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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

THE VITAL ROLES AND LABOR OF NON-ELITE WOMEN AND NONMILITANT
FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN SENDERO LUMINOSO

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Romina Isabella Samplina

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Heidi Tinsman, Chair
Professor Steven Topik
Associate Professor Rachel O'Toole

2023

DEDICATION

To Maria Clementina Nuñez Garcia and Maria Isabella Diaz

In recognition of my abuelas who stepped outside of the stereotypes and constraints of twentieth century gendered roles for Peruvian women to become heads of household and businesswomen. Their stories sparked my curiosity to learn more about the Peruvian women whose narratives did not make it into the history books and discourses that I encountered growing up. Their life stories inspired me to notice moments when women seized opportunities for agency and authority in quotidian life. I quickly learned that their stories were part of a long history of perseverance, rebellion, and resistance among non-elite Peruvian women. As a result, I embarked on a series of inquiries about how such women contributed to the evolution of the nation, which eventually lead me to this dissertation. Without these two audacious and perseverant women, I would not be here today.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGN	Archivo General de la Nación (Lima)	National General Archives (Lima)
AHM	Archivo Histórico Militar (Lima)	Historical Military Archives (Lima)
APRA	Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana	American Popular Revolutionary Alliance
ARA	Archivo Regional de Ayacucho (Huamanga)	Prefectural Archives of Ayacucho (Huamanga)
BNP	Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Sala de Investigaciones (Lima)	National Library of Peru, Research Room (Lima)
CCP	Confederación Campesina del Perú	Peasant Confederation of Peru
CR	Comité Regional	Regional Committee
CVR/TRC	Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
DIRECOTE	Dirección contra el terrorismo	Counter-Terrorist Directorate
EGP	Ejercito Guerrilla Popular	People's Guerrilla Army
MFP	Movimiento Femenino Popular	Popular Women's Movement
FAP	Fuerza Aérea del Perú	Peruvian Air Force
FER	Federación de Estudiantes del Perú	Peruvian Student Federation
GC	Guardia Civil	Civilian Guard
INPE	Instituto Nacional Penitenciario del Perú	National Penitentiary Institution
IU	Izquierda Unida	United Left
LTC	Luminosas Trincheras de Combate	Shining Trenches of Combat
MCB	Movimiento Classista Barrial	Neighborhood Classist Movement
MIR	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria	Revolutionary Left Movement
MOTC	Movimiento de Obreros y Trabajadores Classistas	Movement of Laborers and Classist Workers
PCP	Partido Comunista del Perú	Communist Party of Peru
PCP-SL; SL	Partido Comunista del Peru, Sendero Luminoso; Sendero Luminoso	Communist Party of Peru, Shining Path; Shining Path

PCR	Partido Comunista Revolucionario	Revolutionary Communist Party
PIP	Policía de Investigaciones del Perú	Peruvian Investigation Police
PUCP	Pontifica Universidad Católica del Perú	Pontifica Catholic University of Peru
SINAMOS	Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilización Social	National System to Support Social Mobilization
SL	Sendero Luminoso	Shining Path
SUTEP	Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú	Unitary Union of Education Workers of Peru
UNMSM	Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos	National Major University of San Marcos
UNSCH	Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga, Archivo (Ayacucho)	National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga Archives (Ayacucho)

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INTRODUCTION

Dennis Chávez de Paz's *Juventud y Terrorismo: Características sociales de los condenados por terrorismo y otros delitos*—published in 1989 using data gathered between 1983 and 1986—revealed that a high proportion of women held positions as combatants and commanders in Shining Path, nearing fifty percent.¹ After a three-year inquiry into of the Peruvian civil war, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) further complicated this demographic, following the TRC's *Final Report* published in 2003. Written under the direction of Senderologist Carlos Ivàn Degregori, the *Final Report* indicated that Shining Path women were exclusively educated, mestiza or white women. These statistical findings contradict the story of Carlota Tello Cutti told in Ricardo Uceda's *Death in the Little Pentagon: The Secret Cemeteries of the Peruvian Military*. Tello Cutti was a young woman from a rural, peasant background who became a key guerrilla leader, logistical advisor for Shining Path in the Ayacucho region during the first three years of the insurrection and targeted by the Peruvian counterinsurgency. Yet her relative invisibility in the official Truth and Reconciliation Movement archives reveals a common reality about non-elite, women from marginalized areas; their narratives were silenced during two decades of challenging the social political status quo in Peru.

This dissertation began with the research question, who were the women of Shining Path and what exactly did they do within the party and over the course of more than two decades of revolutionary insurgency? I chose to look broadly at women who identified as white, mestizas, and Indigenous from the altiplano and the Andean sierras. Additionally, I made the decision to focus mostly on rural highlanders, the urban working-class, peasants, and individuals who came

¹ Dennis Chávez de la Paz, *Juventud y Terrorismo: Características sociales de los condenados por terrorismo y otros delitos* (Lima, Peru: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1989).

from the most impoverished sectors of the Peruvian population. Furthermore, I elected to narrow the geographical areas to the countryside of Ayacucho where Shining Path started and urban Lima. I specifically chose to not to emphasize the violent roles women carried out, instead looking for daily tasks and jobs. Finally, I included alternative types of insurgency and unconventional locations of revolutionary work.

I argue that the women of Shining Path played crucial, dynamic roles at all levels of the Party and provided a broad array of labor that was vital to Shining Path from its inception. Female Senderistas formed part of a long history of political and social activism in Peru. Elite, educated, mestiza women used their knowledge of political philosophy to create space for Peruvian woman in Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movements of the 1960s. However, it was the labor of non-elite women in both Ayacucho and Lima that expanded Shining Path's influence and reach. Women from marginalized backgrounds found opportunities to become leaders and gain influence within the quotidian maintenance of a guerrilla revolution. They served as bridges between the isolated, ideological party leaders and the popular masses that Shining Path sought to emancipate. Sendero women were major players in destabilizing Peru's economy and undermining the power of Peruvian state.

Rural and Urban Shining Path

In 1965, Abimael Guzmán (alias Chairman Gonzalo) and Augusta La Torre (alias comrade Norah), his wife, founded Shining Path in the Ayacucho department of Peru.² Shining Path identified as a Maoist Communist party that combined the political ideology of Peruvian, Marxist philosopher José Carlos Mariátegui to initiate an effective revolution led by the peasant and proletariat classes of Peru. The Popular Women's Movement was an affiliate organization

² Also commonly known and referred to in this dissertation as Sendero Luminoso, the Peruvian Communist Party-Shining Path, and PCP-SL.

that worked alongside PCP-SL in preparing for the People's War to overthrow the Peruvian state. Augusta La Torre started the Popular Women's Movement (*Movimiento Femenino Popular*, MFP) as an independent but associated, organized women's movement in Ayacucho. Through MFP, Shining Path incorporated gendered rhetoric and political ideology into their gender-neutral approach to a class revolution. Nonetheless, its claims to be a feminist organization, Shining Path followed patriarchal practices. This was especially noticeable in the cult of personality that Guzmán developed around himself as sole leader of PCP-SL. As Shining Path grew from 1965 through 1980, Sendero and MFP heavily recruited more party militants within the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga and throughout the Ayacucho. On March 17, 1980, Shining Path insurgents burned the voter ballot boxes in the district of Chuschi in Ayacucho. From this point until the 1992 capture of Guzmán, Shining Path militants waged a guerrilla war in both urban and rural Ayacucho. By 1983, the Peruvian government deployed military counterinsurgency forces to stop this rebellion and initiated a two-year dirty war that led to the deaths of thousands of civilians, Senderistas, and soldiers. As Senderistas the women of rural Ayacucho were at the center of this war as both victims and perpetrators of violence as Senderistas. Their activities along with those of the non-elite, rural women of Ayacucho are the focus of this dissertation and offer an alternative narrative to the well documented research on the victims of the civil war.

The secondary, but nonetheless important front of PCP-SL's People's War was urban Lima. Publicly, for the urban elite, Shining Path did not arrive in the capital until the July 16, 1992, when PCP-SL bombed a residential building on Tarata Street in the Miraflores district of

Lima. However, Shining Path had established a presence in the capital since 1965.³ In fact, Guzmán and other members of the party's Politburo had moved operations to Lima as early as 1981 or 1982.⁴ Shining Path operated more clandestinely in Lima, than in rural environs to avoid capture by the national police.⁵ Sendero cultivated a significant base of militants in the marginalized neighborhoods and squatter settlements on the outskirts of Lima.⁶ Members that lived in these impoverished and state-lite areas represented PCP-SL and recruited on their behalf creating covert popular schools to learn Sendero ideology.⁷ These Senderistas used the social invisibility of their ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic place within Lima society to infiltrate middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, bringing the war from the remote areas of Ayacucho to the front yards of Lima's elite. By 1986, Sendero increased its insurgency in the capital and developed a third front within the prisons of Lima where police forces imprisoned Shining Path militants and associates.

Women from Below in Shining Path

Scholars of non-elite women in Sendero Luminoso have focused on the forced labor the Party demanded of peasant and Indigenous women and the gendered division of tasks. The early work on SL were focused on analyzing the Party's origin and organization, as well as an emphasis on Abimael Guzmán, Augusta La Torre, and Elena Iparraguirre, referred to as the "Sacred

³ Herbert Morote, *¡Todos contra la verdad!*, Primera edición (Lima-Perú: Jaime Campodónico/Editor, 2014), 170–77. Umberto Jara, *Abimael: El Sendero Del Terror* (Lima, Perú: Planeta, 2017), 154–56. *State of Fear: The Truth about Terrorism Peru's War on Terror 1980-2000*. Documentary. New Day Films, 2005.

⁴ Partido Comunista Peruano, Sendero Luminoso, "Linea de masas," 1988. "1.1.5.1. El I Congreso del PCP-SL 1988," Tomo I (Perú: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003), 81. Bill Chambers, "The Barriadas of Lima: Slums of Hope or Despair? Problems or Solutions?," *Geography* 90, no. 3 (2005): 200–224.

⁵ Partido Comunista Peruano, Sendero Luminoso, "Linea de masas," 1988. "1.1.5.1. El I Congreso del PCP-SL 1988," Tomo I (Perú: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003), 81.

⁶ "Vendedora Ambulante Dirigia 'Commando de Aniquilamiento,'" *El Comercio*, April 26, 1987. "Sendero Luminoso Intento Recuperar," *El Nacional*, November 19, 1987.

⁷ "Sórdidas Células de Aniquilamiento Fueron Capturadas Por La DIRCOTE," *Hoy*, April 1, 1987. "Capturan a Jefa de Sendero En San Martín: 'Camarada' Betty Dirigió Escuela de Adiestramiento," *El Nacional*, May 13, 1986. "Sendero Luminoso Intento Recuperar." "Vendedora Ambulante."

Family.”⁸ Scholars that examined Sendero militants did so from a political and ideological framework with interest on identifying the demographics and reasons for why individuals joined. Dennis Chávez de Paz provided an early analysis of the men and women of Sendero beyond the Party’s elite leadership.⁹ This research started the conversation about women as PCP-SL militants, but the data collected concentrated on imprisoned Senderistas. Furthermore, the high concentration of college educated women that identified as leaders did not fit the profile of non-elite women that were Senderistas. Ponciano del Pino’s investigation of the daily life and relationships between the distinct groups in Sendero camps with an emphasis on the coerced militants offered an intimate portrait of non-elite women and their efforts to not just survive but also find agency despite being forced to participate in the revolution.¹⁰ Moreover, del Pino argued that the victims of Sendero’s coercion found moments of resistance that they used to undermine the political and military structure of the party.¹¹ This dissertation expands on del Pino’s work by analyzing the labor performed by coerced, non-elite Sendero women and the value of their gendered labor in sustaining the insurrection. This dissertation joins Valérie Robin Azevedo and Dorothee Delacroix to focus on the distinct ethnic and class identities of the rural women of Ayacucho. Rather than referring to the rural women of Ayacucho as peasants this dissertation distinguishes the different regions and experiences of non-elite women from the countryside, as well as their choice to volunteer for Sendero militancy. As a result, a more

⁸ Ponciano del Pino H., “Familia, Cultura, y ‘Revolución’: Vida Cotidiana En Sendero Luminoso,” in *Los Senderos Insólitos Del Peru: Guerra y Sociedad, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1998), 4. Nelson Manrique, *El Tiempo Del Miedo : La Violencia Política En El Perú, 1980-1996* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2002); Carlos Degregori, *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso : Ayacucho, 1969-1979* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1990); Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, Latin America in Translation/En Traducción/Em Tradução (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁹ del Pino H., “Familia, Cultura, y ‘Revolución,’” 4. Antonio Zapata, *La guerra senderista: hablan los enemigos*, Primera edición, Pensamiento (Lima, Perú: Taurus, 2017), 82.

¹⁰ del Pino H., “Familia, Cultura, y ‘Revolución,’” 4–5.

¹¹ del Pino H., “Familia, Cultura, y ‘Revolución,’” 4–5.

accurate understanding of why certain groups volunteered, and others joined by coercion affected the roles and tasks they contributed to PCP-SL as it fought to control Ayacucho and the rest of the Peruvian countryside.

This dissertation adds to the work of del Pino, Azevedo, and Delacroix in focusing on the self-identification and agency that non-elite women exercised in their relationships with Sendero Luminoso. This dissertation will go further to argue that self-identification along with when and how they joined Shining Path affected roles and positions. In addition to the rural women of Ayacucho, this dissertation examines the daily contributions of non-elite Sendero women that lived and operated within the marginalized neighborhoods of Lima. The non-elite women Senderistas operated as militants within private spaces like their homes to maintain PCP-SL's urban campaign in Lima. This dissertation asks scholars to consider that Indigenous and non-elite Sendero women leaders built on decades of political activism in post-WWII Peruvian labor and social political spheres.¹² Shining Path leaders believed that they had to educate the women of rural of Ayacucho and the working-class women of Lima's marginalized neighborhoods to understand the class war as their only hope for emancipation from capitalist oppression.¹³ Women who joined Sendero had a prior history of political awareness and social movement experience that enabled them to assume responsibilities beyond providing support to their male counterparts. Women from marginalized socioeconomic classes, ethnicities, and geographical regions (i.e., areas throughout Lima like Villa El Salvador or Comas and in rural regions in

¹² Miguel La Serna, *The Corner of the Living: Ayacucho on the Eve of the Shining Path Insurgency*, First Peoples : New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 133; Stéphanie Rousseau, *Women's Citizenship in Peru: The Paradoxes of Neopopulism in Latin America*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 130–35; Cecilia Blondet, “La Emergencia de Las Mujeres En El Poder. ¿Hay Cambios?,” *Sociología y Política* 13 (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1998). Cecilia Méndez, *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850*, First Edition edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2005), 173–75.

¹³ Movimiento Femenino Popular, “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 1974.

Ayacucho such as La Mar or Vilcashuamán) had also been involved in movements and political parties demanding educational and agrarian reform, fighting for more recognition from the state, and protecting their rights throughout the twentieth century.¹⁴ Though most labor unions and many political parties did not allow women to join as equal members, both peasant and proletarian women joined in physical protests and direct conflicts with the state before joining Sendero Luminoso.¹⁵ They brought the knowledge and skills from prior attempts for reform into their everyday involvement in the revolution.

Women's Political Contributions to Peru

The historiography of women in Sendero Luminoso has evolved from initial anecdotal discussions reflecting the curiosity surrounding the high number of female militants to studies that offer a more comprehensive portrait of Sendero women as revolutionaries.¹⁶ Dennis Chávez de Paz's *Youth and Terrorism: Social characteristics of those convicted of terrorism and other crimes*—published in 1989 using data gathered from 1983 to 1986—provided raw data illustrating that a high proportion of women held positions as combatants and commanders (near forty to fifty percent).¹⁷ However, Chavez de Paz did not offer insight into the type of work or contributions the elite women of Shining Path made beyond being labeled as leaders. In her pioneering work on women in Sendero, Robin Kirk provided a long history of Augusta La Torre and highlighted the relationship between La Torre and Guzmán not as party leaders, but primarily as romantic partners.¹⁸ Kirk left a defining portrait of La Torre as a devoted wife of a

¹⁴ Degregori, *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, 149–54.

¹⁵ Degregori, *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, 149–54.

¹⁶ Gustavo Gorriti, *Sendero: historia de la guerra milenaria en el Perú*, 1. ed (Lima, Perú: Editorial Planeta Perú, 2008), 234–38.

¹⁷ Dennis Chávez de la Paz, *Juventud y Terrorismo: Características sociales de los condenados por terrorismo y otros delitos* (Lima, Peru: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1989).

¹⁸ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw: New Chronicles from Peru* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 45–46, 78, 90. Jaymie Patricia Heilman, “Family Ties: The Political Genealogy of Shining Path's Comrade Norah,”

revolutionary leader over her own militancy that subsequent scholars have followed.¹⁹ Furthermore, the trajectory of La Torre's politicization, as well as the leader's participation in drafting political ideology for MFP does not factor into Kirk's discussion of La Torre.²⁰ In contrast, Jaymie Patricia Heilman discussion of La Torre as a radical leader provides an alternative narrative of a dedicated political actor."²¹ Heilman critiqued scholarship that contained "comments [that] subtly downplay Augusta La Torre's political significance, evaluating her only in relation to her husband and failing to treat her as a militant in her own right. Family—in the form of her husband—has effectively overshadowed Augusta La Torre's political legacy."²² Heilman draws on familial relationships and a history of political/civic engagement to determine the extent of La Torre's early politicization before exposure to PCP-SL. However, Heilman argues against solely looking at the relationships of elite women in Shining Path; to urge a focus on the political trajectory of an individual in the same way that one would look at a member of any gender in any political movement.²³ Isabel Cordero also examined the leadership positions of elite women in the first wave of female Senderistas, but ultimately argued that access to the upper levels of leadership did not equate to control of the party or changes in gender relations and the gendered division of labor PCP-SL's revolutionary

Bulletin of Latin American Research 29, no. 2 (April 2010): 164–65. Isabel Cordero, "Las Mujeres En La Guerra: Impacto y Respuestas," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 337–63. Imelda Vega-Centeno B., "Género y Política: A Propósito de La Mujer En Sendero Luminoso" (Conversatorio sobre el papel de la mujer en el Perú, Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazon, Lima, Perú, 1992), 207–13.

¹⁹ Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 90. Jaymie Patricia Heilman, "Family Ties: The Political Genealogy of Shining Path's Comrade Norah," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 29, no. 2 (April 2010): 155–69. Orin Starn and Miguel La Serna, *The Shining Path: Love, Madness, and Revolution in the Andes*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019). Imelda Vega-Centeno B., "Género y Política: A Propósito de La Mujer En Sendero Luminoso," *Boletín Americanista* 33, no. 44 (1994): 207–13.

²⁰ Heilman, "Family Ties," 165–66; Robin Kirk, *Grabado En Piedra: Las Mujeres de Sendero Luminoso*, Mínima IEP 29 (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1993), 90. del Pino H., "Familia, Cultura, y 'Revolución,'" 25.

²¹ Heilman, "Family Ties," 165–66.

²² Heilman, "Family Ties," 165–66.

²³ Heilman, "Family Ties," 157.

project.²⁴ Drawing from Cordero’s argument, this dissertation starts the analysis of the first elite-women leaders of Sendero during their early militancy in the Popular Women’s Movement (MFP). Furthermore, this dissertation argues that the work of MFP’s elite leaders laid the foundation for the “Sendero woman” and redefined the term “revolutionary feminist” to fit MFP and PCP-SL’s concepts of women militants.

This dissertation also argues that members of PCP-SL and MFP performed specific labor such as creating ideology and opening opportunities for women rather than merely mimicking Guzmán’s ideas and agenda. This dissertation asks scholars to consider non-militant elite women in Sendero as contributors to the political ideology and agenda of Shining Path. Starting with the Popular Women’s Movement (MFP) where the women of Shining Path were recruited but also where, in 1974, the founding members—Augusta La Torre, Elena Iparraguirre, and Catalina Adrianzen—drafted a political philosophy that not only expected women to participate in a political and socioeconomic revolution, but detailed the duties that proletariat and peasant women had to assume in order to launch a successful insurrection.

Latin American Revolutions and Political Movements

Finally, this dissertation contributes to the ongoing and vibrant modern Latin American historiography on women’s contributions to political movements and revolutions by demonstrating the militancy of non-elite women.²⁵ Florencia Mallon argued in *Peasant and Nation*, that “contrary to the prevailing ideology, women’s labor was crucial to the daily conduct

²⁴ Cordero, “Las Mujeres En La Guerra: Impacto y Respuestas,” 341–42.

²⁵ Cecilia Blondet, “La Situación de La Mujer En El Perú 1980-1994,” *Estudio de Género*, No. 1 (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1994); Jo-Marie Burt, *Violencia y Autoritarismo En El Perú: Bajo La Sombra de Sendero y La Dictadura de Fujimori* (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2011); M. Cristina Alcalde, *La Mujer En La Violencia: Pobreza, Género y Resistencia En El Perú*, Primera edición, Serie Perú Problema 39 (Lima: IEP, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos : Fondo editorial, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2014). Patricia Córdova Cayo, *Liderazgo Femenino En Lima: Estrategias de Supervivencia* (Lima, Perú: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1996).

of war.”²⁶ Furthermore, Mallon suggested that “the reconstruction of gender hierarchy within a guerrilla war meant that women were defined by male party officials and observers as ‘outside’ combat, despite their presence in the villages and on the battlefields.”²⁷ In *Women & Guerrilla Movements*, Karen Kampwirth addressed other participants in revolutionary movements dismissed women’s daily work in guerilla movements as “low-prestige” support work as “providers of food were at least as critical as combatants.”²⁸ Kampwirth suggested that regardless of how individual participants in these movements perceived a woman’s work as far removed from the frontline, it was nonetheless crucial to ensuring the possibility of combat.

This dissertation analyzes the critical daily tasks performed by the non-elite women of PCP-SL not just as armed combatants, but also the responsibilities they assumed at remote base camps, at their work sites, and even in their homes to reveal that though perceived as seemingly unimportant preparation work for armed insurgency relied on fulfilling such tasks. This dissertation continues the scholarly conversation proposed by both Mallon and Kampwirth by providing a discussion that centers non-elite women in spaces where the battle lines are blurred with the home front and argues that without the gendered labor of non-elite Sendero women, vital support lines necessary to continue fighting state forces would have inefficiently provided for the guerrilla forces or stopped altogether. Additionally, this dissertation proposes that Shining Path acknowledged the fundamental importance gendered labor because PCP-SL sought replacements to execute those tasks even if it meant militants had to coerce unwilling non-elite women to join.²⁹

²⁶ Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

²⁷ Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 76.

²⁸ Karen Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 13–15, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10532156>.

²⁹ del Pino H., “Familia, Cultura, y ‘Revolución,’” 29–37.

Ayacucho the Cradle of the Shining Path Woman

Until the late 1980s, and the early 1990s, the department of Ayacucho's great topographical diversity was connected by was connected by a system of dirt roads and few paved highways for mostly interdepartmental commercial transportation.³⁰ Yet the people from Ayacucho's rural communities—including peasant, Indigenous, and semi-urban areas—maintained connections with smaller developed towns and among rural towns, and villages through kinship ties, commerce, political/union participation, regional committees, and labor relationships on local haciendas or state projects.³¹ Ayacucho's rural populations had a high illiteracy rate among both men and women. By 1970, the illiterate population of Ayacucho above the age of fifteen stood at 175,200 out of 246,200 (71.2%).³² Approximately 84.6% of women were illiterate, in comparison to 53.9% illiteracy amongst men.³³ In the more isolated villages, these rates often meant that a handful of people, mostly men, were actually literate in comparison to the lower valleys and plains. Additionally, women in these areas were overwhelming monolingual Quechua speakers.³⁴ Still; when Shining Path militants left the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga (UNSCH) and ventured into the rural countryside to “politicize” the rural populations through “popular schools” and meetings with local leaders, rural communities were ready and capable of engaging in political dialogue. By 1980, hundreds of

³⁰ To present, there are still only two roads that traverse the department of Ayacucho; Los Libertadores Wari and La Interoceánica sur.

³¹ Well into the 1970s, local governments forced peasants in the sierras to provide manual labor for state projects in Ayacucho. Peasants from various communities had to provide workers and thus combined population had to work together. Heilman, *Before Sendero*, 198-199.

³² “Poblacion Analfabeta en La Sierra sur Por Departamentos, 1970”, by Ministerio de Educación División de Estadística Educativa.

³³ “Poblacion Analfabeta en La Sierra sur Por Departamentos, 1970”, by Ministerio de Educación División de Estadística Educativa. By Gender and Department. Though not the highest discrepancy in illiteracy—Apurimac had statistically the greatest male and female illiteracy rates—Ayacucho is second in the southern sierras.

³⁴ Poblacion de 5 años y mas que no hablan catellano, 1961. By ONEC. Censo Ncional 1961. Tomo III. VI. Cuadro 47.

Ayacuchanos had joined Sendero. Sendero was ready to launch its revolution from the fields of the Ayacuchan countryside to the urban areas of Huamanga and beyond throughout Peru.

Lima and the Urban Campaign

As the capital of Peru, Lima was the center of the Peruvian state and a strategic region for revolutionary action. By 1972, as Sendero Luminoso's auxiliary organizations started to organize a following in Lima. Lima's population was 3.3 million and would continue to grow throughout the 1980s and eventually hit 6.5 million in 1993 after the capture of Abimael Guzmán and the Central Committee.³⁵ Lima's rapid population boom at a rate of one hundred and twenty percent between the 1970s and 1990s was due, in part, to the decades-long period of economic stagnation and a severe macroeconomic crisis that Peru faced alongside political instability.³⁶ Provincial migrants who arrived in Lima moved into areas on the city's outskirts and joined the local underpaid and exploited urban working-class. By the 1980s, most of the lower-income populations lived in squatter settlements and substandard housing with minimal city services in areas such as Pueblo Libre, Breña, El Agustino, San Martín de Porres, Comas, Villa El Salvador, Raucana, Ate, and San Juan de Lurigancho.³⁷ Sendero Luminoso sought to mobilize these populations by capitalizing on the lack of state presence and the growing resentment against Peruvian sociopolitical power structures in the capital. Sendero found the women of this sector of society to have unique worth as militants in the urban setting.

³⁵ Henry A. Dietz, *Urban Poverty, Political Participation, and the State: Lima 1970 - 1990* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 66. "Migraciones Internas En El Peru: 3.4.1 La Migración En Lima Metropolitana" (Lima, Perú: Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, September 1995), https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib0018/cap34001.htm.

³⁶ Francisco Sagasti, ed., *Development Strategies for the 21st Century: The Case of Peru* (Miraflores, Lima-Perú: Peru Monitor SA, 2001), 205.

³⁷ Elena Iparraguirre, Entrevista a Abimael Guzmán Reinoso y Elena Iparraguirre, interview by Sofia Macher and Iván Hinojosa, November 6, 2002, 4.

Sendero and its leadership targeted Lima's marginal neighborhood for strategic military reasons, but also worked to expand its influence among the people who lived in or identified with these working-class and lower income communities. To achieve this, Guzmán understood that the party needed an active network of Senderistas to maintain a "strategic balance" for revolutionary plans. Women from marginalized neighborhoods and settlements throughout metropolitan Lima could establish support networks and create bases that allowed militants to escalate the war in Lima to the next phase of the revolution.

In addition to the marginalized neighborhoods, Shining Path extended their authority into the Peruvian penal system and used this space to continue destabilizing the government and competing leftist movements. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's investigation confirmed that over two decades Sendero Luminoso succeeded in turning Peru's penal system into an extension of the revolutionary battlefield. Imprisoned Shining Path members lived in the same prisons as Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and vied for control of prisons like Castro Castro, Canto Grande, El Frontón, Chorrillos, and Santa Barbara just outside of Lima.³⁸ Additionally, imprisoned Sendero militants had to maintain their militancy and direct their efforts fully to continuing the advancement of the revolution by any means necessary including the use of theatrical performances within the walls of prisons.³⁹ Plays gave Senderistas the chance to continue their ideological education while also exposing the level of commitment party members had after incarceration.⁴⁰ Moreover, by holding productions in public spaces the

³⁸ Manuel Luis Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio: Una Etnografía Sobre Los Senderistas Presos En El Establecimiento Penitenciario Miguel Castro, 2008-2010* (Lima, Perú: Revuelta Ediciones, 2019), 46–49, 63–67, 136–140, 154–156.

³⁹ Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio*, 144–49.

⁴⁰ Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio*, 153–154.

women of Sendero forced other imprisoned, non-Sendero women to face party messages and thereby asserted power over the entire prison population daily.⁴¹

Sources and Methodology

This dissertation is a social history of Shining Path that examines the party's structures, PCP-SL's impact on society, and the individual experiences of non-elite women in the party to determine what function these women performed within the revolutionary mission. Additionally, it considers the cultural history of non-elite women's participation in Peruvian sociopolitical movements and Latin American revolutionary movements to challenge the norms of what it means to be a militant combatant. To analyze intersectional aspects of this nuanced history, I performed research that included a wide variety of sources and archives.

My research started at major archives located in both the Peru and the United States that contained documents from official government sources. The Centro de Documentación e Investigación del Lugar de Memoria (CDI-LUM) provided a starting point for information on the Peruvian insurrection from 1980 through 1999. The CDI-LUM houses a repository of testimonials, state documents, personal archives, and other informational materials from the three-year investigation conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru's from 2000 through 2003. Both its online repository and the physical archives contained a valuable collection of testimonies regarding Sendero Luminoso and the activities of its members. The Commission's Final Report, published in 2003, was a foundational primary source that offered information about Sendero operations and the party's structure. Although the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Lima had a wealth of sources about Peruvian political movements in the twentieth century, due to the "recent" nature of Sendero's active insurgency in the 1980s, few

⁴¹ Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio*, 137, 144–49, 154–56. "CVR Informe Final, Tomo I."

sources were available for public review. Similarly, as of early 2020, the Archivo Regional de Ayacucho in Ayacucho had released documents from this era for public review—a lack of funding and a reduced staff prevented the cataloguing of relevant materials in a timely manner. The 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic concluded the possibility of returning to the archives to check on any progress for accessing the materials. During a trip to the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, I was informed that the Peruvian state actively destroyed a wide array of internal documents related to Sendero Luminoso due to the state violence perpetrated by counterinsurgency and police forces. Not surprisingly, the largest source of Peruvian National Intelligence records and investigative reports on Senderistas were in the Collection of ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection at Princeton University Library archives. Princeton University Library contained copies of *La Nación*, *Reporte Semanal*, and *Caballo Rojo*. Princeton's university archives also housed the Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen Collection of Personal papers, which contained Gorriti's investigative files. Gorriti's notes provide unique access to places and situations that Sendero members did not document themselves. Within all these files, women are present in anecdotal references and in transcripts of personal interviews. Reading against the grain of official state narratives established a foundation of the types of women in Sendero and the categories of roles and labor they performed.

I also consulted media coverage of Sendero and the women of Sendero for civilian narratives and perspectives. I searched through both digital and print formats of Peruvian newspapers and media outlets from the 1980s through 1992, including *El Comercio*, *La Republica*, *La Nación*, *El Peruano*, *Caretas*, *El Ojo*, *QueHacer*, *La Tortuga*, *Resumen Semanal*, *El Caballo Rojo*, *El Diario*, and international newspapers for interviews and investigative reports specifically on women's participation in Sendero activities. These sources provided dates and

names for further research on women who were cadre leaders or militants who became part of public discourses on women as revolutionaries. These sources provided the evidence for a late twentieth-century Peruvian public discourse that characterized female Senderistas as aberrant examples of women “trying to be men.”⁴² As depicted by the Peruvian press, the roles women performed either traded on their femininity, or it made them appear to society as women seeking to become men through a violence-based notion of heteronormative masculinity. Furthermore, stories done on individual Senderistas contained names and often interviews or quotes from an incarcerated female militant.

Finally, I used the communication and published work of both Popular Women’s Movement and Shining Path to analyze the party’s perspective regarding women’s involvement in the insurrection and identify the roles and duties prescribed for women in the party. The published work including communications and pamphlets by the Popular Women’s Movement offered also insight into the ideological work and political philosophies. Similarly, I closely examined how PCP-SL discussed gender roles and women’s labor to compare to those discussed by the Popular Women’s Movement. My analysis helped to solidify my argument that Augusta La Torre, Elena Iparraguirre, and Catalina Adrianzen—elite women leaders in PCP-SL—drafted the most prominent piece of feminist revolutionary literature in both MFP and Sendero, the document entitled “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Popular Women’s Movement” in 1974.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter one expands on Patricia Heilman’s work on “political genealogy” to closely examine how the prior knowledge and experience of founding leaders of the Women’s Popular Movement influenced the creation of MFP and contributed to shaping Sendero Luminoso in its

⁴² Cordero342

early years. The first section focuses on three of MFP's most influential leaders—Augusta La Torre, Elena Iparraguirre, and Catalina Adrianzen—and their formation as political actors before becoming Senderistas.⁴³ The second section provides a close reading of MFP's main texts, "Marxism, Mariátegui and the Women's Movement" and "Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement." to argue that La Torre, Iparraguirre, and Adrianzen engaged in intellectual work to draft a political ideology that argued for women's activism. In "Marxism, Mariátegui and the Women's Movement," they defined the concept of "revolutionary feminism" to distinguish their goals from other women's organizations. They articulated the types of spaces, roles, and responsibilities for female revolutionaries within the organization in "Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement." Concluding with the third section that discusses the legacy of MFP leaders and the two foundational texts, as well as the role the Popular Women's Movement had on Sendero Luminoso.

Chapter two focuses on the non-elite women of rural Ayacucho and the roles they fulfilled in Sendero Luminoso, as well as the importance of their gendered labor in maintaining over a decade of insurgency. The first section analyzes the intersectionality of rural Ayacuchanas and their relationship with political and social activism historically. The second section discusses the non-elite rural women that joined Sendero voluntarily. The life story of Carlota Tello Cutti—a non-elite leader in PCP-SL's Ayacucho regional committee—illustrates how non-elite women from the countryside rose to prominence and assumed prominent positions within the revolution as mid-level leaders. Finally, the third section reconsiders narratives of non-elite, rural women

⁴³ Elena Iparraguirre is also known as Elena Yparraguirre.

forced into joining Sendero Luminoso after 1984. Their gendered labor within Sendero camps, though forced, was nonetheless vital to sustaining Shining Path forces.

Chapter three examines the lives of non-elite women from the marginalized neighborhoods and settlements surrounding Lima and their labor, which allowed Sendero to bring the revolution from provincial fields to the urban capital. The first section of chapter three identifies the types of non-elite women that joined Sendero and the locations where they operated. The second section identifies distinct roles that non-elite Sendero women performed within their neighborhoods. This section uses Karen Kampwirth's concept of "low prestige" work to reframe the gendered labor non-elite Sendero women completed that was vital to sustaining Sendero actions in the heavily surveilled capital. The closing section of the chapter, reconsiders how marginalized neighborhoods became sites of struggle and violence between both the non-elite women of Sendero Luminoso and non-elite women's grassroots organizations. This approach decentralizes the focus on the perpetration of violent actions and provides further insight into the ways non-elite Sendero women of urban Lima used violence to access authority and influence within the Party.

Chapter four moves from urban neighborhoods to Sendero Luminoso's third battleground, Lima's prisons and focuses on the women who were incarcerated Senderistas that adapted theatrical performances as members of the Shining Trenches of Combat (*Las Luminosas Trincheras de Combate*, LTC), a branch of PCP-SL that worked within their confined spaces at prisons like Canto Grande, El Frontón, and Santa Barbara. This chapter begins with an examination of Sendero Luminoso's "new art" and revolutionary theater and its relationship to Victor Zavala's peasant theater (*teatro campesino*) that started in Ayacucho in 1969, as well as the left's long emphasis on using culture as a revolutionary tool. The first section discusses the

role of theatrical performances as tools for revolution. This section specifically explains the connection between imprisoned Sendero women's use of live performances to maintain militancy during incarceration. The second section analyzes the first prison plays performed by the *Trincheras Luminosas de Combate* (TLC), Sendero's militant force in prison. The third section focuses on the impact Sendero women's performances on prisoners: existing members of PCP-SL, other leftist militants (e.g., members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Army), potential sympathizers, and other individuals that had no interest in Sendero ideology. Additionally, this section looks at the interactions between performing Sendero women and the visitors who were temporarily subjected to these plays and other artistic demonstrations. The fourth section reconsiders the performances as a way for the women of LTC to attract international media attention and use this platform to change public image of Sendero women. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion about the performances as opportunities for imprisoned, women Senderistas to combat the official state narratives and public opinion that viewed all Senderistas as violent terrorists. As a result, the imprisoned Sender women challenged the Peruvian government's narratives through televised performances and interviews about their artistic work.

CHAPTER ONE

The Popular Women's Movement and the Birth of Female Senderistas

When and how did women become a part of the Peruvian Communist Party, Shining Path?⁴⁴ Elite women were involved in the founding of the Peruvian Communist Party, Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), that later became known as simply Sendero Luminoso (or Shining Path). Elite women also participated in preparing for and waging the PCP-SL's war against the Peruvian state that officially started with the burning of the electoral boxes on May 17th, 1980. However, elite women had already influenced the development of Sendero Luminoso and the start of a revolution through the elite women's creation and management of the Popular Women's Movement (Movimiento Femenino Popular, MFP) an all-women's movement that started in 1970. This distinct woman-led organization began to organize informally in 1965 in Ayacucho through the efforts of Augusta La Torre— an Ayacuchan woman from a politically-involved lineage with experience training in leftist parties and married to Abimael Guzmán. Although women from all classes throughout Ayacucho had a history of engagement in political parties, social activism, and student movements throughout the 1940s and 1950s, by the late 1960s, there was still no stand-alone women's organization for political involvement that did not focus on the role of women as mothers.⁴⁵ Political parties and unions permitted women to participate at an increase rate in the 1960s, to attain their votes.⁴⁶ The men in the higher levels of leadership limited women to auxiliary roles in administrative or secretarial capacities.⁴⁷ Within this context, the Popular Women's Movement emerged in 1965, to offer an alternative option for

⁴⁴ Peruvian Communist Party, Shining Path, also known as Shining Path; Partido Comunista del Peru, Sendero Luminoso; PCP-SL; Sendero Luminoso; Sendero. Also known as Partido Comunista del Peru, Senderos Luminosos de Mariátegui.

⁴⁵ Heilman, "Family Ties," 158–59. Jara, *Abimael*, 71–77. Interview with S. Tello, July 7, 2017.

⁴⁶ S. Rousseau, *Women's Citizenship in Peru: The Paradoxes of Neopopulism in Latin America* (Springer, 2009), 130–35. Zoila Hernández, *Movimiento Social de Mujeres* (Lima, Perú: Mujer Sociedad, 1985).

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women of all ages and backgrounds to organize politically, acknowledge the experience of Peruvian women, and challenge other movements that did not equally consider the reality of women as workers. MFP's goals were to organize and educate women on ideology and make female-centered political theory accessible to and for women. By 1973, MFP leadership expanded throughout Peru and hosted national conferences. Based on their organizing, training, and politicizing within the MFP, the women who would become Sendero leaders were well equipped to ally with Shining Path in 1975. A closer look into the formation of the Popular Women's Movement reveals the origins of the female Senderista. It challenges the narrative that MFP was not merely an instrument to recruit women to Sendero.

The Popular Women's Movement (MFP) was an autonomous organization that used the teachings of José Carlos Mariátegui on Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist political theories to link women's emancipation with the struggle of the masses to overthrow capitalist oppression. This organization was part of a long lineage of politically active women in Ayacucho that shaped the political trajectory of MFP militants.⁴⁸ Beginning in 1965, Augusta La Torre began collaborating with other political activist women in various student political groups and social movements throughout Huamanga, Ayacucho, and all of Peru. By 1973, La Torre had started working with Catalina Adrianzen, Elena Iparraguirre, and others, to strengthen the movement's presence in Ayacucho and actively recruit members throughout Peru through giving conventions and by publishing of propaganda and ideological pamphlets.⁴⁹ Adrianzen— a professor in the education program at UNSCH and partner of Antonio Diaz who oversaw the Agrarian Reform Course

⁴⁸ Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen, *Collection of Ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection : Second Series*. ([Peru]: [N.v.], 1960), Movimiento Femenino Popular Folder. Movimiento Femenino Popular, "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino"; Jara, *Abimael*, 145–49.

⁴⁹ Gorriti Ellenbogen, *Collection of Ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection*, Movimiento Femenino Popular Folder. Movimiento Femenino Popular, "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino"; Jara, *Abimael*, 145–49.

offered at the same institution—brought the knowledge and exposure to various discourses on women’s rights within leftist organizations.⁵⁰ While Iparraguirre—who eventually became third and second in command of PCP-SL—was a politically-experienced graduate student of education from Lima who also had experience in other Peruvian Communist parties. Together La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraguirre drew from their unique perspectives and experiences as politicized women to draft the sixty-eight-page pamphlet “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement” in 1974. This pamphlet constructed a new female-focused political ideology based on a "revolutionary feminist" interpretation of José Carlos Mariátegui's work and in response to both feminists and male-centered leftist organizations. Over five thousand copies of this text circulated nationally in its first run.⁵¹ Not only did this work appear in the 1975 editions of the communist newspapers *Bandera Roja* and *El Caballo Rojo*, but it became accessible to a significant number of the population as a pocket edition distributed publicly by MFP members.⁵² Several 1975 editions of *Bandera Roja*, a publication associated with Sendero Luminoso, included portions of the "Marxism, Mariátegui and the Women's Movement" to draw attention to the call for proletariat women to join revolutionary organizations like MFP and Sendero itself.

1.1 The Origins of the Popular Women’s Movement

The Popular Women’s Movement (MFP) would become an auxiliary group of the Peruvian Communist Party, Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), but the founding members were women with activist training, organizing skills, and knowledge of political theory before joining

⁵⁰ Diaz was also involved in PCP-SL as an early leader in its founding.

⁵¹ Anouk Guiné, “Encrucijada de Guerra En Mujeres Peruanas: Augusta La Torre y El Movimiento Femenino Popular,” *Millars: Espai i Història*, no. 41 (2016): 16, <https://doi.org/10.6035/Millars.2016.41.5>.

⁵² Gorriti Ellenbogen, *Collection of Ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection*, Movimiento Femenino Popular Folder.

PCP-SL. Key leaders of MFP belonged to families with a history of political and civic engagement—a “political genealogy”— that exposed MFP women leaders to various calls for social and political reform throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Although the Women’s Popular Movement leadership became prominent figures in Sendero Luminoso, Augusta La Torre, Elena Iparraquirre, and Catalina Adrianzen had already developed political skills and analysis of women’s unique challenges prior to joining the Party.

Augusta La Torre started organizing the Popular Women’s Movement and became one of the movement’s top leaders due to the skills and training she had received from an early age through her family. La Torre was born into a land-owning family in the Huanta region of Ayacucho in 1946.⁵³ Although her family owned the hacienda Iribamba, they were not among the wealthiest families in Ayacucho but were among the upper class for the rural area where the land was located.⁵⁴ According to historian Jaymie Heilman, this “political genealogy” influenced La Torre’s political trajectory, not as a determining factor but as an essential factor in the political evolution of any militant in a political party or insurgency.⁵⁵ The La Torre family’s prominence in regional politics started with her grandfather, Carlos La Torre Cortez, who in 1923 challenged the Huanta’s subprefect, which led to La Torre Cortez’s imprisonment.⁵⁶ La Torre Cortez claimed that the guards tortured and humiliated and when he won his freedom, he rallied local men to confront criminal abuse against prisoners.⁵⁷ His confrontation against corrupt state officials and police forces became well known throughout Huanta and illustrates the type of political and social perspectives of the family. Eventually, like his granddaughter, La

⁵³ Jara, *Abimael*, 71–72; *Storm in the Andes*, Documentary, 2015.

⁵⁴ Jara, *Abimael*, 71–72; *Storm in the Andes*.

⁵⁵ Heilman, “Family Ties,” 156.

⁵⁶ Jara, *Abimael*, 71–72; *Storm in the Andes*. Heilman, “Family Ties,” 156.

⁵⁷ Ayacucho Regional Archive, 123b:10.

Torre Cortez worked with a total of forty *hacendados* and middle-class professionals to form the Rights of Man Defense League in 1923. La Torre Cortez would also stand against the policies of President Augusto B. Leguia who unfairly taxed the poorest people in rural communities. Following in his father's footsteps, Carlos La Torre Cárdenas, Augusta La Torre's father, participated in Huanta's public aid society in the 1940s and served on the city's provincial council in the 1950s. La Torre Cárdenas joined Ayacucho's Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) and hosted traveling intellectuals and political leaders during the time Augusta La Torre grew up at Iribamba.⁵⁸ La Torre's cousins recalled that La Torre was keen to listening to "older folks talk politics, mostly Stalinist and APRISTA ideas."⁵⁹ La Torre Cárdenas encouraged political education and debate in his household including everyone from party leaders to professors and local neighbors.⁶⁰ Augusta La Torre and her three siblings openly participated in political parties and movements, thus explain her political activism as an adult.

La Torre's political genealogy and exposure to political theory differentiated her from other contemporary female leaders in Ayacucho, the Women's Popular Movement, and Shining Path. La Torre overheard discourses on agrarian reform and the plight of the rural, Indigenous Peruvian. Rather than simply repeat the opinions of others, La Torre sought out opportunities to speak regularly with some of the laborers and their families who worked on the Iribamba land.⁶¹ Through these interactions, she attempted to learn Quechua and observed first-hand the reality of peasant life in Peru.⁶² These experiences impacted La Torre's sociopolitical views, favoring the Maoist revolution from the fields to the cities over her father's Stalinist ideas.

⁵⁸ ARA, 1942, 17 January; *Sierra*, 1951: 8

⁵⁹ *Storm in the Andes*.

⁶⁰ *Storm in the Andes*.

⁶¹ Militante del PCP 1, Sobre camarada Norah: testimonios de militantes del PCP - Testimonio 1, August 29, 2015, https://presospolicosdelperu.blogspot.com/2015/09/sobre-camarada-norah-testimonios-de_26.html; Jara, *Abimael*, 71-77. *Storm in the Andes*.

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La Torre did not receive a formal philosophical education in political theory however and her political development continued into adulthood leading to active militancy in Peruvian Communist groups. Through La Torre's political activism, she challenged traditional gender boundaries for young women from the middle and upper classes. Middle- and upper-class boys in Ayacucho's secondary school system received civic education and encouragement to learn about political philosophies. Yet, the same was not true for the education of girls. La Torre stood out when she became a spokesperson for her peers during student strikes and other activism in the early 1960s.⁶³ Interviews with La Torre's friends revealed that she was already heavily committed to protest and direct engagement on the front lines as a teenager. La Torre's development as a political activist eventually led to her joining the Peruvian Communist Party before meeting Guzmán.⁶⁴ La Torre developed politically at an early age prior to her introduction to Abimael Guzmán at age sixteen. However, La Torre's formal training continued after their wedding in 1964.

La Torre formally joined the Communist Youth party in Ayacucho in 1962, before meeting Guzmán through her father. La Torre witnessed power struggles between pro-Soviet (following Leninist and Stalinist ideas) members and the emerging Pro-China "Maoist" sympathizers within the Peruvian Communist Party. Although Carlos La Torre Cárdenas, her father, maintained his own pro-Soviet ideas, Augusta La Torre chose to join the Maoist PCP-Bandera Roja and became deeply involved in the leadership of the Ayacucho section.⁶⁵

According to extended family and friends, La Torre Cárdenas believed that an armed revolution

⁶³ *Storm in the Andes*.

⁶⁴ Abimael Guzmán and Elena Yparraquirre Revoredo, *Memorias Desde Némesis*, 2014, 81. Heilman, "Family Ties," 157.

⁶⁵ Guzmán and Yparraquirre Revoredo, *Memorias Desde Némesis*, 133–34. Bandera Roja would split again and lead to the formation of Sendero Luminoso in 1965, with Guzmán and La Torre at the top of the party's leadership.

was necessary to help the Peruvian peasants. However, true to his own position as a landowner, La Torre Cárdenas disagreed, and continued to argue that agrarian land reform through redistribution of the land was the proper approach. Unlike her father, Augusta La Torre had spent more time directly with the Indigenous laborers at Iribamba and developed closer relationships that impacted how she saw the plight of rural Peruvians.⁶⁶ Additionally, the younger leftist generation of Peru saw Maoism in a more favorable light to Soviet Communism. In later years, La Torre clashed with Guzmán over the importance of liberating the countryside for peasants to lead the revolution. La Torre disagreed with Guzmán about changing Sendero Luminoso's focus from the peasants of Ayacucho and rural areas to Lima. At the beginning La Torre and Guzmán shared an interest and belief in Maoism as the best solution for Peru. In fact, in March of 1965, La Torre and Guzmán traveled together to China at the request of PCP-Bandera Roja—as leaders in the party—to observe and train under Maoist schools. Guzmán confirmed that La Torre did not go to China merely because she was his wife; instead, La Torre completed intellectual training in Marxist and Maoist philosophy acquiring the ability to politicize the masses of Ayacucho.⁶⁷ La Torre also completed military instruction, tactical training, and strategies for revolutionary agitation under the supervision of Chinese Communist Party cadres, just like other women in China and other Maoist revolutionaries from around the world.

With the skills and knowledge to become a leader, La Torre initiated political activities among university students at the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga (UNSCH) and with the women of Huamanga. Peruvian National Intelligence records reaffirm that La Torre led political activities with the Student Revolutionary Front (FER) at UNSCH. In fact, La Torre created a women's faction of FER that would later work with MFP. Beyond organizing, La Torre

⁶⁶ *Storm in the Andes*.

⁶⁷ Guzmán, 2002: 15.

took a hands-on approach to radicalizing youth and women. On May 25th, 1965, La Torre led students and incited a demonstration after the meeting for the Parents Association of Ayacucho to protest the teachers' strike, and motivating a counter-demonstration of students.⁶⁸ By 1969, La Torre had established herself as a key agitator and was involved in the June 1969 protests supporting the Unitary Union of Education Workers of Peru (*Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores de la Educación de Perú*, SUTEP) in Huanta and Ayacucho.⁶⁹ La Torre formed relationships and alliances with members of SUTEP who would later join MFP and Sendero Luminoso. As a result of her public manifestations, police forces arrested and briefly detained her and placed her under state surveillance. Records from local police and the Peruvian National Intelligence service labeled La Torre as a leader and dissenter. While the records did mention her marriage to Guzmán, this was secondary to her potential as a threat to the Peruvian state.

La Torre's evolving role as a leftist militant and leader mirrored the evolution of the Popular Women's Movement and Sendero Luminoso after 1965. La Torre relied on her relationships with other educated and politically engaged women in Ayacucho to continue forming the women's movement. La Torre used the prominence of her family in the region's political history to discern which movements were important to create alliances. Guzmán, a transplant from Arequipa, did not have the same knowledge of the key people in local movements, especially regarding the women in urban Huamanga. In fact, former colleagues of Guzmán described him as the philosopher who dealt mostly with the theoretical aspect of revolution. Meanwhile, La Torre did the groundwork in both the rural areas with peasants and in the city of Huamanga with working-class and merchant women.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "Peruvian Intelligence Service Notes Regarding Activities of Augusta La Torre from 1965-1982" (Peruvian Intelligence Service, n.d.), Gustavo Gorriti collection on the Peruvian insurrection, Princeton University.

⁶⁹ *Documenting the Peruvian Insurrection*, 2005e.

⁷⁰ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

Like La Torre, Elena Iparraguirre Revoredo—who became a leader within Popular Women’s Movement and Sendero—had a political genealogy and brought practical experience within leftist groups in Lima to her work for both organizations. Iparraguirre was not from Ayacucho, rather she was born in Ica in 1947 and grew up in the urban part of this state. Yet, her parents were also responsible for her exposure to politics. Her father Carlos Alberto Iparraguirre Guerra was a long-standing member of APRA and ran for political office under a left-leaning platform in Ica. Iparraguirre Guerra was a staunch nationalist and anti-imperialist who openly engaged in discourses opposing foreign, capitalist intervention in Peru.⁷¹ Iparraguirre Guerra was also a Mason and the master of his Masonic lodge, a gather place for political discussion among the country’s elite in power.⁷² The Masons, full of rituals and secrecy may have influenced Iparraguirre’s own foray into a clandestine life. Iparraguirre Guerra had three daughters and shared his love of political philosophy with them rather than seeing the topic as a strictly male domain. Her father also encouraged Iparraguirre to develop a sharp criticism against imperialism. Iparraguirre’s mother Blanca Elena Revoredo Relis was a middle-class woman from Lima who maintained her own family business and was not afraid to step outside of the private sphere of the home. Described as a “hardworking and independent woman with more progressive ideas,” by Iparraguirre, Revoredo Relis demonstrated female leadership skills as a businesswoman.⁷³ One of her older sisters, a student in chemical engineering student at the University of Lima, mentored Iparraguirre., and took Iparraguirre around the poorest areas of Lima to perform charity work. As a result, Iparraguirre stated that these visits introduced her to what true poverty and exploitation were in Peru.⁷⁴ Just as La Torre had become intimately

⁷¹Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

⁷² Paola Ugaz, “La Novia de Abimael Guzman,” *CARETAS*, May 3, 2007.

⁷³Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

⁷⁴ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

acquainted with the plight of the rural peasant, Iparraguirre engaged firsthand with the urban low-income and working-classes.

Unlike La Torre, however, Iparraguirre continued her formal university education and joined other leftist parties before following a Maoist line. Iparraguirre moved from Ica to Lima during her secondary school years. Iparraguirre attended the University of Education, La Cantuta in Lima, which would eventually become a hotbed of Sendero activity in the 1980s. While student political organizations and party recruitment in Lima was at a record high. From all the parties, Iparraguirre joined Peruvian Communist Party, Red Flag (*PCP-Bandera Roja*). Throughout her militancy, she distinguished herself as a leader and gained practical knowledge about the administration of a party. She oversaw political protests and formed relationships with other movements. Iparraguirre enrolled new members from different organizations to expand PCP-Red Flag. Iparraguirre temporarily left her militancy when she married Javier, a graduate student and non-militant. In the 1970s, Iparraguirre lived in Europe for four years because of her husband's doctoral program in chemistry. During this time, Iparraguirre studied for a master's in education for gifted children. In Europe, she interacted with various academic circles and political theorists and expanded her political knowledge through her discussions with scholars from the Soviet Union and leftist thinkers in France.⁷⁵ Although she was gone for a significant amount of time, she resumed her work in PCP-Red Flag and became involved in more movements when she returned to Peru.

Iparraguirre's development as a political activist within education prepared her to become a leader within the Popular Women's Movement and Sendero Luminoso. When she returned to Lima from Europe, Iparraguirre started working in education and became involved with the

⁷⁵ Zapata, *La Guerra Senderista: Hablan Los Enemigos*. Iparraguirre recalls that her husband "[...] was not a militant; he lived for research; he had social awareness, but he did not enjoy politics."

Unitary Union of Workers in Education of Peru (SUTEP). By 1974 and 1975, Iparraguirre collaborated with the women of MFP to organize events to build a national network of women's revolutionary work. As a member of both SUTEP and MFP, Iparraguirre helped the MFP organize the June 1975 First Convention of Female University Students for the Emancipation of Women to foster a sense of solidarity for women across party lines and regional distances.⁷⁶ Through her membership in SUTEP, Iparraguirre was aware of the developing conflicts between the state and educators surrounding the education reforms from 1972-1975 and the General Education Law implemented by the military regime of Juan Velasco (1968-1975). Iparraguirre brought with her the knowledge and lived experience of educators, particularly young women starting out their careers in education. Iparraguirre voiced criticism against the state through the perspective of a frustrated educator. For example, Iparraguirre stated in "The general education law and the reassessment of women,"

The General Education Law is a political, ideological instrument of the regime. Through its application, it is intended to disseminate the ideology of the ruling classes, impose its policy, and facilitate the application of its fundamental measures: The Agrarian Law and the General Law of Industries. [...] Taking education as an instrument of its policy, the regime aims to corporatize the feminine masses and use women more and better than before to achieve their "creative participation in the process of transformation and improvement of Peruvian society," as stated in its Article II of the General Education Law.⁷⁷

Here, Iparraguirre drew upon her personal experience as an educator during President Velasco's Agrarian Reform. She claimed that the state made changes in education not to improve the conditions of its citizens, but to indoctrinate a generation of Peruvians to accept the social

⁷⁶ "Viva La I ConvenCion Nacional de Universitarias Sobre Emancipacion de La Mujer" (Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario (FER), June 1975), Gustavo Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

⁷⁷ "La Ley General de Educacion y La Revaloracion de La Mujer" (Movimiento Femenino Popular, September 1974), Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

modifications proposed in the Agrarian Reform laws. Moreover, Iparraguirre noted that the state understood the crucial role women played as educators. According to Iparraguirre, the state was not empowering women, but using them as tools to disseminate state agendas.

From her firsthand experience as educated young women in the workforce and the leadership qualities she observed from her own family, Iparraguirre offered concrete ways to organize empathetic audiences and mobilize women outside of political parties. Unlike La Torre, Iparraguirre did not receive formal Maoist training. Nevertheless, she had directly observed the successes of her mother, Revoredo Relis in the daily practice of running a business during an era where Peruvian society expected women to stay at home and for men to oversee businesses within the formal economy. This contrasted with the experience of La Torre who gained a political awareness through her paternal lineage's direct involvement in politics. Nevertheless, the leadership skills Rovoredo Relis demonstrated in capitalist ventures gave Iparraguirre pragmatic understanding of how impresarios and the proletariat interacted.⁷⁸ When she traveled to Europe, Iparraguirre did not participate in political movements, but did witness student manifestations in France to reform universities during the late 1960s.⁷⁹ Unlike La Torre, Iparraguirre did not receive formal Maoist training. Nevertheless, Iparraguirre further developed her understanding of Communism while in Europe. Iparraguirre chose a Maoist form of Communism because she recognized the limitations of state-legislated improvements. Iparraguirre recognized that the class structure and “othering” of the rural populations seen as Indigenous could not compare to the established proletariat movements that had developed over time in Europe. Iparraguirre witnessed the first-world feminism of Europe, which did not relate

⁷⁸Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

⁷⁹ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

to the issues facing most of the population in Peru or even Latin America. Iparraguirre highlighted this disconnect between bourgeoisie feminism she had witnessed in Europe and what later became revolutionary feminism present in both the 1949 Chinese Revolution and the 1966 Cultural Revolution.⁸⁰ As a result, the political genealogies that La Torre and Iparraguirre inherited set them on the course for political involvement, however, it was the experiences and desire to learn more about political theory that brought both women to lead MFP. Both women made their own choices as to the political movements they eventually chose to join. It was the combination of political genealogy, training, and experience that made both women invaluable leaders. However, the lack of political genealogy did not preclude women from becoming MFP leaders.

Catalina Adrianzen became the third main leader of the Popular Women's Movement, bringing with her direct experience collaborating with peasant communities and skills in Maoist insurgency that made up for her lack of political genealogy. Adrianzen did not belong to a family with distinguished political participation in Lima or Ayacucho. Like Iparraguirre, Adrianzen came from a middle-class background and had a more advanced education than La Torre. Adrianzen earned a degree in anthropology and worked in the field conducting sociology studies on agrarian communities throughout the central Andes.⁸¹ Through her work Adrianzen witnessed firsthand how the politics of the agrarian reform affected campesino populations.⁸² In 1970, Adrianzen accepted a teaching position at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga (UNSCH) as an anthropologist and worked with students interested in social work. At UNSCH, she met and became romantically involved with Antonio Díaz Martínez a colleague

⁸⁰ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*.

⁸¹ Catalina Adrianzen, "Semblanza de Antonio Díaz Martínez," *Boletín Americanista* 30, no. 38 (1998): 19.

⁸² "Version DIRECOTE Del Manuscrito de SL En Cuzco, Incautado Al Capturar a Catalina Adrianzen (1982)," n.d., Gustavo Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

in the Agrarian Reform department.⁸³ Adrianzen acknowledged in her biographical articles on Diaz Martinez that they had both traveled extensively through the rural areas of the Andes in Ayacucho and Puno due to their shared interest. In the most remote Indigenous communities of the southern sierras. Adrianzen's practical expertise on peasant mobilization and prior knowledge of the individuals MFP should approach for collaboration made her an invaluable asset for the organization's efforts to expand beyond the university campus.

Adrianzen expanded her ideological formation when she lived and traveled throughout Europe during a fellowship period for Diaz Martinez. Adrianzen used her time living in Paris reading leftist materials and meeting with other intellectuals to exchange ideas regarding different forms of Communism. Additionally, Adrianzen studied the Paris Commune of 1871 and the French Revolution as key moments of political and cultural change.⁸⁴ Her engagement with the feminist history of the French Revolution while in Paris contradicted the triumphalist narratives on French Revolutionary feminism that was prevalent in Peru during the twentieth century. Adrianzen became interested in the writings of Alexandra Kollontai, specifically those dealing with mobilizing working-class women in union movements and as mothers. Adrianzen joined Diaz Martinez to meet with labor movement leaders and peasants in the north and south of France. She learned through these interactions that the conditions all peasants encountered—whether in Latin America or Europe—remained the same. In a biographical piece on Diaz Martinez, Adrianzen noted that “these European peasants were still anguished, harassed by the enormous interest on bank loans, trapped with the State through harsh taxes.”⁸⁵ Although the

⁸³ Colin Harding, “Antonio Díaz Martínez and the Ideology of Sendero Luminoso,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 19. Antonio Díaz Martínez (1933-1986) was an agricultural engineer and rural sociologist who joined the UNSCH in the 1960s. He became a member of the top leadership for Sendero Luminoso. .

⁸⁴ Adrianzen, “Semblanza de Antonio Díaz Martínez,” 28.

⁸⁵ Adrianzen, “Semblanza de Antonio Díaz Martínez.”

European peasants had greater access to technological advancements and more modern amenities, their struggle to live beyond mere subsistence was equally as challenging as in Peru.

During the two years that Adrianzen lived and studied in China, she acquired a profound understanding about the cultural revolution and witnessed the reality of life for peasants under Maoism that she brought back to Ayacucho. In 1974, Adrianzen and Diaz Martinez obtained a two-year work contract through the Chinese embassy in Lima to work in the Spanish-language section of the Foreign Languages Press—the main publisher of government propaganda.

Adrianzen worked as a Spanish teacher for party members. In her reflections on her time in China, Adrianzen expressed that during the two “very productive years,” where she focused on political education and women’s role within the new China. There she saw firsthand the party division and struggle for power after the death of Chairman Mao, an experience that reaffirmed Adrianzen’s commitment to a peasant revolution. Adrianzen traveled throughout China visiting important party institutions and development projects that Mao had created prior to 1973.⁸⁶ She witnessed the complex structure of Maoist government apparatus including the roles of female Communist China Party members that allowed her to argue that the state treated women as members of the same class as their male counter parts. In contrast to her experience in Europe and her knowledge from the writings of Kollontai, Adrianzen found that the Maoist form of communism was free of the sexism of male-dominated leftist parties in Europe. Adrianzen returned to Ayacucho in 1976 to continue the organizing work she had started with La Torre at UNSCH in 1970. becoming deeply involved in organizing MFP and developing the movement’s ideological points.

⁸⁶ Adrianzen, “Semblanza de Antonio Díaz Martínez,” 27.

By 1975, La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraguirre had cultivated a women's movement that extended throughout Peru and provided a women's perspective in the building of Sendero Luminoso. Prior to 1975, MFP would often meet at La Torre's family house in Huamanga. They were joined by other women in leadership positions who had affiliations with the University of San Cristobal de Huamanga (UNSCH) though not all the members came from these social and professional circles. Barnabela Cisneros and Estela Salvatierra became a vital part of the secretarial structure of MFP in early 1970. Cisneros and Salvatierra were both campesina women who had participated in agrarian reform movements and worked in collaboration with other women's political movements in Huamanga during the late 1960s.⁸⁷ Similarly, Nelly Carhuaz had been involved in labor movements and community defense organizations in Huamanga before joining MFP in the late 1960s.⁸⁸ Carhuaz became an essential figure on the National Coordination Committee.⁸⁹ These women were intermediaries between their respective communities and the Popular Women's Movement. However, La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraguirre remained the most influential creators of ideology for MFP, drafting "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women's Movement," that became the foundation for the organization and establishment of the "feminist revolutionary."

1.2 Constructing a Revolutionary Feminist Ideology

Augusta La Torre, Catalina Adrianzen, and Elena Iparraguirre set goals, defined ideology, and proposed projects for the Popular Women's Movement in two key texts published together in 1974. MFP published and distributed "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women's

⁸⁷Guiné, "Encrucijada de Guerra En Mujeres Peruanas," 113.

⁸⁸Nelly J. Carhuaz, "Movimiento Femenino Popular: Por Una Linea de Clase En El Movimiento Femenino," January 1975, Perú Siglo XX - Archivo Gorriti - Conflicto Armado Interno - Sendero Luminoso, Colección documental sobre la violencia política en el Perú (CEDOC), Biblioteca Central de la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.

⁸⁹ Movimiento Femenino Popular, "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino."

movement” in Lima and Ayacucho in 1974 with an addendum entitled “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement.” While a sizable portion of the text discussed the origins of women’s oppression in the home and as participants in the public sphere, the most influential sections argued for the pre-existing nature of Peruvian women as revolutionaries, defined “revolutionary feminism” within Peru, and charted the way for women to marshal lasting changes to society. Although the leaders of MFP did not enumerate explicit roles and jobs for its members, they drafted this revolutionary manuscript that called women to use the knowledge and skills uniquely developed through their class and gendered experiences in Peru. Unlike Abimael Guzmán, MFP leaders specifically addressed the issue of gender and the unequal uplift that could occur if women did not become personally involved in any revolutionary actions. Nevertheless, MFP leaders performed intellectual work within “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement” and “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement” by arguing and reinterpreting Mariátegui to bring the reality of Peruvian women to the Maoist revolutionary plan. The leaders of MFP produced this ideology as a group of women, without the direct consultation of a contemporary male leader, which set the organization apart from other women’s organizations and Sendero Luminoso. La Torre, Iparraguirre, and Adrianzen proposed activities for other women within a social and political revolution rather than focusing on how MFP’s members could help male revolutionaries.

MFP leaders jointly wrote “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement” and “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement” to distribute to women throughout Peru for recruitment and to distinguish itself from other women’s movements and political groups. From 1968 through 1972, Augusta La Torre and other

women that became MFP leaders produced propaganda and agitation materials promoting a "Women's Movement" through a network of female-focused groups. La Torre worked with the women of the Student Revolutionary Front (FER) at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga (UNSCH) in 1968 to write the "Declaration of principles and program of the Female Faction of the FER of Ayacucho," that reflected the ethos of this joint Women's Movement.⁹⁰ La Torre published the declaration as a leaflet and within the newsprint *Rimariyña Warmi* (Quechua for "speak now woman") established by La Torre. *Rimariyña Warmi* became an important circular for MFP intended to spark political engagement among frustrated female laborers and Indigenous women.⁹¹ In 1973, the leadership of MFP prioritized the formulation and development of the party's principles, programs, and policies. Published originally in the second edition of *Rimariyña Warmi* in September of 1973, MFP's "Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement," served as a founding document for the merger of various women's groups and MFP into a united "Women's Movement." Although this declaration predates the release of "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women's Movement" by four months, MFP published both texts together in January of 1974 officially declaring itself as the only truly Marxist-Leninist women's movement in Peru.

The authors of "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women's Movement," started this text with a thorough discussion of the role of women within revolutionary politics and actions to distinguish MFP from other feminist movements of the 1970s in Peru. The leaders of MFP also deployed Marxist-Leninist concepts regarding the role of women in political and social

⁹⁰ This group was all women and focused on issues of female students rather than class and university struggles as FER. "III. Experiencias de La Construcción Del Movimiento Femenino Popular" (Movimiento Femenino Popular, 1973), Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

⁹¹ "La Declaración de Principios y El Programa de FER de Ayacucho," *Rimariyña Warmi*, 1973, Gustavo Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

revolutions. The authors of this text specifically quoted Marx on the importance of women in revolution, “the experience of all liberation movements confirms that the success of the revolution depends on the degree to which women participate.”⁹² For MFP this meant that the true success of any revolution did not rely solely on progressive changes, but on lasting social transformations—in addition to political and economic—that changed the essence of women’s lives as members as equal among classes and regardless of gender. They also reaffirmed their call to women to act and not just study the theory of women’s emancipation. MFP agreed with the words of Friedrich Engels that compelled women to step into the center of a revolution. The authors used Engels’ argument that women cannot achieve emancipation unless they play a significant part in the social redevelopment and refuse to go quietly back to the home afterward re-establishing the pre-revolutionary status quo on regarding gender.⁹³ MFP leaders furthered their call to action by quoting Vladimir Lenin’s words about what the actual practice of Marxism regarding women’s emancipation would mean; “this is a prolonged struggle, which requires a radical transformation of social technology and customs. But this fight will end with the complete victory of communism.”⁹⁴ For lasting changes, Peruvian women would have to avoid the short-term contentment with social changes as the women of the French Revolution had done. Rather, Peruvian women had to commit to a long term, even ongoing, fight to ensure progress continued to additional generations of women and to not settle for an overly generalized, ambiguous democratization of society.⁹⁵ Through this discussion about Marx and Lenin, MFP identified itself as a Marxist-Leninist women’s organization.

⁹² “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino” (Centro Femenino Popular, January 1974), 32.

⁹³ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 33.

⁹⁴ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 36.

⁹⁵ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 19.

MFP then identified the group's core principles through an in-depth analysis of Peruvian political philosopher, José Carlos Mariátegui's ideas on Peruvian society and the Peruvian woman's role in revolution. Early in the twentieth century, Mariátegui recognized the need to adapt Marxism for Latin America rather than imposing European models. Additionally, Mariátegui helped build the first working-class organizations in Peru and argued for the inclusion of women for a successful revolution. In the text, the authors quoted Mariátegui's thoughts on gender, specifically his claims about women as political actors including how, "a woman is something more than a mother and a female, just as a man is something more than a male."⁹⁶ MFP emphasized that women were just as multifaceted and capable of being revolutionaries as their male counterparts. In fact, MFP argued that it was precisely the women of the Peruvian proletariat and peasant populations who understood the true meaning of emancipation. MFP used Mariátegui's words to unify women of lower-income backgrounds in urban and rural areas:

No one should be surprised that all women do not come together in a single feminist movement. Feminism necessarily has several colors and various tendencies. You can distinguish that there are three fundamental tendencies, three substantive colors: bourgeois feminism, petit bourgeois feminism, and proletarian feminism. [...] Women, like men, are reactionary, centrist, or revolutionary. They cannot, therefore, fight the same battle together. In the current human panorama, class differentiates individuals more than sex.⁹⁷

MFP directly addressed the audience that it targeted for recruitment to fill its ranks. Differences in regional background or ethnicity did not change the reality of women who labored in exploitative spaces and lived in marginalized neighborhoods. Class not only differentiated the type of feminism, but the impact of each groups' agendas as the manifesto explained how, "the

⁹⁶ "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino," 45.

⁹⁷ "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino," 51.

proletarian woman consubstantiates her feminism with the faith of the revolutionary multitudes in the future society.”⁹⁸ Working-class and peasant women looked beyond their own independence to an altruistic fight to establish permanent social and political changes for future generations of women. MFP contended that bourgeois and petit bourgeois feminists cared only to consolidate their independent freedoms across their own class, not for all the women of Peru.

However, MFP also addressed men in leftist parties and revolutionary movements when it compared proletariat men and women. MFP used Mariátegui’s words carefully to move beyond the question of whether women could become truly politicized.⁹⁹ The authors used the lines, “a woman is something more than a mother and a female, just as a man is something more than a male,” as well, “women, like men, are reactionary, centrist, or revolutionary,” to show that it was not just a feminist position to include women, but also a tenet of Mariátegui’s proposed strategy for a successful revolution in Peru.¹⁰⁰ In equating men and women’s political reactions and actions, the authors of MFP argued that gender was not a determinant factor in making a revolutionary; it was a human response that was more akin to their class. Both men and women of the lower-socioeconomic classes experience the same marginalization and disenfranchisement. If anything, proletarian and peasant women endured a double burden of capitalist oppression in public and private spheres. MFP used Mariátegui—the most well-known leftist political theorist in Peruvian socialist circles—to address the male political audience that tolerated women in their ranks but did not see them as true revolutionaries. The authors of the text went further into addressing this issue by specifically addressing the concept of a “feminist revolutionary.”

⁹⁸ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 53.

⁹⁹ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino.” 32.

¹⁰⁰ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 45, 51.

MFP leaders used “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s movement” to define the concept and roles of a “feminist revolutionary,” differentiating MFP members from other women’s groups. MFP argued that to have an effective revolution a new society must emerge with a new type of woman that parallels the innovative principles proclaimed. In order to create a parallel between the new woman and the new state, women had to participate in the entire process, “and these new women will be forged in the revolutionary crucible and will relegate to the [annals of history] the old type of woman deformed by the old system of exploitation, which is already sinking the true dignity of women.”¹⁰¹ Women could not simply wait for a revolutionary government to change the status quo and grant them rights as citizens. More importantly, women had to show the rest of the world what they were capable of doing and contributing to the developing public space. Only women could bring a distinct perspective on issues “intimately linked to women in particular” such as divorce, marriage, and love, which men’s perceptions had exclusively dominated in the decision making.¹⁰² MFP reiterated that women could not rely on leftist movements to consider the issues most important to women, “However, as a good Marxist he [Mariátegui] does not focus his attention on them [divorce, marriage, and love] until he resolves them the main question; because to do such a thing is to forget the main struggle and the fundamental goal; at the same time sowing confusion and disorienting the revolutionary struggle.”¹⁰³ The “new woman” was the end result of the revolutionary feminist from the masses, not a woman that accepted the “feminine nature” of weakness. Furthermore, the revolutionary feminist struck a balance between representing the rights and concerns of women in the transformation of society and the class struggle. This work

¹⁰¹ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 58.

¹⁰² “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 58.

¹⁰³ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 58.

contrasted with other feminists who centered the liberation of women from dependency on men as the main goal. MFP believed that placing the blame on men was not fruitful but hid “the root of all feminine oppression which is actually private property and woman’s subjugation comes with its creation.”¹⁰⁴ Feminist groups that saw the world as women versus men oversimplified the systematic oppression of people as classes. Women who identified as feminists, but supported the capitalist structures were in fact “counterrevolutionaries.”¹⁰⁵ The feminist revolutionaries were at the command of the people and fought for a total change in society that benefitted both men and women of the marginalized classes. But MFP had to set guidelines on how the women would serve the masses.

In the addended “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement,” MFP instituted the policies and principles for revolutionary females to create a successful women’s movement. In the January 1974 edition of “El Marxismo, Mariátegui, El Movimiento Femenino,” the authors of this text attached the 1973 “Declaration of principles” as an addendum, to discuss the ideologies that members of the Popular Women’s Movement would pledge to uphold.¹⁰⁶ Women needed to incur risk through involvement in forcing progress and reinventing society:

The advancement of women has been and is the advancement of the people. But they have not been passive beneficiaries but combative sisters and determined fighters for the cause of the oppressed and front-line militants; the trenches of the people everywhere also bear the indelible traces of their blood. The woman is not, as they say, apolitical and indifferent; Women are, especially those of the people, revolutionary combatants.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 63.

¹⁰⁵ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 63.

¹⁰⁶ “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 64.

¹⁰⁷ Vocero del Movimiento Femenino Popular, “Declaracion de Principios y Programa Del Movimiento Femenino Popular (Proyectos),” *Rimariyña Warmi*, September 1973, No. 2; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 65.

The greater the investment, the more control women could have in planning a new Peru. However, MFP specifically used the words like “fighters” and “militants” on the frontlines and in the trenches. Unlike urban women who joined the revolutionary cause against Batista, especially those identifying themselves as mothers, the Peruvian militants did not use discourses that reflected "paternalist" or hyper-feminine rhetoric that appealed to women’s special moral authority to justify their participation.¹⁰⁸ La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraguirre instead relied on Mariátegui’s ideas on women’s emancipation to articulate responsibilities for women revolutionaries. Being “helpers” or supporters of a male-led organization was not enough. Members of MFP had to have a class consciousness and be a “tireless fighter and determined militant.”¹⁰⁹ Proletarian and peasant women needed to accept their power as historical actors in prior revolutions and not submissively.¹¹⁰ MFP’s principles were not gender-neutral, rather it specifically called marginalized women to assume the role of revolutionary that they had already been exercising for decades before 1973.

MFP used the second half of the “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement,” to state the duties and responsibilities its members needed undertake to propel the Peruvian revolution. MFP had drafted a call to arms in “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement,”

the popular women's movement of Ayacucho restarts its combative march and with clear awareness of the situation of our country, it launches into the fight for the mobilization of Peruvian women, at the service of the national-democratic revolution.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Michelle Chase, *Revolution within the Revolution: Women and Gender Politics in Cuba, 1952-1962* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 79.

¹⁰⁹ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 65.

¹¹⁰ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 66.

¹¹¹ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 66.

For MFP the revolution had already resumed, and its members had to assume roles that only they as women with experiences in marginalized groups could handle. At the core of the work MFP militants performed, they needed to “uphold the dignity of women, against prejudices, superstitions, and claims of apoliticism.”¹¹² The militants of the Popular Women’s movement did not need to become or perform as men. Women needed to use their own gendered experience to contribute to the struggle as well as “defend the successes achieved and expand rights through struggle.”¹¹³ In this way, MFP was creating the revolutionary feminist who would bring equality between genders in the new society and secure lasting change. Additionally, women needed to combat not only conservatives, but also the leftist groups—like the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) or the larger Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) that in the 1970s offered limited roles to women. To hold male-dominated groups accountable for revolutionary progress, MFP members needed to hold events and meetings among women in the organization and interested affiliates not just to recruit, but to show their strength and listen to the issues that the average Peruvian woman felt needed attention. Militants had to be involved in fundraising for more propaganda and to support the revolutionary project in all phases.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, MFP also tasked its members to “spread and develop popular culture.”¹¹⁵ MFP sought to cultivate a culture that reflected the experiences and realities of the Peruvian masses—both the urban proletariat and rural peasants—as well as the new proposed society that adapted from the World Revolutionary Front (*Frente Revolucionario Mundial*). These goals stated the standard ideas about organizing women, mobilizing groups to work collectively to raise women's class consciousness and fight for class emancipation. Although they did not specifically design

¹¹² “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 68.

¹¹³ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 68.

¹¹⁴ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 68.

¹¹⁵ “Declaracion de Principios”; “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 68.

categories or identify specific roles—reconnaissance, logistics, armed insurgency, and other traditional radical work on the front lines—MFP addressed the goals its members needed to accomplish within the policies and principles stated in the “Declaration.”

Through "Marxism, Mariátegui and the Women's Movement" and “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement,” La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraguirre established for male and female audiences that Peruvian women had the ability to contribute to the advancement of the revolutionary project. In fact, women had distinct skills and access to parts of society unique to their lived experience as women of marginalized communities in urban and rural areas. Thus, within the multifaceted nature of a successful, enduring revolution, MFP militants became assets in ways that men could not. The policies, procedures, and programs outlined in "Marxism, Mariátegui and the Women's Movement" and “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement,” set the course for the evolution of the Sendero woman after 1976.

1.3 The Legacy of the Popular Women’s Movement and “Revolutionary Feminism” after 1976

By 1975, MFP had published five thousand copies of “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement” and the incorporated addendum “Declaration of principles and the program of projects for the popular women's movement.” MFP claimed in its 1975 second edition that the original run had been completely distributed. Augusta La Torre, Elena Iparraguirre, Catalina Adrianzen, and Nelly Carhuaz—among other women—formed the National Coordination Committee of the Popular Women’s Movement to expand the groups influence across regions and various demographics to continue to grow the revolution. The ideological, organizational, and politicizing work that the Popular Women’s Movement (MFP) had completed continued even after MFP officially merged with PCP-Sendero Luminoso by

December of 1976. MFP specifically addressed the duties and goals for revolutionary women within “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement,” that not only stimulated marginalized women to join a revolution, but also influenced initial Sendero goals and policies.

The leadership and members of the Popular Women’s Movement embodied the “proto Sendero woman” who integrated a class-conscious "revolutionary feminism" into the war against the Peruvian state. As noted previously, La Torre, Adrianzen, and Iparraquirre eventually became leaders and high-ranking members within Sendero’s Politburo and party at large, as La Torre and Iparraquirre became the second and third in command of PCP-SL. According to Peruvian journalist Umberto Jara without the influence and work performed by La Torre, Sendero would not have controlled as much territory throughout Peru and among women:

The importance that she (Augusta La Torre) has had within Sendero Luminoso has been fundamental. That's not because I say so, that's what everyone I've spoken to has told me: former members of Sendero Luminoso or the Police. Also, apparently, in existing documents and the testimonies of witnesses in Ayacucho. Everyone tells me that: 'without that girl, Abimael Guzmán would not have been able to because he was not a man of action.'¹¹⁶

La Torre became a well-known representative of both Sendero Luminoso and the Popular Women’s Movement and organized not only women’s groups, but also neighborhood committees and street vendors' associations. According to Orrin Starr and Miguel La Serna, La Torre recruited "among doormen, street vendors of clothing, food, and farmers" that traveled to that markets in Ayacucho market to do their shopping.¹¹⁷ La Torre interacted on a personal level with people by handing out fliers and speaking directly to the working-class people and peasants in those spaces. Despite being a married woman, La Torre dismissed the taboo of traveling alone

¹¹⁶ Harold Quispe, “Umberto Jara: ‘Hay Evidencias Que Demuestran Que Augusta La Torre, Camarada Norah, Fue Asesinada,’” *La República*, November 23, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Orin Starn and Miguel La Serna, *The Shining Path: Love, Madness, and Revolution in the Andes*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019).

and visited other cities and rural areas in the Andes to speak about the “armed revolution.”¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Guzmán stayed within a close-knit circle of supporters drafting more ideology. Adrianzen did not assume as high a role as La Torre or Iparraguirre, but she did take on an important insurgent role as the commander of the Zonal Committee in Cusco.¹¹⁹ Peruvian forces arrested Adrianzen in 1982 and tortured her until the late 1980s, with the goal that she would surrender valuable logistical information on PCP-SL. The original leadership of the Peruvian Women’s Movement thus assumed roles that required them to be on the frontlines of the revolution and in the decision-making process. The specific type of “revolutionary feminism” proposed by La Torre, Iparraguirre, and Adrianzen in this text, distinctly integrated the quotidian concerns and lived experiences of Peruvian women, in ways that subsequent Sendero texts failed to capture.¹²⁰ Within Peru this Manifiesto called women to directly participate in the act of insurrection and demand a place within political movements, rather than settling for auxiliary roles or assisting/supporting their male counterparts.¹²¹

In the reinterpretation of socialist doctrines and revolutionary theories, the leaders of MFP made women of the working and peasant classes a focal point of their discussions. Moreover, instead of broadly addressing people already involved in unions and political parties, MFP leaders targeted the female masses with their publications. In this manner, they directly addressed women to mobilize based on the combination of gender and class consciousness.¹²² In

¹¹⁸ Pierina Pinghi Bel, “Quién Fue La Camarada Norah, La Mujer Que Hasta Su Misteriosa Muerte Fue La Más Poderosa Del Sanguinario Grupo Sendero Luminoso,” News, BBC News Mundo, September 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-53185215>.

¹¹⁹ Folder A, “1982 – Version DIRCOTE del manuscrito del SL en Cuzco, Incautado Al Capturar A Catalina Adrianzen.” Documents seized show the level of involvement Adrianzen had within Sendero and her invaluable position on this committee. These documents also provide information about shifts in power within terror cells and committees as police forces captured Senderistas.

¹²⁰ Movimiento Femenino Popular, “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 35–39.

¹²¹ Movimiento Femenino Popular, “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 35–39.

¹²² “Intelligence Service Notes Re La Torre 65-82.”

particular, Sendero continued MFP plans for women to operate within education unions and university activist circles. Members of both MFP and Sendero that were trained as teachers moved into rural communities as early as 1976, particularly in the Carhuanca District in the province of Vilcashuamán, in the department of Ayacucho. In this remote area that had limited access to roads and unreliable communication with Lima or Huanta, teachers with higher education that came into villages quickly gained influence within the community. Even in the more traditional, patriarchal Andean communities, female teachers claimed authority as individuals with higher education. These MFP-Sendero members took on education, and outreach roles that reeducated the masses just as “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement” had ordered.¹²³

La Torre used *Rimariyña Warmi* to reach outside of university circles to both Spanish and Quechua audiences throughout Ayacucho. *Rimariyña Warmi* became an important circular for MFP intended to spark political engagement among frustrated female laborers and Indigenous women. Articles in this print media presented historical examples of Peruvian women in class mobilization against imperialism and feudal conditions in rural provinces.¹²⁴ More importantly, articles in *Rimariyña Warmi* highlighted women's efforts to fight against economic, political, and ideological oppression. Articles ranged from historical accounts of women participating in labor strikes in the 1930s to providing information on current mobilization efforts. However, after 1973 the Popular Women’s Movement leadership shifted toward constructing its canon of political doctrine.

On December 21, 1974, eleven months after publishing “Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women’s Movement,” delegates from different organizations throughout Peru gathered in Lima

¹²³ Movimiento Femenino Popular, “El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino,” 68.

¹²⁴ “La Declaración de Principios y El Programa de FER de Ayacucho.”

to generate objectives and tasks that undergirded the National Organization of the Popular Women's Movement (*Dinacion Nacional del Movimiento Femenino Popular*). At that convention in 1974, the National Organization of MFP drafted the "Accords of the 1st National Coordination Meeting," which MFP leader Nelly Carhuas published and distributed widely in January of 1975 along with a message to "fellow female combatants."¹²⁵ Within this document MFP delegates agreed to the following tasks at hand:

The Construction of the Movement demands persistent work and the main struggle has been waged in this field to develop the construction adhering to the principle of taking as an indispensable foundation the ideological-political construction (the formulation and development of the declaration of principles, program and concrete policies) and promote at the same time, the construction of organizations (that of raising organizations starting from the workers', university, teachers' labor fronts, etc., and the collusion and strengthening of the leadership organizations) in the class struggle of the feminine masses [...]¹²⁶

When PCP-SL absorbed control of MFP and its leaders, the role of women within the party became mostly obscured in favor of gender-neutral references to militants and the masses, referring directly to women in exclusively protective contexts rather than as active, changemakers.

Yet the elite women who lead the Popular Women's Movement contributed to more to the shaping of Shining Path through non-insurgent roles that created a Marxist-Leninist "feminist revolutionary" ideology for MFP. La Torre, Iparraguirre, and Adrianzen left a legacy of the model female Senderista through "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Women's Movement." More importantly, the elite women of Sendero performed intellectual work that placed women's

¹²⁵ "Acuerdos de la I Reunión de Coordinación Nacional," December 21, 1974. Distributed again in January 1975, with a letter from Nelly Carhuas in charge of communications for the Popular Women's Movement to "fellow female combatants."

¹²⁶III. Experiencias de la construcción del Movimiento Femenino Popular, "Acuerdos de la I Reunión de Coordinación Nacional," January 1975.

movement leaders beyond the concept of “helpers” within revolutionary movements. Whether intentional or inadvertently, the Popular Women’s Movement created spaces and emboldened women to find positions for themselves within the broader revolutionary project despite Shining Path’s patriarchal treatment of female Senderistas.

CHAPTER TWO

The Rural Women of Ayacucho

The rural women of Ayacucho had become politicized through their participation alongside men in protesting against the state and abusive landowners. Thus, it is not surprising that when Sendero Luminoso appeared in rural communities at the end of the 1970s, some rural women freely joined and found empowerment in rising through the ranks. These women found success as gendered revolutionary bridges—a kind of liaison—between PCP-SL and isolated rural communities that were sympathetic to Sendero’s cause early in the 1980s. Nevertheless, most rural women in the region chose to not join Shining Path. By 1984, when combat with the Peruvian military forces intensified, Sendero forcefully coerced rural women to form a part of Sendero. Sendero needed the labor of rural women to maintain its strategic, physical control over the department of Ayacucho and social control over the various people in the region. The rural women of Ayacucho did not experience only one type of relationships with Shining Path; however, these women were crucial to maintaining a long-term, attempted revolution.

As early as 1970, Sendero members spread throughout Ayacucho to recruit members and politicize the peasantry. Augusta La Torre and other Sendero leaders spent weeks on horseback going into remote areas of the countryside, visiting out-of-the-way villages to address community leaders, and gaining support for Sendero. At first interactions remained friendly as Sendero hoped to gain local support and membership from villages. Yet, many peasant communities from the altiplano (*puna*) decided to reject Sendero’s requests to join its membership. However, the peasant communities did not represent all rural women found in Ayacucho in 1970 or 1980. Although many women identified as peasants (*campesinas*) and Indigenous women, not all used these terms to identify or classify themselves within the broader population of Peru. Furthermore, many women with rural backgrounds had migrated to urban

settings for economic and educational opportunities gaining invaluable experience and knowledge of major cities (including Huamanga and Lima).¹²⁷ Once in PCP-SL, rural women's roles and duties were just as varied and were often dictated by their backgrounds and willingness to join the insurrection.

2.1: The Diverse Women of Rural Ayacucho

Who were the rural women of Ayacucho? In the investigations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, researchers have commonly identified the women of Ayacucho as either Indigenous or peasants who lived in villages and communities throughout the countryside of Ayacucho.¹²⁸ Regardless of how these women identified themselves, scholars have followed this narrative of Indigenous and peasant women as victims of Shining Path's control over the region.¹²⁹ However, not all women that lived in the countryside self-identified within this binary of campesinas or Indigenous women. Furthermore, the Agrarian Reform implemented by the government of Juan Velasco Alvarado in 1969, caused rural women and men to migrate from rural Ayacucho to urban centers like the city of Huamanga or even as far as Lima.¹³⁰ Since the women of rural Ayacucho did not have a homogenized lived experience, how they formed relationships with Shining Path is similarly as varied. Nevertheless, women with ties to the countryside possessed knowledge and skills that were distinct from women who had only experienced life in big cities.¹³¹ Likewise, rural women shared unique, firsthand exposure to the

¹²⁷ Maletta y Bardales, "Perú, las provincias en cifras," 1985. Degregori, *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, 268–76.

¹²⁸ Valérie Robin Azevedo and Dorothee Delacroix, "Categorización Étnica, Conflicto Armado Interno y Reparaciones Simbólicas En El Perú Post - Comisión de La Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR)," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, December 11, 2017. Gorriti, *Sendero*, 233–38. La Serna, *The Corner of the Living*, 204–9.

¹²⁹ Robin Azevedo and Delacroix, "Categorización Étnica."

¹³⁰ Maletta y Bardales, "Perú, las provincias en cifras," 1985. Degregori, *El Surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, 268–76. Interview with S. Tello, May 13, 2018.

¹³¹ Interview with S. Tello, May 13, 2018. La Serna, *The Corner of the Living*, 204–9.

exploitative politics of the central highlands of Peru. Therefore, the rural women of Ayacucho were an asset for Shining Path to launch and maintain its revolution.

The rural population of Ayacucho was never a uniform group of individuals, rather the distinct microcultures lived parallel to each other in a diverse topographical area that impacted their lived experience. In “Violencia política y respuestas campesinas en Huanta,” Peruvian historian José Coronel’s noted that people misconceive the rural population of Ayacucho as “socially homogenous” and fail to consider how the different regions, relationships, and economic characteristics throughout the department affect how different villages and communities self-identify.¹³² For example, within Ayacucho’s borders, there are two distinct groups of Indigenous or autochthonous people, the Asháninka and Quechuas. The Quechua people are the largest group in the region and consist of many distinct communities such as the Sarhua, Rucana, and Iquichans based on family clans (*ayllus*). José Carlos Mariátegui and Gonzales Prado—who coined the term “indigenismo”—combined Marxist socialism with elements of a romanticized Indigenous Inca tradition to celebrate the “indian population” as authentic Peruvians. However, in celebrating the “indian” Mariátegui and Prado added to the homogenizing of the rural communities. Additionally, under the 1969 Agrarian Reform Law, specifically Decree-Law No. 17716 (Land Reform Act), the state ascribed the new, formal classification of *campesino* to all Indigenous and rural Peruvians.¹³³ This decree by president Juan Velasco Alvarado attempted to redefine the social category of the “indian” (*indio*) commonly used by Peruvians from urban areas to pejoratively refer to people from the countryside. Even though the peonage system in Peru ended through land reforms in the 1950s,

¹³² José Coronel, “Violencia Política y Respuestas Campesinas En Huanta,” in *Las Rondas Campesinas y La Derrota de Sendero Luminoso*, ed. Carlos Iván Degregori (Lima: IEP Ediciones, 1996), 29–31.

¹³³ Peru Decree Law No. 17716, Title 1: Basic Principles, Article 1, 1969.

socially and politically the rural populations endured discrimination. Velasco sought to change this by legally creating the category of campesino—defined as a member of the Latin American rural working-class and people of Indigenous heritage—to empower rural men and situate them as a vital part of the Peruvian economy. However, Velasco unintentionally oversimplified these populations as a modern pastoral labor force taking away their ability to define themselves as individuals.¹³⁴

By 1960, Ayacuchan rural women began asserting control over how they identified themselves within Peruvian society despite the labels used by others. Many non-urban Ayacucho women self-identified as campesina because their lives focused on agriculture. However, within more remote villages, women involved in communal agriculture and in raising livestock continued to identify as Indigenous. Meanwhile, women from communities and small towns closer to urban areas classified themselves as small ranchers, local merchants, and migrant laborers.¹³⁵ The increasingly limited economic opportunities and jobs in the rural sector forced many rural women to venture into cities throughout Ayacucho. These individuals experienced more exposure and access to education, urban markets, and sociopolitical activities. As a result, such individuals self-identified as campesinas, merchants, working-class, or maintained their Indigenous identity. Ayacuchan women with Indigenous and peasant heritage were part of a long history of women who had become politicized and directly protested and fought for their communities.

Rural women in Ayacucho became invisible as members of the rural population under the 1969 Agrarian Reform Laws. While Juan Velasco Alvarado attempted to redistribute land

¹³⁴ Javier Puente, “The Military Grammar of Agrarian Reform in Peru,” *Radical History Review* 2019, no. 133 (January 1, 2019): 79, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-7160077>.

¹³⁵ Coronel, “Violencia Política y Respuestas Campesinas,” 33–39.

resources in Peru, the result was a redefinition of the male peasant as a citizen. Velasco used the language of revolution encapsulated in the term “campesino” to empower rural men,

From today onwards, the peasant of Peru will no longer be the outcast or the indebted one who lived in the poor, from the cradle to the grave, and who looked helplessly at an equally gloomy future for his children. From this fortunate June 24, the peasant of Peru will truly be a free citizen whose country, at last, recognizes the right to the fruits of the land he works, and a place of justice within a society from which he will never again he will be, as he is today, a diminished citizen, a man to be exploited by another man.¹³⁶

In describing the new peasant and his claims to citizenship, Velasco clearly referenced the male population. The language and rights contained within the Decree Law No. 17716 emphasized patriarchal notions of politics, economics, and landownership as the domain of the male, head of household. The decree protected the campesino man and his landownership rights as productive members of the country,

The agrarian reform is an integral process and an instrument of transformation for the agrarian structure of the country [...] through the creation of an agrarian order that guarantees social justice in the countryside and increases the production and productivity of the agricultural sector, raising and securing the incomes of the peasants so that the land constitutes, for the man who works it, the basis of a well-being and guarantee of their dignity and freedom.¹³⁷

Velasco lauded the contributions of the Peruvian peasant, underscoring the need to protect and guarantee the “dignity and freedom” of the “man who works for it.” While one could argue that this language used the plural, masculine form of nouns in Spanish, the specific designation of certain rights as belonging to men stands alongside discussions of family units and communities. If the term “man” was to encompass humanity throughout this decree, then there would be no

¹³⁶ Juan Velasco Alvarado, *La Revolución Peruana*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1973, 8.

¹³⁷ Decree Law No. 17716, Title 1: Basic Principles, Article 1.

need to specify the importance of the male head of household. The use of the singular “man” implied the male campesinos, “the owner works personally or land with his family, this work being his basic activity, when the area he owns does not exceed the type of the family agricultural unit.”¹³⁸ In its original Spanish language text, “el propietario” identified the male owner singularly, conjuring images of the head of household responsible for the wellbeing of the family. The Agrarian reform clearly became the domain of men.

Peasant women thus faced an unequal uplift with limited benefits under the Agrarian Reform. As the state promised to protect men who toiled the land, it left out the campesina woman. Velasco clarified in subsequent speeches and declarations, that the reform centered around the male peasant:

The land must be for the peasant for the small and medium owner; for the man who sinks his hands in it and creates wealth for all; for the man, finally, who struggles and roots his own destiny in the fertile surves, forgers of life.¹³⁹

The president made it clear that there would be new respect for landownership of men, regardless of their class. In the eyes of the state, the law did not recognize women, but defended the rights of campesino men and family units. The decree’s empowerment of the campesino man came through their new title as associates (*socios*) of peasant cooperatives created by the state.¹⁴⁰ Women did not participate in these cooperatives in any significant manner—married or single. This was a shift from life before the reform, when communal decisions incorporated women and the family unit, now it was men gathering to make decisions as providers. Furthermore, the cooperatives and unions sought to bolster male authority by encouraging young men to attend schools to learn the necessary skills to modernize agricultural production with new mechanized

¹³⁸ Decree Law No. 17716, Tittulo III: De las limitaciones de la Propiedad Rural, Capitulo III, Article 20b

¹³⁹ Velasco, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Andreas, 47-48.

methods. Both the state and local cooperatives discouraged young women from attending school, exerting their newfound greater decision-making power.

Newly labeled campesina women quickly found themselves struggling under men's increasing control on their lives. In her interviews of women in Ayacucho, Carol Andreas noted this struggle in her interviews with Ayacuchan women:

“They [women] became dependent on men for survival. Women were expected to carry meals to the men who worked in the fields. When hired as contracted labor by the cooperatives, they had no voice or vote. Only divorced or widowed women could become *socios* of the cooperatives. Contracted workers inevitably did the unskilled work and received inferior wages for it.”¹⁴¹

The reform initiatives made it impossible for women to access education and training that was crucial to modernization of region's economy. Furthermore, the state's emphasis on the masculinity of agrarian production through extensive propaganda promoting the reform, stressed the economic value of men's labor over their female counterparts. Instead, the new peasant woman's responsibility was to build a revolutionary home thereby ensuring the success of the revolutionary family.¹⁴² A series of four propaganda posters for the Agrarian Reform commissioned by the Velasco government, an Indigenous peasant woman reminds campesinas to contribute to the revolution as mothers “present in forming a revolutionary home.” This propaganda relegated the political economy of women to a type of republican motherhood.

2.2: Rural women as Sendero Insurgents, Revolutionary Gendered Bridges and Leaders

Women from the rural highlands of Ayacucho who chose to join Shining Path played vital roles in the party's military plan to take over the department of Ayacucho from 1980

¹⁴¹ Andreas, 48.

¹⁴² Jesús Ruiz Durand, *Northern women are with the revolution...* 1968, Museo de Arte de Lima Collection, Contemporary Art Acquisitions Committee 2007, accessed August 8, 2019, <https://artmargins.com/qsubversive-practices-art-under-conditions-of-political-repression-1960s-1980s-south-america-europeq-in-stuttgart-exhib-review/>.

through 1982. Once Senderistas, they participated on the frontlines as armed guerrillas in local forces in the People's Guerrilla Army (*Ejercito Guerrilla Popular*, EGP), worked as informants and spies within liberated zones, and most importantly, served as a strategic connection between Shining Path and the rural populations of Ayacucho. The rural women who freely joined Shining Path used the revolution to confront issues that affected women all over the countryside—such as the demands under the Velasco administration—that the state, political parties, and their own community leaders had failed to address; particularly, issues that rural women faced daily such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse of civil rights. While Shining Path utilized rural insurgent women to establish control throughout Ayacucho and benefitted from their efforts, these dedicated rural women made use of the insurgency to create changes with their newfound authority as Senderistas, usurped by the Velasco administration.

Augusta La Torre specifically targeted women of Ayacucho's countryside to build relationships with rural communities and involve the women in the redefining their role during the revolution. When the Popular Women's Movement (*Movimiento Femenino Popular*, MFP), published "Declaration of Principles and Program of Movimiento Femenino Popular (Projects)," in September of 1973, they addressed the campesinas directly, urging them to join proletarian women to "fight for their rights, successes, and democratic liberties."¹⁴³ MFP called on rural women who were already politicized to educate others in their villages and communities.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, MFP reminded peasant women that although the quality of life for campesinas had changed, any improvement had come at a slower rate not only to their male counterparts, but also

¹⁴³ Declaracion de Principios y Programa del Movimiento Femenino Popular (proyectos)." Rimariyña Warmi, número 2; Vocero del Movimiento Femenino Popular de Ayacucho: setiembre 1973.

¹⁴⁴ El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino, III. Desarrollar El Movimiento Femenino Siguiendo a Mariátegui, 2. Retomar El Camino De Mariátegui.

to that of urban, non-Indigenous women.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, MFP argued that in order to prevent being coopted by male-dominated Marxist organizations and campesino unions, peasant women had to join urban women in a coalition to simultaneously assert a change that transformed all classes and gender structures.¹⁴⁶ By 1975, Augusta La Torre personally led members of both the Popular Women's Movement (MFP) and Sendero to rural communities for recruitment. One former Sendero member, Nilda Atanacio, recalls that in 1978, Augusta La Torre understood the importance of reaching women throughout the countryside:

She [La Torre] made us see the mistake we had made: "You are looking for masses in the desolate, barely populated *punas*. And the peasant masses are, numerous in the valleys, right under your noses. Have you not seen them?" [...] Indeed, we had been ascending the uninhabited pampas of the *punas* on our way to the Pato Canyon. Also, in the heights of Quillabamba, in the desolate *puna* where the cold wind whistled with the straw of such a *puna*, where there were no farmers. She made us see that the masses were, for example, in the lands where Túpac Amaru acted and organized his revolution.¹⁴⁷

La Torre recognized that rural populations varied in socioeconomic status among the Indigenous and peasant classes, as well as varying in exposure to urban environs rather than being a population that lived in isolated villages. More importantly, La Torre acknowledged that the rural women of Ayacucho offered more than simple numbers for increasing membership but held valuable knowledge and skills essential to navigating rural realities that their urban counterparts lacked. La Torre often spent weeks visiting out-of-the-way villages to address community leaders and gain support for Sendero. In these meetings rural women noted that the party actively

¹⁴⁵ El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino, II. El Problema Femenino en Mariátegui.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, I. El Problema Femenino Y El Marxismo

¹⁴⁷ Militante del PCP 1, Sobre camarada Norah- Testimonio 1.

recruited both men and women, but more importantly, targeted women as leaders and not as just “helpers” to their male counterparts.

The way a rural woman entered Sendero often determined her role, but it was not the sole determinant of the duties the Senderista would perform. The peasant women of Ayacucho fulfilled an array of roles and duties over the course of the five phases of Sendero’s plan—phases that often occurred simultaneously depending on the tactical evolution of a location—that were quintessential to unfolding the revolution throughout Peru. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that before Sendero’s first action against the Peruvian state—the burning of the electoral ballot boxes—in May of 1980, PCP-SL had no significant influence over rural populations throughout Ayacucho.¹⁴⁸ However, after this initial attack in the Chuschi district of Ayacucho, Sendero Luminoso spread out into rural areas and extend control to other provinces of the department, generating popular committees in Huamanga, Huanta, La Mar. If women had voluntarily joined Shining Path before 1980, they had greater opportunities within the movement. Yet, more women from the countryside joined after 1980.

Post-1980, rural women who volunteered for Sendero received military training that they used in combination with their prior skills and knowledge to gain a foothold as insurgents. Rural Sendero women could not rely solely on their knowledge of the land and local sociopolitical relationships to become valuable militants. In fact, the Truth and Reconciliation’s investigation on women in Sendero showed that party leaders assigned rural women volunteers gendered work such as cleaning and cooking during the first phase of the military plan from June through December of 1980.¹⁴⁹ Rural women receive orders to help with the provisions and in maintain

¹⁴⁸ “2.1.3. El retorno de los maestros y la inserción del PCP-SL en el circuito educativo,” *Informe Final*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ “1.2.3.6. La autogestión, el equipamiento y el despliegue de la DIRECOTE,” *Informe Final*, Tomo I (Perú: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003), 193.

base camps. To avoid continuing to provide the same type of gendered labor as they had performed in their communities, rural women sought military training. In Robin Kirk's interview with Senderista "Betty," the young woman detailed her experience training to become a militant when she joined at age 17. "Betty" was a clear example of a young woman who had lived an urban life but had ties with rural communities. She wanted to join the revolution and stop being tasked with domestic work.¹⁵⁰ Women learned to clean and shoot firearms as well as wield other close-range weapons. Although rural women had outstanding knowledge of the area, Shining Path provided tactical training on how to invade police stations, set up ambushes, create and plant improvised explosive devices (IED), as well as identify strategic locations. Additionally, Sendero trained rural Sendero women on how to obtain weapons and break police morale, alongside lessons on Shining Path ideology.¹⁵¹ Within this newfound skill set, rural Senderistas entered the rank-and-file of PCP-SL's Popular Guerrilla Army (*Ejercito Guerrillero Popular*, EGP).

In the first three years of Sendero's guerrilla war rural women Senderistas capitalized on their pre-existing knowledge and newly acquired skills to become dynamic insurgents within PCP-SL's Popular Guerilla Army. As confrontations with police forces escalated in August of 1980, the EGP relied on the rural female militants to provide tactical and reconnaissance work. Sendero peasant women provided valuable information of important local leaders who became targets for attack. Rural women formed part of the thirty EGP combatants and approximately 200 peasants from Pujas (Cangallo Province) who participated in the first Sendero assassination of a

¹⁵⁰ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw: New Chronicles from Peru* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 21-22.

¹⁵¹ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 21-22. Benedicto Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo En El Perú: El Abc de Sendero Luminoso y El MRTA Ampliado y Comentado: Tomo I* (Lima, Perú, 2000), 137. "2.1.3.4. Tomar a los pueblos por asalto," *Informe Final*, 26.

local authority—landlord Benigno Medina and his foreman—during the capture of a hacienda in San Agustín de Ayzurca on December 24, 1980.¹⁵² Other rural women participated in a two-day guerrilla fight with police forces on January 21st and 23rd of 1981, in the Qoiza region. In this armed confrontation Senderista women made up a significant portion of the forces that totaled over one hundred peasants.¹⁵³ In March of 1981, Marina Loayza Palomino, a rural Ayacuchan Senderista participated in another armed confrontation that led to the takeover of another hacienda.¹⁵⁴ Paulina Pinco Huamán, a peasant woman from the village of Santa Rosa de Pihuan (District of Santiago de Pischa, province of Huamanga) was not a high ranking leader in the EGP. However, Pinco Huamán was a prominent combatant in the Main Force (*Fuerza Principal*, FP) of the 21st Revolutionary Support Base of the Ayacucho Zonal Committee. She participated in agitation and recruitment missions throughout Ayacucho. Pinco Huamán also participated in the assassination of residents and an ambush that killed eleven police officers of the Huamanga district and injured others.¹⁵⁵ Rural female Senderistas provided valuable information and created diversions to cover EGP forces that attacked Huamanga’s prison on March 2, 1982. Sendero’s assault involved one hundred and fifty armed militants in simultaneous attacks on two local police stations as a diversion to the main objective— the liberation of influential Sendero Luminoso leaders like Edith Lagos Saenz among others.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, among the Senderistas who planned this incident was comrade Carla (Carlotta Tello

¹⁵² Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen, "Estadísticas de ataques al 12/80," in the *Collection of Ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection: Second Series*. ([Peru]: [N.v.], 1960), Group A, box 3, folder 3. "Tomo V," *Informe Final*, 46. Miguel La Serna, *The Corner of the Living: Ayacucho on the Eve of the Shining Path Insurgency*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 143.

¹⁵³ Benedicto Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo En El Perú: El Abc de Sendero Luminoso y El MRTA Ampliado y Comentado: Tomo I* (Lima, Perú, 2000), 341–42.

¹⁵⁴ "Case: 10009383, Testimony: 205357," *Final Report*.

¹⁵⁵ "Ayacucho: Cae Mujer Requisitoriada Por Terrorismo y Presunta Miembro de Sendero Luminoso," *Diario Correo*, December 7, 2020.

¹⁵⁶ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo: Tomo I*, 342–45.

Cutti), a rural peasant women who had risen to become an important cadre leader in Ayacucho.¹⁵⁷

Rural women found opportunities to lead and assume important duties in PCP-SL because of their unique familiarity with the challenging terrain and landscape of the Ayacucho region. Due to state absence, Ayacucho suffered from a lack of infrastructure. Locals had extensive knowledge of the valleys, rugged mountain sides, and other topography needed to travel or transport goods from urban areas to more secluded locations.¹⁵⁸ Sendero leaders who were from urban backgrounds could not navigate the area as efficiently.¹⁵⁹ La Torre was the exception since she grew up in a rural estate outside of Huamanga. Moreso, rural women assumed commanding positions in smaller cadres because of their ability to maneuver through contested spaces. After the burning of the electoral ballot boxes, the Peruvian state ordered local authorities to locate the perpetrators and stop any further attacks.¹⁶⁰ Sendero entered greater clandestinity and occupied strategic areas that peasant Senderistas had designated. These areas were not only isolated but were also tactical points necessary for Sendero to continue engaging police forces and maintain access to food sources at nearby support bases. Although rural women were not the only ones familiar with traversable routes, it was their availability and willingness to participate that made them more appealing than their male counterparts.

By 1982, rural women became vital links between Sendero and non-affiliated villagers once Peruvian armed forces launched more aggressive and comprehensive surveillance in the countryside. President Fernando Belaúnde Terry increased military intervention in Ayacucho in

¹⁵⁷ Ricardo Uceda, *Muerte En El Pentagonito: Los Cementerios Secretos Del Ejército Peruano* (Lima, Perú: Editorial Planeta Perú S.A., 2019), 37.

¹⁵⁸ “2.1.3.4. Tomar a los pueblos por asalto,” *Informe Final*

¹⁵⁹ Zapata, *La Guerra Senderista*.

¹⁶⁰ Gorriti, *Sendero*, 215–44.

1982 that lead to violent counterinsurgency tactics. Belaúnde Terry committed an increased presence of special forces (*Sinchis*) and the Peruvian Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Aéreas Peruanas*, FAP), as well as rank-and-file soldiers to engage in direct combat with Sendero forces. Local men, particularly peasants, served within the armed forces.¹⁶¹ The Law on Compulsory Military Service (D.L. 264) passed on November 8, 1983 and the 1984 Regulation on Military Service Supreme Decree 072-84-PCM, increased the recruitment of the rural male population as the war against insurgency (both Sendero and MRTA) reached its peak.¹⁶² While women were also part of these conscription laws—those 18-45 years of age—the counterinsurgency forces most present in Ayacucho were almost exclusively male. As a result, local men were not free to join Sendero and PCP-SL’s leadership could not strategically use the information. However, rural women that had shared the same or similar experiences in navigating the physical, political, and social spaces in the countryside were capable of commanding cadres and cells. This was especially true regarding rural women who had participated in protests during the 1960s, particularly related to agrarian and education reforms. Comrade Carla became one of the most important rural women leaders that assumed the task of using her rural and urban experiences to counter state forces.

Carlota Tello Cutti became one of the most well-known stories of campesina female leadership within the Ayacucho sector of Sendero’s leadership. Tello Cutti (alias Comrade Carla and Comrade Marcela) was a local young woman from the Ayacucho region who identified with her rural and peasant roots. Her family, including her parents and siblings, had many ties to

¹⁶¹ Peru’s draft is notoriously heavily dependent on the conscription of young men from rural and more impoverished regions throughout the country. Constitución para le República de Perú (July 12, 1979), Capítulo XIII, art. 270. Documentation, Information and Research Branch (DIRB), 1995 Telephone interview with two professors of political science specializing in Peru. DIRB, 18 May 1995.

¹⁶² Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, “El servicio militar obligatorio y las leyes en el Peru,” <https://www.derechos.net/cnddhh/informes/levas2.html>.

various campesino communities in Ayacucho and the Angaraes province in the Huancavelica region. She grew up speaking Quechua and lived in a part of the countryside that was not remote or isolated from urban areas. By age 13, Tello Cutti went to live in Huamanga to work as a domestic in a lawyer's house.¹⁶³ With the troubled economy, following Velasco's successful coup and the aftermath of the agrarian reform, many families sent their young daughters to work in Lima as domestic servants whose wages went back home.¹⁶⁴ While in Huamanga, Tello Cutti improved her Spanish and studied at Mariscal Cáceres, a state-run secondary school in the city. At Mariscal Cáceres, Tello Cutti's schoolmates included other young radicals, as well as individuals affiliated with Shining Path.¹⁶⁵ However, her family grew concerned about Tello Cutti's participation in the political groups that worked as youth subsidiaries of Sendero. Elena Yparraguirre confirmed the family's concerns did have merit because Tello Cutti became involved with Sendero in some capacity while she was still in high school and participated in the 1970 teacher's strike.¹⁶⁶ Tello Cutti maintained her political activism and eventually she clandestinely lived separately from her family while receiving training as a Senderista.

Carlota Tello Cutti not only served as a leader in the capture of Ayacucho, more importantly she functioned as a gendered revolutionary bridge between the mestizo, urban Shining Path leadership and the rural militants and civilian populations. Tello Cutti quickly ascended from the rank-and-file membership to a leader in direct combat and in saboteur efforts against state infrastructures because of her prior knowledge of the region and acquired combat

¹⁶³ Victor Caycho, "Historia Secreta de Una Guerrillera (Cap. I), «Camarada Carla»: Una Mujer Que Juega Con La Muerte," *La Republica*, March 15, 1982.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Reyna M., July 13, 2017. The custom of sending young women to urban centers to provide additional income to rural families dates to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, this practice became even greater under both the Velasco and Bermudez administrations leading up to 1980's free elections.

¹⁶⁵ Caycho, "Historia Secreta de Una Guerrillera (Cap. I), «Camarada Carla»: Una Mujer Que Juega Con La Muerte."

¹⁶⁶ Antonio Zapata, "Elena Yparraguirre: La Mirada de La Número Tres" (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2016), 19.

skills. According to Iparraguirre, Tello Cutti's knowledge of Quechua was valuable as a leader because she could communicate with other peasant revolutionaries and the communities that Sendero encountered in the countryside.¹⁶⁷ Tello Cutti served as an intermediary with locals when PCP-SL militants escaped into villages after attacks or required assistance from the population. Like revolutionary women in Cuba, who were also from rural communities, Tello Cutti provided the moral authority of Sendero¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the Sendero women of rural origins with Quechua-speaking abilities engendered more support and appeal for joining PCP-SL than the university students and teachers who were outsiders or not members of rural communities.¹⁶⁹ Apart from her language abilities, Tello Cutti used her knowledge of Ayacucho and the neighboring Angaraes region to assist other Sendero leaders in planning and leading operations that raided police outposts, which required quick escapes into isolated areas that were unknown to outsiders.

Tello Cutti's success as a guerrilla leader on the surface fit into the trope of the resentful, hypermasculine female radical. Tello Cutti's exploits became widely known as news sources and state forces monitored her many missions that disrupted civilian life and targeted security forces.¹⁷⁰ In one of her many missions, Tello Cutti and her cadre stopped a civilian passenger microbus that was traveling from the urban center of Huamanga to nearby remote towns in a strategically remote location. Tello Cutti ordered her group to stop the transport and began searching for state forces who may have been traveling on this microbus. Senderistas frequently engaged in this type of maneuver to monitor army and police forces. In this encounter, a naval

¹⁶⁷ Antonio Zapata, "Elena Yparraguirre," 18.

¹⁶⁸ Julie D. Shayne, *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 132–33. Linda A. Klouzal, *Women and Rebel Communities in the Cuban Insurgent Movement, 1952-1959* (Youngstown, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2008), 334–35.

¹⁶⁹ "2.1.3.2. Del discurso a la acción consecuente," *Informe Final*, 20.

¹⁷⁰ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*, 100-103. Ricardo Uceda, *Muerte En El Pentagonito: Los Cementerios Secretos Del Ejército Peruano* (Lima, Perú: Editorial Planeta Perú S.A., 2019).

reservist was returning home from running errands. The squad forced the man off the microbus and kidnapped the reservist accusing him of being a spy for state forces. According to Elena Iparraguirre, Tello Cutti ordered her subordinates to execute the man.¹⁷¹ This sort of ambush of military and police personnel doing daily chores among the civilian population served to strike at armed forces by forcing a consistent atmosphere of physical confrontations.¹⁷² Furthermore, this behavior also intimidated counterinsurgency efforts among local officials and private citizens. As a result of this and other violent acts, press in Lima published stories about Tello Cutti as a vengeful, resentful peasant woman. In the *La Republica* article “Secret history of a female guerrilla,” Victor Cayacho described her as “bitter and rancorous” as well as having a “surly and resentful character.”¹⁷³ Shining Path leaned into this mystique of Tello Cutti in a February 23, 1983 story published in *Marka*, which discussed her fierce nature as a leader and her willingness to be the executioner of public justice in a manner that was—“cold, energetic, audacious.”¹⁷⁴ Tello Cutti’s exploits distinctively made her into both a symbol of the revolution and placed a target on her back.

The rural women who voluntarily joined PCP-SL had an impact on the course of the insurgency. These women were visible at all levels of Sendero forces within Ayacucho providing gendered labor, tactical and logistical work, armed insurgency, serving as community liaisons, leading cadres, and even assisting in planning the most well-known retrieval of incarcerated militants from a local prison. Nevertheless, because of the clandestine nature of their labor, these rural Senderista women do not appear in the official records outside of arrest records and

¹⁷¹ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*, 18.

¹⁷² Zapata, *La guerra senderista*, 100-103. Ricardo Caro Cárdenas, “Ser Mujer, Joven y Senderista: Género y Pánico Moral En Las Percepciones de Sendero Luminoso,” *Instituto de Pastoral Andina*, 2006, 1–22.

¹⁷³ Caycho, “Historia Secreta de Una Guerrillera (Cap. I), «Camarada Carla»: Una Mujer Que Juega Con La Muerte.”

¹⁷⁴ “Carlota Tello Cutti, Dos Veces Muerta,” *El Diario Marka*, February 23, 1983.

anecdotal discussions in testimonies. Klouzal poignantly noted that in guerrilla movements it is “difficult to track the extent of activism” and argued that it is problematic to deduce from few references to women in documents and publications that they participated solely in limited, more gendered ways.¹⁷⁵ This erasure is particularly true in revolutionary movements where the state labeled Sendero affiliates and sympathizers as terrorist under penalty of at least twenty-five years of prison. Rural women who chose to participate in criminal acts took advantage of the law of repentance (*ley de arrepentimiento*, Ley No. 26220) and as a consequence did not provide testimonies regarding their roles and duties as Senderistas.¹⁷⁶ As a result, Sendero rural women are obscured in the archives where PCP-SL documents and the testimony of witnesses does not reflect the impact of their labor and contributions to Sendero as combatants and, more significantly, as liaisons with the rural populations of Ayacucho during the first half of the 1980s. In fact, Shining Path understood the value of their labor and when rural women combatants and leaders like Carlotta Tello Cutti were executed by Peruvian military forces, PCP-SL recruited more rural women under threat of violence.

2.3 Gendered Labor and the Daily Conduct of Guerilla Warfare

As Shining Path pushed into the second phase of its military plans in 1983 and counterinsurgency forces increased in 1984, PCP-SL needed to find more people in the Ayacuchan countryside to provide the labor necessary to continue its efforts. Sendero intensified its intimidation on the individuals from these isolated communities after 1986, when the Peruvian military began to empower and provide supplies for self-defense forces in rural villages

¹⁷⁵ Klouzal, *Women and Rebel Communities in the Cuban Insurgent Movement, 1952-1959*, 315.

¹⁷⁶ La Ley de Arrepentimiento, or the Repentance Law, which was approved by Congress in May 1992 and signed by President Alberto Fujimori on August 13, 1993, includes clauses that benefit members of armed groups who provide information that facilitates the capture of other presumed members of armed groups. These individuals must also renounce their affiliation with such groups and never again identify as a party member or associate with others. All information must be surrendered to Peruvian intelligence forces for a full pardon. Often individuals will minimize their participation to take advantage of this law and avoid long-term imprisonment.

to fight Shining Path simultaneously. From 1986 through 1992, Sendero specifically targeted the rural population of women and youth to incorporate forcibly in PCP-SL's and to provide labor at base camps and in skirmishes with counterinsurgency forces. Sendero used these coerced women in distinct ways from the insurgents that freely joined. Shining Path leaders forced rural captive women and girls in base camps to provide gendered labor—cooking, cleaning, childrearing, making clothes, and acquiring the food and goods—necessary for daily life. However, this type of gendered labor grew in importance as guerrilla war continued in 1992. Although these women and girls labored under threat, their acknowledgement as victims of Shining Path's violence does not delegitimize the importance of such labor in not only maintaining quotidian life, but overall, the continuance of PCP-SL's entire revolutionary project.

As Shining Path forces expanded control over the department of Ayacucho from 1981 through 1988, militants forcibly recruited peasants to provide basic subsistence. Early in the first phase of Sendero's military plan—launching the revolution—the organization noticed the potential of rural communities to provide a labor force that would allow trained insurgents to focus on the frontlines.¹⁷⁷ The rural women and men who chose to join PCP-SL had trained to become insurgents. Nevertheless, the rural women became responsible for communal tasks, like domestic duties.¹⁷⁸ When PCP-SL launched its second phase in 1981, which lasted until 1983, the guerrilla warfare intensified and Sendero needed the trained insurgents to focus on combat and saboteur missions.¹⁷⁹ It was at this point that Shining Path chose to more actively harness the labor force that was not already committed to the revolution. In the Chungui district of rural Ayacucho, Sendero forces took over the village and forced the community to provide support for

¹⁷⁷ "8.4 Conclusiones," *Informe Final*, Tomo VI, 452.

¹⁷⁸ Zapata, *La guerra senderista*, 77. Gorriti, *Sendero*, 212-214.

¹⁷⁹ "8.4 Conclusiones," *Informe Final*, Tomo VI, 452

insurgents. During the investigations conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's examiners identified that local people were burdened with building houses and latrines, cleaning, and raids on local police arms depots, as well as farms for food. The commission's published *Final Report* noted that Sendero also forced young girls to provide labor and train to become militants:

The PCP-SL had a persistent, repetitive, and continuous policy of forced recruitment of boys and girls, especially in the areas of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Húanuco and Junín. Considering children as part of the "Popular Guerrilla Army," for this he formed the organization of the "pioneer children" or "red pioneers." Who from a very early age carried out surveillance, espionage, food provision, among others. From the age of 12, the "main force" taught the pioneer children the use and manipulation of weapons, spears, knives, and slings. The objective was to train them to participate in armed actions and in clashes.¹⁸⁰

Sendero had use for girls and women regardless of their age. By obtaining girls at an early age and training them for missions, PCP-SL believed the girls would grow to have a strong loyalty. Even if adult women were reluctant to join, Sendero threatened the lives of their families and children. Sendero militants used both genders in attacks on commercial food transports as well as on military and police supply posts in rural areas.¹⁸¹ Susana—a woman who lived in a peasant community outside of Huamanga—recalled that Sendero forces would use individuals with a relationship to the people or locations targeted for an attack. Sendero would take young women to serve as decoys.¹⁸² Starting in 1982, Sendero launched its most violent engagement on rural populations, forcibly requiring peasant communities to take the place of fallen insurgents.¹⁸³ By

¹⁸⁰ "8.4 Conclusiones," *Informe Final*, Tomo VI, 452.

¹⁸¹ Interview with S. Tello, July 7, 2017.

¹⁸² Interview with S. Tello, May 13, 2018.

¹⁸³ Benedicto Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo En El Perú: El Abc de Sendero Luminoso y El MRTA Ampliado y Comentado* (Lima, Perú, 2000).

1984, the rise in casualties among Senderistas in Ayacucho due to increased military presence created a bigger demand for bodies on the front line and support workers in base camps.¹⁸⁴

Increasing guerrilla warfare with local police and Peruvian military forces in 1984 meant that Sendero relied more heavily on the labor of coerced rural women. Trained insurgents who had declared loyalty to Sendero needed to remain engaged in battle. Women who had previously performed gendered labor for fellow insurgents needed to return to the frontlines for sustained armed combat. As a result, Sendero forces occupied whole villages in regions like the Chungui district and demanded local peasant women to take over the gendered work of supporting the insurgents. Sendero leaders tasked the women of Chungui district with preparing food and “supportive hospitality” to the militants. In an interview with Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigators, a rural woman from the community of Huamblpa (Ayacucho), recalled that older women had to prepare *chicha de jora* (maize alcohol) to the insurgents during occupation by PCP-SL. Additionally, this rural woman stated that the local women had to use their skills to make yarn and textiles for clothing.¹⁸⁵ Preparing food stuffs was another type of labor Sendero sought from rural women.

Shining Path placed the crucial responsibility of managing food preparation for combatants and leaders on coerced peasant women. Sendero forces and leadership needed access to food and water to continue fighting daily. Much like camp followers and other secondary assistants in other conflicts, rural peasant women provided a staggering amount of work in food preparation.¹⁸⁶ In the case of Senderistas, the peasant women worked long hours peeling potatoes and shucking corn in copious quantities for insurgents and other militants living in the

¹⁸⁴ del Pino, “Familia.” Zapata, *La guerra senderista*, 200-204

¹⁸⁵ “BDI-P110, Notas del Campo,” *Informe Final*, 2003, 110.

¹⁸⁶ Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 77.

clandestine encampments.¹⁸⁷ Women were also responsible for collecting the food stuffs necessary for cooking. Sendero leaders would then distribute the food prepared and gathered by the captive women to other encampments in strategic locations to maintain the chain of supply for insurgents moving throughout the region.¹⁸⁸ A peasant woman from the community of Accomarca (Ayacucho), recalled for Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigators, that women worked at a grueling daily pace that often resulted in chronically injured hands.¹⁸⁹ Not only did captive peasant women need to cook, but the younger ones were responsible for serving leaders, while the rank-and-file served themselves the remaining food. Providing nutritional sustenance, whether forced to do so or not, was important for everyone to continue with daily routines on the battlefield and in the camp. Thus, the simple tasks of feeding and maintaining a steady flow of supplies for insurgents had a broader impact on the long revolutionary project.

Despite strong rhetorical commitment to women's equality and emancipation, Sendero Luminoso—like other armies and guerrilla groups—reinforced gender norms that subordinated women to men. Sendero acknowledged the double burden placed on women, especially the peasant when the Party incorporated the ideological arguments of the Popular Women's Movement, (*Movimiento Femenino Popular*, MFP) into their own declarations. Both Sendero and MFP spoke about the oppression women faced under capitalism in both the public and private spheres,

The woman continues to be a slave of the home despite all the liberating laws because she is overwhelmed, oppressed, brutalized, and humiliated by the small domestic chores, which turn her into a

¹⁸⁷ “BDI-P110, Notas del Campo,” *Informe Final*, 2003, 110.

¹⁸⁸ Mariella Villasante Cervello, “Por El Reconocimiento de Víctimas de Los Campos de Internamiento Senderistas,” *Boletín Del IDEHPUCP*, February 10, 2015, 7, <http://idehpucp.pucp.pe/comunicaciones/opinion/por-el-reconocimiento-de-las-victimas-de-los-campos-de-internamiento-senderistas/>.

¹⁸⁹ “BDI-P70 Notas del Campo” *Informe Final*, 2003, 70.

cook and a nanny who waste her activity in an absurdly unproductive, petty job, enervating, stultifying and annoying."¹⁹⁰

Nevertheless, Sendero leaders forced these tasks and roles onto Indigenous and peasant women held captive in their camps and occupied villages. In his well-known 1988 interview with *La Marka*, Abimael Guzmán declared that "the poor peasantry, mainly, is the one who takes a crust from [their] mouth to give us, the one who gives us a piece of [their] blanket, the one who gives us a little place in [their] hut; it is [they] who sustains us, supports us and gives us even [their] blood."¹⁹¹ In reality, Guzmán and other Sendero leaders believed it was the duty of peasant to provide for the revolutionaries. As a result, Senderistas assigned the unwilling women to perform tasks that the women were already doing in their communities. However, as Mallon stated, "women's work was multiplied significantly by the war effort, giving the lie to the assumption that 'women had to do this work anyway.'"¹⁹² Sendero exploited their labor in the lowest positions within the organization's structure without benefit to the women; at least in their communities their families.

Nevertheless, scholarship that focuses solely on the exploitative nature of this labor and the violence these women endured under Sendero captivity diminishes the importance of gendered labor to any guerrilla war. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's published work, including the *Final Report*, supported the claims of captive women as victims of the war between Shining Path and the Peruvian state.¹⁹³ However, the information gathered by Truth and Reconciliation investigators on the women forced into serving Sendero frames discussions of that labor as evidence of the duress the women experienced. In reassessing the labor as a key

¹⁹⁰ Catalina Adrianzen, Elena Iparraguirre, and Augusta La Torre, "Por Una Linea de Clase En El Movimiento Femenino Popular: El Marxismo Mariátegui Y El Movimiento Femenino" (Bandera Roja, 1975).

¹⁹¹ "Presidente Gonzalo Rompe El Silencio. Entrevista En La Clandestinidad," *El Diario Marka*, July 24, 1988.

¹⁹² Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 77.

¹⁹³ "2.3. Los casos de Chungui y de la Oreja de Perro," *Informe Final*, Tomo V."

component of the prolonged war, expands arguments about the value of women's labor. Karen Kampwirth's research on women's participation in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador during the 1980s, showed that the range of guerrilla work for women included gendered labor in camp life:

Further evidence of the breadth of the category of guerrilla was provided by another study of 1,100 Salvadoran women who had been demobilized by the United Nations. Of those demobilized guerrillas, 28.8 percent reported that they had worked as cooks, 15 percent had been health workers, 15.2 percent were combatants, 10.7 percent had been part of the base of support, and 40.3 percent had carried out some other sort of work (Fundación 16 de Enero 1993, 10).¹⁹⁴

In the case of the women of FMLN, their labor was not coerced and as women and girls in these studies chose to join the guerrilla for assorted reasons. Yet, it is the same work and had the same value to the success of FMLN. Kampwirth identified this type of work as “low prestige,” because as support workers, the women often experienced discrimination by others in camps and by the leadership.¹⁹⁵ Not only did other Sendero members and leaders perceive this labor as women's work, but so did the Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigators. As Kampwirth stated, “with regard to the viability of the guerrilla forces, providers of food were at least as critical as combatants.”¹⁹⁶ By 1988, when Sendero Luminoso started to lose control over the Ayacucho region, forced labor from rural women reached its most pivotal point because voluntary recruits were dwindling. At this point, Shining Path went to neighboring departments like Apurimac and raided villages for more female laborers in these previously untapped regions.

¹⁹⁴ Karen Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 13–15.

¹⁹⁵ Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements*, 2002, 13.

¹⁹⁶ Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements*, 2002, 15.

Sendero continued to use captive women's labor for years after the 1992 capture of Abimael Guzmán.

The rural women of Ayacucho's labor within Shining Path varied from 1980 through 1992 had a major impact on the insurgency. The promise made by the Popular Women's Movement in "Marxism, Mariátegui, and the Popular Women's Movement," that "emancipation of women will begin [...] when she [woman] begins her mass transformation into a great socialist economy," proved to be relevant only to the rural women who chose to join the masses of their own accord.¹⁹⁷ For these committed revolutionaries, they were able to represent rural women's concerns, obtain leadership positions, prove themselves as insurgents, and put equity into the revolution as MFP said was necessary to ensure their place in the new society. In contrast, the peasant and Indigenous women of Ayacucho who joined under threat of death or other intimidation did not find emancipation or an equal place. Instead, their reluctance or refusal to join Sendero gave PCP-SL leaders a justification to maintain these women in subordinate roles beneath under all militants and combatants regardless of gender or ethnicity. Nevertheless, Shining Path leaders were conscious of the need for women to provide labor to guerrillas on the front lines and as forced caregivers away from front lines. The rural women of Ayacucho were valuable assets to the revolution.

¹⁹⁷ Movimiento Femenino Popular, "El Marxismo, Mariátegui y El Movimiento Femenino."

CHAPTER THREE

Seizing Opportunities for Leadership, Authority, and Influence in Urban Lima

On April 26, 1987, *El Comercio* published the story, "Woman street vendor commanded an assassination squad," that circulated throughout Lima sensationalizing the capture of a female cadre leader by the Directorate Against Terrorism (DIRECOTE).¹⁹⁸ Rosario Margarita Salinas Anoyo, alias Comrade Sandra, directed an assassination squad consisting of three male Senderistas who had previously participated in at least five assassinations and attempted to rob banks throughout the capital city beginning in July 1986.¹⁹⁹ She was described as a dark-skinned, medium-height, thirty-year-old, thin woman who appeared docile, but behind this façade hid a "stone-cold terrorist."²⁰⁰ The newspaper account continued to profile the Sendero militant by explaining how Sandra moved throughout the city, posing as an unassuming street vendor who lived in the marginalized neighborhood known as El Agustino. From her hideout in this low-income sector on the outskirts of Lima, Sandra could operate without police knowledge. She also allegedly maintained a stockpile of arms and explosive materials for easy access by Sendero cadres. As Lima's citizens read about Sandra and other Sendero women from marginalized neighborhoods, the newspaper stories heightened anxiety and brought the guerrilla war from far-off rural provinces to the heavily-populated capital. However, in fact, female Senderistas from low-income neighborhoods had established a presence in Lima much earlier and performed a wide range of covert revolutionary work beyond acts of violence.

As early as 1972, Augusta La Torre and other early female members of Shining Path started organizing women in the marginalized neighborhoods (*barrios marginales*), human

¹⁹⁸ Nazario Tapia Zamora, José Julio Egoavil Martínez, and Darraan Huallpa Mollehaunca. "Vendedora Ambulante."

¹⁹⁹ Zamora, "Vendedora Ambulante."

²⁰⁰ Zamora, "Vendedora Ambulante."

settlements (*assentamientos humanos*), and popular urbanizations in the department of Lima to gain support and membership among the urban poor and working-class female population. In 1975, the women of Sendero Luminoso held regular conventions for women's organizations—like the “women laborers from marginalized neighborhoods”—designed to recruit the "women of the 'barrios' of Lima" and introduce the party's ideology to this group of citizens.²⁰¹ By 1986, female Senderistas ran vital operations like spying on important government officials, planning attacks on foreign corporations to further destabilize the economy, attacking banks for funding to continue the insurgency, running clandestine popular schools from their homes, recruiting new members, and identifying hostile community organizers to neutralize. While the Sendero women of the marginalized neighborhoods performed tasks that *other* individuals—armed revolutionary actors in other parts of Peru—would then use for the insurgency, their significant contribution was as liaisons between the radical party members and civilian populations.²⁰² Women supported the revolution but also existed in a space between the civilian population and revolutionaries by representing the party and building inroads with their neighbors to create support networks of sympathizers.²⁰³ The women served an integral role in the long revolutionary process that waged urban guerrilla warfare in Lima and contributed to more extensive insurgency efforts for over two decades.

3.1 The Women on the Outskirts of Lima Society

Who were the women of the marginalized neighborhoods and squatter settlements?

Sendero focused its efforts on utilizing women from squatter settlements like Pueblo Libre, Breña, El Agustino, Ate, San Martín de Porres, Comas, Villa El Salvador, Raucana, San Juan de

²⁰¹ Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

²⁰² Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection.

²⁰³ Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection.

Lurigancho, and La Victoria to spearhead revolutionary work within their own communities. The women of these lower-income communities represented a wide range of ethnicities: Indigenous (Quechuas, Asháninka, Aymara, Awajú) and mixed race (*mestizas*).²⁰⁴ They came from Lima and other regional areas: Andean highlands (*serranas*), the altiplano, provincial capitals, the coastal region, and the Amazon. Although most had basic primary education, there were also women with secondary education, professional training, and even university education. While they were all living in working-class and lower-income neighborhoods, their occupations varied from established industrial labor to informal economy jobs like domestic workers, childcare providers, and street vendors.²⁰⁵ The women also ranged in marital status from single to married, with children or childfree, and many as heads of female household, the ability for the women to blend into communities and draw upon shared experiences with their neighbors made them valuable assets for Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL). These women were on the lowest rungs of the Peruvian economic hierarchy and did not hold positions of power within mainstream society in Lima. Lima's other classes often overlooked these women as part of the indistinguishable, popular masses and disregarded their presence in important spaces.²⁰⁶ The backgrounds, ethnicities, and positions in the capital of these women made them capable of fulfilling roles and executing work for Sendero Luminoso while living in plain sight.

The women who lived on the “outskirts of Lima” were both geographically on the edges of urban sprawl and metaphorically on the margins of the capital’s socioeconomic hierarchy. The lower-working-class women of Sendero in Lima lived in and identified as members of these

²⁰⁴ “Lista de pueblos indígenas u originarios,” Base de Datos de Pueblos Indígenas u Originarios, August 08, 2023. <https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/pueblos-indigenas>

²⁰⁵ Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University. Burt, *Political Violence*, 91-102.

²⁰⁶ Burt, *Political Violence*, 91-102.

neighborhood communities. In 1961, Peru's National Office of Planification and Urbanization (*Oficina Nacional de Planeamiento y Urbanismo*, ONPU) defined marginalized neighborhoods as,

The area of land owned by the public, municipal, communal or private property (...) in which, due to invasion and regardless of legal provisions on the property, with or without municipal authorization, on lots distributed without officially approved layout plans, housing groups of any structure have been constituted, said area as a whole lacking one or more of the following services: drinking water, drainage, lighting, sidewalks, vehicular traffic routes, etc.²⁰⁷

Marginalized neighborhoods were not only physically outside of the city center, but mainstream Lima society also ostracized them as “shanty towns” (*barriadas*).²⁰⁸ Moreover, the inhabitants also became associated with negative stereotypes that became “deeply embedded in a highly exclusionary social system” and evolved from paternalism and contempt for decades of migration from other regional departments throughout Peru.²⁰⁹ Similar pejorative connotations existed for the women and communities from the squatter settlements. Squatter settlements were areas where groups of families established ownership of land without legal title. According to the United States Department of State, “tens of thousands in Lima’s *pueblos jovenes* do not have electricity or water [...] Trash is piling up in the streets [...]” and these areas lacked basic infrastructure drainage, or paved streets.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ In the past, these areas were known as shanty towns (*barriadas*), young towns (*pueblos Jovenes*), and encroachments (*invasiones*). The popular urbanization has similar characteristics and is differentiated by its access to land through irregular purchases of land.

²⁰⁸ Historically, these marginalized areas outside of Lima appeared in the 1920s, the areas exploded with new communities after the 1950s. Cecilia Blondet, “La Situacion de La Mujer En El Peru 1980-1994,” *Estudio de Genero, No. 1* (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1994).

²⁰⁹ Julio Cotler, “Peru since 1960,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 451–508.

²¹⁰ “Can the Government of Peru Defeat Sendero Luminoso?,” Confidential Report (Joint Staff Info Service Center, November 1990), 2.

Many of the women from these neighborhoods who joined Sendero had migrated from both the rural and urban sectors of the Andean highland regions and had brought with them grievances against the Peruvian state. Migration from the provinces that formed the central and southern sierras of Peru had steadily continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century, creating substantial community of migrants within the urban population.²¹¹ However, not all the women were Indigenous or peasants from the rural areas, many had already lived within the smaller towns and major cities of places like Ayacucho, Arequipa, and Cusco.²¹² The women who identified as Indigenous and lived in more isolated, rural areas before coming to Lima commonly had a limited formal education due to their lack of access to schools. As for the peasant population, their proximity to marketplaces and urban centers increased their likelihood of formal education and the ability to speak, read, and write in both Quechua and Spanish.²¹³ Nevertheless, the women of the sierras faced extensive prejudice and discrimination that limited their options for employment. Although some were able to find work in the industrial manufacturing sector of Lima, the majority of the women from the sierras had to rely on obtaining work through the informal economy as street vendors, selling in marketplaces, and as domestic workers for affluent and middle-class families. During a 1984 interview by a *New York Times* reporter, the twenty-three year old Sendero member Lilian Torres from one of Lima's marginalized neighborhoods recounted how she had "worked as a maid and a street vendor" since she had arrived in the capital at seventeen. Torres claimed to have been afraid at first "'to join the party,' [...] but she became aware of her responsibility once she learned about 'the class

²¹¹ Rousseau, *Women's Citizenship in Peru*, 98-101.

²¹² Rousseau, *Women's Citizenship in Peru*, 98-101.

²¹³ Marlise Simons, "'Shining Path' More than a Name for Peruvian Guerrillas: Guerrillas," *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1984, 42.

struggle,” from female Senderistas who lived in her community.²¹⁴ Women militants employed as domestic workers gathered important intelligence and other information for use in larger insurgency plots. Women like Torres in Sendero adapted the same tactic to their places within Lima's middle- and upper-class homes. Despite being on the lowest rung of Lima society, these women had access to strategic locations and people that was due to the prejudices against provincial women.

Aside from rural migrants, poor non-white women from the capital joined Sendero from working-class neighborhoods in the center of Lima and Callao. Both scholars and the Peruvian state broadly classified the women of Sendero as peasants within the party's rural campaign, but this terminology ignored Sendero's substantial following among urban women.²¹⁵ The marginalized neighborhoods around Lima contained women who were first- or second-generation limeñas, but had Indigenous roots, as well as a higher concentration of mestizo women.²¹⁶ A substantial number of the women who joined Shining Path belonged to the city's low-wage labor sector that worked in industrial labor, food service, and retail.²¹⁷ Others worked in the informal economy as street vendors, domestic workers, and caregivers. While few were small business owners or relied on the wages of others in the family.²¹⁸ However, unlike the migrant women, those born and raised in the capital received greater educational instruction.²¹⁹ In fact, many went on to university despite their socioeconomic position. Sendero sought to gain

²¹⁴ Simons, “‘Shining Path’ More than a Name for Peruvian Guerrillas Guerrillas,” 42.

²¹⁵ Robin Azevedo and Delacroix, “Categorización Étnica.”

²¹⁶ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 61-68.

²¹⁷ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 61-68. Interview with Z. Alleman.

²¹⁸ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 61-68. Interview with Z. Alleman.

²¹⁹ Juan Marcos Martínez Mendoza, “Política Educativa y Construcciones Escolares En El Distrito de La Victoria (Perú) Durante El Gobierno de Odría, 1948-1956,” *Historia y Memoria de La Educación*, no. 17 (December 18, 2022): 320–21, <https://doi.org/10.5944/hme.17.2023.32051>.

the participation of first-generation university students from the popular urbanizations with propaganda that stated:

Every year the problem in the training and performance of professionals in general and women in particular worsens. It is precisely linked to the crisis in Peruvian society, since the State, increasingly reactionary, denies them the future... who should professional women expect from this old system? In short nothing. It is an order where professionals see the ideals of forging themselves and serving the people truncated... the only way for professional women is to assume their role as a revolutionary intellectual.²²⁰

As with other militant women leaders in Lima, not all students were drawn from the elite, but grew up in poverty, and acted on their grievances by joining revolutionary movements.²²¹ As Karen Kampwirth has suggested, there is no reason to portray revolutionary militants, participants, or guerrillas as either students or peasants, when the women of these marginalized areas demonstrated that they fall into both categories. In fact, the university students were on their way to upward mobility based on their education. Thus, there was no such thing as a typical woman of the masses in the marginalized areas.

3.2 Urban Insurgents and Gendered Revolutionary Bridges

The women of the marginalized neighborhoods brought a wide range of experiences, skills, and connections that made it possible for Sendero to expand its presence in Lima. Female Senderistas circulated throughout their communities and other lower-income areas using their gender and status to serve as liaisons, gendered revolutionary bridges, between the party and the masses.²²² As gendered revolutionary bridges, these women performed what PCP-SL referred to as “community outreach”—recruitment events, popular schools, listening to concrete complains,

²²⁰ Sendero Luminoso, “Por La Emancipación de La Mujer,” *El Diario Marka*, March 13, 1988.

²²¹ Karen Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 155.

²²² Shayne, *The Revolution Question*, 43.

resolving domestic issues, providing social and economic support when possible—that created more rapport with individuals in the communities and establishing a network of sympathizers willing to provide cover and supplies without joining PCP-SL.²²³ Sendero women from these areas also used their gender and socioeconomic place in society to perform logistical work such as gathering arms and monetary funds, obtaining valuable information, and provided an informal order in these state-light places to gain approval for the revolution and recruit new members for the party.²²⁴ Additionally, women militants found opportunities for leadership and gained authority on the local level due to PCP-SL's own disorganization in the Metropolitan Regional Committee.²²⁵ These militants used gender norms and the prejudices against the women of Lima's popular communities to conduct tasks that facilitated interrelated goals for Shining Path and to claim a leadership location for themselves.

3.2.1 *Curating Strategic Relationships and Recruitment*

The main task Sendero women performed was to represent Shining Path in their marginalized neighborhoods on a more relatable basis and create rapport with people who were undecided about joining the insurgency. When Sendero women served as examples of revolutionary women and had to model what it meant to be part of the revolution for people not familiar with Shining Path ideology. Sendero women attempted to socialize with neighbors and acquaintances and advocate for Shining Path, they often did so within their homes. In theory, the home was the private sphere that protected Shining Path women. There Sendero women could hold conversations about current events and measure the disposition of individuals in the area to allow insurgency work. Sendero women built rapport with their neighbors through conversations

²²³ Militante del PCP 2, "Sobre camarada Norah: testimonios de militantes del PCP" - Testimonio 2, August 29, 2015, https://presospoliticosdelperu.blogspot.com/2015/09/sobre-camarada-norah-testimonios-de_26.html,

²²⁴ Burt, *Political Violence*, 137-138.

²²⁵ Zapata, *La Guerra Senderista*.

about the price of groceries, the lack of employment opportunities, and even the state violence perpetrated in rural departments like Ayacucho, Apurimac, and Huancavelica, as well as in Lima.²²⁶ In fact, female Senderistas who were originally from rural departments throughout Peru sought out fellow provincial expats to create a connection and try to build solidarity between the people and Senderistas.²²⁷

Women accepted minimal-risk invitations to socialize with non-Sendero women from the neighborhoods where they lived or worked to make inroads on behalf of PCP-SL. In testimony provided by an imprisoned Sendero militant who worked in the low-income area of La Balanza in the district of Comas, she recalled that her interactions with non-member women of the neighborhood often led to invitations by local women to eat lunch.²²⁸ In this way, the popular women of Sendero had an advantage in reaching local communities, in contrast to Abimael Guzmán, Elena Iparraguirre, and other leaders in the Politburo that grew increasingly isolated.²²⁹ Simple interactions like sharing food did not draw attention from security forces but allowed Sendero women to engage in conversations that could lead to sharing Sendero ideology in a casual manner rather than through public manifestations and long speeches. The other benefit to low-key interactions with social groups for Sendero women was the minimal-risk opportunity to find the spaces in the low-income areas that would ignore Sendero activity in the heat of the moment. Sendero women could identify the people who would ally themselves with state forces. In casual conversations, they could learn information about routines crucial to the timing of guerrilla events or when Sendero needed to transport materials or insurgents. Sendero women

²²⁶ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 61-68.

²²⁷ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 61-68.

²²⁸ Militante del PCP 2, "Sobre camarada Norah: testimonios de militantes del PCP" - Testimonio 2, August 29, 2015, https://presospoliticosdelperu.blogspot.com/2015/09/sobre-camarada-norah-testimonios-de_26.html.

²²⁹ Zapata, *La Guerra Senderista*.

worked within established and accepted female relationships to connect the revolution to marginalized civilian women.

The story of Senderista Sylvia Solórzano illustrates a common experience of militants who lived in marginal neighborhoods throughout Lima and cultivated gendered revolutionary relations with her community. Born in Lima in 1945, Solórzano was the daughter of parents who migrated from the rural provinces to the capital in the 1940s. Like most of the transplants from other departments throughout Peru, Solórzano's family lived in a working-class neighborhood in the newly-populated areas on the outskirts of Lima.²³⁰ Solórzano's family worked as singers and casual laborers but also had socialist political leanings. In the late 1960s, Solórzano formally joined the Communist Party of Peru in Lima—not to be confused with the faction that became Sendero Luminoso.²³¹ Solórzano did not receive a college education, but as many women from working-class backgrounds, sought to improve her economic situations while working as a secretary. By 1970, she worked as a secretary for a high-ranking official in the Communist Party of Peru at their offices on Plaza Dos de Mayo in Central Lima. According to the personal accounts of Jose Carlos Agüero—Solórzano's son and Peruvian scholar—Solórzano may have worked for the Peruvian Communist Party leader, Jorge Prado.²³² She eventually resigned and joined first the New Left Movement (*Movimiento Nueva Izquierda*) and then the Revolutionary Leftist Movement (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, MIR) to become more involved in politicizing the masses. During her work with the MIR, Solórzano traveled to the central sierras

²³⁰ Solórzano's mother was a seamstress, while her uncles were singers of *musica criolla* in bars around Lima. There is no direct mention of her father. "El hijo," *Radio Ambulante* (NPR, October 16, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/657053154>.

²³¹ The Communist Party of Peru broadly and not one of the offshoots that formed following internal ideological debates.

²³² Her son Jose Carlos Agüero believes she may have worked for Jorge Prado a leader in the PCP at the time and other men in charge of the party in the late 1960s. Michael J. Lazzara and Charles F. Walker, "A Conversation with José Carlos Agüero," in *The Surrendered: Reflections by a Son of Shining Path* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

to work in the rural areas of Junín and Huancayo. Solórzano engaged with labor unions, miners' guilds, and campesinos, spreading leftist ideology and recruiting new members to agitate for change against the governments of both Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) and Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980). However, during her time in the provinces, Solórzano worked for weeks in remote areas and lost contact with the party. Cut off from MIR's support networks, Solórzano had no way of supporting or maintaining herself and had to find help from sympathetic leftists in other parties.²³³ Solórzano learned how to engender sympathy and create relationships with non-militants during her time in the countryside. Solórzano eventually married another leftist activist, Juan Manuel Agüero—an engineering student from a working-class neighborhood in Lima—in the early 1970s formed a family and continued political activism. Solórzano and Juan Manuel Agüero became disillusioned with the politics of both the New Leftist Movement and MIR, so they joined Sendero Luminoso in 1982. By the time Solórzano joined PCP-SL, she had developed vital tactical experience from her prior political activism and brought this knowledge into her underground work as a Senderista.

Solórzano hosted social gatherings with friends and colleagues from her work in leftist circles, as well as neighbors in her own home to advocate for Shining Path. Solórzano and her family settled down in the marginalized neighborhood of El Agustino, a district within Lima founded on January 6, 1965, with a long history of settlement by migrants from other parts of Peru and with a low-income population. At the informal dinner parties at her home, she and her husband would gather people around their table and have conversations about politics. This was not an uncommon form of socializing in Peru, particularly during the politically active years of

²³³ These sympathetic leftists included a physics professor named Marco Antonio Briones, Sybila Arredondo, and Sybila's daughter. Both women would later have ties to PCP-SL. Lazzara and Walker, "A Conversation with José Carlos Agüero"

the 1980s. Outwardly, these gatherings did not arouse major suspicion since it was simply a gathering of old friends and new acquaintances. Solórzano cultivated bonds of affection with her guests that to outsiders looked like any other social gathering. However, in creating that trust and ease she could then leverage this rapport on behalf of Sendero Luminoso. Even individuals who did not become militant party members had a purpose. Solórzano secured the cooperation of individuals within her social networks to perform minor favors and tasks related to information gathering or passing along or hiding packages.²³⁴ Solórzano incorporated this tactic of recruiting and exposing working-class neighbors to leftist ideas from her prior work for MIR into her Sendero duties. Her son, Jose Agüero recalled that Solórzano invited fellow militants from leftist political activist groups and parties to interact with neighbors not involved with PCP-SL.²³⁵ Thus, Solórzano 's neighborhood knew about her activities, but recalled that she did not recruit openly for state and police officials to witness. In fact, Agüero explained that young Senderistas frequently interacted with non-party member acquaintances of Solórzano and spoke about Sendero in vague terms like "el P" or "the P" for "party" (i.e., political party; "*el Partido*"). Furthermore, when Solórzano talked about operative plans and missions with other militants, they would employ the phrase "*tareas del P*" meaning homework or tasks assigned by the PCP-SL.²³⁶ In this manner, Solórzano could collaborate with other party members and pass along orders under the guise of quotidian activities.

Solórzano's made deliberate choices with whom she established relationships and built networks that, in turn would contribute to important guerrilla duties in Sendero's plan to conquer

²³⁴ José Carlos Agüero, *Los rendidos: sobre el don de perdonar*, 20 (Lima: IEP Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2015). "CVR Informe Final, 1.1.5.1," 85-86.

²³⁵ José Carlos Agüero, *Los rendidos: sobre el don de perdonar*, 20 (Lima: IEP Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2015), 195, Kindle. José Carlos Agüero, *Persona*, Colección Tezontle (Lima, Perú: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2019), 46.

²³⁶ Agüero, *Los rendidos: sobre el don de perdonar*, 20.

Lima through the marginalized neighborhoods. Solórzano understood the dangers of inviting random people into her home. Accordingly, Solórzano targeted specific individuals based on what they could contribute to the party rather than just the person's level of enthusiasm for revolutionary change. Shining Path was particularly interested in recruiting university students who lived in these neighborhoods. University students living in marginalized neighborhoods were commonly migrants from the Peruvian countryside who had migrated to live in these areas with family or due to the low cost and proximity to others of their ethnic or regional identification. While these university students were from lower-income roots, due to their education they were now part of the rising middle-class. Sendero also recruited directly on Lima's university campuses including the National University of San Marcos, La Cantuta, Ricardo Palma University, but after 1986, the Peruvian military more heavily surveilled recruitment activities on campuses. Therefore, by establishing relationships with such students away from campus by offering of food and a sense of family as they lived far from their homes, Solórzano had a better opportunity to recruit students outside of the heavily, state-surveilled university campuses.

3.2.2 Urban “Popular Schools”

Sendero women from the low-income areas of San Martín de Porres, Comas, Villa El Salvador, and Raucana used their homes in these neighborhoods as meeting places and as underground popular schools. In the popular urbanization of San Martín de Porres, Beatriz Sarmiento Ramos (alias Comrade Betty) not only used her home to plan the assassination of military and police officials, but also maintained a popular school.²³⁷ Sarmiento Ramos was a young woman—twenty-three years old at the time of her arrest by a joint military and police

²³⁷ “Capturan a Jefa.”

operation and was described as having long black hair, dark skin tone, and small in stature, which allowed her to blend into the population of San Martín. Sarmiento Ramos conducted her duties from her house in the “El Naranjal” sector of San Martín de Porres, a squatter settlement that started as land invasions of old haciendas (e.g., hacienda Naranjal) in 1945, and formally became the District of Industrial Workers of October 27 (*Distrito Obrero Industrial 27 de Octubre*) in 1950.²³⁸ San Martín de Porres, like El Agustino, lacked a strong police presence in the early 1980s and through 1986 even after the state realized Sendero militants had established support bases and informally controlled these low-income areas. Officials such as Coronel Benedicto Jiménez Bacca—a former investigative detective in the Peruvian National Police and in the Counter-Terrorist Directorate (DIRCOTE) team that captured Abimael Guzmán—corroborate that female Senderistas in popular neighborhoods took on these risky roles with responsibilities that had far-reaching consequences in the urban theater and throughout Peru.²³⁹

3.2.3 Organizing Around Motherhood

Sendero women from marginalized neighborhoods who were mothers and female heads of household used motherhood as a point of organizing women and creating solidarity with Shining Path. The reality of life in marginalized neighborhoods during the 1980s reflected not only the economic hardships of households, but also a large number of missing or killed men from the lower-income classes. In Cecilia Blondet’s study of the effects of the civil war on displaced women who fled to Lima’s urban areas, she noted that women were among the most affected by the forced displacement. By 1992, Blondet found that 78% of the households among

²³⁸ The name of the district changed to St. Martín de Porres in 1962 after the canonization of the Peruvian saint Martín de Porres.

²³⁹ Interview with Z. Alleman, April 15, 2019.

displaced families, women became the heads of household.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, when families arrived in new neighborhoods, they often faced hostility and insensitivity by Lima-born neighbors. Mothers had to deal with the reality that their families were treated as the object of jokes, contempt, abuse and aggression by native locals.²⁴¹ Therefore, Sendero women were able to create valuable relationships with local urban mothers and offer opportunities for changes to improve conditions for families.

Sylvia Solórzano used her position as a mother living in financial hardship in El Agustino and other marginalized neighborhoods to articulate the party's ideology through maternalistic rhetoric in such a manner that negotiated alliances with a hesitant support base. Sendero women understood the value of "motherhood" as a tool since the party incorporated the language of maternalism within their communiqués.²⁴² Solórzano used a similar tactic as the Peruvian economy reached increasingly elevated inflation levels during the presidency of Alan Garcia (1985-1990).²⁴³ Solórzano emphasized income disparity and mothers' difficulty in providing for their families.²⁴⁴ Appealing to urban working women's desire to provide for their families mirrored both Augusta La Torre's actions in 1976 and MFP's early recruitment of women illustrated in "Glory to the mothers of the popular people." MFP leaders stated "but, in the midst of these difficulties, the combative role of the mothers of the town began to germinate and develop."²⁴⁵ Thereby acknowledging the intertwined the roles of motherhood and revolutionary

²⁴⁰ Cecilia Blondet et al., *La situación de la mujer en el Perú, 1980-1994* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1994), 96–97.

²⁴¹ Blondet et al., *La situación de la mujer en el Perú, 1980-1994*, 97–98.

²⁴² Rousseau, *Women's Citizenship*, 111-113.

²⁴³ "El hijo"

²⁴⁴ "El hijo."

²⁴⁵ "Gloria de Las Madres Del Pueblo" (Movimiento Femenino Popular, May 8, 1977), 1, *Perú Siglo XX - Archivo Gorriti - Conflicto Armado Interno - Sendero Luminoso*, Colección documental sobre la violencia política en el Perú (CEDOC), Biblioteca Central de la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.

action..²⁴⁶ Sendero's party communiques also appealed to motherhood, explaining how "it is the fight for bread for your children, for their education [...] for a new world for your children."²⁴⁷ Sendero leaders found appeals to motherhood to be essential in recruiting, especially after 1986, when the State launched counterinsurgency efforts in Lima. Agüero recalls that Solórzano had success using this tactic, particularly when the family moved to more impoverished areas after the death of her husband at El Frontón.²⁴⁸ By articulating the revolution through the feminine rhetoric of mothers, Sendero women not only maintained the same strategies as the early leaders of MFP and Sendero female leaders, but also lessened the rigid nature of Sendero ideology regarding class war and the need for violent insurrection. Solórzano was not alone in using this tactic and in rejecting Shining Path's ideas on maternity.

Scholars have written about Sendero's expectation that militants abandon their families to become full clandestine insurgents thereby committing themselves completely to the revolution.²⁴⁹ In an interview for *Caretas*, Elena Iparraguirre stated that she left her children to dedicate herself to the revolution and that all women should liberate themselves from the social and economic impositions of motherhood,

As I became more committed to the revolutionary struggle, the balance began to crack until it broke. [...] One day in the workers' houses located on the sandbanks, my daughter said to me "Mommy, there is no floor here, pick me up!" And these phrases made me shudder and pressured me. [...] I confess that I tried various ways to comply with everything, but they did not give me good results. [...] I opted for the definitive rupture, I rebelled against the role that this society imposes on women: having and educating children and working to contribute to the social production that sustains an unfair system, I gave myself up to the

²⁴⁶ "Gloria de Las Madres Del Pueblo," 2.

²⁴⁷ Partido Comunista del Peru, Sendero Luminoso, "¡A NUESTRO HEROICO PUEBLO COMBATIENTE!"

²⁴⁸ Agüero, *Los rendidos*, Location 195.

²⁴⁹ del Pino H., "Familia, Cultura, y 'Revolución.'" Jaymie Patricia Heilman, *Before the Shining Path: Politics in Rural Ayacucho, 1895-1980* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), 162.

strives to transform such a society. I tied my heart with my guts and left without turning back [...] I said to myself, when we take power, I will show them again the new world that we communists and the new people will build. The war took away their mother.²⁵⁰

Iparraguirre's testimony and lack of regret demonstrated the prescribed conduct for women with families. Moreover, Iparraguirre expressed the idea that women could not fully commit to Sendero militancy while still carrying out the responsibilities of motherhood. Still, her capacity to leave her children was related to her privileged position of having family resources to assume parental supervision. Yet, many Sendero women did not voluntarily abandon their children without regret like Iparraguirre. Jose Agüero interviewed a female combatant who was part of the rank-and-file, and the woman related the story of abandoning a newborn baby by a river under direct orders from her superiors to continue her role in the insurgency,

A woman who belonged to Sendero Luminoso told me how she tried to forget her son. As a newborn, forced by her command, she abandoned him skinny, almost hairless, covered with branches and stones so that his crying would not give them away when he escaped, in pursuit of the army. He would be as big as you, she tells me. She also tells me that she sees him in the rain. They were near a river. Which became part of the water cycle. And that when it rains, he returns.²⁵¹

Agüero's haunting description of the Senderista's remorse emphasizes that the woman was unable to forget her child. While the female leaders of PCP-SL's highest committees stated that they had chosen to cut all family ties, this was not the reality for the women of the lower positions within the party. Many of those women engaged in armed insurgency throughout Peru did not see the abandonment of their children as a voluntary action or a self-initiated decision.

²⁵⁰ Paola Ugaz, "La Novia de Abimael Guzmán," *CARETAS*, May 3, 2007.

²⁵¹ José Carlos Agüero, *Persona*, Colección Tezontle (Lima, Perú: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2019), 23.

Those mothers in the party who worked within their popular communities had more opportunity to maintain their family through concealment.

Solórzano's militancy demonstrates that not all mothers in Sendero held the same absolute conviction to abandon their families for the cause and therefore attempted to continue as mother and Senderista. In the urban setting of Lima, militants who had not transitioned into a full, clandestine insurgency and performed daily tasks to assist Sendero were able to incorporate their family life into their party roles. Iparraguirre told *Caretas* that she could not take her children to protest or perform revolutionary actions,

Taking the children to school by taking three minibuses from home to the neighborhood was not the same as taking them to SUTEP marches or rallies where the rochabús drenched us to seas in the middle of winter, or the reprimands harassed us with tear gas bombs.²⁵²

Iparraguirre's own middle-class background enabled her to leave her children at home or with other family. However, female Senderistas from marginalized neighborhoods could not leave their children in the care of others as easily as Iparraguirre, due to their economic conditions and the reality that many were single, heads of household.²⁵³ Solórzano's experience contrasts with the lived experience of lower-income women who faced heavy criticism for balancing family and insurgency. Solórzano faced reproach from Sendero leaders, who viewed her as "weak" for

²⁵² Unitary Union of Education Workers of Peru or *Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú*. A rochabús is a police vehicle, usually a truck with a hydrant that blasts water at crowds; particularly, this is a police vehicle used to intervene during political events and/or encounters with police forces. Ugaz, "La Novia de Abimael Guzmán," 52.

²⁵³ del Pino H., "Familia, Cultura, y 'Revolución,'" 24–27. While this is true in urban settings, Sendero did change its policies about abandoning children in the countryside over the course of the decade. Toward the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, Sendero began using children of captured populations as soldiers and the "future of the party." Del Pino discusses strong resistance by mothers forced to become Sendero militants at the notion of their children also forming part of the insurgency.

remaining with her children until she died in 1992.²⁵⁴ Solórzano did not see motherhood as a hindrance to her work. A rochabús is a police vehicle, usually a truck with a hydrant that blasts water at crowds; particularly, this is a police vehicle used to intervene during political events and/or encounters with police forces in her revolutionary work. Instead, Solórzano saw the benefits of using her identity as a mother to do more work for PCP-SL among her neighbors. The fact that she remained with her children and did not abandon them like most militants helped her gain solidarity from neighbors. The trust of her neighbors was particularly important when the PNP arrested a militant named "Benito" who had stayed at her home and tortured him for information. Neighbors who respected her and had a friendship did not give any information, illustrating that even though the neighbors may not have been supportive of Sendero Luminoso, they respected Solórzano enough not to divulge information that would confirm that she was a militant and leader to her imprisonment or death.

Drawing on the sensibilities of motherhood and its cover for her revolutionary activities, Solórzano's experience suggests the possibility of revisiting maternity as a useful weapon rather than a burden or simply women's work. Agüero's testimony of Solórzano's life notes the dangerous reality that the women of Sendero faced even within their neighborhoods. Police forces arrested Solórzano several times throughout the course of her militancy and jailed her on a few occasions, but she did not suffer the same fate as her husband who was killed by the Peruvian military during the 1985 siege on El Frontón prison. Solórzano became the sole support for her family.²⁵⁵ However, even during her covert work as a liaison between Shining Path and

²⁵⁴Agüero, *Los rendidos*. Solórzano remained with her three children even after her partner, Juan Manuel Agüero, abandoned the family to assume full clandestine, insurgency in late 1983. He performed terrorist operations around Lima. He was imprisoned in 1984 and died during the 1985 siege on El Frontón. Solórzano became the sole support for her family.

²⁵⁵ José Carlos Agüero, *Los rendidos: sobre el don de perdonar*, 20.

her community, she had to worry about accusations by neighbors or that they would report her to the local police force. In one specific situation, Solórzano faced capture and put her family in potential danger when a neighbor—who Solórzano had helped—accused her of several subversive acts:

My mother talked to her [the neighbor] about her relationship with a guy who mistreated her, gave her advice, and treated her like a niece in need of protection. He did not seek to do politics with her or involve her in anything of the "P." "We constantly share our meager food with her, and we come to take care of her and her babies. She was the one who pointed at us with the most hatred. With rage. "That woman is a *terruca*; she is the leader," she told the police. I do not know if we were helping her the whole time, she hated us.²⁵⁶

Agüero noted that even though Solórzano provided support to the woman, she did not intend to recruit the neighbor for PCP-SL. Nevertheless, Solórzano's relationship with the young neighbor made Solórzano vulnerable to exposure and imprisonment.

Solórzano's fate also reveals that the reality Sendero women faced even within the intimate spaces within their home and under the guise of motherhood, which shared similar risks as armed insurgents. Solórzano did not escape arrest forever. In 1992, Solórzano disappeared from her work at the National University of San Marcos (UNMSM), where she worked in a small school supply store.²⁵⁷ State forces sequestered Solórzano—like many accused of participating in the insurgency—following the protocol post-1989, that required finding information on Sendero plans and coordination. After a week, Solórzano body washed up on the

²⁵⁶ *Terruca* was the informal way with which the members of the PCP-SI were called and are still called, colloquially used to identify terrorists or to associate innocent people with terrorists. The term has ended up being imposed in such a hegemonic way that it even serves to name not only the subjects "terrorists" but the entire period of violence as "the era of terrorism" and acquires greater meaning as part of an authoritarian-military discourse than I seek to impose myself as official memory in Peru, Agüero, *Los rendidos*, 207. See also, Carlos Iván Degregori, *How Difficult It Is to Be God: Shining Path's Politics of War in Peru, 1980–1999*, ed. Steve J. Stern, trans. Nancy Appelbaum et al., 1 edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

²⁵⁷ Agüero, *Los rendidos*, 214–20.

shores of Chorrillos with two bullet holes at the back of her head like many other Senderistas who victims of state violence were. Nevertheless, Solórzano's recruitment efforts, creation of active and passive support networks, and success in identifying "centers of resistance" for the party to capitalize within the different marginalized neighborhoods where she lived over the course of a decade was a fundamental part of launching urban operations for Sendero.

3.2.4 Organizing Around Access to Food and Anti-Poverty Campaigns

As early as 1975, the Popular Women's Movement (*Movimiento Femenino Popular*, MFP) and Sendero members in Lima worked to organize the women of marginalized neighborhoods and squatter settlements around the issue of food access. The Popular Women's Movement communique, "Glory to the Mothers of the People" on May 8, 1977, specifically addressed the issue of the cost of living for working-class families.²⁵⁸ Attached to this declaration, MFP tracked the rising cost of groceries in marginalized neighborhoods, declaring that "rice went from S/13.30 to S/ 23, an increase of 77%, cooking oil from S/28.00 to S/60.00, an increase of 135%, milk from S/13.00 to S/20.70, an increase of 60%, bread from S/0.70 to S/1.00 an increase of 43%."²⁵⁹ Sendero women of the marginalized neighborhood continued this type of effective propaganda that reflected how the fiscal crisis directly hit the working-class and migrant communities, including the increasing consumer prices, a 143% on average per month. Food shortages and mass unemployment in both the formal and informal sectors reached over 6% by 1990. Eventually, the poverty rate rose to 55% countrywide.²⁶⁰ The Sendero women who had prior experience and/or relationships within political parties, anti-poverty non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and relations with grassroots community leaders used these networks to

²⁵⁸ "Gloria de Las Madres Del Pueblo," 1. *See also* Illustration 3.1.

²⁵⁹ "Gloria de Las Madres Del Pueblo," 1. *See also* Illustration 3.1.

²⁶⁰ DESCO report, Economic.

coopt or disrupt their competitors. Within this context, the Sendero women from the marginalized neighborhoods, squatter settlements, and popular urbanizations took on community, grassroots leadership roles outside of PCP-SL and used community activism to increase the party's presence in these areas and developed their authority.

The women of Sendero infiltrated anti-poverty non-government organizations (NGOs) and women's grassroots organizations to curtailing opposition to PCP-SL. Guzmán criticized the mother's clubs and other anti-poverty groups, claiming that such bodies continued to make the proletariat dependent on the State or capitalist charities.²⁶¹ Yet these organizations were gaining support for criticizing both the Peruvian State and Sendero Luminoso for doing nothing to help people.²⁶² Thus Senderistas had to undermine the influence of these programs to avoid any challenges to their supporter bases among the proletariat and migrant populations in Lima. Still, women worked with government agencies and NGOs to advocate for the needs of children and families—for example, the Glass of Milk Program (*Programa del Vaso de Leche*, PVL) that began in January of 1985, as a social assistance program in Peru to give daily food provisions to vulnerable populations.²⁶³ These programs operated locally within districts and called for the participation of women from the Mother's Clubs (*Clubes de Madres*). Advocating for children's rights to food provisions had become a common point of mobilization in areas like Raucana, El Agustino, and Villa El Salvador. Yet, PCP-SL criticized these organizations and efforts by parties such as American Popular Revolutionary Alliance Party (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria* or APRA) and United Left (*Izquierda Unida* or IU) to create programs that only promoted the

²⁶¹ *El Diario*, No. 551, 1989. *El Diario*, No. 620, 1992.

²⁶² For example on July 18, 1990, the vaso de leche organizations, mother's clubs, and popular kitchens called for Fujimori to immediately put into practice the *Programa de Compensación Social* "CVR Informe Final, Anexo 1, Cronología 1978-2000."

²⁶³ Pregnant women and children under age six were the focus of this program, followed by children seven to thirteen years of age, seniors, and people with tuberculosis.

continued dependency of the proletariat and *campesinos* on capitalism and the corrupt Peruvian State. The soup kitchens (*comedores populares*) had a similar tactic according to Sendero.

Sendero women with previous relationships with NGO-antipoverty organizing and grassroots activist groups worked these connections to gain influence within these bodies and control public perception. Testimony obtained by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Investigation shows that Sendero women from these lower-income backgrounds joined local committees in charge of food distribution to alert other party members of the days when the supply banks were full and/or the times of food distributions.²⁶⁴ Senderistas would then appear and ridicule the food to discredit the organizers calling them the "crumbs and leftovers of the rich."²⁶⁵ Sometimes they would confiscate the materials and redistribute goods themselves to the people to win support.²⁶⁶

3.2.5 *Providing Security and Assuming Local Authority*

Through their outreach work and performance as gendered revolutionary bridges, the Sendero women used their relationships with other women to ascertain the most critical issues that would generate mutual support. As previously discussed, Sendero women from these lower-income areas knew the drastic changes in cost of living. The upper-party leadership was in hiding in middle-class neighborhoods in Lima, including La Torre and Iparraguirre, and were not tracking the volatile market changes throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. It was the female Senderistas who were living among, or were themselves part of, the urban poor who knew firsthand about the price gouging by merchants in neighborhood marketplaces. Burt interviewed

²⁶⁴ Entrevista, Diciembre 2002. "Informe Final: 2.16 VES y Sendero Luminoso," (Perú: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003), 503-504, 41.

²⁶⁵ *El Diario* No. 620, 1992.

²⁶⁶ Entrevista, Diciembre 2002. "Informe Final: 2.16 VES y Sendero Luminoso," (Perú: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003), 503-504, 41.

women from the popular urbanization who noted that the local Sendero women would regulate the marketplace and punish merchants who attempted to take advantage of customers:

[Sendero Luminoso] has a policy of controlling the prices of vendors, who can sometimes be abusive or speculators. For example, there was a series of murders of people who had stalls in the Sarita Colonia market in Bayóvar. News spreads fast: a vendor is killed, then everyone in Canto Grande finds out about this, it works as a kind of warning.²⁶⁷

During interviews conducted with two women—who were not sympathetic to PCP-SL—they recalled witnessing Sendero women who lived in their respective marginalized neighborhoods and worked in local marketplaces. Sendero women would surveil the location and noted individuals who overcharged or defrauded customers.

The Senderistas blended in with groups of vendors selling goods, but people knew they were party members because of the way they talked about certain topics or their participation in activities with known militants.²⁶⁸

In one specific case, one of the women interviewed recalled witnessing an attack by a group of Sendero women on a food merchant who had used a manipulated scale to cheat buyers.²⁶⁹

Although men were often vendors in these marketplaces, it was the neighborhood women who frequented these locations and communicated the gendered logics and policing of marketing that remained undetected by state authorities, while openly appearing to champion the “urban poor” on behalf of the party. Likewise, Linda Klouzal found that within the Cuban Revolution, women had an easier capacity to move around and acquire supplies without arousing suspicion among the army and police forces.²⁷⁰ Thus women rebels’ informal networks were important to the

²⁶⁷ Burt, *Violencia y Autoritarismo En El Peru*, 204.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Z. Alleman.

²⁶⁹ Interview with I. Huaman, April 18, 2019.

²⁷⁰ Linda A. Klouzal, *Women and Rebel Communities in the Cuban Insurgent Movement, 1952-1959* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 311.

execution of revolutionary actions that would otherwise not have been possible purely through coercion or by the threat of violence.

Female militants also performed community outreach by assisting the women of these neighborhoods with matters that state authorities and the police neglected. Popular communities experienced a lack of police presence and much like the rural countryside, lived with little state intervention. The void of law and order in areas led to high crime and corruption. In her study of popular communities around Lima, scholar Jo-Marie Burt interviewed and surveyed locals about the reality of life popular neighborhoods.²⁷¹ Burt found that among the “urban poor,” many felt a sense of greater security with Senderistas acting as agents of order:

I conducted a survey that broadly confirmed these results. In the survey, applied to 300 residents of San Juan de Lurigancho and another 300 in Villa El Salvador, a surprising number of residents openly stated that they approved of or understood the punishments imposed by Sendero Luminoso and even the murders against individuals perceived as corrupt or abusive as well. as against criminals.²⁷²

Burt referenced the activities of Sendero broadly to find that the women of Sendero assumed the responsibilities of maintaining order in distinct, gendered ways. These actions did not necessarily inspire women to join the revolution but created a reciprocal relationship among militants and community members.

Female militants also bridged the party’s doctrines about changing Peruvian culture and society with the reality of domestic violence. Senderistas disseminated the party’s position encouraging women to fight against prejudices, sexual extortion, and physical abuse in the domestic sphere.²⁷³ This message resonated with the women in disadvantaged urban spaces,

²⁷¹ Burt, *Violencia y Autoritarismo En El Peru*, 204.

²⁷² Burt, *Violencia y Autoritarismo En El Peru*, 189.

²⁷³ Sendero Luminoso, “Por La Emancipación de La Mujer.”

who endured domestic violence within their homes. A 1987 study of the San Juan de Lurigancho district shows that women routinely suffered violence that ranged from “light” to “severe” with the extreme being homicide.²⁷⁴ Women also faced daily verbal and mental abuse within their homes and neighborhoods, especially when economic hardship, inflation, and political instability worsened in 1987.²⁷⁵ However, most of this domestic violence went unreported or dismissed by local authorities. Sendero women like Solórzano, who had helped a neighbor who suffered domestic violence, illustrates how the relationships militants formed with non-party members exposed the violence urban, working-class women endured in silence. According to interviews conducted by Burt, non-Sendero women in the popular neighborhoods looked favorably on the actions of female Senderistas who publicly punished the men who abused women either physically or through social humiliation.²⁷⁶ Given the high crime rate in these neighborhoods and police reluctance to get involved in domestic violence crimes, the popular adjudication of abusive men and those who sexually assaulted women was essential to the well-being of working-class women.

In the marginalized neighborhoods and squatter settlements, working-class women of Sendero assumed positions of authority within the local, zonal units while the Central Committee and the higher echelons of the leadership retreated into increased clandestinity. According to Sendero's structured organization of power, the ultimate power remained within the Permanent committee (Guzmán, La Torre, and Iparraguirre) however, within Lima the leaders of

²⁷⁴ “Light” consisted of hitting, scratching, and anything needing less than ten days of rest, this did not require more than a slight fine. “Severe” referred to anything that required more than ten days of medical rest or intervention, Excuses ranged from women leaving their homes without permission, the poor performance of household duties, sexual accessibility, inebriated partner, etc. Patricia Ruiz Bravo, “Silencios y Maltratos: Mujer y Violencia Domestica,” *Debates En Sociología* 12, no. 14 (1988): 29–46.

²⁷⁵ Ruiz Bravo L., “Silencios y Maltratos.” 39.

²⁷⁶ Burt, *Violencia y Autoritarismo En El Peru*, 186.

intermediate-level detachments and cadres, otherwise known as "zonal" and "sub zonal" groups, which had a strong presence in these neighborhoods continued to exercise the diffused authority. However, this hierarchy was not stable in Lima. In 1985, the party's central leadership retreated into extreme isolation to avoid capture.²⁷⁷ PCP-SL's high command struggled from the beginning to secure total control of over all the ranks. The localized cells had more autonomy due to the high turnover of local leadership at the lower levels and created new opportunities for the women operating in marginalized spaces to gain authority and become organizational leaders.

3.2.6 *Tactical and Military Activities*

Sendero women who identified their locations as amenable to politicization converted the intimate spaces of their homes as venues of militant labor. The activity of hosting informal socializing among a group of individuals did not appear overtly peculiar within the context of daily life for a Peruvian working-class, urban woman.²⁷⁸ Sendero women who lived in popular communities used the gendered expectations of urban socializing to transform their homes into insurgent bases. As previously discussed, Judith Díaz Contreras (alias comrade Isa), a local Party Support Group leader in La Victoria, used her dilapidated, older house that did not have any distinguishing or suspicious characteristics to coordinate with cadres, zonal leaders, and new Sendero recruits. The fact that Díaz Contreras lived at this home with her family helped to shield her covert activities. Other female Senderistas used their homes to recruit new members and allies to grow the party's influence.²⁷⁹ Senderistas knew that to perform the necessary work to

²⁷⁷ "Desarrollar La Guerra Popular Sirviendo a La Revolución Mundial" (Partido Comunista del Peru, Sendero Luminoso, August 1, 1986).

²⁷⁸ Alcalde, *La Mujer en la violencia*, 129-130.

²⁷⁹ Carlos Paredes, *La Hora Final: La Verdad Sobre La Captura de Abimael Guzmán*, Primera edición (Lima, Perú: Planeta, 2017), 53.

prepare for future insurgent actions, they had to gain the trust of individuals by any means necessary.

Aside from community outreach-related work, the women of Sendero adapted their social visibility to perform logistical work such as surveillance and intelligence. Security forces often overlooked women, especially women of lower socioeconomic standing, who performed domestic tasks as a cover for their insurgency work. As the 1980s progressed, the economic situation in Peru worsened, and formal employment in Lima became unstable and scarce. Women had difficulty finding employment within the formal economy. As a result, women joined the informal economy as domestic workers, street vendors, or odd jobs. The story of Senderista Lilian Torres—who stated that she had worked as a maid and street vendor—was not uncommon among party members from the working-classes.²⁸⁰ It was not uncommon for women from the popular urban sectors to walk down the streets of the city in affluent neighborhoods such as Miraflores and Monterrico where they were employed as domestic workers. Although few Sendero women were caught according to Peruvian newspapers, Peruvian National Intelligence documents, and the testimony of other Sendero members young women from the party assumed the position of domestic workers within the households of important government officials.²⁸¹ This reconnaissance work in the homes of some of Peru's most influential people proved important to plans for assassinations and bombings in Lima, as well as information to continue the armed insurgency in the countryside. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background became crucial covers for the women that gathered information on individuals that lived with high security and restricted access.

²⁸⁰ Simons, “‘Shining Path’ More than a Name for Peruvian Guerrillas: Guerrillas.”

²⁸¹ *State of Fear: The Truth about Terrorism Peru's War on Terror 1980-2000*, Documentary (New Day Films, 2005).

Similarly, Sendero women traveled from their homes in the marginalized areas of Lima to work as vendors throughout Lima to not only gathering intelligence, but also disseminate information and obtain resources for other missions. Jose Agüero recalled that Solórzano went to a park in Miraflores to sell curios on the street. While she sold miscellaneous items, Solórzano would interact with other PCP-SL members to exchange information under the guise of speaking to customers.²⁸² Sendero women astutely took advantage of these optics to collect information on subjects' activities, observe "predictable routines," find escape routes, and determine the materials necessary for the operation to succeed; all done over the course of two to three months.²⁸³ A. Vela, a former member of the Peruvian National Police who also lived in a popular urbanization, recalled that female Senderistas would find work in businesses that police officers frequented to engage in conversation with officers or even their families to casually extract information.²⁸⁴ As a result, police provided logistical intelligence to Sendero leaders without torture or under the threat of a gun. Even their male counterparts noted that Sendero women became so skilled at this covert work that people often did not suspect that their friendly neighbor was a Senderista.²⁸⁵

By exploiting gender stereotypes to conduct revolutionary tasks, Sendero women adapted communist revolutionary tactics to subvert counterinsurgency efforts. Both Linda Klouzal and Michelle Chase have found ample evidence of women using this tactic in the Cuban Revolution.²⁸⁶ In the older, working-class neighborhood of La Victoria, Miriam Rodriguez

²⁸² Agüero, *Persona*, 40.

²⁸³ Marlise Simons, "'Shining Path' More than a Name for Peruvian Guerrillas: Guerrillas," *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1984, A29, Digital National Security Archive.

²⁸⁴ Interview with A. Vela, February 21, 2021.

²⁸⁵ Testimony of Jose Vizcardo, testimonio CVR No. 70047. See also, *State of Fear*.

²⁸⁶ Klouzal, *Women and Rebel Communities in the Cuban Insurgent Movement, 1952-1959*, 323; Michelle Chase, *Revolution within the Revolution: Women and Gender Politics in Cuba, 1952-1962*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 30, 79–80.

Peralta (alias comrade Cris) secured an intelligence network in the heart of Lima and formed important connections for military/insurgency operations throughout the capital. Rodriguez Peralta was able to use her relative obscurity as just one of the “masses” and her femininity to conceal her reconnaissance work. The information she gathered provided Sendero with a support base and locations to launch operations or regroup afterward for debriefing.²⁸⁷ The neighborhood did not cooperate with police forces because of the Sendero women militants who had embedded so completely into the community.

At the most localized level of power, Sendero women were able to gain authority of the Sendero efforts within the marginalized communities. In the established, low-income neighborhood of La Victoria in the heart of Lima, Judith Díaz Contreras—alias “Isa”—used her home to meet with young Sendero members to distribute orders and missions on behalf of Sendero zonal leaders.²⁸⁸ According to intelligence information from "Operation Isa" Díaz Contreras lived on García Naranjo street in the heart of the La Victoria district, a marginalized neighborhood with a significant Afro-Peruvian and migrant population from other provinces. Once alerted, Counter-Terrorist Directorate (DIRCOTE) observed that Díaz Contreras conducted business through the phone in her home and received coded messages from local and regional Sendero leaders that they left with her father. From there, Díaz Contreras coordinated cadres, obtained munitions, and monitored the development of new Senderistas. Diaz Contreras' duties were crucial for Sendero to succeed in its urban campaign. While the upper leadership approved of Diaz Contreras' role in managing missions on the ground level, she maintained a level of autonomy that allowed her to make decisions based on the firsthand knowledge and experience she had because of her background, living situation, and identity within her community.

²⁸⁷ “Cris En Enlace,” *Caretas*, July 9, 1990, 37.

²⁸⁸ Paredes, *La Hora Final*, 53–56.

Similarly, Sarmiento Ramos “confessed” to the national Peruvian police force that she was the “head of the popular schools” in Metropolitan Lima and that her role was to recruit new militants for Sendero Luminoso.²⁸⁹

In Lima, Sendero, leadership lacked a strong presence and chain of command in the marginalized neighborhoods that allowed for marginalized women to take on unofficial leadership roles. In a 2017 interview, Iparraguirre admitted that the Central Committee did not have complete control over the masses, she explained that “we lost touch [...] We were getting cut off from the base.”²⁹⁰ Local zonal leaders and often senior militants rose to positions of leadership given the high turnover of captured individuals. The ability to develop intimate connections through friendship brought in the potential of increased sources for the intelligence network vital to Sendero.²⁹¹ Indeed, Solórzano found among her neighbors individuals who were sufficiently apt to become militarized insurgents and trained them within the house to create explosives and set up detonators.²⁹² Sendero urban women with their socioeconomic, ethnic, and migrant backgrounds, as well as their gender, gave them a unique perspective and set of firsthand experiences that translated into knowledge and abilities pivotal to executing PCP-SL’s missions and longer goals of attacking key figures of the Peruvian state to destabilize the government.

3.2.7 Gendered Labor in Marginalized Neighborhoods as Legitimate Urban Guerrilla Work

The labor of marginalized Sendero women in urban Lima was as crucial to the prolonged revolutionary project as that of women in Ayacucho. Women from the marginalized

²⁸⁹ “Capturan a Jefa.”

²⁹⁰ Elena Iparraguirre, Entrevista a Abimael Guzmán Reinoso y Elena Iparraguirre, interview by Sofia Macher and Iván Hinojosa, November 6, 2002.

²⁹¹ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 183.

²⁹² Agüero, *Los rendidos*, Location 775.

neighborhoods negotiated the relationship between a revolution launched in the countryside by a mestizo, university vanguard and a population that lived in poverty with refugees from areas affected by the civil war. This was not an easy task with Sendero's increasing violence toward rural peasants and Indigenous people in other departments of Peru. However, because marginalized women were not directly involved in combat actions and used their gender to accomplish many tasks under the radar of police forces Shining Path leaders did not acknowledge the leadership potential of these women. Cecilia Blondet claimed that PCP-SL, "saw women as harmless and second-class citizens."²⁹³ To some extent the marginalized women were secondary in Sendero and could not give final approval for Sendero actions despite having more knowledge of the proposed missions. Scholars like Julie Shayne explained that women who participated in urban underground movements served not as active revolutionaries or political actors, but as participants whose existence strategically "minimize[d] the apprehensions of unincorporated but curious civilians."²⁹⁴ Likewise, Karen Kampwirth noted that women in Latin American revolutionary groups that provided such support work experienced dismissive responses to their roles and efforts as merely "women's work," as did Sendero leaders.

Marginalized Sender women with what Kampwirth described as low-prestige jobs experienced delegitimization of their work, regardless of how crucial their work was in successful guerrilla campaigns. Kampwirth used the terms "low prestige" and "mid-prestige" to categorize various unarmed revolutionaries within the power structure.²⁹⁵ Creating a relationship with neighbors seemed low-risk work and not guerrilla work but it is just as important in the process of executing armed combat. As Florencia Mallon argues in a guerrilla conflict, the line

²⁹³ Blondet et al., *La situación de la mujer en el Perú*, 96–97.

²⁹⁴ Shayne, *The Revolution Question*, 132.

²⁹⁵ Karen Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 13 FN 19.

between the home front and battlefield become “increasingly blurred” and is especially true in the context of the marginalized neighborhood.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, Mallon argued that women caught in this space became “de facto combatants, confronting enemy incursions and the physical danger they entailed.”²⁹⁷ In Lima, the women of the marginalized neighborhoods risked physical danger by bringing the insurgency into their homes, representing PCP-SL in unreceptive communities, and subversively undermining the influence of other leftist political parties, non-governmental assistance organizations, and grassroots community movements. Although these women from the popular communities were not identifiable leaders and performed low- to -mid-prestige work their contributions to the daily maintenance of the party’s goals were intertwined with armed-insurgency to forward the broader revolutionary goals.

3.3: Agents of Violence and Armed Subversion

Sendero women from marginalized neighborhoods were perpetrators of violence and armed combat throughout urban Lima. Although this was not daily work for Sendero women, due to the shocking nature of these violent acts, Peruvian security forces and news media were most interested in this type of guerrilla efforts. Moreover, Peruvian state records provide limited information about women Senderistas beyond simple biographical information upon capture and booking into prison. As for the investigations published in the *Final Report* by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the focus is on the victims of the violent actions perpetrated by Sendero. Accordingly, the lack of interviews or voluntary statements by urban women of Sendero in either archive limits the voices of many militants. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to prove that the women of the marginalized neighborhoods and squatter settlements participated in assassinations of government and military officials, bombings of banks and

²⁹⁶ Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 76–77.

²⁹⁷ Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 76–77.

buildings belonging to foreign corporations, as well as intimidate and murder grassroots organizers. Following Party protocol, Sendero women did not engage in disorganized or arbitrary acts of violence.²⁹⁸ Sendero Luminoso had five stages of executing attacks on people or locations: preparation, initiation, development, final strike, and supplemental support. In each phase, women seized opportunities for leadership and authority.²⁹⁹ This was particularly true for the female Senderistas of the marginalized neighborhoods, squatter settlements, and popular urbanizations. They were adept at determining and organizing what supplies were necessary and they had to acquire the necessary weapons, materials, and safe houses without suspicion. The women's success as leaders and strategic members of elite squads not only led to their increased status within PCP-SL, but also contributed asserting Sendero's presence in Lima.

Sendero women from the popular neighborhood formed part of the local forces—cadres, detachments, and neighborhood cells—that directly conducted acts of armed insurgency and public attacks.³⁰⁰ Starting in 1985, Sendero launched a more aggressive attack against the new Alan García administration, which led to increased surveillance and presence by state forces and the national police in Lima's urban sectors. Militants who had operated in more overt manners such as giving public lectures on Sendero ideology, organizing community events with party propaganda, participating in university student activist groups with known affiliations to PCP-SL went to jail or disappeared in greater numbers leading up to 1988.³⁰¹ Women rose to the high-risk positions as directors of cadres and other armed units from 1989-1992.³⁰² Intelligence records reflect this influx of female leadership, such as comrades Estrella and Luz who lived in

²⁹⁸ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo En El Perú*.

²⁹⁹ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo En El Perú*.

³⁰⁰ Sendero used the term detachment to label the small military units that were separate from the main armed force called the People's Guerrilla Army (*Ejercito Guerrillero Popular EGP*). Sendero detachments consisted of individuals from the local areas where they operated and had different leaders.

³⁰¹ Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection.

³⁰² Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection.

the eastern zone of Lima—an exclusively working-class area.³⁰³ Estrella and Luz were the directors of neighborhood cells (*células barriales*) and worker cells (*células obrebras*).³⁰⁴ Both women had knowledge of local unions and labor organizations that they used to plan attacks on competing institutions. Luz, as a resident of Huaycán served as the leader of this squatter settlement and directed three military detachments. She gave the orders for the units to launch propaganda efforts and approved assassination targets like Pascuala Rosado Cornejo, General Secretary of the Huaycán Self-Managed Urban Community, who had to live in exile in Chile because of the threats against her life.³⁰⁵ Luz and Estrella succeeded in making Huaycán into a Sendero stronghold.

Peruvian national police records indicate the specific tasks and responsibilities female cell leaders and members performed in PCP-SL. Peruvian counter-insurgency intelligence records confirm that women played crucial leadership roles and made vital decisions regarding armed acts of insurgency. Cecilia Rossana Nuñez Chipan (alias comrade Lucia, Ana, or Helena) was the political director of the special detachment No. 12 that participated in the Tarata bombing in Miraflores on July 16, 1992. She was in charge of the mission and rented the property where the Sendero squad met and prepared the car bomb for the attack.³⁰⁶ María del Carmen Ortega (alias comrade Rosa or Mercedes) the political leader and director of the special detachment 15, as well as, Carmen Ochoa Roa (alias comrade Flora) and Ana Luz Mendoza Mateo, both members of the zonal detachment 18, were also arrested for their participation in the

³⁰³ Peruvian Intelligence Service notes, Gorriti Collection on the Peruvian Insurrection.

³⁰⁴ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 555-556.

³⁰⁵ *Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación del Perú*, Tomo VII Capítulo 2: Los casos investigados por la CVR 2.5 Los asesinatos de María Elena Moyano (1992) y Pascuala Rosado (1996) <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index>. accessed on July 9, 2023. Rosado Cornejo eventually returned to Huaycán, but Sendero forces succeeded in assassinating her on March 6, 1996.

³⁰⁶ “CVR Informe Final: 2.60 Los Asesinatos y Lesiones Graves Producidos en el atentado de Tarata (1992),” 666.

bombing.³⁰⁷ Each of these women contributed to the execution of the deadliest terrorist attack in Lima and was part of a more extensive, week-long bombing campaign throughout the city meant to discredit the Fujimori administration. According to PCP-SL testimony from the CVR investigation, the intended target was not the sizeable civilian apartment complex damaged in the blast. However, the Peruvian Credit Bank (*Banco de Crédito del Perú*) stood next door.³⁰⁸ However, a male insurgent could not park the car bomb in the designated location due to a last-minute change in the routine schedule for a police officer reported in prior observation work. To evade detection by a nearby police officer, the male Senderista abandoned the car in front of the apartment building, where it detonated. Since the bombing was at the heart of one of the most upscale neighborhoods in Lima, the public outrage encouraged President Alberto Fujimori to increase state control of Lima and intensify counterterrorism efforts against PCP-SL. The partial failure of one mission compromised Guzmán's final phase of Sendero's plan to build the conquest of power.³⁰⁹

Sendero women executed civilian attacks and bombings, assumed more responsibility and risk than the upper leadership, and had more direct control over the mission's outcome. Planned attacks and bombings required months of preparation and post-operative work. Since the People's Guerrilla Army (*Ejército Guerrillero Popular*, EGP) could not operate openly within Lima, the smaller armed units had to execute systematic attacks with precision to prevent arrests that could lead to valuable information divulged via torture of captured operatives at the hands of state forces. Counter-insurgency records indicated that Juana Margarita Cosquillo Mercado (alias

³⁰⁷ The last-minute change in the routine was due to a third party being sick on the day of the attack. The PCP-SL surveillance could not have accounted for something, but the male detachment member should have decided to call of the operative without the approval of the plans by one of the women in charge. "CVR Informe Final: 2.60 Los Asesinatos y Lesiones Graves Producidos en el atentado de Tarata (1992)," 666.

³⁰⁸ "CVR Informe Final: 2.60 Los Asesinatos y Lesiones Graves Producidos en el atentado de Tarata (1992)," 666.

³⁰⁹ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 150, 227–29.

“Judith” o “Rosa”) was the leader of the Selective Assassination Detachment (*Destacamiento de Aniquilamiento Selectivo*). While she participated in the murder of five and the attempted murder of one, it was her command of the car bombings in both Lima and Callao that made news in the capital.³¹⁰ Cosquillo Mercado operated for years before the national police arrested her.

Within Sendero, women also gained authority and influence as leaders and notable members of assassination squads. According to PCP-SL’s official stance, militants could not execute random assassinations or by the decision of a combatant, cell, or detachment.³¹¹ Instead, assassination orders were issued after a process of investigation and decision-making along the chain of command, and passed to the leadership and the actions committee in Lima.³¹² If sanctioned, surveillance teams and the assassination squad would initiate a proper execution plan. Thus, the authority to sanction assassinations—particularly after 1986 when Sendero began increasing its insurgency in Peru and engaging in more frequent assassinations of individuals—often became the domain of the zonal and sub-zonal leaders who often included Sendero women.

Women in the assassination squads worked to increase their command over local organizing efforts, including attacking competing parties. As such, they followed the orders of Sendero’s leaders as Guzmán criticized the work of parties like the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*), accusing them of convincing the masses not to fight against the bureaucratic State by offering them insignificant gains.³¹³ American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) leaders were also in the crosshairs for continued efforts to unionize men in working-class neighborhoods. Sendero women, thus, infiltrated opposition parties including the APRA that was

³¹⁰ Counterterrorism Investigation File (Peru: Dirección Contra el Terrorismo, n.d.), Documenting the Peruvian Insurrection, Princeton University.

³¹¹ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 150, 227–29.

³¹² Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 150, 227–29.

³¹³ “CVR Informe Final, 2.16.5.5 Los comedores populares: ¿amortiguadores del sistema o potenciales bases de apoyo?” 505-506.

notoriously sexist against female laborers, often hiring women as secretaries in their party offices throughout marginalized neighborhoods. In October 1985, a female Senderista who had worked within an APRA office in Villa San Juan de Lurigancho led a special assassination detachment to kill members of APRA inside the local office by planting a bomb.³¹⁴ This attack not only damaged local offices and ended in killing officials, but it also interrupted a series of lectures and classes hosted by APRA as part of community outreach. People became apprehensive about engaging with political parties.

The essential show of violence by female Senderistas was the assassination of María Elena Moyano, which affected the course of the revolution and led to the party's decline in support. From 1970 through the 1990s, non-Senderistas, popular women emerged as political and community leaders for organizations and movements related to social welfare reform.³¹⁵ By the 1990s, the Federation of Popular Women of Villa El Salvador (*Federación popular de mujeres de Villa El Salvador*, FEPOMUEVES), had gained momentum and a large support base in the neighborhoods and recognition from people throughout Lima.³¹⁶ One leader captured national attention for her work in Villa El Salvador, María Elena Moyano. Moyano was an Afro-Peruvian woman in her thirties who grew up in the impoverished conditions of Villa El Salvador.³¹⁷ Moyano was also a married mother of two who became involved in grassroots activism through organizations like *Taza de Leche*.³¹⁸ She became a founding member of FEPOMUEVES that not only advocated for better conditions in Villa El Salvador and better

³¹⁴ "US State Department Records, AN: D850725-0238," (Washington, DC, 1984-1986).

³¹⁵ Jo-Marie Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 142.

³¹⁶ María Elena Moyano, Diana Miloslavich Túpac, and Patricia Taylor Edmisten, *The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano: The Life and Death of a Peruvian Activist* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 23-30.

³¹⁷ Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 75-87.

³¹⁸ Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 75-87.

access to food for children, but also provided training for women to become politically engaged. She represented the interests of women, children, and the community.³¹⁹

Moyano strongly vocalized her rejection of Shining Path and became a problem that the female Senderistas of Villa El Salvador needed to eliminate. As the secretary for FEPOMUEVES, Moyano became the spokesperson for women's rights advocacy. Moyano publicly criticized Sendero Luminoso and accused them of hurting the population despite PCP-SL doctrine professed to protect.³²⁰ Sendero publicly accused Moyano of working on behalf of the Fujimori government and hindering a revolutionary change in Peru.³²¹ Moyano publicly responded in a letter defending her work and denouncing the efforts of PCP-SL and national police forces.³²² Thus, the Central Committee of PCP-SL called for the assassination of Moyano, since publicly attacking Moyano's character had not helped Sendero regain its control over Villa El Salvador.

The Sendero women from the marginalized communities where grassroots organizations like FEPOMUEVES that had won support among the key areas PCP-SL worked to control initiated plans to assassinate non-Sendero female leadership. Investigation notes from DIRECOTE indicate that the following female Senderistas became leaders of their respective neighborhoods: Amalia and Veronica, Villa El Salvador; Monica, Liz, Inés Solis Moreno (alias comrade Angela), Giovana, and Nelly Blanco Garcilasco (alias comrade Janet), San Juan de Miraflores; and Lourdes, Chorrillos had formed part of the three local detachments tasked with assassinations.³²³ They made decisions as part of the leadership of the detachment committee on

³¹⁹ Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 75-87.

³²⁰ Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 27-30.

³²¹ Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 27-30. Burt, *Political Violence*, 146-147.

³²² Moyano, *The Autobiography of Maria Elena Moyano*, 27-30. Burt, *Political Violence*, 146-147.

³²³ *Dirección contra el terrorismo* arrest records and information obtained from of Pedro Abarca Sánchez "Nicolás" captured by DIRCOTE on November 27, 1991. Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 580.

assassinations and gave orders to four militias regarding other attacks in their respective areas. According to interviews conducted during the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation investigations in 2003, Sendero women's familiarity with the popular community allowed them to successfully infiltrate the close circles of women's organizations and participate in the assassination of ten female grassroots leaders in 1985 and 1992.³²⁴

Sendero women from impoverished urban areas executed Moyano, which became the pivotal moment that Sendero lost support from the lower-income communities in Lima. On February 15, 1992, a female-led cadre based out of Villa El Salvador systematically assassinated Moyano and attacked people attending a charity event for the local "Glass of Milk." It was not public knowledge that Moyano would attend this party. Therefore, according to the information released by the Peruvian police authorities, a spy who held a position on the committee that organized the charity event had provided intelligence to Sendero cadres to complete the task.³²⁵ In a *New York Times* article about Moyano's assassination, police investigators explained that one of the Sendero squad members had attended the event as a member of FEPOMUEVES. The assassination squad shot and killed Moyano and threw dynamite on her body, creating a sizeable explosion in front of party guests and her young children. The female Senderistas who participated in this assassination initiated a turning point for Shining Path in the eyes of working-class urban Lima.³²⁶ Both the media and Peruvian government used this event to cast Shining Path women as barbaric and a major threat to the safety of all citizens. Peruvian society rallied around the community of Villa El Salvador to honor the women that tried to lower-income

³²⁴ "CVR Informe Final, Tomo III." "Neighborhood Class Movement-Base Villa El Salvador" (Partido Comunista del Peru, Sendero Luminoso, March 1992).

³²⁵ CVR Caso: 1015718; N° de Testimonio: 100054, 700201, 700407, 700549.

³²⁶ "The legacy of the 'mother courage' that Sendero Luminoso never managed to kill in Peru, *CE Noticias Financieras*, February 15, 2022.

people feed their families. The assassination undermined the bridge-building work that the marginalized women of Sendero had worked to create.

Regardless of the eventual loss of support, the Sendero women of Lima were not merely revolutionary helpers or revolutionary bridges disseminating the words of the visionary leader or the party's dogma. They were directly involved in revolutionary stages throughout the various phases of the "plan." Their roles changed throughout the urban campaign in Lima from 1980 through 1992, reflecting the needs of the party and the realities of life in marginalized neighborhoods, squatter settlements, and popular urbanizations. There was no monolithic experience for the Sendero women of the masses, either throughout the party or within the capital. The women of the formal leadership exercised limited power in the same way as their male counterparts concerning the ultimate power lies solely in Abimael Guzmán. As a result, the women of the lower ranks created a place for themselves within the party and their surrounding communities by taking on responsibilities that put them in higher-risk positions and with higher impact on strategic military plans. However, as their influence and authority grew in these spaces, so did their potential for capture. by state and police forces—who saw all Sendero militants as equally dangerous. Even within prison, the women found new spaces to negotiate possibilities for influence and authority, just as they had in the marginalized neighborhoods, squatter settlements, and popular urbanizations of the capital.

CHAPTER FOUR

Waging War from within Lima's Prisons through Performance

In 1991, a television crew from the Spanish program “Weekly Report” gained access to the Peruvian prison Canto Grande, where they spent five hours interviewing and observing Senderistas imprisoned for terrorist acts or on suspicion of being terrorists. The news segment started with a group of female Senderistas marching from a cell block into an open-air courtyard between the prison wings. The Sendero women, dressed in long red-sleeve shirts and long black skirts, march and sing about their loyalty to the Peruvian Communist Party, their belief in the ideology of Abimael Guzmán (*Pensamiento de Gonzalo*), and in liberating the masses of Peru. The journalist noted that the performance could be a Maoist march in China and not a presentation conducted by Peruvian inmates at a prison on the outskirts of Lima. This news segment played for audiences in Spain, but eventually became part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) archive on Sendero women in the prison system and reached even broader audiences since the three-year investigation on the civil war from 1980 through 1999. The image of women marching with flags and torches in front of large mural of Abimael Guzmán seems like a public spectacle illustrating indoctrination, however this performance was only part of Shining Path’s campaign to wage an ideological war in a third battle ground zone—Peru’s prisons.

Coming out of a long history of leftist protest theater, the Sendero women keenly used their performance labor as a tool of control, pedagogy, and revisionism that stood in place for an armed insurgency. Sendero Luminoso’s *arte de tipo nuevo* or new art adapted to Abimael Guzmán’s political education within Maoism and his observation that the Communist state co-opt established culture, i.e., theater, to create a complete cultural and social revolution. Executed in the prisons where, due to Shining Path’s clandestine nature, Guzmán had seized the

opportunity for Sendero to create a third front to wage its war on Peru created the Shining Trenches of Combat (*Luminosas Trincheras de Combate*, LTC), a group for militants to use art to spread PCP-SL ideology openly.³²⁷ Since 1983, imprisoned female Senderistas formed part of the LTC and performed for audiences that included fellow prisoners, visitors, and the press. Accordingly, the imprisoned women of Sendero were able to use their theatrical performances to not only introduce and reacquaint audiences to Sendero ideology, but also managed and humanized the image of the party through plays with empowering and relatable themes. Additionally, the PCP-SL women used "guerrilla theater" performances as a pedagogical tool to assert dominance in this new battleground within prisons. The visibility of Sendero women of the Shining Trenches of Combat to specific audiences challenged state narratives about the violence and viciousness of the female revolutionary in PCP-SL. Even though Sendero's leadership used these women to further its agendas, the women retained agency through their participation and contributions to historical performances and dialogues in these unique prison shows.

4.1 Sendero Luminoso's Arte de Nuevo Tipo

Drawing from its Maoist foundations, Sendero Luminoso's leadership acknowledged the importance of waging a cultural war through art in addition to armed combat. Abimael Guzmán knew the history of political protest theater, i.e. revolutionary theater, campesino theater, and guerrilla theater, that had exploded into Latin American society starting in the 1960s.³²⁸ Sendero attempted to create its version of the already established guerrilla theater that borrowed heavily

³²⁷ Valenzuela, *Cárcel domonio*, 46-49.

³²⁸ Revolutionary in this context refers to theater associated with Russia at the turn of the 20th century through the era of Stalinist censorship beginning in 1927. It is characterized by sporadic and varied experimentation that unites political and social ideals of the revolution with modernist artistic innovations.

from existing artistic institutions and genres that the population was already familiar with and added direct references to party ideology thereby creating *arte de nuevo tipo* or new art.³²⁹

Sendero Luminoso used the tradition of leftist political protest theater as a tool to further its revolutionary mission. The leaders of PCP-SL were aware of the political left's long history of using theatrical performances as a tool for reaching mass audiences. José Carlos Mariátegui's political reflections noted the importance of art as a secondary means to wage a revolution, "art is part of the second task of mobilizing."³³⁰ During their various trips to China in the 1960s, Abimael Guzmán and Augusta La Torre witnessed the Chinese Communist Party repurpose the Peking Opera by replacing traditional themes with more contemporary and revolutionary material as well as propaganda supporting the Chinese Communist Party.³³¹ Sendero drew inspiration from both the 1960s theatrical approaches of Brazilian Augusto Boal's guerilla theater and the campesino theater created by the Peruvian playwright Victor Zavala Cataño.³³² A style that evolved from the public protests that erupted throughout Latin American countries in the 1960s, guerrilla theater was a type of politicized street theater. Sendero borrowed the production tactics of Boal's guerrilla theater, specifically the practice of performing plays and skits in casual, public spaces that forced audiences to observe the shocking messages of plays. Actors performed not just for those who stopped, but for individuals who had no choice but to share the same space as street stage. The point was to reveal political realities otherwise silenced by mainstream society regardless of consent from passersby.³³³ Sendero also borrowed heavily

³²⁹ Abimael Guzmán, *Opiniones particulares, iniciales, desarrolladas en el fragor de la lucha de ideas...*, manuscrito, Lima, 1994.

³³⁰ Mariátegui cited in *El Diario*, July 1988.

³³¹ Marianne Bastid and Flora Botton, "Orígenes y Desarrollo de la Revolución cultural," 258-275, *Estudios Orientales*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (5), 1967, 260.

³³² Valenzuela, 103-104; Salazar, 31.

³³³ Some "guerrilla theater" groups include Quatrotablas, Maguey, and Yuyachkani in Peru; Teatro del Cuerpo and La Rueca in Mexico; La Candelaria in Columbia; Macunaima in Brazil. Salazar, 31.

from the themes and style of Zavala's *campesino* theater exposed the plight of the Andean campesino, bringing theater out of bourgeois spaces to the people to build class awareness. Like Zavala, Sendero adapted characters who reimagined perceptions of the rural peasant within the Peruvian cultural consciousness, making a reconstructed peasant who was no longer a joke or caricature, but a person of dignity in a world trying to abuse them.³³⁴ Sendero adapted Zavala's "La Gallina" (1965) and "El Gallo" (1966) with Sendero's ideology and placed the party militants at the center of the story as heroes of the class war.³³⁵ Consequently, Sendero's combination of Boal's guerrilla theater and Zavala's *campesino* theater —*arte de nuevo tipo* or new art—reworked pre-existing political art with PCP-SL rhetoric.

Sendero's new art was a call to arms meant to disseminate PCP-SL's ideology and utilize imprisoned insurgents through the Shining Combat Trenches created by Guzmán to take the lead on artistic endeavors. Guzmán saw Sendero's new view on protest theater as the next step in the evolution of revolutionary art and thus referred to it as new art. Unlike the works by Boal or Zavala, Sendero produced "theater that narrates the heroic deeds of the people and has as protagonists the combatants of the Popular Guerrilla Army."³³⁶ Members of the Popular Guerrilla Army (EGP) became the protagonists as their fearless exploits replaced the objective of reclaiming dignity for peasants; the plays served to incite the audience to violent action and vengeance. If peasants and the proletariat were characters, the storylines emphasized the need for such individuals to join Sendero to build a new Peru. One notable change was the inclusion of female characters, the women of Sendero that dutifully devoted their lives to the party in a

³³⁴ Zavala's influence on Sendero's theater was solely artistic, Peruvian scholar Manuel Valenzuela Marroquín argued that not only Zavala was sympathetic to Sendero but Zavala was also a member. Manuel Valenzuela Marroquín, "Violencia política y teatro en el Perú de los 80: El teatro producido por Sendero Luminoso y el Movimiento de Artistas Populares," *Pacarina del Sur* Año 4, no. No. 14 (March 2013), www.pacarinadelsur.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=625&catid=17.

³³⁵ Valenzuela, 103-04, 107-111; *Teatro Campesino*, Zavala.

³³⁶ "El Arte de Nuevo Tipo," *El Diario*, May 21, 1988.

variety of scenarios. Through these plays, imprisoned Sendero women found opportunities to continue their militancy and gain a degree of control over their daily lives through their participation in these public performances.

Imprisoned Sendero women joined the Shining Combat Trenches and used the new art adaptation of guerilla theater to intensify their impact on the revolutionary project, thus recommitting themselves to the cause. By 1984, the Peruvian government transported the majority of the detained Sendero militants into Lima and Callao, including the all-women's prison of Santa Barbara.³³⁷ Once centralized into specific prisons, Guzmán sent out party communiques through zonal leaders, individuals who visited, and incarcerated leaders calling for imprisoned Senderistas to continue their militancy within prisons as part of the Shining Combat Trenches:

We, the communists of Peru, have always shown the world that the communists continue to fight in any condition, that is why we turn the prisons into Shining Combat Trenches serving our cause, no matter what happens to us as individuals.³³⁸

Sendero members could openly participate guerrilla theater style plays drawing public attention to themselves and the PCP-SL messages. Thus Guzmán urged that militants reach out to conduct their work under more agreeable artistic endeavors, stating “what the people want and need is an art that encourages their struggles, hopes and accompanies them towards their highest ideals.”³³⁹ For many Sendero women, participating in the performances offered them the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to Sendero by revisiting the ideology within the plays just as Guzmán had communicated to his followers:

³³⁷ Valenzuela, *Carcel Dominio*, 144, 112-114.

³³⁸ Abimael Guzmán, Documento realizado para analizar y desarrollar. Documento más Avanzado, manuscrito, Lima, 1995.

³³⁹ Abimael Guzmán, Documento realizado para analizar y desarrollar. Documento más Avanzado, manuscrito, Lima, 1995.

Even if you find yourself in the coldest solitude, you will find the warmth of the light of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Gonzalo Thought, and you will have a work plan resulting from a policy, an ideology, and you will fight by crushing the black goals of capitulation, of isolation, or repentance.³⁴⁰

For these women, not only did they recommit to the party, but they created art that collaborated for the revolutionary process. When interviewed by the foreign press, Claudia prisoner at Canto Grande prison expressed her excitement for participating in revolutionary theater, stating “the government thinks that since we are prisoners, we must be downcast. [...] But we are prisoners of war and combatants and therefore still engaged in the armed struggle [...]”³⁴¹ In his interviews with Sendero women in jail, Valenzuela found that other inmates shared the same view as Claudia. Valenzuela also affirmed that both sympathizers and militants tried to maintain certain ideological principles once they entered the prison society as a method of self-preservation against the reality of prison life.³⁴²

4.2 First Prison Performances by the Shining Combat Trenches

When the members of the Shining Combat Trenches (LTC) started performing in 1983, the focus of their plays were simple re-enactments of confrontations between the state and Sendero forces, as well as the corruption of the Peruvian government. Throughout the insurrection, how the women of LTC presented new material and the subject matter evolved to reflect the reality of the revolution for the average Senderista. From 1984 through 1986, Sendero women performed plays that appeared more as propaganda to promote Sendero’s ideology and unsophisticated attempts to recruit new members.

³⁴⁰ “2.22.1.1 Tierra de nadie,” *Informe Final*, 699.

³⁴¹ Roger Atwood, “Prisons in Peru Become a Forge for Guerrillas,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1990.

³⁴² Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio*, 47.

At the beginning of Sendero guerilla theater in prisons, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat followed the party mandate to perform plays that recruited new members. From 1984 through 1986, Sendero women performed simple, short twenty-minute skits that highlighted key encounters between the Popular Guerrilla Army and Peruvian forces.³⁴³ These performances served more as propaganda to promote the revolutionary cause than sophisticated theater like Victor Zavala's *campesino El Gallo* and/or *La Gallina*. Where Zavala's lead characters revealed the harsh reality of peasant life and placed campesinos as tragic heroes; the Sendero performances focused on awkward encounters among PCP-SL militants that ended in praising *Presidente Gonzalo* (Abimael Guzmán's nom de guerre). At the end of "Sendero Matrimony," the actors bring out an image of *Presidente Gonzalo*, which is meant to invoke the reverence that a religious, political, or the military would receive. Nearly all the plays during this initial period ended with key homages to Gonzalo and emphasizing the importance of devoting oneself to the revolution.

4.3 Attraction and Coercion to Shining Path Prison Plays

Sendero women took advantage of the open space available in the outside courtyards in between prison buildings during visiting hours and on regular days to perform for captive audiences. Visitors were temporarily contained within prison walls, as well as prison guards whose jobs require them to watch everything the prisoners do were exposed to the plays, just like guerrilla theater had done on the streets. Although Sendero did not coerce these audiences to pay attention, the small outdoor spaces in between prison buildings filled with the sounds of Sendero chants and performances that were difficult to ignore. The subject matter of the plays often

³⁴³ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 33–34.

captivated the temporary audience that had never encountered Senderistas personally or lacked exposure to Sendero ideology as taught firsthand in popular schools.³⁴⁴

4.3.1 *Impact on Other Prisoners, Both Sendero and Non-Affiliated*

In acting out certain plays, Sendero women performed not only as fictional characters but modeled the ideal revolutionary woman to control the behavior of imprisoned militants as a didactical aspect of auto-criticism. Sendero expected Party women to not only maintain their composure but also serve as “examples of dignity and revolutionary morality” while imprisoned.³⁴⁵ As a result, when the Sendero women performed, they had to portray the ideal revolutionary woman in everything from their appearance and mannerisms as well as convincing audiences of the one “correct line” of Senderismo. Therefore, women presented themselves to audiences smartly dressed in semi-formal attire that denoted not only the severity of their resolve and dedication to the revolution but also differentiated them from other inmates.³⁴⁶ Additionally, in performing plays such as “Sabotage” (*Sabotaje*) and “Conquest of arms and means” (*Conquista de armas y medios*) the women emphasized that members needed to maximize productivity to ensure that the sole objective of any labor was to contribute to the party.³⁴⁷ In “Sabotage” the storyline followed as saboteurs disrupting police forces and proclaiming Sendero ideology, similarly “Conquest of arms and means” depicted militants willingly risking their lives to obtain guns and dynamite for insurgency efforts.³⁴⁸ Even though the plays were straightforward and simple in theme, the performances also educated people in the audience about how to perform such guerrilla work for PCP-SL.

³⁴⁴ Valenzuela, *Carcel Dominio*, 63-67, 148-149.

³⁴⁵ Sendero Luminoso, "Comporamiento en prision," found in *Collection of Ephemera from the Peruvian Insurrection: Second Series*. ([Peru]: [N.v.], 1960).

³⁴⁶ “Cinco Horas con Sendero Luminoso - Primera Parte,” *Informe Semanal* (España: Television Española, 1991), <https://youtu.be/zciCmK0SWHk>.

³⁴⁷ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 34.

³⁴⁸ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 34.

Performances were effective ways to surveil and test fellow Sendero women. Sendero women had to participate in performances to prove their commitment to the Party. In a 1987 performance of “Matrimonio Senderista” at Canto Grande prison, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat performed a play that at surface level appeared as a celebration of committing to PCP-SL. However, the message about what happens to traitors served to deliver warnings against betraying the party without explicitly threatening anyone.³⁴⁹ For example, one of the lead male characters refused to join Sendero and is turned over to the party by his romantic partner, a committed female Senderista. In the play, PCP-SL leaders put the man on trial and then assaulted him as part of “popular justice” for being too cowardly to join. His punishment serves to remind audiences that you are either with the party or against them at your peril. The romantic partner on the other hand is a model Senderista that has saved the young man when he finally accepts his role in the revolution. By the late 1980s women Senderistas and sympathizers began to wane in their commitment to the party. However, Sendero women that defected from the party faced harsh reprisals.³⁵⁰ Scholar Yeiddy Erwin’s interviews with former Senderistas who remained in prison illustrated that the women were conscious that the artistic performances served a dual purpose and that made the women want to move out of the Sendero cell blocks,

there are many cases, many people who renounced [their membership], that said ‘I want to change pavilions,’ [cell block buildings] and the militants went to war with those people despising and spitting on them.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 36.

³⁵⁰ The peak of defection from Sendero came after the 1993 Ley de Arrepentimiento (Law of Repentment), which allowed people accused/convicted of terrorism or ties to a terrorist organization to cut all ties with the organization in question and offer information on prior criminal and/or terrorist activities.

³⁵¹ Interview of Ana de la Cruz, Lima, Peru, September 2008, in Yeiddy Erwin Chávez Huapaya, “Los Oscuros Presagios: Vida Política de Sendero Luminoso En La Cárcel (1980-1992)” (Master’s in History, Lima, Perú, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2010), 99–100.

Thus, participation in performances became a test of commitment and a tool for Sendero leaders within prison to note the defectors.

Additionally, participation in these performances and other cultural activities were mandatory parts of daily life for the women as voluntary or de facto members of the Shining Combat Trenches. If women did not participate or floundered in their ability to repeat Sendero's ideology, the women in charge of these activities suspected defection or betrayal.³⁵² Moreover, leaders within the prison used women's participation in theatrical work to assess women's loyalty to the party. Based on the interviews Erwin gathered from prisoners at Canto Grande, he discerned that prisoners who had renounced their membership in Sendero were incorporated into plays as a type of auto-criticism session:

[the plays] functioned as a great mass exam, where each individual was compared with their peers in everyday life; but at the same time, in these stagings, each militant is compared to the great martyrs, where the cult is staged in a sample of a great mass examination in front of their ideological political commanders.³⁵³

In this manner, the artistic work in those performances became a way to rank Senderistas within the new power structure of the party within prison walls. For women trying to rise through the ranks within the leadership of the prison cell blocks, a commitment to performances proved their loyalty and authority. For the women who had renounced their affiliation to Sendero, the lack of participation caused leaders to engage in intense rounds of auto-criticism.

Paradoxically, the creative labor involved was therapeutic for the imprisoned militants who had undergone and continued to experience violence and trauma as incarcerated insurgents. For all the negative aspects of theatrical performances as ways to keep Senderistas in line while in prison, Sendero women explained that preparing for plays allowed a change in routine and

³⁵² Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos. Testimonio N° 100146, 27.

³⁵³ Chávez Huapaya, "Los Oscuros Presagios," 115.

allowed them to feel control over their own bodies.³⁵⁴ For the women who survived violent confrontations with the Peruvian military and police forces, reporters noted that inmates found working on plays served as coping mechanisms for their post-traumatic stress. One Sendero woman told Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigators that the experience of being in prison was a daily foreboding, sense of anxiety, that “any day, the fascist police will commit another genocide. They are waiting for the right moment, and we will be prepared to shed our blood again for the revolution.”³⁵⁵ Through their focus on the artistic work the women could elude the anxiety temporarily and control their minds and bodies to experience some relief from the constant fear of violence. Performances became a way to maintain and engage with Sendero ideology, dealing with the trauma of prison life (i.e., torture) in innovative ways. The women of the Shining Combat Trenches understood their artistic efforts had far-reaching impact on the revolution and the probability of sustaining insurgency efforts.

Finally, the imprisoned Senderistas used the public nature of their performances to claim power over other inmate populations. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Final Report*, Shining Path members and associates were the highest group of prisoners in Lima’s prisons.³⁵⁶ Senderistas protected the pavilions where they lived from incursions by various other factions, i.e., Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Army (MRTA) members, other political prisoners, and the general prison population.³⁵⁷ Republican guards who worked in the prisons avoided confrontations with Sendero cell blocks because the high number of PCP-SL militants heightened the possibility of a riot that police forces may not be able to control. Through public

³⁵⁴ Marta Romero-Delgado, “Rompiendo El Sistema Penitenciario: Género, Memoria y Solidaridad En Las Cárcel Peruanas Durante El Conflicto Armado Interno,” *Revista Encuentros Latinoamericanos, Segunda Eopoca*, Dossier: Pensamiento, Sociedad y Democracia, V, no. No. 1 (June 2021): forty-nine.

³⁵⁵ Atwood, “Prisons in Peru Become a Forge for Guerrillas.”

³⁵⁶ “CVR Informe Final, Tomo II.”

³⁵⁷ Valenzuela Marroquín, *Cárcel Dominio*, 143.

performances out in the prisons' *canchas* or the open-air communal spaces, Sendero women invaded the shared spaces—the women could be seen from other pavilions, but more importantly, the dialogue resounded through other areas in the prison. Other inmates complained that they could not escape Sendero, as one inmate stated “the party is a thousand eyes and a thousand ears, it was everywhere and in everything, like gods, you could never escape, wherever you went you would breathe in Abimael Guzmán.”³⁵⁸ Inmates who did not belong to any political organization also felt they were held hostage in the prison yard when Sendero women would perform.³⁵⁹ The women ended performances with homages to Guzmán and his portrait at “centerstage,” forcing non-members in the audience to constantly interact with Guzmán and his ideology. These women dominated a significant amount of space and drew power from these performances, successfully maintaining a noninterventionist attitude with the guards from the National Penitentiary Institute (INPE).

4.3.2 *Impact on Visitors to the Prison*

Sendero actors used prison yards as a guerilla theater stages that reached audiences not only within prison but outside its walls. The children and families of prisoners came to visit and spend time with individuals who belonged to Sendero, as well as the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), other political groups, and those sentenced for crimes with no political affiliations. Additionally, the prison guards from the National Penitentiary Institute (INPE) were also present during performances. As a result, Sendero women acted out plays that creatively appealed to these mixed audiences and agitated the crowds in an artistic manner that resulted in recruits. These actors also connected with their audiences through the themes of the

³⁵⁸ Interview with inmate, November 2009 in Chávez Huapaya, “Los Oscuros Presagios,” 96.

³⁵⁹ Chávez Huapaya, “Los Oscuros Presagios,” 100.

Sendero plays and forged sympathetic ties that contributed to extended networks of support outside of the prison.

To the audiences that were temporarily forced to share the same physical space, the women of the LTC presented the harsh experiences of peasants and the proletariat in Peru through the lens of Sendero ideology. Outside of a formal stage and presenting an urgent message like other guerrilla theater as early as 1985, Sendero women would greet visitors to the prison and dress in their best attire to display a positive representation of the party.³⁶⁰ *El Diario* described these exchanges with visitors as opportunities for non-militants to take part in the celebrations commemorating the Sendero holidays and interact with party members:

Thus, hundreds of relatives and friends of political prisoners have been able to observe in the various celebrations of anniversaries and other dates promoted by the people, like the prisoners have been achieving increasingly higher content and extraordinary techniques in all artistic manifestations.³⁶¹

Through these performances, non-militants who had never previously been involved with PCP-SL learned more about the party's ideology and proposed goals for the New State for twenty to forty minutes. Manuel Valenzuela argued that the families of those in prison found hope in the new Peruvian state proposed in those plays.³⁶² Watching plays like “The Insurgent Mother” and “The Pioneers” that each contained storylines about Senderistas who heroically risked their lives for the future of the masses—including their own children and the next generation—were intended to inspire visitors to fight on behalf of their incarcerated family members.

Sendero women performed plays that contained themes designed to incite other women in the audience into action and draw on the sense of shared identity with audiences to stir action

³⁶⁰ Atwood, “Prisons in Peru Become a Forge for Guerrillas.”

³⁶¹ *El Diario*, October 11, 1989.

³⁶² Manuel Valenzuela Marroquín, *El teatro de la guerra. La violencia política de Sendero Luminoso a través de su teatro* (Lima, Perú: Grupo Editorial Arteidea, 2009), 137-8.

and gain support. As previously mentioned, the main “hero” of “Senderista Wedding” was a Quechua-speaking campesina who had joined the revolution and taken up arms against the corrupt Peruvian state by destroying the hacienda of a local *gamonal*.³⁶³ The campesina’s commitment to the party was so fervent that she was willing to turn in her male partner after he refused to complete the task party leaders had assigned for the couple. The campesino man realizes his mistake after receiving a severe beating by the party and therefore agrees to join the revolution. While the play ends with a general call to incorporate into the ranks of PCP-SL, the women of LTC were targeted the female visitors in the prison courtyard who may cautiously want to join the cause but do not have the fortitude to go against their own romantic partners and/or families. As a result, plays served as demonstrations of how people that had not joined Sendero could support the revolution when the visitors returned to the world outside prison walls. The campesina ends up saving her lover by forcing him to face his destiny as a rebel so that the actors emphasize how one woman can make multiple valuable contributions to the Party including recruiting the men in their lives and holding them accountable in fighting for a new state. Similarly, in performing “Insurgent Mother” the women of LTC highlighted to the mothers in the audience that regardless of their familial and household responsibilities, making sacrifices for a great cause outweighed personal ties.³⁶⁴ The actors also presented “Insurgent Mother” as a call for mothers to seek out joining Sendero outside of the prison walls or simply support Sendero operations by supplying information or labor necessary to perform more attacks to destabilize the Peruvian government.

Many audience members that had not previously joined PCP-SL were inspired to join the *Socorro Popular*, the Committee for Family Members of Political Prisoners, Prisoners of War,

³⁶³ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 36–37.

³⁶⁴ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 36.

and the Disappeared, organizations designed to support militants in jail.³⁶⁵ The successful recruitment of individuals to join the “autogenerated” auxiliary groups was just as important as enlisting new armed insurgents. Adding more people to the support networks allowed other parts of the interdependent revolutionary project—assassinations, armed combat, raids, etc.—to continue.

4.4 Audiences Beyond Prison Walls

The women of the Shining Trenches of Combat were able to reach audiences throughout Lima and internationally through the reproduction of their plays and recorded performances. Sendero women reached public spaces through university students and television news media.

4.4.1 *Students at San Marcos*

The women of the Shining Trenches of Combat influenced university students who visited the prisons to carry PCP-SL’s messages into public spaces and cultivate relationships beyond the prison walls. Among the audience members present in the prison were students from universities who either had incarcerated family members or were conducting research in the prison. Among those university students were individuals enrolled at National University of San Marcos (UNMSM) and La Cantuta, or members of student folk groups who copied the plays inspired by the performances of the female Senderistas. The skits that women performed like those simply labeled “Sabotage,” “Conquest of weapons and means” and “Taking of lands” had storylines that promoted swift radical action. These themes appealed to several radicalized student movements (e.g., Tungesteno) to perform during protests of their own.³⁶⁶ The short skit format of works like “Toma de tierras” with the message of taking back land lost because of the

³⁶⁵ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 369. Tamara Feinstein, “Competing Visions of the 1986 Lima Prison Massacres: Memory and the Politics of War in Peru,” *A Contra Corriente: A Journal on Social History and Literature in Latin America* 11, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 19.

³⁶⁶ Valenzuela Marroquín, *El teatro de la guerra*, 154–55.

reversal of the agrarian reforms of the 1960s, resonated with university students who came from the Peruvian countryside and were children of peasants that had endured that loss.

Although the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat could not leave prison, their influences reached youth audiences through these university groups performing their skits. In November of 1986, during a month of cultural activities and protests at UNMSM, ten Sendero women presented the same play “Toma de tierras” inspired by the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat³⁶⁷ Aside from inspiring more pro-Sendero groups to emerge as protest groups outside of prisons, women saw the performers of the Shining Trenches of Combat as examples of how to actively rebel against the state violence that they and their family members in custody had endured.³⁶⁸

4.4.2 Journalists

Through their international media exposure, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat developed a humanizing image by 1990. In an April 6th, 1990, article in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled “Prison in Peru Becomes a Forge for Guerrillas,” notes that women of LTC—at least eighty-four convicted PCO-SL members and other associates—would interact with visitors and particularly with the press.³⁶⁹ The novelty factor of these female performers and the nature of plays in prison courtyards attracted international media. Since prison personnel did not want to deal with the possible threat of a prison riot, imprisoned Senderistas obtained the ability to engage with journalists. These news stories would reach audiences throughout the world that supported Sendero’s cause. In early 1992, before the Fujimori coup d’état that changed prison rights, a London Channel 4 camera operator covertly filmed the women on Wards 4B and 1A at

³⁶⁷ Salazar del Alcazar, *Teatro y Violencia*, 34.

³⁶⁸ “2.2 Cárceles,” *Informe Final*, 700

³⁶⁹ Atwood, “Prisons in Peru Become a Forge for Guerrillas.”

Canto Grande prison. There the women performed a revolutionary show that they had been acting out since 1988. But by 1991, the experience had been rehearsed “to the true level of Chinese opera,” complete with costumes, “correctly uniformed -green blouses and caps, blue pants, red handkerchief in hand.³⁷⁰ The women used Maoist revolutionary dress that made them appear as political prisoners and looked nothing like the stereotypical terrorists in the rhetoric used by the Peruvian press and government. In these performances for journalists, the women distinguished themselves from male Sendero performers by identifying as members of the Popular Women’s Movement in addition to Shining Path, distanced themselves from showing their guerrilla skills. By parading “like sacred objects the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and, of course, “Chairman Gonzalo”.³⁷¹ In contrast, the male Senderistas demonstrated their bomb-making skills and talked about a car bomb that the PCP-SL had placed near US embassy building. By allowing themselves to be put on display—no matter what the intention of the film crews—the women of TCL used these global forums to disseminate the thought of President Gonzalo beyond the borders of Peru. The female performers not only came to represent Sendero as a public display, but they also pushed new narratives.

By 1992 and the capture of Guzmán, women once again fell into party lines and called for the liberation of Chairman Gonzalo, which in turn led to increased repression the women retained agency through their participation and contributions to historical performances and dialogues in these unique prison shows.³⁷² After 1992, women continued to perform even within their cells, including facing any outside windows where others could to see their messages.

³⁷⁰ José Luis Rénique C., *La Voluntad Encarcelada: Las “Luminosas Trincheras de Combate” de Sendero Luminoso Del Perú*, Serie Ideología y Política 18 (Lima: IEP, Instituto de Estudios Peruana, 2003), 84–85.

³⁷¹ Rénique C., *La Voluntad Encarcelada*, 84–85.

³⁷² Valenzuela, *Carcel Dominio*, 112-114.

4.5 PCP-SL Prison Plays as Tools to Combat Peruvian Government Narratives and Denounce Human Rights Violations

In late 1985, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat followed the orders of Sendero leadership to rework the narratives offered by the Peruvian government on events that included the 1985 and 1986 prison massacres. The first major encounter between incarcerated Senderistas and police forces happened in October of 1985, when thirty-four inmates died during what the Peruvian government labeled “prison riot.”³⁷³ The following year, on June 18, 1986, according to the official government reports, prisoners rioted at San Juan de Lurigancho, El Frontón, and the women’s prison in Santa Mónica prisons. The next day, June 19, the Peruvian Republican Guard in charge of prisons assaulted the women’s prison at Santa Mónica and at Fronton, the Peruvian navy bombarded the buildings where Shining Path members were housed.³⁷⁴ In total two hundred and forty four lives were lost in this massacre. The resulting performances balanced the party’s goals to broadly represent Peruvian classes over individuals with the history of individual Senderistas that became heroic examples of the ideal revolutionary. As support for the party waned by 1988, the women of LTC continued to perform pro-Sendero theater that contradicted Guzmán’s position on human rights.

Sendero performers brought attention to the atrocities that had occurred in the prison massacres and provided a voice for the silenced militants. According to the Peruvian official reports on the “prison riots,” Sendero militants attacked prison personnel and instigated a confrontation with police officials that escalated to the use of military forces.³⁷⁵ The Peruvian government stated that its agents had used “proper force” to deal with the volatile standoff and

³⁷³ Valenzuela, *Carcel y Dominio*, 50-53.

³⁷⁴ Valenzuela, *Carcel y Dominio*, 63-67

³⁷⁵ Valenzuela, *Carcel y Dominio*, 50-53, 63-67.

violence.³⁷⁶ In response, the LTC actors would call out the specific names of the dead.³⁷⁷ This approach diverged from the earlier performances with broad characterizations of campesinos or laborers. In giving names to previously anonymous militants the women humanized their dead comrades.

Yet the women's purpose was not to gain support or sympathy by claiming these individuals as victims but to exalt their contributions, lionize their sacrifices to the cause, and put a triumphal spin on the events for PCP-SL. In this manner, they could further model the ideal Senderista and also bypass the doubts of supporters who may be second-guessing their commitment to die for the revolution.³⁷⁸ The performances reflected the political objectives of those remembering.³⁷⁹ Thus even though Shining Path transformed the anniversary into a celebratory holiday of heroism—thereby closing off participation from those who saw the event as a tragedy and not a triumph—the women of TCL controlled who, what, and how these events would be remembered.

By 1988, the women's performances evolved to reflect their own conditions and demands for actions their own human rights violations causing an ideological break with *Presidente Gonzalo*. With the leadership out of communication and operating clandestinely, the women of the Shining Trenches began performing plays and other skits that highlighted the abuses by the INPE and other Peruvian forces against the women in jail and women in the countryside.³⁸⁰ Just as the women had performed about state violence in the countryside, by the late 1980s, the conditions for imprisoned women became a new reality to expose to the masses. Shining Path

³⁷⁶ *El Comercio*, 1986.

³⁷⁷ *El Comercio*, 1986.

³⁷⁸ “La versión de Sendero Luminoso sobre la matanza de 300 presos políticos,” *El Nuevo Diario*, 14 June 1987. Salazar, 69.

³⁷⁹ Feinstein, “Competing Visions of the 1986 Lima Prison Massacres: Memory and the Politics of War in Peru,” 19.

³⁸⁰ Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 189.

women were still subject to rape and torture once inside the prisons.³⁸¹ Moreover, the arrest rates for Senderistas almost doubled when Alberto Fujimori became president. As the state conducted a total war on the Peruvian population that included national police forces use of torture.³⁸² As a result, the women of the Shining Trenches integrated discussions about the conditions they faced within performances for international media attention. The increase of state violence did not completely end the performances.

By changing the focus of the plays to reflect their prison conditions, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat contradict Guzmán's position on human rights. Feinstein argued that while PCP-SL mentioned in a limited capacity social and economic rights within their rhetoric, Guzmán viewed "human rights" to be a bourgeois trapping, which conflicted directly with the rights of the people:

For us, human rights contradict the rights of the people because we base ourselves in man as a social product, not in an abstract man with innate rights. 'Human rights' are nothing more than the rights of the bourgeois man, a position that was revolutionary in the face of feudalism.³⁸³

However, the women of LCT pushed the "woman question" to directly reflect their own experiences. In doing so, the women provided more propaganda for international support groups that proved popular to international media and support groups.³⁸⁴

Since Sendero women gained control of prison spaces through cultural activities like theater, the government of Alberto Fujimori enacted laws to eradicate the right to perform outside of prison cells. After Fujimori's coup d'état of April 5, 1992, the national police assumed

³⁸¹ *El Diario*, 1989.

³⁸² *El Diario*, 1989. Jiménez Bacca, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso Del Terrorismo*, 190.

³⁸³ Sendero Luminoso and Human Rights: A Perverse Logic that Captured the Country," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 431.

³⁸⁴ Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru, Berkeley: The Committee, 1989.

control of Peru's penitentiaries enforcing strict control over the inmate population.³⁸⁵ The national police enacted restrictive policies to tightly control all prison populations, but in took away the free movement of prisoners into open, communal spaces. Forced to stay in their cells and no longer able to participate freely in theatrical performances, Sendero women had to find other ways to contribute to the revolutionary project. However, by 1992, Sendero's "guerrilla theater" had spread outside the prisons to performances in universities across Lima and other major urban areas throughout Peru. The women of the Shining trenches had helped decrease the issue of defecting Senderistas in jail by recruiting new members in and out of prison. The women of Sendero had engendered support among individuals exposed to the performances, even if they did not fully join the party. This was crucial during the waning years of public support for the party during the late 1980s and after the capture of Abimael Guzmán in 1992.

Even though the incarcerated Shining Path women followed party orders to present Pro-Sendero performances that challenged the "official" Peruvian state and media narratives on events. In doing so, the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat reintroduced audiences to the ideology of the Popular Women's Movement and linked MFP to Shining Path. This shift illustrates how the women of the Shining Trenches of Combat were able to gain authority over their activities despite living in prison.

³⁸⁵ Government of national reconstruction, Decree Law No. 25421.

CONCLUSION

Both elite and non-elite women of Ayacucho and Lima were militants of Shining Path and performed jobs that fit gendered expectations of Indigenous and mestiza women's roles as well as those of guerrilla insurgents. The location and the time that a woman joined Sendero Luminoso determined the type of job and responsibilities that she would be offered. The elite women of Huamanga at the beginning stages of Shining Path left their legacy on PCP-SL through the political and philosophical labor they performed in the affiliated Popular Women's Movement. Meanwhile, the non-elite rural women of Ayacucho assumed the responsibility of producing gendered labor, but the voluntary commitment to PCP-SL allowed these women to access leadership roles and spaces within combat. Coerced non-elite women of the rural countryside had little to no opportunities to step out of gendered roles as caregivers and domestic workers in base camps, nonetheless their labor was as important to the ability for PCP-SL to continue fighting more heavily armed and trained counter-insurgency forces. A similar story occurred in Lima, where women from marginalized neighborhoods seized chances to gain authority and influence on the micro-level beyond engaging in assassinations or directly perpetrating violence. Like their rural counterparts, these women contributed valuable labor for supply chains to armed insurgents in heavily surveilled urban Lima. Beyond gendered and combatant work, Sendero women from all background used unusual spaces and tactics—prisons and plays—to successfully reach sympathetic audiences globally from their imprisoned reality.

The information gathered by focusing on the daily lives and routines of individual Shining Path women through examining newspapers, official state records, interviews, and biographical literature provides more than anecdotal evidence; it challenges the authoritative archive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Investigation in 2003. These microhistories shed light on the invisible work of women in guerilla warfare. Additionally, the microhistories

reveal evidence that Shining Path was not the feminist organization that it purported to be in its public communications. Examining the lives of both elite and non-elite women outside of the binary of leaders versus rank-and-file, can deliver a new narrative on non-elite rural women such as that of Carlota Tello Cutti who are often lost in broader investigations of women in revolutionary movements. Finally, the deliberate choice to examine the women of Sendero through their self-identification as members of a proposed revolution rather than as the terrorist labeled by third-party audiences helped to reimagine how exactly these women pushed along the insurrection for over two decades.

One avenue of research that needs more investigation is discovering the specific work women performed to push the cultural side of this Peruvian Maoist revolution. Abimael Guzmán proposed changes to Peruvian society, while the leaders of the Women's Popular Movement called for women to participate and lead the charge for redefining the new Peruvian woman. Certainly, the female Sendero performers in jail borrowed from other leftist movements that used art to promote the revolution. However, there is little specifically written about the Shining Trenches of Combat and other forms of art. If plays humanized Sendero women and attempted to recreate a new identity for Sendero women as political prisoners rather than terrorists, what did the women producing visual art and music do with the product of their labor?

Through this dissertation I hope to add to the scholarly discourse of women in Latin American leftist movements and bring Shining Path women into the conversation with research on the women of their contemporary counterparts in Central American leftist revolutionary projects. Finally, I hope this project will inform newer generations of Peru who have grown up in the absence of a nuanced conversation on the Peruvian civil war and Sendero's insurrection. Although the Museum of Memory (LUM) in Lima, Peru does an outstanding job in maintaining

the archives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's three year investigation and offers interactive experiences for visits to engage with the testimonies and artifacts that tell the story of the lived experiences of Peruvians during the 1980s and 1990s, it still requires people to have the self-initiative to go to the LUM and spend their own time learning about this history. From my visits to LUM and the conversations with college students, many are not even aware that the LUM exists or what it has to offer. The current political instability of Peru and the return of self-proclaimed new Sendero factions necessitates a fresh look at a sensitive topic that could lead to a new era of understanding the violence for the Peruvians.

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