From the Sierra to the Cities

The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path

Gordon H. McCormick

RAND | NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The research described in this report was sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. The research was conducted in the National Defense Research Institute, RAND's federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, Contract No. MDA903-90-C-0004.

ISBN: 0-8330-1232-0

Published 1992 by RAND
1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

R-4150-USDP

From the Sierra to the Cities

The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path

Gordon H. McCormick

Prepared for the
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

RAND


Tumbes
TUMBES
PIURA
Sullana
Piura
LAMBAYEQUE
Chiclayo
AMAZONAS
Chachapoyas
Moyabamba
CAJAMARCA
Cajamarca
Tarapoto
SAN MARTIN
LA LIBERTAD
Trujillo
Tocache
Iquitos
LORETO
Pucallpa
Chimbote
ANCASH
Huaraz
Tingo Maria
HUANUCO
Huanuco
UCAYALI
PASCO
Cerro de Pasco
Puerto Supe
Huaral
Satipo
JUNIN
LIMA
Callao
Lima
Huancayo
Huancavelica
Quillabamba
MADRE DE DIOS
Puerto Maldonado
HUANCAVELICA
Huanta
CUZCO
Ayacucho
Cuzco
Abancay
APURIMAC
Ica
ICA
AYACUCHO
PUNO
Juliaca
Puno
AREQUIPA
Arequipa
MOQUEGUA
Mollendo
Moquegua
TACNA
Tacna
0 Miles 250
0 Kilometres 400

Urban Peru

PREFACE

This report describes the Shining Path's urban campaign against the government of Peru. The study is founded on a data-based assessment of the war, the author's travels in Peru, and interviews with members of the Peruvian security establishment now engaged against the Shining Path. It was carried out as part of a larger project, "Andean Futures: A Comparative Political, Economic, and Security Assessment," sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

This research was conducted in the International Security and Defense Strategy Program within RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff.

SUMMARY

The cities do not appear to have played a prominent role in the Shining Path's (Sendero Luminoso or SL) theory of victory during the first five years of the armed struggle. Although urban Peru served as the movement's final operational objective on the path to a national takeover, it was to be slowly cut off and eventually seized from without rather than subverted from within. Urban actions were carried out primarily for their propaganda value and to undermine popular confidence in the prevailing order, rather than for any direct contribution they could be expected to make to an SL victory. The ultimate target of these efforts, from the outset, was the city of Lima. The goal was an obvious one: Lima is not only the capital, it is also home to approximately one-third of the country's population and the great majority of its social and economic elite. For these reasons and others it serves as the psychological center of Peru. To control Lima would be to control the country, and for Sendero, control over Lima would eventually be won by controlling the countryside. With this objective in mind, Sendero moved quickly to establish a strong position in the central highlands and began to lay the groundwork for a similar position in Ancash, Ica, and the outlying provinces of Lima department. While this campaign, at one level, should be viewed as only one of several distinct axes of Sendero movement over the past decade, it was and remains a key element of the movement's larger strategy of protracted war.

Evidence that a distinctive aspect of this plan had been modified began to appear in 1985. The basic outline remained the same, but it is clear in retrospect that Sendero was beginning to give much more attention to its metropolitan organization than it had during the opening years of the insurgency. This was apparent in two areas. First, the number of actions carried out by Sendero in and around the capital effectively doubled between 1984 and 1986, a fact that suggested the movement was making a significant investment to expand its urban underground. Second and more important, by the mid-1980s it was apparent that the nature of Sendero's objectives in the city had begun to change from a simple interest in armed propaganda to a more long-range interest in building an enduring base of popular support, backed by a developed, grass roots organization. As part of this program, Sendero moved to establish its first set of urban front organizations beyond those already in place in the universities, and began what has since become a concerted campaign to penetrate and

mobilize elements of the city's base of organized labor. A key target in these efforts was the extensive slums surrounding the capital and other major metropolitan areas of the coast, which SL hoped might be turned into a stronghold of the urban campaign. These and similar efforts marked the Shining Path's first attempt to integrate its position in the cities with its larger program in the countryside. Although still subordinate to the demands and timetable of the rural conflict, the urban campaign assumed a new importance in Sendero national planning.

The new attention given to organization building in Lima and a handful of other coastal cities was evident in many of the major towns of the sierra, most notably in Ayacucho city and the department capitals of the central highlands. Sendero's regional strategy, in each case, was now to be based on a dual program to close on the local center of government from the interior while extending the movement's scope of organization and operations within and around the city's limits. While the elements of this program were to be operationally independent, each was believed to support the other. By keeping the army and the police occupied in the cities, the urban underground would relieve government pressure on the primary locus of the movement's advance, which was in the countryside. Similarly, as Sendero consolidated its rural position and began to disrupt urban access to the hinterland, the regime's political and military position within the cities could be expected to deteriorate, giving Sendero's urban apparatus an additional measure of security and further openings for subversive exploitation. The impact was to be a synergistic one. The combined effects of a diversified urban-rural campaign on regional authority and control were expected to exceed the sum of their parts. This process would end with Sendero's rural apparatus linking up with the urban underground in a coordinated move against the local seat of power.

At a higher level of analysis, but in a similar manner, Sendero's developing positions around Lima department and its position within the Lima metropolitan area are considered to be two parts of the same plan to eventually take the capital city and, with it, the country. Sendero actions in the sierra, in this respect, can be viewed both as a prelude and precondition to its larger plan to envelop Lima. The end game of this plan is likely to involve an attempt to sever the capital's lines of communication with the interior and physically isolate the regime. The metropolitan committee, for its part, has been charged with the job of preparing for this day. The first part of this plan is already well advanced. Large portions of the central and southern sierra have fallen under effective SL control. The area of guerrilla

influence stretches from San Martin department in the north to the northern provinces of Puno department in the south, and from the foothills of the western slope of the Andes to the eastern jungles. With few exceptions, what Sendero is not able to control in this area it is able to deny to the central government. While the regime continues to maintain a presence in the highlands, it is increasingly relegated to the department capitals and a handful of other garrison towns. Large tracts of the sierra have been effectively ceded to the guerrillas.

Sendero's efforts in the capital itself have not met with the same level of success. Since its first big push into the city in 1985, the movement has suffered from a series of major and minor setbacks that have slowed its development and limited its effectiveness. The metropolitan committee is growing, but it is growing slowly. This appears to be true both of the urban underground and its associated front groups. The source of Sendero's problems in the city can be traced to a number of sources, including the limited appeal of its message, the diversified and comparatively integrated character of its targeted constituencies, the absence of an effective coercive option in the city, the relative strength of the forces of law and order, and the natural difficulties associated with building and running an urban underground organization. As the latter point suggests, these problems have as much to do with the inherent limitations of operating in an urban environment as they do with the Shining Path per se. They have, however, been exacerbated by the movement's characteristic concern for security, which has had the effect of further slowing the evolution and tempo of its urban campaign. Together, these factors have placed an effective constraint on what Sendero can hope to achieve in the capital in the foreseeable future. While its presence can be expected to contribute to the general deterioration of Peru's security situation, it is unlikely to ever pose a direct, independent threat to the regime.

Given the course of events beyond the city's limits, however, the slow evolution of the movement's position in the capital is not likely to matter. The differentiated or dual character of Sendero's campaign against the city has provided it with a set of maximum and minimum objectives. Ideally, SL would like to see the metropolitan committee become an independent force to be reckoned with, capable of calling up a large popular following on demand. Its role under these circumstances would be to prepare for the day when it would lead an urban uprising in coordination with a campaign to move on the capital from the countryside. Even if Sendero's urban apparatus falls short of this goal, it could still prove to be an effective instrument in any final play for power. The key to SL planning, in the end, would not emerge from

within the city but from without, in the movement's efforts to seize or destroy Lima's lines of communication and sever its ties to the interior. Given the city's dependency on the interior for food, power, water, and other resources, the impact of any such action would be both immediate and profound. While it is impossible to predict what the specific ramifications of such a move might be, it is easy to imagine that it would be highly destabilizing, resulting in anything from food riots to the exodus of large elements of the Peruvian elite. If the roads were not quickly reopened, the breakdown in law and order could end in the collapse of central authority.

This strategy would not end with Sendero "taking Lima," which the magnitude of the problem and its own relative weakness would be unlikely to permit it to do, but with the creation of the conditions for political disintegration. The regime would not, in these circumstances, be pushed from power; it would collapse under its own weight. The end, Sendero hopes, would be expedited by mounting political unrest within the city, the collapse of public confidence, and a sense of impending doom. These events could unfold quickly or slowly depending upon the speed and decision with which Sendero moved to sever Lima's access to the interior, the precise nature of the city's dependency on the hinterland, its food reserves, the existence and level of any international assistance effort, and the government's ability to control and contain popular instability. The minimum objective of the metropolitan committee under these circumstances would be to make a bad situation worse. If Sendero's urban apparatus was not strong enough to shape and control a final urban uprising, it would almost certainly be in a position to further catalyze a spontaneous popular reaction and employ this reaction for its own purposes. Its goal would be to ensure that once events were set in motion, they continued to escalate until the central government either fled or was driven from office, regardless of whether the metropolitan committee was in a position to pick up the pieces.

The Shining Path is moving methodically to build this option, both within the capital and without. Although the movement is still a long way from being in a position to fully exploit any cutoff of the capital, it is already in a position to threaten the city's lines of communication. This is certainly true of the vulnerable central highway, which serves as Lima's most important access route to the interior. It also appears to be true of the capital's only southern access route via the Panamerican highway. While the city's single route northward is still secure, this too could be compromised by Sendero's growing presence in the highlands of Ancash and La Libertad and the northern provinces of Lima department. It is not possible to estimate if and

when Sendero will feel it is strong enough to attempt to finally divide the capital from the rest of Peru. Such a decision, however, is likely to be linked much more closely to developments in the countryside than to Sendero's position in the city. Should current trends continue and the movement succeed in consolidating its hold over the central highlands and the western foothills of the Andes, the choice will be SL's to make. Whether the movement succeeds or fails in this effort will hinge much more on the Shining Path as an organization than on any likely set of responses from the government of Peru, which has shown little understanding of the insurgency and less ability to stop it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I am indebted to Jennifer Duncan of RAND, who was responsible for building the data sets used in this and several forthcoming studies on political violence in Peru, for this project and others. The task she confronted was formidable, as anyone who has a passing familiarity with the level of political violence in Peru and the confusion and uncertainty of much of the available statistical reporting will readily understand. Her work has paved the way for the first numbers-based assessment of the war. I would also like to thank the many American and Peruvian observers of the conflict I spoke with in Peru, most of whom have requested anonymity. I have appreciated the opportunity to exchange assessments of the course and future of the conflict. Among my friends and colleagues, I would like to thank Roger Benjamin, Norris Cotton, Bruce Hoffman, Caryn Hollis, Lionel Galway, Michael Kennedy, Jack Riley, Benjamin Schwarz, Michael Swaine, and George Tanham, who commented on all or portions of this work. Finally, I would like to thank my secretary, Cathy Janeff.

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

The current insurgency in Peru is an expression of a larger, historically based conflict between the traditional societies of the sierra and the modern, Spanish-speaking culture of the coastal plain. This dichotomy, which began with the Spanish conquest, has played a powerful role in shaping modern Peruvian history, ensuring that even under central government, Peru has remained culturally divided. In the words of Jose Carlos Mariategui, who founded the Peruvian Socialist Party and whose writings provided one of the intellectual pillars of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), "The dualism in Peruvian history and the Peruvian soul is expressed in our time as a conflict between the historical development on the coast and the Indian sentiment that survives in the sierra." This conflict has persisted, he argued, because though "the Peru of the coast" is able to exercise nominal control over "the Peru of the sierra" through Lima, it is neither demographically nor spiritually strong enough to absorb it.[1]

Sendero Luminoso (SL) is the heir to this tradition.[2] Where Mariategui writes of an enduring conflict between the sierra and the coast, Sendero speaks of a longstanding conflict between the countryside and the city. This view, considered within a framework of class analysis, not only underlies Sendero's interpretation of the structure of Peruvian society, it has also contributed to the movement's basic theory of revolutionary takeover. The sierra, in this view, will serve as the cockpit of the revolution. Having consolidated its gains in the highlands, Sendero will move to extend its reach into the lowlands and the major metropolitan centers of the coast. The process of gaining control over the countryside and moving on the cities will be carried out in stages over time. In its original conception, as we will see, this was to be completed by surrounding and choking off the country's major cities from the interior. By the mid-1980s, this early strategy had been modified to incorporate a meaningful role for SL's growing infrastructure in the cities themselves. The scope and intensity of the

---

[1]Jose Carlos Mariategui, "Regionalism and Culturalism," in *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1971, pp. 163–164.

[2]See Abimael Guzman, *Para entender a Mariategui* (1968) and *Retomemos a Mariategui y reconstituyamos su partido* (1978), reprinted in Luis Arce Borja (ed.), *Guerra popular en El Peru: El pensamiento Gonzalo*, Brussels, 1989, pp. 43–58, 61–91. See also Carlos Ivan Degregori, "Sendero Luminoso: Los hondos y mortales desencuentos," in Eduardo Ballon (ed.), *Movimientos sociales y crisis: El caso Peruano*, Lima, Centro de Estudies y Promoción del Desarrollo (DESCO), 1980, pp. 225–267.

movement's activities in and around the country's major urban centers have grown methodically ever since. Even though it has self-consciously retained its original rural orientation, the cities have played an increasing, contributory role in Shining Path planning.

The final objective in this drive is to be the city of Lima, the political and psychological center of the modern Peru of both Mariategui and Sendero. Lima, according to Mariategui, had an arbitrary beginning. "Founded by a conquistador, a foreigner, the city originated as the military tent of a commander of some distant land." While its privileged political position, in Mariategui's view, was justified neither by history, geography, nor the pattern of national economic life, it was "born into nobility," "baptized the city of Kings," "consecrated as the seat of Spanish power in South America," and subsequently "proclaimed" after independence as the capital of the newly formed Republic of Peru.[3] Today it accounts for between 7 and 8 million of the country's estimated 22 million people, the great majority of Peru's political, social, and economic elite, over three-quarters of the country's industrial activity, Peru's only banking and financial center, the majority of its imports and exports, and most of Peru's educational, social, and health services. The city was and remains much more than the simple administrative center of the country; it manifests many of the attributes of a city-state. Although ultimately dependent on the interior for its relative prosperity, it has long defined, shaped, and dominated the political and economic life of the nation. Lima is thus important to Sendero planning not only in its role as the capital, but as a symbol of the movement's larger campaign against modernity.

Sendero's campaign against Lima can be broken out into three "fronts." The primary front, at the present time, is represented by SL's campaign in the regions surrounding and bordering Lima department: Ancash department to the north, Ica to the south, and Huánuco, Pasco, Junín, and Huancavelica departments to the east. These areas serve as the basis of the movement's long-range plan to gradually envelop the city and sever its access to the hinterland. Sendero's second front is represented by its slowly escalating campaign in the nine provinces of Lima department that surround the larger capital metropolitan area. SL actions in these areas are largely an extension of its position in the interior and are supported by the movement's efforts to gradually consolidate its influence in the central highlands. The final front is represented by SL actions in the

[3]Mariategui, 1971, p. 176.

capital city itself. Although Sendero's program in the city is evolving under a different set of opportunities and constraints than its related efforts in the countryside, it has become part of an integrated campaign to close on Lima. Any assessment of Sendero planning against the city, and by extension its strategy to seize Peru, must consider this campaign as a collective. This applies also to the movement's counter-urban campaign in the interior, notably against the country's department capitals, which is based on the same basic operational principles.

This report is organized with these considerations in mind. The study's primary purpose is to examine the nature of SL's urban campaign and the place it has assumed in Shining Path planning. The scope of this campaign, however, is broadly defined. What emerges is a general assessment of not only Sendero's organization and operations within the city, but the integrated role played by the urban and rural campaigns in the movement's larger theory of victory. The study begins with an examination of the factors that brought Sendero into the city and the ideological and organizational assumptions that underlie its approach to urban operations. These are compared and contrasted with those of the other South American urban guerrilla organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is followed by a discussion of Sendero's position within and around the capital, the nature of its position elsewhere in Lima department and the surrounding central highlands, and the implications of this position for Sendero's general game plan against Lima and the central government. As part of this discussion we will briefly examine recent trends in the movement's counter-urban campaign in the interior and what they suggest about Sendero's growth and level of consolidation in the sierra. The final section of this study examines the difficulties Sendero has encountered in operating in an urban environment. This examination is presented through a general discussion of the special problems faced by urban underground organizations. The report concludes with a net assessment of the strengths and limitations of the Shining Path's urban campaign and its implications for the stability of the prevailing order and the future of Peru.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The data on terrorist actions used in this analysis are drawn from RAND's "Andean Political Violence Data Base." The data base was developed and is being extended to support RAND analysis on a range of projects related to the Andean area. It is derived, in part, from RAND's Chronology of International Terrorism and has been

updated and expanded to provide a higher level of detail on the developing insurgency in Peru. These efforts have been supported by both RAND and a variety of RAND's project sponsors. The Peruvian data set is based on four primary sources: RAND's Chronology of International Terrorism, the Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo through its weekly and monthly publications *Resumen Semanal* and *Informativo DESCO*, Control Risk International, and the Peruvian national and provincial daily and weekly press. All of these sources base their statistics on open source reporting. Each source has been reviewed, correlated, and cross-checked to provide an integrated statistical picture of the war in Peru down to the provincial level. It is our belief that the result provides a highly conservative picture of the conflict. There is a great deal more going on in Peru than open source reporting can capture. This is certainly true of Sendero, which is operating beyond the view of the press in large parts of the country. With this in mind, the data employed in this study should be considered to be a cross sample of an even more violent reality.

2. SENDERO'S APPROACH TO THE CITIES

Organized urban rebellion has a long tradition in Latin America. While purposely downplayed in the official history of the Cuban revolution, urban elements of the loose coalition of forces arrayed against the Batista government in 1957–1959 played a key role in the success of Fidel Castro's small and isolated guerrilla *foco* and contributed directly to the downfall of the old regime. The "model" established by the Cuban revolution was implemented in Venezuela by the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) in 1965–1970, in Guatemala by the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) and its antecedent organizations in 1962–1969, and in Bolivia by the National Liberation Army (ELN) in 1966–1974. All these organizations were primarily rural based, but each sought to supplement its operations in the countryside with a network of urban sympathizers capable of both supporting its rural campaign and carrying out an independent program of urban terrorism. Even groups with an exclusively rural operational focus, such as Fabio Vazquez's National Liberation Army in Colombia and its namesake in Peru, founded by Hector Bejar, espoused a theory of victory in which the beginning of the end would come with a general uprising in the cities. The struggle would begin and take off in the countryside, but each movement intended to eventually establish an urban fifth column that would undermine the standing regime from within as the rural rebellion closed from without.

The concept of urban revolution was brought to its highest level of development in Argentina by the Montoneros and the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) from 1970–1976, in Brazil by the National Liberating Action (ALN) and the early Revolutionary Popular Vanguard (VPR) between 1968 and 1970, and in Uruguay among the Tupamaros, formally known as the National Liberation Movement (MLN), between 1965 and 1973. In contrast to the first wave of urban insurrectionists, who operated as city-based arms of rural-based movements, the second-generation urban terrorist sought to use the city and its slums as the primary if not exclusive arena of combat with the prevailing order.[1] Indeed, those who joined these organizations saw

[1]It should be noted that even the most urban-oriented of these organizations continued to reserve a place for rural operations in their larger theory of victory. The ALN, for example, viewed the urban campaign to be the opening shot in a larger struggle that was eventually to move out of the cities into the countryside. According to Carlos Marighella, the ALN's most prominent theoretician, the purpose of the urban guerrilla is to help his country cousin get established in the hinterland. This was to be

themselves not as urban terrorists but as urban guerrillas, operating not as the urban instrument of a larger rural-based guerrilla army but as a standing army unto itself. Whereas the first-generation urban terrorist subscribed to the view that victory would ultimately be either won or lost in the countryside, the second-generation urban guerrilla envisioned winning first in the cities and only then moving beyond the city limits to consolidate his control over the rural population. Urban action, in this scheme, was not simply a tactic but a strategy of revolutionary combat.

At a high level of generality, SL's approach to the cities appears to be a hybrid of these two traditions. Like the guerrilla organizations of the 1960s, the Shining Path has accorded the greater importance to the rural campaign. At the same time, the scope and structure of much of Sendero's efforts in the city—notably in Lima—resemble those of the urban guerrillas of the 1970s. SL's metropolitan apparatus, in fact, shows the same complexity of form and function as its counterparts in the countryside, a feature that places it more closely in line with such second-generation urban organizations as the Tupamaros than with the weak city-based fronts of the July-26 Movement and its imitators. In the end, however, it is the differences between SL and its predecessors that should be of greatest interest to the contemporary analyst. The Shining Path's campaign in the cities does share certain tactical features with those of the urban guerrillas of the past, but it is the product of a very different revolutionary tradition. This distinction has had important implications for the premises underlying Sendero's move into the cities and its approach to urban rebellion.

TAKING THE FIGHT TO TOWN

In contrast to Sendero's rural strategy, which was formulated long before the movement's first armed actions in 1980, its conception of the urban campaign has evolved over the course of the past decade. As we will see, it has been only in the years since 1985 that Sendero has come to view the cities as integral to its larger theory of victory. The urban campaign prior to this time appears to have had little rele-

---

accomplished by engaging in "an endless ascendancy of unforeseen actions," ensuring that "government troops [could not] leave the urban area to pursue the guerrillas in the interior without running the risk of abandoning the cities and permitting rebellion to increase on the coast as well as in the interior of the country." This diversion was intended to permit the unmolested creation of a rural guerrilla army, which would eventually reenter the city to seize power. See Carlos Marighella, "Mini Manual of the Urban Guerrilla," appendix in Robert Moss, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, Adelphi Papers, No. 79, London, IISS, 1971, pp. 29–30.

vance to "the real war," which Sendero's leadership believed was being waged in the countryside. While urban bombings and assaults were of unquestionable propaganda value, the cities were thought to be unsuitable for revolutionary action. This view appears in part to have been inherited from the military writings of Mao Zedong, which downplay the potential role of urban action in favor of a rural-based campaign. Ironically, it may also have been influenced by Sendero's reading of the failure of the urban campaigns of the 1970s, just as the urban guerrilla theorists of that period were themselves influenced by the failure of the rural revolutionary experiments throughout Latin America a decade before. Although the cities, in Sendero's view, defined the end game of the revolution, they were to play little role originally in the process of winning. Victory was to be achieved through a methodical campaign to gradually squeeze the cities from without, rather than undermine them from within.

Several factors appear to have prompted SL to modify its assessment of the potential importance of the city in its general theory of victory. The first can be attributed to the natural evolution of Sendero strategy. While acknowledging the "universality" of the Maoist concept of "people's war," Abimael Guzman noted in 1988 that the concept must be interpreted and applied with a close eye toward the advantages and constraints of the moment. In other words, while the "popular struggle" may be universally relevant, it cannot be universally operationalized. The basic principles of people's war provide a guidepost; how these principles are translated into practice must be conditioned by circumstances and opportunity.[2] For Sendero this has meant, among other things, modifying Mao's original doctrine to account for the advantages provided by an urban following. It was natural for the movement to build on the network of supporters it had established in a number of highland and coastal cities during its eight- to ten-year building phase in the 1970s. Once established, however, these "centers of resistance" gradually took on a significance of their own. This process was accelerated by the initial success of Sendero's opening actions in the cities, particularly Lima. The shock value of operating in and around the capital city was clearly very high, a fact that encouraged the movement to continue to expand its urban campaign. Over the next four years the cities gradually assumed a more prominent role in SL planning. By 1985 they appear to have become

[2]Interview with Abimael Guzman, July 15, 1988, printed in *El Diario*, July 24, 1988, p. 15 (henceforth, Guzman interview).

a distinct component of the Shining Path's increasingly distinctive conception of people's war and popular struggle.[3]

This decision was reinforced by Peru's large and rapidly growing urban population. The number of people living in or around the cities in 1961 was estimated to be 3 million. This figure increased to almost 6 million in 1972 and almost 11 million in 1985. Where urban dwellers accounted for less than 30 percent of the national population in the mid-1960s, they were estimated to account for well over 50 percent of the national total in the mid-1980s.[4] Demographic shifts of this magnitude obviously had important strategic implications. Among other things, they conferred a natural importance to urban revolutionary organization, even if the locus of the popular struggle remained in the countryside. When Mao Zedong was laying down the principles of people's war in the late 1920s and 1930s, approximately 15 percent of the Chinese population lived in the cities. Under such circumstances it was quite natural that the revolution would not only begin in the countryside but remain there until the guerrillas were strong enough to seize power. The differing conditions of Peru, Guzman argued, required a different approach. Urban Latin America, he noted, had come to account for a proportionately larger percentage of the region's population than is typically found elsewhere in the Third World. The revolutionary struggle, consequently, "must unfold there" as in the countryside if the movement was to take advantage of the new demographic environment.[5]

The migration to the cities witnessed throughout the 1960s and 1970s was accelerated significantly by the escalating conflict in the sierra. The most dramatic shifts occurred in the wake of the military's opening actions against Sendero in late 1983 and early 1984. The evidence of this internal movement was particularly evident in the capital, which by the mid-1980s had become a refuge for hundreds of thousands of highland peasants attempting to flee Sendero, the army, and the war. The swollen ranks of the city's urban poor, most of whom were relegated to a life at or near the subsistence level in one of Lima's rapidly growing shantytowns, offered an attractive target

---

[3]This shift was anticipated by Raul Gonzalez, who wrote in 1984, "If the speculation is correct, we may be on the threshold of a new Senderista strategy that would begin taking shape and having an impact on the urban areas." Such speculation indeed turned out to be correct. See "Que pasa con Sendero Luminoso?" *QueHacer*, No. 29, June 1984, pp. 34–38.

[4]Richard Webb and Graciela Fernández Baca de Valdez, *Peru en números 1990*, Lima, Cuánto, S.A., 1990.

[5]Guzman interview, p. 15.

for SL recruitment. By 1985, Lima had expanded to include some 6 million of the country's 20 million people. As many as 2 million of these were believed to be living in the shantytowns, called *pueblos jovenes* or *barriadas,* surrounding the city. As village populations moved to the city, the Shining Path's local apparatus, if any, often moved with them. Without prospects for employment, facing severe racial discrimination, and separated from the traditional support structure of village life, the newly arrived peasant, it was hoped, would prove to be more "mobilizable" than he might have been back home. It is quite understandable that Sendero would attempt to turn these developments to its advantage, regardless of its established rural orientation. Building on its initial presence in the city, the leadership of the Shining Path saw an opportunity to capitalize on the country's accelerating internal migration and step up its operations in and around the capital.[6]

This decision appears to have been further encouraged by the rise of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in 1984. Until 1984, Sendero had retained a virtual monopoly over the use of organized political violence. Though at least two other groups—Puka Lacta-Red Flag and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR)—shared this mantle in principle, neither movement was particularly active, substantiating Sendero's claim to be the only militant alternative to the prevailing order. Tupac Amaru rose to challenge this claim. Then, as now, MRTA's particular forte was the "urban spectacular." Even though the group's core membership in the mid-1980s was estimated to be no more than several hundred cadre, the high-profile nature of MRTA operations posed a potential threat to the Shining Path's still limited foothold in and around Lima.[7] By the end of 1984, Sendero's leadership was faced with the choice of either continuing to downplay its Lima-based campaign and thereby risk losing ground to MRTA or reorienting its priorities and stepping up this campaign in an effort to win the loyalty of Peru's urban poor. It is evident in retrospect that Sendero opted for the latter course. While the peasantry was still believed to be the "motor force" of the revolution, urban operations were designated a "complementary but necessary" element of the movement's struggle for power.[8]

---

[6]For a brief chronicle of these events, see James Smith, "Peru: Terror Coming Out of the Hills," *Los Angeles Times,* July 1, 1988; and Sam Zuckerman, "Sendero Luminoso Pushes Urban Strategy," *The Guardian,* March 16, 1988.

[7]Gordon H. McCormick, *Sharp Dressed Men: An Organizational Assessment of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement,* RAND, forthcoming 1992.

[8]Raul Gonzalez, "Sendero vs. MRTA" and "Sendero: Los problemas del campo y de la ciudad . . . y además el MRTA," *QueHacer,* No. 46, April–May, 1987, pp. 47–53.

Finally, Sendero's interest in expanding its urban presence may have been spurred by a sense that events were coming to a head for the central government. SL's efforts to "expand the guerrilla war" were clearly taking a toll. This, coupled with the deteriorating economic situation, growing civil-military tensions, and mounting popular dissatisfaction with the standing regime, led many observers to conclude that the military would soon move against the government in an effort to restore order. To fully exploit such a crisis, the Shining Path would require an established urban presence. The displacement of the civil government and the counterterrorist campaign that would almost certainly follow could be expected to polarize Peruvian society. The most dramatic repercussions of such an event would be felt in Lima, where large elements of the population were already believed to be in a state of revolutionary ferment. With a foothold in the capital, the Shining Path would be in a position to turn this event to its advantage and strike at the heart of the new regime. This foothold, however, would have to be established before the military intervened, while the movement was still able to extend its presence under the comparative protection of Peru's constitution. Once the takeover occurred, Sendero's organizing efforts would be driven underground, limiting the movement's ability to build a mass following.[9]

IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

First- and second-generation urban guerrillas had more in common than probably either would have admitted at the time. They certainly had more in common with each other than either would today with the Shining Path. Despite differences in the actual priority assigned to the urban campaign, which was their principal distinguishing characteristic, both fell squarely within the Cuban model of insurrection. By contrast, Sendero's theory of victory has evolved out of the tenets of orthodox Leninism and the interpreted experience of the Chinese revolution. This distinction has had important implications for Sendero strategy and has resulted in a notably more successful

---

[9]See the discussion by Raul Gonzalez, "El cambio de estrategia de Sendero y al captura de Morote," *QueHacer*, No. 53, July–August 1988, pp. 16–22. This article presents an evaluation of an interview with Isidoro Santiago Nunja Garcia, an "intermediate political official" within the Shining Path. Nunja maintained that by the mid-1980s, Sendero had decided to begin a "new phase: insurgency in the urban areas." One of the driving considerations in this decision, he argued, was to instigate a coup through stepped-up urban action and the polarization of Peruvian society. An established urban presence, in this respect, was not only believed essential if the Shining Path was to fully exploit the consequences of a coup, it was viewed by the movement as a means of generating it in the first place.

approach to revolutionary action, both in and out of the city. The most important manifestations of these differences are to be found in the areas of revolutionary leadership, organization, the expected timing and duration of the struggle, and the related question of popular support.[10]

First, building on the tenets of orthodox Leninism, the first priority of the Shining Path was to establish a party of core activists who would be tasked with the objective of guiding the revolutionary struggle. This decision had practical as well as ideological implications. The party vanguard, in SL's view, serves as the strategic center, the high command, and the political conscience of the armed struggle. It is the heart of the revolution. It is "a select organization," according to Guzman, "a selection of the finest, of those who have proven themselves, of those who are made of solid stuff." While it "has a mass nature," it is not "of the masses." It is "a party of activists, of leaders," organized into a "machine of war."[11] In its role as vanguard, the party also serves as an essential mechanism for mass political mobilization and as an instrument for harnessing and channeling general popular unrest into a directed, subordinate program of revolutionary action. This is to be achieved by linking the goals and demands of targeted groups, whether these be "bread," "land," "peace," or "unity," with the objectives of the party. Although these appeals may take different forms in different parts of Peru, the principle is the same. By posing as a standard bearer, the Shining Path has worked to translate the ambitions and hopes of its chosen constituency into usable political influence. The party elite, in the words of Philip Selznick, is "won over" or "persuaded" to support the revolution's objectives. "The masses," by contrast, are "maneuvered" into doing so by symbolic appeals to their hopes and fears.[12]

---

[10]The discussion is derived in part from a reading of Sendero's few published documents, notably *Desarrollemos la guerra de guerrillas* (1982), *Bases de discusión* (1987), and *Documentos fundamentales* (1988).

[11]Guzman interview, p.13; *Bases de discusión* (Bandera Roja edition), Lima, Comité Central, Partido Comunista del Peru (CC/PCP), September 1987, pp. 111–130.

[12]Philip Selznick, *The Organization Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics*, RAND, R-201, 1952, p. 9. This latter process is aided by what A. Rossi described as a *mystique de parti*, in which the vanguard is presented as the basis of practical truth (Selznick, p. 44). This has become a powerful and characteristic feature of the Shining Path, which has sought to reshape its membership in its own image through party discipline. The principles of party discipline are threefold: "the subordination of the minority to the majority," "the subordination of the militant to the party," and "the subordination of the party to the central committee," cited and discussed in captured Shining Path party documents and personal notebooks, Junín department, 1989.

The first- and second-generation urban terrorist, by contrast, made no meaningful distinction between the party and the army or, in the parlance of the day, the urban guerrilla *foco*. In the tradition of the Cuban revolution, party development was an afterthought, of little perceived operational significance. The party was to emerge as a by-product of combat. It would postdate rather than predate the initiation of the guerrilla struggle. This view was presented most graphically by Regis Debray, who argued that "the armed revolutionary struggle [required] a new style of leadership, a new method of organization, and new physical and ideological responses on the part of leaders and militants." These qualities, it was hoped, would be provided by the guerrilla *foco,* whose actions would serve as a catalyst for a general popular uprising. Party leadership per se was not only deemed unnecessary, it was considered a liability. The guerrilla struggle, according to Debray, must be "directed not from the outside but from within, with the leadership accepting its full share of the risks involved." The *foco,* in this view, was to be "master of its own political leadership." It was to operate as an autonomous actor: a vital force of revolutionary change, beyond the control of any larger political entity or party structure. While such words sounded good, this advice proved to be impractical. The overtly military orientation of the typical guerrilla *foco* left it isolated from both the constituency in whose name it fought and the larger political issues that purportedly underlay the conflict.[13]

Second, and related to the issue of vanguard party control over the revolutionary process, is the importance given to organization building. Political organization, in Guzman's view, must take precedence over military action. While power, Guzman would agree, "grows out of the barrel of a gun," the Shining Path's ability to operate on a military plane is a function of the strength, scope, and diversity of its popular base. This in turn will be a function of the movement's efforts to politicize, mobilize, and subsequently organize a "peasant-worker alliance." What this has meant in operational terms is that Sendero has rarely showed its hand before it is ready to strike. It is a movement, as suggested elsewhere, that clearly understands the value of political work. Armed actions, as a general rule, succeed rather than precede the establishment of a secure political base. What we do not see of Sendero, therefore, has proved to be as impor-

---

[13]Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America,* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1967, pp. 101–116.

tant as, if not more important than, what we do see.[14] Shining Path operations, in this view, while enjoying an almost uninterrupted growth since 1980, are an expression of a much more extensive network of political support lying just beyond the horizon. Although we can see the manifestations of this support, we are not able to measure it. It is this political base and what it implies about Sendero's long-run potential, rather than the movement's current military profile, that poses the greatest challenge to the central government. This has been made possible, according to Guzman, by the Shining Path's continuing efforts "to create organizations that are superior to those of the reactionaries."[15]

This emphasis stands in sharp contrast to the process of mass mobilization espoused by the first- and second-generation urban guerrilla, in which action rather than planning and political spadework was deemed to be the key to success. In the same way that the guerrilla band was considered to be a "party in embryo," a militant mass following and military organization, it was argued, would ultimately evolve ineluctably and effortlessly out of the armed actions of the guerrilla nucleus. Conviction, self-sacrifice, and the power of example, in this scheme, counted for much more than the slow process of building an organizational base. Would-be followers, it seems, were to be attracted naturally to the original guerrilla band until its size eventually swelled with new recruits. Organization was to flow directly from the movement's growth in numbers. Little more attention was given to the actual process by which this evolution would occur than to suggest rather mystically that the guerrilla *foco* would recreate itself. The nucleus would grow "until the day when its troops, too numerous to be fed and supplied locally, would split up. From the mother cell . . . the other germ carrying cells detach themselves, by natural division." Each would develop into an independent column that eventually "begets various others consecutively." As this process was brought to its logical conclusion, established columns would gradually coalesce around "fronts" that in turn would create their own columns. This "budding" process was to continue until the old regime was literally overwhelmed.[16]

---

[14]Gordon H. McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru*, RAND, R-3781-DOS/OSD, March 1990, p. 48. See also CC/PCP, 1987, pp. 124–129.

[15]Guzman interview, p. 7. See also the discussion by Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen, *Sendero: Historia de la guerra milenaria en El Peru*, Lima, Apoyo, 1990, particularly chapter 19, "El 'pensamiento militar del partido,'" pp. 349–357.

[16]Debray, p. 80.

Third is the question of timing and opportunity. When is it a good time to organize? When has the time come to act? Ideologically, of course, Sendero subscribes to the view that the success or failure of a revolutionary program will hinge, in part, on the existing state of society. Social disequilibrium generated by deep-seated class conflict, in this view, is the raw material out of which successful revolutions are made. This has a number of strategic and operational implications. Perhaps the most important implication in the first case is that revolution is not for everyone. A vanguard organization cannot be expected to emerge, much less win a meaningful following, within the context of a stable social system. Sendero judged correctly that the elementary conditions for revolt exist in Peru. Although the country is obviously not a powder keg waiting to be ignited, its longstanding and strong social, ethnic, economic, and geographical divisions have provided SL with a highly charged set of exploitable issues, and SL is trying to make the most of them. How it goes about doing so is an operational question that in turn presents timing problems of its own. The challenge is obviously different in different parts of Peru, depending on such factors as the strength of the local government presence, the degree of prior sympathy for the group, the area's level of prior political organization, and whether or not the area in question has fallen under emergency jurisdiction.[17] As a general rule, however, the Shining Path operates under the assumption that the process of political mobilization—in which local populations are targeted, brought under SL control, and incorporated into the movement's regional support structure—will naturally occur at different times, at different rates, and in different places throughout the course of the conflict.

The early urban guerrilla, by contrast, operated as if the revolution could be created "ex nihilo."[18] Far from acknowledging the widely accepted tenet that certain conditions in society have to pertain before

---

[17]Sendero is running at least four distinct campaigns in Peru. These are the campaign in the emergency zones, where the movement must confront the presence of the army; the campaign in areas not designated emergency zones, where SL confronts the police; the campaign in the Upper Huallaga valley, where the presence of the coca trade has resulted in a number of distinctive changes to SL's standard modus operandi; and finally the urban campaign, which, as we will see, offers its own special opportunities and constraints. Within each of these "campaigns," tactical and operational opportunities are determined by prevailing conditions. Sendero, in this respect, has proved to be a flexible organization, capable of shaping and reshaping its program in relation to the local situation and the needs of its targeted constituency.

[18]James A. Miller, "Urban Terrorism in Uruguay: The Tupamaros," in Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts (eds.), *Insurgency in the Modern World*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1980, p. 148.

an armed rebellion can be successfully undertaken, the urban guerrillas of the 1960s and early 1970s argued that, if necessary, a revolutionary takeover could be manufactured out of whole cloth by forceful action. "Revolutionary actions," according to the Tupamaros, "create revolutionary situations." Human will, rather than the abstract laws of history, determines success. This view was squarely in line with the prevailing romantic view of the guerrilla fighter, who, in some quarters, was accorded almost superhuman powers. One of the worst offenders in this regard was Che Guevara, whose writings on guerrilla warfare between 1960 and his death in 1967 grew increasingly out of touch with the reality of revolutionary conflict. Writing in 1960, Guevara argued that the tactics of the Cuban revolution were likely to be effective only against "Caribbean-type dictatorships." These parameters, however, were expanded significantly in 1961 and again in 1963 with the argument that the "objective conditions" for revolution existed throughout Latin America, a view that effectively rejected the question of timing by arguing that the time was right everywhere, including states with popularly elected governments and no previous record of political unrest. All that was required to turn the potential for revolutionary violence into the reality of a revolutionary takeover was the catalyst provided by the guerrilla *foco*. Armed action, in this view, would generate its own support, which in turn would lead to further operations.[19]

Fourth, the Shining Path has a clearly developed theory of victory based on the assumption that the struggle for power will be protracted. The protracted character of the conflict is dictated, in Guzman's view, by the simple fact that the guerrillas, which begin weak, must finish strong. The Shining Path, it is argued, can only address this disparity over time. The initial basis of this struggle is believed to have been provided by the network of political support that was laid between the period of Sendero's founding in 1970 and its first armed actions on May 17, 1980. The war itself will begin in the highlands, move up the Andean spine, spread through rural Peru, and penetrate, surround, and eventually overwhelm the cities. This process, which Sendero believes is already well advanced, is to unfold in a series of stages, defining the movement's intermediate objectives

[19]For two critiques of this and related aspects of "*foco* theory," see Ernest Evans, "Revolutionary Movements in Central America: The Development of a New Strategy," in Howard J. Wiarda (ed.), *Rift and Revolution: The Central American Imbroglio*, Washington, D.C., American Enterprise Institute, 1984, pp. 167–193; and Irving Louis Horowitz, "Military Origins and Outcomes of the Cuban Revolution," in *Cuban Communism*, Horowitz (ed.), 5th Edition, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1984, pp. 617–654.

as well as the scope and intensity of the conflict. Each stage will lay the foundation for the next. This evolution has organizational as well as operational implications. Each stage corresponds to the gradual metamorphosis of the military arm of the movement from a collection of guerrilla fighters into a "popular guerrilla army," from a force that is capable only of isolated acts of terrorism to one that is able to carry out stand-up, quasi-conventional operations.[20]

For the early urban guerrillas, by contrast, planning rarely extended beyond the next battle. The revolution was not to be carried out under the auspices of a master plan, which was believed to place unnecessary restrictions on the guerrilla's room for maneuver, but through a succession of discrete engagements. The lack of a master plan was deemed to be a virtue, giving the guerrilla *foco* free rein to operate as an emotive force in its efforts to impress itself on the popular imagination. One engagement would flow from the next in a process that would be driven by circumstances and local targets of opportunity. Revolution, in this view, was reduced to a series of contingent events. The position of the target regime, it was presumed, would erode with each attack. These would begin slowly but accelerate over time as popular support for the original guerrilla nucleus expanded. The combined effects of these engagements would undermine the last vestiges of the old regime, leaving it with no other choice but to abdicate or die.[21] The guerrilla's style of operation would look the same at the end of this process as it did at the beginning. Stages, in this view, were merely "conditions of closeness to or distance from victory," with no particular strategic or tactical significance of their own.[22] It was not strategy, then, but superior tactics, coupled with the natural virtue and superior determination of the guerrilla, that would permit a small group of dedicated men to defeat an objectively stronger force.

Fifth, a key element of Sendero strategy is the establishment of a series of rural base areas (*bases de apoyo*) to support the further expan-

---

[20]CC/PCP, *Bases de discusión*, pp. 79–82.

[21]This view was articulated clearly by one of the leading theorists of urban guerrilla warfare, Abraham Guillen, who argued that what was important in revolutionary war was "not a lightning victory when the people are not in the streets, but rather small frequent guerrilla actions which prepare them for the moment at which they arise en masse like an enraged lion." Guillen dubbed this approach to guerrilla warfare "the strategy of the artichoke." The objective was to "eat the enemy bit by bit, and through brief and surprise encounters of encirclement and annihilation to live off the enemy's arms, munitions, and paramilitary effects." See Donald C. Hodges' translation and discussion of Guillen's writings, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla—The Revolutionary Writings of Abraham Guillen*, New York, William Morrow and Co., 1973, pp. 1–55, 250.

[22]Horowitz, p. 622.

sion of the movement throughout Peru. The establishment of such a basing structure, according to Guzman, has been made possible by "a vacuum of power in the countryside," a result of both the underdeveloped political infrastructure of the regime and the actions of the Shining Path. Each base area consists of a network of "popular committees" tied together by a regional political administration under Sendero control. Together they represent the evolution of the Popular Republic of New Democracy.[23] This concept, once again, is intended to have organizational as well as operational content. Apart from its role in supporting the operations of SL's guerrilla columns in the short run, the base structure is believed to be a critical step in supporting the long-run goal of developing a standing military force. This process is to be characterized by a lengthy period of "dual power," in which Sendero will work to consolidate its authority over large areas of the highlands in an effort to create a competing claim to legitimacy. Abimael Guzman, in this respect, would clearly agree with Mao, who is said to have told his troops that "a revolution's need for a base area [is] . . . like an individual's need for buttocks. If an individual didn't have buttocks, . . . [he] would have to run around all the time . . . his legs would get tired and collapse under him, and he would [soon] fall down."[24] Sendero's urban support base, or "buttocks" so to speak, would be and have been provided by its surrounding positions in the countryside.

In line with their romantic, highly action-oriented view of insurgency, the early urban guerrilla paid little or no heed to the development of a territorial base and a corresponding zone of guerrilla administration. With the takeover, the insurgents would step out of the shadows to assume their rightful place at the head of a new revolutionary government. Until then, they were advised to lay low and remain constantly on the move. "Constant vigilance, constant mistrust, [and] constant mobility" must be their watchwords, tenets that precluded the establishment of guerrilla bases. The "guerrilla base or fixed base of support," it was argued, though valuable in principle, depended upon "a combination of favorable circumstances" that were believed not to exist in Latin America. Any such effort, it was predicted, would prove to be "a colossus with feet of clay," depriving the guerrilla of his comparative advantage, "mobility," and providing the enemy with the opportunity to "employ its most effective weapons." The establishment of a "rear area" in the revolutionary struggle would have

---

[23]CC/PCP, *Bases de discusión*, pp. 77–78.

[24]Cited in Douglas Blaufarb, *The Counter Insurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present,* New York, Free Press, 1977, p. 4.

to wait until the guerrilla force was on the verge of being swept into power. The guerrilla zone, under these circumstances, was not a means to an end but an expression of the end itself. Until this was achieved, support functions, to paraphrase Fidel Castro, would be provided by the territory through which the guerrilla happened to be moving. The guerrilla base was "the guerrilla fighter's knapsack."[25]

The urban guerrillas of the 1960s and early 1970s, in short, operated as if "voluntarism" were an effective substitute for planning and preparation. They argued for a highly action-oriented program that emphasized military operations at the expense of building a solid political network. Such political work, it was argued, was nothing more than an excuse for postponing the day when the would-be revolutionary finally picked up his weapon. "The rebellion of the urban guerrilla and his persistence in intervening in public questions" was believed to be "the best way of insuring public support." The guerrilla, in other words, did not have to go through the time-consuming exercise of establishing a popular following, he simply had to act. Action would generate its own political base. The organizations that emerged from this revolutionary philosophy were one-dimensional and hence more vulnerable to government counteraction. This problem was noted by the Venezuelan guerrilla leader Douglas Bravo, one of the early proponents of this approach, who later criticized those who chose to pursue this path for their simplistic adventurism. "Although we talked a lot about a prolonged, long drawn out war," Bravo reflected, "we were using shock tactics, as for a coup. We wanted to overthrow [the regime] in a few hours, in one or two battles. This resulted in very far-reaching defeats and prevented us from getting down to building a guerrilla army." The effort, he concluded, had been hopeless.[26]

Sendero's theory of victory and its approach to organization building are, in a very real sense, a product of these failures. Prompted in part by the unambiguous defeat of the Cuban revolutionary model, Guzman looked to the experience of the Chinese revolution and the principles of orthodox Leninism to find a political and strategic framework that might be modified to the prerevolutionary conditions he believed

---

[25]Regis Debray described the preconditions for the establishment of a guerrilla base as (1) "extensive territory" and a corresponding absence of "communications facilities in the hinterland," (2) "a high density rural population," (3) "common borders with a friendly country," (4) "the absence of airborne enemy troops," billed as counter-insurgency "shock troops," skilled in mobile pursuit and small-unit tactics, and (5) "numerical insufficiency" on the part of the enemy. Debray, pp. 31, 61, 65.

[26]Cited in William E. Ratliff, *Castroism and Communism in Latin America, 1959–1976*, Washington, D.C., American Enterprise Institute, 1976, pp. 103–109, 133–155.

existed in Peru. The result was a study in contrast to the scores of guerrilla bands that had come and gone throughout Latin America over the previous 20 years. Where the Fidelista believed that a revolutionary takeover might be achieved by a small band of dedicated militants, without political guidance, in a catalytic engagement with the central government, Sendero has operated on the assumption that a revolution is a slow-motion affair in which victory will go to the side that is better organized. Such organization, it is argued, can be provided only by a revolutionary party and must be built slowly, step by step, over a protracted period. This principle was developed in the countryside and subsequently applied to the city. In both places, Sendero has proved to be a low-profile organization. Although its position in the cities, as we will see, is by no means as developed as its standing in the countryside, the movement's underlying modus operandi is the same: revolutionary organization must precede rather than succeed revolutionary action.

3. THE URBAN CAMPAIGN, BY THE NUMBERS

After ten years of open conflict between Sendero and the government of Peru, one does not need a statistical picture of the insurgency to know which way the war is going. It is going badly. At this writing, approximately 50 percent of the country is under a state of national emergency, a fact that has placed some 64 percent of the population under military rule. One measure of the escalating intensity of the war is provided in Fig. 1, which tracks the growth in Shining Path actions between 1980 and 1990. The numbers speak for themselves. In 1980, Sendero was responsible for 178 acts of political violence resulting in seven known deaths. Ten years later it registered 3671 actions, with an estimated death toll of over 3700. The total number of Shining Path incidents registered over this period comes to 20,462, which averages out to approximately 2000 actions a year. According to Peruvian sources, over 22,000 people have died in politically related violence since 1980. By the end of 1990, at least 98 percent of these deaths could be attributed to the war with the Shining Path.[1]

The growth in Shining Path actions over the past ten years can be divided into three statistical periods: the opening period of active insurgency between 1980 and 1984, which witnessed a rapid expansion of SL activity; the years between 1984 and 1988, in which SL actions at the national level tended to stabilize, fluctuating around a mean of 1970 incidents per year; and the period since 1988, in which we have once again witnessed a dramatic upsurge in SL operations. A further level of detail is provided by Fig. 2, which breaks out SL's national totals by region, in this case comparing the number of actions conducted in or around the greater Lima metropolitan area with those carried out in the departments immediately surrounding Lima and in other parts of Peru. As with Sendero's national trends, the years between 1980 and 1983 and 1988 and the present show a net increase in operations across our three regions. With the exception of the apparent deceleration in activity we see between 1989 and 1990 in the departments surrounding Lima, there is no significant difference among these areas except their rate of growth. This is not true of the period between 1983 and 1988, which, in contrast to the relative stability shown by national-level trends, presents us with a profile of regional fluctuation.

---

[1]Casualty figures include those killed by both the Shining Path and government forces.

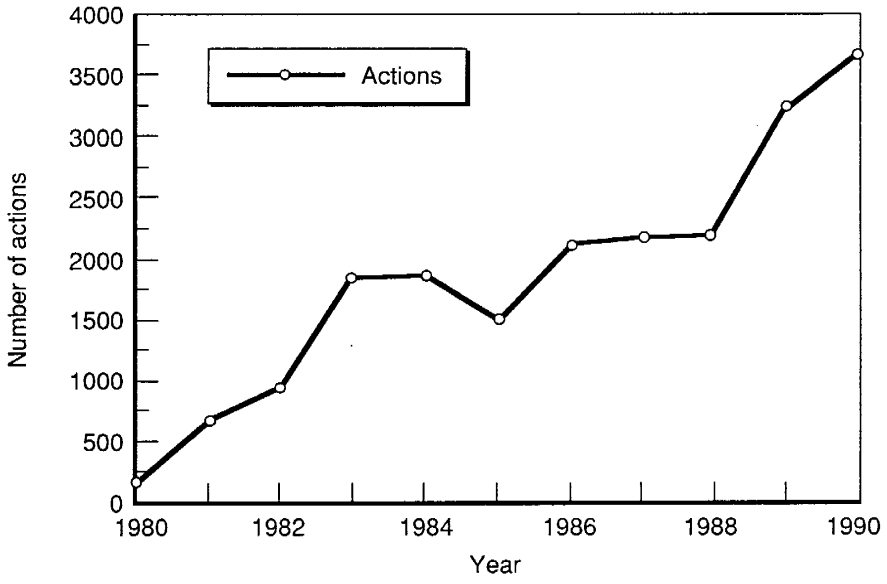

Fig. 1—Sendero Armed Actions in Peru, 1980 to 1990

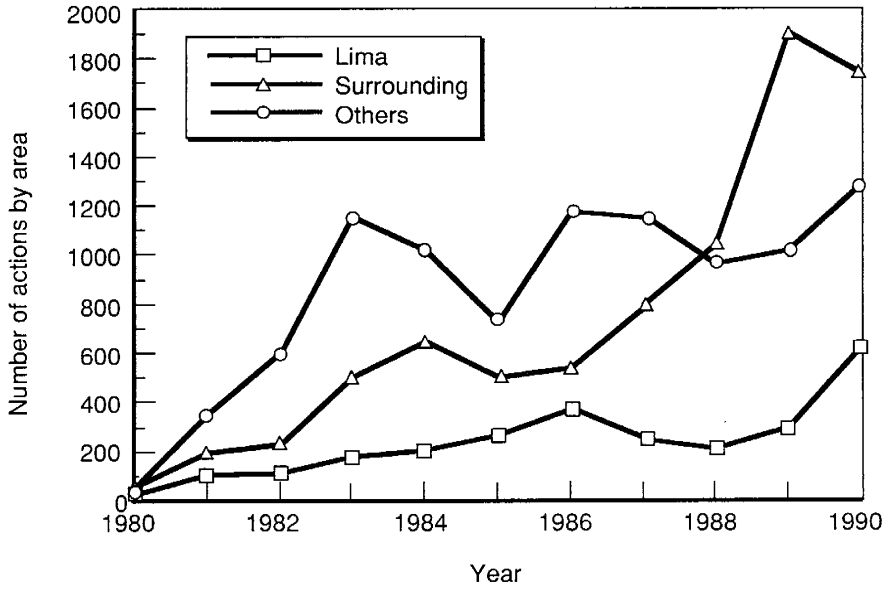

Fig. 2—Sendero Actions by Area

As noted in Table 1, over 2700 of SL's more than 20,000 estimated actions were carried out in or around the capital. This figure represents 13 percent of total SL actions and 12 percent of the estimated incidence of political violence carried out in Peru since 1980. The rest of these incidents are divided almost evenly between those areas surrounding the city (and therefore directly or indirectly associated with Sendero's long-run ambition to conquer the capital) and the rest of the country. The six departments surrounding Lima and the nine provinces surrounding the greater Lima metropolitan area within Lima department account collectively for 8192 actions. The rest of Peru, an area encompassing 18 of the country's 24 departments and 85 percent of its land mass, accounts for 9565 and the remaining 47 percent of Sendero's ten-year count. The same pattern, as we can see, is not evident in the case of deaths. Relatively speaking, residents of Lima are not now at personal risk from political violence, the great majority of which is targeted against either political or politicized objects or specific individuals. This is true both in terms of relative actions, where the death count for Lima is disproportionately low, and in terms of deaths per capita, which is insignificant. The same cannot be said of the areas surrounding Lima, where an estimated 5490 people have been killed in the conflict with Sendero, or in the rest of Peru, where, with a death count of 12,624, the number killed actually exceeds the number of known Sendero actions.

Table 1

Sendero Political Violence: Actions and Deaths by Area and Year

	Lima Metropolitan		Surrounding Departments		Other Departments	
Year	Actions	Deaths	Actions	Deaths	Actions	Deaths
1980	36	7	76	0	66	0
1981	116	1	203	3	366	9
1982	119	7	237	25	613	212
1983	184	18	512	494	1169	2338
1984	214	17	652	595	1022	3469
1985	266	151	501	297	730	975
1986	379	349	547	187	1172	998
1987	246	48	786	255	1149	905
1988	207	32	1025	540	957	875
1989	304	101	1913	1096	1023	1269
1990	634	152	1740	1998	1298	1574
Total	2705	883	8192	5490	9565	12,624

THE SHINING PATH IN LIMA

The Shining Path's campaign within the capital has been and will continue to be guided by the movement's larger rural-based theory of victory. This strategy is broken out into five phases that have guided SL's operational objectives and plans since 1980. These phases are (1) agitation and armed propaganda, (2) the opening campaign against Peru's socioeconomic system, (3) the generalization of the guerrilla struggle, (4) conquest and expansion of the movement's support base and the strengthening of the guerrilla army, and (5) general civil war, the siege of the cities, and the final collapse of state power. As Guzman himself has acknowledged, these phases are based loosely on Mao's three-stage theory of protracted war. They were offered as "rules of thumb" to carry the movement from its initial configuration as a small band of militants with a narrow base of popular support to a nationally based guerrilla army enjoying an extended popular base.[2]

Each phase of the struggle, in Guzman's view, is characterized by a different combination of intermediate goals, targets, and operations. As I have suggested in Table 2, each is also arguably marked by a distinguishing set of urban objectives and a corresponding set of urban tactics. In order, these objectives might be identified as follows: a stage of "symbolic action," designed to publicize Sendero's existence and demonstrate that it was a force to be reckoned with; an "expansion phase," in which the movement would extend its underground network and expand the frequency and scope of its urban operations; a period of "front development," in which Sendero would make its first inroads into organized labor; an extended period of "mass mobilization," designed to expand the movement's base of popular support within the cities; and the final push to seize power, in the form of an orchestrated "urban uprising."[3]

Sendero's first actions in Lima were carried out on May 20, 1980, within days of its opening campaign in Ayacucho. Although the strategic importance of the capital campaign has clearly grown over the past ten years, the city has played a prominent role in Shining Path operations from the outset. On average, operations in or around Lima have accounted for 13 percent of Sendero's annual national

---

[2]McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru*, p. 15; CC/PCP, *Linea militar*, reproduced in Arce Borja, *Guerra popular en El Peru*, pp. 341–365.

[3]For a general discussion of a similar "staged" approach to urban insurrection, see Brian M. Jenkins, *The Five Stages of Urban Guerrilla Warfare: Challenge of the 1970s*, RAND, P-4670, 1971.

Table 2

Sendero's Urban Campaign

Guerrilla Phase	Urban Objective	Urban Tactics
Agitation and armed propaganda	Symbolic attacks	Bombings
Attacks against the socioeconomic system	Expansion of target base/urban network	Bombing, armed assaults, assassinations
Generalization of the guerrilla struggle	Front development	Armed actions, creation and penetration of affiliated organizations
Expansion of the rural support base	Front development/mass mobilization	Armed actions, open mass demonstrations, armed strikes
Siege of the cities	Urban uprising	Guerrilla army links up with urban underground

total. These have ranged from a high of just over 20 percent in 1980 to a low of 9.4 percent in 1989. As illustrated in Fig. 2, Sendero's campaign for the capital grew gradually if not always evenly between 1981 and 1986. While SL's urban score card did not keep pace with the very rapid expansion in Sendero's national campaign during the early years of the war, the movement was clearly laying the groundwork for greater things to come. As noted in Table 3, Shining Path operations in the Lima metropolitan area briefly stabilized in 1981 and 1982 between 116 and 119 actions, accounting respectively for between 17 percent and 12 percent of the movement's annual total. Events picked up in 1983, when SL's tally of urban actions jumped to 184 incidents, and again in 1984, when the movement carried out 214 violent actions in or around the capital. By 1985 this total had again risen to 266 actions, which, when coupled with the brief downturn in SL-generated violence elsewhere, principally in the highlands, accounted for 18 percent of the year's activities. It had become clear by early 1986 that SL's capital campaign could be expected to pose a long-term and possibly accelerating political challenge to the central government.

What these trends do not show is the organizational transformation that was occurring within the metropolitan committee throughout its first five years of operation. SL's early actions during this period were no different in purpose from those of any urban guerrilla movement in its initial stages of development; the goal was to advertise

Table 3

Sendero Political Violence: Actions in Lima Department and the Lima Metropolitan Area

Year	National Total	Lima Department Total	Lima Metro Total	Department (% of all actions)	Metro (% of all actions)	Metro (% of actions in Lima Department)
1980	178	41	36	23.0	20.2	90.0
1981	685	227	116	33.1	16.9	51.1
1982	969	186	119	19.2	12.3	64.0
1983	1865	228	184	12.2	9.9	81.0
1984	1888	339	214	17.9	11.3	63.0
1985	1497	319	266	21.3	17.8	83.4
1986	2098	477	379	22.7	18.1	79.4
1987	2181	388	246	17.8	11.3	63.4
1988	2189	523	207	23.9	9.5	39.6
1989	3240	829	304	25.6	9.4	36.7
1990	3672	954	634	26.0	17.3	66.5
Total	20,462	4511	2705	22.0%	13.0%	60.0%

and define the group's presence: Where did it come from? What did it stand for? And where was it going? This was obviously done more effectively in the capital city than in the countryside, certainly a countryside as remote as Ayacucho. Shining Path operations conducted in or around Lima could be expected to receive immediate and sustained attention from the press, the public, and the government, all of which could be ordered to stand up and take notice on demand. Sendero actions in the city, in short, served to amplify the movement's profile within Peru and bring it to the attention of the world. If publicity was the objective—and it was an important objective in the opening months of the armed struggle—one well-selected operation in the capital city was worth any number of "invisible" actions in the interior.

The urban campaign, while still a sideshow to the movement's efforts to expand its presence in the countryside, played a critical role in putting Sendero onto the front pages and into the popular imagination. From the outset, SL's leadership has revealed a close understanding of the psychological component of revolutionary struggle. Victory, in this view, is a function not only of one's ultimate ability to best one's adversary on the battlefield, but a matter of moral conquest. Sendero's program of "propaganda by the deed" was carried out with this purpose in mind. Its immediate objectives were mental rather than material, to provide the movement with an image of

strength, momentum, and destiny that it did not necessarily possess in fact. While the movement's urban network during this period probably comprised no more than several hundred cadre, it did not take long to cultivate the image that it was a force to be reckoned with. Its urban operations struck at the heart of the belief, long held by the city's elite, that Lima was separate and distinct from the rest of Peru, an island of civility surrounded by a sea of "cholos." Events in the countryside, in this view, were of no consequence to the city. The growing incidence and drama of Sendero attacks, coupled with a revealed ability to periodically paralyze key urban services, slowly changed this perspective, giving the movement a notoriety and psychological presence that would have taken years to cultivate in the countryside.

The first "symbolic" phase of Sendero's campaign in the capital was carried on until approximately 1982. Sendero's primary concern during this period appears to have been to put on a good show, rather than to expend time and resources to expand its organizational base in the capital. Such efforts were certainly not ignored altogether, but they appear to have been deferred long enough for Sendero to focus its urban assets and make a strong first impression. This emphasis began to change sometime in late 1982 or early 1983, which dates the beginning of a concerted period of urban expansion. While the pace of Sendero operations continued to accelerate, increasing attention was being given to broadening its urban network. This appears to be the period of the metropolitan committee's organizational growth. Though the committee itself predates the opening of urban operations, much of its present-day architecture was completed during this period. As part of this process, the movement sought to expand its ranks and the ranks of its supporters by actively strengthening its position in the universities—notably the University of San Marcos, where SL had established its first cells during the late 1970s—and extending its organizational net into the shantytowns surrounding Lima. Although the Shining Path was still capturing headlines, it had now begun to lay the necessary groundwork for a much more provocative campaign of urban violence that would carry the movement through mid-June 1986.

This phase in Sendero's campaign for the capital marks a period of maturation in the movement's strategy and organization for urban insurrection. Over the course of the previous five years, SL had succeeded in building an undisputed network of supporters and vicarious sympathizers throughout the capital. While the absolute number of individuals directly or indirectly associated with its urban apparatus was still relatively small—probably no more than a thousand—the

metropolitan committee cast a long shadow.[4] This shadow was lengthened by Sendero's first apparent efforts to move beyond clandestine mobilization to embrace a broader constituency through the creation of a growing number of front organizations, a shift that signaled the beginning of SL's third stage of urban development. Until 1985 or 1986, the Shining Path had paid little attention to the option of employing front groups as a tool of mass organization. As long as SL strategy was dominated by the need to establish a rural base of operations, the front group concept offered few opportunities. To succeed, an open front requires the protection of the law. For obvious reasons, this was impossible to achieve in large areas of rural Peru, where membership in an affiliated SL front could well mean a quick death at the hands of the police or the army. As Sendero's presence in the capital gradually increased, however, its opportunity to employ such tactics grew accordingly. The regime was faced with the choice of either tolerating Sendero's legal efforts to mobilize support, even though many of the movement's fronts were openly hostile to the prevailing order, or risk undermining its own legitimacy by cracking down on legal assembly. Reluctantly, it chose the former course, permitting the Shining Path to complement its clandestine activities with open efforts to broaden its base of popular support. SL's organizing and related operational efforts in Lima grew accordingly.[5]

The upward trend in the number and scope of SL actions that we witnessed during this period was brought to a halt by the Sendero prison uprising on June 18, 1986. The uprising was coordinated between three high-security penitentiaries: Lurigancho and Santa Barbara, located on the outskirts of Lima, and El Fronton, Peru's Alcatraz, located on an island just off the coast. Two hundred and sixty inmates were killed in the process of recapturing the prisons and putting down the rebellion.[6] According to the government's initial report, the inmates, who were armed with dynamite, homemade crossbows, and a handful of small-caliber weapons, were all killed in the process of reestablishing official control. It was later determined, however, that as many as 130 of these had been recaptured and subsequently executed with a bullet to the back of the head. Among the dead was SL's reputed third-in-command, Antonio Diaz Martinez, who had been in-

---

[4]Susan C. Bourque and Kay B. Warren, "Democracy Without Peace: The Cultural Politics of Terror in Peru," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1989, pp. 7–34.

[5]McCormick, p. 27.

[6]The Shining Path has ever since marked the anniversary of the event, which it has dubbed "Hero's Day," with an upsurge in bombings and other terrorist actions throughout Peru.

carcerated two years earlier. The incident created an immediate crisis in the Garcia government and a propaganda victory for the Shining Path. It also proved to be a major blow to Sendero's metropolitan organization, which appears to have been directed from behind bars.[7]

This last conclusion, put forth by the Garcia administration in the wake of the international condemnation of the massacre, is suggested independently by the general downturn in SL activity in and around Lima in the months following the uprising. As our data illustrate, SL actions in Lima had increased from a total of 29 incidents in June 1985 to a total of 66 incidents in June 1986; the average growth rate was 9 actions a month, for a total increase of 113 actions over the course of the year. This not only represented the single largest increase in Sendero operations in the city since 1980, the government's apparent inability to contain this trend suggested that the city would continue to experience an upsurge in Shining Path activity for the foreseeable future. This momentum appears to have been strong enough to briefly carry Sendero beyond the uprising. The data show that SL actions in the city reached an all-time high in the weeks just after the massacre. Over 70 attacks were registered in Lima in a 30-day period. It seems clear in retrospect that Sendero wanted to punish the government for crushing the revolt and to demonstrate that its Lima organization was not crippled. From this point on, however, SL's metropolitan apparatus shows a gradual but steady decline. While punctuated by periodic surges of activity, the peaks of SL actions grow shorter and the troughs grow deeper until the numbers finally bottom out in a three-year low in November 1986. This general downward trend, which continued well into 1988, has come to represent the ten-year nadir of Sendero's Lima-based organization.[8]

---

[7]The Shining Path had been organizing in the prisons for years. Sendero captives were housed together in barracks-like conditions and permitted to hold regular party meetings, conduct classes in political education, and even recruit from among the general prison population. Organization and discipline within SL-controlled areas were tight. More than one visitor to SL cellblocks in the months preceding the massacre, including a camera crew that captured the scene on film, commented on the highly regimented, cult-like quality of SL's organization behind bars. This was strengthened by an established means of communication with the outside world through "visitors" and regular contact with Sendero-controlled legal representation. Organization and communication permitted Sendero to use the prison system as a base of operations, giving rise to speculation that the movement was actually running the urban campaign from behind bars. For a discussion of SL's prison organization, see José Maria Salcedo, "Con Sendero en Lurigancho," *QueHacer*, No. 39, February–March, 1986, pp. 60–67. According to recent reports, SL's prison organization today looks very similar to that of the mid-1980s. See Jose Luis Renique, "The Revolution Behind Bars," *Report on the Americas*, No. 4, December–January, 1990–1991, pp. 17–19.

[8]Andean Political Violence Data Base, *Peruvian Data Set, 1980–1990*, RAND, 1991.

The first signs of recovery do not appear until early November and early December 1988 in a series of attacks preceding Sendero's "Red Army Day" and the birthdays of Abimael Guzman and Mao Zedong. This may have occurred sooner but for the fortuitous arrest of SL's reputed second-in-command, Osmán Morote, in a Lima safe house in June. Morote's position before his arrest was believed to have been head of Sendero's northern committee, responsible for extending SL operations into the areas of Cajamarca, Lambayeque, and La Libertad. Although his exact rank and role in the movement at the time of his capture has never been confirmed, his arrest must surely have been a setback. As in the case of the prison massacre, the pattern of Shining Path operations in Lima in the wake of his capture showed an immediate, reactive upswing, followed by a period of decline. This decline, however, was comparatively brief. It was followed by a second upswing in activities in advance of Peruvian Armed Forces Day on September 24. While SL's recovery in the city might have come sooner and proved to be stronger if Morote had not been captured, the incident itself does not seem to have resulted in a noticeable long-run impact on group actions. One can assume either that his presence in Lima was unrelated to the activities of the metro committee, a possible but unlikely interpretation, or that the metropolitan committee was already well on the road to recovery and had become much better at adjusting to such losses after the destruction of much of its leadership two years before.

By the beginning of 1989, Sendero's campaign in and around Lima was once again moving forward. In the twelve-month period between mid-1987 and mid-1988, SL is thought to have conducted only some 207 armed actions in the capital. Over the next twelve months this figure is estimated to have risen to 251, a 21 percent increase in the course of a year. The movement sustained this rate of activity throughout 1989, leaving it with an annual count of 304 actions in the capital, which accounted for almost 10 percent of its national total. A similar trend was under way in the provinces surrounding Lima, where the number of actions increased by 66 percent, from an estimated total of 316 actions in 1988 to 525 incidents in 1989, and in the departments surrounding Lima, where the 1989 total increased 96 percent, from some 709 incidents in 1988 to an estimated 1388 actions in 1989. Together, these areas accounted for almost 59 percent of SL's national total. A clear link had once again been established between Sendero's accelerating campaign in the sierra and its performance in the capital city. The "rulers of Peru," as one taxi driver put it, would now be clearly disabused of the notion that what happened in the countryside had little or no bearing on life in the capital.

After the setbacks of the previous two years, the metropolitan committee was again coming into its own. If we assume that SL's general plan in Lima is similar to that being followed elsewhere, this resurgence was made possible by the careful reconstruction of the movement's underground support structure in and around the city.

These trends appear to have continued and accelerated into 1990. Sendero is estimated to have carried out over 600 actions in Lima by the end of the year. This figure, which was more than twice the number of actions conducted in 1989, represented 17 percent of SL's national total. Over the course of the year, this averaged out to 52 actions a month. As in 1989, however, the majority of these actions were grouped around a series of distinct offensives. Predictably, two of the more important of these were carried out before the presidential election in April and the runoff vote in June. Other upswings in Sendero actions can be noted prior to the presidential inauguration in July and in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of President Fujimori's economic reform program in August. The offensive carried out in the weeks immediately preceding the general election involved well over a hundred actions, including attacks on at least 14 banks, scores of domestic and international businesses, the offices of the national election board, the headquarters of the APRA party, the Ministry of Transportation, a number of police and military facilities, and a wide range of other government-related targets. While Sendero did not succeed in its stated objective of halting the elections, it proved once again that it was a force to be reckoned with, even in the heart of the capital. The Shining Path is still far too weak in the city to sustain such a high-intensity campaign, but its ability to mobilize for specific policy objectives appears to be greater now than at any other point in the past ten years.

This capability has been reinforced by Sendero's continuing efforts to establish an affiliated front to complement the underground. As in the past, Shining Path work in this area is evolving along three parallel tracks: the establishment of new front organizations, which SL has termed "generated organisms"; the penetration of existing, neutral associations, which are subsequently turned to SL's advantage; and the "capture" of regime-oriented groups, which are then either neutralized or transformed into guerrilla-controlled organizations.[9] Sendero's organizing efforts in all three tracks have been aggressive and wide ranging. It has targeted the Peruvian labor

[9]CC/PCP, *Bases de discusión*, pp. 125–130. For a general discussion of such front tactics, see Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 277–279.

movement, neighborhood and community associations, student organizations, sports clubs, and myriad other special-interest groups. The same breadth is evident among SL's generated organisms, such as the Popular Women's Movement (MFP) and the Revolutionary Students' Front (FER), and its support organizations, such as the Association of Democratic Lawyers (AAD), the Association of Democratic Students (AED), and the Committee of the Families of Political Prisoners of War (CFPPGD). Prior to 1985, SL uniformly condemned such organizations for their "reformist," "revisionist," or "opportunistic" tendencies. By 1986, however, they were calling on the masses to "develop the struggle for reforms as a part of the conquest of power." This was to be accomplished through the mechanism of SL-controlled grass-roots associations.[10]

Sendero influence and control within these groups is exercised both overtly and covertly. In many cases, for example the Association of Democratic Lawyers, SL's tie is quite obvious. Such organizations operate under the protection of the law as a de facto legal representative or support group of the Shining Path. In other cases, its presence is indirect and not openly evident. Sendero, in these circumstances, may have succeeded in penetrating the group and may be able to influence its agenda, but is not yet in a position to control it. Alternatively, the movement may actually control the organization but choose to exercise that control from afar. The group's leadership positions may be in SL hands, but its rank and file may or may not be aware of the strength of Sendero's position. The proximate and ultimate objectives of the organization, in these instances, will not be the same. This fact has often made it very difficult to assess Sendero's success rate in its efforts to coopt and exploit standing associations. While the movement's generated organisms tend to be fairly transparent, the same cannot always be said of its penetration of established, hitherto neutral organizations. This appears to be the case, for example, within broad segments of the Peruvian labor movement. The list of labor organizations targeted by SL over the past five years is quite long, representing every sector of Peruvian economic life. SL's level of influence within organized labor is generally thought to be significant, but few unions have obviously cast their lot with the Shining Path.[11]

---

[10]"El socorro de Sendero," *Caretas*, January 11, 1988.

[11]See, for example, *Peru Report*, Vol. 2, No. 5; "Sendero en el aula," *Caretas*, May 16, 1988, pp. 24–29; "Del campo a la ciudad," *Si*, June 12, 1988.

Whether Sendero's methods of influence are direct or indirect, the employment of front organizations has served a number of essential functions, including public agitation, political education, fundraising, and recruitment. They have also provided the movement with its primary instrument for achieving a mass base of support, particularly in the cities. To borrow from Philip Selznick, "mass" in this case is not used "vaguely or symbolically" but precisely, to refer to "participants who have, through the use of designed organizational forms and practices, been made *mobilizable*." The front group, in providing an "organ of access and control," can be used to "transform a diffuse population into a mobilizable source of power."[12] This, as I have just suggested, will apply to individuals who sympathize with all or part of Sendero's agenda, those who find themselves on the "ideological periphery" of the movement, and even those who want nothing to do with it but share a particular front group's stated objectives. In the latter case, the individuals in question do not, by any means, have to always realize they are operating in the service of SL's agenda to become an instrument of political combat. Such an arrangement may even prove to be advantageous if it provides the Shining Path with a means of covertly radicalizing the goals or methods of otherwise hostile organizations.

THE URBAN CAMPAIGN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

For the purposes of this essay, the analysis of SL's urban-oriented campaign beyond the immediate Lima metropolitan area will focus on the movement's efforts to establish a commanding position in the departments surrounding the capital, which will ultimately determine whether the group will succeed in its stated goal of severing the city's access to the interior. The administrative regions surrounding Lima have played a key role in Shining Path planning since 1980. According to RAND's data-based profile of the growth of Sendero operations in the opening phase of the conflict, the movement carried out its first actions in Ancash, Junín, Pasco, Huancavelica, and the outer provinces of Lima department—five of the seven administrative regions surrounding the Lima metropolitan area—in the first six months of the insurgency. The movement opened its military campaign in the two remaining areas, Ica and Huánuco departments, twelve months later. By 1983, these seven departments accounted for 27 percent of all reported Sendero actions, excluding those attacks carried out directly against Lima. If we exclude operations carried out in Ayacu-

[12]Selznick, *The Organization Weapon*, p. 101.

cho, the movement's base area, they account for almost 48 percent of the remaining total.

Over the next three years, SL actions in the areas surrounding Lima fluctuated from a 1984 high of 652 actions, to a low of 501 actions in 1985, and to a new high of 786 actions in 1987. These trends continued into 1988, accelerated in 1989, and experienced a slight downturn in 1990. Despite this downturn, the year closed with a total of 1740 armed actions, a 70 percent increase over what Sendero is estimated to have carried out two years before. In general, Sendero is believed to have carried out almost three times as many operations in the areas surrounding the Lima metropolitan area as it did in and around the capital city itself. As illustrated in Table 4, most of this activity was registered, in descending order, in Junín and the outer provinces of Lima department, followed by Ancash, Huánuco, Huancavelica, Pasco, and Ica. By the end of 1990, these areas accounted for 40 percent of Sendero's ten-year national total. If we again discount for the war in Ayacucho, Sendero actions in the areas surrounding the capital city account for just under 51 percent of the movement's remaining armed incidents over the past ten years. Most of these actions occurred in or on the edges of the central highlands, an area that incorporates Junín, Pasco, Huancavelica, and large parts of Huánuco and extends into eastern Ancash and Lima. An estimated 75 percent of SL actions in the areas around Lima were carried out in the central highlands.[13]

Sendero's favored tactic in the areas surrounding Lima is the bombing. As illustrated in Fig. 3, bomb attacks account for 38 percent of the incidents registered in these areas, followed closely by armed assaults. These tactical trends, at a high level of generality, are similar to what we see in Lima, as shown in Fig. 4. If we compare them more closely, however, a number of interesting distinctions can be made. The most obvious difference is that bomb attacks are, proportionally speaking, half again as prevalent in the city as they are in the countryside. While bombings account for almost 40 percent of SL's attacks in the areas surrounding Lima, they account for 60 percent of

[13]For a good discussion of Sendero's campaign in Junín department see Cynthia McClintock, "The Sendero Luminoso Insurgency in Peru," mimeo, pp. 20–25, forthcoming in James Malloy (ed.), *Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record*, Vol. VIII; see also *Peru Report*, June 1989.

Table 4

Incidents of Sendero Political Violence for Selected Departments: Distribution of Actions by Year

Department	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Ancash	6	20	19	36	20	47
Huancavelica	15	5	48	216	180	68
Huánuco	2	2	8	16	103	85
Ica	0	4	13	11	39	9
Junín	34	47	68	102	123	125
Lima	41	227	186	228	339	319
Pasco	14	14	14	87	62	114
Subtotal	112	317	356	698	866	767
Other departments	65	366	613	1169	1022	730
Total	178	685	969	1865	1888	1497

Department	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	Total
Ancash	64	121	85	270	276	964
Huancavelica	62	45	57	129	127	952
Huánuco	55	73	113	117	158	732
Ica	19	32	49	84	39	299
Junín	140	259	268	590	711	2467
Lima	477	388	523	829	954	4511
Pasco	109	114	137	198	109	972
Subtotal	926	1032	1232	2217	2374	10,897
Other departments	1172	1149	957	1023	1298	9565
Total	2098	2181	2189	3240	3672	20,462

Sendero's operations in the capital. Related to this is the fact that the Shining Path's tactical repertoire in the areas surrounding Lima is more diverse than what we have seen in and around the capital city. Differences can also be seen in SL targeting patterns. Comparing Figs. 5 and 6, the single most interesting distinction is the proportionately greater attention Sendero has given to "social" or civilian targets in the countryside, where they account for an impressive 23 percent of the total, compared to Lima, where they account for only 12 percent of Sendero activity. This emphasis has resulted in a proportionate reduction in SL attacks against domestic businesses, the military, and the police. In the city these latter targets together account for 48 percent of SL actions, but they account for only 37 percent of the movement's attacks in the countryside.[14]

[14]Estimates are generated from the Andean Political Violence Data Base, *Peruvian Data Set 1980–1990*.

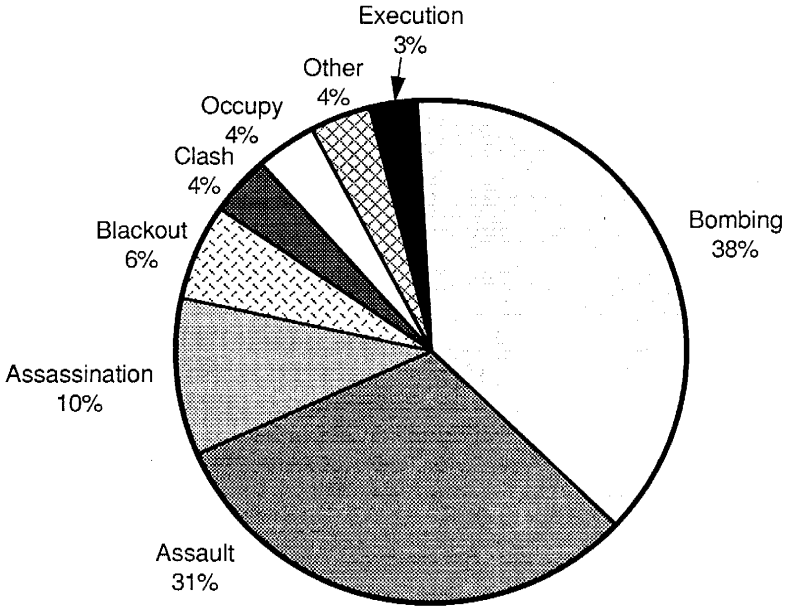

Fig. 3—Sendero Tactics in Departments Surrounding Lima

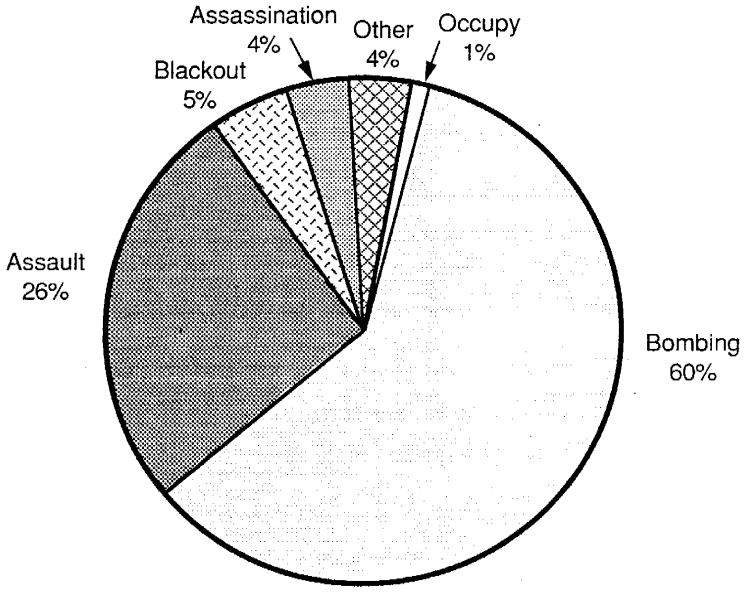

Fig. 4—Sendero Tactics in Lima

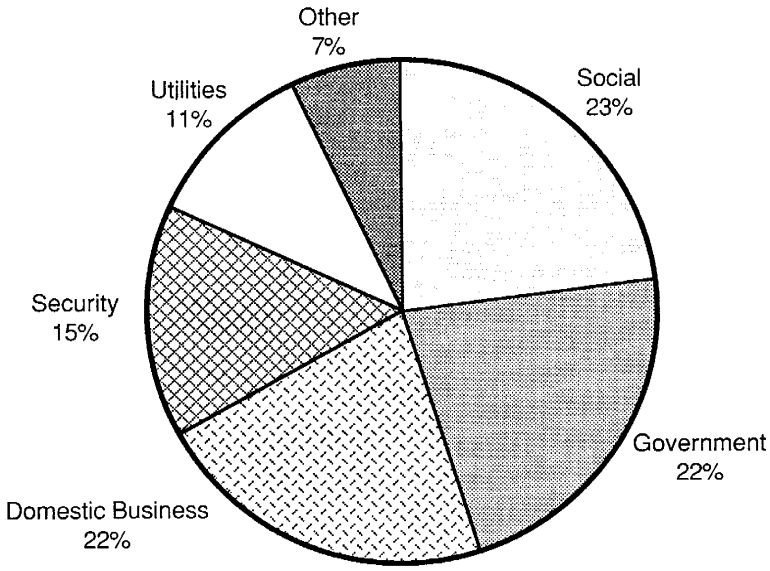

Fig. 5—Sendero Targets in Departments Surrounding Lima

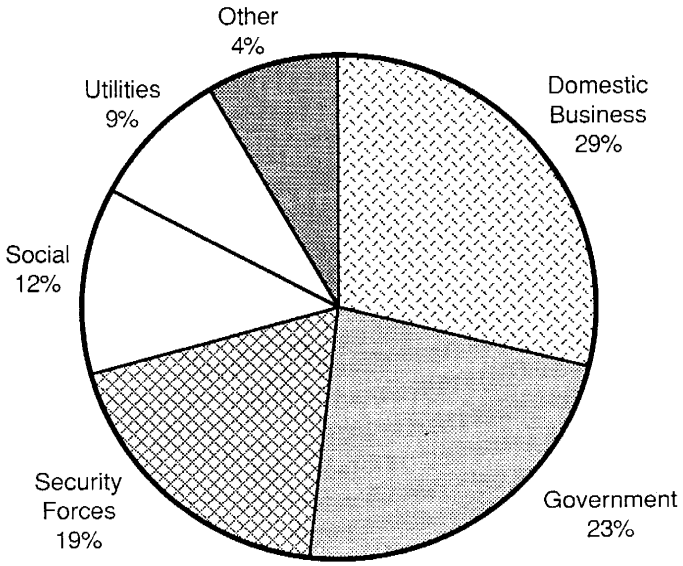

Fig. 6—Sendero Targets in Lima

Several reasons can be offered to explain these differences. First is the fact that the countryside and the city offer very different operating environments. This, in turn, has a number of tactical implications. All things being equal, SL's tactical opportunities in the city are more restricted than they are in the country. This is due, in large measure, to the comparative strength of the police and the armed forces, which raises the risks of open action. Bomb attacks, by comparison, are relatively safe and are therefore well represented. Second, SL objectives in Lima and the areas surrounding Lima are similar but not the same. The propaganda effect of the urban campaign is still very important and certainly more important there than in the sierra, where the movement is much more interested in organizing the population than in impressing residual elements of the local government. The propaganda mission can be carried out perfectly well through bomb attacks. Finally, and related to this, is the fact that Sendero's campaign in the areas surrounding Lima is simply more advanced than what we now see in the capital. This, as noted, is particularly true in the central highlands, where many of the movement's activities are oriented toward consolidating its position, rather than carving out a position in the first place. This has not only required a different tactical mix, it has provided the Shining Path with considerably more room for maneuver than it enjoys in Peru's major urban centers.

The significance of this focus can be explained by examining an economic atlas and topographic map of Peru. The central highlands are economically, politically, and strategically significant. Collectively, they account for an estimated 10 percent of Peru's gross national product, 11 percent of its minerals, 19 percent of its agricultural production, 25 percent of its export earnings, and 15 percent of the national population.[15] They are also a key node in the country's road and rail net, providing the only direct overland access from the capital to the sierra and the eastern jungles. Sendero has made the control of these areas a key intermediate objective. As SL has grown in presence and influence in the central highlands, its options have expanded, permitting it to extend and consolidate its position in Huánuco department and the coca-growing areas of the Upper Huallaga valley to the north, link these areas geographically with its original base areas in Ayacucho and Apurímac departments to the

[15]Estimates are derived from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Informatica (INEI), *Peru: Producto bruto interno regional, 1970–1988*, Lima, 1990; INEI, *Peru: Compendio estadístico, 1989–1990*; and Webb and Fernández Baca de Valdez, *Peru en números*, 1990.

south, further extend its area of influence into the Ene river valley and the low jungles of Ucayali department to the east, and gradually reinforce its position around the capital located 90 to 130 miles to the west. The region has become the centerpoint of Sendero planning.

Sendero's strength in these areas is significant and growing.[16] Most of the area appears to have been brought under SL shadow administration, which coexists with residual elements of the official political infrastructure. Other regions, such as large segments of the Upper Huallaga valley, and parts of Huánuco, Pasco, Junín, and Huancavelica have been brought under open SL control.[17] Such areas are no longer even contested by the army, which has largely reverted to a policy of selective, static occupation. In association with Sendero base areas to the north, south, and east, the central highlands serve as the linchpin in an interlocking system of strong points from which SL expects to fully consolidate the sierra. The Shining Path's level of control in and around these four departments has by now become sufficiently strong and self-reinforcing that it appears unlikely that the army will be in a position to reverse this process anytime in the foreseeable future. While it is impossible to make a precise estimate of the local population that has been directly or indirectly overtaken by these events, the number is certainly in the hundreds of thousands, providing the organization with a large pool of potential recruits and an even larger support base with which to continue to underwrite its general strategic plan for the region.

One measure of the course of this campaign is presented in Table 5, which examines the level of SL activity in and around Peru's 24 de-

---

[16]For a contrary view see the interview with Carlos Ivan Degregori in *Expreso*, May 19, 1990, pp. 8–9. Degregori argues that SL "was advancing until a year and a half ago." This advance, he suggests, has been halted. As indicated in the present essay, the increase in the number of Sendero actions since 1988 and the growth in SL's support base that have made this increase possible do not bear out Degregori's conclusion. More salient, I believe, is his observation that "Sendero is all alone on the playing field," a fact that has effectively brought a growing percentage of the highland population under Shining Path influence by default.

[17]This is suggested by the scope and vitality of Sendero's campaign throughout these areas, as revealed by a review of local SL actions. For a further comment on this development see the interview with Gustavo Gorriti in *Expreso*, October 11–12, 1990, p. 4. Gorriti has estimated that between 25 and 40 percent of Peruvian territory has been brought under effective Sendero control or shadow Sendero administration. This area encompasses most of the Andean ridge. See also the comments by then Interior Minister Mantilla in *Expreso*, June 7, 1989. According to Mantilla, "The subversives move with impunity in the hills of Ayacucho, Apurímac, Huancavelica, Junín, and Pasco departments" and large areas of the eastern jungles. In the intervening year and a half they have continued to extend their highland positions into the region's bordering valleys. For a dissenting voice see an earlier interview with the late (assassinated) General Enrique Lopez Albujar in *QueHacer*, No. 57, February–March, 1989.

Table 5

Sendero Political Violence: Actions and Population by Department and Capital Provinces, 1980 to 1990

Department Capital (Department)	Population[a]		% of Dept. Population in Capital Province	Actions in Capital Province		Urban Conflict Index[b]
	Department Capital	Surrounding Province		Total Number	% of Dept. Total	
Chachapoyas (Amazonas)	14,000	25,918	12%	0	—	0
Huaraz (Ancash)	65,600	50,915	12%	436	45%	3.86
Abancay (Apurímac)	29,200	48,142	21%	140	21%	.56
Arequipa (Arequipa)	643,500	68,797	74%	246	50%	.80
Ayacucho (Ayacucho)	101,600	71,015	30%	1413	33%	1.40
Cajamarca (Cajamarca)	92,600	109,236	17%	131	24%	2.22
Cuzco (Cuzco)	275,000	41,804	30%	200	44%	1.93
Huancavelica (Huancavelica)	27,400	71,721	26%	352	37%	1.67
Huánuco (Huánuco)	86,300	88,502	29%	170	23%	1.02
Ica (Ica)	152,300	75,461	42%	94	31%	.91
Huancayo (Junín)	207,600	190,221	36%	1486	61%	1.61
Trujillo (La Libertad)	532,000	105,211	51%	390	43%	.95
Chiclayo (Lambayeque)	426,300	199,253	67%	361	84%	1.33
Iquitos (Loreto)	269,500	112,592	58%	58	54%	.79
Puerto Maldonado (Madre de Dios)	21,200	16,492	77%	8	33%	.06
Moquegua (Moquegua)	31,500	31,870	47%	11	43%	.56
Cerro de Pasco (Pasco)	77,000	93,521	60%	597	61%	1.13
Piura (Piura)	324,500	278,356	40%	74	47%	1.13
Puno (Puno)	99,600	109,092	20%	194	25%	1.28
Moyobamba (San Martin)	26,000	36,287	13%	8	2%	.10
Tacna (Tacna)	150,200	21,978	82%	47	67%	.57
Tumbes (Tumbes)	64,800	46,521	77%	33	82%	.49
Pucallpa (Ucayali)	153,000	46,292	87%	127	47%	.49

[a]Population data source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Informatica.

[b]Urban conflict index = % capital area acts/% capital area population; based on an

partment capitals. The two columns of primary interest are those listing the number of reported SL actions in Peru's individual capital provinces in the past ten years and this number as a percentage of the departmental total. These are followed by a final column presenting each city's "urban conflict index," which is the ratio of the percentage of departmental actions carried out in or around the local capital to the percentage of the department's population living in the same area. The index, coupled with a knowledge of the absolute number of actions carried out in each department and each capital province, provides us with a useful means of examining the intensity of SL's urban campaign beyond Lima and the relative importance the movement has given to extending its position in the vicinity of each departmental capital. All things being equal, one would expect to see guerrilla activities distributed evenly by population. This would be indicated by an index number of 1. When this number is less than 1, it indicates that the relative balance of SL actions is being carried out beyond the local capital. When it is greater than 1, it indicates that a disproportionate percentage of SL armed attacks are being carried out in or in the vicinity of the city.

Looking again at Table 5, we see that every one of the highland capitals but one, Abancay (Apurímac), has a conflict index that is greater than 1. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of the capital cities of the central sierra, Huánuco, Cerro de Pasco, Huancayo, and Huancavelica, as well as Ayacucho city, which all show both a relatively high index number and a relatively high number of actions departmentwide. Not only is there a lot going on in these departments, a disproportionate percentage of what has happened over the past decade has occurred around the local capital city. This is in contrast with cities such as Piura, which show a relatively high conflict index but a small number of incidents departmentwide, and cities like Arequipa, whose department has had a relatively high level of SL activity but fewer incidents, relative to population, in its own immediate vicinity. In view of Sendero's general strategic plan and operational style, the first would suggest an area in which SL's program is still in its infancy, and the second, an area in which the movement has established a foothold but is not yet in a position to threaten the capital city's rural linkages.

High departmentwide activity and a high conflict index, by the same token, would tend to suggest that SL's local campaign is well advanced. The absolute number of actions in the department would speak to the size of Sendero's regional apparatus, while a high index number would suggest that SL's position elsewhere in the department

was well established and the movement had entered the final stage of surrounding the local capital city. This process is indicated more clearly in Table 6, which tracks the course of SL's departmental campaigns by these criteria over time. Organized by department and year, each set of three rows lists the percentage of department actions carried out in or around each capital city, the absolute number of these actions, and each capital city's annual conflict index. As a general rule, in key areas of Sendero activity the index has a tendency to begin high, as SL opens its propaganda campaign in the capital, then dip down, as the movement concentrates on establishing a strong base of operations in the countryside, and finally swing back up as the group consolidates its rural position and begins to close in on the local seat of power. As illustrated in Table 6 and Figs. 7 and 8, the degree to which this process has advanced in the highlands, notably in Junín, Pasco, Huánaco, Huancavelica, and the mountainous areas of Ancash, is indicated by each department's high index number for 1990 and the large number of actions carried out departmentwide.

This is, of course, exactly what we would expect to see in view of Sendero's five-stage theory of victory and the pattern of the Peruvian counterinsurgency campaign. The opening phases of this strategy, which have been replicated every time the group moves into a new operational area, place a premium on urban actions. The objective, as suggested earlier, is to advertise the organization's presence and to make the most of its limited assets. This, as noted, is obviously better accomplished in the city than the countryside. This emphasis shifts over time as SL moves into the third and fourth stages of its campaign, "the generalization of the guerrilla struggle" and "the conquest and expansion of the support base and the development of a guerrilla army." Although the level of SL activity in and around the cities may actually grow during this period, it is not growing at the same rate as the movement's presence in the countryside. Sendero's proportional presence in and around the capital, therefore, is declining. These two stages represent, consecutively, SL's period of rural expansion and its period of consolidation. The purpose of these efforts is to pave the way for a "return to the city" in the fifth and final phase of the conflict. This stage, as noted, will see the Shining Path envelop and cut off the local capital.

This pattern has followed and been reinforced by the expansion and gradual contraction of the Peruvian counterinsurgency campaign. As a general rule, major increases in SL activity have resulted in a local declaration of emergency rule—declared by city, district, province, or department—which opens the way for the introduction of military

Table 6

Sendero: Percent of Actions in Capital Province, Urban Conflict Index

Department	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	Total
Amazonas[a]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ancash	100%	65%	47%	69%	10%	11%	13%	32%	52%	58%	47%	45%
	6	13	9	25	2	5	8	39	44	157	129	437
	.84	5.47	3.99	5.84	.84	.89	1.05	2.71	4.36	4.90	3.94	3.86
Apurímac	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	6%	47%	30%	27%	12%	21%
	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	84	25	15	6	139
	0	0	.25	0	0	0	.29	2.3	1.45	1.3	.58	.56
Arequipa	100%	78%	92%	84%	66%	62%	25%	41%	36%	17%	28%	50%
	14	36	36	36	25	23	14	16	27	14	5	246
	1.43	1.11	1.30	1.17	.92	.86	.35	.56	.49	.23	.38	.80
Ayacucho	59%	84%	53%	33%	25%	14%	17%	24%	29%	46%	40%	33%
	22	117	187	270	176	42	64	92	104	176	162	1412
	2.32	3.23	1.98	1.23	.92	.51	.6	.82	.99	1.54	1.30	1.40
Cajamarca	0%	33%	0%	68%	100%	100%	17%	32%	24%	8%	10%	24%
	0	6	0	36	6	6	6	30	24	6	12	132
	0	2.07	0	4.23	6.24	6.24	1.04	1.98	1.49	.53	.63	2.22
Cuzco	100%	85%	76%	72%	21%	34%	13%	18%	50%	47%	46%	44%
	2	38	26	38	3	15	8	14	12	14	31	201
	4.11	3.46	3.0	2.75	.8	1.25	.46	.61	1.72	1.57	1.5	1.93
Huancavelica	53%	100%	52%	36%	32%	26%	32%	33%	30%	47%	39%	37%
	8	5	25	75	58	18	20	15	17	60	50	351
	2.05	3.84	2.00	1.39	1.23	1.01	1.23	1.27	1.13	1.77	1.49	1.67

Table 6—continued

Department	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	Total
Huánuco	0%	100%	50%	25%	2%	12%	22%	14%	21%	31%	42%	23%
	0	2	4	4	2	10	12	10	24	36	67	171
	0	3.53	1.76	.88	.07	.41	.76	.48	.74	1.07	1.48	1.02
Ica	0%	50%	85%	36%	23%	44%	47%	41%	18%	15%	54%	31%
	0	2	11	4	9	4	9	13	9	13	21	95
	0	1.22	2.06	.88	.56	1.07	1.14	.98	.44	.37	1.28	.91
Junín	34%	50%	58%	49%	61%	72%	71%	75%	65%	56%	59%	61%
	12	23	37	46	73	89	98	191	174	326	417	1486
	.91	1.33	1.55	1.33	1.65	1.97	1.93	2.07	1.80	1.55	1.64	1.61
La Libertad	100%	50%	24%	5%	37%	28%	62%	41%	48%	43%	58%	43%
	3	8	11	3	37	45	61	27	27	29	139	390
	2.27	1.11	.54	.10	.80	.59	1.27	.83	.97	.86	1.13	.95
Lambayeque	100%	100%	100%	85%	81%	80%	80%	82%	95%	100%	72%	84%
	3	6	19	22	13	64	64	42	61	13	51	358
	1.51	1.51	1.51	1.28	1.22	1.20	1.20	1.24	1.43	1.50	1.07	1.33
Lima	90%	51%	64%	81%	63%	83%	79%	63%	40%	37%	66%	60%
	36	116	119	184	214	266	379	246	207	304	634	2705
	1.02	.58	.73	.92	.72	.95	.91	.73	.45	.42	.77	.74
Loreto	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	42%	0%	100%	0%	0%	25%	54%
	5	10	5	5	0	10	0	15	0	0	10	60
	1.89	1.87	1.85	1.83	0	.75	0	0	0	0	.44	.79
Madre de Dios	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	33%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	8
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.65	0	.06

Table 6—continued

Department	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	Total
Moquegua	0%	15%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	63%	0%	0%	43%
	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	11
	0	.35	2.24	2.22	0	0	0	0	1.34	0	0	.56
Pasco	100%	79%	100%	23%	58%	48%	52%	68%	68%	68%	80%	61%
	14	11	14	20	36	52	57	77	93	134	87	595
	1.70	1.33	1.69	.39	.98	.80	.87	1.13	1.13	1.12	1.32	1.13
Piura	0%	100%	0%	100%	71%	0%	73%	59%	13%	38%	21%	47%
	0	3	0	8	20	0	8	20	3	6	6	74
	0	2.72	0	2.66	1.88	0	1.88	1.50	.33	.94	.53	1.13
Puno	0%	88%	19%	41%	37%	0%	30%	37%	17%	7%	7%	25%
	0	22	3	9	25	0	95	13	10	9	6	192
	0	4.42	.94	2.04	1.86	0	1.51	1.83	.82	.33	.35	1.28
San Martin	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	4%	2%
	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	4	8
	0	0	0	0	.59	0	0	0	.22	0	.30	.10
Tacna	0%	100%	50%	50%	0%	50%	100%	0%	50%	100%	0%	67%
	0	23	3	3	0	3	6	0	3	6	0	47
	0	1.29	.64	.64	0	.63	1.25	0	.62	1.23	0	.57
Tumbes	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	40%	100%	0%	71%	100%	82%
	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	19	0	5	5	33
	0	0	0	1.31	0	0	.52	1.30	0	.93	1.30	.49
Ucayali	0%	100%	0%	69%	100%	0%	0%	27%	76%	73%	17%	47%
	0	5	0	11	5	0	0	21	16	58	11	127
	0	1.19	0	.81	1.18	0	0	.31	.88	.85	.20	.49

[a]Each set of three rows presents the following: first row, percentage of department actions carried out in the respective capital province; second row, total number of actions capital province-wide; third row, the urban conflict index for the capital city.

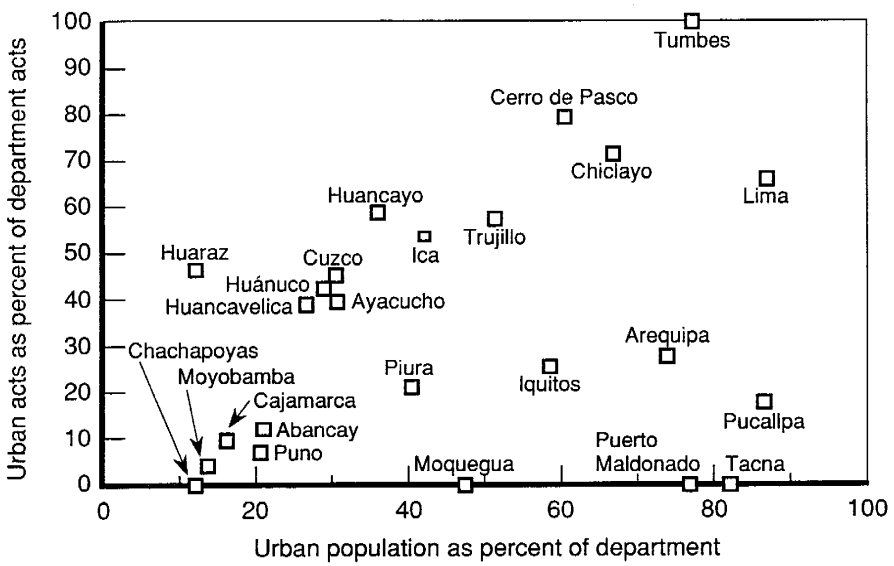

Fig. 7—Sendero Urban Actions by Population: Capital Provinces, 1990

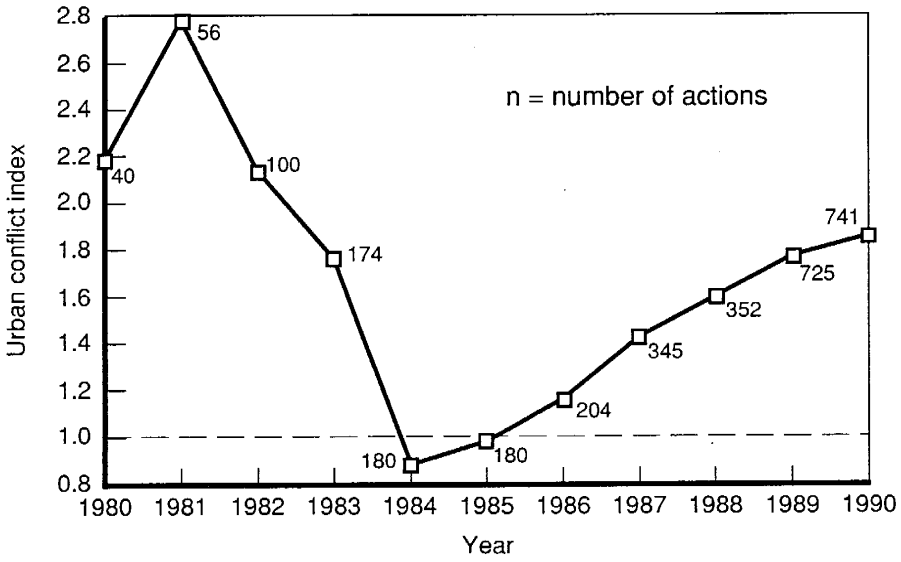

Fig. 8—Sendero Urban Conflict Index: Departments Surrounding Lima

force.[18] These interventions have tended to follow a distinctive path. A major garrison and headquarters unit is deployed to the departmental capital, secondary garrisons are positioned in the department's remaining provincial capitals, and small counterinsurgency units are deployed at the district or village level throughout other parts of the region. This deployment has had the initial and natural effect of encouraging the displacement of Sendero efforts from the cities, where the army was relatively strong, to the countryside, where it tends to be comparatively weak. This, coupled with Sendero's own program of development, generally resulted in a brief downturn in SL actions in the immediate vicinity of the local capital and an increase in group actions and organizational efforts in areas beyond military control. It was usually at this point in the campaign that the local military commander would announce that the guerrillas were defeated and the region pacified.

The war in such areas, in fact, was only beginning. This was certainly the case in the central highlands, where, as indicated in Table 4, Shining Path actions have expanded significantly since 1985. Once the movement had succeeded in building a solid operational base and felt sufficiently strong to resume the offensive, the army's position became increasingly tenuous. By late 1986, it was clearly losing ground. Sendero's march back to the department capitals has been preceded and subsequently facilitated by the disintegration of the military's counterinsurgency program throughout large areas of the highlands. Many exposed army or police outposts have been simply overrun. Many others have been closed because of inaccessibility, growing material shortages, high desertion rates, or because they have been effectively bypassed and cut off by the gradual expansion of Sendero influence.[19] The Shining Path has sought to exploit these develop-

---

[18]Prior to this time, counterinsurgency was the responsibility of the police. A declaration of emergency rule provides the military with the constitutional mandate to deploy against an internal adversary on the orders of the president. Emergency rule suspends most individual constitutional guarantees, including the inviolability of one's domicile, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, and freedom from arrest without court order. The emergency zone commander becomes the law of the land, responsible for both military and political matters within his designated operational area.

[19]The weakness of the Peruvian counterinsurgency response has been compounded by the style and objective of military and police counterguerrilla operations. The military's chief measure of effectiveness is the body count. Rather than attempt to target Sendero's organization, which would strike at the heart of the movement's capacity to regenerate, the security forces have been content to tally up guerrilla kills. This objective, coupled with severe resource constraints, training and leadership deficiencies, and the general passivity of forward-deployed units, has helped ensure that SL will retain the initiative. Sendero, under these circumstances, is in a position to determine its own acceptable casualties. By expanding or contracting its scope of

ments by consolidating its local position and extending its reach closer to what, increasingly, is the last vestige of real government control in large areas of the sierra, the local capital. As the army falls back on the cities, Sendero is following. In general, a growing share of a growing number of actions are now being conducted to sever the sierra's urban linkages.

THE THREAT TO THE CAPITAL

The single most important aspect of SL's position in the central highlands is the importance it holds for the campaign for the capital. The war for Lima will be won or lost in the central sierra. The level of SL activity in the capital itself, in this respect, is a much less important indicator of the potential threat the Shining Path poses to the city than the degree to which the movement has consolidated its position in and around Junín and Pasco and the strategically associated areas of southern Ancash, Huancavelica, and northern Ica departments. As SL consolidates its influence over these areas, Lima's links with the interior of the country will become increasingly tenuous. If current trends continue and Sendero manages to establish a controlling position in the central highlands, it will have won the option of physically separating Lima from the rest of Peru. The political consequences of this would be enormous. How close Sendero has to extend its position toward the capital before it is in a position to exercise this option is defined by topography, the city's lines of communications with the rest of Peru, and the pattern of Lima's dependency on the interior.

Lima's overland links to the interior are maintained through three primary routes. The single access routes to the north and south are via the Panamerican highway. To the east, one is largely limited to the central highway *(carretera central)*, which runs due east through the mountains into Junín. The most important of these routes by far is the central highway, which provides the only direct, paved access from the capital to the hinterland. The highway leaves the capital and passes through the towns of Vitarte, Chaclacayo, and Chosica, gaining some 850 meters or 2789 feet in some 20 miles. Once past Chosica, the road narrows to two lanes and begins moving up fast.

---

operations it can alternatively expect to increase or decrease its attrition rate. Operating in this manner, the army will never find itself in a position to cripple the Shining Path, even if it possessed the human and material capital to get SL to this point in the first place. Long before this point was reached, SL would have scaled back the tempo of its activity (and losses) to a level that would not jeopardize its core organization. Having done so, the movement would retain the option of again stepping up its level of action once it had made the necessary investment to expand its support base and strengthen its position vis-à-vis the armed forces.

The highway's course roughly parallels that of the Rimac river, moving through canyons and defiles, around a seemingly endless series of winding turns, over ten bridges, and through one tunnel until it passes through the 20,000-foot peaks of the *cordillera occidental*, the western ridge of the Andes, at 15,890 feet. The scene is reminiscent of parts of Afghanistan, and like the mountains of Afghanistan, it is excellent guerrilla country. While ground cover is generally sparse, the route through the mountains offers numerous ambush sites where even a small column of guerrillas could control the road for as long as it would take for a superior force to be alerted, react, and finally arrive to reclaim the highway. If such efforts were multiplied, they could close the road indefinitely.[20]

Access southward is presently unrestricted and relatively safe. Though Sendero's presence in southern Lima and northern Ica departments is growing, there has been little interference with vehicular traffic. The road runs through the relatively flat coastal plain as far as Pisco, where it turns inland toward the city of Ica. The highway deteriorates by stages the farther one travels from the capital. Between Lima and Cañete, 80 miles to the south, it is largely four lanes and in fairly good repair. Beyond Cañete it narrows to two lanes and deteriorates. The first mountains are not encountered until one nears the small town of Palpa, where the road passes through a one-lane tunnel on the way to Nazca. Between Nazca and the coastal town of Chala, the road, or what remains of it, passes through some 100 miles of wasteland. Mountains are again encountered just beyond Chala, where the road has been carved out of sheer cliff through most of the 150-mile distance to the coastal town of Camana. At this point the highway again turns inland as it begins to wind through the coastal mountains on its way to Arequipa, Peru's "second city." The distance between Lima and Arequipa is roughly 600 miles by road.

---

[20]To extend the analogy, by 1987—two years prior to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan—the mujahadeen had managed to close the Salang highway, which served as the Soviet Army's one land access route between the Soviet Union and Kabul. Sometime prior to this, they had effectively cut Soviet ground access to Herat to the west, Khandahar to the southwest, and Jallalabad to the south, Afghanistan's only other significant urban centers. With the mujahadeen in control of the roads, the Soviets were forced to support their positions in Kabul and elsewhere in the country from the air. This, itself, finally became untenable with the introduction of the Stinger surface-to-air missile. Even before they closed the Salang highway, mujahadeen efforts to do so were rewarded by the fact that it required an estimated 10,000 troops to keep it open, forces which could then not be used for offensive action. The Soviet army was forced to move men and materiel along the road in heavily guarded convoys under the protection of continuous air cover. Alex Alexiev, Gordon H. McCormick, and James Quinlivan, *Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan*, unpublished RAND assessment, April 1987.

For the last 70 miles of this distance the road offers numerous points at which small bands of insurgents could close it indefinitely, with little evidence of anything to stop them. This is certainly the case in the dramatic stretch between Chala and Camana, where well-placed charges above and below the cliff highway would end overland travel between Lima and Arequipa for the foreseeable future.[21]

The route northward is similar to what we see in the south. One moves north out of Lima through the towns of Chancay, Huacho, and Barranca, finally passing out of Lima department into Ancash. Once again, the condition of the road deteriorates as one moves farther from the capital, narrowing from four to two lanes as it moves beyond Lima. Just north of Barranca the road divides, with the Panamerican highway continuing north along the coast and a second route climbing into the coastal mountains along the edge of the Fortaleza River to Huaraz city. Once into Ancash department, population centers become few and far between. The first real town encountered along the Panamerican is that of Huarmey, which is located some 75 miles up the coast. This is followed by only three small population centers before one reaches the city of Chimbote, some 120 miles into Ancash and 10 miles from La Libertad. The terrain throughout this area is similar to what one encounters south of Lima. The road is largely level but periodically moves along the cliff face above the coast north of Lima and through patches of rugged terrain extending westward from the mountains of central and eastern Ancash. While only short stretches of the road offer the inviting opportunities for demolition found to the south, it remains vulnerable to a planned interdiction campaign designed to close the highway at a series of potential choke points. These become more numerous as one moves into northern Ancash and southern La Libertad, where the road passes over numerous bridges and through increasingly hilly country on its way to the city of Trujillo.

---

[21]One indicator of the road's vulnerability, which is due in part to its extreme isolation, is that it is the scene of regular highway banditry. Expedient roadblocks are established along isolated sections of the highway to stop and rob travelers or to extract "tolls" for being permitted to continue. The night after the author drove through one such attempted roadblock in the vicinity of Chala in northwestern Arequipa department, two buses were stopped and looted. According to local authorities, the police "do not have the manpower, the gasoline, or the inclination to patrol the road." That the highway is kept open at all is due to groups of youths who clear the road for tips and the cooperation born of a sense of shared destiny on the part of those who drive it. Once into the mountains, the sides of the highway are dotted with hundreds of memorial markers to those who ended their journey in the rocks at the bottom of some cliff or ravine. Closing the highway in these areas is a simple matter of placing a dynamite charge.

The Panamerican highway north and south are, for all intents and purposes, roads to nowhere. Lima is situated in the midst of a vast desert plain that effectively flows from the border of Ecuador in the north to the Chilean frontier and beyond in the south. To the east and west, the desert extends on average between 20 and 70 miles inland from the coast to the edge of the barren western slope of the Andes. While the area currently accounts for an estimated 60 percent of Peru's population, 71 percent of this—43 percent of the total—is concentrated in the urban centers of Lima, Ica, Arequipa, Chimbote, and Trujillo. The rest of the region is very thinly populated. Where there is water there is agriculture, but there is very little water. Agricultural settlements are few and far between, particularly to the south, which becomes increasingly arid as one moves into and through Ica department. This problem has been exacerbated seriously in recent years as Peru has come under the grip of a severe drought that observers believe has resulted in a reduction of arable land along the coast.[22] As a consequence of this situation the coastal plain has, to one degree or another, always depended on the interior of the country for its food supply. Although many of the smaller villages and towns of the coast still fortunate enough to have a source of water may be able to meet their own demand, the coastal cities are critically dependent on the daily influx of agricultural and animal products from the countryside. The bulk of this flow does not move north and south, but east to west, from the highland departments of Huánuco, Pasco, and Junín, which collectively serve as the breadbasket of Lima and the central coast.

The level of dependency is dramatic in the case of Lima, which is home to one out of every three Peruvians but is able to meet only an estimated 10 percent of its daily food requirements from sources in the immediate vicinity. Between 60 and 70 percent of Lima's food supply is estimated to come directly from the interior, the majority of this via the central highway.[23] These needs are supplied on a daily basis by thousands of independent truckers who serve as middlemen between town and country. The majority of the balance is imported from abroad. The city's dependence on the interior is even greater with regard to its water and electric power supply. The city's water

[22]It almost never rains along the coast of Peru. Coastal agriculture, consequently, depends on the more than 60 permanent and seasonal rivers and streams that flow westward out of the mountains. Drought, the gradual deterioration of much of the coastal irrigation system, and increasing problems with salinity have forced hundreds of thousands of acres out of production over the past five to ten years.

[23]Estimates derived from INEI, *Peru: Producto bruto* and *Peru: Compendio estadístico*.

supply, which is increasingly insufficient, is provided by the Rimac river, and its power supply is drawn from hydroelectric plants located in the interior, principally in the Mantaro river valley. Four of the six high-voltage trunk lines that deliver this power run out of the mountains along the Rimac and the central highway to the coast. The remaining two run through equally barren country, entering the city from the north and south. Lima, in this respect, is an artificial creation: sitting in the middle of a desert, without any local source of food and electricity, critically dependent on continuing uninterrupted access to the countryside to meet its demands. This dependency has grown considerably over time with the continuing influx of economic immigrants and war refugees from the hinterland.

All of this makes the central highway the lifeline of the capital. If the city were ever to lose ready access to this one avenue into the interior, it would begin to feel the effects almost at once. If access were denied altogether, it would present the central government with an immediate crisis for which there would be no immediate solution. It is not enough to say that the army would only have to move in and reclaim the highway. Its loss in the first place would be a product of the army's failure to contain Sendero's growth in the central highlands. Closing the highway, furthermore, is much easier than keeping it open in the face of a concerted campaign to deny it to the central government. The guerrillas would not necessarily have to hold the highway and its approaches for an extended period of time to shut it down indefinitely. Well-placed detonations at any one of several hundred points along the road would easily bring down the surrounding cliffs, burying large segments in thousands of tons of rock and debris. If destruction were carried out systematically, it would take road crews months, if not longer, to dig their way back into the mountains, assuming the security environment would permit it. In the meantime, Lima would effectively be cut off from the interior.[24]

In the worst case, Sendero would not move against the central highway until it was also in a position to threaten Lima's access to the north and south. This, too, could be accomplished with relative ease if the guerrillas were willing to employ the manpower to do so. In contrast to the central highway, which could be severed within 30 miles of the edge of the city, the most convenient place to cut the Panamerican highway is likely to be in central Ica and southern and central Ancash, between 125 and 200 miles from the capital. While

[24]For a related analysis see Nelson Manrique, "Sierra central: La batalla decisiva," *QueHacer*, No. 60, August–September 1989, pp. 63–71; for a recent comment see *Expreso*, January 4, 1991.

the terrain offers numerous opportunities to close the road much closer than this, actions carried out to the north and south are likely to be more permanent. These areas also appear to correspond to Sendero's areas of greatest local strength. Sendero's position in the mountains of southern and central Ancash, for example, has grown considerably since 1986. The department currently ranks fourth overall in the intensity of SL activity. Should Sendero succeed in consolidating its position in the highlands, it would be in a strong position to challenge government control over the narrow coastal plain and, by association, all north-south access. A similar situation now exists in central Ica, where the road swings eastward through Palpa and along the edge of Ayacucho department. Secondary roads run out of Ayacucho and link up with the highway at both Palpa and Nazca, each of which lie between 10 and 15 miles from the border. Sendero's position in the area is reported by local observers to be secure. Nazca, which by virtue of its historical interest has enjoyed a small if dwindling tourist trade, is reported to be used by Sendero as a source of medicines and other supplies that are unavailable in the highlands. Palpa, for its part, was seized briefly by an SL column in 1989, an action that resulted in the death of its local police detachment.

Where access is cut, were it to occur, would be less important than the fact itself. The Panamerican highway is simply not a substitute for direct access to the interior via the central highway. Indeed, even unimpeded north-south access would do very little in the short run to either relieve Lima's dependence on the interior or permit it to continue to draw upon the hinterland via some alternative network of roads. The most important secondary access point to the sierra leaves the capital to the northeast and moves into the mountains via the town of Yangas. Some 20 to 25 miles beyond the capital, however, at the point at which it begins to enter the mountains, this road is no longer paved. The same is true up and down Peru's 1300-mile coastline. Depending upon what one is willing to call a road, there are as many as nine secondary points at which one can reliably drive into the interior from the coast between Arequipa city in the south and Chiclayo in the north. Although each features a roadbed, not one of these alternate routes is paved at the point at which it begins to cross over the western ridge of the Andes. Furthermore, all but one, the northern route between Chiclayo and the Marañon river valley, pass through areas that have either already come under effective guerrilla influence or where Sendero has successfully denied effective control to the central government. Lima's overland lines of communication, in short, are vulnerable, a condition due both to topography and to the inherent limitations of the country's road network. This, coupled

with the city's dependence on the interior and the deteriorating security situation in the highlands, has provided Sendero with a potentially powerful option for striking at the seat of power.

None of this is news to the Shining Path. As noted above, their program for victory rests on a strategy to surround the capital from the countryside, severing any and all ground access to the rest of Peru. Theory, in this case, has been reflected in practice. The pattern of SL's campaign over the course of the past ten years has arguably been designed to put it in this position. The movement has also shown an interest in the central highway and an appreciation for its importance to the capital. Sendero has been attempting to organize the central highway worker's union for years, with varying degrees of success. It has also called a series of armed strikes along the highway over the past three years that have effectively cleared the road of commercial traffic for several days at a time. These and similar events, while still tolerable, are best taken as an indicator of possible further action to come, rather than as a measure of where Sendero stands in its efforts to establish a position around Lima. The movement is already in a position to seriously disrupt and, for periods of time, even stop commercial traffic along not only the central highway but portions of the Panamerican highway as well. That it has not yet done so, we can presume, has been a matter of policy and timing, rather than a question of understanding or a lack of real opportunity.

Under what circumstances might SL targeting policy change? Three factors are likely to influence the timing of any attempt to sever the capital's overland links. First, as suggested earlier, SL's program in and against Lima is driven by the requirements and timetable of the rural campaign. Any move against the city, therefore, is likely to follow rather than precede the movement's consolidation of its position in the countryside. Any prior move against Lima of this nature would be considered premature. Second, in the interest of maximum effect, Sendero is unlikely to attempt to sever the capital's overland lines of communication incrementally. If it were interested in pursuing such an option, it could well have done so by now. The impact of completely disconnecting the city from the interior in a single series of operations is likely thought to be too great to waste. Sendero's current positions in southern Ancash and northern Ica, however, are not yet strong enough to close the Panamerican highway permanently. Finally, any move against the capital of the magnitude being discussed here is likely to be executed as part of a final play for power. Any attempt to do so can, in turn, be expected to be coordinated with a call for a general urban uprising. Sendero is unlikely to believe that

its current position in the capital is strong enough to carry through with such a plan.

The Shining Path has proved to be a patient organization. It also manifests a high degree of professionalism. It is unlikely to attempt to close off the city until it is ready to exploit the consequences in a move to seize power, and it is unlikely to attempt to move until it is convinced it is strong enough to carry the fight. Guzman has spoken of this moment as the opening act in the "climax" of the revolution. The combined effects of these efforts, it is hoped, would be fivefold: (1) to in one series of moves dramatically change popular perceptions of the course and likely outcome of the conflict, (2) to create a sense of impending calamity within the government and the armed forces, (3) to stimulate a "bandwagon effect" in which fence-sitters and closet supporters of the movement rally around SL's program in the expectation of being on the winning side, (4) to force Lima's leading citizens, individual elements of the government and the armed forces, and various foreign personnel living in the city to leave the country while "the getting was good," and (5) to encourage a general breakdown in law and order, further inhibiting government efforts to regain the initiative. Sendero believes that these effects will result in a general collapse of confidence in the central government, a corresponding disintegration of government authority, and the demoralization of remaining city-based elements of the armed forces and the police. Rural-based and urban elements of the Shining Path, the theory goes, will link up at this point in a final, decisive move against the last of the government's city-based defenses and finally ride the mounting wave of popular unrest into the presidential palace.

4. PROBLEMS OF THE URBAN UNDERGROUND

As we have seen, Sendero's strategy against Lima and, by extension, its strategy for seizing power are based on a dual program to gradually surround the capital city from without while undermining it from within. The Shining Path, I have argued, is clearly much closer to accomplishing the first objective. While Sendero's record of city-based action is certainly respectable, the campaign in the capital has not shown the vitality and potential for growth that marks the movement's efforts in the countryside. As the numbers indicate, the urban campaign has been a matter of two steps forward and one step—sometimes two steps—back. The movement, to be sure, has made some important inroads into selected urban populations. It has always been able to count on a small base of university support and has managed to establish a presence in the shantytowns surrounding Lima. And despite a number of false starts, it also appears to have had some success in penetrating selected groups of organized labor. This, coupled with its own generated front groups, has provided the organization with the first real opportunity to extend its political net in the city beyond the underground. In general, however, it is likely that the urban campaign has not fulfilled Sendero's expectations. The movement's efforts in the countryside have clearly far outpaced its development in Lima and other coastal cities. Although it has established a durable urban presence, that presence does not yet constitute a direct threat to the central government or urban authority.

The problems Sendero has confronted in the city have less to do with its particular approach to urban insurrection than with the inherent challenges of organization building in an urban environment. Even though these problems arguably have been exacerbated by the SL's ideological "fundamentalism" and a related tendency toward exclusivity, they exist independently. As such, they apply not only to the Shining Path but to any rural or city-based movement attempting to expand its urban position. Three sets of problems can be identified, revolving around the special difficulties of popular mobilization in the city, the comparative advantages that tend to be held by regime forces in an urban environment, and the subsequent vulnerability and inefficiency of the guerrilla's urban underground.

THE CHALLENGE OF POPULAR MOBILIZATION

It has long been argued that peasants represent a natural force for conservatism in traditional societies. The peasant left in a state of

nature is generally portrayed as stable, plodding, tradition-bound, and resistant to change. This view is so strong that many a volume has been written examining the contrary case of the peasant as revolutionary. By contrast, it is sometimes argued and often assumed that the city dweller is flexible, progressive, open to change, and free of traditional constraints. These differences have implications, it is further argued, for each group's susceptibility to and potential for radical mobilization. The conservative instincts of the peasant, it is said, make him an unlikely candidate for political mobilization. The rural-based insurgent must overcome or work around this constraint if he is going to succeed in tying the support of the peasantry to the larger goals of the revolution. The modernizing instincts and rising expectations of the urban resident, by contrast, are argued to leave him much more open to political change. This is thought to be particularly true of the urban dispossessed, who share the expectations of the city but live on the margins of urban economic life. Detached from the support structure of the village and unable to advance in the alien environment of the city, they are said to become politically frustrated and, in turn, become the targets of the revolutionary left.[1]

Events in Peru and other urbanizing countries of the developing world have demonstrated the fallacy of this view. While the peasant may well be a natural conservative, his urban counterpart has hardly proved to be a natural radical. This is immediately apparent when one looks at Sendero's level of success in mobilizing what the movement itself considers to be its principal urban constituency, the first- and second-generation urban slum dweller. As noted earlier, there are some three to four million people living in shantytowns in and around Lima. By any objective standard, these people eke out a desperate existence, subject to disease, malnutrition, and the constant struggle to find any form of employment in what is one of the three sickest economies in the hemisphere. Many have argued that this population is the stuff urban rebellions are made of. Guzman himself has referred to the surrounding slums as "iron belts" that the movement will use to encircle and slowly squeeze the central government.[2] While this may yet happen, SL's progress in using these conditions to transform the "underside of the city" into a revolutionary base and

---

[1]The literature on the sources of peasant and urban rebellion is quite vast. For a useful survey see Theda Skocpol, "What Makes Peasants Revolutionary?" *Comparative Politics*, No. 14, 1982, pp. 351–375; Mark N. Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution*, New York, Dodd Mead, 1974; Joel S. Migdal, *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974; and Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979.

[2]Guzman interview, p. 16.

the slum dweller into an instrument of urban rebellion must be disappointing. Sendero is there, but its presence has certainly not met its expectations. After eleven years of political work, it is clear that Sendero has not yet been able to mobilize a network of support in Lima like the one it has established in many parts of rural Peru. This has tended to bound the scope and intensity of the urban campaign and, should it continue, is likely to constrain the degree to which the metropolitan committee will find itself able to carry out its prescribed role in some future "final offensive."

How can the Shining Path's difficulties be explained? A number of factors can be identified. The first of these is related to the social backdrop of the urban slum dweller. A close examination of the social networks of the pueblos reveals that much of the literature on the supposed breakdown of community in the migrant settlements of the cities is overstated. While frustration, poverty, and anomie certainly exist, none of these is the determiner of political attitude that many observers have argued. As a general rule, peasants who have abandoned the country for the city have sought to retain much of their sense of rural life.[3] The new communities clearly reflect the department, the region, and sometimes even the villages of their founding families. Once established, they provide a continuing link to the old country, reinforced by periodic return visits by the newly urbanized villagers and a continuing influx of new migrants, who naturally settle among their own kind. Over time, the rural identity of the migrant communities is institutionalized through the creation of local community associations that work to preserve the social patterns and traditions of the sierra. The structure of interpersonal relationships, community expectations, and the dynamics of community life in the slums, in short, can look very similar to what was left behind. It is an urban life with a rural flavor.

At first glance, this pattern of migration and settlement might appear to be advantageous for the rural-based organization attempting to build an urban front. All things being equal, the communal character of the new communities would appear to make them attractive candidates for mobilization. Well-segmented communities with developed communal or associational ties will tend to be mobilized more rapidly

---

[3]This thesis is well presented by Paul L. Doughty, "Behind the Back of the City: 'Provincial' Life in Lima, Peru," in William Mangin (ed.), *Peasants in Cities: Readings in the Anthropology of Urbanization,* Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970, pp. 30–46. See also William Mangin, "The Role of Regional Associations in the Adaptation of Rural Population in Peru," *Sociologus*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1959, pp. 23–35. For a critique see Fred Jongkind, "A Reappraisal of the Role of Regional Associations in Lima, Peru," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1974, pp. 471–482.

than those with a comparatively disorganized or unorganized set of internal relationships. Systems of this nature tend to be resistant to influence from without and comparatively susceptible to appeals pitched from within. The problem, under these circumstances, is to find a way of getting inside the group in the first place. Having done so, however, one is in a position to recruit the targeted collective en masse rather than individual by individual.[4] The group characteristics that once served as a barrier to entry can now be used as an instrument of group politicization. This is, of course, precisely the problem that Sendero has confronted in the countryside, where the village represents a closed, parochial social system that must be penetrated before it is proselytized. Where the Shining Path has been successful, it has succeeded in penetrating the outer crust of the village system, establishing a foothold on the inside, and transforming this foothold into a springboard for political influence. Wherever possible, it has sought to exploit traditional and existing lines of authority and conflict, using the pattern of local village life to its own advantage.[5]

This, however, is not the pattern of recruitment we see in the city. Although many of the pueblos surrounding Lima and other major metropolitan areas meet the first criterion of bloc recruitment—a strong, defining set of communal ties—they do not satisfy the second—a high degree of group segmentation from the rest of society. In contrast to the countryside, where the village often stands apart socially and geographically from the rest of Peru, the pueblos exist within a notably larger and more diversified social, economic, and political setting. This fact has presented Sendero's urban apparatus with a number of practical difficulties. First, it is impossible to move on the new communties as if they were isolated entities, an advantage the movement has long enjoyed in the interior, where in many parts of the country it represents the law of the land. In the absence of a countervailing presence, which at this point in the war can be provided only by the army, village populations are effectively trapped, falling under Shining Path control by default. The war, under these conditions, is no longer a popularity contest. Sendero is often able to mobilize population in many parts of the sierra because there is no one to stop them. The villager is left with the choice of either aban-

---

[4]For a discussion of this concept see Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*, Englewood, Prentice-Hall, 1973, pp. 125–129.

[5]McCormick, "Organizational Perspectives on the Shining Path," mimeo, March 1991, pp. 17–19.

doning the village or making his accommodations.[6] This cannot occur in the city, where Sendero is operating "on government soil" and must remain underground to survive. Not only does this cause a built-in tendency toward inefficiency, it has robbed the movement of the ability to enforce its will. This, in turn, has both eliminated Sendero's option of last resort and significantly reduced the coercive undertones of its established program of political proselytization.

Sendero, in short, has much less room for maneuver in the pueblos than it does in the isolated highland village. Its program of political mobilization in the city must be based principally on its appeal, rather than intimidation. In the absence of this latter option, the Shining Path has sometimes found it difficult to "get inside" the shantytowns. Similarly, where it has managed to establish a presence, it has often found it difficult to use its position to mobilize the local population. To the degree the slum organizations of Peru's major cities have managed to provide the migrant with much of the psychic and material stability of village life, they have succeeded in easing the considerable adjustment costs of abandoning one's highland community and moving to town. The new resident can enter the city at his own pace, cushioned to one degree or another by the tradition of mutual aid brought from the countryside. This support structure has often served as an effective barrier to entry. While SL can either ignore or break down this and similar barriers in the countryside, it must find a way to work within or around it in town. For these reasons as well, bloc mobilization in the cities under effective government control, which is to say the large urban centers of the coast, has met with limited success. The Shining Path, in these cases, must be content with recruiting the individual rather than the group, a fact that has constrained the movement's growth rate in and around the capital.

Sendero's problems of entry have been reinforced by the fact that the peasant does not come to the city from a tradition of rebellion. As one observer noted some years ago, "The world of the individual peasant is one of suffering and repressed dissent, reflecting the response of the average individual to coercive authority."[7] The result in most

---

[6]Assuming Gorriti's estimate that between 25 and 40 percent of Peru is currently under open or shadow Sendero administration, as many as five to eight million people may currently be subject to potential SL coercive influence. Some subset of this number can be assumed to have fallen under effective SL control and forced to confront this dilemma.

[7]Mehmet Bequiraj, *Peasantry in Revolutions*, Ithaca, Center for International Studies, 1967, p. 8.

cases is a tradition of political inaction rather than political response. The residents of the pueblos, furthermore, are a self-selected group. Most have migrated to the city either to escape the war or to improve their economic condition. These motivations have arguably made the urban slum dweller more resistant to guerrilla influence than his typical counterpart in the countryside. In the case of the former, Sendero is a known quantity. Those who fled the conflict in a sense made their choice when they decided to leave their highland communities in the first place. There is little reason to expect them to be any more susceptible to Sendero's blandishments or pressure once resettled than they were in the interior. Those who fall within the latter group, like their counterparts throughout Latin America, tend to be preoccupied with the immediate problems of acquiring the basic necessities of life. In Huntington's words, they live "on a low margin: the payoff that counts is in the here and now." Even the most progressive among them tend to be "economic realists," more interested in improving their material station in life than in radical politics. Their new lives in the city often tend to give them a sense of "relative reward" in comparison to what they left behind.[8] To the degree this is true they have proved to be a difficult target group to recruit.

The tendency toward conservatism that we find in the cities is reinforced by a higher rate of political participation than is typically found in the countryside. Urban residents, as a general rule, simply have more avenues of legitimate political expression available to them than their rural counterparts, who more often than not exist outside of the political mainstream. This is certainly the case in Peru, where political life is concentrated in the cities and where many of the issues that might otherwise have provided Sendero with an entrée into the popular imagination were long ago coopted by the country's legal Left. Whether the Left supports or critiques the prevailing policies of the standing regime is less important than the fact that it does so within the parameters of accepted political discourse. The legal Left, in this respect, is not only a safety valve for venting the numerous frustrations of Peru's lower classes, it provides an important mechanism for incorporating these elements of society into the structure of political life. This, in turn, has operated as a check against the possibility of widespread radicalization among the growing ranks of the country's urban dispossessed.

---

[8]Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order and Changing Societies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, pp. 279, 280.

Together, the factors discussed above have worked to (1) moderate and defuse the demands of Peru's urban lower classes, (2) channel these demands into established and more or less controlled avenues of expression, and (3) tie those who have become part of this process to the prevailing political order. As long as the mechanisms for incorporating the urban poor into the mainstream of political life are working properly, they will tend to serve as an instrument of social stability. The fact that this framework was in place and functioning before SL's first real attempts in the mid-1980s to broaden its political base in the cities served and continues to serve as an effective barrier to radicalization. The Shining Path, in this sense, was a late comer. It was faced with the problem of not only winning *over* an urban constituency, but winning it *away* from a set of established institutions that tied it to the very establishment Sendero was working to overthrow. SL's success in this area has been inversely related to the degree to which these institutions have either fulfilled or dampened the expectations of their memberships. As these and related "mechanisms of incorporation" have begun to fray under the stress of Peru's economic decline, Sendero has been able to find political openings through which to penetrate the existing structure of urban society. As a general rule, however, these institutions still remain intact, with the result that the Shining Path's success in and around the capital has remained contained.

GOVERNMENT CONTROLS IN THE CITY

As suggested earlier in this study, the problems facing the urban guerrilla are compounded by the fact that the comparative advantage in the contest for power in the city lies with the government. There are several reasons for this. First, the coercive potential of the state, with few exceptions, will be concentrated in and around the cities. Third World armies seldom possess the necessary support structure to deploy in strength in the countryside for extended periods. In a very real sense they are tied to the city, which provides the infrastructure to support the trappings of a conventional military force. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that many such armies are not interested in leaving town in the first place. Deploying to the hinterland means leaving the relative high life of the city for the uncertain comforts of an expedient garrison. The political action, furthermore, is in the cities, not the countryside. Advancement, in many cases, will not only not be aided by a successful tour fighting guerrillas, it could actually be harmed insofar as the commander in question is no longer in a position to protect his career interests by networking in the capital. Strong urban deployments also reflect the priorities of

the state, which tend to confer importance on events in inverse relationship to their distance from the cities in general and the capital city in particular.

These and similar factors have been hampering counterinsurgency efforts in Latin America since the Cuban revolution. Peru is no exception. The Peruvian army is a garrison-bound force, and its garrisons are tied to the cities. Even in the rural emergency zones, which, according to senior military officials, currently claim from 20 to 25 percent of the armed forces (about 20,000 men), the military is tightly linked to the economy and support services of the city. The same holds true for the police. Police outposts in the countryside are few and far between. Even before the rise of the Shining Path, a disproportionate percentage of the Peruvian civil guard was located in the country's department and provincial capitals. Even this thin presence has now disappeared in large areas of the highlands as the police have withdrawn to the cities for their own protection. Security in the sierra can now be guaranteed only by numbers. This, coupled with the fact that large numbers can be supported only in town, has greatly restricted the army's ability to extend its reach beyond the relatively few cities and towns large enough to support a major garrison. Patrolling outside of the environs of the city has become a major undertaking, with the result that it is seldom done. The urban garrison's radius of action is generally defined by the distance it can travel from and return to its main base before the sun goes down. Large multiday expeditions are unsupportable, and small-force groups caught after dark run the risk of being destroyed.[9]

All of this is good news for the rural insurgent, who is often able to operate with relative impunity in the countryside, and bad news for his urban counterpart, who must confront the brunt of the regime's security forces. He must do so, moreover, on a day-in and day-out basis. The forces of law and order are all around him all the time. He is the outsider. He is operating just beyond government view and must rely on his continued anonymity for his personal security and that of the urban organization. This confers a vulnerability on the city-based revolutionary that his country cousin does not share. The rural insurgent is often able to select the time, place, and frequency of his confrontations with government forces. As long as he is mobile and the army is not, he commands the initiative. He strikes and the army reacts. As Sendero has so often demonstrated, the guerrilla under

[9]For a discussion of some of the limitations currently facing the Peruvian counterinsurgency effort see McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru,* pp. 31–37.

these circumstances can control the tempo of the conflict to maximize his strengths and minimize his weaknesses. This advantage is not generally shared by the urban insurgent. Insofar as his operating area and base area both correspond to the area of the government's greatest strength, it is he rather than the regime who tends to be on the defensive. His margin for error is much narrower than that of his rural counterpart, who always has the option of retreating over the distant hills in the face of overwhelming force. The urban guerrilla, by contrast, is trapped within the confines of the city and surrounded by those who will corner him and destroy him should he be discovered.[10]

Discovery is generally easier in the city than in the countryside. The city confronts the insurgent with a large heterogeneous population living in close quarters. That population is also comparatively integrated and as such is not subject to the same level of imposed discipline that we see in SL-controlled areas of the countryside. These factors, coupled with the ever-present proximity of the government, pose a security problem quite different from what the urban guerrilla faces in the country. In the village, there are no secrets, but there is no one to tell. In the city, by contrast, secrets are somewhat easier to hold but considerably more difficult to protect once the word is out. In the first instance, the close-knit character of village life generally means that what is known by one member of the village is soon known by all. This, however, is mitigated by the segmented nature of highland society, the general suspicion of the central government, and the sentence SL imposes on informers, all of which make it unlikely that information concerning Sendero's local disposition will come to the attention of the authorities. In the second case, the integrated nature of urban society and the difficulty SL has had in enforcing its will over urban populations all mean that information, once revealed, will tend to flow much more quickly into government hands. This tendency cannot always be mitigated by an equivalent improvement in information security and thus tends to work against SL's urban apparatus.

The probability of this outcome is reinforced by the fact that the internal intelligence apparatus of most Third World states is likely to be much more developed in the city than in the countryside. This is certainly the case in Peru, where the government is effectively blind throughout large and growing areas of the sierra and the jungle, but

[10]Brian M. Jenkins, *Soldiers Versus Gunmen: The Challenge of Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, RAND, P-5182, March 1974.

has managed to establish a broad-based collection effort in the capital and a handful of other major metropolitan areas. Ideally, a counterinsurgent intelligence program should be designed to answer three sets of questions: (1) What does the insurgent require in the way of "inputs" (defined as men, materiel, shelter, intelligence, and support), who provides them, and how, when, and where are they obtained? (2) How are these inputs processed and converted into outputs, or action, and what does this reveal about group leadership, organization, and operating procedures? and (3) What operations is the insurgent currently conducting, and what actions is he planning to carry out in the future?[11] The primary means of acquiring the necessary information to answer these and related questions is through human intelligence, and human-source intelligence programs are simply much easier to run in a government-controlled city than in the vast no man's land of the countryside. The higher probability in the city that "news" related to the guerrillas will spread, coupled with the greater likelihood that any such leak will be picked up by government informers, has made the city a dangerous operating environment.

That danger is compounded by the comparative ease with which the central government can make use of any information it is able to gather on the city-based guerrilla group. Assuming an equivalent access to intelligence, it is obviously easier for the security forces to target an urban organization than a rural one. The knowledge that Sendero has established a permanent presence in a particular village, for example, only presents the army with a new problem: What, if anything, can we do about it? The army must move out of the garrison if it is going to confront the guerrillas, but its capacity to do so is limited by its short logistical tail. For obvious reasons, this is not a problem in town. Responding to timely information of an SL presence in any particular part of the city can mean little more than picking up the phone and sending the local unit of the general police around the corner to raid a guerrilla safe house. The time lag between receiving and exploiting a tip can be very short, even for the most inadequately trained or underequipped police unit. This is far from the case in the countryside, where any effort to exploit even the most important intelligence on SL movements or intentions can take weeks of preparation and planning while the army accumulates the necessary gasoline to get it there, the supplies to feed it while it is gone, and the required

[11]For a discussion see Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts,* RAND, R-462-ARPA, February 1970, pp. 32–41. For an intelligence application see Jack Shea, "The Intelligence Requirements Associated with the Systems Model of Insurgency," Monterey, Naval Postgraduate School, manuscript, December 1990.

signatures to make it happen. The rural guerrilla, consequently, is often safe even when his relative position is known. The urban guerrilla, by contrast, must always be concerned about the possibility of discovery and the fact that if he is discovered, he may already be surrounded before he is in a position to react.

PROBLEMS OF ORGANIZATION BUILDING

In response to its comparatively greater vulnerability, the urban underground must place a premium on secrecy, stealth, and flexibility. Above all else, it must remain invisible. All about, as J. Bowyer Bell has noted, are "the outward signs of war" and "the sinews of legitimate government," but no rebels "beyond a splash of graffiti or a torn poster." The uninitiated, as he goes on to point out, often view the guerrilla's clandestine lifestyle as a source of strength rather than a limitation. The urban guerrilla, in this view, is "circling beyond sight, ready to strike, introduce disorder, and benefit from secrecy." But the reality of the guerrilla's condition is generally much less compelling. Secrecy, in most cases, is better viewed as not a strength but a minimum condition for survival. It is also operationally and organizationally limiting. Secrecy is purchased at the price of inefficiency and the risk of organizational fragmentation. All things being equal, the more secrecy that is required, the more inefficient the group will have to become to achieve it. "Absolute secrecy," as Bell points out, "assures absolute chaos." While secrecy is thus a precondition for success, it also imposes constraints or penalties on the secret organization that make success more difficult to achieve.[12]

Sendero's urban underground is penalized in a variety of related ways. First, in contrast to large areas of the countryside, the city provides the guerrilla with little opportunity for sanctuary. While Sendero's position is obviously stronger or weaker in different parts of the capital, it is always potentially within the grasp of the central government. The same is not true of SL's rural apparatus, which is based in areas under effective Sendero control, faces a thinning government presence, and can often count on regime passivity in areas under nominal government control. It is easy to imagine that the ever-present threat of discovery must place enormous strains on members of the underground. The life of the urban guerrilla, in a very real sense, is a full-time commitment, even if he remains a part-

[12]J. Bowyer Bell, "Revolutionary Dynamics: The Inherent Inefficiency of the Underground," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1990, pp. 201, 203. The following discussion builds on Bell's assessment.

time operator. It is not a question of making a periodic foray against the regime and then withdrawing into the safety net of the SL community. There is no reliable place to hide. On duty or off, the urban guerrilla is vulnerable to being rolled up in one of the city's frequent mass arrests, uncovered by poor tradecraft or effective police work, or pinpointed through the arrest and interrogation of his immediate associates.

Another constraint is the absence of an immediate base area that might be used to support and train Sendero's urban membership. Guerrillas are not born with an ability to use small arms or build pipe bombs—they have to be trained to do so like everyone else. It is obviously much more difficult to fulfill this requirement in the city than it is in the countryside. Even in Lima, random gunshots will still attract attention. Some Peruvian military sources have suggested that key cadre within Sendero's urban organizations may be sent through training programs in the countryside or may come originally from one of the movement's rural committees, but such opportunities cannot be provided for everyone. Most of SL's urban rank and file are given rudimentary instruction in the tools of the trade and forced to learn the rest on the job. Even the comparatively quiet pursuit of political education is made more difficult in the city by the risks associated with bringing any sizable group of people together and the greater need to preserve membership anonymity. Although Sendero's rural base, as we will see, serves a number of critical support functions in the urban campaign, providing "basic training" for the movement's urban underground cannot be one of them. SL's urban committee, in this respect, is very much on its own.[13]

This problem is reinforced by the comparatively higher losses SL appears to experience in the city. Apart from the two clear-cut defeats it suffered in 1986 and 1988, the metropolitan committee has had to come back from a succession of smaller incidents in which operations

[13]In the countryside, at least, Sendero appears to be making a major investment in political education and basic military training. Instruction begins at a very young age and continues throughout the individual's gradual advancement through the organization. Peruvian military sources indicate that SL has established both political and military "schools" throughout its liberated areas. Captured SL notebooks and documentation suggest that these standing schools are supplemented by teams of instructors who travel throughout SL-controlled zones in Sendero's version of a guest lecture series. Such instruction covers a range of topics, including the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the "Thoughts of Guzman," party rules and procedures, and the strategic and operational principles underlying the "popular war." In one lecture, students were treated to the "lessons of the anti-Japanese struggle in China for the popular war in Peru." Captured Sendero documentation, Ayacucho department, 1990.

have been blown, cells have been rounded up, safe houses have been uncovered, and mid-level leadership have been either killed or captured. While good comparative statistics do not exist, it is probably true that SL's losses over time, relative to its local size and strength, have been greater within the metropolitan committee than in any other single command. This has posed a serious problem of institutionalization. It is obviously much more difficult for an organization that is facing a high turnover rate to retain a high professional standard and expand the scope and intensity of its activities than it is for one that can draw upon a stable and improving personnel base. A high attrition rate has several troublesome consequences: the group is spending a disproportionate amount of time and resources initiating new membership simply to hold the line on numbers; a comparatively small percentage of the group is around long enough to perfect its skills; and whatever "corporate learning" has been acquired is continually vulnerable to destruction in the next series of government raids. While Sendero's loss rate in the city obviously has not been serious enough to threaten its urban organization, it is likely to have made it more cautious and has undoubtedly impeded its timetable for expansion.

For reasons of security, an urban underground also tends to be more fragmented and compartmentalized than its rural counterpart. The metropolitan committee is no exception. To preserve the identity of its members, Sendero's urban apparatus appears to be organized along cellular lines. Cell members may know few if any members of the organization beyond their immediate associates, and even these may be known only through their "revolutionary identity" or nom de guerre. Only one member of the group knows the identity of and the procedures for contacting his designated superior. This link provides the single regular means by which messages are transmitted up and down the chain of command. There is no question that such an organizational form helps preserve the security of the group. The principle is a simple one: what one does not know, one cannot tell. Security, however, comes at the price of effective command and control.[14] Normal communications in a cell-based system are slow and unreliable. Communications, as Bell notes, "must be stripped to their essentials" and often hidden or disguised by "primitive cloaking," which might include the use of simple codes, shorthand expressions, or allu-

[14]McCormick, pp. 48–49.

sion.[15] Such procedures, in turn, impose constraints on organizational effectiveness. First, communications tend to be quite time-consuming. Messages must be passed slowly through each succeeding echelon or layer of the organization in order to preserve group security. Second, communications, particularly at the lower end of the chain of command, tend not to be interactive. The slow and often insecure nature of covert communications frequently requires that messages travel in one direction at a time. This constraint, coupled with the lengthy transmission process, contributes to the possibility of distortions and misunderstandings. Third, to minimize this risk, messages will generally be kept short and simple, which of course limits what can be communicated. This has meant that low-end communications are often bimodal, involving little more than a "go" or "no go" order from the leadership to the rank and file.

All of these factors tend to make the urban underground a highly inefficient organization. They also place serious constraints on its ability to pose a direct threat to the central government. In the first case, a disproportionate amount of time, energy, and resources is consumed in simply maintaining itself. An organization built on the principles of secrecy, compartmentalization, and clandestine communications will be more expensive to sustain at any given level of output than one founded on the principles of full disclosure, open interaction, and easy real-time communications. The urban underground's decentralized nature also seriously limits its ability to be used as a unified force. Operations can be held back or set in motion, but there tends to be little effective way to control them once they have begun. While this is perhaps acceptable in the early stages of a group's urban development, in time it will prove to be tactically restricting. Similarly, the organization's compartmentalized structure clearly restricts the degree to which its actions can be internally coordinated. What coordination does occur must be planned well in advance to give the organization's component parts ample time to get the message.[16] In these and other ways, the urban underground must spend more for less.

---

[15]J. Bowyer Bell, "Aspects of the Dragonworld: Covert Communications and the Rebel Ecosystem," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1990, p. 19.

[16]This, of course, carries its own risk that in the time it takes to spread the word, the "word" will have spread to the authorities. Advance planning, in short, increases the time horizon for information leakage. Here again, there is an inverse relationship between the need for security, which would dictate that as few individuals as possible are informed about impending operations, and the demand for impact, which ultimately requires relatively large-scale, coordinated operations. Problems of size, coordination, and security, of course, plague most clandestine organizations. They are particularly challenging in the city.

Finally, such considerations tend to place natural limitations on the size of the urban organization and its rate of growth. Addressing this issue, Bell speaks of the problem of "guerrilla overload," in which only so many individuals can operate in a given area before the group begins to experience assured losses.[17] All things being equal, once this point is reached, increases in numbers are likely to result in an accelerating rate of loss, due both to the fact that there is an ever-growing number of "fish in the sea," thereby increasing the probability that some of them will be captured, and the fact that sustaining such a growth rate in the face of accelerating losses means that a growing percentage of the group will be made up of inexperienced, hence vulnerable, members. Such a spiral, needless to say, can be self-destructive. To avoid this problem, or at least minimize the costs and risks of expansion, organizational growth must be carefully managed. While this issue is particularly pertinent to the urban underground, it applies to a greater or lesser degree to all guerrilla organizations. Managed growth is achieved not by adding numbers to the existing table of organization, but by ensuring that any growth in numbers is matched by a corresponding growth in the structure of the organization itself. This process must be carried out in a manner that minimizes the marginal risk of exposure to the center.[18]

AN URBAN NET ASSESSMENT

Having said all this, one must also point out that Sendero's urban campaign continues to move forward, albeit more slowly and less surely than the movement's efforts in the countryside. This persistence has been due, in the first place, to the metropolitan committee itself, which has shown a professional unwillingness to expose its equity to government countermeasures. This was clearly evident in the wake of the 1986 prison massacre: Having lost some percentage of its leadership, the Lima command, to use a phrase from the novels, went to ground. Sendero's operational tempo, it appears, was slowed in

[17]Bell, "Revolutionary Dynamics," p. 199.

[18]This aspect of Sendero's activity is generally ignored by outside observers, who overemphasize the significance of SL's military activities and seriously underemphasize the importance of its organizational efforts. Organizational work is the basis of Sendero planning and action. Like the Chinese communists, the Viet Minh, and the Viet Cong before it, the Shining Path sees itself first as an "agency of social control" and only second as a military instrument. The movement's capacity to grow as a military force is considered to be a natural outgrowth of its organizing efforts. This is discussed in detail in McCormick, "Organizational Perspectives on the Shining Path," pp. 23–27. For a discussion of its doctrinal antecedents see Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1966, especially pp. 106–107, and 50–51.

part until the movement was satisfied that it had resecured its position through a general reorganization. It is easy to imagine that such considerations must be part of the metropolitan committee's regular routine, if usually on a more limited scale. Every time a committee member is captured or rounded up by the security forces, some small piece of the urban organization is compromised. Depending on the individual's role within the movement, recovery may mean no more than abandoning a safe house, relocating a meeting place, or changing one's authentication procedures and identity codes. In the case of senior or mid-level management, the response will of course be much more extensive and, hence, disruptive, involving as it must large pieces of the urban network. The Shining Path has paid this price to stay in business. A characteristic concern for organizational security has permitted the metropolitan committee to continue to function in the face of periodic setbacks and the central government's persistent efforts to defeat it.

This has been reinforced by the linkages between the urban and rural campaigns and the fact that the government of Peru has been forced to respond to a diversified and integrated urban and rural-based threat. What many of Latin America's early guerrillas spoke of in principle, *la línea de insurrección combinada*, the Shining Path has sought to accomplish in practice.[19] This approach has played a conscious role in Sendero planning since at least 1985. This is true at the level of group strategy, where, as we have seen, the city has come to play a key role in Sendero's general theory of victory; at the operational level, where there is an evident degree of coordination and cooperation between the movement's urban and rural networks; and at the logistical level, where the city provides access to goods and services that are not readily available to SL cadre in the countryside. These ties have conferred a depth and complexity to Sendero's metropolitan organization that it would not otherwise enjoy if it were strictly Lima-bound. The strength of the rural campaign, furthermore, has restricted the degree to which the government is able to focus its limited counterinsurgency assets against SL's underground network in the city, just as the existence of an urban organization has complicated and certainly weakened the government's counterguerrilla campaign in the countryside.

This has given the movement's urban underground a degree of durability that was quite uncharacteristic of urban guerrilla campaigns of

[19]This concept was coined by Francisco Prada in 1968, who was then in charge of the Caracas Front of the Venezuelan Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN).

the past. First, it is very difficult for the government to destroy or seriously disrupt SL's urban apparatus without registering similar successes against its political network in the countryside. The metropolitan committee's rural links provide a means of regeneration in the face of any combination of setbacks within the city itself. Second, the diversified nature of SL's urban program has permitted the committee to shift its pressure back and forth inside and outside the city depending on the particular focus of government countermeasures. This, as we have seen, was clearly apparent in the wake of the prison massacre in 1986, when the downturn in Sendero actions in the capital was met with an increase in activity elsewhere in Lima department. Third, and related to this, access to rural support has also meant that the urban underground can call upon the movement's rural base to supplement or reinforce its own ongoing programs. This appears to have been the case, for example, with many of the assassinations that SL has performed in Lima, which Peruvian sources believe are often carried out by "annihilation squads" brought in from the interior. It was also evident during the 1990 presidential elections, when the blanket of security forces spread across the capital began picking up teams of rural cadre that had been ordered into the city to disrupt the balloting process.

The flexibility this has conferred was evident in June 1990, in the wake of an operation by Peruvian security forces that the outgoing president, Garcia, called the "hardest blow against subversion in the last ten years."[20] The action, which apparently came after weeks of surveillance, was alleged to have resulted in the seizure of 35 Sendero safe houses in the greater Lima metropolitan area. According to security sources, the police captured a printing press, tons of documents and SL literature, maps, access codes, notebooks containing the names and code names of active cadre, as well as 32 suspected guerrillas, a number of whom were said to be members of Sendero's central committee. Even accounting for the high degree of exaggeration that had come to characterize security force reporting in general and Garcia's claims to success in particular, the raids appeared to be significant. And yet they in fact had no discernable impact on either the scope or intensity of SL actions in the city. Sendero actions in the city showed the same pattern of activity after the raids as they had before. Indeed, the presidential runoff, which was scheduled for the following week, was met with one of the strongest SL responses in the city that year. Although the destruction of a part of SL's city-based network,

---

[20]James Brooke, "Guerrilla Hideout in Lima Yields Key Documents," *New York Times*, June 7, 1990.

regardless of how small a part it may have been, certainly had a deleterious effect on its urban position, the movement's organizational complexity and capacity for self-renewal helped it to insulate and contain the damage and forge ahead.

The strength of Sendero's position in the countryside, coupled with the professionalism of its apparatus in the city, suggest that the metropolitan committee will continue to pose a serious political challenge. That challenge can be expected to grow with time. The integrated and ultimately synergistic quality of SL's urban and rural campaigns means that the level of threat Sendero is able to pose within the city will, in part, be a function of the vitality of its position in the surrounding countryside. On the basis of this, one cannot be optimistic. While the government of Peru has succeeded in slowing Sendero's progress over the past decade, it has not managed to clearly defeat the movement anywhere. The only argument can be over the pace of the Shining Path's advance, not the basic trends, which indicate that SL is gradually consolidating its hold over large areas of the highlands, has compromised overland access to the eastern jungles, and is beginning to contest government authority in selected areas of the coast. As Sendero's position in the countryside grows, its position in the city can be expected to grow along with it. As we have already seen, this trend is apparent in such highland cities as Huancayo, Ayacucho, and Huancavelica, where the strength of the movement's position in the areas just beyond each city's limits has presented local security forces with an increasingly complex problem of urban control. In these areas and others, the level of integration is such that it may no longer be appropriate to distinguish between an urban and a rural campaign.

Short of this, Sendero's urban campaign will continue to erode public confidence in the stability and future of Peru's democratic institutions. Bombings, armed assaults, assassinations, political kidnappings, and armed strikes are now a daily fact of life for Lima's population. This, coupled with the city's escalating crime rate and disastrous economic position, has made life difficult, comparatively dangerous, and uncertain. All are affected, regardless of whether they or family members have suffered directly from terrorist activity. Between the last quarter of 1989 and the first quarter of 1991, Lima experienced over 634 acts of political violence, including 349 bombings, 153 assaults, 34 assassinations, and countless violent strikes and major strike-induced disruptions to the city's health, legal, and transportation systems. Even the police have gone out on strike, though the city has been in and out of emergency rule since 1982. While the Shining Path has not yet attempted to seal off the

capital from the interior, movement operations in the areas surrounding Lima have resulted in periodic food shortages, a severe drop in the influx of export commodities, and chronic power shortages, all of which have contributed to a general feeling that the government has lost control over its future. Concern for the future has been reflected in recent public opinion polls indicating that terrorism has surpassed concern for the economy as the principal source of public anxiety.[21]

---

[21]This shift was evident as early as 1988 in a poll taken in Lima in which 15 percent of the respondents indicated they believed Sendero would eventually win. *New York Times,* July 17, 1988, p. 1.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Shining Path's campaign against the government of Peru is based on a protracted strategy to move, in stages, from the sierra to the coast and from the countryside to the cities. The basis of this plan lay in the simple fact that the initial advantages in the struggle would rest with the central government; Sendero would begin weak in relation to the government's strengths. Reversing this balance was expected to take time. Guzman's choice of a rural base was made with this condition in mind. Building on the principles of rural mobilization developed by Mao, Sendero was to exploit the government's historic lack of interest and presence in the countryside to build an armed counterstate with which to challenge the authority and power of the political center. As noted elsewhere, the process of building such a rural organization began years before the movement actually initiated its first armed actions in May 1980. By the time the decision was made to come out into the open and take up arms, Sendero already had a political network in place in the rural central and southern highlands, the city of Lima, and selected departmental capitals. In laying the political groundwork for its military campaign before rather than after it performed its first armed operations, the Shining Path not only succeeded in seizing the initiative at the outset of the struggle, it ensured that the central government would find it very hard to regain the upper hand. True to plan, the regime has been reacting to Sendero initiatives ever since.

The cities do not appear to have played a prominent role in Sendero's theory of victory during the first five years of the armed struggle. Although they served as the movement's final operational objective on the path to a national takeover, they were to be slowly cut off and eventually seized from without rather than subverted from within. Urban actions were carried out primarily for their propaganda value and to undermine popular confidence in the prevailing order, rather than for any direct contribution they could be expected to make to an SL victory. The ultimate target of these efforts, from the outset, was the city of Lima. The goal was an obvious one: Lima is not only the capital, it is also home to approximately one-third of the country's population and the great majority of its social and economic elite, and for these reasons and others it serves as the psychological center of Peru. To control Lima would be to control the country, and for Sendero, control over Lima would eventually be won by controlling the countryside. With this objective in mind, Sendero moved quickly

to establish a strong position in the central highlands and began to lay the groundwork for a similar position in Ancash, Ica, and the outlying provinces of Lima department. While this campaign, at one level, should be viewed as only one of several distinct axes of SL movement over the past decade, it was and remains a key element of the movement's larger strategy of protracted war.

Evidence that a distinctive aspect of this plan had been modified began to appear in 1985. The basic outline remained the same, but it is clear in retrospect that Sendero was beginning to give much more attention to its metropolitan organization than it had during the opening years of the insurgency. This was apparent in two areas. First, the number of actions carried out by Sendero in and around the capital effectively doubled between 1984 and 1986, a fact that suggested the movement was making a significant investment to expand its urban underground. Second and more important, by the mid-1980s it was apparent that the nature of Sendero's objectives in the city had begun to change from a simple interest in armed propaganda to a more long-range interest in building an enduring base of popular support, backed by a developed, grass roots organization. As part of this program, Sendero moved to establish its first set of urban front organizations beyond those already in place in the universities, and began what has since become a concerted campaign to penetrate and mobilize elements of the city's base of organized labor. A key target in these efforts were the extensive slums surrounding the capital and other major metropolitan areas of the coast, which SL hoped might be turned into a stronghold of the urban campaign. These and similar efforts marked the Shining Path's first attempt to directly integrate its position in the cities with its larger program in the countryside. Although still subordinate to the demands and timetable of the rural conflict, the urban-based campaign assumed a new importance in Sendero national planning.

The new attention given to organization building in Lima and a handful of other coastal cities was evident in many of the major towns of the sierra, most notably in Ayacucho city and the department capitals of the central highlands. Sendero's regional strategy, in each case, was now to be based on a dual program to close on the local center of government from the interior while extending the movement's scope of organization and operations within and around the city's limits. While the elements of this program were to be operationally independent, each was believed to support the other. By keeping the army and the police occupied in the cities, the urban underground would relieve government pressure on the primary locus of the movement's advance, which was in the countryside. Similarly, as Sendero consol-

idated its rural position and began to disrupt urban access to the hinterland, the regime's political and military position within the cities could be expected to deteriorate, giving SL's urban apparatus an additional measure of security and further openings for subversive exploitation. The impact was to be a synergistic one. The combined effects of a diversified urban-rural campaign on regional authority and control were expected to exceed the sum of their parts. This process would end with Sendero's rural apparatus linking up with the urban underground in a coordinated move against the local seat of power.

At a higher level of analysis, but in a similar manner, Sendero's developing positions around Lima department and its position within the Lima metropolitan area are considered to be two parts of the same plan to eventually move against the capital city and depose the standing regime. SL actions in the sierra, in this respect, can be viewed both as a prelude and precondition to its larger program to envelop Lima. The end game of this plan is likely to involve an attempt to sever the capital's lines of communication and physically isolate the central government. The metropolitan committee, for its part, has been charged with the job of preparing for this day. The first part of this plan is already well advanced. Large portions of the central and southern sierra have fallen under effective SL control. The area of guerrilla influence stretches from San Martin department in the north to the northern provinces of Puno department in the south, and from the foothills of the western slope of the Andes to the eastern jungles. With few exceptions, what Sendero is not able to control in this area it is able to deny to the central government. While the regime continues to maintain a presence in the highlands, it is increasingly relegated to the department capitals and a handful of other garrison towns. Large tracts of the sierra have been effectively ceded to the guerrillas.

Sendero's efforts in the capital itself have not met with the same level of success. Since its first big push into the city in 1985, the movement has suffered from a series of major and minor setbacks that have slowed its development and limited its effectiveness. The metropolitan committee is growing, but it is growing slowly. This appears to be true both of the urban underground and its associated front groups. Sendero's problems in the city can be traced to a number of sources, including the limited appeal of its message, the diversified and comparatively integrated character of its targeted constituencies, the absence of an effective coercive option in the city, the relative strength of the forces of law and order, and the natural difficulties associated with building and running an urban underground organization. As the latter point suggests, these problems have as much to do with the

inherent limitations of operating in an urban environment as they do with the Shining Path per se. They have, however, been exacerbated by the movement's characteristic concern for security, which has had the effect of further slowing the evolution and tempo of its urban campaign. Together, these factors have placed an effective constraint on what SL can hope to achieve in the capital in the foreseeable future. While its presence can be expected to continue to contribute to the general deterioration of Peru's security situation, it is unlikely to ever pose a direct and independent threat to the standing political order.

Given the course of events beyond the city's limits, however, the slow evolution of the movement's position in the capital is not likely to matter. The differentiated or dual character of Sendero's campaign against the city has provided it with a set of maximum and minimum objectives. Ideally, SL would like to see the metropolitan committee become an independent force to be reckoned with, capable of calling up a large popular following on demand. Its role under these circumstances would be to prepare for the day when it would lead an urban uprising in coordination with a campaign to move on the capital from the countryside. But even if SL's urban apparatus falls short of this goal, it could still prove to be an effective instrument in any final play for power. The key to SL planning, in the end, would not emerge from within the city but from without, in the movement's efforts to seize or destroy Lima's lines of communication and sever its ties to the interior. Given the city's dependency on the interior for food, power, water, and other resources, the impact of any such action would be both immediate and profound. While it is impossible to predict what the specific ramifications of such a move might be, it is easy to imagine that it would be highly destabilizing, resulting in anything from food riots to the exodus of large elements of the Peruvian elite. If the roads were not quickly reopened, the breakdown in law and order could end in the collapse of central authority.

This strategy would not end with Sendero "taking Lima," which the magnitude of the problem and its own relative weakness would be unlikely to permit it to do, but with the creation of the conditions for political disintegration. The regime would not, in these circumstances, be pushed from power; it would collapse under its own weight. The end, SL hopes, would be expedited by mounting political unrest within the city, the collapse of public confidence, and a sense of impending doom. These events could unfold quickly or slowly depending upon the speed and decision with which Sendero moved to sever Lima's access to the interior, the precise nature of the city's dependency on the hinterland, its food reserves, the existence and level of

any international assistance effort, and the government's ability to control and contain popular instability. The minimum objective of the metropolitan committee under these circumstances would be to make a bad situation worse. If Sendero's urban apparatus was not strong enough to shape and control a final urban uprising, it would almost certainly be in a position to further catalyze a spontaneous popular reaction and employ this reaction for its own purposes. Its goal would be to ensure that once events were set in motion, they continued to escalate until the central government either fled or was driven from office, regardless of whether Sendero was in a position to pick up the pieces.

The Shining Path is moving methodically to build this option, both within the capital and without. Although the movement is still a long way from being in a position to fully exploit any cutoff of the capital, it is in a position to threaten the city's lines of communication. This is certainly true of the vulnerable central highway, which serves as Lima's most important access route to the interior. It also appears to be true of the capital's only southern access route via the Panamerican highway. While the city's single route northward is still secure, this too could be compromised by Sendero's growing presence in the highlands of Ancash and La Libertad and the northern provinces of Lima department. It is not possible to estimate if and when Sendero will feel it is strong enough to attempt to finally divide the capital from the rest of Peru. Such a decision, however, is likely to be linked much more closely to developments in the countryside than to SL's position in the city. Should current trends continue and the movement succeed in consolidating its hold over the central highlands and the western foothills of the Andes, the choice will be Sendero's to make. Whether the movement succeeds or fails in this effort will hinge much more on SL as an organization than on any realistic set of responses from the government of Peru, which has shown little understanding of the insurgency and even less ability to stop it.