

Gender and Peru's Shining Path

by Jordan Payne

The unique brand of feminism popular in Peru and in South America in the 1970's contributed to the widespread presence of female members in and in support of the Maoist movement: Partido Comunista de Peru: Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru: Shining Path [PCP-SL]). Certain aspects of both the organization's hierarchy and the approaches it used to pursue its goals appealed particularly to large swathes of poor, peasant women in the Andean region. Many of the women involved attained high levels of power within the organization: constructions of masculinity and femininity were adapted to accommodate this change. The PCP-SL also appealed directly to strategic use of gender in garnering support for their cause because so much of the rural population was composed of women. Specific examples of women who held upper-tier positions in the PCP-SL demonstrate the reality in practice of the party's promises of equality between the genders. Though there is significant room for additional feminist analysis of women and gendered narratives in the Shining Path and Peru's 'Dirty War,' this paper attempts to draw together the existing body of literature to form an initial exploration of the subject.

Peruvian social conditions in this time period created an environment in which gender-based and feminist movements found wide audiences. Social stigma against poor, indigenous, rural, and highland populations were only worsened for those who also happened to be women. Widespread, often extreme, poverty concentrated in the highland areas was even more difficult for rural women to

escape than it was for rural men due to additional discrimination based on gender. The PCP-SL promise to overthrow society entirely found widespread support among those with few positive patterns to which to cling. Peru, in particular, has a long history of women participating actively in guerrilla-style resistance movements and pre-colonial traditions displayed complementary, rather than subordinate, roles for women. Within the context of a country rapidly approaching social tumults of multiple types, the Shining Path effectively utilized and modified notions of gender to advance the organization's objectives.

BEGINNINGS OF THE SHINING PATH

In the late 1960s, Abimael Guzmán, a philosophy professor at San Cristóbal of Huamanga University, founded the Shining Path Movement in the highland region of Ayacucho. Intellectuals and recently educated students formed the initial foundations of the movement and held the highest leadership roles throughout the movement. The Shining Path pursued the imposition of a dictatorship of the proletariat and sought to induce cultural revolution and, eventually, world revolution to arrive at what the group's leaders defined as the most pure form of communism. The leaders of the Shining Path went further than other communist parties and accused existing socialist countries of being revisionists. The pejorative use of the term "revisionist" is used to separate those who consider themselves true to the original writings of Karl Marx and those who stray too far from the strictest interpretation of his writings (Stern 1998).

One particularly distinct aspect of the communist and Maoist movement in Peru is the strategic and intentional conflation of race and class. When Spanish

forces first came to Peru, they claimed to bring religion, civilization, proper education, and modernity, and enlightened culture to the area. In modern times, individuals of European, especially Spanish, descent are viewed as more beautiful and are assumed to have higher levels of intelligence, education, and more modern culture. Those individuals who are more visibly indigenous or are mixed with indigenous ancestors are assumed to be uneducated, lazy, culturally backward, less capable, and generally inferior. Hundreds of years of these ideas of race combined with colonial wealth concentrated in Lima, the country's capital, have led to a status quo in which wealth and whiteness are nearly as synonymous as darker skin and poverty. This strict racial hierarchy is a creation of and perpetuated pattern from the colonization of Latin America by European powers.

The coastal city of Lima is home to the vast majority of Peruvians of European descent, the government's operations, and all of the country's businesses and wealth. Rural areas in the Andes Mountains and further inland in the Amazon Basin are home to almost exclusively those of mixed blood of predominantly indigenous descent. These rural, small communities with agriculturally based economies have been plagued by persistent poverty since at least the beginning of Spanish colonization. The divisions of race, geography, and socioeconomic class often trace the same divisions in Peruvian society. Racist discrimination against those with more Andean features has bolstered and safeguarded these divisions for decades. Abimael Guzmán emphasized the direct conflict between poor, rural, indigenous populations with the wealthy, coastal, 'white' populations as one and the same as the class conflict. The conflict of the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat was

strengthened by the cultural, racial, and geographic elements that further divided *Limeña* reality from the lived experience of the average Peruvian (Cadena 1998).

After briefly widespread popularity in several Peruvian universities in the early 1970s, the Shining Path shifted strategies and developed militias to begin the “armed struggle” necessary to inspire the group’s desired outcomes. Guzmán orchestrated the creation of military schools for instructing members in military tactics and the use of various types of weaponry. In May of 1980, Peru’s military government allowed elections for the first time in over a decade, and the Shining Path was one of the few leftist political groups that declined to take part (Dietz 2000). PCP-SL argued that the political and economic systems and choices offered by the elections would not ameliorate the lives of marginalized Peruvians. Through a popular revolt and a complete transformation of the government, PCP-SL offered promises of equality to economically, socially and politically neglected populations. Primary amongst these were the impoverished, indigenous, and peasant populations in the Andean highlands, especially around Ayacucho, Apurímac, and Huancavelica. (Comisión De La Verdad Y Reconciliación 2003) Initial sympathies for the objectives of the Shining Path were present and assisted by the government’s weak and delayed response to PCP-SL’s activities.

For over a year, the government underestimated the staying power of the movement and delayed the declaration of a state of emergency in the group’s primary regions of activity. In late December of 1981, when the government finally declared “emergency zones” in the Andean regions of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac, the military grossly abused the powers granted to them. Peasant

populations, especially those visibly of indigenous descent, were presumed to be sympathetic to and in collusion with the Shining Path. With the freedom to detain any “suspicious persons” the military and police operatives arrested dozens of innocent people and are now known to have tortured and raped many of them, especially but not exclusively women. Police and military operatives are now also known to have tortured and raped many of those whom they detained and or interrogated (Poole 1992).

Local knowledge and anger at these occurrences along with continued intimidation from the PCP-SL led to the creation of *rondas*, locally organized and often military trained peasants formed into anti-rebel militias. When *ronderos* initiated attacks and killed thirteen *senderistas*, including an SL commander, in the Andean town of Lucanamarca in 1983, many members of PCP-SL began fomenting strategies to undermine or eliminate peasant resistance to the Maoist cause. One month after the commander’s death in Lucanamarca, the Shining Path stormed the town and its neighbors and killed 69 people (Poole 1992).

This first incident of Shining Path violence against peasants marked the beginning of more widespread violence against peasants. PCP-SL’s militias carried out several other massacres in the highland regions, used violence and threats to intimidate rural populations and established agricultural labor camps to punish those seen to have betrayed the “forces of the people.” As evidenced by the findings of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), these ‘forces of the people’ concentrated their attacks on those in the rural regions. After examining the estimated 31,000 deaths between 1980 and 1995, the TRC stated that, “there was a

significant relationship between poverty and social exclusion and the probability of becoming a victim of violence” and that it “[had] been able to discern that the process of violence, combined with socioeconomic gaps, highlighted the seriousness of ethno-cultural inequalities that still prevail in the country.” The TRC found that 40% of deaths and disappearances were from the department of Ayacucho, 79% lived in rural areas, and 75% spoke an indigenous language as their mother tongue (Comisión De La Verdad Y Reconciliación 2003). The very people for whom PCP-SL claimed to fight were those who suffered most from the movement’s violence.

Attacks perpetrated by the Shining Path were concentrated in rural areas, but by no means limited to them. By 1991, the Shining Path’s persistent, violent operations had won it control of much of the center and south of Peru and a sustained presence in the shantytown outskirts of Lima. Bombings and attacks on civilians and public offices were common in Lima in for over a decade. Different sabotages and bombings resulted in several blackouts of the city proper, and car bombs were detonated in and around public offices and, later, in public gathering spaces (Poole 1992). Shining Path also targeted and assassinated individuals from other leftist groups, labor unions, peasant organizations, *rondas*, and other political parties. In 1991, several foreign priests and foreign leaders of grassroots organizations promoting social justice became victims of Shining Path assassinations. Other political leaders who identified as Marxists, but resisted either the Shining Path’s specific goals or strategies, were targeted. These attacks on leaders of civilian groups sought to destroy existing democratic platforms for marginalized groups to advance their objectives. By eliminating popular alternatives

to PCP-SL, Shining Path sought to strengthen their claim that they offered the only path to better lives for the peasantry (Dietz 1990).

WOMEN IN THE PCP-SL

The prime years of the conflict lasted from 1980 to 1992, when government forces captured Shining Path's founder, Abimael Guzmán. Throughout this time, women played important and active roles in the organization's operations.

According to Juan Lazaro (1990) in "Women and Political Violence in Contemporary Peru," approximately 35 percent of the military leaders in the Shining Path were women. Most of these women held leadership positions at the level of underground cells, but several women leaders have been noted by the Peruvian government literature. By 1987, over 1000 women in Peru were arrested for suspected involvement in terrorist acts. These arrests included four senior Shining Path female leaders: Laura Zambrano ("Camarada Meche"), Fiorella Montano ("Lucia"), Margie Clavo Peralta, and Edith Lagos. The female guerrilla militants represent a significant portion of the estimated 5000 militants and higher-level *Senderistas* involved in the movement (Castro 1994).

Women, especially those of Andean Indian background, had significant motivation to join and participate in the radical actions of the PCP-SL. In economic terms, the times leading up to the formation of the Communist Party of Peru were incredibly difficult. With widespread inflation, military rule, and rampant corruption, wages stagnated or fell as food prices rose. Those in the highland regions were accustomed to governmental neglect, but the level of social services and opportunities for these populations fell even further in the 1980s. Over half of

the Peruvian population was economically incapable of providing sustenance for themselves or their dependent family members (Poole 1992). The few job opportunities that did exist were nearly unattainable for women from these regions due to the double discrimination they faced from racial and sex-based stereotypes. Seen as less competent, weaker, and less intelligent, women had such little chance of securing a job in the city that they more often remained in their rural home villages. Adding further salt to this social wound was the fact that uneducated women could not even vote until 1980 due to illiteracy laws, the absence of punishment for rape and the apparently inescapable cycles of women's lives: poverty, childrearing, strenuous labor and early aging (Andreas 1985). With so many persistent issues and so few means to better their lives through political channels, an organization promising radical change of societal structures held great appeal.

An article from the *Lima Journal* in the *New York Times* states that, "after Mr. Guzmán, the No. 2 person in the organization has almost always been a woman. Of the 19 members of the central committee, the governing body of the guerilla group, at least 8 are women" (Nash 1992). Publications from the Shining Path claim that approximately 40 percent of its guerrillas are women, and Guzmán often emphasized Mao's statement that women are half the world and that the difference between men and women cannot be solved by a struggle of the sexes but only through class warfare (Stern 1998). Guzmán even founded, with his wife's encouragement, the Popular Women's Movement in the city of Ayacucho. Those working within this organization established the theoretical context for women's part in the PCP-SL movement (UNHCR 1993). Though women have been involved in

many other revolutionary movements in Latin America, they filled positions of unprecedented power and authority in the Shining Path hierarchy (Lázaro 1990). Additionally, Guzmán's initial recruiting efforts targeted the educational department of the university where he taught philosophy, and women composed a clear majority of this department.

Certainly, women were assigned to spread the teachings of the Shining Path, but they played active militant roles from the organization's beginnings. Women leading armed bands of guerrillas were often described as more ruthless than the men they commanded. The Shining Path was infamous for its trademark coup de grace for those convicted of 'treason' in public trials, a gunshot to the back of the head of the kneeling offender. Women leaders often delivered this shot. The previously mentioned *New York Times* article relates the following example of violence from female combatants:

"In a recent Shining Path attack outside of Ayacucho, 11 civilians riding in a bus and a car were killed. Lieut. Col. Carlos Romero Barestagui, operations commander at the army base there, said witnesses reported that a man had been shot in the arm and was crying. A Shining Path woman grabbed him by the hair, pulled back his head and cut his throat with a knife, Colonel Romero said."

To prove that they belong not only among the combatants, but also in leadership roles, women turn to extreme ruthlessness to show that they are "more macho than macho." Though not necessarily treated better in daily militant life, female guerrillas could generally depend on their inferiors to follow their orders (Andreas 1985).

Dr. Matilde Ureta de Caplansky, a psychoanalyst and university professor who has analyzed many captured female members of Shining Path, has documented an interesting combination of feminine and masculine qualities. The women's cellblocks were kept neat, tidy and clean, and the women performed traditional femininity strongly through their wearing of skirts, painted fingernails, and makeup. The hard, distant, ferocious concepts that emerge when these women discuss the PCP-SL, however, align far more closely with warlike, impersonal tropes of masculinity. Many experts have attributed this unnerving combination of behaviors to the patriarchal figurehead of Mr. Guzmán (Nash 1992). The ways in which Guzmán is idolized as a hyper-masculine father figure for the organization allows for women to hold violent, powerful roles while still being submissive to masculine power embodied by their leader.

Dr. Ureta argues that the dominant roles played by Peruvian women in Sendero do not contradict historical patterns of expectations for Andean women. She states,

"Women have always played the dominant role in Andean society. They raise the children, take care of the house and often have the responsibility for being the main income-producer. The role of the male has been one of a drunk who is lazy and dominates the woman by beating her up. It is not that much different in Shining Path" (Nash 1992).

In the highland areas, women are responsible for far more than domestic maintenance, cooking, and child rearing. They are accustomed to completing not only these tasks but also raising and harvesting most of the crops and livestock

upon which their families and communities survive. Despite the wide range of responsibilities in the average Andean woman's life, she is expected to remain submissive to her husband, father, brothers, and other male authority figures regardless of their contribution to household survival (Andreas 1985).

A HISTORY OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACTIVISM

Involvement in revolutionary movements is not new to Andean women. As far back as the times of the Incan Empire, women in the Peruvian region participated in political life when they held leadership positions in the *ayllus*, clans that acted as the building blocks of Incan society. In the 1780s, women actively participated in the Tupac Amaru guerrilla movement to resist Spanish forces. In the 1820s, Andean women fought in the Peruvian independence movement. This legacy of participation continued in the War of the Pacific from 1879-1883 when Peru resisted Chilean occupation. The women in these previously mentioned movements were frequently active militants and often held high leadership positions (Castro 1994). They did not merely make decisions along with men and then watch them march out to battle but, instead, picked up their weapons and marched to war with their male counterparts.

Spanish colonization brought a two-century halt to this pattern with the imposition of a combination of capitalist and Catholic roles for women (Castro 1994). The church and government powers encouraged women to develop and value "personal self-sacrifice, chastity, forgiveness, self-abnegation, hard work, honesty, and sobriety" (Andreas 1985). Though the church eventually recognized at least a modest amount of the suffering specific to women in Peruvian society, they

still held women responsible for the well being of their children and husbands. The assumed structure of the capitalist, Catholic family was never considered or criticized as a potential source of oppression for women (Kollontai 1920).

High in the Andean regions where colonial influences were weaker or shorter-lived, many of the more oppressive injections into Peruvian society failed to take root. Indigenous couples continued to respect and practice trial marriages. The traditional practice of trial marriages require that couples provide evidence of at least nine months of successful cohabitation before they may complete the full marriage process. The violence against women that was nearly omnipresent in Peru is often identified with hyper-masculine ideas of *machismo*, usually cited as having Spanish origins. Indigenous couples also fought, but tussling, teasing, and mock fighting were traditional with women just as often the 'aggressors' as men. There were also fewer institutional distinctions between men and women in these regions. Colonial law was often accompanied by distinctions by gender in property, tax, marriage, church, agrarian reform, and local government laws. Excluding women from access to education and training further made women dependent on men in the money-based economies that held little sway in the mountain regions. Life in these regions was no more privileged in terms of an absence of violence or the presence of a stable food supply, but there were far fewer drastic gender gaps (Andreas 1985).

Throughout these modern decades of conflict, women in the cities participated strongly and constantly in social protests and movements. Land take-overs to return divided lands to communal ownership, student protests against the

high price of and discrimination within education, labor strikes for better working conditions, and intensified neighborhood organizations within the shantytowns all proved excellent stages for women's participation and leadership. In the midst of the most intensive years of bombing and military activity in Lima, women schoolteachers protested in the streets every day despite continued physical repression. Women returned to protest after being subjected to the strikes of police clubs and the sting of thrown tear gas bombs (Andreas 1985).

Despite this active involvement, women were not allowed to hold formal leadership roles in these popular organizations. Women's frustration of this denial of leadership roles is evident in the words of one feminist activist: "The repression doesn't distinguish between men and women—the only ones that apparently maintain this inequality are our comrades of the political parties of the Left" (Andreas 1985). This inequality within progressive, popular movements likely encouraged even more sympathy for the PCP-SL's promises to overturn and recreate nearly all current societal conditions.

FEMININITY IN THE PCP-SL

One of the primary writings cited by the Sendero Luminoso when discussing women's role in the movement is Alexandra Kollontai's "Communism and the Family." Published in *Komunistka* in 1920, this article focuses particularly on women's role in production and how this role impacts family structures. After only a brief, introductory glance into the lives of Andean women in the time of PCP-SL's rise, the appeal of Kollontai's arguments should be clear. Kollontai writes of the ease of divorce under communist regimes and how women ought not fear independence

because the collective, the society will provide for those willing to work. Economic dependence on men prone to alcoholism, abuse, and abandoning their families has plagued Andean women for centuries. Kollontai encourages women to open their minds to entirely new structures free of the oppression of the status quo when she writes, “Nothing could be less true than the saying ‘as it was, so it shall be.’” Perhaps few other arguments could bring so much hope to women who have not only stagnated in every way, but have seen their lives become steadily more difficult despite their back-breaking work.

Kollontai also writes of how the woman is made to take on even more responsibilities under the capitalist system than her historically disproportionate charges. She states, “Capitalism has placed a crushing burden on woman’s shoulders: it has made her a wage-worker without having reduced her cares as housekeeper or mother. Woman staggers beneath the weight of this triple load” (Kollontai 1920). She expounds further upon the fact that, since women’s work is not paid, additional labor garners no additional reward for the working-woman. The article describes a communistic utopia where all domestic labor is split amongst community members so that, regardless of sex, all may engage equally in productive work for the good of all in the area and none is unduly burdened. For women who have staggered under the weight of their burdens without any external recognition of the obvious sources of their plight, having these statements made so plainly must have been rejuvenating. Generations of mothers and daughters had followed nearly identical paths of poverty, early pregnancy, isolation, and hardship. In light of government neglect and religious promotion of the very structures weighing

heaviest on these women, an entirely new society held great appeal. They had nothing positive to cling to in their current situations.

CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

Isabel Coral Cordero writes a most comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the contradictions within the Shining Path. Though many authors simply list what women militants believed and what Sendero espoused, this author argues that the Shining Path created a new system of patriarchy in its operations rather than the idealized, gender-neutral environment of its written ideology. PCP-SL conceived of politics and war as highly masculine or *macho* work and women militants were lauded for their work as *macha* warriors (Coral Cordero 1998). The way in which the word *macho* is adapted in unconventional ways to create the word *macha* is only one example of the organization's *de facto* preference for masculine behaviors.

Feminization and gender used as tools by the Shining Path to insult and undermine the credibility of opponents is prevalent throughout the conflict. PCP-SL conducted public campaigns to discredit antisenderista male leaders by spreading rumors of their wives' infidelity. Male leaders were meant to be both disrespected humiliated by tales of their inability to control their wives and implications of their poor performance in the bedroom. The honor of adversarial female leaders was tied to their sexual behaviors when they were accused of having sexually transmitted diseases or called prostitutes, women of ill repute, and lovers of male leaders. Opponents were attacked with pejorative terms like "fags" (*maricones*), "cowards," and "little women" (*mujercitos*) (Coral Cordero 1998). Feminized terminology,

utilized to bring shame and dishonor, reveal internalized preference for the masculine and subordination of the feminine.

Though many women joined the Shining Path in hopes of attaining augmented agency and opportunity for individual choice, the organizational leadership controlled highly personal decisions. Shining Path decided where people would live, had to approve of lifestyles, and even chose mates for members. Citing the security of the Party, PCP-SL leadership made and broke up couples as they saw fit. Romance was even used as a strategy to draw women into the organization where they would later have to forsake that same affection that first drew them in. Women who were willing to devote all to the cause, especially by breaking ties with family, friends, and or lovers, were especially highly valued. Resistance to orders to change partners was viewed as prioritizing emotions and affection above the organization and as a feminized form of weakness. Women demonstrated their high value by the ease with which they could follow through on the leadership's orders.

Paradoxically, the organization of this Communist/Maoist organization was quite hierarchical with the highest members elevated far above the level of most operatives. Coral Cordero describes a kind of cult surrounding the highest male leaders in the PCP-SL, Abimael Guzmán and Antonio Díaz Martínez. These men took on "lordly attitudes and intellectual airs and distanced themselves prudently from the common concerns of mere mortals." They were practically deified and characterized as the ultimate Party members: coldly logical, strong, intelligent, and willing to make tough and brutal decisions. Guzmán, in particular, became the absolute patriarch over the entire organization with all his underlings feminized in

their subordination and dependency. Women often filled the lower, logistical positions and female committee members were often assigned only minor political tasks and held responsible for Guzmán's personal and domestic needs. Speaking of the women committee members arrested along with Guzmán in 1992, Coral Cordero states, "Without underestimating the capacities, political will, and mystique of these women, it is clear that they were also responsible for the care and attention of the personal and survival needs of the patriarch" (Coral Cordero 1998).

Isabel Coral Cordero's article recognizes the highly visible participation of women in the Shining Path movement and their transition into higher leadership roles as years progressed. Many authors believe that this change was due to the organization's growing acceptance of women and closer alignment with a form of gender-neutral hierarchy. Coral Cordero argues, however, that these changes had nothing to do with increased focus on gender interests since women's issues were rarely even discussed by the PCP-SL leadership. She argues that the changes were due to the PCP-SL's growing desperation from rapidly shrinking public support, growing numbers of male militant casualties, and growing frustration and dismay within Party members. Shining Path may have only accepted women in more purely militant roles or higher leadership roles because their options were dwindling. Additionally, the PCP-SL leadership may have sought to exploit what they saw as more easily controlled and persuaded populations in rural, less educated, women. These contradictions between PCP-SL ideology and the organization's *de jure* and *de facto* practice show the failure of the Sendero Luminoso to genuinely overcome gender differences.

FEMALE LEADERS OF THE SHINING PATH

Augusta la Torre

Known more commonly as Comrade Norah, la Torre was the first wife of Abimael Guzmán and is widely credited with having established the equality of women's participation within the movement. As the daughter of a Communist party leader, Carlos la Torre Córdova, La Torre was born into a highly political family. She was involved in political protests against governmental authorities from a very young age and joined the Peruvian Communist Party when she was 17 years old. She married Abimael Guzmán two years after her parents introduced them to each other. When Guzmán was formulating plans for the establishment of the Shining Path, she encouraged him to create the Popular Women's Movement, primarily responsible for the focus on recruiting and training women for the revolutionary organization. La Torre helped orchestrate and then subsequently led the first Shining Path offensive in December of 1980. She later went into hiding with Guzmán in 1978 and died eleven years later (Andreas 1985).

Augusta La Torre is widely acknowledged as essential in Guzmán's creation of the PCP-SL and was second in command until her death. The cause of her death is still uncertain. Augusta La Torre's role in the movement's creation is well established and served as the foundation for including women in the movement it's first moments. The movement's members' respect for her is evident in the fact that they awarded her with the 'order of the hammer and the sickle,' which is the highest tribute awarded by the Shining Path. Few males ever received this high honor (UNHCR 1993).

Edith Lagos

Though only nineteen years old at the time of her death, Edith Lagos is still a widely known persona among those who lived during the time of the Dirty War. According to Daniel Castro in his article, “‘War is Our Daily Life’: Women’s Participation in Sendero Luminoso,” Lagos became a rallying figure for both the public and for youth in the mountain regions. Though the youth were often still trying to disentangle the confused narratives of the many combatting parties, they were well aware of their social and economic conditions. When she was killed in a confrontation with members of Peru’s Guardia Republicana in September of 1982, more than 30,000 people attended her funeral. This gathering occurred in blatant defiance of the authorities’ ban on a public funeral for Lagos.

Lagos was the daughter of a wealthy Ayacucho merchant, a law student at Lima University of San Martín de Porras, and a woman guerrilla. The thin, petite Lagos joined the PCP-SL at the early age of sixteen. Castro argues that different groups revered her for different reasons. *Ayacuchanos* saw a local woman fighting against the authority of Lima; others saw her as an example of Sendero’s acceptance of women as leaders and combatants in the face of dominant patriarchy; some focused on a rallying point for other deceased Sendero fighters; and some focused on her as another local victim of the broader war. The combination of people brought together by the death of Lagos is particularly worthy of note. Though a PCP-SL flag covered her coffin, an ultra-conservative and staunchly anti-communist bishop of Ayacucho presided over the funeral (Poole 1992). Perhaps this

combination was only possible because she was a slight, female fighter who inspired more sympathy and desire for vengeance than male fighters who died that day.

The story of Edith Lagos is comparable to the narratives associated with Jessica Lynch. Many other women (and men) died in the battles between the many Peruvian factions of the day, but Lagos became a significant rallying point. Why? Just as Jessica Lynch, a diminutive, blonde, blue-eyed, woman, represented the “All-American Girl,” Lagos, a slight, dark-haired, dark-eyed, *Ayacuchana* woman with indigenous features, provided a visual representation of many different layers of the ongoing conflict. Lynch was spoken of both as a strong soldier who fought to prevent her capture but was ultimately outmatched and, later, as a damsel in distress in need of masculine protection. Whereas the U.S. military and government actively manipulated the narratives of Lynch’s capture, holding, and rescue, (Sjoberg 2010) Lagos’ narrative required no modifications. She truly did ‘go down fighting’ in the heat of a battle against opposing sources. Lagos was never framed as needing masculine protection but was instead viewed as an example of a woman fighting against patriarchal, capitalist forces and an example of the plight of the youth in the Dirty War. As evident in the size of her funeral attendance, no media campaign was required to build support for Lagos. This woman guerrilla became such a symbol that opposing forces eventually bombed her tomb in an effort to destroy the morale of the Shining Path and their rural supporters.

Another strategy that emerged from the emulation of Edith Lagos was the use of female guerrilla deaths to shame individuals on both sides of the conflict. Government actors who gave orders to kill guerrilla groups with large numbers of

women were shamed for targeting women (Castro 1994). A government that had grown so weak and corrupted that it feels threatened by armed women was framed as feminized as well as dishonorable. Rural men were shamed for being passive when a small woman like Lagos had proven herself strong and brave enough to pick up a weapon and get involved. Other women in the area, too, were told the tale of Edith Lagos and how they too could become national heroes and be courageous like her. Her strength in her role in the Shining Path was not framed as more or less feminine but, rather, her actions were framed to be those of any courageous, loyal, female Party member (Poole 1992).

Laura Zambrano

Zambrano was a teacher by trade and joined the organization when she was unsatisfied with the actions of teacher-led protests occurring in Lima. She quickly rose within the organization and became known as Camarada Meche (Comrade Meche). Zambrano was a lieutenant within SL and she is widely believed to have been the director of operations in Lima. Clearly, holding the position of director of operations for the Peruvian capitol, home to all major government offices and the majority of the 'owners of production,' is among the highest of positions within PCP-SL's hierarchy. She was captured along with Guzmán in 1992. When asked about love, Zambrano said, "Love is for the class, and in service of the popular war" (Stern 1998). Camarada Meche's utter devotion to the cause is clear in this statement.

The Shining Path prized their women Party members who were so devoted that their feminine prioritizing of family and romance came second to the Party. When Shining Path recruitment began targeting teenage children of Andean women

in 1983, willingness to sacrifice family relations became even more highly valued as a characteristic of a good Party member. Additionally, the prevalence of female Shining Path militants with backgrounds in teaching reflects the PCP-SL's roots in universities and community-based schools (Andreas 1985).

CONCLUSION

Given the history of Peruvian women and the dismal social and economic realities of women with less education, particularly those from highland and interior territories, their involvement in such a radical group ought to come as less of a surprise. By conflating ideas of race and class, the Shining Path both strengthened and broadened their initial popular support bases. The Shining Path intentionally targeted women for recruitment into their organization and women held roles at nearly every level within the PCP-SL hierarchy. As in nearly all violent conflicts, ideas of masculinity and femininity are present in both subtle and overt manifestations. Unfortunately, the contradictions between ideology and practice of gender issues in the organization reveal that the Shining Path was not so egalitarian as it claimed. The widely disproportionate percentages of casualties and damages in the rural, Andean regions reveal the disastrously paradoxical outcomes of this 'people's war.' Within the shadows created by the light of the Shining Path lay genuine progress for women and the poor, rural, indigenous populations.

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