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Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History

ORIN STARN

Abstract. This article examines the history and ideology of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*). The rebels claim to embody a distinctively Peruvian Marxism. However, a close examination of the party betrays a conspicuous indifference to Peruvian culture and traditions. The distinctiveness of this largest and most diverse of the Andean nations disappears in the orthodoxy of a universal Marxism, in this respect placing the Shining Path within the long legacy of the imperial inscription of Latin American history into the preconceived categories and linear narratives of Western philosophy and science.

Our chief is Gonzalo
he of brilliant thought and action
inspired by Marx, Lenin and Mao he develops
our powerful ideology
and brings to a burning world
the invincible people's war.

A hymn of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path

In April 1980, Abimael Guzmán sounded an apocalyptic summons to war at the First Military School of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso – PCP-SL):

Comrades: Our labour has ended, the armed struggle has begun... The invincible flames of the revolution will glow, turning to lead and steel... There will be a great rupture and we will be the makers of the new dawn... We shall convert the black fire into red and the red into pure light.¹

Just one month later, four Shining Path militants burned ballots in the Andean village of Chuschi to announce a war to topple the Peruvian state. Chuschi launched a savage conflict between the Maoist guerrillas and government forces that cost more than 10 billion dollars in damages and

¹ Quoted in Gustavo Gorriti, *Sendero: La historia de la guerra milenaria*, vol. 1 (Lima, 1990), pp. 66–7. This and all subsequent translations from the Spanish are mine, unless otherwise noted.

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twenty thousand lives in the 1980s alone, and plunged the south-central Andes into what villagers call *chaqwa*, Quechua for trauma and chaos.²

This article locates Guzmán's thinking within the Maoist tradition of philosophy and politics. Historian Arif Dirlik contends that Mao pioneered the 'sinification of Marxism', forging a compelling vision of social transformation at the crossroads of Chinese history and revolutionary theory.³ The case of Guzmán tells a different story. Shining Path doctrine enshrines the party leader, whose *nom de guerre* was 'President Gonzalo', as the wise inventor of a 'distinctively Peruvian' Marxism. On close inspection, however, 'Gonzalo Thought' betrays a conspicuous indifference to Peruvian culture and traditions.⁴ The local yields to the global in the Shining Path, as the smooth universalism of a 'scientific' Marxism flattens the bumpy distinctiveness of this, the largest and most diverse of the Andean nations. Far from a 'Peruvianisation of Marxism', Guzmán refigures local culture and national society into the Enlightenment imperatives of reason and progress, and the salvation history of Judeo-Christian tradition, in this respect part of a long legacy of the imperial inscription of Latin American history, into the preconceived categories and linear narratives of Western philosophy and science.

To be sure, a critical examination of 'Gonzalo Thought' poses the question of alternatives. It will not do to swing to the opposite extreme of a faith in the recovery of an 'indigenous' or 'non-Western' past as the best path for the national future, as if history's clock could be turned back,

² I have borrowed the first part of the title of this article from one of the best early articles on the Shining Path, by Lewis Taylor, *Maoism in the Andes: Sendero Luminoso and the Contemporary Guerrilla Movement in Peru*, Centre for Latin American Studies, Working Paper no. 2 (Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Liverpool, 1983). I take some of the phrasing of this opening paragraph from Orin Starn, 'New Literature on Peru's Sendero Luminoso', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1992), p. 212.

³ Arif Dirlik, 'Mao Zedong and China's History', in Arif Dirlik, Paul Healey, and Nick Knight, *Critical Analysis of Mao Zedong Thought* (New York, n.d.), p. 3.

⁴ Two of the best books on the Shining Path are Carlos Iván Degregori, *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso: Del movimiento por la gratitud de la enseñanza al inicio de la lucha armada* (Lima, 1990) and Gorriti, *Sendero: Historia de la guerra milenaria*, vol. 1. Both are forthcoming in English translation from the University of North Carolina Press. One of the most useful existing English sources on the Shining Path is a recent anthology edited by David Scott Palmer, *Shining Path of Peru* (London, 1992). Other valuable recent sources are Dennis Chávez de Paz, *Juventud y Terrorismo* (Lima, 1989); Carlos Iván Degregori, Javier Escobal, and Benjamín Marticorena (eds.), *Perú: El problema agrario en debate* (Lima, 1993); Iván Hinojosa, 'Entre el poder y la ilusión: Pol Pot, Sendero y las utopías campesinas', *Debate Agrario*, no. 15 (1992); Robin Kirk, *Grabado en Piedra: Las mujeres de Sendero Luminoso* (Lima, 1993); and Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, *Peru: Time of Fear* (London, 1992). The most comprehensive chronology and statistics on the war come from DESCO, *Violencia Política en el Perú* (Lima, 1989).

or the mutual entanglement of the 'Western' and the 'Andean' be denied. On the contrary, pragmatic politics of social transformation must recognise that Peruvian society unfolds, as elsewhere in the Third World, at the shifting and sometimes painful intersection of village politics and state-making, local custom and institutional religion, regional trade and the world economy. Rather than a desire for either a romantic return to an autochthonous past or a blind faith in the promise of a Western future, the challenge becomes to move beyond the tired opposition of the indigenous and Western, First World and Third World, traditional and modern. On this precarious terrain, the potential opens for political vision that would embrace flexibility and improvisation, even as it remained grounded in commitment to economic justice and social democracy.⁵

Such a possibility has haunted, and attracted, Peruvians throughout this century. A child of the Andes, nicknamed '*El Indio* – The Indian', Peru's greatest poet, César Vallejo was guarded about the possibilities of redemption in a hard world where 'pain grabs at us at every minute'.⁶ However, Vallejo also believed that any hope rested in an energising politics at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, within a framework that would respect diversity, while attacking the savage injustices of race and class. In his own verse, Vallejo sought to lay out the elements of this ecumenical yet committed vision, concocting a distinctive mix of images and styles from mountain villages and bustling cities, Inca nationalism and French Surrealism, Andean melancholy and Marxist utopianism. 'Mountains of my Peru, the Peru of the world. And Peru, at the cusp of the globe', he concluded in a guarded assertion of the possibilities of a mixed future in an ever-tightening world, 'I can only accept it.'

Ayacucho and the origins of the war

'Revolutions start in Arequipa, but when they reach Ayacucho, the matter is serious', goes a Peruvian saying. In part, this aphorism betrays the racial and regional stereotype of Ayacucho as more 'Indian', and thus more savage, than Arequipa, an old capital of the Spanish aristocracy. However, many Ayacuchans themselves like to claim a prickly history of revolt; among others the Taki Onqoy movement of the 1560s, the Iquichan rebellions of 1825–8, and the insurrection in 1883 against the Chilean invaders during the War of the Pacific.⁷ Popular mythology abounds in,

⁵ I am influenced here by Cornell West's fine article, 'The New Cultural Politics of Difference', in Russell Ferguson et al. (eds.), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (New York, 1990), pp. 19–36.

⁶ I paraphrase from César Vallejo's 'The Nine Monsters' in *Human Poems*, translated by Clayton Eshelman (New York, 1968).

⁷ An anthology edited by Steve J. Stern, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th–20th Century* (Madison, 1987) offers a fine introduction to

and often celebrates, the themes of deep passions and fierce independence. 'Only the people of Ayacucho cannot be bought, and when danger arises, they offer their lives', bravely proclaims a Quechua ballad by Carlos Falconí, one of Ayacucho's premier guitarists and students of folklore.⁸

The Ayacuchan history of political upheaval cannot be understood as a consequence of isolation from the rest of Peru or the world. The cactus gorges and icy moors of the mountainous region were already a busy intersection of cultural mixture and social transformation before the arrival of the Spanish. Legend as well as archaeological evidence tell of the bitter struggle between the ethnic kingdoms of the Chancas and Pocras and the Inca empire, which eventually sent in teams of colonists, or *mitmaqs*, to help to pacify the zone. The Ayacuchan capital of Huamanga grew into a lively centre of commerce and mining under Spanish rule. Just ten miles from this lovely city of sandstone churches, the plain of Quinua was the site of the decisive battle of the Independence Wars in 1824 between the multinational army of the Ecuadoran General José Antonio de Sucre and the royalist forces of Viceroy de La Serna. In the present century, the reopening of Huamanga University (UNSCH) in 1959 brought a cosmopolitan crowd of Peruvian agronomists, Israeli students, US Peace Corps Volunteers, and French historians. At the same time thousands of Ayacuchan villagers set out in search of a better life in the great migrations that took them to the coastal capital of Lima and even to the United States and Europe. The most cursory look at Ayacuchan history, therefore, underlines the untenability of what can be called 'Andeanism', the stubborn vision of the Andes as a place of autochthonous purity and timeless traditions.⁹ To be sure, a distinctive, sometimes fierce sense of cultural independence persists in much of Andean South America. The raucous sounds and twirling dances at Ayacuchan festivals testify to a different artistic imagination from the globalised popular culture of Michael Jackson, Robocop II, and soap operas. Yet these Andean traditions cannot any longer be understood, if they ever could, as pristine artefacts of an ancient past. Dances incorporate

the history of resistance and rebellion in the Andean nations. Stern's *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of the Spanish Conquest* (Madison, 1982) examines the Taki Onqoy, or 'Dancing Sickness', movement, while Patrick Husson's *De la guerra a la rebelión: Huanta, Siglo XIX* (Cuzco, 1992) takes up the Iquichan wars in the 19th century.

⁸ The song is 'Ofrenda', or offering.

⁹ For more on the debate about the concept of 'Andeanism', see Orin Starn, 'Missing the Revolution: Anthropologists and the War in Peru', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1991); Enrique Mayer, 'Peru in Deep Trouble: Mario Vargas Llosa's "Inquest in the Andes" Reexamined', *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 6, no. 4 (1991); the special issue of *Allpanchis*, no. 39 (1992); and Orin Starn, 'Rethinking the Politics of Anthropology: The Case of the Andes', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1994), pp. 45-75.

steps from Hollywood videos, while Ayacuchan musicians splice Cuban rhythms into Incan melodies on flutes made of plastic tubing in an eclectic, yet still resolutely Andean, brand of cultural expression. In the Andes identity and difference unfold in the charged context of the interconnected field of communities, classes and nations as elsewhere in the global system.

Ayacuchan society in the mid-twentieth century remained haunted by the hierarchy of race and class that was a legacy of colonialism. Landowners and clerics from old families ruled regional life, while Quechua villagers battled against political disenfranchisement and want. Of course, it would be wrong to overplay the rigidity of the division between white and Indian, rich and poor, powerful and dispossessed. Already in colonial days native chiefs, *kurakas*, turned their role as mediators between the Indian majorities and the Spanish oligarchy into economic privilege and political influence, dividing the so-called 'Republic of Indians' into 'the rich and more acculturated on one side, the poor and less acculturated on the other'.¹⁰ These divisions persisted into post-colonial times in village hierarchies of financial standing and social prestige. In the towns also, elites spoke Quechua as well as Spanish, and racial and economic gaps were tempered by the common feeling of marginality of an Andean department in relation to the central government in coastal Lima. Still, the poor majorities in the region, who struggled to scratch a living from dry plots on steep Andean hillsides, faced what some observers called 'Fourth World' conditions of infant mortality and life expectancy. Even with remittances from family members in Lima and abroad, and seasonal labour on coastal and jungle estates, the precariousness of everyday life in what the anthropologist and novelist José María Arguedas called '*la nación cercada* – the surrounded nation' of the mountain countryside left Ayacucho third among Peru's 25 departments in a 1981 index of poverty.¹¹

Scholarship on rebellion has emphasised that there is never a straight line from hunger to revolution.¹² In Ayacucho, the insurrection of the Shining Path was begun by middle-class university intellectuals, not poor villagers. The reopening of the UNSCH coincided with an explosion of radical politics in Peruvian universities. Campus supremacy was hotly disputed by an alphabet soup of Marxist parties. Most were Maoist, and one student even remembers universities of the time as 'temples to Mao

¹⁰ Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest*, p. 182.

¹¹ From the *Mapa de la Pobreza*, Banco Central de Reserva Peruana (1981) cited in Richard Webb and Graciela Fernández Baca (eds.), *Perú en Números* (Lima, 1991), p. 303.

¹² One of the best introductions to the literature on rural rebellion remains Theda Skocpol, 'What Makes Peasants Revolutionary?', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1982).

Zedong'.¹³ Unlike other Latin American regimes, the 'military socialist' government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–75) maintained ties with Beijing, even promoting exchange programmes with Chinese universities. More broadly, Maoism's emphasis on the peasantry meshed with the hopes of many twentieth-century Peruvian intellectuals for the protagonism of Andean villagers in remaking national society. It also appealed to farm-born youth, entering public universities in growing numbers after World War II and drawn by the themes of youth activism and the political fervour of the Cultural Revolution. The boundary between academics and politics dissolved, as students and professors turned campuses into a revolutionary carnival of rallies and strikes.¹⁴

Abimael Guzmán founded the Communist Party of Peru at the UNSCH in these tumultuous years of campus radicalism. A reserved yet self-confident man who favoured the conservative suit of an Andean intellectual, Guzmán came from a middle-class family in the desert town of Mollendo, and arrived in Huamanga in 1962 to take a post at the university as a philosophy professor. Already convinced of what he called 'the grandiose importance and transcendence' of Marxist thought, Guzmán belonged to the Communist Party of Peru-Red Flag until 1970, when, apparently dissatisfied with the unwillingness of the leadership of Red Flag to take up arms against the Peruvian government, he led a splinter movement to found the Shining Path.¹⁵ At a boarding house on Pukacruz Street, later known to local pundits as *El Kremlin*, Guzmán delivered long talks on dialectical materialism and scientific socialism, and earned the nickname of *Dr. Shampú* for his ability to 'brainwash' listeners. He also used his position as personnel director to appoint loyalists to influential university positions. Meanwhile, intermarriage sealed political bonds between the Morotes, Durands and Casanovas, the nucleus of what came to be known as 'the Sacred Families' that provided the inner circle around the baronial Guzmán. Revolutionary bravado and intellectual certainty prevailed in the leadership of the new party, and an eager, even fierce, anticipation of the war in which Guzmán unabashedly promised that his followers would 'put the noose around the neck of imperialism and the reactionaries... garrot them by the throat'.¹⁶

¹³ Quoted in Nicolás Lynch, *Los jóvenes rojos de San Marcos: El radicalismo universitario en los años setenta* (Lima, 1990), p. 64.

¹⁴ See Hinojosa, 'Entre el poder y la ilusión' for more on the influence of Maoism on Guzmán.

¹⁵ Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru, *Interview with Chairman Gonzalo*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Abimael Guzmán, 'We are the Initiators', quoted in Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori, and Robin Kirk (eds.), *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, 1995), p. 313.

The bulk of recruits were high school and university students from Ayacucho's shantytowns and countryside. In this respect, and despite claims of radical upheaval, the new party's internal organisation replicated the colonial stratification of regional society: a privileged elite of white professionals commanded a mass of brown-skinned youth of humble origin. Even if they remained on the low rungs of the party, however, young followers of the Shining Path were offered the seductive promise of an active role in an imminent 'world proletarian revolution' under the wise guidance of a charismatic leader who seemed to speak in the omniscient, almost magical, voice of scientific truth. The assertion that the time was right for armed struggle furthered the Shining Path's appeal to many students, whose anxiety for action was in many cases heightened by personal experience of poverty and racism as children of the dispossessed. By 1977, young militants were already holding education sessions and recruiting fighters in mountain villages. 'The reactionaries are sharpening their knives... we, too, must get our knives ready', wrote a party propagandist of these preparations for the so-called 'ILA' or *Inicio de la Lucha Armada*.¹⁷

Between 1980 and 1982, the Shining Path put to flight the poorly armed and badly trained police throughout the rugged countryside in Ayacucho and the neighbouring departments of Huancavelica and Apurímac. News of the Andean insurgency led some US scholars in the nascent enterprise of 'Senderology' to proclaim the Shining Path a 'peasant rebellion' or an 'agrarian revolt', which overlooked the top-down character of this insurrection, planned and directed by Guzmán and his followers.¹⁸ In these first years, however, the Shining Path was unquestionably successful in winning a measure of village sympathy in the war zone. Many peasants were happy to see the departure of inefficient and corrupt authorities, and the punishment by the cadre of adulterers and thieves seemed to validate the promise of a new, more just order. Although it would be a mistake to present the rural poor as the makers of 'rational choices' as if they were outside culture and ideology, historian Steve J. Stern also rightly underscores that 'peasant societies, in order to survive, are notoriously sensitive to changes in power balances'. The status of the Maoist rebels as the new lords of the countryside also heightened readiness in the

¹⁷ Osmán Morote, 'Lucha de clases en las zonas altas de Huanta (distrito de Santillana)' Bachelor's thesis, Facultad de Antropología, Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga, Peru (1970).

¹⁸ For a critical overview of the enterprise of 'Senderology' see Starn, 'New Literature on Peru's Sendero Luminoso', as well as an astute, yet exaggerated, essay by Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, 'The New Chroniclers of Peru: U.S. Scholars and their 'Shining Path' of Peasant Rebellion', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1991).

Andean countryside to cooperate in demands for food and lodging. As yet unopposed in mountain villages, the Shining Patch ruled the south-central Andean countryside under what one analyst has called a regime of 'utopian authoritarianism'.¹⁹

In the towns of Huamanga and Huanta, the exploits of the Shining Path led to an initial surge of pride. As a Huanta schoolteacher recalled in 1994, 'At the beginning, in 1982, it was the thing to do, and just about all of us high school students were involved in one way or another.' A jailbreak in Huamanga in March 1982 added to the allure and mystique of the revolutionaries. Seven months later, thirty thousand Ayacuchans went to the funeral of Edith Lagos, an ardent 21-year-old militant killed by the police. Her funeral turned into an impromptu rally for the Maoists. When President Belaúnde sent in the Second Infantry division at the end of 1982, many Ayacuchans viewed it as akin to a foreign occupation by what historian Alberto Flores Galindo called a 'colonial army'. The military went on to mount a deadly campaign of disappearance and torture.²⁰ Unbeknown to most in the department, however, the Shining Path would itself prove to be just as willing to turn to the tactics of terror, the stony absolutism and deliberate use of mass violence that was the core of Guzmán's revolutionary plan. More than three thousand Ayacuchans, most of them impoverished villagers, would be killed in the dirty war in 1984 and 1985 alone. The bodies of the disappeared, concluded a song by another of Ayacucho's greatest musicians, Ranulfo Fuentes, rest 'under the rocky ground beneath the earth or among the thorns budding like flowers'.

The principles of Gonzalo Thought

Some of the first Peruvian scholars to write about the Shining Path portrayed the party as an indigenous uprising in the tradition of the eighteenth century neo-Inca rebel Túpac Amaru II.²¹ Ten years later, and playing shamelessly to the conventional view of the Peruvian Andes as an exotic place of primordial customs and millenarian dangers, a British journalist could still claim that these revolutionaries were the children of 'the magical world of the Indians' and the 'cruelty' and 'ferociousness' of 'the Indian Mind'.²² In fact, the ideology of Shining Path eschewed

¹⁹ Carlos Iván Degregori, 'Jóvenes y campesinos ante la violencia política', unpublished manuscript, p. 3.

²⁰ Alberto Flores Galindo, *Buscando un Inca* (Lima, 1987), p. 395.

²¹ One example was the anthropologist Juan Ansión, '¿Es luminoso el camino de Sendero?', *Caballo Rojo*, no. 108 (1982). In fairness, Ansión later rethought his position.

²² Simon Strong, *Shining Path: The World's Deadliest Revolutionary Force* (London, 1992), pp. 27, 92. For a more recent, and just as egregious example of this kind of absurd

completely any appeal to 'indigenous' or 'Andean' roots. On the contrary, the political culture of the revolutionaries centred on class struggle and anti-imperialism, and on the party's primacy in revolution. The light-skinned Guzmán always appeared in party propaganda in the glasses and suit of a university professor, echoing the standard Peruvian association of wisdom and leadership with the white, the urban and the educated. More concretely, the leader of the Shining Path traced his political lineage through Marx, Lenin, and Mao, not Túpac Amaru II, Juan Santos Atahualpa, Manco Inca, or any of the other Indian rebels in Peruvian history. A party poster of the First Military School, for instance, depicted a commanding Guzmán issuing instructions to cadres. Pictures of Marx, Lenin and Mao hung on the wall, and the poster's design located the Shining Path chief in precise proportion and position to complete the revolutionary pantheon, a thinly-veiled suggestion that he was the living embodiment of a noble tradition of Marxist heroes. In the early 1980s, party propaganda openly proclaimed Guzmán 'the Fourth Sword of Marxism', and the 'world's greatest living Marxist-Leninist'.

Four themes stood out in Guzmán's thought. The most obvious was an emphasis on the primacy of class struggle. According to Guzmán, the trajectory of modernity could be written as a struggle between the proletariat and the reactionaries, framed as a Manichean war between light and darkness. Racism and sexism were 'secondary contradictions' in this orthodox Marxism, destined to wither away with the advent of Communism. 'Love is for class', Lima commander Laura Zambrano ('Comrade Meche') declared in an interview, 'and is a function of the people's war'.²³ From the mysteries of the heart to the structure of society, the book of history could be unlocked by the master key of class struggle in what one observer has called the 'hyperclassism' of Gonzalo Thought.²⁴

The need to combat imperialism represented a second and interrelated feature in Guzmán's thinking. An anti-imperialist and pan-Latin Americanist plank was one of the mainstays of Peru's most powerful political machine of the twentieth century, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) under the charismatic leadership of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. Like the founder of the Peruvian

exoticism, see Ilan Stavans, 'Two Peruvians', *Transitions* no. 81 (1994), pp. 19, 38. Astonishingly, in the light of all the evidence to the contrary, the Mexican novelist insists that the Shining Path wants to restore 'mythical Inca heroes' to Peru, which he describes as a 'semi-feudal, quasi-modern banana republic'.

²³ Quoted in Kirk, *Grabado en Piedra*, p. 54.

²⁴ Degregori, *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, p. 205.

Communist Party, the early twentieth-century socialist José Carlos Mariátegui, Guzmán lambasted the APRA for separating the struggles against capitalism and imperialism, questioning Haya's premise that a pan-Latin American front could be built across class lines. At the same time, however, the Shining Path leader drew on Lenin to assert that imperialism represented, in conjunction with 'semi-feudal' Andean relations and Lima-based 'bureaucratic capitalism', one of 'the three mountains' in the way of revolution. Although contemptuous of China and the Soviet Union for 'revisionism' and 'social-imperialism', Guzmán followed Mariátegui in denouncing the United States as the main agent of imperialism in Peru. The semi-official party newspaper *El Diario* claimed that Guzmán's arrest in 1992 was the work of the Central Intelligence Agency, and derided Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori as a 'yankee puppet'. The Shining Path chief himself reasserted the role of the United States in maintaining Peru under the 'imperialist yoke' in a defiant speech to reporters from a 'Silence of the Lambs'-style cage just after his capture.

A third cornerstone of Guzmán's thought was the importance of the vanguard party. Shining Path propaganda always claimed wide backing through the labels of '*guerra popular* – people's war' and '*lucha de masas* – mass struggle'. Locating the Peruvian revolution in the Maoist tradition, Guzmán asserted that the 'peasantry is by far the major portion... [of] our fight'.²⁵ At the same time, however, the Shining Path leader invoked Lenin to insist that in every age, a set of men emerges 'who apply... [Marxist] principles in their purest form'. This 'fistful of Communists', in Guzmán's phrase, would lead the masses across a 'river of blood' to the promised land of a classless utopia. In this hierarchical, almost colonial, view of party supremacy, the poor majorities figured as the malleable objects of revolutionary truth, who, in the characteristic vehemence of an *El Diario* editorial, would need to have 'ideas pounded into their heads through dramatic deeds'.²⁶ Like the eighty peasants slaughtered in 1983 in the village of Lucanamarca on charges of collaborating with the government, those who refused submission had to be 'annihilated', in Guzmán's words, in order to channel the masses in the 'riverbed' of revolutionary correctness.²⁷ This fierce ideology of privileged insight and leadership worked as a binding force within the party, fuelling the burning passion as history's elect. In the evocative metaphor of the Peruvian anthropologist Carlos Iván Degregori, the party turned into a 'dwarf star', small in size yet intense in heat and force.²⁸

²⁵ Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru, *Interview with Chairman Gonzalo* (New York, 1989), p. 76.

²⁶ Quoted in Carlos Iván Degregori, *Qué difícil es ser Dios* (Lima, 1989), p. 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9. ²⁸ Degregori, *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, p. 198.

A final theme centres on violence. Guzmán cited Mao to contend that ‘violence is a universal law...and without revolutionary violence one class cannot be substituted for another, an old order cannot be overthrown to create a new one.’²⁹ During the Cultural Revolution, the future rebel leader visited China at least three times. The Savonarolan fervency of the Gang of Four reappeared in Gonzalo Thought in an all-or-nothing vision of history as a ceaseless struggle between the ‘glorious forces of true revolutionaries’ and ‘the miserable revisionism’ of other Peruvian socialist parties and the ‘social-imperialism’ of China and the Soviet Union. Opponents were ‘filthy’, ‘parasitic’, ‘fetid’, ‘cancerous’, and ‘reptilian’ in this social etiology of purity and danger, providing the ideological framework for the murder of hundreds of trade unionists, peasant activists and neighbourhood leaders from other political parties as well as policemen and soldiers. To kill was to cleanse evil. To die was to become a martyr. The so-called *Día de la Heroicidad*, when in 1986 the security forces slaughtered 246 inmates following a failed Shining Path prison rebellion, turned into a major rebel holiday. Meanwhile, an unofficial anthem, *Flor de Retama*, declared that ‘the people’s blood has a rich perfume, like jasmine, daisies, geraniums, and violets’, part of what Degregori has called a ‘poeticisation of death’ in the political imagination of the party. Violence became the path to redemption for the Shining Path, perhaps unintentionally echoing Catholic iconography of destruction and resurrection on display in the grim crucifixes above church altars across the Peruvian Andes. ‘Blood will not drown the revolution, but water it’, as a party slogan proclaimed.

It would be wrong to overplay the uniqueness of the Shining Path. From Stalin’s Soviet Union to Pol Pot’s Cambodia, vanguardist zeal and unrestrained violence in the name of the fight for a revolutionary utopia have a painful familiarity. Despite a partial accuracy, the labels of ‘terrorist’, ‘fanatical’, and ‘bloodthirsty’ obscure the party’s history, as if it had no genealogy within Marxist politics. Too quickly in Peru, moreover, the unilateral focus of the press and politicians on guerrilla brutality covers up official violence. The police and military have played a deadly role in dozens of Andean villages: Uchuraccay, Accomarca, Soccos, Cayara, Santa Bárbara. At the opposite extreme, however, it will not do to generalise from the Shining Path about socialism’s bankruptcy – like a Peruvian general who pointed to Guzmán’s party as an example of the ‘criminality’ of the ‘World Communist Movement’.³⁰ Not only does this ignore the diversity of the desires and strategies of socialist

²⁹ Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru, *Interview with Chairman Gonzalo*, pp. 51–3.

³⁰ Roberto Noel Moral, *Ayacucho: Testimonio de un Soldado* (Lima, 1989), p. 9.

parties both in and outside Peru, but it glosses over the human costs of the policies of the new wave of neoconservative orthodoxy in Latin America, where triumphant talk about markets and democracy ignores a terrible failure to address the persistence, and even increase, of exclusion and poverty. Rather than either insisting on the exceptionalism of the Shining Path or using the party to generalise about Marxist failings, adequate analysis pivots on an examination of how Guzmán's thinking at once dovetails with and diverges from main trends in twentieth century Marxism, even as it maintains a recognition of violence and the multiple sources of terror in Peru.

In particular, there can be little doubt of Guzmán's debt to Chinese Marxism. The primacy of class struggle, the imperative of crushing the 'paper tiger' of imperialism, the rule of the Communist party, and the cleansing character of revolutionary violence were prominent themes of Maoist thought. More specifically, the style of the Shining Path mimicked the Cultural Revolution in a relentless politicisation of personal behaviour and public life. Guzmán's followers even borrowed conventions, like the wall-poster, dunce cap, street theatre and singing of paeans to Mao (which they memorised in Mandarin). The dismissal of the Shining Path as 'anarcho-infantilist-terrorists' by the rival Maoists of the Communist Party of Peru-Red Homeland ignored how much Guzmán had learned from Chinese Marxism.³¹ At the same time, however, Mao's suspicion of bureaucracy dropped from Guzmán's thought, where a preoccupation with written documents, elaborate greetings and official titles reflected the Peruvian tradition of exuberant enchantment with legal protocol and formal ceremony. The anti-intellectual thrust of the Cultural Revolution was tempered by the insistence on the claim of scholastic authority as well as revolutionary potency in Guzmán's own image as a learned professor. Perhaps most importantly, and in the face of massive urbanisation in Peru, Guzmán was willing to break from classic Maoism by waging war in metropolitan Lima as well as the Andean countryside. Bombs already rocked the capital in the early 1980s, and party organisers fanned into the shantytowns on the central highway. In brief, these Peruvian revolutionaries copied, yet also recoded, the Maoist tradition they claimed to embody.

By 1994, it appeared that Guzmán and his followers were not to win the war for a Maoist state. They had developed a steady source of cash in the mid-1980s by taxing the cocaine trade in the humid Andean foothills of the Upper Huallaga Valley. Militants in Lima dynamited pylons to throw

³¹ A legal party, Red Homeland enjoyed the support of Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese government in the 1980s, and participated in elections as the Union of the Revolutionary Left (UNIR).

the capital's eight million inhabitants into a nervous darkness, and carried out a wave of assassinations of foreign missionaries and aid workers in a bid to force Peru's isolation and final descent into chaos and then revolution. In the early 1990s, however, a pair of developments changed the course of the battle. Peasant militias against the Shining Path grew with rapid force. Weary of the pain of the war, and encouraged by an increasing emphasis in the army on cooperation with civilians, these villagers forged an unlikely alliance with the military to push the Maoists out of former strongholds, from the stony canyons of Huanta to the rainy valleys of the Apurímac River.³² Meanwhile, improved intelligence led to the capture of Guzmán and more than half of the Central Committee. Actions in 1994 had declined to a trickle, and tourists and business returned even to Ayacucho. President Fujimori used these victories to bolster his reelection campaign, even as his regime papered over human rights violations by the government under the banner of the fight for democracy.

Despite these setbacks, the Shining Path maintained a fatal attraction for its young followers. Membership in the party probably never exceeded more than a few thousand even in the late 1980s. Still, this relative handful of militants – convinced of the infallibility of Gonzalo Thought and that it was urgent to attack corruption and poverty – swore to pay the so-called 'quota' with their own lives, and forged a party whose stunning extremes of sacrifice and resolve lent credence to political philosopher Raymond Aron's famous claim about Marxism as a 'secular religion'. Some fighters maintained faith into the mid-1990s, even after their leader's imprisonment and apparent call for peace talks with the government. In 1993, for example, an armed column descended upon the town of Satipo. Cadres believed that Asháninka Indians in this jungle settlement had collaborated with the army. This conviction, within the framework of party thought, made them into 'miserable mercenaries' to be 'annihilated by the people's justice'. With knives and guns, the guerrillas slaughtered sixty-five Indians, even spearing four children, as they shouted *vivas* to President Gonzalo and the 'people's war'. In the name of the revolution, as Guzmán had announced in 1988 with the icy authority of reason and science, 'we... [are] ready to do everything, everything'.³³

³² There is not space to consider the complex dynamics behind the rise of the so-called *rondas campesinas*. For introductions to the organisations, including the tremendous differences between the original *rondas* in the northern departments of Cajamarca and Piura and their namesakes in the war zones, see Orin Starn (ed.), *Hablan los ronderos: La búsqueda por la paz en los andes* (Lima, 1993) and José Coronel, Carlos Iván Degregori, Ponciano del Pino, and Orin Starn, *La rebelión del coro* (Lima, 1995).

³³ Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru, *Interview with Chairman Gonzalo*, p. 68.

The refusal of history

The Shining Path was built around the premise that Guzmán's thought represented, in the words of a follower, the 'highest development of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought'.³⁴ The greatest contribution of 'Gonzalo Thought', or so Guzmán himself contended in his so-called 'Interview of the Century' in *El Diario*, lay in adapting Marxism to 'Peruvian reality'.³⁵ All the more powerful because of Guzmán's success at evading capture for thirteen years, a view of the Shining Path leader as the creator of 'Peruvian Marxism' became the foundation of the personality cult to 'President Gonzalo', perhaps history's first to a socialist leader before the triumph of their forces. At the start of the war, the Shining Path rallied to the banner of 'Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought'. A decade later, the standard changed to 'Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong-Gonzalo Thought', or even just 'Gonzalo Thought'. Hymns, poems, and loyalty oaths celebrated the 'greatness' of 'our beloved and respected President Gonzalo ... teacher of Communists and party unifier', even as they swore 'full and unconditional submission to the all-powerful and infallible ideology of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Gonzalo Thought, especially Gonzalo Thought'.³⁶

In claiming a Peruvian Marxism, Guzmán placed himself in the tradition of José Carlos Mariátegui. His Ayacuchan rebels took their name from a quote by the founder of Peruvian socialism about 'the Shining Path of revolution'. More concretely, Guzmán insisted that his new party was the true descendant of Mariátegui's original Peruvian Communist Party, dismissing other pretenders, like the Unified Mariateguista Party (PUM), as 'putrid' corruptions of the teachings of the '*Amauta*', Quechua for 'Wise Man', as Mariátegui had come to be known on the Peruvian left.

Perhaps the most influential Latin American Marxist of the twentieth century, Mariátegui was the self-educated child of a humble family from the southern Peruvian town of Moquegua. He worked in Europe as a journalist between 1924 and 1927, meeting Breton, Croce and Gramsci, before returning to a meteoric career as a cultural critic and political activist. Mariátegui's interests ranged from Andean history to surrealism. However, the hallmark of his thought was the desire to apply Marxism to interpreting, and transforming, Peru. The young socialist chided nineteenth-century intellectuals for failing to locate Andean poverty

³⁴ Antonio Díaz Martínez, quoted in José María Salcedo, 'Con Sendero en Lurigancho', *Quehacer*, no. 39 (1986), p. 62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁶ The quote comes from a letter from a party militant to Guzmán from the late 1980s or early 1990s, published and translated in Starn, Degregori and Kirk (eds.), *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, p. 336.

within structures of political economy, and in particular for ascribing rural want to spiritual 'backwardness' instead of to seizures of village land by big owners. Unlike the purveyors of the reductive economism of the Third International, however, Mariátegui insisted on the imperative of, in his words, 'Peruvianising Peru' at the intersection of local traditions and world history. This would not mean, Mariátegui asserted, an 'innocuous apology for the Inca past' or 'dreams of utopian restoration [of pre-Columbian ways]'.³⁷ On the contrary, history ought to serve as a 'root', not a 'programme'; Peru should combine the best of the proud history with the promise of Western technology and science, 'precious instruments of human power'.³⁸ 'Along these cosmopolitan and ecumenical paths... we come ever closer to finding ourselves', he concluded in 1925, five years before his death from a crippling bone disease.³⁹

On close examination, however, big gaps divide the two socialists, and expose the painful blindness of Guzmán to the stark yet labyrinthine pathways of Peruvian history. The most obvious contrast revolves around Guzmán's pronounced disinterest in Peru's indigenous roots. Although prevented by poor health even from travel to the interior, Mariátegui was fascinated by the great civilisations of the Andean past. Perhaps in this case with a strain of romanticism, he contended that Incan ethics of collectivism and social welfare might be a foundation for Peruvian socialism. By contrast, Guzmán makes almost no mention of the pre-Columbian past, a striking omission in light of Peru's legacy of extraordinary accomplishments in art, architecture and state-making going back even before the Incas to, among others, the Chavín, Moche, Nazca and Chimú cultures. Three thousand years of precolonial and colonial life telescope into a brief dismissal of the 'petrified rule' of the Incas in Guzmán's most extensive speech about Peru's past. In his view, history's bright and shining moments were the rise of the 'international proletariat' ('an invincible force'), and the birth of the Peruvian Communist Party in 1930 ('a resplendent light').⁴⁰ Far from any interest in the specificity of local traditions and national history, this brand of historical vision flattened the coarse and sometimes desperate contours of Peru's past into the bland economism of a prefabricated narrative about class struggle and capitalism.

The same reductionism characterised Guzmán's view of contemporary Peru. Far from relegating them as a matter of an outdated past, Mariátegui

³⁷ José Carlos Mariátegui, *Peruanicemos el Perú* (Lima, 1970), p. 74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Carlos Iván Degregori, *Después de la caída* (Unpublished manuscript, n.d.), p. 5.

insisted on the need to build upon Peru's diverse traditions, and especially those of Andean villagers, who even today comprise more than a third of Peru's population. Guzmán reminisced in 1988 about how Ayacucho had 'served me to discover the peasantry'.⁴¹ However, the writings of the Shining Path founder stand out for the total lack of interest, or even mention, of the distinctive textures of Andean life. A dependence on the Maoist typology of poor, middle and rich peasants substitutes for an engagement in the politics of language for Quechua and Aymara-speaking villagers, the role of local festivals and regional saints, the reconfiguration of Andean ways in the wake of mass communication and rapid urbanisation, or any of the other central problems of twentieth-century mountain life. Guzmán never drew references from an observation of village ways or even the many short stories and novels about Andean life. Instead, he quoted Shakespeare, Kant, Thomas Mann and Washington Irving, in a Eurocentrism that almost completely wrote out other Peruvian or even Latin American authors. The pseudonym 'Gonzalo' may itself have been inspired by Prospero's adviser in *The Tempest*.⁴² Some of Guzmán's most famous catchphrases in speeches, such as a promise to lead Peru across a 'river of blood' to the promised land of Communism, came from the Old Testament. Meanwhile, the pre-eminent twentieth-century champion of Andean traditions, the mountain-born and Quechua-speaking José María Arguedas, came under virulent attack in party propaganda as a 'magical-whining nationalist' with 'a Hitler-like moustache', for insisting on the urgency of addressing problems of cultural difference and autonomy at the supposed expense of a 'scientific, class-based analysis'.⁴³ Even as it fought in the name of the peasantry, the Shining Path reinscribed the old insensibility of privileged Peruvian society towards mountain villagers, and the elevation of the European over the Andean.

A lack of understanding of Andean villagers was a major obstacle to the struggle of the Shining Path for lasting support in the south-central highlands. According to Gonzalo Thought's insistence on the 'semi-

⁴¹ Central Committee of the Communist Party of Peru, *Interview with Chairman Gonzalo*, p. 147.

⁴² Many Marxists in the 1960s and 1970s took their pseudonyms from characters in Greek and Roman mythology, or Shakespeare (Carlos Iván Degregori, personal communication). Degregori himself, now a scholar of the Shining Path, was militant of the Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario (MIR) in Ayacucho in the 1970s, and took the name 'Héctor' after Troy's leading defender in *The Iliad*. Guzmán liked to quote Shakespeare; Degregori, and other leading students of the Shining Path I have consulted, think there is a good chance that Gonzalo's famous speech in *The Tempest* about utopia and society may have inspired the adoption of the name by the Maoist chief, whose original pseudonym was 'Alvaro'.

⁴³ Quoted in Poole and Rénique, *The New Chroniclers of Peru*, p. 144. I use their translation.

feudal' condition of the countryside, the mass of poor peasants lived in the chokehold of cheating merchants and brutal landlords. From this perspective, villagers should be glad to raise animals and crops only for themselves as part of the Maoist strategy of starving the cities. However, the black-and-white simplicity of the 'semi-feudalism' model ignored the division of large estates under the agrarian reform of 1969, and the conversion of the Peruvian Andes into a crazy quilt of small and medium-size farmers, government cooperatives and community holdings that profoundly blurred the lines of exploitation and division. Just as importantly, it overlooked the role of markets in mountain life. The trek to town to sell a sack of potatoes or a team of oxen provided a source of income for buying kerosene, soap, school supplies, matches and other essentials; it was also the major social event of the week with the opportunity for visiting, drinking, and even the touch of excitement with the purchase of an ice cream cone or a new cassette of Colombian *cumbias*. The prohibition on going to market proved a catalyst of resentment early on, and even sparked revolt against the Shining Path in the moors of Huanta and then Huancayo.⁴⁴ Another example of Guzmán's incapacity to grasp the rowdy intricacy of Peruvian society, the failure to recognise the desires and expectations of mountain villagers boomeranged against the Maoist design for revolution.

This indifference to cultural heterogeneity points to the invisibility in Guzmán's thought of Peru's fraught politics of race and gender. Although influenced by Victorian views of race as founded in biology, Mariátegui anticipated Marxist scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s on the interrelation of colour and class, exploring how what he called the 'original sin' of Spanish conquest imposed the rule of a white elite over a poor majority of mixed and Andean descent.⁴⁵ If anything, racial division in Peru hardened in the second half of the twentieth century. What anthropologist José Matos Mar called *desborde popular* – including land reform, political upheaval and rapid urbanisation – heightened the feelings of threat and danger among the white oligarchy, and contempt for the *cholo*, or dark-skinned, majorities, who flooded into Lima from the provinces with dreams of a better life.⁴⁶ In complete contrast to Mariátegui, Guzmán's privileging of class, implicitly reducing race to an 'epiphenomenon' of capitalism, led him to ignore altogether the searing injuries of racial

⁴⁴ Revolt against the Shining Path in Huanta is discussed in José Coronel and Carlos Loayza, 'Violencia política: Formas de respuesta comunera', in Carlos Iván Degregori et al. (eds.), *Perú: El problema agrario en debate* (Lima, 1992); for Huancayo, see Nelson Manrique, 'La década de la violencia', *Márgenes*, vol. 3, no. 5–6 (1989).

⁴⁵ Mariátegui, *Peruanicemos el Perú*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ José Matos Mar, *Desborde popular y crisis del estado* (Lima, 1983).

despair and hatred. The colourless partition of the social universe into 'masses' and 'oppressors' erased the heterogeneous histories of Amazonian Indians, Afro-Peruvians or immigrants of Japanese and Chinese descent, who made Peru into what Arguedas once called a nation of '*todas las sangres*'. 'Reading through the documents of the PCP-SL', as one observer emphasises, 'one would think that Peru was as homogeneous as Sweden or Japan'.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly in the light of this insensitivity to racial and ethnic questions, the internal organisation of the party in the 1980s and early 1990s still mirrored the Peruvian structure of stratification by colour and class, much as it had in the early years in Ayacucho. The party elite remained mostly white professionals, as was made clear by a widely shown video captured by police of Guzmán and his inner circle dancing to 'Zorba the Greek' at a 1991 *fiesta* in a Lima safe house. By contrast, newspaper photographs of arrested fighters disclosed the threadbare clothes and mixed features of youth in the lower ranks of the Shining Path, who came overwhelmingly from the brown-skinned and impoverished majorities. In a reflection of the survival of prejudices of race, class, and geography within the party, one leading spokesperson could even refer to Andean villagers as 'Peru's most backward inhabitants'.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, in the light of the worship of Mao, slurs against Asians were also recycled in attacks in *El Diario* on Fujimori as 'slitty-eyed' and 'reptilian'. In organisation as well as ideology, the party operated as much within as against the structure of racial exclusion and stereotypes in national society.

By contrast to racial justice, women's issues did receive some attention in party propaganda.⁴⁹ Citing Mao's aphorism about the need 'to mobilise the whole people', Guzmán himself also took practical measures to recruit female cadres, forming a *Movimiento Femenino Popular* in 1965, the first of its kind in Ayacucho. Charismatic figures like Catalina Arianzén, Edith Lagos and Augusta de la Torre, Guzmán's wife, helped draw other women into the party in the early years. About a third of members were female by 1990, far more than in any of the parties of the legal left. Even if the patriarchal Guzmán presided, women filled positions at all levels of the hierarchy, including a reported eight of 19 slots on the Central Committee (a far larger percentage than any of Peru's other leftist parties).⁵⁰ Some international feminists even acclaimed the Shining Path as a welcome break from the male-dominated tradition of Latin American

⁴⁷ Degregori, *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, p. 205.

⁴⁸ Luis Arce Borja, quoted in Poole and Rénique, *The New Chroniclers of Peru*, p. 144.

⁴⁹ See the special supplement 'Por la emancipación de la mujer' in *El Diario*, March 13, 1988.

⁵⁰ These figures come from Kirk, *Grabado en piedra*, p. 14.

revolutions in the style of Augusto Sandino or Che Guevara, and the broad history of what pundits labelled *Machismo-Leninismo*.⁵¹

Despite success in recruiting women, however, Guzmán maintained a studious distance from any detailed engagement with gender inequality in Peruvian society. There was no mention at all of relations between men and women in any of his most famous speeches or the twelve-hour interview with *El Diario*, a torrent of talk about class struggle and imperialism. Socialist feminism of the 1970s and 1980s called for recognising how gender and class interlock in today's world. However, Gonzalo Thought, with its absolute privileging of class, reverted to what political theorist Heidi Hartmann calls an 'unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism' that 'subsumes feminist struggle into the "larger" struggle against capitalism'.⁵² Women's issues did not have to be addressed in detail, as one leader explained, because 'all problems will fall away in the New Society'. Just as Arguedas was denounced for devoting too much attention to ethnicity and race, so feminist groups, organised in Peru to address an array of urgent concerns from wife-beating to back-alley abortions, come under heated attack as 'mercenaries and wheedlers, who unleash a struggle restricted only to the feminist plane'.⁵³ Like racism, sexism was only a secondary issue for the Shining Path, propagating the same indifference to a key axis of domination and injustice as the system the revolutionaries wanted to overthrow.

A final manifestation of disconnectedness from Peruvian society revolved around the presumption of history's inevitable progress towards human liberation. Despite the oppositional thrust of his attack on liberalism, Marx himself operated within the Enlightenment tradition, and the social evolutionism of Victorian science and philosophy, when he assumed Communism's certain arrival. However, or so many scholars have argued in recent years, Marx also maintained a sensitivity to the role of human agency in the making of culture and society, even if he insisted that choice and initiative were themselves always shaped by ideology and economy. Guzmán's Marxism, however, resurrected a robotic economism that refused a real place to Peruvians in forging history. In this view, the rising of the masses – and the protagonism of the cadres – were already scripted by world forces, of an Aeschylean inevitability like life, death, or

⁵¹ Carol Andreas, 'Women at War', *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1990) offers one such positive assessment. See Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood (eds.), *'Viva': Women and Popular Protest in Latin America* (London, 1993) for a good overview of the questions of women and popular protest in Latin America.

⁵² Heidi Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union', *Capital and Class*, no. 8 (1979), p. 1.

⁵³ Interviews by Robin Kirk in Canto Grande prison in June 1991 (personal communication), and *La Nueva Bandera*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1994), p. 20.

the seasons' change. Much of Peru's past testifies to the unruliness of history, from the conquest of the Inca empire by a handful of Spanish adventurers to the election of a *nisei* president and of a talk show host as mayor of Lima. In the teeth of the economic catastrophe of the 1980s, many Peruvians threw an astonishing energy into what economist Hernando de Soto dubbed 'the other path' of streetselling and small business, shattering the racist stereotype maintained by conservative pundits about the laziness of the brown majorities as well as the comfortable presumption of the progressive analysts about the translation of misery into opposition to free trade and individual entrepreneurship.⁵⁴ These strange twists and unexpected breaks vanish in Guzmán's reduction of Peruvian history to a preordained tale of mass revolution and eventual utopia.

Ironically, it might be argued that one of the main attractions of 'Gonzalo Thought' to the disaffected was precisely this denial of the messiness of Peruvian history, and the seeming unknotting of its tangles by the nimble metaphysics of a universal Marxism. In the particular case of women, journalist Robin Kirk contends that the party's appeal does not lie in a serious engagement with the politics of sexuality and gender in Peru.⁵⁵ To her surprise, Kirk discovered in prison interviews that even high-ranking women had given little thought to abortion, divorce, birth control, or family planning in a future 'Popular Republic of Peru'. They responded to questions with bland, even impatient, generalities about 'everything being solved under Communism'. The party's attraction to women, Kirk concludes, lies not in attacking patriarchy, but in offering an all-consuming cause and a 'scientific ideology' beyond the desperate harshness of everyday life in Peru, often doubly so for women. More generally, the promise of escape from a national history of corruption, poverty, and despair forms a major foundation of the party's attraction to all of the cadres, male and female. Not so different in this respect from evangelical churches, which grew with explosive rapidity in the fraught years of the 1980s, the Shining Path offered the possibility of mastery over the unmasterable, a magnetic promise in the face of chaos and trauma in years of official corruption and economic crisis among the hardest in Peru since the Chilean invasion at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York, 1989). Although De Soto's book played an important role in calling attention to the so-called 'informal economy', it also romanticised the potential and accomplishment of 'popular capitalism', underestimating how barriers of poverty and racism structure access to capital and the market in Peru. Jürgen Golte and Norma Adams offer a critique of de Soto in *Los caballos de Troya de los invasores: Estrategias campesinas en la conquista de Gran Lima* (Lima, 1987).

⁵⁵ Kirk, *Grabado en piedra*.

⁵⁶ Juan Ossio, *Violencia estructural en el Perú: antropología* (Lima, 1990) offers an interesting, if also unsatisfying, comparison between the Shining Path and Pentecostal churches.

Even after the capture of most of the leadership, Guzmán and many of his followers have not wavered in the conviction of the ‘inexorable victory’ of the revolution. A prison statement in early 1994 advocated peace talks, in the light of imperialism’s ‘temporary recovery’, yet insisted on the party’s final victory. ‘Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Gonzalo Thought’, Guzmán proclaimed, ‘is undefeated and imperishable’.⁵⁷

Rethinking the future

In the jagged mountains of Ayacucho, where Guzmán hatched war plans three decades ago, the social landscape still bears the scars of war. The army’s counteroffensive against the Shining Path in 1983 and 1984 left a grisly trail of burned crops, homeless families and massacred villagers. The party responded with fierce reprisals against suspected collaborators. The slaughter at Lucanamarca was followed by mass executions of villagers in Cochas, Uchuraccay, Huamanguilla, Chaca, Huayllao and Sivia. Fifteen thousand Andean peasants had perished by 1994, as the poorest Peruvians remained the principal victims of the war that the Shining Path waged in their name. Six hundred thousand more fled to the mean shantytowns of Lima and Ayacucho, as the dirty war turned Peru’s south-central Andes into what Quechua-speaking villagers called ‘*manchay tiempo* – the time of fear’.⁵⁸ In the early 1990s, the weakening of the revolution enabled the cautious return of many peasants to mountain homelands. As a stark reminder of the recent past, however, the ruins of burned villages still abounded in the *puna*, the high-altitude desert, with their memories of the dead and disappeared. In a few areas, the Shining Path remained dangerous. Ragged bands descended from the high moors to loot and kill in night-time raids, in a futile bid to wipe out the village defence organisations that continued to multiply in the early 1990s. ‘Death to wretches’, shouted the leader of a machine-gun wielding band of fifty militants who torched the settlement of Paccosan in Huanta province in June 1993, before shooting the 78-year-old mother of the leader of the village defence patrols as she pleaded for her life in Quechua.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, official policies have also exacted a high price in Peru. Although the use of fear and terror in the counterinsurgency has

⁵⁷ The statement is reproduced in the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS), *Latin America*, 2 February 1994, pp. 32–41.

⁵⁸ See Amnesty International, *Human Rights During the Government of Alberto Fujimori* (New York, 1992) on human rights violations; on internal refugees, see Robin Kirk, *The Decade of Chaqwa: Peru’s Internal Refugees* (Washington, 1991) and *To Build Anew: An Update on Peru’s Internally Displaced People* (Washington, 1993).

⁵⁹ This information comes from my own visit to Paccosan, and interviews with survivors of the attack, in June 1993.

diminished (though by no means ceased), the conservative policies of the Fujimori government, including privatisation and slashed services, have swelled the number of Peruvians below the poverty line from five million in 1975 to twelve million in 1992 and rising. As the money managers of Scudder, Stevens, and Clark Inc. trumpet Peru as a 'superb investment opportunity', and mining and timber companies flock to the Andes to take advantage of loose controls and cheap labour, the average household income hovers at \$100 a month.⁶⁰ Glitzy duty-free shops hawk Johnnie Walker whisky and Chanel perfume in Lima's airport, even as children and old people hunt for scraps of food in the sooty garbage dumps a stone's throw from the runway. Current enthusiasm represents free trade and foreign investment as a new development for Latin America, an historical amnesia that plays off the familiar view of the region as an 'archaic' and 'premodern' place beyond the logic of Western reason and economy. In fact, these policies have been as much the norm as the exception, punctuated only by brief periods of socialist and populist experimentation in this century. Although history may not always be doomed to repeat itself, little reason exists to think the social consequences of the current cycle of unchecked capitalism will be any more positive for Latin America's majorities.

Certainly, the failure of the Shining Path as well as neoliberalism in Peru underlines the imperative of alternative models of national development. Paths remain unexplored for visions that would fuse a respect for difference with a desire for unity, a pride in the past without a retreat from the possibilities of the present and future. So, too, does the terrain for social and economic policies that might acknowledge the impossibility of building a viable economy outside of the world market, yet committed to working against Peru's legacy of division and impoverishment. Mariátegui's almost mystical dream of a 'myth, faith, and hope' in social transformation haunts the nation with as much urgency as ever.⁶¹

The concept of paths untaken, and others imposed, connects closely to Gabriel García Márquez's famous claim that Latin America has been condemned to 'one hundred years of solitude'.⁶² As Stern has pointed out, Márquez has never seen the source of his solitude as disconnectedness or isolation from Western seats of economy and culture. It lies elsewhere, in Latin America's historical difficulty in forging broadly accepted programmes for change that do not reduce the familiar formulas of

⁶⁰ See the Scudder Latin America Fund, First Quarter Report, 31 January 1994.

⁶¹ José Carlos Mariátegui, 'El Hombre y el Mito', *Mundial*, 16 January 1925, p. 1.

⁶² The phrase 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' comes from the title of the Colombian writer's novel.

Western historical vision, but grapple with the distinctiveness of the paradoxes and challenges of Latin America's 'outsized reality'. Perhaps one day, García Márquez dared to hope, a time will come when 'the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth'.⁶³

⁶³ Nobel acceptance speech by García Márquez, published in *The New York Times*, 6 February 1983, translated from the Spanish by Marina Castañeda. My use of the speech borrows heavily from a superb article by historian Steve J. Stern, 'Reply: "Ever More Solitary"', *American Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 4, 1988.