

# **Maoism in the Andes: Sendero Luminoso and the contemporary guerrilla movement in Peru**

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### Preface

This paper arises from a period of research spent in Peru between January 1980 and September 1982, when many of the events mentioned below were taking place. I would like to register my gratitude to Celia Brading, Andy Brown, and Francoise Barbira-Freedman, who supplied me with a variety of newspapers and magazines. Much of the data on the early divisions within the Peruvian Communist Party and Sendero Luminoso's origins relies on the account given by Mercado (1982). I should also like to thank the participants in the seminar at the Centre for Latin American Studies at Liverpool University who passed comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Maoism in the Andes : Sendero Luminoso and the contemporary guerrilla movement in Peru

Introduction

In 1965, during the first Belaúnde government, a rural guerrilla movement emerged in the Peruvian highlands. Inspired by the Cuban experience, the Peruvian insurgents adopted a Guevarist foguista strategy and opened up operations on three fronts in the Central and Southern Andes. On this occasion, however, the guerrillas survived less than six months, and were crushingly defeated by December, 1965. Among other causes, the reasons for this lack of success lay in their poor preparation, bad organization, the costeño composition of many members of the guerrilla columns (resulting in a superficial knowledge of sierran conditions) and a misreading of the national political situation. Although in many respects a guerrilla movement a la criolla, the events of 1965 did contribute towards the introduction of social change in Andean Peru, albeit indirectly, for the army's experience in crushing the rebels is reputed to be one factor which encouraged the military to implement a thoroughgoing agrarian reform between 1969 and 1976.

Today, in Belaúnde's second term of office, another rural guerrilla movement has arisen to challenge the State, this time in the shape of the Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso. Far better organized than their 1965 predecessors and possessing a more efficient military structure, at the time of writing (May 1983), Sendero Luminoso have been able to survive for three years, during the course of which the organization has carried out a substantial number of political and military actions, and been a constant thorn in the side of the Belaúnde government. The objective of this working paper is to outline Sendero's origins, guerrilla strategy and ideology.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of these events see Gott (1970) and Bejar (1973).

The political background: the military and the revolutionary left during the 1970s

The social and economic policies of the Velasco regime (1968-1975) are well documented and need not be commented on here.<sup>2</sup> Suffice it to say that the reformist and anti-imperialist rhetoric emitted by the Government-controlled media (the press, radio and television), in addition to state agencies such as SINAMOS, created a political atmosphere in which the revolutionary left could prosper, notwithstanding the selective repression of left-wing activists by the police and military's intelligence services. Using the political space offered by the government-sponsored land reform and its attack on landlordism to good advantage, the revolutionary left was able to significantly increase its influence among the peasantry and landless labourers over the period 1970 to 1975. The two most obvious examples of the left's success in agitation and organization in the rural districts were the large-scale land invasions that occurred in Piura (1972, 1973, 1978-79) and Andahuaylas (1974). Similar events materialized on a smaller scale in Cajamarca (1973-74), Cusco (1977) and elsewhere) These important peasant movements, which involved thousands of peasants and landless labourers, developed under the aegis of the Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP), which markedly grew in strength during these years.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Caballero (1981) provides what is probably the best succinct account of the Peruvian military's record in office between 1968 and 1980.

3 On the background to the land invasions in Andahuaylas see Sánchez (1981). For a discussion of the land take-overs nationally and the political shortcomings of this strategy see García-Sayán (1982).

4 Due to the great organization effort of the 1970s, the CCP is today the most influential rural proletarian and peasant organization in Peru, encompassing within its ranks activists from all revolutionary left groups, with the dominant political party being Vanguardia Revolucionaria.

The outcome was that, although still patchy, the revolutionary left's presence as a political force in Peru's rural districts was far greater by 1975 than it had been in 1968 when the Velasco regime ascended to power. Less impressive, but nevertheless important, advances were registered by the left over the same period at both the level of ideas and organization among other sectors of the labour force. These ranged from white collar groups (teachers, bank workers and public employees) through to the industrial proletariat, such as workers in the metallurgical, fishing and mining industries, labourers on the newly formed sugar co-operatives and factory workers in the industrial belt surrounding Lima. This uneven but rapid growth of the left during the Velasco years provided a springboard for more significant advances between 1975 and 1980.

1975 brought not just the ousting of General Velasco by Morales Bermudez, it also marked the onset of Peru's worst economic crisis since the War of the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> The Morales regime responded to this difficult economic situation in an orthodox fashion, implementing an IMF approved deflationary policy in an attempt to get out of the crisis by depressing the living standards of the mass of the population. Due to this monetarist economic strategy, between October 1975 and August 1978 real wages fell by 35%. White collar workers were even more adversely effected, their salaries falling by 42% in real terms over the same period. Simultaneously, open urban unemployment rose from 6.6% in 1974 to 9.4% in 1977, with urban underemployment demonstrating a similar tendency to rise, from 25% in 1974 to 39% by 1977. Prices rocketed by 221% between December 1974 and February 1978, while the sol was devalued by 446% vis-a-vis the US dollar over the three-year period December 1975 to December 1978. As a result of the regime's deflationary measures, per capita GNP fell by 12% between 1974 and 1978. A further outcome

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<sup>5</sup> Caballero (1981: 18-19) provides a good summary of the causes fomenting this economic crisis.

of the military's policy was a significant shift in earnings from lower middle and working class groups to the capitalists: the share of profits in national income rose from 24% in 1975 to 311% in 1979 (Caballero, 1981:19).

The response of Peruvian workers to this concerted attack on their living standards was a wave of strikes throughout all of Peru's major industrial sectors (mining, fishing, steel, textiles and manufacturing industry) as well as important white collar unions (notably schoolteachers and bank employees). The high points of this industrial action were three successful general strikes in July 1977, May 1978 and July 1979. As time progressed, these strikes began to carry a more overt political complexion. Economic issues were of course included in the strikers' list of demands, but the general strikes increasingly became a vehicle through which the mass of the population demonstrated their repudiation of the military regime and its growing tendency towards repression as a tool for implementing its monetary strategy. In addition to the three general strikes, stoppages at a regional and departmental level were also organized (as in Juliaca, Moquegua, Pucallpa and Ayacucho). On occasions these paros encompassed whole towns, as was the case of the important industrial centre of Chimbote, which sustained its own general strike for fifty-two days in 1977-

Active opposition to the Morales regime between 1975 and 1980 was mainly urban in origin. Although several important rural mobilizations did develop, overall the peasantry were very much on the sidelines throughout this period of heightened social unrest. This occurred despite the fact that the left's presence as a political force in the countryside had noticeably increased during the 1970s: by 1980 there existed a far greater number of politically conscious peasants and rural labourers with a history of active participation in revolutionary left organizations. This apparent anomaly was partly due to the impact of the recently terminated land reform, which had brought significant social changes to the rural districts without in any

way providing a long-term solution to Peru's agrarian problem(s).

As was to be expected, the left-wing political parties threw themselves into the forefront of the struggle against the Morales government. Operating in a favourable political and economic environment, revolutionary left organizations were able to expand their support among industrial workers and the urban unemployed to a hitherto unheard of degree. They managed to consolidate their control of key trade unions, such as the miners and steelworkers. In the Lima-Callao conurbation the left made significant ground among the glassworkers, workers in the vehicle assembly, metallurgical and construction industries, as well as within certain groups of public sector manual workers. Inroads were also registered in the textile workers union, which had long been an Aprista fiefdom, leading to the gradual erosion of APRA domination over this important sector of Lima's industrial proletariat. 1975 to 1980 witnessed a similar trend with respect to another key group of workers who had hitherto been solidly Aprista in outlook: >those employed on the sugar co-operatives. This laid the foundation for the revolutionary left's emergence as the dominant force in the sugar workers union in mid-1982, thus ending fifty years of APRA hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

The popular protests and uprisings gradually chipped away at the military regime's legitimacy and credibility, finally persuading the generals of the need to return to the barracks. As a first step in this process, in June 1978, elections were held in order to convene a Constituent Assembly.

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<sup>6</sup> One indication of the degree of APRA's declining influence within the Peruvian labour movement over these years is that in the 1982 union elections in the CAP Casa Grande they were defeated by the left slate. The hacienda Casa Grande had been an APRA stronghold since the party's foundation in the 1920's. During the election campaign in Casa Grande a group of APRA's búfalos (hired thugs) fired on a march organized by the left against the corruption of the CAP's then APRA leadership, killing a child and wounding several other demonstrators.



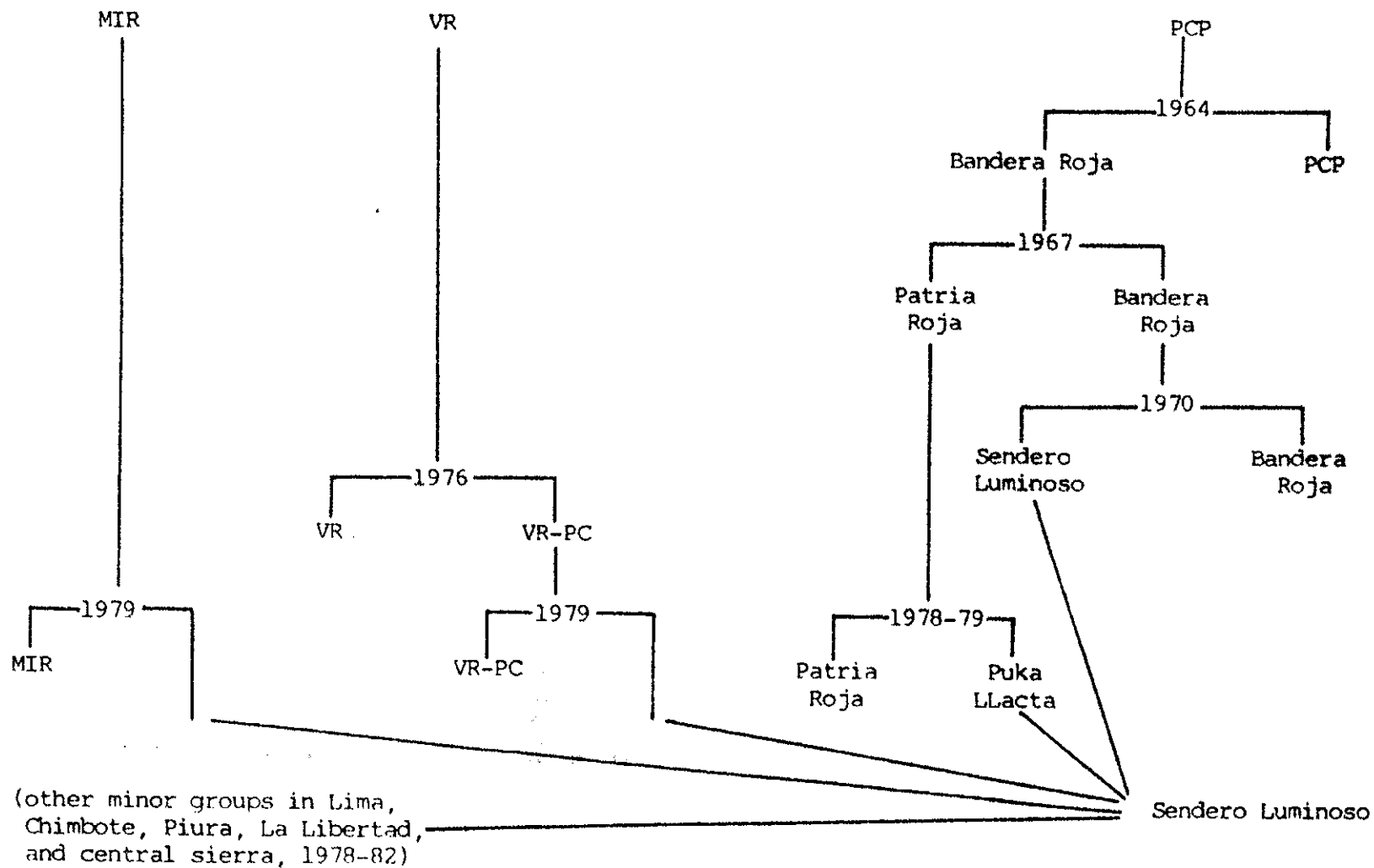
In these elections the left emerged as a significant electoral force for the first time in Peruvian history, gaining 31% of the votes at a national level (they polled a derisory 6% in the 1962 elections). In sixteen of Lima's working class districts the revolutionary left polled over 40% of the votes (and an average of 49.7% over the whole capital), with the Trotskyist leader Hugo Blanco obtaining well in excess of 250,000 votes. This relative election success, coupled with its growing influence among the urban population and the continuing high level of urban discontent, led most of Peru's revolutionary left groups by 1977-78 to the conclusion that a 'pre-revolutionary' situation existed in the country. Sendero Luminoso also adopted this position, but played no active role in organizing worker and peasant struggles over these years. Rather than participating in the mass movement, Sendero had already embarked upon a different path, and was preparing its cadres for the launching of a rural guerrilla war.

Before proceeding to outline Sendero's political perspectives, ideology and tactics, an outline of the organization's origins is called for.

#### The origins of Sendero Luminoso

To the outsider the Peruvian left is a particularly complicated phenomenon, made up as it is of dozens of parties divided on no more than obscure issues that bear no relation whatsoever to the day-to-day problems confronted by Peru's workers and peasants. In order to avoid unnecessarily confusing the reader, therefore, I here present a simplified account of Sendero Luminoso's genesis and development (see diagram).

The Origins of the Partido Comunista del Perú - Sendero Luminoso  
 (simplified version)



January 1964 witnessed the first important split within the Partido Comunista del Perú (PCP). This occurred during the PCP's Fourth Conference and reflected divisions that had arisen within the international communist movement. The pro-Chinese faction was led by Saturnino Paredes. This group left to form a new organization - the PCP-Bandera Roja ('Red Flag') - taking with them a majority of the PCP's youth organization and several regional committees. The pro-Moscow members included a majority of the national leadership and these retained control over the Party's apparatus, as well as the external finance coming from Russia.<sup>7</sup>

A central point of friction at this time was the pro-Chinese faction's criticism that the Party leadership was not taking the question of armed struggle seriously, and that they had adopted 'opportunist', 'pacifist' and 'conciliatory' positions. Shortly after the split Bandera Roja organized a National Conference in which it characterized Peruvian society as 'semi-feudal' and 'neo-colonial'. As a result, the revolution in Peru would originate in the countryside leading to the encirclement and collapse of the towns.

This new organization, however, did not hold together for long.. Accusations were made that Saturnino Paredes had embezzled funds destined to maintain the Party's full-time organizers in the countryside. But this aside, the central point of conflict was the recurrent charge that the central committee was not making any attempt to construct

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7 This split was unwittingly helped along by Pérez Godoy's military government (1962-63). On 5 January 1963 state security agents rounded up many PCP members on the trumped-up charge that they were organizing a communist uprising under Cuban guidance. The detainees were flown to El Sepa prison camp in the Amazon Jungle. Representatives of both tendencies were among those detained, and during their months in detention a heated debate took place between the rival factions, in the course of which the divisions hardened, with the Maoists finally coming to the conclusion that they were left with no alternative but to leave.

the military apparatus necessary to wage revolutionary warfare in Peru. The outcome was a split in 1967 led by the regional committee from the Central Region, whose paper was entitled Patria Roja ('Red Homeland'). Predominant among this group were Rolando Breña, Odón Espinosa and Ludovico Hurtado, who left Bandera Roja to form a new Maoist organization which took its name from the aforementioned newspaper. By 1967 Abimael Guzmán, Sendero Luminoso's future general secretary and chief ideologue, was responsible for agitation and propaganda in Bandera Roja and the production of the organization's newspaper which bore the same name. Guzmán decided to remain inside Bandera Roja for the time being, although he was already heading a faction opposed to the line of Saturnine Paredes. It was not until 1970 that Guzmán split from Bandera Roja, thus forming the organization that today carries the name of the PCP-Sendero Luminoso.

At this stage the Sendero Luminoso group were concentrating their organizational efforts in the student movement, with the Party's name originating from their control of the Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario por el Sendero Luminoso de Mariátegui (the 'Revolutionary Student Front for the Shining Path of Mariátegui'). One of its most important bases was the University of Huamanga located in the small sierran town of Ayacucho, where Abimael Guzmán taught philosophy. Other educational establishments where the Frente Estudiantil had support were the Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (National Engineering University - UNI) and the University of San Martín de Porres in Lima. Other important universities in the capital, such as San Marcos and La Católica, were dominated by Patria Roja, Vanguardia Revolucionaria and other left-wing organizations between 1970 and 1979, with Sendero Luminoso having but a relatively insignificant presence.

The first phase of Sendero Luminoso's existence covered the years 1970 to 1977. During this period they began to construct a party apparatus, achieving a surprising degree of success, especially in student circles. Cells were

formed throughout Peru, as were regional committees:, with the main concentration of cadres (then and now) being found in the Central Sierra and Lima. Quickly gaining a reputation as extreme dogmatists, Sendero's members were regarded somewhat dismissively by the other revolutionary left groups as 'nutters'. For its part, Sendero launched vilification campaigns against the rest of the revolutionary left that were so intense that they even surprised many activists with long experience of working in a political environment not noted for gentlemanly behaviour. Sendero's distinctive feature at this time was their classification of the Velasco regime as 'fascist', against which the only viable strategy that could be adopted was an armed struggle originating in the country-side and eventually encircling the towns. Other left groups who took a different attitude vis-a-vis Velasco's reformist military government were denounced by Sendero as 'conciliators', 'traitors' and 'running dogs', etc. In reality, this dogmatic ultra-left stance went hand in hand with a rightist political practice, for Sendero limited its activities to purely 'educational' tasks in this period, and as has already been mentioned, refrained from participating in the important mobilizations initiated by the Peruvian working class in the 1970s.

The second phase in Sendero Luminoso's development began in 1977 and lasted until early 1980. Those cadres who were deemed responsible for the organization's over-attention to purely educational matters and its failure to become involved in practical politics between 1970 and 1977, were censored (they were mostly to be found in the Lima section of the Party), and the new central task was declared to be 'reconstructing the Party'. In effect this meant the creation of a political and military apparatus that would be Capable of waging armed struggle. By late 1976 Sendero Luminoso had increased its influence in the student movement, especially in the Central Andes and Lima. As part of this policy of 'reconstructing the Party', a majority of these student cadres were withdrawn from the universities in 1977 and 1978

and sent into the countryside. So too were a number of the non-student activists who lived in urban areas. Training camps were established in certain rural districts (such as the puna around Julcamarca in Ayacucho), and given Sendero's commitment to guerrilla warfare, the organization refused to intervene in the 1978 Constituent Assembly elections, dismissing them as an 'electoral farce'.

The years 1977 to 1980 are characterized by the careful construction of a national organization (but still with a significant majority of the membership located in the Central Sierra and Lima). This process was aided by attracting members from other left groups. In 1976 a split occurred in Vanguardia Revolucionaria, with approximately 25 to 10% of the organization leaving to establish a new party called Vanguardia Revolucionaria-Proletaria Comunista (VR-PC). These latter had formed the more Maoist influenced and campesinista elements of VR's membership, who significantly were concentrated in the most backward regions of the sierra (e.g. Andahuaylas, Cajamarca and Ayacucho). VR-PC adopted an ultra-left position with respect to the 1978 Constituent Assembly elections, failing to participate on the same grounds as Sendero, but only to undertake later an abrupt volte-face in 1979-1980. This, in addition to other rather strange positions taken up by the organization in these years, created a high degree of confusion and disenchantment among VR-PC's membership. Into this situation stepped Sendero Luminoso, infiltrating VR-PC in 1978 and later leaving, taking with them many of VR-PC's cadres, including several of their most important and experienced peasant militants in 1979 (e.g. Felix Calderón from Cajamarca, among others). Similarly, in 1979 the Puka LLacta ( Tierra Raja in Quechua) faction broke off from Patria Raja to join Sendero Luminoso. Puka LLacta's membership in the main consisted of miners in the departments of Junín and Pasco. Other small groups gravitated towards Sendero Luminoso over the period 1979 to 1982, as did many independents and individual members of other revolutionary organizations, who were dissatisfied by the lack of seriousness with which the leaderships of the

most important groups were dealing with the need to develop an effective military structure.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of natural growth and defections from other left organizations, during the first months of 1980 Sendero's leaders arrived at the conclusion that the Party apparatus had been sufficiently 'reconstructed'. Having reached this decision, given the logic in which they were caught up, they then proceeded to commence the armed struggle. This, the third phase in Sendero Luminoso's trajectory, was launched on 18 May 1980 with actions synchronized to coincide with the general election of that month. As was to be expected, the decision to begin guerrilla warfare led to fierce debate inside the organization. Debate did not take place, however, on the question of whether the moment was propitious or not to open up the guerrilla struggle. This point had already been discussed by Sendero's leadership on numerous occasions between 1975 and 1980, with the conclusion being unanimously reached in the IX Plenary Session of the Central Committee, held in 1978, that Peruvian society was living 'through a revolutionary situation'.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the internal debate within Sendero in 1980 was concerned to define the armed strategy to be followed. Two main positions emerged on this issue. The first was that of a prolonged rural guerrilla war that originates in the countryside eventually encircling and forcing the collapse of the towns. This strategy was advocated by Sendero's general secretary Abimael Guzmán.

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<sup>8</sup> Among others, the minute groups joining Sendero at this stage included the MIR-Cuarta Etapa based in Chosica; the Nucleos Marxistas-Leninistas, a group that had split from Patna Raja in 1967 and whose zone of activity was Chimbote; the VR-Político-Militar from Lima; and in 1982 a group of approximately sixty members who split from the MIR-Peru and were spread around the areas of Cajamarca, Huamachuco and Piura in the north of Peru. Earlier the group VR-Proletario-Campesino, led by Julio Mezzich in Andahuaylas had also joined Sendero.

<sup>9</sup> At the same time Sendero announced its split with Deng Xiaoping and the rest of the present Chinese leadership, declaring its support for the 'Gang of Four'.

The alternative position, supported by Luis Kawata and several other members of the central Committee, was to give equal weight to armed actions in town and country (i.e. 'the Albanian line'). The debate on this question of strategy continued throughout 1980 and 1981, with the Guzmán position eventually achieving majority support on the Central Committee. It is interesting to note that during the 1980-1981 period nobody in Sendero Luminoso openly came out against the decision to initiate armed struggle.

#### Sendero Luminoso's organizational structure

Sendero's main decision-making body is in principle the organization's national conference, but, given the clandestine nature of the Party, decisions are in practice taken by the National Directorate or Central Committee, which comprises leaders from each of the five 'strategic zones' into which they have divided Peru. These are:

- i) South: Cusco, Sicuani, Puna, Andahuaylas.
- ii) Central: Ayacucho, Huancayo, Huancavelica (the predominant region in terms of leadership and members).
- iii) Lima.
- iv) South-West: Arequipa, Tacna, Moquegua.
- v) North: Cajamarca, Piura, La Libertad.

Within each of these 'strategic zones' a Regional Committee exists, made up of representatives from each province or district where Sendero possesses an organizational presence. Seats on the National Directorate are also reserved for the members responsible for organization and discipline (control de cuadros) and the Party's military apparatus (brazo armado).

Sendero's membership is organized through a tightly controlled cell structure. By 1981 approximately 200 functioning cells had been established, with each cell containing fewer than ten members (the standard maximum cell size for a revolutionary organization in Peru is seven; Sendero work with five). Individual cells possess a



'commander' (responsable político), and several of these intermediate-level leaders received political and military training in China and North Korea in the days when Sendero had not fallen out with the contemporary Chinese leadership over the problem of post-Mao succession and the fall of the 'Gang of Four'. Under normal circumstances, the members of one cell have very little contact with those organised in a different cell, with contact only occurring when large-scale combined operations are undertaken. Even then all official communication between the cells is via the 'commander'. Orders coming down from above are not normally debated, they are carried out.

Each cell contains two explosives specialists (those trained in China several years ago, miners, or chemistry students from the UNI), an ideologue responsible for the members' political 'education', as well as another person charged with the cell's physical fitness and the instruction of unarmed combat techniques. All full members are trained in the use of firearms, hand-to-hand combat, and self-defense. One member of each cell is given sole responsibility for the concealment and maintenance of the cell's arms, a task usually entrusted to the cell commander. Every cadre is given instruction in general first aid, with one member of each cell normally possessing slightly more advanced medical skills. Sendero have a number of doctors and nurses in their ranks, and presumably have access to clinical facilities of some description in the Central Andes, and perhaps Lima as well.

Apart from those who have already been admitted into the Party Apparatus, a periphery of sympathizers exists who pass on information, provide refuge, and undertake other useful services for the organization. The size of this periphery is naturally enough very much unknown. Anybody wishing to join Sendero Luminoso has to be guaranteed by two already proven members of the organization. All recruitment, of course, is done clandestinely, with the initiative coming from Sendero Luminoso itself - any unknown person pushing to

join the organization would be regarded with a good degree of suspicion. Pre-militants usually spend the first year of their connection with Sendero on simple propaganda tasks (such as painting walls, producing and sticking up leaflets and posters, etc.). They undertake no military action and do not come into contact with the Party's military apparatus, spending much of their time being indoctrinated with Sendero's political line, and receiving basic instruction in Marxist texts and the theory of guerrilla warfare. After between one and two years - only in exceptional cases prior to this - the pre-militants are allowed to begin 'soft' military actions. This includes the blowing up of bridges, electricity pylons, and similar tasks.

During this second stage in cadre formation the recruits change instructors and now receive training in the use of firearms, explosives, the practicalities of rural guerrilla warfare, and physical fitness. Having successfully completed this stage of their preparation, a final decision is reached as to whether they will be admitted into the organization or not. A postulate's background and associates are meticulously investigated, and if accepted, the new member takes an oath of allegiance before four hooded leaders of the departmental organization.<sup>10</sup> They are then allocated to a cell and are considered sufficiently prepared to go into armed actions against the army or police. Even though they may well have been in contact with the organization for two or three years, cadres possess very little knowledge of Sendero's hierarchy, and know but a few of the Party's other members. Also, contact within the organization is reduced to a minimum for security purposes. It is said that a regional leader, for example has direct contact with no more than eight members of the organization.

It will be appreciated that Sendero's organizational structure (which is modelled on that of the Chinese Communist Party during the civil war period), is very difficult

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10 According to an article in La República, 2 August 1982.

to infiltrate. This is especially so as most cadres originate from the small sierran towns and rural areas, with the result that their family backgrounds and past histories are well known and easily checkable. Infiltration has also been made more difficult by the fact that Sendero **enjoys** both the active and passive support of some ex-members of the **Guardia Civil**, who are experienced in police methods and know the identity of likely informers.<sup>11</sup>

#### Sendero Luminoso's ideology and political perspectives

One problem faced by any analysis of Sendero Luminoso's ideology and strategy is that the organization has to date produced very few documents for external consumption and its leaders have shown no interest in making public statements. The information in this section is taken from two articles that carry the titles Desarrollamos la guerra de guerrillas and La guerra popular es una guerra campesina o no es nada, both of which appeared in August 1982. These form the first official analysis published by Sendero Luminoso giving their view of the contemporary political situation in Peru, their strategy, and the tactical reasoning behind the actions they are currently undertaking. In addition to these sources, I also utilize the contents of several leaflets and an extended interview with one of Sendero Luminoso's leaders that was published in a Lima newspaper.

On reading the aforementioned political statements, the first impression that the reader acquires is that Sendero Luminoso is a hard-line Maoist organization that rigidly applies the schema of the Chinese to a very different Peruvian reality. In common with other Peruvian Maoist groups from Bandera Roja to the present, Sendero see Peru as a semi-

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11 There are at present some 40,000 ex-Guardias Civiles in Peru, who have been discharged for a variety of disciplinary reasons. Sendero apparently utilize the disgruntlement of these ex-Guardias to good effect, for it is rumoured that they receive the plans of police stations, details on manning levels, the shift system employed, etc. Also, it would have been logical for Sendero to infiltrate the Guardia Civil over the period 1977 to 1980. On these points see La República, 2 August 1982.

feudal and neo-colonial society, claiming that 'the Peruvian State is bureaucratic and landlord, dominated by a dictatorship of feudal landowners and the big bourgeoisie under the control of imperialism'.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, one of their leaders sustains that:

Belaúnde's Government represents the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, which heads the counter-revolutionary camp, leads the feudal landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie and is tied in with Yankee imperialism. 13

From these quotes it can be seen that Sendero Luminoso hold an outdated image of el Perú agrario, that is of a predominantly rural pre-industrial Peru dominated by so-called 'feudal landlords'. On this point the influence of Mao Tse-tung's analysis of classes in Chinese society written in 1926, and the image of Peru popularized by Jose Carlos Mariátegui in his extremely influential Seven Essays (published in 1928), will be immediately apparent.

Obviously this perception of contemporary Peru is hopelessly mistaken. 'Feudal landlords' play no role in today's Peru, while large-scale landlordism (feudal' or otherwise) as an economic and political force was decimated by the military government's enactment of a thoroughgoing agrarian reform between 1969 and 1976. In addition to CAPs and SAIS, post-land reform Peruvian rural society is characterized by an expansion in the ranks of medium-scale farmers and comparatively well-to-do kaiaks, who co-exist alongside vast numbers of semi-proletarianized minifundists and landless labourers, 'feudal' landlords being conspicuous by their absence.

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12 Quoted from the document Desarrollamos la guerra de guerrillas (August 1982).

13 Quoted from an interview with one of Sendero's Central Committee members by Manuel Góngora, which was published in La República, 12 March 1982.

If Sendero's estimation of the weight of large-scale landlordism is incorrect, so too is their vision of Peru as a predominantly agrarian society. For example, in 1980 the contribution of agriculture to GNP was approximately 10%, and agriculture's contribution to exports only reached 20%. Moreover, according to the 1981 National Census 70% of the Peruvian population live in urban areas, with only the remaining 30% being housed in the countryside. Even in backward Ayacucho, the zone where Sendero wield their greatest influence, some 36.4% of the Department's population in 1981 was urban. Similarly, the proportion of Peru's population inhabiting the coastal zone has markedly increased over the past three decades, while simultaneously the highland population has diminished in proportional terms. One outcome of post-War industrial development has been to transform Peru into a capitalist and urban dominated nation far removed from the 'feudal' and agrarian society described by Mariátegui and perceived by Sendero Luminoso to be the nature of Peruvian society today.

Ayacucho itself was never a zone characterized by 'feudal' landlord domination. Rather, from colonial times it has been the administrative and commercial capital of a poorly endowed agricultural region. Indicative of Ayacucho's relative lack of importance in agrarian terms, is the fact that no landlord from Ayacucho has exercised power at a national level or been influential in national politics in the modern period since Andrés A. Cáceres in the late nineteenth century. A further indication of Ayacucho's relative unimportance as a bastion of large-scale landlordism is that under the agrarian reform only one SAIS and 11 CAPs were established, the overwhelming majority of the rural population being members of peasant communities or small- and medium-scale independent farmers. In today's Ayacucho the only people who even remotely merit the title of large-scale landowners are in no way 'feudal', being involved in that most capitalistic of businesses, the cocaine trade. Neither has nearby Huancavelica been a zone of great landlord influence,

being a predominantly mining region. While haciendas were a more important feature of the rural scene in Apurímac than either Ayacucho or Huancavelica, here the landlords were eradicated by the CCP-led land invasions that took place in 1914.

A link can be made here between the predominantly serrano composition of Sendero Luminoso's cadres, their view of Peruvian society and Maoism as a political doctrine. A majority of Sendero's members originate from the highlands, especially the Central Sierra, and are little travelled. Their image of Peru, therefore, is very much that of an Ayacucho grande, i.e. predominantly rural, mainly peasant and possessing little industry. As they view the peasantry as the largest and most exploited group in Peruvian society, Sendero logically assume the peasantry to be the vanguard of the revolution, a position that dovetails neatly with Maoist ideology. Maoism's attraction as a revolutionary ideology has been fomented by the rural crisis besetting the sierra from the 1960s to the present day, as well as the important peasant movements that have developed in the Central Sierra over recent decades. The growth of Maoist-orientated political organizations has also been assisted by the large expansion in the university population originating from the provinces (many of these students coming from families of artisans, peasants or other petty bourgeois backgrounds). In Maoism these students found simple and clear explanations for the social backwardness and misery that envelopes the highlands through reference to concepts such as 'feudalism', 'dependency' and the like, Mao's easily readable tracts fitting in well with their limited horizons. Given this situation, it is no coincidence that Sendero Luminoso and its brand of politics took deepest root in some of the most backward zones of Andean Peru. Nor is it coincidental that in Latin America, only in the Andean countries has Maoism as a political doctrine dominated student politics in the universities.

It should also be noted that Sendero's emphasis on the peasantry's revolutionary potential and Maoist ideas links in well with another aspect of the organization's politics, namely Andean messianism, the looking back to some mythical Inca 'golden age' prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. This is an important feature of Andean socio-political culture both among sectors of the peasant population and urban mestizos. Many of Sendero's cadres possess a strong millennial streak, as can be ascertained from the following reply made by one of the organization's national leaders:

Q: What military texts do you study?

A: We have studied the experiences of the struggles of Juan Santos Atahualpa and Túpac Amaru, and we see how easy it is for the campesinos to become involved in a revolutionary war . 14

Interestingly, this high-ranking member of Sendero Luminoso refers to Juan Santos Atahualpa and Túpac Amaru rather than to Mao, General Giap, Che Guevara or other prominent theorists of rural guerrilla warfare. This indigenista outlook has also been a characteristic of Sendero Luminoso's participation in peasant union and political meetings, where statements such as necesitamos un gobierno de Indios ('We need a government of Indians') and hay que matar a los blancos y destruir las ciudades que siempre nos han explotado ('We have to kill the whites and destroy the towns, that have always exploited us'), have been frequently heard.

This Andean messianism fosters another strain in Sendero's political and ideological make-up, that of viewing everything emanating from outside as bad, as being a sign of 'dependency' and, therefore, something to be broken or destroyed. Sendero take the dependency theorists' premises to their logical extreme. The clearest indication of the outcome of this way of thinking was Sendero's attack on the University of Huamanga's agricultural experimental farm on 3 August 1982. The motivation for this was that

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14 Interview by Manuel Góngora, La República, 12 March 1982.

the Alpachaca farm was partly financed by Dutch technical assistance. As in Sendero's world view everything originating *from* outside represents 'imperialism' and therefore, is a cause of 'dependency', 'underdevelopment', and is inherently bad, the farm had to be destroyed. Sendero thus entered the farm, assembled the 55 workers who were told that Alpachaca was a centre of exploitation and a symbol of imperialist domination. They then proceeded to slaughter the pedigree livestock that had been patiently acclimatized to Andean conditions and smashed all the machinery, causing damage approximating 51.1,500 million (£14 million at August 1982 exchange rates), as well as undermining many years of experimentation. Ironically, the University of Huamanga's experimental farm has a good record for orientating its research towards the needs of the local peasantry and was by no means working solely to the benefit of medium-scale landlords, as happens with other universities in Peru.

Another consequence of Sendero's Andean millennialism is a tendency to idealize values reputed to be inherent in the highland peasantry (especially their supposed communalism and co-operative spirit) and wildly overstate their revolutionary potential. These tendencies are allied to a strong rejection of anything costeño or croillo, Sendero being very anti-Limeño in its outlook. This blending of Maoism with Andean millennialism has also produced a political ideology that is campesinista in the extreme, and, as often happens in pre-industrial settings like Ayacucho, this has taken on aspects of religious fanaticism. As has already been noted, Sendero's identification of Peru as a predominantly rural society has as its corollary the view that the revolutionary army will be constructed among the peasantry. According to one of their leaders:

Sendero Luminoso works among the peasant masses who constitute the principal force of the revolution. We are a semi-feudal country and, therefore, the popular army will be forged in the countryside. 15



In addition to viewing the Andean peasantry as the key component in the population as far as the revolutionary process is concerned, Sendero also adopted two other standard Maoist concepts. First, the idea of a four-class alliance, with the revolutionary bloc consisting of peasants, workers, the petty bourgeoisie and a medium-scale bourgeoisie 'that vacillates between revolution and counter-revolution'. Second, the notion of a protracted revolutionary war through which liberated areas are established in the countryside and slowly expand, bringing the gradual encirclement and final collapse of the towns.<sup>16</sup> On both these points, Sendero Luminoso has mechanically taken the Chinese experience of the 1920s and applied it to a Peruvian society deep in the throes of an economic and social crisis in the 1980s.

With regard to their analysis of the contemporary political situation in Peru, Sendero maintain that the only way forward is that of armed struggle. In common with other revolutionary left organizations, Sendero interpreted the 1977-1980 period as a 'revolutionary situation', but whereas Maoist groups like Patria Roja and VR-PC modified their ultra-left line of 'not participating in the electoral farce' with respect to the 1978 Constituent Assembly elections, and formed an alliance to contest the June 1980 general elections, Sendero doggedly holds to its position of the late 1970s.

This analysis was mistaken in the 1977-1980 period, and is even more so today. As has already been mentioned, between 1977 and 1980 Peru's urban working class was mounting significant mobilizations to demand improved living standards, employment, an end to military rule, and a return to democracy. The massive vote for the revolutionary left in 1978 was in recognition of the fact that the left was in the forefront of these struggles. But the movement as a whole was more democratic in sentiment than a demand for socialism, notwithstanding the fact that the influence of socialist ideas inside

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<sup>16</sup> On one occasion Sendero have said that this protracted rural guerrilla war will go on to the year 2000, and on another mentioned that it will last 50 years.

the working class was much greater in 1980 than it had been in October 1968, when the military hauled Belaúnde out of the presidential palace in his pyjamas. For a revolutionary situation to exist, it is not only necessary that workers and peasants decide that things cannot continue in the old way, it is also necessary that the ruling classes are unable to govern as before. But the Morales regime did have a way out of the political crisis that developed in the late 1970s: the holding of elections. The relatively smooth transition from Morales to Belaúnde in itself shows that what many labelled a 'revolutionary situation' or 'pre-revolutionary situation' was in fact nothing of the sort.

If a 'revolutionary situation' did not exist in the 1977 to 1980 period, then it receded still further between 1980 and 1983. Even though support for the Belaúnde regime has been rapidly crumbling throughout 1983, the vast majority of Peruvians still want a democratic government in some shape or form and still cling to the idea that they might attain some benefit through the present system.<sup>17</sup> They also realize that the probable alternative at the present time is a return to an authoritarian regime similar or worse than that of Morales Bermúdez. These points could be elaborated further, but the central point is that a revolutionary

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17 According to an opinion poll published in Caretas, 2 May 1983, by April 1983 Belaúnde's 'popularity curve' had slumped to 20%, an all-time low. The ruling Acción Popular party only had the support of 17% of the electorate. This decline in popularity has been partly due to the Government's economic policies, for the living standards of the majority of the population continue to decrease, while inflation reached a record 37% for the 4 months January-April 1983. Further causes of widespread discontent have been scarcities in food supplies (notably sugar), generalized corruption by Government officials and party members, as well as the poor handling of the events taking place in Ayacucho. In response, workers in Lima, Puno, Juliaca, Cusco, Moquegua, Chimbote and Trujillo staged a successful general strike on 10 March. Despite this general discontent with the Government, a previously untried reformist alternative is the APRA. It is likely that a large proportion of Peruvian workers and peasants would prefer to try the Apristas, or alternatively some kind of Allende-style coalition with its recipe for disaster, before embarking on the risky and bloody business of widespread civil war. Once one or both of these alternative paths have been attempted and failed, then perhaps the positions of Sendero might attract mass support.

situation has not arisen in Peru between 1980 and 1983. Sendero Luminoso's whole strategy, however, has been based on the premise that such a situation exists. For example, the article Desarrollamos la guerra de guerrillas maintains that 'the people clamour for armed revolution', a statement that is hopelessly optimistic. Sendero then proceed to argue that:

The root, the cause of the existence of this revolutionary situation is based in the crushing oppression suffered by the majority of the population, not only the proletariat, but also the small-scale producers, especially the peasants. Oppression, hunger and misery are becoming worse. The absence of rights is more and more notorious.

Although the appalling economic conditions and the increasing restrictions on civil liberties mentioned by Sendero are both real, hunger in itself has never been sufficient to create a revolutionary consciousness or a revolutionary situation. When pressed on this point Sendero fall back on the voluntaristic Guevarist maxim that even if all the conditions are not ripe for launching of armed struggle, the struggle itself will create them.<sup>18</sup>

It can be gleaned from these statements, that as far as Sendero is concerned no reformist option is available to the ruling classes in Peru; the Right have no room for manoeuvre, and will have to rely on heightened repression in order to maintain the status quo. From this perspective the only realistic alternative is seen to be the pursuit of armed struggle, which forms the premise on which their strategy and tactics are based.

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<sup>18</sup> In the document Desarrollamos la guerra de guerrillas Sendero state that 'it is the armed struggle itself that opens, by deeds, the road to armed struggle'.

Sendero Luminoso's guerrilla strategy

Sendero Luminoso have defined five stages in their project of prolonged guerrilla war leading to the eventual conquest of power:

- i) propaganda and agitation.
- ii) sabotage against the socio-economic system.
- iii) the generalization of violence and the development of guerrilla war.
- iv) the conquest and expansion of bases of support.
- v) the siege of the cities leading to the total collapse of the State.

Sendero's guerrilla campaign openly commenced in May 1980 with the taking over of ballot boxes in the peasant community of Cuschi in the department of Ayacucho, which were symbolically burnt. Since then the organization has carried out over three thousand actions of one form as another, the majority of these being small-scale, but others have attained quite complex proportions involving up to 150 guerrillas in audacious and well synchronized operations, such as the jail attack that took place in the town of Ayacucho in March 1982, as a result of which several hundred internees escaped, and the simultaneous blackouts and firebombings that have shaken central Lima on several occasions during the latter half of 1982 and the first six months of 1983.

Between May 1980 and the present, Sendero Luminoso has been attempting to progress towards the attainment or partial attainment of the first four of their five-stage guerrilla strategy. Agitation and propaganda activities have been proceeding with varying degrees of intensity since slogans calling for the initiation of armed struggle began to appear on the walls of Ayacucho's university in mid-1978. This kind of action includes distribution of leaflets and posters, or the taking over of radio stations, which are forced to emit pre-recorded messages exhorting the population

to support the guerrillas.<sup>19</sup> Schools have also been occupied, with the Senderistas explaining the reasons for their struggle to the pupils before retiring. Sendero also use occasions such as the funeral of the 19-year-old guerrilla leader Edith Lagos in September 1982 as a means of propagandizing their cause and attracting sympathizers. This event was attended by 10,000 mourners in Ayacucho town, with openly pro-guerrilla speeches being made in the cemetery. They have also organized a general strike in Ayacucho (8 January 1983), which was extremely successful due to a mixture of local support and fear. When a few shopkeepers began to take down their shutters on the morning the strike was to take place, five timely dynamite explosions in different sectors of the city was sufficient to convince them that they

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19 For example, on 29 December 1982 an armed group comprising two women and four male Senderistas occupied the 'La Voz' radio station in the centre of Ayacucho town. They made the staff transmit a pre-recorded message in Quechua and Spanish. This was Sendero's response to the army's arrival in Ayacucho on 27 December to take charge of counter-insurgency operations (see below). In the message Sendero said that they were not afraid to fight the army and that, 'We also are going to spill the blood of the soldiers'. The last part of the tape mentioned that the guerrillas' struggle would 'topple this obsolete order, for we have nothing to lose, only our chains of oppression and exploitation'. For a report of this incident see El Diario de Marka, 30 December 1982 .

should not open for business.<sup>20</sup> On two occasions Sendero Luminoso have synchronized the blackout of Lima with the lighting up of a hill overlooking the presidential palace with a hammer and sickle, symbolic actions guaranteed to cause great annoyance to the majority of non-left senators and deputies assembled nearby in the Congress building.

To date, the most noticeable aspect of Sendero's operations has been the consequences arising from the implementation of the second of their five-stage guerrilla strategy, that of sabotage against the economic system. Electricity generating and transmission installations have been dynamited on numerous occasions (between July 1980 and December 1981 fourteen pylons were blown up and the incidence of this accelerated markedly throughout 1982), as have telephone and other communications equipment. Elite private schools in Lima have been attacked and shops (especially those assoc-

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<sup>20</sup> The background to this general strike in Ayacucho was as follows. On 6 January eight peasants were assassinated by the sinchis in the community of Huancaralla, province of Victor Fajardo in Ayacucho department. At dawn on the same day a guerrilla group attacked the police post in Vischongo, badly wounding two sinchis. Sendero let it be known around Ayacucho town that they would avenge the killing of the peasants at Huancaralla, and on 7 January at 8.30 a.m. five armed men shot dead a sergeant of the Guardia Republicana in the heart of the city only 400 metres from the police barracks. That afternoon, one of Sendero's urban cells distributed handwritten leaflets declaring a general strike for the following day against the high cost of living and in support of the armed struggle. On the day of the strike Sendero's youth propaganda cells distributed a leaflet in the market which read 'Pueblo of Ayacucho, heroic and combative pueblo: the reactionaries evilly seek to drown in blood our nascent armed rebellion. They threaten us with their 'ultimatum'. Whom do they scare? Nobody. Your best sons, embracing the banner of rebellion are by their actions against the semi-feudal bases of this rotten order, fighting for you, annihilating the reactionary authorities, obtaining armament and the means to arm our people. The masses are the only iron wall'. On 26 December 1982 Belaúnde had given an 'ultimatum' that all those engaged in subversive activity should give themselves up or face the consequences.

fated with international capital such as Sears) have been firebombed. Cane burnings have occurred on sugar co-operatives in Lambayeque department, while in Cajamarca lorries supplying milk to the Nestlé Corporation have been hijacked and rolled over cliffs. Recently this campaign has escalated to include attacks on factories in coastal cities, such as the destruction of a Bayer acrylic fibre plant on 27 May 1983 that caused damage estimated at US\$60 million.

This facet of Sendero's strategy has been unpopular among the mass of the population, a situation that has been eagerly grasped by pro-Government newspapers and television stations to foment popular resentment against the guerrillas. Apart from the vast damage to mainly public utilities, Sendero's targets have often produced the opposite effect to that intended by the insurgents. For example, blowing up television relay equipment during the 1982 World Cup was justified by Sendero on the grounds that football was making people forget about their everyday economic and social problems. Apart from being a disparaging attitude to adopt (faced with great economic difficulties people are not so fickle), the blacking out of television screens did little to enhance Sendero's popularity and in any case the population listened to the football matches on the radio instead. Likewise, when Sendero's unit operating in the Huamachuco-Cajabamba region disrupts Nestlé's milk supply, the main loser is not the multinational (which is insured against such possibilities) but the small peasant producers and the members of the dairy co-operatives, i.e. just the type of people that Sendero is hoping to recruit into its ranks. Similarly, when Sendero takes over a co-operative, as happened in the case of the SAIS La Pauca in the department of Cajamarca in mid-1982, and destroys all the machinery, this does not adversely affect the co-operative's corrupt administrators. It is the co-operative's peasant and rural proletarian members who ultimately have to pay for the damage.

Related to Sendero's strategy of bringing an already floundering economy to its knees is their policy of making the peasants break all ties with the monetary economy and produce no more than subsistence requirements. This position is in keeping with Sendero's views on dependency, their affinity with Pol Potian economics and the perceived need to encircle and starve the towns. Not surprisingly, this issue has been a major source of friction between the guerrillas and the peasantry due to the vital role that commodity exchange plays in ensuring the reproduction of Andean peasant households. Allied to this facet of Sendero's strategy is the destruction of food storage facilities in Ayacucho department and elsewhere (the main food warehouse in Ayacucho was burned down in August 1982). Sendero Luminoso's efforts at economic sabotage had achieved a significant degree of localized success by January 1983, with inter-provincial commerce in Ayacucho practically at a standstill.

The third stage in Sendero Luminoso's concept of rural guerrilla war (the generalization of violence and the development of guerrilla activity) began in earnest during the latter half of 1981. At this time Sendero started to 'undermine the semi-feudal bases of the State' through the assassination of what they describe as 'old and new-style gamonales' in the highlands. Typical of this aspect of Sendero's activities is the attack on the fundo Matará, located 93 kilometres from Ayacucho town. A reported 150 guerrillas entered the farm at night, killed two of the three brothers who owned the farm, in the process expropriating 180 head of cattle and sheep. The owner's houses were blown up, as were two vehicles belonging to Cooperación Popular (the Belaúnde Government's substitute for SINAMOS) and the Agrarian Bank.<sup>21</sup> Between July and September 1982 a total of 16 gamonales, informers, and Government represent-

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21 For a report on this incident see La República, 12 September 1982. The attack took place on 10 September 1982.



atives were assassinated by Sendero.<sup>22</sup>

Over the period late August to early September 1981 attacks took place on the US embassy and ambassador's residence in Lima, as well as mining camps (on one occasion the guerrillas got away with 50,000 sticks of dynamite) and other US interests in the highlands. In part these activities were intended as a diversionary tactic while Sendero withdrew more of its cadres from the urban areas and sent them into the countryside as a prelude to the expansion of rural guerrilla warfare.

The fourth step in Sendero Luminoso's schema (the conquest and expansion of bases of support) is closely tied in with the third. Here the organization's aim has initially been to wipe out any vestiges of State authority over whole districts and provinces, substituting in its place Sendero's rule. Public buildings have been dynamited, with Government representatives (hamlet lieutenant governors, district governors and provincial sub-prefects) threatened and assassinated.<sup>23</sup> Members of Belaúnde's political party, Acción Popular, were particular targets with the result that by late 1982 the ruling party had virtually gone into clandestinity in Ayacucho. As part of this campaign, in December 1982 the Sub-prefect of Ayacucho was shot, with the mayor and mayor-elect of the town both being hospitalized with gunshot wounds during the same month. In the villages

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22 The first elimination of a 'landlord' was Benigo Medina del Carpio who owned a medium-sized farm in the province of Cangallo. He was assassinated in December 1980. Thirty guerrillas entered his farm and tried him before the local peasantry.

23 To give a couple of examples. On July 1982 the Acción Popular mayor of Huancaraylla community was killed by the guerrillas. He was supposed to have handed to the Ministry of the Interior a list of people who criticized the Government. On 21 September 1982 Rómulo Córdova, Acción Popular secretary in Vischongos, was executed after being submitted to a juicio popular by 15 Senderistas. A father and son accused of rustling and rape were also despatched in Vischongos on the same day.

governors and lieutenant-governors were submitted to trial by a Sendero-inspired 'People's Court' before being publicly executed. This fate befell the mayor of Machente on Christmas Day 1982. On 1 January 1983 the new mayor-elect of Ayacucho was shot dead in his farm by 12 masked guerrillas. By late 1982 this tactic by Sendero was resulting in large-scale resignations by pro-Government officials over whole provinces of Ayacucho, Apurimac and Huancavelica.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time Sendero Luminoso launched a series of attacks on police posts in the outlying villages and even in departmental capitals. For example, they occupied Huanta (a town of about 80,000 inhabitants) for 24 hours in late 1982. Over 1981 and 1982 these attacks resulted in dozens of police deaths, one of the most notable being the over-running of Vilcashuaman police station located 75 kilometres from Ayacucho on 22 August 1982. This was achieved by approximately 100 guerrillas who surrounded the police post during the night, before beginning the assault at 3 a.m. After a four-hour battle 20 well armed special anti-guerrilla police were overcome, with those not killed in combat being stripped of their arms and uniforms and

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<sup>24</sup> Nor should it be forgotten that Sendero have also assassinated peasant members of other revolutionary left groups in the highlands. Cadres of other organizations who disagree with Sendero's rural guerrilla strategy under present circumstances are denounced 'as agents of the bourgeoisie infiltrated into the workers movement'. According to Sendero it is the rest of the Peruvian left who by their 'parliamentary cretinism' are preventing the masses from flocking to Sendero's banner. In January 1983 they hung dogs from lamp posts in the Lima suburb of Rímac as a sign of their contempt for the Maoist organization Patria Roja and its general secretary Rolando Breña. Patria Roja support the existing Chinese leadership.

later released after being forced to sing Sendero's hymn.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously the police post at Luricocha, over 100 kilometres to the north of Vilcashuaman was attacked by 30 Senderistas.

Sendero Luminoso's success in such raids on police stations was such that in May 1982 the police were forced to abandon outlying rural areas in the department of Ayacucho, withdrawing to the towns. Consequently, by the latter half of 1982 Sendero became the only effective authority (apart from the traditional peasant community leaders) over large areas of Ayacucho, with the police restricting their activity to non-too-frequent heavily armed day-time patrols. Under these circumstances Sendero began to enforce their own law against rustlers, petty criminals, rapists, and informers, with justice being quickly and bloodily dispensed.

Another important aspect of Sendero Luminoso's strategy between 1981 and 1982 has been to force the army to intervene in the counter-insurgency campaign as an important first step in provoking a military coup against the Belaúnde regime. The logic behind this policy is that a repressive military regime would stimulate an upsurge in worker and peasant militancy, thus making them more responsive to Sendero's politics. At the same time this situation would also force all the left organizations in the Izquierda Unida ('Left Unity') coalition into clandestinity and make them adopt a guerrilla strategy. For obvious reasons, Belaúnde resisted the development of this scenario until 21 December 1982, and was for long prepared to rely on the

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25 For a report of this clash see La República, 24 August 1982, and La Prensa, 26 August 1982.

police to counter Sendero's guerrilla activities.<sup>26</sup> By January 1981 1000 sinchis were stationed in Ayacucho, with a further 400 being sent up into the highlands by January, 1982.<sup>27</sup> Despite the presence of these special police units, the situation continued to deteriorate as far as the Government was concerned, thus forcing Belaúnde to declare a state of emergency in five of Ayacucho's seven provinces on 11 October 1981.

This step was combined with a massive encircling operation mounted by the sinchis, who combed the zones of guerrilla activity village by village, house by house. When the state of emergency ended on 12 December 1981 over 2,000 suspects had been arrested, the large majority of whom had no active role in Sendero's organization. Only a very few Senderistas were pescados. This operation's lack of success was demonstrated by Sendero's ability to break out of the encircling police ring, and they were even able to continue operations within the police net. As part of this police operation a hundred PIPS (CID) were secretly sent into the zones of known guerrilla influence posing as travellers, students and peasants. Their task was to acquire intelligence data on Sendero.<sup>28</sup> Most of the information they obtained, however, was of secondary importance and Sendero's operational capacity was not disrupted in 1981 or 1982.

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26 On 4 July 1965 some Mirista students set off four bombs in Lima. On that occasion Belaúnde responded by declaring a state of emergency throughout the Republic, giving the military complete power in the guerrilla zones. He never really regained that power and was ousted by a coup on 3 October 1968. Now a much wiser politician, Belaúnde did all he possibly could to avoid calling in the army, but police ineffectiveness ultimately left him with no alternative. It remains to be seen whether history will repeat itself.

27 The sinchis are the special counter-insurgency police corps established after the 1965 guerrilla movement and trained by the CIA.

28 For further information on this see La República, 5 August, 1982.

The whole exercise might well have had a counter-productive impact on the local population, for the sinchis' and PIP's clumsy and brutal methods acted to turn sectors of the populace against the police, with the result that they view Sendero's guerrillas as a lesser evil.<sup>29</sup>

Numerous successes against Sendero Luminoso's guerrilla fighters were claimed in the pro-Government Lima press in 1982, but as the year wore on these appeared increasingly hollow as Sendero's operations became more audacious and extended over a wider area of the country.<sup>30</sup> On 28 July, 1982 the jail in Cerro de Pasco was attacked by an armed column in an operation reminiscent to that mounted on Ayacucho's prison a few months earlier. The guards were overcome and 13 prisoners released, the majority of whom were accused under the Anti-terrorist Law that had been introduced in March 1981. In addition to this raid, synchronized attacks were launched on targets many miles apart, while on two occasions (in August and September 1982) Lima was plunged into darkness, and buildings in the central zone of the capital simultaneously dynamited. Meanwhile one opposition Lima newspaper reported that:

The armed groups in the countryside have grown to such an extent that in police circles it is said that whole villages are involved in the subversive movement.<sup>31</sup>

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29 The sinchis have been nicknamed by the peasants yana allco, which means 'black dogs' in Quenchua.

30 Government ministers also tried to foster the illusion that all was well under control in the sierra. Just three days after the attack on the police station at Vilcashuaman and shortly after the blackout of Lima by a guerrilla operation, Minister of the Interior Jose Gagliardi reported to Congress that the police operation code named 'Halcón 3' had been a success with 232 of Sendero's 'activists' detained. See El Diario de Marka, 26 August 1982.

31 Quoted in La República, 3 August 1982 .

Although this was partly a police ploy to get more arms and a rise in wages, there was also a grain of truth in the statement with regard to the Ayacucho region where the police had practically abandoned the countryside. Elsewhere in the highlands Sendero's cadres are too few to give credence to this statement.

What is the explanation for the lack of police success in containing Sendero's activities and their eventual forced withdrawal to the towns in May 1982? One obvious reason has been the lack of counter-insurgency training given to a majority of the Guardia Civil. Secondly, a lack of equipment (especially in communications and transport) has been a contributing factor. For example, during Sendero's large-scale attack on the police station at Vilcashuaman the police were unable to call for reinforcements as the batteries in their radios were flat and they had no replacements. This has been one legacy of the years of military government, which, due to considerations of inter-institutional rivalry, deliberately neglected the Guardia Civil. Moreover, due to financial restraint the Guardia Civil are understaffed at a national level by 17,000 persons. A fourth reason explaining the police's lack of effectiveness against Sendero has been their poor morale: salaries are low, with the ranks receiving S/.180,000 per month (August 1982 - at the exchange rate of that month approximately £150), from which they have deducted S/.25,000 for a variety of reasons.<sup>32</sup>

These questions aside, by far the most important reason explaining the Guardia Civil's inability to curb Sendero Luminoso's guerrilla activities has been the lack of an efficient intelligence network. Over the years 1977 to 1980 Sendero was very much ignored by military intelligence,

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32 One indication of police dissatisfaction with their pay and conditions was the illegal strike held on 25 May 1983 by some 5,000 Guardias Civiles in Lima. In August 1982 the ranks of the Guardia Civil were receiving a 'bonus' of US\$5 per month for combat duty against Sendero. See El Diario de Marka, 26 August 1982 .

for the government's spies were more concerned to keep tabs on those activists who were fomenting urban unrest and organising the general strikes. Because Sendero did not participate in these events, the organisation was not a target for infiltration. Even when wall paintings in favour of armed struggle appeared at the University of Huamanga in 1978 nobody paid much attention, regarding it as just another meaningless aspect of the ever volatile student politics of the university. Moreover, when the military returned to the barracks in July 1980 they took with them all the Ministry of the Interior's documents dating from October 1968. In the words of one general, 'We left the office as we found it'. This meant that the new civilian Minister of the Interior was left with little information on Sendero, while for their part the military high command were prepared to let him 'stew in his own juice' for a period at least.

The outcome was that Sendero Luminoso was not infiltrated, and according to an interview with ex-War Minister General Cisneros published in January 1983, it requires at least two years to construct the necessary intelligence network when faced with an organization like Sendero. In the words of General Cisneros, the outcome has been:

the police force do not know who the Senderistas are, nor how many there are, nor when they are going to attack. For the police force to have any success they would have to begin to kill Senderistas and non-Senderistas, because this is the one way that they could ensure success. They kill 60 people and at most there are 3 Senderistas among them ... and for sure the police will say that the 60 were Senderistas . 33

This statement has a prophetic ring about it when one considers the course events have taken in the Central Sierra between January and May 1983.

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33 Quoted from the interview with Cisneros published in Qué Hacer, 20 (January, 1983).50 .

In the face of Sendero's growing confidence and the Guardia Civil's patent lack of success, by the end of 1982 the situation was clearly getting out of hand as far as the Belaúnde Government was concerned. Consequently, on 21 December the decision was reluctantly taken to give the army a free hand in quashing Sendero Luminoso. Thus, on 27 December the first contingent of troops were flown into the Central Sierra.<sup>34</sup> By February and March 1983 the pro-Government press was once again declaring that Sendero were suffering crippling reverses and were on the verge of defeat.<sup>35</sup> They claimed that 243 Senderistas were killed in the months of January and February alone (compared to 32 for the whole of 1982).<sup>36</sup> March, April and May of this year have seen the death toll rise to well in excess of 200 per month, but no accurate independent figures are as yet available. Sendero Luminoso's leaders and the large majority of the organization's 'middle management' have to date escaped detection. Just how many of the army's victims are really Senderistas is anybody's guess. In fact, an escalation in the violence and reports of high guerrilla casualties could have been anticipated given that, when announcing the army's intervention, Belaúnde and several army chiefs in Lima gave the field commanders in the highlands a period of 60 days to eradicate Sendero. This absurd attitude has naturally put a lot of pressure on the army officers in the field to enter into a 'body count' syndrome, and as General Cisneros noted in the aforementioned interview, who is to contradict them if the corpses are Sendero Luminoso cadres or not? Cisneros

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34 Not all those connected with the military were happy with the decision to involve the army. For example, retired Vice-Admiral and Navy Minister in the Velasco regime, Jose Arce Larco, saw the army's involvement as a 'grave error' because 'The intervention of the armed forces will necessarily unleash a very violent and cruel repression, as it is not possible to differentiate between the guilty and the innocent': quoted from El Diario de Marka, 31 December 1982. Overall the minority Velasquista faction in the armed forces has been critical of getting involved in the anti-Sendero campaign.

35 See, for example, the article entitled 'Sendero en Derrota' that appeared in Caretas, 736 (21 February 1983.).

36 See Caretas, 737 (28 February 1983).



himself has adopted a more plausible view, suggesting that a year would be needed to cripple Sendero's combat capacity, and even then the organization would not be completely eliminated.<sup>37</sup> Attacks on police stations in the Central Sierra, as well as another blacking out of the whole of Lima in conjunction with bomb attacks on several government buildings, banks and the destruction of Bayer's chemical plant in late May 1983, suggest that Sendero's military and political structure has as yet not been effectively infiltrated nor dealt a mortal blow.<sup>38</sup>

If past performance is anything to go by, Sendero Luminoso have been caused more problems as a consequence of the counter-insurgency forces' use of long-standing inter-community conflicts, and their own rigid imposition of a subsistence economy on a reluctant peasantry, than direct police or army action.<sup>39</sup> Sendero's style of 'popular' justice has also on occasions been counter-productive due to the close ties of compadrazgo in the rural areas (usually all the families in the villages are inter-related). In recent months Sendero's cadres have been accused of three

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37 Qué Hacer, 20 (January 1983).

38 On Friday 13 May Sendero felt sufficiently confident to make its first public appearance in Lima. The occasion was provoked by the funeral of two Senderistas who had been shot by the police in the course of a disturbance inside the island prison of El Frontón. Nearly a thousand mourners, some dressed in red, followed the coffins which were draped with red flags decorated with a hammer and sickle emblem, through the centre of Lima, singing the Internationale. For a report of this event see Caretas, 748 (16 May 1983).

39 The security forces' provocation of peasant inter-community violence and their attempt to cover up for their own inadequacies by encouraging the peasants to kill strangers, brought about the death of 8 journalists at Uchuraccay community on 26 January 1983. Community members in this district are reputed to have killed 24 alleged Senderistas in the days leading up to this massacre. The Sinchis gave the peasants a license to kill and rewarded them with foodstuffs and drink, taking no action to investigate the 24 deaths, before the journalists' untimely end caused an international outcry.

peasant massacres. In one community in Ayacucho (Lucanamarca) 50 of Sendero Luminoso's cadres accompanied by 140 of their peasant supporters are reported to have killed 67 peasants with machetes and spades in a scene reminiscent of Fol Pot's Cambodia. The truth or otherwise of these massacres is yet to be established given the military's clamp down on all information originating from the zone. One well informed observer has suggested that these reports were untrue and that army instigated 'paramilitaries' have been responsible for the killings.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, with the military now flooding the Ayacucho zone with informers, Sendero's activists must realize that their continued survival depends on making it crystal clear to potential informers what their fate will be if they co-operate with the authorities. Moreover, no matter what criticisms have been levelled at Sendero Luminoso in the past, squeamishness has not figured among them. These issues will only be clarified in the coming months, but in the meantime it appears that (as ever) the brunt of the army's activities is being borne by the local peasantry.

These questions notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that Sendero Luminoso has enjoyed more support than many people (including those on the left) gave them credit for when they launched the rural guerrilla in May 1980. It is also obvious that Sendero Luminoso have mounted a much better organized and determined attempt at rural guerrilla warfare than their predecessors of 1965.

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40 According to Colin Harding, 'Few people in Ayacucho, however, believe that this is what is happening. Sendero's brand of fundamentalist Maoism places great emphasis on close relations with the poor peasantry, whose interests the guerrillas claim to represent': The Times, 18 May 1983. For rumours of conflicts in Huancasancos and Sacsamarca communities see Caretas, 737 (28 February 1983), and the report by Luis Millones that appeared in Oiga, 117 (21 March 1983).

### Conclusion

As things stand at the moment three possible outcomes of the present situation can be envisaged. The first is that Sendero grows in strength and influence, allowing the organization to bring to fruition its five-stage guerrilla strategy. Under present circumstances, this seems an extremely unlikely course of development. The second is that the military completely crushes Sendero, a probability that is also unlikely on past and present performance. The third and most likely possibility is that Sendero Luminoso will suffer important reverses over the coming months, but that sections of the organization will survive to act again at some future date. Two other consequences arising out of the present situation can be speculated upon. First, that this will probably be the last major attempt at rural guerrilla warfare in Peru: next time around the most important scene of guerrilla activity will switch to the cities. Second, if the military do happen to be very successful in their present campaign, then field commander General Clemente Noel y Moral could be coming down from the Andes with a presidential sash in his knapsack.

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