

RONDAS CAMPESINAS IN THE PERUVIAN CIVIL WAR

Peasant Self-Defence Organizations in Ayacucho

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On 21 January 1983, an armed column of seven guerrillas approached the community of Huaychao, in the highland sub-region of Huanta province known as Iquicha. It was not the first time guerrillas had visited Huaychao. Another group of Senderistas had passed through the village just five and a half months earlier. On that occasion, they judged and summarily executed Eusebio Ccente and Pedro Rimachi, Huaychao's president and lieutenant governor respectively (Coronel 1996:48). But this time the encounter would be different. A congenial reception from the *comuneros* put the seven young men at ease—and off guard. Perhaps they did not realize they were gradually being encircled by the grim-faced villagers. They most certainly did not even notice the machetes and knives that suddenly materialized in the hands of the peasants, until it was too late.

Shining Path's selective executions of peasant authorities and common peasants had been growing more frequent over the past half-year (see DESCO 1989). But never before had *campesinos* in the department of Ayacucho, the epicentre of the insurgency, resorted to violence to defend themselves—until now. The news from Huaychao astounded the entire nation, which was of the general (though erroneous) opinion that Shining Path enjoyed near-unanimous acceptance among the Ayacuchan peasantry. Various newspapers in Lima, as well as President Fernando Belaúnde Terry himself, immediately praised the community for its resoluteness and bravery in standing up to the guerrillas. In five days' time, however, Huaychao would be all but forgotten, overshadowed by the tragic report that eight Lima journalists and a guide, who were making their way to Huaychao in order to verify the astonishing news from the previous week, had themselves been mistaken for guerrillas and massacred by peasants in the Iquichan community of Uchuraccay, some seven kilometres away. The tragedy brought world attention to the political violence that was spinning out of control in this remote part of the Andes, one of Peru's poorest and most neglected departments. However, the tragedy in Uchuraccay should not cause us to lose sight of the significance of Huaychao. In Huaychao, for the first time since Shining Path began its insurgency, Ayacuchan peasants demonstrated their willingness to defend themselves, their scarce resources, and their way of life from guerrilla claims and domination.

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

In a seminal article entitled "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Sendero Luminoso," Cynthia McClintock (1984) takes the position that a subsistence crisis is an important factor in peasant protest movements in Peru. But poverty does not automatically lead to revolution (see Skocpol 1982, Popkin 1979). Nor should we assume an intrinsic rebellious quality of peasants that makes them ready to embrace the concept of communist revolution, even in times of livelihood crisis. ¹ Indeed, Peru's rural poor have always shown themselves to be capable of developing sophisticated and effective non-violent strategies in response to economic hardship (see Mitchell 1991; De Soto 1986; Cotler et al. 1995). Nevertheless, most scholars of revolution would agree that peasants "will consider rebellion when

they judge their right to subsistence to be seriously threatened" (McClintock 1984:58). Perhaps the crucial question, though, is *rebellion against whom?*

The evidence from the department of Ayacucho² suggests that Shining Path generated extensive and considerable resentment when it attempted to impose on the peasantry, by force of violence, a revolutionary strategy that not only threatened personal security, but also exacerbated the very economic hardships that had brought the rebels a large measure of popular sympathy in the first place. "We have lost almost everything," said one exasperated peasant refugee to me in Tambo, a district in the Aycuchan province of La Mar (see Map 1). "Life was hard before the war, but at least we had our own homes back then, and enough food to eat. Of course we blame the Marines for the killings and the destruction they perpetrated here in the past. But we ultimately blame the *terrucos* [Senderista "terrorists"] for causing the Marines to come here in the first place. The *terrucos* started this whole mess."

The phenomenon of rural self-defence committees, which represents the definitive expression of peasant resistance to Shining Path's revolution, raises a number of questions of which two will be addressed in this paper. First, what circumstances gave rise to an anti-Sendero peasant self-defence response in Ayacucho? Why did peasant self-defence groups first emerge where they did, in the *punas* of Huanta?³ Second, what can the phenomenon of civilian self-defence committees tell us about the process by which the state's monopoly of the use of legitimate force has become fragmented and decentralized in Peru?

I. PERUVIAN SOCIETY ON THE EVE OF REVOLUTION

The democratic election of 1980 was intended to symbolize Peru's return to civilian governance and democracy after more than a decade of military rule. But the Communist Party of Peru—Shining Path (Partido Comunista del Perú—Sendero Luminoso), a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organization committed to armed struggle, chose the eve of the very election to initiate a rebellion against the Peruvian state by burning ballot boxes in the rural town of Chuschi, in the Ayacuchan province of Cangallo (see Map 1). The seventeenth of May would thereafter be celebrated on the revolutionary calendar as the *Inicio de la Lucha Armada* (ILA); but the decision to embark on the path of guerrilla war had already been made as early as 1978, when it was deemed at a Central Committee meeting that conditions in Peru had reached a historical conjuncture ripe for revolution (Taylor 1983:12).

The Shining Path revolution is paradoxical in that it began immediately following a decade of sweeping agrarian reform and nationalization of industry carried out by the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces. *Plan Inca*, its ambitious programme of progressive social and economic reform, was first conceived by a small group of left-leaning military officers under the leadership of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-75) in response to the failed guerrilla revolts of 1965. "The reforms, conceptualised as a coherent anti-poverty strategy, were to prevent another guerrilla uprising in the future" (Kruijt 1996:243). Most of the reformist military officers considered reform to be a vital ingredient for national security. In spite of the military government's best intentions and limited achievements, it had become apparent by the middle of the decade that the reform structures and economic policies it had put in place were sometimes at odds with the priorities of peasant communities. For instance, the government's decision to create state-controlled agrarian and livestock cooperatives, "rather than to restore the land in the form of individual or communal holdings" (Rénique 1994:225), caused widespread disillusionment and dissatisfaction among peasants towards the official land reform and its administrators (see Deere 1990:234-261, Nuñez Palomino 1995:35-36, Berg 1992:87-90). But although the agrarian reform initiative (Law Decree 17716) that the military set in motion is today widely considered to have been a well-meaning yet dismally failed experiments, it managed nevertheless to drive the last nail into the coffin of a feudalistic *hacienda* regime that had, in any case, been in rapid decline ever since the beginning of the 1960s. Hence, despite the continuing problems of poverty and economic crisis at the turn of the

decade, Peru at the moment of the ILA could hardly be described as the "semicolonial" and "semifeudal" society, ripe for armed revolution that Shining Path envisioned it to be. Even so, Shining Path would still find abundant popular dissatisfaction in which to tap.

II. INITIAL PEASANT RESPONSES TO SHINING PATH: 1980-82

The emergence and development of the peasant self-defence phenomenon must be considered within the larger context of general peasant responses to political violence, which were diverse. To determine what caused the emergence of self-defence groups, we must consider not only the impact that armed forces intervention in the counterinsurgency struggle has had. We must also look at the factors that caused certain peasant groups to change their attitude and behaviour towards the guerrillas, so as to account for the few but significant early instances in which peasant groups spontaneously organized their own self-defence groups, either prior to the military's arrival in the department or without their direct assistance.

After the burning of ballot boxes in Chuschi, Shining Path embarked on a series of vigorous, nation-wide operations that aimed at the disruption of public life by dynamiting buildings and sabotaging national infrastructure. Its actions were also directed at making dramatic symbolic statements (like blowing up Velasco's tomb, hanging dead dogs on lampposts, and painting political slogans on walls), and at building up its guerrilla arsenal by robbing dynamite from mining camps and seizing firearms and uniforms from police stations or policemen. The death toll during the first two years of the insurgency was extremely low: six policemen and seven civilians, none of whom were peasants (DESCO 1989:43).

The government of President Belaúnde initially did not take these acts seriously, and merely dismissed the militants as "terrorists," "petty cattle-rustlers," and "bandits." Consequently, the responsibility for confronting the guerrillas in the first three years of the insurgency was given exclusively to the police. During this period, the President expressed repeatedly that he was reluctant to utilize the armed forces to suppress the rebellion.⁴ Nor did he deem it a necessary measure. Even so, the political crisis eventually worsened to such an extent that the government saw no alternative but to extend the state of emergency over the entire department of Ayacucho on 3 March 1982.⁵

Why was Shining Path able to flourish and expand its field of operations in the Ayacuchan countryside so quickly? Besides the seeming inability of the police to suppress the insurgency, another reason appears to have been that Shining Path enjoyed a great degree of sympathy (if not active support) from the rural population, at least at first. In the rural district of Tambo, I asked people to describe for me their first encounter with Sendero. "*Primero los senderos han venido,*" recalled Manuel Millpo, a displaced peasant now living in one of Tambo's suburban refugee settlements. "*Primero los senderos han venido y nos han hablado, nos han consentido ya. Pues la gente todas han creído que nos han dicho pequeñito: vamos a hacer esto, vamos a trabajar. Si usted no tiene animales, va a tener. Vamos a matar a los que tiene cantidad animales—esto vamos a dar a los pobres. Y vamos a tener igualitos. Así nos ha engañado, la gente han creído pues serán verdad.*" And from others, I got different explanations. Pascual Quispe Vargas, a *desplazado* who was still just a young teenager during the early years of the insurrection, laid stress on the point that apart from a few students and teachers, most people in Tambo town and its nearby *anexos* only cooperated with the Senderistas "*por temor,*" for they were initially powerless to resist or to defend themselves. Whatever the reason behind the assistance given, there is little doubt that the guerrillas nevertheless enjoyed a large measure of sincere public sympathy. Consequently, in the first three years of the insurgency, the guerrillas showed themselves to be the proverbial fish in water: moving freely in the countryside, striking targets when and where they pleased, eluding the police easily and cunningly.

Shining Path's first field of operations in the department of Ayacucho encompassed the provinces of Huanta, La Mar (in the zone of Tambo and San Miguel), Huamanga, Cangallo, and Víctor Fajardo (DESCO 1989. See Map 1). The latter two are poor provinces predominated by peasant communities; but they have schools in abundance. Given that teachers and students have always formed the core following of Shining Path in Ayacucho, its choice of regional setting was thus a prudent one (Degregori 1987:41-42; Degregori 1990). In Huanta, the movement gained active assistance from young students in the valley and passive support from their peasant parents, particularly the established smallholders (Coronel 1996:45). From 1980 until the end of 1982, villages in Huamanga province and in the Huanta and Pampas River valleys were frequently visited by guerrilla groups preaching the message of "a new life; a government of the people, of the peasants; a New Democracy in which there would be no more exploitation or corruption, a society without the rich" (Coronel and Loayza 1992:524. My translation).

While Shining Path's vague yet passionately vitriolic rhetoric of sanguinary class struggle and vision of a new utopian social order held great appeal for frustrated and discontented educated youths, the measure of sympathy they initially gained from the older, less-educated peasantry can perhaps be attributed more to a number of early, concrete actions than to their ideology. In particular, their defiance of the state, vividly symbolized by their daring clashes with the police, received enormous support from the Ayacuchan population. Of the various representatives of the state, Ayacuchanos have never had much love for the police. People in Tambo, Huamanga, Chuschi, and practically everywhere else I travelled in the department in 1997 told me that they consider most policemen to be corrupt and exploitative, sometimes abusive and inconsiderate, and often disrespectful of civilians, particularly *campesinos*. The peasants' dislike for the police is also based on the fact that "all across Peru, the police have been the point men for the state in containing *campesino* mobilization. They evict land invaders, break strikes, and keep constant tabs on peasant leaders" (Starn 1989:66). Moreover, the history of relations between the Ayacuchan population and the police has periodically been marked by violent confrontation; small wonder that in the first years of the revolution, Shining Path militants most certainly had the passive acquiescence⁶—if not the active encouragement or assistance—of most of the rural Ayacuchan populace in attacking police posts.

Sendero also boosted initial general approval for itself by distributing confiscated goods and resources. Guerrillas occasionally redistributed the livestock of wealthy landowners and sacked stores in rural villages, subsequently sharing out their goods, as happened at Pacucha (Apruïmac department) in November 1982. On that occasion they also executed the storekeepers, who were disliked for their wealth and for their assumed exploitation of peasants (Berg 1992:93). At other times militants have even stopped lorries on roads and distributed their cargo to local peasants (e.g. DESCO 1989:89). State-run agrarian and livestock cooperatives, and abandoned *haciendas* awaiting adjudication by the agrarian court, became particular targets of guerrilla activity. Their lands and livestock would be redistributed to neighbouring peasant groups, or to the cooperatives' peasant members.

But of all Sendero's tactics, the one that was to prove as socially divisive in the long run as it was notoriously and disturbingly popular among Ayacuchan villagers in the first instance was the practice of liquidating those labelled, in Maoist jargon, as "enemies of the people," or "*shensis malvados*" in Senderista-speak (González 1984b:17; Degregori 1987:45). At first this category corresponded neatly with the archetypal villains of Andean society: bandits, thieves, and livestock rustlers. Such individuals are loathed throughout the Peruvian Andes, for they are commonly viewed as preying on poor peasants by stealing their scarce resources. In the northern Peruvian department of Cajamarca, for instance, many rural villages have spontaneously organized *rondas campesinas*—peasant vigilante patrols—ever since the mid-1970s tackle the problems of robbery, petty thievery, and cattle rustling (see Gitlitz and Rojas 1983; Starn 1989, 1999). Shining Path struck the right chord with the peasantry, then, when it declared one of their objectives to be the eradication of thieves, rapists, and the like. In short time, however, its severe administration of justice came to run the whole gamut of offences, from "antirevolutionary" offences to breaches of the Party's strict

Maoist-inspired moral code. As a measure of Sendero's increasing attempts to exercise a pervasive control over the minutiae of the daily lives of peasants, "enemies" or "bad people" came to designate all sorts of persons: petty-*gamonales*, wife beaters and adulterers, drunkards, alleged homosexuals, and perceived extortionists and exploiters, like the Pacuchano merchants mentioned above.

The accused would first be judged by a "people's court" before receiving either corporal punishment (e.g. flogging, head-shaving) or public execution. When they could, the insurgents utilized and exacerbated age-old animosities between antagonistic villages. Such was the case when guerrillas executed Chuschi's first "enemies of the people" in September 1982. On that occasion the accused were cattle-rustlers from Chuschi's traditional rival, the adjacent village of Quispillaccta. The two communities have had a number of serious (and sometimes violent) land-related disputes over the centuries, and their legendary rivalry is known throughout Ayacucho (see Isbell 1978, 1992). Evidently, it was also known to the guerrillas.

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

III. INITIAL PEASANT SUPPORT TURNS SOUR

In the second half of 1982, Sendero Luminoso's "protracted people's war" commenced with Plan II: "The Campaign to open guerrilla zones and advance bases of support" (see Tapia 1997:85-86).⁷ This strategic phase called for the encircling of Ayacucho's major urban centres, thereby starving them by cutting off their supply of rural produce and labourers. The success of the strategy depended on the severing of the peasantry's economic ties with the market and monetary economy. In addition, guerrillas closed roads in an attempt to isolate the so-called "liberated red zones" from the rest of country (see Palmer 1992; Isbell 1992; Degregori 1987; Coronel 1996; Taylor 1983). Peasants were henceforth to produce only for subsistence, and were discouraged from travelling to town in order to break what Sendero considered to be their relations of dependency on urban centres. In the parts of the Ayacuchan countryside that it controlled, Sendero even tried to prohibit the weekly local markets from functioning. Most Ayacuchan peasants for whom commodity exchange, labour migration, and participation in the cash economy played a vital part in their livelihood strategies and consumption practices generally disapproved this initiative. Peasants are not isolated from but in fact rely on the national market for basic goods. In the words of one peasant woman from Chuschi, "We could not let them close the markets. Where would we get our salt and matches?" (quoted in Isbell 1992:66). In addition, Sendero's closing down of local *ferias* merely resulted in increased transportation costs for peasants, who were thus forced to travel farther to sell their goods and to procure basic commodities (González 1983b:20). Labour migration is

also an extremely important source of income for the rural economies of south-central departments like Ayacucho, and Sendero's attempts to restrict traffic to urban centres by blocking roads disrupted not only household economies but also important personal networks of mutual support.

But while Shining Path preached the ideal of economic self-sufficiency, they actually did little to facilitate its practice. In the few instances when they organized collective agriculture, the Senderistas subsequently appropriated the entire harvest as "the people's contribution to the revolution" instead of dividing it up among all those who took part in the work (Coronel 1996:46; Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332-333). According to one former Sendero cadre, "What was planted was no longer for the community, but to supply the comrades in the field...." (quoted in Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332). However, by attempting to reorganize peasant modes of production to make them conform to the autarkic economy it envisioned, Shining Path merely imposed additional hardships on precarious rural livelihood practices, and therefore worsened the dire economic conditions that the Ayacuchan peasantry was already experiencing. The Party's expectation that the peasantry would be willing to put up with the long-term economic sacrifices demanded by their "protracted struggle" was also something that was simply out of sync with the pragmatic interests of the majority of peasants, which focussed on satisfying the immediate livelihood needs of their families, and minimizing insecurity and risk in their daily lives. Moreover, by confiscating the fruits of communal labour entirely, the Senderistas not only blatantly violated Andean principle of reciprocity. They were also directly contradicting their earlier promise to create a "new life" for the peasantry, free of exploitation (Coronel and Loayza 1992:524). Acts like these showed Senderistas to be not so different from the very exploiters they denounced. (At least capitalists and merchants ordinarily paid the peasants for the work they did.) With this sort of behaviour, the Senderistas only demonstrated that they were quite capable of acting just like the hated *hacendados* of old.

Shining Path militants embittered the peasantry yet further when they began a moral campaign that prohibited fiestas, drinking, and the use of coca. Fiestas are important for the reproduction of community life, marking crucial stages in the agricultural cycle and reaffirming shared community beliefs and values (see Isbell 1978:197-220; Mitchell 1991). Sendero's restrictions simply revealed their unfamiliarity with, or disregard for, Andean rituals and exchange relationships, in which coca and alcohol play a significant role.

As part of Plan II, Sendero militants began in earnest to "*batir al campo*"—to churn or to beat the countryside—by eradicating all remaining vestiges of the state in the "red zones" while simultaneously forming *Comités Populares*, the administrative organs of Senderista government. According to Abimael Guzmán himself, to "*batir*" meant "*limpiar el campo, incendiarlo: barrer con todas las autoridades; que el campo sea desbandado y que se limpie el terreno sobre el cual se desplazará y se construirán las bases de apoyo revolucionarias*" (quoted in González 1984c:19). The public adjudication and execution of state representatives did not receive equal acceptance in all parts of the department, however. One vivid illustration of this was when Bernardino Chipana, the governor of Chuschi, was captured by the guerrillas and paraded naked through the village streets in July 1982. The insurgents intended to kill him in the plaza, but when they asked the crowd to decide the man's fate the reply they received was an emphatic "No, don't kill him" (Isbell 1992:67; DESCO 1989:83). Clearly, not all individuals whom Sendero considered to be "*shensis malvados*," "*traidores*" and "*soplones*" were regarded in the same way by their fellow villagers (see González 1983b, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). Nevertheless, by the end of the year, most state authorities at the district level and below had either fled or renounced their posts, leaving an absence of formal government in many rural areas (Berg 1992:93).

In this period, Shining Path also began to repudiate peasant communal authorities, even "threatening them with death when they refused to leave their post" (Coronel 1996:47). Sendero's increasingly frequent attempts to replace peasant leaders (including the traditional community authorities called *varayoccs*) with their own cadres made it seem that the Party was moving to limit peasant participation in the revolution, in direct contradiction to their earlier

pledge to create "*un gobierno del pueblo, de los campesinos*" (Coronel and Loayza 1992:524). Furthermore, Sendero's increasingly violent authoritarianism simply replicated structures of power and domination that many peasant communities, like those in the *punas* of Huanta, have for decades been struggling to escape. "Shining Path had simply transformed the power structure with itself at the top and with the peasant masses, *whom it considered in need of leadership and instruction*, at the bottom" (Isbell 1988:72. My emphasis). Using terror as its primary weapon, Shining Path came to occupy the place of the traditional Andean *patrón*, imposing a strict moral code and distributing its own brand of justice (Degregori 1996:193).

As we will see, many Ayacuchan peasants had already grown disenchanted with Sendero Luminoso by the end of 1982.⁸ Along with the other aforementioned grievances, the increase in the number of executions and assassinations of common peasant and peasant leaders caused substantial, widespread resentment towards the guerrillas, particularly among the victims' relatives (see Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:332).

IV. VIOLENT PEASANT RESISTANCE TO SENDERO IN AYACUCHO

It was Shining Path's repudiation, attempted substitution, and subsequent assassination of peasant authorities in Huaychao and Ccarhuahurán in August 1982 that drove Iquichan communities to resist Shining Path domination by violent means. Unlike in many other parts of the department—where, since the late '70s, the customary politico-religious institution called the *varas cargo* system was already being abandoned (see Mitchell 1991)—in the communities of Iquicha the *vara cargo* system remained in force into the 1980s, having been strengthened by the power vacuum created by the disappearance, in the previous decade, of the *hacendados* who historically had dominated the Iquichan highlands. The men of Iquichan communities continued to participate in the civil-religious hierarchy of the cargo system, and the *varayoccs*—the traditional community authorities—were regarded by *comuneros* as the embodiment of community values, order, and tradition (Coronel 1996:38-40). Consequently, the local population did not take the guerrilla executions of community leaders in the Iquichan communities lightly. A high degree of endogamous marriage between *ayllus* (bilateral kin groups) had forged strong, multiple kinship ties within and among the ethnic Iquichan communities; hence, in these small villages almost everyone was related to each other. Sendero's execution of a single individual in a closed community would therefore have generated an intense degree of resentment among the other *comuneros*, many of whom would have been related to the victim. Indeed, the handful of Iquichan communities who were among the first peasants to present a cohesive resistance to Shining Path not only belonged to the same village or Iquichan ethnic group; they also were related by blood. Eusebio Ccente, the community president killed by guerrillas in Huaychao, had many relatives in Uchuraccay (Coronel 1996:48).

The characteristic of the public executions was itself viewed differently in various communities. For instance, although Sendero's public executions were somewhat approved and thus normalized in Chuschi—for those initially killed were commonly acknowledged "enemies" (rustlers, thieves etc.)—the immediate response to guerrilla killings in Iquicha, by contrast, was universal shock and rage; for the victims were not bandits or rustlers, but recognized and respected peasant authorities and kinsmen (Coronel 1996:47-48). In other words, the public executions of "bad people" in Chuschi were initially accepted by the *comuneros* as morally justified, whereas those perpetrated by the guerrillas in Iquicha were quickly rejected by the populace, who immediately interpreted the murders as part of a larger attempt by Sendero to terrorize, intimidate, and subjugate them (*ibid.*).

But why did the Iquichans decide to react violently against Shining Path? And why did collective resistance to the guerrillas erupt first in Iquicha and not in other parts of Ayacucho? I would argue that an attempt to explain disparate responses to Sendero violence must consider (1) the experience that individual peasant households and peasant groups have had with the wider world and the kinds of socioeconomic resources available to them, and (2)

the surrounding circumstances in which responses were made, particularly the intensity of guerrilla presence in a specific area. At the time of the ILA, most rural communities in the department of Ayacucho—principally those of the lowlands and the valleys—already exhibited a high degree of class stratification. The members were commonly differentiated not only on the basis of wealth, but also by factors such as the level of education and bilingualism, the experience of labour migration, and the strength of personal, informal networks with the urban world (see Mitchell 1991). Furthermore, private ownership of land, coupled with class differentiation and a weakening of traditional authorities (*varayoccs*) that in the past played a key role in mediating conflicts, invariably led to frequent disputes and squabbles between *comuneros* in the majority of Ayacucho's rural communities. According to McClintock, 71 percent of Ayacuchan peasants in 1961 were *minifundistas*, and “as of 1971, 71 percent of Ayacucho's [smallholders] were engaged in boundary disputes—one of the highest percentages in the country”(1984:74). On the other hand, at the start of the 1980s the Iquichan communities presented an almost unique, anomalous case within Ayacucho's peasantry: the Iquichans still retained their *varayoccc* leaders, were still predominantly monolingual Quechua speakers, and had had more limited migration experience and interaction with urban centres as compared with most other Ayacuchan peasants. They hardly participated in the cash economy, were still relatively egalitarian in relation to each other, and exhibited a strong sense communal solidarity and ethnic identity that differentiated between insiders and outsiders, rather than along class lines).⁹

So, while in many other communities the presence of social cleavages and social stratification provided Shining Path with ample opportunities to create so-called “enemies of the people,” in the Iquichan communities by contrast, greater egalitarianism among members left fewer cleavages that Shining Path could try to manipulate or aggravate. It can be argued, then, that the nature of the socioeconomic structures of more stratified and internally differentiated communities resulted in what in fact was a fragile social solidarity, one prone to factional conflicts and cleavages. It was also for these reasons that the *comuneros* of many such communities would have encountered profound difficulties in organizing collective resistance to Shining Path. Consequently, the peasants of most Ayacuchan communities more often responded to guerrilla violence in individual ways, rather than collectively. A family's particular resources—like social and kinship networks in towns and cities, skills, education, cash savings etc.—presented the possible alternatives. For this reason, many peasant groups in Ayacucho adopted various paths of response and resistance to Sendero Luminoso *other than* forming peasant militias. Their wider options included, for instance, fleeing to relatives and friends in cities, or to the pre-war migrant colonies in urban centres, where they can enter the burgeoning “informal economy” (see De Soto 1986). Richer villagers might even have had sufficient resources to go overseas. In some cases, those who remained in a community were the poorer peasants; richer neighbours tended to leave (see Coronel and Loayza 1992, Flagg 1998). Poorer *comuneros* consequently sometimes came to assume the leadership roles that previously had been held by richer peasants. While the former heterogeneity of such a community might have prevented it from effectively organizing communal defence as an *initial* response, the homogenizing effect brought about by Sendero's selective assassinations and the subsequent migration of terrified richer peasants has made it easier for the remaining poorer members to organize themselves in defence of their lives and their resources. (However, families that chose to stay often sent all or some of their children to urban centres for safety.) This is precisely what appears to have occurred in the community of Cochás, in Luricocha district, near the Huanta valley.

The Iquichans had less option to respond to guerrilla violence because they had fewer resources available to them. One response might have been to migrate voluntarily, but it would have been a difficult and unappealing one. They usually lacked social networks and contacts in urban centres, and they were often deficient in skills, education, and other resources necessary to navigate in urban society (e.g. bilingualism, literacy, cash etc.). Thus, Iquichan *comuneros* decided that together they stood a good chance of defending themselves and their community, their

livelihood and their scarce resources against guerrilla incursions. “*Surgimos cuando ya nuestra vida parecía que se iba a extinguir,*” said a refugee from the Iquichan *punas* to me, “*porque empezaron los senderos a matar nuestros parientes, nuestros autoridades pues. Al final nos preguntamos vamos a esperar nuestro turno o nos defendemos. Y la gente dijeron no, a una sola voz, hay que morir luchando, defendiendo nuestra vida.*”

But it is also important to consider the specific circumstances in which peasant responses to Shining Path were made. For instance, the intensity of guerrilla presence in the Pampas River valley and in the Iquichan highlands (two Ayacuchan sub-regions in which communities nevertheless exhibited structural similarities) had differed markedly. The Pampas villages of Chuschi, Quispillaccta, and Canchacancha, contained large numbers of students and teachers, most of whom openly sympathized with Shining Path; they constituted the very core of Sendero's "one thousand ears and one thousand eyes," and made the task of organizing community defence all the more difficult. A similar situation prevailed in many other parts of the department of Ayacucho. Describing their efforts in the district of Vinchos (Huamanga province) to organize self-defence groups in the early-1980s, a *ronda* president known by the pseudonym "Juan Pardo" recalled: “*Entre las comunidades hemos hecho una reunión pero a escondidas porque los senderos estaban por esas zonas, ya era obligado pasar por sus manos de ellos, nosotros teníamos que hacer reuniones ocultas*” (quoted in Starn 1993:43). But in contrast to the circumstances that surrounded most villages in the provinces of Huamanga and Víctor Fajardo, and in the valleys of Huanta and the Pampas River, the lack of presence of students and teachers in the Iquichan highlands resulted in an absence of immediate pro-Sendero vigilance within Iquichan communities. Moreover, while the aforementioned communities in the Pampas River valley were constantly visited and eventually occupied by guerrilla columns, Shining Path had relatively few initial contacts with the Iquichan communities in the *punas* of Huanta, prior to the local population's open revolt against them (Coronel 1996:43,45-46). Hence, it can be argued that the autonomous space necessary for planning and organizing armed community resistance was something that existed in the *punas* of Huanta in the first three years of the insurgency, but not in most parts of the other provinces already mentioned above.

It is important to realize, however, that the Iquichan communities' decision to defend themselves was not an inevitable one. It was a response influenced by a variety of factors—the relative intensity of guerrilla pressure in the area, and the Iquichans' ability to mobilize themselves perhaps being the most important. Had the guerrillas attacked them in 1982 as severely as they did in 1983 and 1984, there is little doubt that the Iquichans would have immediately elected to flee rather than to fight.

Like the Iquichans, though, many Chuschininos had had enough of guerrilla presence by the end of 1982. When the security forces entered Chuschi in December of that year, the guerrillas took to the surrounding hills; and with them evaporated any remaining credibility they had with the local inhabitants.¹⁰ The rebels' refusal to wage pitched battles in defence of rural communities against superior military forces is a standard Maoist guerrilla tactic.¹¹ The result, however, was that those invariably left behind to incur the wrath of the soldiers were the defenceless villagers. By resorting frequently to this tactic, the guerrillas caused feelings of disillusionment, exasperation, and betrayal among many Ayacuchan villagers. “*Por qué no nos cuidan, nos han metido en este problema y no nos cuidan; deben cuidarnos, deben defendernos. ¿Cómo nos han dicho que ellos iban a luchar primero y nosotros íbamos a ir atrás? ¿Dónde están? Aquí no se ve la presencia de ellos, ellos nos meten en este lío y se quitan, no puede ser!*” (quoted in Degregori 1987:46).

After they blew up an elderly peasant man using a home-made guerrilla explosive, the security forces left Chuschi to continue their search for the insurgents elsewhere. The Senderistas returned to the community soon after and tried to organize a victory celebration, but they were rebuked by what was now an estranged population. They retreated once more into the hills. A couple of months later, Chuschi flew white flags and complied with orders from

the military to organize a civil defence force. It also requested that a military post be installed in the community (Isbell 1992:69).

V. PEASANT SELF-DEFENCE COMMITTEES IN AYACUCHO: 1983- 1997

President Belaúnde authorized the intervention of the Peruvian armed forces in the counterinsurgency struggle on 29 December 1982. The previous day his Minister of War, General Luis Cisneros Vizquerra, had made the optimistic prediction that "*lo único que les puedo asegurar es que en 1983 Ayacucho va a estar tranquilo*" (quoted in DESCO 1989:90). What in fact followed were two years of unadulterated violence; two years during which indiscriminate and brutal military repression was repaid in kind by Shining Path, with terrible vengeance. To make matters worse, peasant communities also began to attack each other in vicious reprisals for supposed denunciations made either to the guerrillas or to the security forces; many carried out witch-hunts aimed at rooting out presumed "*terrucos*" in nearby rival communities and adjacent districts.¹² The result was a "dirty war" that has left a multitude of orphans and widows, and a grisly trail of mutilated corpses, abandoned villages, and mass graves that continue to be discovered more than a decade later.¹³ This cataclysmic violence has claimed as its principal victims the peasants of Ayacucho.

V.a. Peru's Armed Forces unleashed

Peru's system of national defence was designed to confront military threats from its international neighbours; it simply was neither informatively nor organizationally prepared to handle an insurrection (Tapia 1997:29; Kruijt 1996). Nevertheless, the armed forces anticipated a swift counterinsurgency campaign of no more than two months (DESCO 1989:91). Unaware that they were dealing with an adversary that operated on an altogether different revolutionary strategy, the military expected to crush the Shining Path insurrection in the same manner as they did the guerrillas in '65 (Tapia 1997:27-32).¹⁴ General Clemente Noel Moral, Commander of the Second Infantry Division and newly-appointed *Jefe del Comando Político-Militar* of the emergency zone,¹⁵ thus concentrated exclusively on the military aspects of the expedition, neglecting to prepare any corresponding humanitarian measures with which to win over the "hearts and minds" of the population (Tapia 1997:32). For one thing, the force assembled was made up of conscripts from coastal departments like Lima, Ica, Huánuco etc; it conspicuously excluded individuals from the emergency zone itself. As Tapia observed, "*Este fue un grave error, como quedaría demostrado posteriormente. Efectivos militares que no comprendían el quechua y menos la cultura e idiosincracia de los pobladores de la zona no eran los más idóneos para ganarse el apoyo de la población. Las FFAA aparecieron casi como una fuerza de ocupación externa y se comportaron en muchos casos como tal*" (1997:31. Emphasis in the original). This precaution was taken not only because the armed forces feared a massive infiltration of the Army by Sendero Luminoso (Tapia 1997:31), but also because the army's mental attitude towards the Ayacuchan population at the time was one of a "presumption of subversion." Indeed, it was already widely believed in Peru that the Maoist militants of Ayacucho included most students, teachers, peasants, urban workers, priests, men, women, and children.¹⁶ And the stereotyped image of Ayacuchanos as bellicose by nature and inclined to rebellion certainly did nothing to dispel any doubts about their loyalty to the state.¹⁷ Once Ayacuchanos were conscripted and armed, nothing could guarantee that they would not turn their weapons against their fellow soldiers and the state—or so the military chiefs feared.

What would prove also to have significant future consequences was the fact that a Presidential Directive providing guidelines for the conduct of the counterinsurgency forces was never issued by President Belaúnde to Noel or to his successors. The result was that during the entire period of Belaúnde's presidency, each political-military commander was left to decide for himself the character of the counterinsurgency campaign (Tapia 1997:32).

Presented with such unbridled latitude, the *Jefes del Comando Político-Militar* and their field commanders during 1983 and 1984 were permitted to embark on a campaign of brutal and indiscriminate repression in which tortures, massacres, and disappearances were considered simply "part of the cost" of restoring peace and order. Little concern, if any, was initially paid by the *fuerzas del orden* to human rights.

From the moment they set foot in the region, the Peruvian Marines proved particularly vicious. The majority were *criollos* and *mestizos* from coastal towns, many of whom regarded the "*cholos*" and "*cholas*" of Ayacucho with unabashed racist contempt.¹⁸ The Marines were dispatched to areas presumed to be certain "*zonas rojas*": namely, the provinces of Huanta and La Mar, and the *valle del río Apurímac*. They proceeded to wreak such violence and havoc on the civilian population in those areas as to impel refugee migrations on a scale never before seen in the region.

If the guerrillas were fish in water, then the Marines sought to drain the lake. In some parts of the designated "red zones," they compelled the inhabitants of dispersed villages and homesteads to centralize in multicommunal strategic hamlets, threatening to kill anyone who defied this order by remaining in the countryside. Reminiscent of the reasoning behind the American tactic of "strategic hamleting" in Vietnam, the Marines warned that any persons who stayed in the hills would be regarded as "terrorist sympathizers," and risked being killed. This tactic was designed to deprive the guerrilla columns of any logistical support they could have received from the rural population, while also enabling the countryside to be transformed into a "killing zone." The idea was that upon emptying the *campo* of its inhabitants, anything found moving in it thereafter could be easily and justifiably wiped out, thus making field operations less complicated.¹⁹ The problem was that many *comuneros* in remote villages were unwilling to leave their homes and fields, for without them they have almost nothing else in the world. Others were too old or too unfit to travel. Furthermore, orders to relocate to the strategic hamlets were not always conveyed to distant communities, and the boundaries of any "killing zone" were always vague and shifting.

V.b. Refugee displacement and the emergence of new forms of social organization in Ayacucho

As in many other parts of La Mar and Huanta, frightened villagers in the district of Tambo rapidly depopulated the countryside and congregated in droves in the district capital. "Caught between the wall and the sword,"²⁰ many fell victim to both guerrilla and military violence.

When the Marines entered the district of Tambo in February 1983, they began almost immediately to round up scores of suspects in the district capital. Many townspeople, particularly youths of high school age, were arbitrarily detained by the Marines or the *Guardia Civil* on the flimsiest grounds, such as being unable to produce identification, or having in their possession literature taken to be "subversive."²¹ "Most of those people were innocent civilians," a former mayor, and one of the town's few remaining pre-war inhabitants, explained to me in 1997. "The guilty ones, the real Senderistas, they would have already escaped once they heard the soldiers were coming." The severe treatment they received from the military drove a large number of urban families to leave Tambo for cities like Ayacucho, Ica, Huancayo, and Lima. To date, few of Tambo's displaced townspeople have decided to return.

In September and October 1983, the Marines conducted a massive sweeping operation through the western half of the district. Platoons of heavily armed Marines—"con pantalones, con tanto peso que andan," is how one *desplazado* remembered them—combed the countryside, moving in a northwest direction towards the Iquichan highlands. As the soldiers passed through the *campo* they ransacked villages, set fire to homes, and ordered the terrified peasants to relocate to the district capital so as to deprive the guerrilla columns operating in the area of shelter and assistance, which they might otherwise receive from these remote rural hamlets. That this

Marine operation was part of a larger one aimed at impeding rebel activities in these *alturas*, which straddle the common border between the districts of Tambo and Huanta (see Map 2), is suggested by the fact that just a few weeks earlier, Marines in the Huanta began to organize *comités de defensa civil* out of the original, home-grown Iquichan defence groups that had already existed in the area since the end of 1982 (Coronel 1996:51). The Iquichan highlands were frequently traversed by armed guerrilla columns, who used them as a vital, secluded corridor through which to move rebel fighters and supplies between the provinces of Huanta and La Mar. Between 1982 and 1985, these highlands formed the setting of numerous bloody clashes between Senderistas and hostile Iquichan communities.

Over the course of the military operation, peasant refugees caught fleeing in the direction of the *punas* of Huanta were, according to various witnesses, regarded by the Marines as “*terrucos*” trying to escape to their comrades in the mountains. Some were for this reason summarily executed, though it is impossible to say how many. When individual killings turned into massacres, the trickle of terrified and dazed peasant refugees arriving in the district capital became a flood, as the western half of the countryside was quickly depopulated. The morning of 29 November, 1983, found a multitude of refugees from various rural hamlets gathered on a small *pampa*, a little over a kilometre to the west of the town. Some had animals and a few other possessions with them, but the vast majority had only the clothes on their backs. As light drizzle fell on the cold and hungry crowd which huddled together tightly for warmth, a contemptuous Marine officer by the name of *Capitán* Lagarto, swaggered up the hill to address them. One of those present that day recalled for me, years later, the soldier’s alarming ultimatum: “*¡Uds carajo! Si quieren vivir, si quieren estar vivos, acá, carajo, hagan sus casas. Permanente acá. ¡No quiero que me escapan ninguno carajo, porque uds son terrucos carajo! Si no son terrucos carajo, acá quiero ver a todos así amontonados. Acá quiero que vivan, si quieren vivir, si aman a su familia. Si son terrucos, si quieren morir, váyanse al cerro y por allí le pesco, y con el arma, carajo, a todo yo les mato.*” Made to choose between Life and Death, the refugees who had gathered there from ten separate rural communities set about constructing a new settlement that very day. It was from these beginnings that the district’s first multicommunal refugee hamlet of Ccarhuapampa was founded (see Map 2). Over the coming months and years, the population of Ccarhuapampa would swell with the arrival of newcomers from highland communities as far away as Uchuraccay and Iquicha.

According to the testimonies of various refugees, it was soon after Ccarhuapampa was established that *Capitán* Lagarto obliged the inhabitants to organize themselves into a *comité de defensa civil* (CDC)—the very first one in the district. Even though the organizational model and the impetus for the formation of the CDC came from the military, it was the peasant refugees of Ccarhuapampa themselves who appointed their own *presidente*, *vice-presidente*, *tesorero*, *vocal*, and eight *commandos*, each of whom was placed in charge of defending a separate sector in the settlement and its perimeter. Once Ccarhuapampa organized a *comité de defensa civil*, it was only a matter of time before its inhabitants began to incur Shining Path’s brutal reprisals.

In 1985 a new spate of killings, this time perpetrated by the Army in a number of communities near the district’s northeast border with Ayna district, resulted in a new wave of rural refugees. Unlike the first instance of displacement some two years earlier, however, on this occasion the military did not order the civilian population to relocate to the town on pain of death. Consequently, but for a handful of them near the Ayna-Tambo border that were devastated by soldiers, few of the rural communities in the district’s central area, along the highway from the town to the *selva* city of San Francisco were totally abandoned. Nevertheless, the violence unleashed by government troops in this instance was no less vicious than the first time round. “The soldiers killed some of my brothers and relatives, and they carried off all our livestock,” lamented Manuel Millpo, a refugee from the now-abandoned village of Huancapampa. “With my wife and two small children, I fled to the *selva*. We didn’t go to

Tambo because we were so frightened of the soldiers.” Having lost all of his animals and most of his meagre possessions to the pillaging soldiers, Manuel and his family arrived in the *ceja de selva* with almost nothing. For the first three months, their life was quiet. “We lived with my remaining brothers, and I worked as a *peón*. During this time I also became an evangelical. Then one day a group of Senderistas appeared. And soon after a lot more came. They started to kill people too. ‘These are bad people who don’t believe in God,’ I thought to myself. So I took my wife and children to Pichari [where there is a military base].”

Unlike Manuel, other *desplazados* of military violence abandoned their villages and joined one of the larger rural communities in the district. And still others sought refuge in the district capital, where they founded new multicomunal refugee settlements, which they called *pueblos jóvenes*. In later years, they were joined by families from some of the communities in the central and eastern parts of the district who also were seeking sanctuary, but this time from guerrilla violence. Guerrilla attacks have been the other catalyst of forced migration in Tambo district. In contrast to the effects of military violence in the district, sporadic guerrilla incursions on rural hamlets—which peaked in 1984, and then diminished somewhat between 1985 and 1986 before intensify once again from 1987 onwards—have generally resulted in a partial desertion of some villages, and the emergence of multicomunal places of refuge in the countryside.

On a brief note, a further indication of the lack of support, legitimacy, or appeal that Shining Path and its New Democracy now have among the civilian population has been the absence of any massive refugee migrations to the rebel strongholds of Viscatán or Cello de Oro, like what has happened in Sri Lanka, where thousands of Tamil refugees have fled to areas controlled by the Tigers.

V.c. *The Armed Forces and Sendero Luminoso: Errors and Changes of Strategy*

The ferocious and indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign of 1983 dealt severe blows to the armed contingents of Sendero's *Comité Regional Principal*, and even managed to dislodge Senderistas from some of their self-declared "liberated zones." According to Guzmán himself, the security forces managed to kill around 1,800 of his followers (see Guzmán 1988). Yet the security forces inevitably failed to consolidate their temporary control of pockets of countryside when they set up counterinsurgency bases only in provincial capitals, and a few strategically important district capitals like Tambo. What frequently happened was that once the security forces finished sweeping an area and had left, the guerrillas invariably returned to impose themselves on the population once again, punishing "collaborators" in the process (Tapia 1997:33-34). The evidence actually suggests that the security forces failed to reduce Shining Path's scope of operations. Due to guerrilla activity, the 1983 municipal elections were unable to take place in 52 AyacuCHAN districts; a startling increase from the original 19 districts in which Noel deemed Sendero to have had a strong presence in December 1982 (Tapia 1997:34-35). As we shall see later, the harsh repression unleashed by the security forces was to prove counterproductive for a number of reasons, not least of which was that it served to dissipate the anti-Sendero sentiment that had already arisen among the peasantry even before the military's arrival, thus effectively precluding or delaying the emergence of an inflamed, popular backlash against Sendero during this period.

An important change also occurred in 1983 with regard to the characteristics of guerrilla killings. Although the infliction of guerrilla violence was becoming everywhere evermore indiscriminate, the rebels were nevertheless deliberately and systematically targeting peasant communities that had organized a communal defence structure. The selective assassinations of individuals, which were the hallmark of guerrilla violence in previous years, were superseded at this time by indiscriminate mass killings, which now became their principal mode of punishing "collaborators" and "treasonous" communities. These started in 1983 with the slaughter of forty-five comuneros in

Lucanamarca (among them ten children) and thirty-five in Huancasancos, in the province of Víctor Fajardo, on 3 April (DESCO 1989:99,856). In the space of just two months, similar peasant massacres were carried out by Senderistas in Juqusa (Cangallo, 18 killed), Carhuanca (Cangallo, 11 killed), Llusita (Víctor Fajardo, 28 executed), San José de Secce (Huanta, 70 to 80 massacred), Uchuraccay (Huanta, 20 to 25 slaughtered), and so on (see DESCO 1989:99-101). For many peasants throughout the department, such mass killings were tantamount to a declaration of war. As peasants came increasingly to realize that when the security forces were not persecuting them they were not always able to protect them, a growing number of communities in districts throughout Ayacucho began to heed the army's call to form civil defence groups.

From 1984 onwards, guerrilla violence in Tambo was exacerbated by a growing reluctance of rural communities to render assistance to the rebel columns that routinely passed through the district. Rather than be displaced, however, many rural communities in the central and northeast parts of the district decided to resist Sendero, and for this reason are today commonly referred to as *resistentes*. Tambo's *resistentes* were particularly concerned to defend themselves because they realized that they could not rely on the security forces to do this. In fact, guerrilla onslaughts in the district continued despite the periodic military operations carried out in the area. Acco, a rural *pueblo* located only 3.5 km from Tambo, was attacked three times in 1984, causing 30 of its 120 families to flee to the town. And at Challhuamayo, situated some 15 kilometres northeast of the town, three guerrilla attacks in the space of a week in September 1984 left over 50 peasants dead. Even the establishment of a military base in the district capital in 1987 failed to deter the guerrillas from continuing to attack outlying hamlets. The rugged terrain and the poor state of the roads in the district meant that the guerrilla fighters had sufficient time to attack a village and then get safely away before the soldiers or the police could arrive. The district's narrow roads and numerous precipitous drops to deep valleys also made ambushing the military or police relief columns a very easy undertaking. The security forces also realized this and consequently left remote communities—particularly those that were accessible only by obscure footpaths—to their fate. Even if they could hear the sound of gunfire only a short distance away, the security forces always feared being ambushed in the dark, and thus rarely, if ever, took the risk of venturing out of the town to assist a beleaguered community at night. Rural *resistente* communities thus realized that any chance they had of survival lay in grouping together in multicomunal hamlets in order to offer each other much-needed protection, and in organizing *comités de defensa civil*.

V.d. Consent or Resistance to the Creation of Self-Defence Committees

Upon arriving in the emergency zone, then, the military began almost immediately to press rural communities to organize their own civil defence. But it was General Adrián Huamán Centeno, Noel's successor and a Quechua-speaking officer from Apurímac, who was particularly preoccupied with organizing civilian counterinsurgency patrols during his short command as *Jefe del Comando Político-Militar* in 1984 (Tapia 1997:36). Starn makes the important point of distinguishing between the original vigilante groups of northern Peru and the defence groups of the emergency zone, since both share the name "*rondas campesinas*" but have completely distinct origins and missions (see Starn 1993:5-8). Why have the civil defence groups in Peru's emergency zone come to share the same name as the *Rondas* of the north? One possible explanation, put forth by Starn and others, is that criticised by human rights groups for forcing peasants to participate actively in the counterinsurgency project, various high-ranking military officials thought to re-baptize the *Comités de Defensa Civil* with the name *rondas campesinas* in an effort to impart on them the same aura of grassroots spontaneity and organizational autonomy that characterized the northern peasant vigilante groups, which first emerged in Cajamarca in 1976 (Starn 1993:5-8). Be that as it may, the name has stuck in

Ayacucho, and is now part of the counterinsurgency vernacular of the peasantry there, who are themselves well aware of the difference between the two types of organizations.

Yet contrary to popular belief, not all rural populations were coerced into organizing civil defence groups. From the moment they arrived at the *base multicomunal* of Ccarhuahurán in August 1983, the Marines began transforming the *pre-existing* Iquichan self-defence groups into *comités de defensa civil*, subordinated to and in coordination with armed forces command (Coronel 1996:50-51; Coronel 1993:49). The eight communities that made up the multicomunal base "maintained their own authorities—*presidente, secretario, tesorero* and *vocales*, as well as their own respective Comité de Defensa Civil—which coordinated with those of Ccarhuahurán, and these, in turn, with the officers of the military base" (Coronel 1996:51. My translation). In this way Ccarhuahurán became, and remains to this day, a *base de defensa civil multicomunal*. According to a number of Iquichan refugees I spoke in Ccarhuapámpa, the anti-Sendero defence groups that emerged in the *punas* of Iquicha originally called themselves *montoneras*. This is not so surprising. From the Mantaro Valley to the *ceja de selva* of Ayacucho, from the La Breña campaign of the War of the Pacific to the peasant uprisings in La Mar during 1923, "*montoneras*" is a name that armed peasant bands in Peru's central highlands have historically given to themselves (see Mallon 1983, 1995; Cárdenas López 1982:83-84).

The Army's civil defence project also received spontaneous, popular support in the districts of Vinchos, in Huamanga province, and Ocos and Concepción, both of which were then part of Cangallo province.²² According to news reports, eight thousand peasants met with General Huamán in Vinchos on August 4, 1984, to express their support for the military's counterinsurgency struggle by demonstrating that they had organized *rondas campesinas*. The General declared to the press that these *rondas campesinas* and *montoneras* were neither assisted nor organized by the security forces, and that "*ellos tienen derecho a defenderse de los asesinos con las armas que tengan en las manos*" (quoted in DESCO 1989:110). Five days later, twenty thousand peasants in Ocos and Concepción declared in a document that they too had organized a *Frente de Defensa Civil* (DESCO 1989:110). Both these massive demonstrations appear to have been precipitated by a series of massacres perpetrated by guerrillas in these districts earlier in the year.²³ By year's end, Shining Path's presence in Vinchos, Huamanga department's largest province, had been effectively neutralized due largely to the presence of the peasant self-defence groups (Tapia 1997:35).

For various reasons, however, the idea of communal self-defence encountered either extensive local opposition or lukewarm compliance in other parts of Ayacucho. This was particularly pronounced among communities in the Pampas River area, among the smallholders in the Huanta valley, and among villages in other parts of Huamanga province. In the Huanta valley, the emergence and growth of a civil defence apparatus was painfully slow and strongly resisted by the population up until 1989. This response was due primarily to the fact that heavy repression carried out in the valley during 1983-84 had distanced most of its inhabitants from the military (Coronel 1993:49). The civil defence phenomenon also never really took hold in the Pampas region, an area characterized by long-established independent peasant communities that have retained certain social structures characteristic of closed communities, but which nevertheless had a much greater degree of interaction with the external market than Iquichan communities. The majority of Pampas communities like Chuschi and Quispillaccta appear instead to have focused on creating spaces of autonomy within the general climate of violence by rallying around their established community authorities and traditional social institutions.

But in many other parts of Ayacucho, though, the main reason for local reluctance to form civil defence groups simply boiled down to a fear of attracting savage guerrilla reprisals for doing so. With nothing to fight with except literally sticks and stones, many communities simply lacked conviction that they could actually repulse guerrilla attacks (see Coronel and Loayza 1992:528-529). This attitude changed a few years later when subsequent Peruvian

governments began to provide the rural civil defence groups with firearms, for when *comités de autodefensa* were finally given firearms, the whole balance of power changed and they then passed on to the offensive.

There is, of course, a dark side to the rural self-defence organizations.²⁴ Amid the crossfire of political violence some were organized on the initiative of the peasant communities themselves, if perhaps only to relieve the pressure of military repression; others were created only as a result of violent coercion by the military or by the self-defence patrols of neighbouring communities.²⁵ Local opposition to the idea of civil defence committees did not deter the security forces from coercing villages into organizing them. Occasionally accompanied by the civil defence patrols of neighbouring communities, military patrols have been known to pressure recalcitrant villages into compliance using the tactics of violence and terror (Degregori 1987:49; Isbell 1990:11-12; Americas Watch 1992:9). Neutrality was not permitted either by Sendero or the military, or even at times by other peasants. A reluctance to organize community self-defence was often taken by the security forces as tacit support for Shining Path (Isbell 1990:11-12; Americas Watch 1992). Communities that were obliged to form self-defence patrols would sometimes try to avoid reprisals by not confronting any guerrilla patrols that continued to pass through their territory. But the Maoists, for their part, were not interested in arriving at a *modus vivendi* with the civil defence patrols. In fact, such communities appear to have been singled out for pitiless annihilation.

V.e. *Proliferation, Expansion, and Institutionalisation*

As the political violence ground on into the next decade, the proliferation and rapid expansion of rural self-defence patrols in the region from 1985 onwards was evidence of the increasing degree of active peasant participation in the counterinsurgency campaign. Totalling less than 700 in 1989, the number of self-defence patrols in the south-central Andean departments of Apurímac, Ayacucho, Junín, Huancavelica and Pasco had multiplied to more than 1,200 by 1991 (Starn 1993:6; IDL 1991b:28. See Map 1). In 1997, more than 2,500 *comités* representing over 120,000 *ronderos* existed in Ayacucho and Huancavelica alone, according to *Capitán Vásquez*, *Jefe Militar* of all the *Comités de Autodefensa* in these two departments. As a martial force, the majority of CDCs remained weak during most of the 1980s because of their ineffective weapons. Nevertheless, the state eventually recognized that it could never defeat Shining Path without the willing support and assistance of the local population. “We don’t have enough soldiers to patrol and control the entire countryside. We don’t have the capacity for it,” *Capitán Vásquez* told me in 1997. “For this reason we have to rely on the presence of the *Rondas* in areas where we cannot always be.” But rural inhabitants could better defend themselves from guerrilla attacks, and thus contribute effectively to the counterinsurgency struggle, only if their pitiful rustic arsenal of lances, shovels, knives, slings, and homemade firearms were changeably improved.²⁶ With this in mind, President Alberto Fujimori authorized the distribution of large quantities of shotguns to the rural population in 1991—a practice that began during the previous administration of Alan García, though on a limited scale. Effective responsibility for defending the bulk of the rural civilian population was thus passed into the hands of the peasants themselves. Moreover, the Peruvian peasantry’s participation in the counterinsurgency campaign was officially enshrined upon the promulgation of Legislative Decree No.741 in 1991, which legally recognized the existence of armed rural militias: the *comités de autodefensa*. In an ironic twist of fate, the very masses for whom Shining Path had ostensibly launched a ‘people’s war’ have turned against them, and their boast of “one hundred ears and one hundred eyes” now pales into insignificance against the veritable “hundred thousand ears and hundred thousand eyes” of the state, embodied in the self-defence committees.

VI. THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE STATE'S MONOPOLY OF THE USE OF LEGITIMATE FORCE

We have seen that the peasant response to Shining Path and to political violence in general cannot be reduced to one simple explanation, or to one common history. The same can be said with regard to the emergence of self-defence groups in the department of Ayacucho. What, then, can the phenomenon of civilian self-defence committees tell us about the fragmentation and decentralization of the state's monopoly of the use of legitimate force in Peru?

The state has tried to regulate and control this fragmentation of armed actors in a number of ways. One is that the government of Alberto Fujimori has passed legislation which explicitly places civilian self-defence committees under the direct control of the Armed Forces, and charges them not only with the obligation to defend their communities from the aggression and violence of terrorism and drug trafficking, but also to support the armed forces and the national police in the tasks of pacification and socio-economic development.²⁷

A second way that the state has attempted to regulate the delegation of the legitimate use of force to the CADs is to control and limit the lethal capability of such groups. Every self-defence organization is limited by law as to the type of weapons its members are entitled to possess. Article 4, Chapter II of Decreto Legislativo 741, states: "*Los Comités de Autodefensa ubicados dentro del ámbito territorial de la autoridad militar correspondiente, podrán adquirir por compra, donación por parte del Estado o particulares, armas de caza del tipo calibre 12 GAUGE, retrocarga, versión tiro por tiro y munición tipo doble o triple cero, o otra previa autorización del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas*" (SER 1993:28). These shotguns²⁸ are effective only at very close range; their users are therefore placed at a disadvantage against the modern automatic rifles—such as FAL, AKM, Galil—commonly used by the security forces (and the guerrillas for that matter). In addition, despite the seemingly large quantities of shotguns that the Fujimori administration has issued to self-defence organizations all over the emergency zone, the number is actually relatively small as compared with the size of the recipient population. For instance, in the district of Tambo there is an average of only one firearm for every nine active members of the *comité de autodefensa*.

The military permits *ronderos* to use only one type of rifle of "*largo alcance*": the Mauser. Manufactured in Germany and adopted as the standard issue rifled of German armies in World War I, the bolt-action Mauser (Model 1909) is today a museum piece in Europe. Nevertheless, the firepower (though not the rate of fire) of this weapon is comparable to the assault rifles used by the guerrillas, and thus desirable to *ronderos*. The catch, however, is that while most shotguns in the possession of CADs have been donated to them by the state, the Mausers, on the other hand, are not free donations but must instead be bought from the military. Peasants in Tambo informed me that a single Mauser costs between \$800 and \$1000 (U.S.), an enormous sum which at first seemed farfetched to me, until I discovered that anthropologist Orin Starn had also been told the same thing by peasants in Puros, a village located in the *punas* of neighbouring Huanta province (see Starn 1994). The desire of impoverished communities to purchase these lethal, though antiquated, weapons of war is often so great that families will sell livestock, scarce food supplies, even tattered, old woven blankets to visiting researchers in order to pool together enough money to buy a Mauser for their community. And while \$800 could certainly buy a new AKM on the black market, the Mausers that the peasants of Tambo have received from the military in exchange for their hard-earned cash are all invariably in poor condition: I saw many that were lacking sights, and even some whose wooden stocks were being held to the barrel by nothing more than scotch tape.

The military has also deepened the dependence that self-defence organizations have on them by making itself the only official dispenser of ammunition. By virtue of its obsolescence, the Mauser uses an outdated cartridge that is not in common circulation in Peru, and can only be obtained through the military. Ammunition for modern assault rifles can be easily bought on the black market, but they are smaller in calibre than the Mauser

cartridge and would therefore eventually cause damage to the rifle barrel. This means that the *comités de autodefensa* are almost totally dependent on the military for their supply of the Mauser's particular ammunition—a fact that also diminishes the threat of a future armed peasant uprising, which is what many officers initially feared when the idea of arming the peasantry was first broached in the late 1980s. In 1997, I observed CAD leaders having to buy the ammunition not only for their Mausers, but also for their state-donated shotguns. Given the small quantities of donations and the high costs of purchasing ammunition, it was hardly a surprise that *ronderos* in Tambo often complained of a lack of ammunition. I was unable to determine where the money from military-sponsored arms and ammunition sales goes. The military field officer I questioned about it flatly denied the existence of this practice, maintaining instead that “*todo es donación*.” Given the evidence to the contrary, however, it is obvious that some group within the military or the government is financially profiting from the climate of fear that grips the rural civilian population.

But in spite of the state's attempts to control the self-defence organizations, in some parts of Ayacucho they have been able to obtain sophisticated, modern weaponry either illicitly or with the unofficial consent of local military commanders. Ever since the mid-1980s, the *comités de defensa civil* in the jungle of the Apurímac River valley have been buying modern weapons on the black market, with money earned from the sale of coca to drug traffickers (see Del Pino 1993, 1996). In joint operations with the military, *ronderos* in that region have routinely been permitted to use modern assault rifles, hand grenades, and even landmines: weapons that self-defence organizations in the sierra could not even dream of touching. These heavily armed *comités* are exceptions due to specific local circumstances, and not the rule.

The state's control of the *comités de autodefensa* exists not only in *law*, through the medium of the military, control is also established through *actions*. For instance, in most parts of the emergency zone today, CAD commanders were still obliged to report weekly to local military or police commanders so as to update them on all their latest activities and observations in the countryside. In addition, *Capitán Vásquez* used to make periodic surprise inspections of the CADs within the area of his jurisdiction. As well, the military keeps a detailed register of the quantity and types of firearms and ammunition in the possession of *comités de autodefensa*. And in 1997, the military began to compile a record in the departments of Ayacucho and Huancavelica of every peasant *rondero*—a category which includes every rural adult, male or female, between the ages of 18 and 60 (though on this occasion the military even registered adults between 16 and 70 years of age). Not only did Vásquez's team register names, they also took a digital photograph of every *rondero*, which was then stored in a computer database. According to Vásquez and Tambo's municipal mayor, this detailed personal data was necessary for the military to have so that it could eventually issue obligatory *identification cards* to every *rondero* in the emergency zone, at a cost of 5 soles each. The identification card allegedly has two primary purposes: (1) to help prevent rebel infiltration of the *comités de autodefensa*, and (2) to have a record of who is a *rondero* so that it will become easier for the state to make indemnity payments to the families of those killed in the line of duty. To date, however, the state has not made a single indemnity payment to any *rondero's* widow anywhere in the emergency zone.

In Tambo district, the structures of power and domination are also played out when the military penalizes communities or individuals for failing to complete specific tasks, like taking part in a patrol, constructing a *Parque de la Pacificación* in Tambo town, participating in municipal *faenas*, or taking firewood to the army base on designated dates. The most common form of sanction is to confiscate all the firearms of a community for a period of time, which leaves the inhabitants feeling virtually defenceless. If an individual misses a turn at patrolling, or fails to show up at a *faena*, he or she may find himself or herself having to perform menial chores at the local army base for an entire week. And all though the army rarely disappears peasants for no reason these days, the

threat of being taken by the *ronderos* to the army base for refusing to do municipal work still strikes fear into the hearts of many inhabitants, an indication of the lasting traumatic fear still felt by the civilian population towards the soldiers. These, then, are the ways in which the military uses fear to control and to ensure the continued compliance of the civilian population. One might even say that the structures of domination and servitude that once existed between *gamonales* and peasants appear today to have been replicated in the latter's everyday relations with the military.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Not all peasant self-defence organizations were organized by the military, which is the picture that some critics have painted in the past (see Amnesty International 1991, Americas Watch 1992, Degregori 1989). Most of the earliest ones, spontaneously organized by peasants themselves, were born out of the growing resentment towards the guerrillas that had been brewing among Ayacuchan peasants ever since the middle of 1982. Despite the substantial initial popular support and sympathy among the Ayacuchan peasantry for Shining Path's drive against poverty, crime, corruption, and neglect, its violent means ultimately undermined its ends. As Shining Path turned its violence increasingly against the peasants—the very people they claimed to represent—it began to lose whatever degree of peasant support and legitimacy it had previously achieved. Consequently, violent responses by Ayacuchan peasants to Shining Path guerrillas, and the creation of community defence groups, took place in some communities even before the armed forces arrived in the emergency zone in 1983.

That peasants have responded to Shining Path in such disparate ways is itself a reflection of the heterogeneity of the Peruvian peasantry. Responses to Shining Path appear to have been influenced by a number of interrelated factors, among which include (1) a local population's reaction to Shining Path's initial actions in their community (particularly the first killings), (2) the degree of community solidarity, (3) the nature and extent of existing socioeconomic cleavages in the community, and whether these consequently promoted social disintegration, (4) perceived options for response, which was influenced by the resources available to a peasant community or to its individual members, (5) the intensity of guerrilla presence in a particular area. In this paper, I have attempted to show how the Iquichan communities of Huanta province, who were the very first peasants to form self-defence groups to resist the guerrillas violently, utilized their strong sense of ethnic and communal solidarity in order to organize self-defence groups. In fact, the sense of communal solidarity within these villages was so strong that even when displaced by guerrilla violence in 1983-84, villagers moved away together, as a community, to their chosen place of refuge. In recent years, Iquichan communities have also tended to return to their villages of origin as a single unit, rather than as separate households. In contrast, the inhabitants of other peasant communities in Ayacucho, particularly those that exhibited a marked degree of internal socioeconomic differentiation and stratification, often responded to political violence in individual ways, utilizing the particular resources available to them and dispersing separately to different destinations (e.g. Flagg et al. 1998). It is perhaps not surprising that even if they had wanted to, many divided communities were in fact initially unable to organize communal defence.

VII.a. *Do Self-Defence Organizations Signify a Deepening Militarization of Civil Society?*

President Belaúnde's momentous decision in the final days of 1982 to place political control of the emergency zone in the hands of a military commander—namely the *Jefe del Comando Político-Militar*—ultimately engendered there a climate of militarization. Some critics have added that the appearance and proliferation of civil defence organizations throughout the emergency zone merely represented a further militarization of civil

society, and that the greater role they have begun to play in the counterinsurgency struggle since the late 1980s has given the *comités de autodefensa* the potential to imitate the same "dirty war" tactics employed by the guerrillas and the security forces. To what extent are these claims justified?

Some critics have argued in the past that the distribution of firearms to the rural population has added a new level in the militarization of civil society (see Degregori 1989). But civilian access to firearms (particularly shotguns) is not, in and of itself, a sign of increased militarization. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the United States is one of the most militarized nations in the world.

In so far as the character of everyday life in many Ayacuchan communities became more and more orientated around the exigencies of communal defence—amidst a context of heightened political violence, massive refugee displacement, and the disintegration of traditional sociopolitical structures and authorities—the importance and authority of civil defence organization and their commanders did indeed grow in importance in some areas at particular time periods. Even as late as 1997, there existed a multitude of communities in Ayacucho whose social fabric had been so ripped apart that the only authority figure that many had left was the CAD commander. In some areas where local populations perceive a continuing threat of guerrilla attacks, CAD authorities have sometimes become even more important and powerful than the *Junta Directiva* of villages (Flagg et al. 1998:38). For instance, in Andaraccay and Matara, two villages located in the district of Acocro, Huamanga province, “the *comando* of the *ronderos* is the leading force in the community, particularly in Matara where he is the head of a whole [*ronda*] base and has the direct support of the military behind him. In these communities it is the *comando* who deals with the organisation and management of communal work, fees, and other activities, whilst the president of the community is mainly a reference for other communities to approach” (Flagg et al 1998:38).

Yet in other Ayacuchan districts, the situation in 1997 was different. In the village of Chuschi, where the civil defence organization had been imposed by the military on an unwilling population, the CAD remained politically and institutionally weak. In an almost apathetic way, communities in the Pampas River valley are complying with the army's basic requirement of organizing defence committees by merely going through the motions; but their hearts are not in it. As an *ex-alcalde* of Chuschi once told me, “Whether the *comité de autodefensa* of Chuschi exists or not, it makes absolutely no difference to the life or to the future development of the community.” Rather than resorting to the new institution of *comités de autodefensa*, the majority of Pampas communities appear to have focused instead on creating spaces of autonomy, within a general climate of violence, by rallying around their established community authorities and traditional social institutions. And in Tambo, the district CAD commander was without doubt subordinated to the authority of the district mayor, although the mayor himself was ultimately subordinated to the political authority of the local military commander. Given such diversity in the sociopolitical importance of civil defence committees in various local settings, it would thus be a mistake to conclude that they have generally exacerbated the militarization of civil society; the existence of CADs in the emergency zone does not, per se, automatically represent militarization.

VII.b. *Facing the Future*

The keystone of militarism in Ayacucho is, in fact, the continued state of emergency imposed by the central government. Not only does it perpetuate the dominant involvement of the military in political decision-making in the emergency region, but it also permits the military to control and manipulate the self-defence organizations. If the state of emergency were lifted, would the *Comités de Autodefensa y Desarrollo* cease to exist? Based on my observations, the answer I would give to this question would be ‘Probably not.’ As their very name reveals, their task is more than just to ensure security; the government has also envisaged (at least for the

time being) a role for them in the process of socioeconomic development and national reconstruction—a process which one assumes will continue even after their civil defence role is made redundant by the termination of political violence.

Besides helping to raise the rural population's morale and self-esteem in recent years, the *comités de autodefensa y desarrollo* have also become entrenched as important, new social institutions in communities where inhabitants have willingly accepted them. Most of the local people I spoke to said that they would like to see the *comités de autodefensa* continue into the future—but free of military control. As with the original *rondas campesinas* of Peru's northern departments (see Starn 1999), many peasants in Ayacucho would like to see the CADs develop into an alternative, grassroots justice system to what many still perceive as the corrupt police and the biased courts. But the full story of the *comités de autodefensa y desarrollo* has yet to unfold over the coming years; and it will most certainly be a tale fraught with conflict and tension. How, for instance, can the CADs develop and perhaps even institutionalised their role in local policing when their relations with the police are so strained, and when their predominantly illiterate members do not know the criminal law, let alone their own human and civil rights? And what will be the central government's plan of development and reconstruction? Will local peasant communities and CADs be given the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way, as equal decision makers, in the future socioeconomic development of their communities? Or will they just be the *mano de obra*?

According to a number of army officers I spoke to in 1997, the military will continue to maintain a leading and directing role in any future process of national reconstruction and socioeconomic development. Instead of providing basic services to every village, the military envisions a cost-effective plan that would require remote and small rural communities to congregate in a centralized place where they would get road access, electricity, and potable water. "They will only need to return to their fields to farm, but they will live in this nucleated group" an officer explained to me. "This is the only way to develop rural communities. There is nothing for them in their abandoned villages, and when they realize this they will want to live in the nucleated areas." It sounded to me like this vision of post-war development was simply a variation of the military-initiated "strategic hamleting," which has already resulted in the creation of multicomunal refugee settlements, like the ones surrounding Tambo town. As such, it also seemed to be a plan that directly contradicts government- and NGO-sponsored projects that purport to encourage displaced people to return to their villages of origin. Perhaps more importantly, it is an idea that is incompatible with the deep desire of many refugees to return home. How this contradictory situation will unfold is yet to be seen, but it will almost certainly lead to more conflicts, especially if the military is permitted by the government to impose this vision of local development on the rural population.

On a final note, the question of what is to become of the peasantry's firearms, once the subversion has been definitively crushed, is a tinderbox waiting to explode. "Once total pacification has been achieved in this country, all these arms will be returned to the military," *Capitán Vásquez* assured me. However, *campesinos* had also told me: "We have made great financial sacrifices to obtain our Mausers and ammunition. Why should we give them up to the military without compensation? Besides, we need them to defend ourselves from those who would harm or take advantage of us, like abusive policemen. If the military tries to take away our firearms by force, there will be trouble."

By allowing the fragmentation of its monopoly of the use and means of legitimate force, the state has perhaps opened a Pandora's box that, in coming years, will prove most difficult to close.

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- 1984a ¿Qué pasa con Sendero Luminoso?. *QueHacer* 29:34-38.
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ENDNOTES

- 1 According to Berg, peasants actually generally opposed communism, "fearing that Sendero might want to expropriate private land to form collectives. Rather, what people focused on in daily conversation and what they generally approved was revenge against "the rich"" (1992:96).
- 2 Peru is administratively divided into 24 departments. The city of Ayacucho is located in the department of the same name. Departments are further subdivided into provinces, which in turn are partitioned by districts. Within the districts are cities, towns, and rural communities. Larger villages are often further divided into *barrios*.
- 3 *Punas* refer to the high, frigid moors of the Andean mountains. It is an ecological zone that begins at an altitude of about 3,000 metres and extends to over 4,000 metres.
- 4 Belaúnde harboured strong distrust for the military that had ousted him during his first presidential term. It was partly for this reason that he hesitated to involve the armed forces in the counterinsurgency effort for the first two and a half years of the revolution.
- 5 Before this, the first Peruvian provinces to be placed under a state of emergency in October 1981 were La Mar, Cangallo, Huamanga, Víctor Fajardo, and Huanta. This emergency zone embraced a population that numbered 391,883 persons, or 2.20% of the entire national population (DESCO 1989:352).
- 6 Señor Raúl Palacios Hernández, a former district mayor of Tambo (1971-75), explained to me that the guerrilla attack on the Tambo police station on 11 October 1981 was condoned by many Tambinos because those particular *Guardias Civil* were considered corrupt and abusive. They would often extort money from local migrant labourers who worked in the coca plantations of the Valle del Río Apurímac (interviewed on 25 September 1997).
- 7 For a recent detailed analysis of the strategy behind Shining Path's "protracted people's war," see Tapia (1997).
- 8 This was consistently repeated in the testimonies given to me in 1997 by Rubén Rojas Domínguez (District Mayor, Tambo), "Comando Zorro" (President of *Comité Central de Defensa*, Tambo), Pascual Quispe Vargas (*desplazado* and *rondero*, Tambo), District Committee of *Club de Madres* of Tambo District, Vicente Perez Cervan (*Regidor de Desarrollo Rural*, Tambo; ex-CAD president), José Coronel (anthropologist and research fellow at the Instituto para la Paz (IPAZ) of UNSCH), and by Pompeyo Javier Rivera Terres ("Comandante Huayhuaco," former organizer and representative of the *rondas campesinas* of the *valle del río Apurímac*).
- 9 Although I will not discuss it here, I have found Eric Wolf's (1955, 1986) distinction between "open non-corporate" and "closed corporate" communities to be paradigm that still corresponded fairly closely with the empirical realities of Ayacuchan rural society, as it existed before the massive disruptions that took place from 1983 onwards. In the PhD dissertation that I am currently writing, I have used Wolf's paradigm as a fruitful heuristic model for explaining disparate peasant responses to political violence, for it also forces us to pay often-neglected attention to the way in which the peasantry's relation to market and state affects their interaction with external forces.
- 10 But according to the former cadre "Nicario," the guerrillas in Chuschi confronted the soldiers: "We told [the villagers] not to worry, that we would defend them. But we lost support, and that's how Shining Path lost support. All we had were grenades and dynamite, but nothing like machine guns, pistols, or FALS [automatic weapons]. There was a clash between us and the army. Four comrades with four weapons were lost" (quoted in Degregori and López Ricci 1990a:333).
- 11 According to Mao's military principles for defeating Chiang Kai-shek, two of the guerrilla's principles of operation are: (1) "To make the wiping out of the enemy's effective strength our main objective, rather than the holding or seizure of a city or place", and (2) "To avoid battles of attrition in which we lose more than we gain or only break even" (1948:291-292).
- 12 One unfortunate incidence of this was when the Iquichan villages of Huaychao, Uchuraccay, and Ccarhuahurán unleashed a wave of intracommunal violence in the district of Tambo by carrying out a series of raids on a number of communities there in February 1983 (DESCO 1989:98).
- 13 Two clandestine mass graves containing approximately 56 bodies were discovered in the Cordillera Blanca, near Huaraz, in 1997 (see Rosales Cruz and Del Pilar Sánchez 1997:20-21).

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- 14 See Ministerio de Guerra (1966) for the official assessment of the emergence, organization, operation, and repression of the MIR, ELN, and Túpac Amaru guerrilla movements, and the significant issues they raised for the armed forces. For insight into the guerrilla experience, see Béjar (1969) and Blanco (1972).
- 15 By the beginning of 1983, the declared Emergency Zone comprised the five northern provinces of the departments of Ayacucho, the province of Andahuaylas in the department of Apurímac, and the entire department of Huancavelica (DESCO 1989:347-355).
- 16 "We were accused of being terrorists in a very dismissive way by Lima people," explained Cesareo Ayala, a returnee from Huambalpa, Ayacucho, who had lived as a refugee in a shantytown in Lima (quoted in Kirk 1995:357).
- 17 Peru historians and anthropologists never tire of reiterating Ayacucho's "long tradition of rebelliousness," which includes the Taki Onqoy movement in the mid-sixteenth century (see Stern 1993:51-79), the 1896 Iquichan rebellion against the government's salt tax in the provincial capital of Huanta (see Husson 1983, 1992), the violent peasant struggles in the province of La Mar in 1922-23 (Cárdenas López 1982; Vila Galindo 1978), and the massive social movement demanding free education in 1969 (Degregori 1990).
- 18 "To be straight with you, the *cholo* is like an animal for me," an ex-Marine once professed in an interview with anthropologists (quoted in Degregori and López Ricci 1990b:345).
- 19 This tactic is not unlike the one recently attempted by Russian forces fighting Chechen rebels in the city of Grozny. Russian forces battling there have tried to depopulate the city of all its civilians in order to make it easier for them to speedily eradicate thousands of militants fighting from cellars and well-fortified positions by simply annihilating everything along the Russian route of advance.
- 20 This is how Rubén Rojas, Tambo's mayor, depicted the situation of the district's rural inhabitants during the worst years of political violence.
- 21 See González 1983c for a general discussion of this.
- 22 The district of Ocros is today part of Huamanga province, and the district of Concepción pertains to the new province of Vilcashuamán, which was created by Ley No.23930 on 25 September 1984 (Huamaní Oré 1996:7-9).
- 23 Massacres took place in Ocros on 20 April 1983 (18 peasants killed), 17 January 1984 (15 peasants killed), and 3 February 1984 (17 killed), and in Vinchos on 28 March 1984 (30 assassinated), and on 2 June 1984 (4 killed) (see DESCO 1989:100-107).
- 24 See Degregori 1989; IDL 1989; Isbell 1990; Amnesty International 1991; Americas Watch 1992; IDL 1991a.
- 25 The community of Chuschi, in the province of Cangallo, Ayacucho department, is a case in point. The community was compelled by the military to form a *comité de defensa civil* on 14 March 1991, but this was preceded by the disappearance of a number of the community's elected officials who had refused the military's initial urging. For details, see "Secuestro en Chuschi," *La Republica*, 7 de abril de 1991, pp.12-15.
- 26 In earlier years, *ronderos* were instructed by soldiers and *licenciados* (ex-servicemen) in how to make rudimentary firearms out of steel pipe, wood, string, and shotgun-shells. In honour of him, *ronderos* in Tambo baptized their crude blunderbusses "Alan."
- 27 Decreto Legislativo 741 (*Ley de Reconocimiento de los Comités de Autodefensa*) Chapter 1, Articles 1-3, and Decreto Supremo 077 (*Reglamento de Organización y Funciones de los Comités de Autodefensa*), Chapter 1, Articles 3-16 (see SER 1993:28-31).
- 28 The type of shotguns received by *campesinos* as state donations were the 12-gauge MGP-10, manufactured by the Navy, and the 12-gauge Winchester-1300 Ranger, manufactured by the Army.