruvian national identity and culture now than at any other time in Peruvian history. The *extent* to which

they have become integrated, however, remains to be seen.

My observations suggested to me that most former CAD leaders and *ronderos* have generally returned to their pressing task of subsistence farming. A talented few, however, have set their sights on pursuing political careers, or on obtaining local government and civil service positions. This fact constitutes not only incontrovertible proof of new opportunities opening up to Peru's rural citizens; it also shows that these children of the disenfranchised are themselves now becoming part of the system. Poverty has by no means been eradicated in places like Ayacucho. Yet the extent to which Peru's enduring economic problems constitute fertile ground for future revolution is tempered by the important fact that citizenship incorporation and enlarged democratic participation mean that peasants today have a greater stake in preserving and defending the system more than ever before.

As I think back to my personal experiences in Peru, to all I've seen and to all the Peruvians I've met, I can think of no-one who epitomises the profound processes of change, renewal, and heightened self-esteem described above better than my charismatic friend and key informant, Comando Zorro. The last time I saw him in Huamanga in May 2000, he was no longer Comando Zorro, just Walter Ramirez, an ordinary citizen. He was on his way to the Prefecture to submit his application for the post of Governor of Tambo district, and had stopped at my hotel to bid me farewell, and to give me the most precious parting gift I could have wished for. As we sat in the courtyard of Hotel "La Colmena," sipping from our bottles of Inca Cola, Walter suddenly placed a plastic bag bursting with sheets of paper on the stone table.

"I thought this might be of some use to you, *hermano*," he said in his soft, raspy voice, through that perpetual grin.

I rapidly flipped through the thick block of papers and immediately realised what it was I held in my hands. My look of surprise must have amused Walter. In any case, he continued to grin, and for my own joy I couldn't help but grin back an even wider grin.

"This is the complete archive of Tambo's *Sede Central*, including my diary I told you about when we first met [in 1997]. I took these documents with me when I retired [in 1998] and the *Patrulla Especial* disbanded. I could not give this to you back then because, well, we didn't know you well enough yet, and because of the, you know, political situation, with the military security and all. Anyway, you've come back, like you promised, and now we're friends, no? So I thought that this might be helpful to you, when you're writing your book about the *ronderos* of Tambo, the Committees, no? It's important that people don't forget what happened, that they don't forget what the Committees had achieved for Peru and for the peasants. Write this history down in your book, in English so they can read it in the United States and in Europe. Who knows, *hermano*, perhaps my kids will learn English one day, no? It's important for them to know their history, what their father and their uncles did in defence of the *Patria*. When we are old or dead, *hermano*, it is important for them and their own children to remember that we defeated Sendero."

Notes

- 1 There is speculation that the Shining Path was behind the bombing that took place on 23 March in a shopping centre across from the American embassy, just three days before American president George W. Bush's visit. See *The Economist* 2002a.
- 2 One of the earliest writers to depict Shining Path as a "peasant rebellion" is American scholar Cynthia McClintock (1984); and one of the last is British journalist Simon Strong (1992). A critique of this early view of Shining Path as an "organic indigenous peasant insurrection" appears in Starn (1991).
- 3 See, for example, the statement of General Jorge Fernández Maldonado, co-founder of military intelligence, in Kruijt 1994:55, or the testimony of Sub-lieutenant Telmo Hurtado Hurtado, head of the army patrol that massacred 69 peasants at Accomarca, Vilcashuamán province, Ayacucho (DESCO 1989:128).
- 4 Author's email correspondence with Professor Orin Starn, on 26 August 2002.
- 5 Clear evidence of this stubborn and arrogant indifference to peasant concerns can be seen in Abimael Guzmán, "Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio." *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988. Translated by the Peru's People's Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
- 6 It would appear that Poole is directing her criticism at historiographies that postulate "enduring forms of cultural community as an ethnically defined tradition of resistance" (1994:4) at writers such as Flores-Galindo (1987), Larson (1983, 1988), Stern (1982), Stern ed. (1987).
- 7 For a recent scholarly study of peasant counter-rebellion, see Viola 1996.
- 8 Wickham-Crowley (1992) and McClintock (1984) provide good, clear, concise overviews of the different "schools" of thought on the social sources of peasant revolution. In regard to revolutionary theories put into practice, the two contrary pillars of thought are, on the one hand, Ché Guevara's famous *foco* theory of revolution which holds that popular forces operating from rural areas can create the conditions for revolution, and on the other, Mao's dictum that revolution must proceed as a "protracted people's war" from the countryside to the cities.
- 9 The reference here is principally to capitalist market penetration into the countryside.
- 10 It is well not to forget that violent conflicts, often over land boundaries and water rights, though also disputes over issues such as inheritance, existed and were relatively common before the outbreak of political violence (e.g. Isbell 1978; Palmer 1973:198). I also discovered ample evidence of such violent disputes in the archives of the Ministry of Agriculture, in Huamanga. See Reference, primary sources.
- 11 Based on author's interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000, and conversation with José "Pepe" Coronel on 25 April 2000.
- 12 Author's interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000.
- 13 Author's interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000.
- 14 Author's interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000. Degregori has made the general observation that "Shining Path privileged collective forms of organizing production," and provoked resistance, particularly at harvest time, when peasants "found out that collectively produced crops were destined for the party" (1998:133). A similar complaint was made to José Coronel by Pablo Pariona, an ex-president of the community of Chaca (Coronel 1996:46).
- 15 The relevant archival documents are cited in the reference section at the end of this book.
- 16 Some might speak of a "conservative tradition of rebellion" or "culture of resistance" in reference to the Iquichanos. During the War of Independence, the Iquichanos of Huanta-La Mar took the side of the Royalists, while the Morochucos of Huamanga-Cangallo sided with the Republicans

- (Degregori 1990:98-99; see Mendez Gastelumendi 1996). Husson argues that the conservatism of the Iquichanos was the result of their having politically assessed the situation, and concluding that the “liberal discourses, proclamations of reform, projects of social transformation” of the Republicans might only deepen their poverty and exploitation (1986:167). During the Rebellion of 1826-28, the Iquichanos allied with defeated Spanish royalists in Ayacucho; during the rebellion against the salt tax some 70 years later, the Iquichanos sided with Miguel Elías Lazón, a Cacerist *caudillo* and the most important landowner in the region (Degregori 1990:99; Husson 1983, 1992).
- 17 Author’s interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000, and informal discussion with José ‘Pepe’ Coronel on 25 April 2000.
 - 18 Like endogamous preference in marriage, the wealth-levelling cargo system and its *varayocc* authorities.
 - 19 Author’s interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000.
 - 20 Author’s interview with Elías Ccente, president of highland peasant community of Uchuraccay, Huanta province, on 26 May 2000, and informal discussion with José ‘Pepe’ Coronel on 25 April 2000. See Coronel 1996.
 - 21 Abimael Guzmán speaks very candidly about the need for “excesses” as justification for the guerrilla massacre at Lucanamarca, in 1983, in “Entrevista del siglo. Presidente Gonzalo rompe el silencio.” *El Diario*, 24 July, 1988. Translated by the Peru’s People’s Movement (MPP) and The New Flag (<http://www.blythe.org>).
 - 22 “The principal function of terror,” Greene writes, “...is to convince people that the revolutionary movement is powerful and that the power of the state is weak. Terror is designed to increase the individual’s feeling of isolation and helplessness, thereby enhancing his or her susceptibility to the appeals of the revolutionary movement” (1990:106).
 - 23 This is what retired General Rodolfo Robles, former commander of Región III (Arequipa), told Dirk Kruijt during a private interview in June 2002. What is more, Robles stressed that during his time in command, numerous regional commanders agreed among themselves not to transfer captured Senderistas to the SIN, where they would certainly be tortured. Author’s discussion with Professor Dirk Kruijt on 16 July 2002.
 - 24 First articulated in this way by General Sir Richard Templer in 1952 during Britain’s counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya, but prefigured in terms of actual tactics over a century earlier by the French in Algeria in the 1840s (Bulloch 1996:4).
 - 25 More Development, Less Repression.
 - 26 See Ejército Peruano 1989; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Tayacán 1985; Tapia 1997; Greene 1990.
 - 27 The military predicament became particularly acute in Peru when the army, already overstretched in its war against subversion, was suddenly confronted by a new border war with Ecuador in January 1995, followed by sporadic border tension ever since. In 1997, elements of the 2nd Infantry Division stationed in Ayacucho and Huancavelica prepared to deploy to the Cenepa border area, which, had it happened, would have left, according to Infantry Captain (now Major) César Vasquez of the 2nd Infantry Division, much of the defence of the two departments in the hands of the CADs.
 - 28 Author’s interview with Walter Ramirez Echacaya (Comando Zorro), *Presidente* and *Comando General* of Tambo District’s *Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo*, on 6 November 1997.
 - 29 Author’s interview with Captain (now Major) César G. Vásquez Guevara of the 2nd Infantry Division, *Jefe Militar CCAD SZSNC-8*, Frente Huamanga (Ayacucho and Huancavelica departments, and the districts of Pichari-Quimbiri in La Convención Province, Cuzco Department), on 20 November 1997.
 - 30 Translated as “Struggle for the Reconstruction and Development.”

- 31 See Stepan 1976; Koonings and Kruijt 2002; Kruijt and del Pilar Tello 2002; Fitch 1998; Silva 2001; Huntington 1968; Nunn 1992, 2001.
- 32 For more literature on the PAC, see Remijnse's references (2001:468-469).
- 33 We cannot assume that the vast majority of common people in developing countries have a natural sympathy for democracy, for as Pinheiro notes, "[i]n December 1993, in a national survey taken by the daily *Folha de S. Paulo*, 54 per cent of Brazilians agreed that 'democracy is always better than any other form of government'—the highest percentage registered in the ten times the question has been asked since September 1989" (1997:269).
- 34 See Koonings 2001a; Kruijt 2001; Glebbeek 2001; Remijnse 2001; Wouters 2001; Fumerton 2001; Huggins 1991; Pinheiro 1997; Koonings n.d..
- 35 See Biekart 1999:30-31; Gramsci 1971; Diamond et al. 1989:35.
- 36 I am grateful to Kees Koonings for clearly articulating for me these crucial points concerning civil society, social movements, and their theoretical relationship. Based on author's conversation with Koonings on 12 September 2002.
- 37 Article 19(f) of D.S. 077 states that it is a duty of CAD members "not to realise partisan or religious politics that may align the Committees on a course of action that divides or weakens them (El Peruano 1992:110352).
- 38 The preamble of this piece of legislation describes the original *Rondas Campesinas* as "organisations assigned to the service of the community and that contribute to development and social peace without political aims," and as an "Institution devoid of partisan purposes" (reprinted in SER 1993:40).
- 39 This presents a striking contrast to the history of the original *rondas campesinas* of northern Peru (Starn 1999).
- 40 Chalmers (1997) considers this new modality of participation and representation—in other words, Palmer's "informal politics"—as a phenomenon that is expanding throughout Latin America. These developments will certainly lead us to rethink our notions of civil society, and the importance of political parties within it.
- 41 I owe these insights to Kees Koonings. Based on author's conversation with Koonings on 12 September 2002.
- 42 I owe these insights to Kees Koonings. Based on author's conversation with Koonings on 12 September 2002.
- 43 In reinventing himself, Toledo even changed his Castellano accent from the affected Americanised one with which he spoke five years earlier as an "ethnically neutral" presidential candidate, to a more "provincial" one in 2000.
- 44 Walter Ramirez Echacaya, n.d., (Private Papers), pp.92-93.
- 45 The result of these efforts was the drafting of Proyecto de Ley No. 4833/98-CR.
- 46 This episode, combined with the discussion thus far, provides graphic evidence of Wolf's perceptive observation that the two outstanding characteristics of peasant social organisation are: "first, the strong tendency towards autonomy on the part of the peasant households; second, the equally strong tendency to form coalitions on a more or less unstable basis for short-range ends" (1966:91).

Abbreviations

AP	Acción Popular
APRA	Alianza Revolucionaria Americana
ARI	Alianza Revolucionaria de Izquierda
BCS	Base contrasubversiva
BR	Bandera Roja
CADD	Comité de Autodefensa y Desarrollo
CAEM	Centro de Altos Estudios Militares
CAPS	Cooperativas Agrarias de Producción Social
CCADD	Comité Central de Autodefensa y Desarrollo
CCC	Centro de Capacitación Campesina
CCP	Confederación Campesina Peruana
CDC	Comité de Defensa Civil
CEAS	Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social
CEDAP	Centro de Desarrollo Agropecuario
CEPRODEP	Centro de Promoción y Desarrollo Poblacional
CRF	Comando Rodrigo Franco
DECAS	Defensa Civil Antisubversiva del Río Apurímac
DESCO	Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo
DINCOTE	Dirección Nacional Contra el Terrorismo
DIVICOTE	División Contra el Terrorismo
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
FECVRA	Federación Campesina del Valle del Río Apurímac
FEDECMA	Federación Departamental de Clubes de Madres de Ayacucho
FENCAP	Federación Nacional de Campesinos del Perú
FER	Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario
FONCODES	Fondo Nacional de Compensación y Desarrollo
FPM	Fondo de Promoción
GRFFAA	Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas
IDL	Instituto de Defensa Legal
IER	Instituto de Estudios Regionales 'José María Arguedas'
ILA	Inicio de la Lucha Armada
IU	Izquierda Unida
MIR	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria

MRTA	Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru
PAC	Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (Guatemala)
PAR	Programa de Apoyo al Repoblamiento
PCP-BR	Partido Comunista del Peru-Bandera Roja
PCP-SL	Partido Comunista del Peru-Sendero Luminoso
PCP-Unidad	Partido Comunista del Peru-Unidad
PRONAA	Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria
PSR	Partido Socialista Revolucionaria
PUM	Partido Unificado Mariáteguista
SAIS	Sociedad Agrícola de Interés Social
SER	Servicios Educativos Rurales
SIN	Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional
SINAMOS	Sistema Nacional de Movilización Social
SUTE-Huamanga	Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educación-Huamanga
SUTEP	Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú
SUTE-UNSCH	Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educación-UNSCH
SZSNC-8	Sub-Zona de Seguridad Nacional Centro No.8 (Ayacucho-Huancavelica)
TADEPA	Taller de Promoción Andina
UDP	Unidad Democrática del Perú
UI	Unidad de Izquierda
UNIR	Unión de Izquierda Revolucionaria
UNSCH	Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga
VR	Vanguardia Revolucionaria

Appendices

Appendix A: Displacement and return in the rural communities of Tambo District

Name of community	Year(s) displaced	Cause of displacement	Status	Year of return
Acco Antiguo	1984	G	A	–
Acco Nuevo	–	–	Rs	–
Ancascocha	1984	M+G	A	–
Ayapampa	1984	G	A	–
Balcón	1983–84	M+G	Rt	1997
Ccachubamba	1983	M	A	–
Ccancca	1983	G	A	–
Ccatupata	1983–84	M	Rt	1994
Ccayllurumi	1983–84	M	A	–
Ccescce	1985	M	Rt	1996(?)
Ccochcca	–	–	Rs	–
Chacabamba	1983–84	M+G	A	–
Chacco	1984	M	Rt	1996
Challhuamayo–Alta	–	–	Rs	–
Challhuamayo–Baja	–	–	Rs	–
Chupanhuilca	1987	M	A	–
Churrulla	1983	M	Rt	1995(?)
Huancapampa	1985. See Tinyas	M	A	–
Huantaccasa	1983–84	M+G	A	–
Huarmihuañusja	1983	M	A	–
Huayao	–	–	Rs	–
Huiska	1984–85	G	Rt	1996
Huito	1984	G	Rt	1993
Marcaruccay	1983–84	G	A	–
Marcobamba	1983	M	A	–
Marcopata	1983	M	A	–
Masinga	–	–	Rs	–
Mahuayura	Rural refuge formed in 1984–1985 by desplazados from Tapuna, Huiska, Ancascocha	–	Rs	–

Name of community	Year(s) displaced	Cause of displacement	Status	Year of return
Mauca	–	–	Rs	–
Michcapampa	1983	G	A	–
Millpo	–	–	Rs	–
Mincay	1983	G	A	–
Moya	–	–	Rs	–
Osno	–	–	Rs	–
Pacccha	–	–	Rs	–
Pallcacancha	1983	M+G	A	–
Pampa Hermosa	1983–84	G	Rt	1994
Pamparaccay	1984	M	Rt	1996
Paria	1983	M+G	Rt	2000
Pata Pata	–	–	Rs	
Patapata	–	–	Rs	–
Pinchin	–	–	Rs	–
Polanco	1983–84	M+G	Rt	1993
Pucrura	1984	M	A	–
Qeqra	Resistente until displaced in 1992	G	Rt	1996
Ranra	1983	–	Rt	1998
Rayanccasa	1983	M	A	–
Roccchas	–	–	Rs	–
Rodeopampa	1983–84	G	A –	
Rudio	1983–84	M+G	Rt	1995
Santa Rosa	1984	G	Rt	1996
Saytahuaylla	1983–84	G	Rt	1993
Tanahuasi	1983–84	M	Rt	1995(?)
Tantaccocha	1983–84	M+G	A	–
Tantar	1984	M	A	–
Tapuna	1984–85	M+G	Rt	1996
Tinyas	Together with Huancapampa, formed desplazado community of Chupanhuilca in 1985	M	Rt	1993
Toccto	1984	G	Rt	1993
Tucuhuilca	1983–84	M+G	Rt	1995
Unión Cristal	1983–84	M+G	Rt	1995

Name of community	Year(s) displaced	Cause of displacement	Status	Year of return
Unión Minas	1983–84	G	Rt	1995
Urmay	1984	G	A	–
Usmay	1984	M	Rt. Site of military garrison for 6 months in 1997	1995
Ventanayocc	1983	M	A	–
Vicos	–	–	Rs	–
Yuracctullo	1983	M	A	–

Sources: Concejo Municipalidad Distrital de Tambo, CEPRODEP 1997, and personal interviews with Walter Ramirez Echacaya, Ruben Rojas Dominguez, and Eusebio and Felix (surnames withheld).

A – Abandoned to date (May 2000).

Rs – *Resistente* (resistant) community.

Rt – *Retornante* (returnee) community

G – Displaced by Guerrilla violence.

M – Displaced by Military violence.

Appendix B: Total number of times presidential candidates mentioned on the front page of tabloid press

The table below shows how often each of the four presidential candidates were depicted in particular ways on the front page of the popular tabloid papers, between 11 January and 10 March 2000.¹

Notice how Alejandro Toledo, as the only “cholo” in the group, is portrayed exclusively in terms of long-established racist stereotypes of Indians are crooks and liars.

	Andrade	Castañeda	Toledo	Fujimori
Antagonistic towards the poor	51	30	0	0
Emotional disorders	1	39	0	0
Dubious economic income	0	26	0	0
Agitator and violent	21	0	0	0
Pro-terrorist	14	1	0	0
Snob (“Pituco”)	13	0	0	0
Swindler	0	0	10	0
Connections with Alan García	1	5	0	0
Associated with homosexual surroundings	0	9	0	0
Liar	0	0	5	0
Benefits the most needy	0	0	0	31
Public works	0	0	0	10
Against terrorism	0	0	0	12
Others	0	0	0	8
TOTAL	123	116	19	61

Source: after Transparencia 2000c:1

1 These tabloids are popular not only because of the sleazy articles and smutty photos they publish, but also because they all are cheap at a cost of less than one sol per newspaper. They include El Chato, El Chino, El Chuchi, El Mañanero, El Diario, Más, El Men, and El Tío (Transparencia 2000c).

Appendix C: Results of first round of voting for
Ayacucho Peruvian general elections, april 2000

Presidential Votes

	Huamanga	Huancasancos	La Mar	Huanta	V.Fajardo	Vilcash.	Total
Alianza Electoral Perú 2000	19,001	1,276	1,792	3,093	1,769	1,180	28,111
Partido Perú Posible	16,770	1,270	1,362	2,466	1,482	566	23,916
Movimiento Independiente Somos Perú	616	36	66	83	61	251	1,113
Partido Político Solidaridad Nacional	461	236	189	97	62	122	1,167
Agrupación Independiente Avanceemos	900	22	121	124	41	20	1,228
Frente Popular Agrícola FIA del Peru	321	12	32	26	154	37	582
Partido Aprista Peruano	155	40	32	98	49	18	392
Agrupación Independiente Unión por el Perú	86	23	31	17	23	7	197
Partido Acción Popular	80	12	20	11	17	6	146
Frente Independiente Moralizador	5	0	1	3	0	21	30
Blank votes	2,714	634	1,067	789	993	534	6,731
Null votes	1,088	170	158	145	339	159	2,059
Impugnable votes	18	1	0	1	0	0	20
TOTAL VOTES CAST	42,215	3,732	4,788	6,953	4,990	2,931	65,692
TOTAL VALID VOTES	38,395	2,632	3,338	6,018	3,658	2,238	56,882

Congressional Votes

	Huamanga	Huancasancos	La Mar	Huanta	V.Fajardo	Vilcash.	Total	
Alianza Electoral Perú 2000	15,356	798	1,385	2,497	1,581	1,152	22,769	
Partido Perú Posible	9,430	568	1066	871	1,371	415	13,721	
Movimiento Independiente Somos Perú	2,291	35	66	127	71	185	2,775	
Partido Politico Solidaridad Nacional	694	1,114	203	80	60	99	2,250	
Agrupación Independiente Avancemos	1,967	14	455	143	55	146	2,780	
Frente Popular Agrícola FIA del Peru	398	15	37	27	122	33	632	
Partido Aprista Peruano	1,207	39	45	1,618	77	20	3,006	
Agrupación Independiente Unión por el Perú	326	19	28	77	20	8	478	
Partido Acción Popular	189	17	28	24	26	8	292	
Frente Independiente Moralizador	2,175	13	25	64	20	9	2,306	
Blank votes	2,996	5	58	884	562	1,050	458	6,508
Null votes	4,209	541	566	803	527	330	6,976	
Impugnable votes	30	0	0	6	0	0	36	
TOTAL VOTES CAST	41,268	3,731	4,788	6,899	4,990	2,931	64,529	
TOTAL VALID VOTES	34,033	2,632	3338	5,528	3,658	2,238	51,009	

Source: Transparencia

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1942 Mariano Ramírez i Gabriel Muñoz, indígenas de la Comunidad de Challhuamayo, comprensión del distrito de Tambo....Que solicitamos que la Dirección de su digno cargo...se sirva acoger este memorial i dictar las providencias mas acertadas a fin de que se nos otorgue garantías efectivas i definitivas contra los ininterrumpidos abusos, atropellos i apropiaciones de nuestros pequeños bienes, cometidos por un individuo nombrado Gavino Sullca.... (Registrado en Folio No.2732. 29 de diciembre)

1950 En Ayacucho,...; presentes en el despacho de la Inspección de Asuntos Indígenas primera Zona de Ayacucho; por una parte Lorenzo Apanccoray Hicho y por otra Starunino Huicho Yucra, citados para junta de conciliación, en la queja verbal interpuesta ante la Inspección Reg. De Asuntos Indígenas por Lorenzo Apanccoray contra Saturnino Huicho.... (11 de marzo)

1971 Que, soy un campesino natural y vecino de Challhuamayo donde tengo pequeñas propiedades. Desde hace muchos años he sostenido juicios con los miembros de la Comunidad de Challhuamayo a quienes he ganado; sin embargo, desde el año próximo pasado he sido víctima de sucesivas invasiones de parte de los comuneros en una extensión aproximada de 15 Has...SOLICITO A UD/ Sr. JEFE DISPONGA LA afectación de los terrenos que me fueron invadidos que así obtenga el pago de su valor de la Oficina de Reforma Agraria.... (Registro No. 1606. 10 de setiembre)

1974 Acta de Asamblea [sic] Extraordinaria de Protexa en Defensa de Patrimonio Terrenal de la Comunidad [Campesina de Challhuamayo-Soccochupa]. (13 de octubre)

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Samenvatting in het Nederlands (Summary in Dutch)

Toen in 1980 de communistische partij van Peru – Lichtend Pad – in naam van de boerenbevolking en het proletariaat, een gewapende revolutie lanceerde tegen de Peruaanse staat, werd deze door verscheidene wetenschappers al snel betiteld als een boerenopstand, en daarom een geschikte case om zich toe te leggen op de vraag waarom boeren in opstand komen. Maar zelfs terwijl de opeenvolgende onderzoeken over de zich steeds verder ontwikkelende Peruaanse burgeroorlog een overvloed aan literatuur voortbracht, waarvan men de relevantie verkondigde als zijnde een voorbeeld van een boerenrevolutie, vonden geweldadige confrontaties tussen de guerrillastrijders en de boeren, die zij beweerden te vertegenwoordigen, steeds vaker plaats. De wijdverspreide verbazing en verbijstering die deze geweldadige botsingen veroorzaakten was misschien tekenend voor de mate waarin wetenschappers al lange tijd de vraag hadden genegeerd wat boeren ertoe bracht actief en gewelddadig contra-revolutionair te worden. Het voornaamste belang van het fenomeen boerenverzet is zijn cruciale relevantie voor het begrijpen van de wetenschappelijke theorie over revolutie en voor het begrijpen van de dynamiek in de relatie tussen boeren en revolutionaire groepen.

Dit boek probeert het wetenschappelijke begrip van oorzaken, structurele vormen en dynamiek van de geweldadige boerenverzet te vergroten, door een case-studie te presenteren over boerenzelfverdedigingsgroepen in het Peruaanse departement Ayacucho gelegen in het Andes gebergte, geboorteplaats van zowel de revolutie van het Lichtend Pad als het boerenverzet. Daarnaast onderzoekt dit boek ook de geschiedenis van de Peruaanse burgeroorlog vanuit het relatief verwaarloosde perspectief van het boerenverzet in een poging de dagelijkse ervaringen van de boerenbevolking met politiek geweld en hun reactie daarop te begrijpen.

De thesis van dit boek is dat het boerenverzet een vorm is van verzet tegen externe krachten en zijn primaire motivatie voortkomt uit de bescherming van het leven, bezittingen, levensonderhoud en vrijheid van handelen. Onderkennend echter, dat boerenverzet tot grotere gevolgen leidt en nieuwe sociale vormen van interactie en veranderingsprocessen voortbrengt, beoogt deze studie ook een meer gedetailleerd begrip te verkrijgen over, ten eerste, hoe het boerenverzet heeft bijgedragen aan de Staats *counterinsurgency* acties tegen Lichtend Pad, en ten tweede, hoe deze contributie veranderingen hebben bewerkstelligd in de sociale omstandigheden en sociale positie van de boerenbevolking in de Andes. Ten slotte, tegen de achtergrond van de burgeroorlog, verkent deze studie de wijze waarop geweld, racisme, macht en overheersing hebben geleid tot gewijzigde sociale relaties en culturele indentiteiten in Ayacucho en in Peru als geheel in de laatste twee decennia.

Het onderwerp wordt vanuit drie onderling verbonden manieren benaderd. Als eerste wordt er een poging gedaan de sociale, structurele en historische omstandigheden die de zelfverdedigingscomités deden ontstaan in het departement Ayacucho te identificeren. Het doel is hier te verklaren hoe en waarom dit fenomeen zich ontwikkelde en uitbreidde in het departement en om de regionale en lokale verscheidenheid

in hun oprichting en organisatorische vorm uiteen te zetten. Ten tweede wordt er onderzoek gedaan naar het belang dat de zelfverdedigingsorganisaties kregen in het dagelijks leven in de gemeenschappen op het platteland. En ten derde zal een poging worden gedaan om de wederkerige relaties te indentificeren, die zelfverdedigingscomités in verband brengt met grotere sociale transformaties en veranderingspatronen in de bredere regionale en nationale omgeving. Eén van de leidende conceptuele veronderstellingen in deze studie is dat het fenomeen van de zelfverdedigingsgroepen op het platteland moet worden begrepen binnen de context van zowel de lokale gemeenschap als de gehele maatschappij. Er bestaat een grote hoeveelheid literatuur over de burgeroorlog in Peru. Maar het is pas betrekkelijk recent dat een aantal wetenschappelijke studies hebben geprobeerd de meer op macroniveau gedane analyses te integreren met micro-analyses over grotere gebeurtenissen en sociale transformaties en hoe deze zijn opgenomen in het leven van lokale gemeenschappen, en er een sociale betekenis aan te geven.

De opbouw van dit boek is als volgt. Het introducerende eerste hoofdstuk handelt over de meer praktische kwesties als het belang van het project, de aanpak, de methodologie, de bronnen en veldonderzoekservaring. Hoofdstuk 2 beschrijft het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van Lichtend Pad. Het laat zien hoe de door Mariátegui en Mao geïnspireerde kijk van Lichtend Pad op de sociaal-economische kenmerken van de Peruaanse boerenbevolking en de nationale agrarische structuur de veronderstellingen en doelen vormde van haar revolutionaire strategie. Ik betoog dat het extreme geweld dat het Lichtend Pad in de daaropvolgende jaren heeft uitgevoerd tegen de boeren begrepen kan worden vanuit haar unieke verontstellingen en overtuigingen. Ten eerste, dat zij de voorhoede is van de oorlog van het volk en de bevoorrechte eigenaars van de Waarheid (d.w.z. Marxisme-Leninisme-Maoïsme-‘Gonzalo Gedachte’). Ten tweede, haar strikte trouw aan het orthodoxe Marxistisme-Leninisme dat dicteert dat “contra-revolutie” en “revisionisme” nooit mogen worden getolereerd, en moeten worden uitgeroeid, onmiddellijk en meedogenloos, waar zij verschijnen. Deze discussie verschaft ons een achtergrond waar vanuit we het daaropvolgend gedrag van Lichtend Pad ten opzichte van de boerenbevolking kunnen bekijken, en daarmee een bijdrage aan het begrip waarom Lichtend Pad niet, in tegenstelling tot haar claims, kan worden gezien als een voorhoede van een boerenrevolutie, maar meer als een object van boerenverzet.

Hoofdstuk 3 vangt aan met het begin van de gewapende strijd van Lichtend Pad. Het vervolgt dan met het onderzoeken van de eerste effecten van de militaire tactieken en strategie van Lichtend Pad, niet alleen op de boeren maar ook op andere sociale groepen, zoals de politie. Het is op dit punt dat we al de eerste breuken zien in de relatie tussen Lichtend Pad en de boerenbevolking. Dit gebeurde toen Lichtend Pad verder ging met haar unrealistisch optimistisch avontuur om de realiteit in de Andes van gedaante te veranderen – met alle middelen indien nodig, met een totale onverschilligheid ten aanzien van bestaande culturele waarden in het Andes gebergte, overlevingsstrategieⁿ van de boeren of structurele relaties – in een “hyper-realiteit” zoals deze gezien wordt binnen de rigide vorm van het Maoïstisch-Mariáteguista dogma. Door haar acties, ontlokte Lichtend Pad afvalligheid en rancune die uiteindelijk zou leiden tot het uitbreken van boerenverzet in bepaalde berggebieden in Ayacucho.

Niettemin wordt er ook aangetoond, dat toen de militairen een “uitputtingsoorlog” startten, zij ook een actieve rol gingen spelen in het aanmoedigen of dwingen van de boerengemeenschappen om civiele verdedigingspatrouilles te vormen. Tegen de bredere achtergrond van de aanpak van de Belaúnde regering ten aanzien van *counterinsurgency* worden de structurele en functionele kenmerken van deze eerste boeren civiele verdedigingspatrouilles geanalyseerd en hun effectiviteit beoordeeld. Het onderliggende argument in dit hoofdstuk is, dat inachtnaem van de organisatorische kaders van diverse boerengemeenschappen en hun verband met grotere economische en politieke terreinen, een beginpunt geeft voor het proberen te begrijpen van de diversiteit aan reacties van de boeren op het toenmalige politieke geweld in de Zuid-Centrale hooglanden van Peru. De vorming van zelfverdedigingscomités is slechts één van de reacties van de boeren op het politieke geweld.

In hoofdstuk 4 verplaatst het verhaal zich naar het dal van de Apurímac rivier waar, als gevolg van een aantal specifiek regionale omstandigheden en de dynamiek van het politiek geweld dat zich daar openbaarde, de meest geraffineerde en effectieve *counterinsurgency* milities - de DECAS - werden geboren. Tegen een achtergrond van zowel geweld door de guerrillastrijders als de onderdrukking binnen de “vuile oorlog” door de militairen (eerst onder de regering van Belaúnde en later die van García), bekijkt dit hoofdstuk hoe de DECAS probeerden te overleven door wisselende allianties en door het verdedigen of bevechten van vrijheid van handelen tegen de guerrillastrijders, het leger, de politie en drugshandelaren. Daarnaast volgt dit hoofdstuk de opkomst en ondergang van Comandate Huayhuaco, een legendarische militieleider, die niet alleen meehielp met de ontwikkeling van DECAS geavanceerde tactieken, maar ook het symbool werd voor de “donkere zijde” van de boerenmilities. Ook belangrijk in deze periode was het debat of boerenmilities in het algemeen hun wapens zouden moeten krijgen van de staat voor de verdediging van henzelf en de staat, wat hen zou veranderen in een andere “gewapende actor”. Gearchiveerde gegevens geven ons een inzicht in hoe de DECAS als gewapende eenheid in het veld functioneerden. Deze informatie toont aan dat zij veel meer waren dan simpelweg een bonte verzameling van “gangsters” of “kanonnenvoer”, het stereotype beeld van een aantal externe waarnemers. De militaire vuurkracht van de DECAS (mogelijk gemaakt door drugsgeld), haar duidelijke organisatorische structuur en de verschillende strategische allianties die het kon smeden met andere machtige lokale actoren (zoals de drugsbaronnen en de mariniers) zouden, uiteindelijk, beslissend blijken in de bijdrage aan de pacificatie van vrijwel het gehele dal van de Apurímac rivier. In het grotere sociaal-politieke landschap wordt voorzien door in te gaan op de opkomst en val van het García-regime, en hoe een politieke crisis die gedeeltelijk werd veroorzaakt door zijn onorthodoxe economische beleid, aanzette tot een crisis in de *counterinsurgency* en de relatie tussen milities en militairen.

In hoofdstuk 5 keert het verhaal terug naar het berggebied van Ayacucho waar de DECAS zich uitbreiden. Deze werd bereikt door elite groepen van militieleden uit te zenden naar gemeenschappen in de hooglanden waar zij de lokale patrouilles training en instructie gaven in de strategie, organisatie en tactieken van de DECAS. De nadruk ligt hier op de uitbreiding en institutionalisering van het fenomeen van de boerenmilities zoals deze zich ontwikkelde en hoe deze werd ervaren door de inwoners van het Tambo District. Een andere belangrijke ontwikkeling beschreven in dit hoofdstuk is

de opkomst van Alberto Fujimori tot president. Met name wordt er aandacht geschonken aan de onderling afhankelijke relaties die zich ontwikkelden tussen Fujimori, het leger, de inlichtingendienst en de zelfverdedigingscomités, die het nieuwe *counterinsurgency*-beleid van de regering moesten onderbouwen. Het oorlogsdagboek van Comando Zorro bepaalt het verloop van het verhaal in dit hoofdstuk. Samen met met andere informatiebronnen, zorgen de levendige details van het dagboek ervoor dat we het sociaal-politieke geweld in menselijke bewoordingen zien, zoals de mensen het beleefden en ondergingen. Dit hoofdstuk tracht ook vaak verwaarloosde, ontastbare kwesties die betrekking hebben op de dynamiek van het fenomeen van de zelfverdediging te behandelen, zoals de kwetsbaarheid van het moreel waarop de wil om zich te blijven verzetten rustte. Bovendien worden in dit hoofdstuk ook de belangrijke ontwikkelingen en transformaties binnen de revolutionaire beweging eind jaren tachtig en begin jaren negentig onderzocht, met de nadruk op zowel de scheuren, geschillen en conflicten binnen het Lichtend Pad als op de veerkracht en continuïteit. Gebaseerd op gegevens van verschillende belangrijke ongepubliceerde studies en eigen interviews met gevangen genomen rebellen, geeft dit hoofdstuk een inzicht in hoe het dagelijks leven van een guerrilla van het Lichtend Pad, alsmede van de boeren onder de macht van Lichtend Pad, in de afgelegen door guerrilla gedomineerde gebieden van de noordelijke provincies van Ayacucho, eruit zag. De vernietiging van een belangrijke guerrillacel door boerenmilitieleden aan het einde van 1993 sluit dit hoofdstuk af, en symboliseert het aanbreken van een nieuwe periode van een onzekere vrede in deze subregio van het departement Ayacucho.

Hoofdstuk 6 heeft een andere toon en tempo. Het handelt vooral over de processen aangaande de terugkeer van vluchtelingen, de wederopbouw en ontwikkeling. Het belangrijkste argument in dit hoofdstuk is dat, omdat mensen zoeken naar enige mate van normaliteit in hun dagelijks leven, zelfs in ongunstige omstandigheden, we moeten erkennen, dat zelfs in oorlogstijd sociaal-economische wederopbouw plaatsvindt. Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de rol en bijdragen van zelfverdedigingscomités aan het proces van wederopbouw en gaat in op hun mogelijke bijdrage aan het ontwikkelingsproces.

Hoofdstuk 7 is gebaseerd op mijn persoonlijke waarnemingen van de chaotische en ernstige politieke situatie die het land overspoelde gedurende de controversiële presidentsverkiezingen in 2000. Het was, zoals de titel suggereert, een tijd van onverwachte einden. Niet alleen stortte het Fujimori-regime en haar inlichtingenapparaat in binnen slechts enkele maanden nadat Fujimori zijn derde presidentstermijn had “gewonnen”, ook werd de staat van beleg uiteindelijk bijna overal opgeheven waar hij was uitgeroepen en hiermee werden ook de zelfverdedigingscomités officieel gedeactiveerd. In feite echter, waren de boerengemeenschappen in een groot deel van Ayacucho, op eigen initiatief sinds eind 1998, al begonnen met het ontbinden van hun zelfverdedigingscomités toen algemeen werd aangenomen dat pacificatie was bereikt en er niet langer een serieus risico was op guerrillageweld. In samenhang hiermee, was het niet langer zelfverdediging – die van zichzelf al een financiële aderlating was van tijd en materiele bronnen – maar het herstel en de reactivering van verwaarloosde agrarische en andere aan levensonderhoud gerelateerde activiteiten, die de voorname prioriteit hadden voor de bevolking.

Hoofdstuk 8 probeert een begin te maken met een theoretische analyse en dis-

cussie op basis van de voorafgaande hoofdstukken. Sprekend in het algemeen, zijn de belangrijkste punten van discussie het fenomeen van boerenverzet in relatie tot de *counterinsurgency* politiek van de staat, het belang van boerenmilities in civiel-militaire relaties en de invloed van dit fenomeen op de onderling gerelateerde problemen van democratische consolidatie, natievorming en staatsburgerschap.

Op basis van de bewijzen en analyse zoals weergegeven in de voorafgaande hoofdstukken van dit boek, kom ik tot de conclusie dat het Lichtend Pad omvangrijke en aanzienlijke weerstand opriep toen het haar revolutionaire strategie (reeds hierboven beschreven) met gebruik van geweld poogde op te leggen aan de boerenbevolking. Dit bedreigde niet alleen de persoonlijke veiligheid, maar verergerde ook de economische tegenspoed die de guerrillastrijders nu juist een grote mate van sympathie en steun van het volk hadden opgeleverd. De afvalligheid en weerstand die dit veroorzaakte onder de boeren resulteerde, in sommige gevallen, tot een reactie van verzet tegen Lichtend Pad.

In dit hoofdstuk beargumenteer ik ook dat de belangrijkste bijdrage die het boerenverzet tegen Lichtend Pad heeft geleverd aan *counterinsurgency* niet voornamelijk ligt aan hun militaire kracht (boeren zijn aanvankelijk militair bijna altijd zwakker dan de guerrilla-eenheden) maar eerder in hun vermogen te strijden tegen een guerrilla-groepering voor de politieke en psychologische controle over de bevolking. Bovendien geeft hun superieure lokale kennis van de bevolking hun de mogelijkheid te zijn in *counterinsurgency* dan de veiligheidstroepen van de overheid.

Gedurende de jaren tachtig werd de relatie tussen de zelfverdedigingsorganisaties van de boeren en de militairen gekenmerkt door dubbelzinnigheden en soms tegenstrijdigheden en vijandschap aan de kant van de militairen. Dubbelzinnigheden ten aanzien van hun status en plaats binnen de *counterinsurgency* strijd werden voor eens en altijd weggenomen in de jaren negentig toen de regering van Fujimori wetgeving aannam die hun status formaliseerde als de “vierde tak van de strijdkrachten” (Kruijt 1996:246) en gerechtigd maakte om vuurwapens te gebruiken. Op deze wijze werd aangenomen dat zij een militaire status kregen verwant aan die van Reserve of Nationale Garde-eenheden zoals die in veel westerse landen voorkomen. En hun tot dusverre “extra-legale” waakzame vorm van geweld werd veranderd in “legitiem geweld”, tenminste in de ogen van de staat.

De veiligheid waarin de zelfverdedigingsorganisatie van de boeren konden voorzien moedigde de terugkeer of verschijning van de civiele autoriteiten, NGO's en hulporganisaties van de regering aan in delen van het platteland die zij eens door het guerrillageweld hadden verlaten. In dit opzicht lijkt het erop dat de boerenmilities niet alleen een belangrijke rol speelden in het herstel en de versterking van de burgermaatschappij in vele door oorlog verscheurde gebieden in Peru, maar bewezen ook dat zij zelf een integraal onderdeel uitmaakte van deze burgermaatschappij. Echter, gegeven het feit dat de omgeving waarin deze boerenmilities opereerden was gemilitariseerd en er sprake was van een noodtoestand, waarbinnen rechten en vrijheden waren opgeschort, kan worden gesteld, dat de “openbare vrijheid van handelen” vereist voor het bestaan van een echte maatschappij, in feite was vernietigd. In deze context, kan de ogenschijnlijke heropleving van maatschappelijke groeperingen misschien beter omschreven worden als plaatsvindend in een tussenfase, waarbij een onstuimige, chaotische maatschappij in staat van oorlog wordt verlaten en een vreedzame

maatschappij, in overgang naar democratie en met een functionerende maatschappij wordt benaderd. Daarom kan gesteld worden, dat hoewel de boerenmilities bepaalde karakteristieken lijken te hebben die hen vergelijkbaar maken met een sociale beweging, de context van een gemilitariseerd gebied waarin de noodtoestand geldt, naast haar sterke relatie met de militairen en de overheid, typeren hen uiteindelijk toch als een "onbeschaafde beweging" in een "onbeschaafde maatschappij".

Gebaseerd op bewijzen wordt er in dit hoofdstuk ook betoogd, dat de veranderingen veroorzaakt door het politieke geweld, en in het bijzonder de betrokkenheid en actieve deelname van de boerenbevolking aan de burgeroorlog, hebben geresulteerd in een veel grotere mate van integratie van de inheemse bevolking in het nationale kader dan waarschijnlijk mogelijk was geweest als ze gewoon met rust waren gelaten. Derhalve opper ik, dat tegen de tijd dat Alejandro Toledo in 2001 president werd, de inheemse volksidentiteit van "cholos" de basis was geworden, in ieder geval in de collectieve psyche van de meerderheid van de bevolking, voor een nieuwe definitie van de Peruviaanse natie.

De gevolgen van deze twee diepgaande ontwikkelingen – (1) "cholo" als de nieuwe definitie van de Peruaanse nationaliteit, en (2) de niet eerder voorgekomen en onbetwiste uitbreiding van het staatsburgerschap van de boerenbevolking krachtens hun patriotistische verdediging van de Republiek – zijn dat de inheemse boerenbevolking van Peru nu meer is geïntegreerd in de nationale identiteit en cultuur van Peru dan op enig ander moment in de Peruviaanse geschiedenis. De mate waarin zij zijn geïntegreerd moet echter nog maar worden afgewacht.

Dat de boerenmilities zijn afgebeeld, in zowel gewone literatuur alsmede wetenschappelijke verhandelingen in Peru en daarbuiten, en zij zichzelf zijn gaan zien, als "patrioten die Peru en haar samenleving hebben verdedigd", is overtuigend bewijs van de mate waarin deelname aan de boerenmilities de betekenis heeft gekregen (evenzover bij buitenstaanders als bij de deelnemende boeren zelf) van platforms voor het claimen van politiek burgerschap.

Voortdurende economische problemen in Peru vormen misschien een vruchtbare bodem voor een toekomstige revolutie. Maar de kans hierop is aantoonbaar afgenomen door het belangrijke feit, dat opname in het staatsburgerschap en de toegenome democratische participatie betekenen, dat vandaag de dag de boeren een groter aandeel hebben in het behoud en de verdediging van het systeem dan ooit tevoren.

Curriculum Vitae

Mario Antonio Fumerton was born on 15 April 1969 in Manila, the Philippines, but moved at an early age to Canada. He studied social and cultural anthropology at McGill University, Montréal, where he received his B.A. in 1991. He took his MPhil degree in Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford in 1995, where he wrote a thesis on the construction of a women's liberation discourse among women's organisations involved in the communist revolutionary movement in the Philippines. From 1996 to 2002, he did PhD research at the University of Utrecht, and carried out fieldwork in Peru on two separate occasions between 1997 and 2000. He now lives with his wife and son in the Netherlands.