

# NEW LITERATURE ON PERU'S SENDERO LUMINOSO

*Orin Starn*  
Duke University

*EL SURGIMIENTO DE SENDERO LUMINOSO: DEL MOVIMIENTO POR LA GRATITUD DE LA ENSEÑANZA AL INICIO DE LA LUCHA ARMADA.* By Carlos Iván Degregori. (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1990. Pp. 270.)

*QUE DIFICIL ES SER DIOS: IDEOLOGIA Y VIOLENCIA POLITICA EN SENDERO LUMINOSO.* By Carlos Iván Degregori. (Lima: El Zorro de Abajo Ediciones, 1989. Pp. 29.)

*SENDERO: LA HISTORIA DE LA GUERRA MILENARIA.* By Gustavo Gorriti. (Lima: Apoyo, 1990. Pp. 399.)

*JUVENTUD Y TERRORISMO.* By Dennis Chávez de Paz. (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1989. Pp. 64.)

*THE DECADE OF CHAQWA: PERU'S INTERNAL REFUGEES.* By Robin Kirk. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee on Refugees, 1991. Pp. 40. \$2.50.)

*VIOLENCIA POLITICA EN EL PERU, 1980-88.* 2 volumes. Edited by DESCO. (Lima: DESCO, 1989. Pp. 1080.)

In April 1980, Abimael Guzmán sounded his apocalyptic summons to war at the first military school of the Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (PCP-*SL*): "Comrades: Our labor without guns has ended, the armed struggle has begun. . . . The invincible flames of the revolution will glow, turning to lead and steel. . . . There will be a great rupture and we will be the makers of the new dawn. . . . We shall convert the black fire into red and the red into pure light."<sup>1</sup> Just one month later, four Senderistas burned ballots in the Andean village of Chuschi, launching a war between the Maoist guerrillas and government forces that has already cost more than twenty-three thousand lives.<sup>2</sup>

What Senderistas call the "ILA" (short for *inicio de la lucha armada*)

1. Quoted by Gorriti in *Sendero*, pp. 66-67. All translations from Spanish are mine.

2. The best statistics on the war come from the respected research center DESCO (Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo) and the Peruvian Senate's Comisión Especial sobre Violencia Política y Pacificación. It should be noted, however, that these two groups base many of their calculations on a pair of unreliable sources: newspaper reports and military communiqués.

was closely followed by the rise of Sendero studies. A cross-disciplinary and transnational network of observers—including French anthropologists, British historians, and Peruvian sociologists—began to study this Maoist insurrection, which seemed a bad Hollywood cliché with its secretive leader, deliberate use of terror, and “exotic” Andean locale. Pundits were soon speaking of an entire field of “Senderology.”

Although the label might seem to suggest a tightly knit discourse, early Senderology was actually a patchwork of different and often contradictory theories. Sendero-watchers, after all, were operating from a gamut of political and intellectual presuppositions, ranging from leftist Peruvian anthropologist Juan Ansión to U.S. political scientist and former State Department lecturer David Scott Palmer. Also contributing to multiple understandings were Sendero’s disdain for public pronouncements in the early 1980s and the difficulty of conducting first-hand research in the Andean war zones. This initial dearth of good information gave scholars especially free rein in constructing their own interpretations of Guzmán’s cultural-revolution-style Maoist party. Sendero was depicted as, among other things, a peasant rebellion, an ethnic-based Indian uprising, and an insurrection of Peru’s Andean periphery against the coastal center.<sup>3</sup>

As Senderology enters the 1990s, it continues to exhibit a variety of views. But in other ways, the field is being transformed. Information about Guzmán’s brainchild has mushroomed with the publication of the party’s mouthpiece newspaper *El Diario*, capture of internal Sendero documents, release of army and police dispatches from the first years of the war, availability of former Senderistas for interviews, and pronouncements by Guzmán himself in the “Entrevista del Siglo.” The Lima-based Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo (DESCO) has also compiled a detailed and well-organized chronology of the first eight years of the conflict, complete with summaries of newspaper articles, statistics, and an exhaustive bibliography.<sup>4</sup> This explosion of information on Sendero has

3. Ansión (1982) presented an early view of Sendero as an Indian rebellion, a position he later changed. On Sendero as a manifestation of periphery versus center, see Palmer (1986); as a peasant rebellion, see McClintock (1984).

4. *El Diario* was published during the early 1980s as *El Diario de Marka*, a daily of the legal left. It was taken over by Sendero in the late 1980s. Degregori told me in May 1991 that he believes that Sendero’s new interest in public pronouncements had partly to do with the need to compete in Lima with the publicity-minded insurgency of the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru). For Guzmán’s fascinating evaluation of the party in documents captured at a Sendero safe house, see *La República*, 22 Mar. 1991, pp. 13–15. Gorriti’s *Sendero* contains portions of army and police dispatches. All the secret papers will eventually be made available to the public at Princeton University. For an interview with a former Senderista alongside the account of a navy infantryman who served in Ayacucho, see the poignant piece by Carlos Iván Degregori and José López Ricci (1990). For another perspective on the early years, see the recent self-serving memoir of General Roberto Clemente Noel Moral, who directed the army’s brutal counterinsurgency campaign in Ayacucho between December 1982 and December 1983. The “Entrevista del Siglo” appeared in *El Diario*, 31 July 1988, p. 15.

gone hand in hand with the first wave of book-length studies on the topic. Carlos Iván Degregori's *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso* and Gustavo Gorriti's *Sendero: la historia de la guerra milenaria* (both published in 1990) have now become the first classics of Senderology.<sup>5</sup> Overall, Sendero studies possess a growing sense of thoroughness and sophistication, marked by an abundance of primary sources and a pair of central texts.

Meanwhile the war itself marches forward with a numbingly implacable sameness. A couple of months ago, a friend from the village of Chuschi came to my Lima apartment. By chance, Gustavo Gorriti's book sat on the living-room table. Juan picked it up. He pored over the part on Chuschi, staring at the pictures of mutilated bodies from the first years of the war. But Juan's own story that afternoon was a harsh reminder that the terror continues. Only two weeks earlier, four of his fellow villagers had disappeared, first tortured severely in the seedy local police station and then ripped away into the Andean night by an army patrol. For Chuschi and hundreds of other Andean hamlets, history remains stuck in the same terrible gear.

### *Explaining the Rise of Sendero*

Carlos Iván Degregori taught at Ayacucho's Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSCH) between 1970 and 1973 and again from 1975 to 1979. During this time, the young anthropologist was a colleague of Guzmán, a teacher of future Sendero second-in-command Osmán Morote, and an activist in the Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario (MIR) party that competed for local supremacy with Guzmán's PCP-SL. *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso* represents Degregori's first book on his old rivals. Building his account on careful research as well as on his insider's knowledge of Ayacucho, Degregori tracks Sendero from the student protests of 1969 to the beginning of the armed struggle in 1980.

*El surgimiento* situates Sendero amidst radical Peruvian politics of the 1960s and 1970s, when an alphabet soup of Marxist parties were fighting for supremacy within trade unions, neighborhood organizations, and peasant federations. Perhaps the key nodes of radical activity were Peru's public universities.<sup>6</sup> Guzmán himself taught philosophy at the UNSCH in the impoverished Andean state of Ayacucho. Set in the old colonial capital of Huamanga, this school became a crossroads where many of Peru's brightest academics taught a huge pool of young Peruvians from peasant and lower- and middle-class urban backgrounds. Sendero thus

5. Both these books are due to appear in English in 1992. Degregori's will be published by the University of North Carolina Press, and Gorriti's by Princeton University Press.

6. A good study of radical university politics of the 1970s is Lynch (1990).

evolved out of the encounter between a provincial intellectual elite and the provincial students for whom Guzmán's rigidly simplified Marxism held a fatal attraction. As Degregori astutely summarizes the situation in his pamphlet entitled *Qué difícil es ser Dios*, "the children of the betrayed— young provincial kids of Andean origin—entered the university in massive numbers and discovered a simplified and thus more accessible version of a theory, Marxist-Leninism, that defined itself as the only 'scientific truth' . . . and through which they, by joining the party and its truth, could pass from the base to the apex of the 'social pyramid'" (pp. 14–15).

Degregori cautions against overemphasizing the university's role as incubator of the insurrection, however. Pointing to events like Sendero's loss of the UNSCH executive council in 1974, he argues that the influence of Guzmán's organization actually waned throughout the 1970s in the university and Ayacucho in general. As Degregori describes it in *El surgimiento*, Sendero Luminoso went from agitation in mass protests like the 1969 student uprising toward increasing self-enclosure. Paradoxically, he argues, this isolation became a strength: "With each defeat among the masses, Sendero Luminoso solidified its cells and reduced its alliances and sphere of action. It lost its power to convoke but simultaneously achieved an ideological hardening and organic cohesion until it became a kind of dwarf star where matter condenses almost without interatomic space and thus achieves a huge weight disproportionate to its size" (Degregori 1990, *El surgimiento*, p. 198).

"Dwarf star" remains a wonderful metaphor for Sendero. One wonders nevertheless whether Degregori may be overplaying the party's isolation. As he admits, Sendero remained strong enough to win student elections at the UNSCH in 1976 and to control the local branch of the powerful teachers' union. Sendero also commanded wide support in Ayacucho during the first two years of its armed insurrection as well as in its initial offensive into the Mantero Valley in Junín in the late 1980s. Even in 1991, a survey revealed that 7 percent of all Peruvians and 11 percent of the poorest continue to view the insurgency favorably.<sup>7</sup> On balance, however, Degregori's overall portrait persuades. While able to win popular sympathies in particular places over specific periods of time, Sendero remains less a broad-based movement than a strong vanguard faction characterized by tight organization and planned use of mass violence.

This picture shatters two popular theories. One is the view of Sendero as a peasant rebellion. Political scientist Cynthia McClintock advanced this argument in a widely read essay (1984). Drawing on James Scott's (1976) "moral economy" model of rural revolution, McClintock contended that a drought in the late 1970s had pushed Ayacucho's already

7. The poll was taken by *Apoyo* in June 1991. For a commentary, see Balbí (1991).

impoverished peasantry into rebellion. It is true that Sendero's success in rural Ayacucho until the military counteroffensive of 1983 gave the insurgency an agrarian look at first. Many of the cadre, too, have always come from peasant families. But Degregori's demonstration of the urban origins of the insurgency as well as Sendero's apparent loss of much of its initial peasant support in the south-central Andes make it untenable to speak any longer of a "radical peasant movement" or a "rural rebellion."<sup>8</sup>

A second casualty of Degregori's study is the image of Sendero as an Andean millenarian movement.<sup>9</sup> Partial proponents of this vision have included respected historians Alberto Flores Galindo and Pablo Macera, sociologist Gustavo Benavides, and anthropologist Juan Ossio. Flores Galindo, for instance, perceived in Sendero a desire for "the inversion of the world" that fits with "an Andean structure of thought" (1987, 380). Ossio, for his part, has claimed that the PCP-SL has "a messianic ideology that, even if it does not express itself in a truly Andean idiom, adjusts itself to deep-rooted [Andean] tendencies" (1990, 92). Both these neo-*indigenista* visions fall into the same trap. Animated by the desire to view the Andes as a place of pure, age-old traditions, scholars have recast a doctrinaire Marxist party led by a white-skinned intellectual citing Kant, Shakespeare, and Washington Irving as the latest in a cycle of indigenous rebellions.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, many recent observers have pointed out the absence of any appeal to "Indianness" in Sendero's official ideology. As Degregori notes in *El surgimiento*, "Reading through the documents of PCP-SL, one might think that Peru was as homogeneous as Japan or Scandinavia—not a line refers to ethnic or racial problems" (p. 205). The erasing of ethnicity turns out to be less absolute in the party's practice than in its theory. Indeed, an Andean *huayno* ballad, Ricardo Dolorier's "Flor de Retama" (The Broom Flower) serves as an unofficial Sendero anthem. The party also uses Andean folklore clubs in several Lima universities as informal recruiting centers. But Degregori is certainly correct in pointing to a "hyperclassism" in Sendero's official doctrine. Like other brands of orthodox Marxism, PCP-SL ideology privileges class over all other forms of inequality. Dennis Chávez de Paz's recent profile of imprisoned Senderistas, *Juventud y terrorismo*, confirms that many of Sendero's recruits come from Peru's mountain provinces. According to Chávez de Paz's examination of Lima's

8. For a more extended criticism of McClintock's work, see Poole and Renique (1991).

9. Here I draw partly on Degregori's own criticism of this view of Sendero in a recent book review (1990, 111–17).

10. Some of the neo-*indigenista* writing is sharply observant, and none more so than that of the late Flores Galindo. But such work also needs to be located within the larger tradition of representing the Andes as a place of pure and timeless traditions, which can be called "Andeanism" (see Starn 1991a). A bit of Andeanism of my own was my suggesting—probably in error—that Sendero chose the date of 17 May to begin its armed struggle because of the resonance with the execution of the neo-Inca rebel Túpac Amaru II on the same day in 1781 (Starn 1991a, 63).

judicial records, 60 percent of those sentenced for terrorism are from the Andes. More than half of these are under thirty. Yet these young mountain-born Senderistas conceive of themselves as protagonists not of a specifically Andean struggle but of “the World Proletarian Revolution.”<sup>11</sup>

The theory of Sendero as an uprising of the mountain hinterlands against Peru’s coastal core fares only marginally better in the light shed by *El surgimiento*. Degregori shows how the 1969 uprising for free education united much of historically neglected Ayacucho in angry opposition to the Lima-based central government. The initial support for Sendero in Ayacucho reflected some of the same regional resentment, partly confirming David Scott Palmer’s view of the insurgency as part of “a historic pattern of periphery-center conflict” in Peru (1985, 87). Yet the willingness of the insurgents to move into the gray metropolis of Lima and the coca-growing Upper Huallaga Valley by the mid-1980s (partly because of their growing difficulties with the armed forces and peasant civil defense patrols in Ayacucho) confirms Degregori’s claim that Sendero’s program is class-directed rather than ethnically or regionally oriented. Only 9 percent of guerrilla actions occurred in Ayacucho in mid-1991, as compared with 32 percent in the jungles and mountains of other departments and 57 percent in Lima.<sup>12</sup> In short, Sendero is far from restricted to the Andean hinterlands. Cadres now try to rally support throughout the vast mass of poor Peruvians, who are complexly integrated via busy circuits of migration that stretch from highland villages to jungle colonizations and Lima shantytowns.

One key issue that *El surgimiento* does not address is women’s participation in Sendero Luminoso. In striking contrast to the generally male-dominated tradition of Latin American guerrilla movements, women make up about 30 percent of party membership. To be sure, the patriarchal Guzmán presides. But women fill positions at every other level of the organization, including a reported eight of nineteen slots on the Central Committee.<sup>13</sup> Sendero’s overall internal structure reproduces the general stratification by race and class in Peru. Dark-skinned kids from poor backgrounds fill the bottom ranks under a leadership composed mostly of light-skinned elites. Female participation also follows this pattern. Poor women from Andean and Amazonian villages and city slums tend to be found in low positions in the party, in the roving columns in the countryside and propaganda teams in the shantytowns. Generally, light-skinned women from middle- and upper-class backgrounds like Teresa Durand (who danced a Greek *sirtaki* with Guzmán in the recently captured video of a

11. See the interview with PCP-SL leader Laura Zambrano in *El Diario*, 14 Mar. 1988, p. 9.

12. These figures are taken from an unpublished essay by journalist Robin Kirk, “The Women of the Shining Path.”

13. These figures come from DESCO (1991, 1).

Sendero social event) occupy top leadership positions. Yet despite the ubiquity of female Senderistas, the phenomenon has drawn almost no attention in the academic literature on Sendero. Serious inquiry into why women enlist, and also into the broader issue of the construction of gender within the party, should definitely be a priority for future research.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, *El surgimiento* remains a compelling study. Degregori joins a deft novelistic touch with a keen analytical eye. Even if the first chapters on the 1969 protests connect only loosely with the last three on Sendero, the reader still comes away appreciating the vitality of Ayacucho in the 1960s and 1970s. These two decades produced, along with Sendero, a creative and influential generation of intellectuals, musicians, and artists. Yet Degregori (himself part of this group) also portrays the era's explosiveness. At this juncture, a generation of young people from modest backgrounds discovered an intoxicating vision of change with an all-powerful ideology and an "infallible" leader. The result was an insurrection that would shake much of the country.

### *Crossing a "River of Blood"*

Gustavo Gorriti covered Sendero for Peru's leading newsweekly *Caretas* from 1982 to 1989. The Lima-based journalist now writes for the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*. *Sendero: historia de la guerra milenaria en el Perú* is the first of his planned three volumes on the movement. This first installment encompasses the years between the opening attack in Chuschi in 1980 and President Fernando Belaúnde's reluctant decision in late 1982 to send in troops to contain the growing insurgency. Drawing on hundreds of interviews and an impressive array of government and PCP-SL documents, Gorriti has crafted an artful linear narrative that tacks between the methodical Guzmán and his followers and the bumbling Belaúnde administration.

A major contribution of Gorriti's *Sendero* is its vivid portrait of

14. Various factors evidently come into play in explaining why so many women join the PCP-SL. One is the special attention paid by Sendero leaders to recruiting women. To be sure, party doctrine assumes that sexism will fall away with the overthrow of capitalism. Unlike ethnicity, however, gender gets mentioned at least sporadically in Sendero documents. See, for example, the special supplement entitled "Por la emancipación de la mujer!" in *El Diario*, 13 Mar. 1988. The acknowledgement of sexual inequality in Sendero theory has been accompanied by practical measures to incorporate women. Guzmán established the Movimiento Femenino Popular in 1965, the first of its kind among leftist groups in Ayacucho. Charismatic figures like Catalina Arianzén, Augusta La Torre (Guzmán's wife), and Edith Lagos helped to draw other women into the party during the early years in Ayacucho. More broadly, the female presence in Sendero follows the pattern of increased political participation by women in Peru during the last two decades. Female cadres reportedly make up a quarter of the smaller armed insurgency of the MRTA. Hundreds of thousands of other women (many times more than choose armed rebellion) have organized in nonviolent groups such as mothers' clubs, soup kitchens, and neighborhood associations.

Abimael Guzmán. The book shows how the chubby, bespectacled leader of Sendero draws on the writings of José Carlos Mariátegui, Lenin, Mao, and Marx to portray Peru as redeemable only through violent revolution. What the PCP-SL calls “Pensamiento Gonzalo” has become absolute truth for devout young Senderistas. Yet Gorriti also highlights Guzmán’s vigorously pragmatic streak. For instance, when Sendero moved into the Upper Huallaga Valley in the mid-1980s, Guzmán set aside his official condemnation of drugs as capitalist decadence in order to collect a fee from coca farmers in exchange for protection. The self-proclaimed “Cuarta Espada del Marxismo” is also ruthless in internal party struggles. After he engineered a cultural-revolution-style purge in 1981, reports Gorriti, no one dared to challenge Guzmán’s dictatorial rule. Over the decade, the personality cult around “el Presidente Gonzalo” has only grown. Many others have written about Guzmán, but none present such a finely drawn picture as Gorriti’s.

A second major contribution of *Sendero* is its exploration of Sendero’s terrible violence. A brilliant chapter entitled “La cuota” shows how Senderistas swear to die but also to kill for the party. Guzmán himself believes that “violence is a universal law, . . . and without revolutionary violence, one class cannot be substituted for another, an old order cannot be overthrown to create a new one.”<sup>15</sup> The former professor imagines himself as a revolutionary Moses who will lead his followers across “a river of blood” into the promised land of communism: “People of Peru, . . . today your finest children, flesh of your flesh, steel of your steel . . . have unleashed the red wind and the flaming banner of rebellion. . . . the children of your powerful womb offer you their armed actions and their lives” (cited in Gorriti, p. 143). In these terms, to kill is to contribute to the forging of “La Nueva Democracia.” To die is to become a martyr. The so-called Día de la Heroicidad, when the security forces slaughtered 246 inmates following a failed Senderista prison rebellion, is now commemorated as a major Sendero holiday. Manifesting anything but a horror of war, Sendero revels in what Degregori has elsewhere termed the “poeticization of death” (Degregori 1991).

Beyond its analysis of topics like Sendero violence, Gorriti’s history overflows with fascinating details. For example, readers learn that army intelligence dispatches in 1979 predicted the outbreak of rebellion with considerable precision. Yet higher-ups in the military government ignored the repeated warnings. Another portion of *Sendero* reconstructs Guzmán’s medical history. Gorriti argues persuasively that Sendero’s fifty-seven-year-old leader has directed the revolution from either the coast or the jungle because of a rare blood disease that precludes extended stays in

15. Interview with Guzmán, *El Diario*, 31 July 1988, p. 15.



the high altitude of the Andes. Gorriti's careful mastery of detail and his fine narrative sense make *Sendero* an absorbing account.

Perhaps the book's main shortcoming is its too narrow focus on leaders. In places, Gorriti tends to reduce the complicated social drama of the war to a personal chess game between the wily Guzmán and inept Belaúnde officials. For background about on-the-ground issues like the relations between the cadre and peasants in the early years of the conflict, the works of anthropologists Ronald Berg (1986), Henri Favre (1984), and Billie Jean Isbell (1988) remain the best sources.<sup>16</sup>

Both Gorriti and Degregori, however, write with the comfortable assurance of years of close observation. Most Peruvian Senderologists, as middle-class Lima professionals, remain a step removed from the daily reality of the war in the Andean countryside and Lima shantytowns. Yet they have an advantage over foreign observers working from periodic visits, that of having watched the insurrection continuously and at closer range for eleven long years. To be sure, living near the scene does not guarantee good analysis. Plenty of mediocre writing on the PCP-SL continues to appear in Peru. But it is a different story with such keen observers as Degregori and Gorriti. In *El surgimiento* and *Sendero*, they have turned their years of close engagement into books that will set a high standard for future thinking about Sendero.

### *The Politics of Senderology*

The entire enterprise of Senderology is inevitably politically charged. In Peru, Sendero watchers come under angry verbal attacks from Sendero. *El Diario* rants about the "brutish Senderologists." Journalist Raúl González has even received a death threat in print: "The people in arms will demand an accounting for his calumnies against the People's War."<sup>17</sup> Realizing that Senderologists demystify the image of a well-loved popular struggle, party propagandists want to discredit the whole project of Senderology.

These kinds of charges smack of the crude intolerance of a Red Guard wall poster. But they also raise the serious issue of the location of Senderologists in the conflict. Few observers—especially Peruvians—want to wrap themselves in a mantle of neutrality when it comes to a group like Sendero, which evokes the specter of Cambodia's Pol Pot and the Khmer

16. For an excellent account of relations between Sendero and peasants in the department of Junín in the late 1980s, see Manrique (1989).

17. Quoted in *La República*, 19 May 1991, p. 20. Realizing that Senderologists are demystifying Sendero's image as a well-loved popular struggle, party propagandists want to discredit the whole project of Senderology.

Rouge.<sup>18</sup> Degregori and Gorriti never directly drop their professional tone, but they leave no doubt about their personal opposition to Guzmán's party.

The question of taking sides becomes more perilous for Senderologists amidst mounting requests from the Peruvian military for information and advice. To oppose Sendero is one thing—but to advise the armed forces is another. The military, after all, has run a dirty counterinsurgency campaign in which rape, torture, and disappearance are routine (see Amnesty International 1991; U.S. State Department 1991). Can Senderologists play a role in tempering the brutality of the counterinsurgency? Or does any connection with the armed forces inevitably place knowledge in the service of a cruel power? These issues, which have not been addressed in Peru, deserve serious discussion.

U.S. Senderologists do not escape questions about their stances. One U.S. scholar, sociologist Carol Andreas, sides with Sendero. She writes the monthly newsletter entitled *Peru Scholars*, a thinly veiled Sendero propaganda sheet. Meanwhile, the two best-known U.S. Senderologists—Cynthia McClintock and David Scott Palmer—find themselves accused of being apologists for U.S. foreign policy. For example, a smart but nasty diatribe by Deborah Poole and Gerardo Renique has labeled McClintock and Palmer as “political ideologues” who engage in “an intentioned pattern of bibliographic elision and historical falsification” to produce interpretations that feed into “the ideological machinery of U.S. imperialism” (Poole and Renique 1991, 134). Poole and Renique never back up their charges of intentional falsification. The allegation that McClintock and Palmer “advocate the same racist essentialisms that fuel counterinsurgency campaigns” seems an unfair exaggeration at best (Poole and Renique 1991, 176). Yet it remains true that the Bush administration planned to send Green Beret advisors and twenty-five million dollars in military aid to Peru in 1991 under a new anti-drug accord. Amidst this increased U.S. involvement in the Andes with the drug war, many of the questions raised by Poole and Renique about the politics of Senderology certainly merit serious reflection. What personal and institutional ties might exist between Senderologists and the Bush administration? How has Senderology challenged, modified, or incorporated the assumptions of U.S. policymakers? Most important, how can academics contribute to the struggle for peace in Peru?

On the last question, observers might examine the responses of

18. It should also be noted that Peruvian Senderologists face pressure to conform to the limited—if not entirely inaccurate—official view of the PCP-SL as “demented subversives” and “terrorist delinquents.” Historian Nelson Manrique may be exaggerating only slightly in observing that anyone who goes beyond the view of Sendero as “terrorist” risks “being considered . . . conciliatory toward Sendero Luminoso, if not a secret *senderista*” (Manrique 1989, 137).

U.S. scholars to the crisis of the 1980s in Central America. Convinced that escalating U.S. military involvement was only exacerbating problems of poverty and political violence in the region, many academics turned activist. They organized public forums, edited readers for lay audiences, testified at congressional hearings, and published moving books on human rights abuse. By contrast, little scholarly activism of any kind has occurred in answer to the war in Peru. The studies of Senderologists tend to gloss over the pain and suffering of so many Peruvians in the distancing language of scientific objectivism. With some notable exceptions, Andeanist specialists in general have not spoken up much about the human costs of these last twelve years of brutal torture, mass graves, and orphaned children. Part of the reason may have to do with the nature of the conflict. Many scholars on the left can identify with the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the Sandinistas. It is harder to find a "good side" in Peru. Sendero looms as a Stalinist nightmare. The legal left is a fragmented collection of tiny parties, run for the last decade by the same handful of unimaginative caudillos. Ultimately, however, scholars can still contribute to the fight for life in Peru in ways that range from supporting the efforts of grass-roots organizations in Peru to pressuring for strict conditions regarding human rights on any U.S. aid. The effects of these efforts are likely to be limited. But the seriousness of Peru's predicament gives urgency to such attempts.

### *Looking to the Future*

What is the future of Peru's war? Today's leading Senderologists, Degregori and Gorriti, stake out contrasting positions. Gorriti stresses Sendero's strength. Although he claims to "let the facts speak for themselves," he has constructed *Sendero: la historia de la guerra milenaria* in a way that plays up the movement's power (p. 16). The opening lines of his book assert that Sendero is the "largest insurrection in Peru's history," overlooking the far more massive eighteenth-century uprising of neo-Inca rebel Túpac Amaru (p. 15). Guzmán's party comes across in *Sendero* as relentlessly expansive, possessed of the same discipline "that enabled other groups . . . with such apparent initial disadvantages to triumph" (p. 16). Gorriti continues to argue in a recent interview that Sendero—despite its setbacks since the Peruvian military's bloody entry in 1983—has advanced toward its goal of "Equilibrio Estratégico" en route to a final offensive.<sup>19</sup> In Gorriti's view, Sendero may win.

Degregori, by contrast, emphasizes Sendero's limits. In a recent essay, he agrees that the party reigned over most of the Ayacucho coun-

19. See *Expreso*, 2 Oct. 1990, p. 4 (published in Lima).

tryside until 1983 in a kind of “utopian authoritarianism.” But Degregori goes on to argue that Sendero remains stunted by its own violent sectarianism. Peasants, he contends, stick to an ethic of “punish but do not kill,” and Sendero’s free resort to killing thus opens “a divide that separates it from the peasantry” (1991, 9). Even the vast majority of poor provincial youth—Sendero’s main recruitment pool—continue to choose other paths than Guzmán’s revolution. Degregori believes that in the near future, Sendero will continue to disrupt and destroy. But he portrays the group as too limited by its fierce dogmatism to have much chance of ultimate victory.

Degregori may overstate Sendero’s limits. His image of peasants as opposed to all killing edges into romanticism. It is true that many rural Peruvians complain about some Sendero murders. Yet guerrilla executions of cattle rustlers and corrupt officials can also garner strong support from peasants. In short, reactions vary from person to person according to the particular situation. More generally, Degregori tends to present Sendero as depending exclusively on coercion. He overlooks substantial evidence of currents of genuine support. Even if terror remains Sendero’s most reliable weapon, the party’s message of total transformation has some appeal in a country where three-quarters of the population live below the poverty line and discontent with the corruption of the state and established political parties runs rampant.

In the end, however, Degregori’s position seems to me more persuasive than Gorriti’s. Banner headlines in Lima tabloids about the latest Sendero attack can give the impression of an unstoppable force. But Sendero remains blocked out of the northern mountains, where the grass-roots *rondas campesinas* dominate the countryside.<sup>20</sup> Even in much of the officially declared Zonas de Emergencia, Sendero has no sustained presence and relies instead on hit-and-run attacks. The areas under Sendero’s control (at present, parts of the Upper Huallaga and Ene river valleys) amount to less than 2 percent of Peru’s territory. The total number of Sendero actions has leveled off at about two thousand per year for the last five years.<sup>21</sup> Sendero thus appears to be not expanding dynamically but entrenched as a significant but limited force. This staying power probably has less to do with any special ability of Sendero than with the incapacity of Peru’s civilian and military authorities to mount any semblance of an effective counterinsurgency. In short, Sendero remains more a steady problem than a growing threat to the Peruvian state.

20. These groups began in the late 1970s as vigilante patrols hunting down stock rustlers and have since expanded into arbitrating disputes and administering small public-works projects (see Gitlitz and Rojas 1983; Starn 1991b). They should not be confused with the entirely different peasant civil-defense committees—sometimes also referred to as *rondas*—formed by the armed forces in the south-central highlands to combat Sendero.

21. See the figures from the Instituto de Defensa Legal published in *Expresso*, 2 July 1991, p. 4.

Although Degregori and Gorriti disagree about Sendero's future, they concur on the terrible cost of the war. Sendero slaughtered electoral candidates, trade union leaders, and development workers in 1991—even an Australian nun accused of providing “vagrants with free food” and making “brutes of people as a Yankee imperialist.”<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, the police and armed forces continue to torture and kidnap with shocking impunity under the new government of Alberto Fujimori (see Amnesty International 1991). According to United Nations statistics, Peru has amassed the highest number of disappearances in the world over the last four years. Peasants flee the terror in the countryside in a silent exodus to cities like Huancayo, Satipo, and Lima. Journalist Robin Kirk's recent report, *The Decade of Chaqwa: Peru's Internal Refugees* estimates the number of war refugees at two hundred thousand and rising. Kirk observes in her moving account, “Unlike refugees who flee across borders, Peru's internally displaced people . . . go uncounted and unrecognized, unwanted reminders of a war most Peruvians would like to forget.” The Peruvian government does not acknowledge the existence of these internal refugees, many of them Quechua-speaking peasants suddenly forced to abandon their small farms to confront the racism, loneliness, and economic desperation of life in an urban shantytown. Kirk concludes, “The war between Peru's security forces and Shining Path guerrillas is low-intensity only for those who do not live it” (p. 3).

The most disheartening aspect of the conflict in Peru is the lack of hope for any solution. Government commissions and research centers in Lima have drawn up dozens of peace plans. But the obstacles remain overwhelming. Sendero is not like neighboring Colombia's M-19, which is open to negotiation. Guzmán's party views the Peruvian system of elected government as “parliamentary cretinism.” It refuses even to consider peace talks with what it calls the “genocidal regime” of the “reptilesque Fujimori.”<sup>23</sup> While the military can contain the insurgency, it is unlikely to win a final victory as long as it continues to alienate large sectors of the civilian population with its brutality. The impoverishment of Peru, which now ranks with Bolivia and Haiti as the poorest countries in the hemisphere, also favors the war's continuation. Economic hardship creates a sense of desperation that facilitates Sendero efforts to recruit new members. Courageous efforts to cope with poverty and violence persist: the *rondas* in Cajamarca and Piura, peasant unions in Puno, and shantytown soup kitchens in Lima. For millions of Peruvians, however, the history of the next decade seems already written: it will be what Quechua-speakers call *manchay tiempo*, the time of fear.<sup>24</sup>

22. See *National Catholic Reporter*, 14 June 1991, p. 12.

23. See *El Diario*, 8 Feb. 1991.

24. I am borrowing this phrase from Nelson Manrique (1989).

## REFERENCES

- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
1991 *Peru: Human Rights in a Climate of Terror*. London: Amnesty International.
- ANSION, JUAN  
1982 "¿Es luminoso el camino de Sendero?" *El Caballo Rojo*, no. 108:3-7.
- BALBI, CARMEN ROSA  
1991 "Una inquietante encuesta de opinión." *Quehacer*, no. 72 (July-Aug.):40-45.
- BENAVIDES, GUSTAVO  
1988 "Poder político y religión en el Perú." *Márgenes* 4:21-54.
- BERG, RONALD  
1986 "Sendero Luminoso and the Peasantry of Andahuaylas." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 28, no. 4:165-96.
- DEGREGORI, CARLOS IVAN  
1990 Review of *Sendero: historia de la guerra milenaria en el Peru, I*. *Revista Peruana de Ciencias Sociales* 2, no. 2:111-18.  
1991 "Jóvenes y campesinos ante la violencia política: Ayacucho, 1980-1983." Manuscript.
- DEGREGORI, CARLOS IVAN, AND JOSE LOPEZ RICCI  
1990 "Los hijos de la guerra: jóvenes andinos y criollos frente a la violencia política." In *Tiempos de ira y amor*, edited by DESCO, 183-220. Lima: DESCO.
- DESCO  
1991 *Informativo DESCO*, no. 1 (May).
- FAVRE, HENRI  
1984 "Sentier Lumineux et horizons obscurs." *Problèmes D'Amérique Latine*, no. 72: 3-27.
- FLORES GALINDO, ALBERTO  
1988 *Buscando un inca*. Lima: Horizonte.
- GITLITZ, JOHN, AND TELMO ROJAS  
1983 "Peasant Vigilante Committees in Northern Peru." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 15, pt. 1:163-97.
- ISELL, BILLIE JEAN  
1988 *The Emerging Patterns of Peasants' Responses to Sendero Luminoso*. Columbia-New York University Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Occasional Papers, no. 7. New York: Columbia-New York University Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Center.
- LYNCH, NICOLAS  
1990 *Los jóvenes rojos de San Marcos*. Lima: El Zorro de Abajo.
- MANRIQUE, NELSON  
1989 "La década de la violencia." *Márgenes*, nos. 5-6:137-82.
- MCCLINTOCK, CYNTHIA  
1984 "Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso." *World Politics* 27, no. 1:48-84.
- OSSIO, JUAN  
1990 *Violencia estructural en el Perú: antropología*. Lima: APEP.
- PALMER, DAVID SCOTT  
1986 "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 2:127-46.
- POOLE, DEBORAH, AND GERARDO RENIQUE  
1991 "The New Chroniclers of Peru: U.S. Scholars and Their 'Shining Path' of Peasant Rebellion." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 10, no. 2:133-91.
- SCOTT, JAMES  
1976 *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- STARN, ORIN  
1991a "Missing the Revolution: Anthropologists and the War in Peru." *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1:63-91.  
1991b "'Con los llanques todo barro': reflexiones sobre rondas campesinas, protesta rural y nuevos movimientos sociales." Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

**TAYLOR, LEWIS**

- 1983 *Maoism in the Andes: Sendero Luminoso and the Contemporary Guerrilla Movement in Peru*. Centre for Latin American Studies, Working Paper no. 2. Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Liverpool.

**U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT**

- 1991 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.