

# Voices from the War: Exploring the Motivation of Sendero Luminoso Militants

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## **Voices from the War: Exploring the Motivation of Sendero Luminoso Militants**

This study focuses on the militants of the *Partido Comunista del Perú – Sendero Luminoso* (PCP-SL). It argues that it is wrong to consider these as a homogenous group who joined the PCP-SL for the same reasons and in the same way. Using the testimonies of the prisoners accused of terrorism, it shows that the motivations of Sendero Luminoso militants varied according to their profile and their position in the organisation's political hierarchy. Teachers and local officials, at the top of the party, were strongly committed to the movement's ideological rationale and to popular war and still believe revolution is the only solution for social change. University students were usually second-rank militants with a social conscience and ideological training, and with a strong desire for belonging. Peasants and merchants constituted the masses, who sympathised with the PCP-SL discourse and saw in it an opportunity to change their situation.

The PCP-SL's strategies of recruitment also varied according to the profile of potential militants and the conditions it encountered. Within the universities, ideological training and the building of clientelistic relationships were the most effective mechanisms to attract militants. In the rural areas, the PCP-SL resorted to a combination of strategies, including participation in community tasks and punishment of those who threatened community order. The use of terror and coercion gradually became a common strategy as resistance to the PCP-SL grew.

The paper is based on a review of 121 testimonies from prisoners and of the final report of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From these, it was possible to reconstruct the profiles of the PCP-SL militants, to understand why they joined the party, and to learn more about how they were involved with it.

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**Acronyms**

APRA	Popular American Revolutionary Alliance ( <i>Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana</i> )
CVR	Truth and Reconciliation Commission ( <i>Comisión de la Verdad y La Reconciliación</i> )
EGP	Peoples' Guerrilla Army ( <i>Ejército Guerrillero Popular</i> )
FER	Students' Revolutionary Front ( <i>Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario</i> )
MRTA	Revolutionary Movement Tupac Amaru ( <i>Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru</i> )
PCP-SL	Communist Party- Shining Path ( <i>Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso</i> )
UNSCH	Public University San Cristóbal de Huamanga ( <i>Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga</i> )
UNCP	Public University of the Centre of Peru ( <i>Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú</i> )
UNE	Public University of Education Enrique Guzmán and La Valle ( <i>Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle, La Cantuta</i> )
UNMSM	Public University of San Marcos ( <i>Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos</i> )

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By Andrea Portugal

The revolutionary is a doomed man ... He has no interests, no feelings, no attachments, not even a name. Everything in him is absorbed in a single and total passion: revolution. In the depths of his being he has cut all links with the civil order, with law and morality. He continues to exist in society only in order to destroy it ... He does not expect the least mercy. Every day he is ready to die.

J.M.Coetzee<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Much has been written about the *Partido Comunista del Perú – Sendero Luminoso* (PCP-SL). Since the early years of the armed conflict in Peru, Sendero Luminoso has attracted the interest of scholars, journalists and writers from all over the world. From the perspective of their own disciplines, they have attempted to explain why Sendero Luminoso emerged, how it was able to last for more than a decade and why a sector of the population supported it. The image of the Senderista portrayed in this literature was of a monster, a devil force that had to be eradicated. A small group from the academic community tried to go beyond this schematic characterisation, finding the roots of violence in an unequal and exclusive system. However, little was really known about who these people were and why they gave their lives for a war they believed would make things better not only for themselves, but for a large majority, particularly the poor.

In 2001, the interim government of Valentín Paniagua created the *Comisión de la Verdad y La Reconciliación* (CVR, Truth and Reconciliation Commission) to elucidate the nature of the armed conflict, as well as to identify responsibility for the multiple violations of fundamental human rights. Between November 2001 and August 2003, the CVR collected and processed 16,971 testimonies from the victims, their relatives or witnesses to the crimes, human rights violations and acts of violence that occurred during the two decades of armed conflict (1980–2000)<sup>2</sup>, as well as testimonies from those accused of terrorism and sentenced to prison.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Roncagliolo (2007).

<sup>2</sup> After concluding its mandate in 2003, the CVR gave all information gathered to the *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Human Rights Ombudsman). In April 2004, the *Defensoría del Pueblo* inaugurated the *Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos* (Centre of Information for Collective Memory and Human Rights) with the purpose of making this information available to the public.

The value of such testimony today lies in its power as a life story which, together with other similar stories, creates a new national narrative shaping alternative forms of political organisation and ways of understanding the national from a counter-hegemonic perspective. Today, in fact, the testimony has stopped being simply the translation of an oral tradition to be read and analysed by those who are part of the *ciudad letrada* to become a means of instituting a different social imaginary (Silva Santisteban, 2008: 59). In this sense, the testimonies we are about to analyse in this paper are important in that they allow an inclusive narrative that emerges from the voices of a group of individuals marginalised and excluded from the limits of the nation: the imprisoned militants of the PCP-SL. Through them, we seek to get a better understanding of who the militants of the PCP-SL were, what were their motives for embarking on an armed struggle against the state, how they became members of the party and what are their reflections about the armed conflict and their participation in it today, 30 years after the war began.

The rest of this paper is divided into four sections. Section 2 reviews the different interpretations of the PCP-SL developed by public leaders, scholars and the government. Section 3 captures the voices of the militants of the PCP-SL in prisons through their testimonies in an attempt to understand why and how they became members of the party. This section is divided in three parts. The first describes the profiles of the Sendero militants. The second explores their motivations for joining the PCP-SL. The power of *Pensamiento Gonzalo* ideology, the search for a new moral order, the sense of grievance many of the prisoners felt and their desire to revenge abuses perpetrated as part of the armed forces' counterterrorist strategy, all help us to understand why the PCP-SL managed to attract a diverse group of members. The third tries to assess to what extent the PCP-SL appealed to its followers or resorted to the use of blackmail, threats and violence to coerce them into supporting the war. Section 4 presents the reflections of the militants of the PCP-SL in prison regarding the armed conflict and their participation in it. Section 5 presents the main conclusions of this study.

## 2. The Sendero phenomenon: searching for explanations

During the first years of the armed conflict, in the early 1980s, little was known about the nature of the PCP-SL, a radicalised communist party that declared war on the state in the midst of the restoration of democracy. This lack of information extended to the leadership and its members. In an attempt to account for the emergence of this violent political organisation, public discourses, the academic community and the government put forward different hypotheses and interpretations of the PCP-SL, its leadership and its militants.

Two public discourses predominated in the early years of the 1980s: the official discourse led by General Roberto Noel Moral and the academic discourse of historian Pablo Macera. General Noel, who was in charge of the counterterrorist strategy in Ayacucho, where the PCP-SL began its war, argued that the terrorist war was conceived of by experts in political violence as the main instrument in a revolutionary war on behalf of the international communist movement, describing it as a movement of fanatics and resentful and opportunistic people<sup>3</sup>. In this sense, the PCP-SL was understood as an exogenous factor; a disease erupted in the outside world and extended locally among ignorant Peruvian society, led by fanatics and resentful people. To defeat them, the state would have to apply an offensive of annihilation in line with the counterterrorist strategy recommended by the United States armed forces.

From a historical perspective, Macera saw the main roots of the Senderista phenomenon in the persistence of the colonial order. His thesis was that daily abuse against the Andean world had been lived as a reproduction of conquest and domination up to and including the present day, engendering and accumulating resentment and hatred for centuries, which had translated into a desire to harm the exploiter and everything that he represented, but also in a hope for radical change. In Macera's words, "this is a country with offences that have been shut down and stopped without solution and revenge that must be avenged and resolved"<sup>4</sup>. In other

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<sup>3</sup> R. Noel (1989) *Ayacucho: testimonio de un soldado*, quoted in Portocarrero (1998).

<sup>4</sup> P. Macera, pp. 252-253, quoted in Portocarrero (1998)

words, in order to overcome this antagonistic situation, the Indian must take his place in society to be able to coexist with the white, Creole and *mestizo* population.

In his view, Sendero Luminoso represented an uprising of the Andean people, an indigenous liberation movement that appealed to a large majority of this population and was able to articulate their resentments against the abuse and domination of the upper classes (Portocarrero, 1998: 85). He understood and explained the motivations of the militants of the PCP-SL as being a result of the accumulation of feelings of hatred and desire for revenge that could be traced back to colonial times. To some extent, we could argue that Macera was sympathetic to the Senderista cause, at least in its initial years before the PCP-SL became extremely violent. Whether it was driven by an international communist movement or by historical abuse against the Indian, both Noel and Macera agreed that conflict was inevitable.

In the same vein as Macera, the discourses of Enrique Bernales, president of the *Comisión Especial sobre las causas de la violencia y alternativa para la Pacificación Nacional* (Special Commission on the Causes of Violence and Alternatives for National Peace) created by Parliament in 1988, and Felipe Mac Gregor, a Jesuit, former Chancellor of the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú* and director of the *Asociación Peruana de Estudios e Investigaciones para la Paz* (Peruvian Association for Study and Investigation for Peace), used the concept of structural violence to account for the emergence of political violence in the 1980s. Bernales created the Commission to diagnose the causes of violence and to propose measures towards peace. In its conclusions, the Commission emphasized historical and structural aspects to explain the violence, arguing that “social violence is a historical outcome; therefore, a society becomes progressively violent when in the process of its formation the elements that compose it do not fully integrate”<sup>5</sup>. According to this approach, political violence was rooted in a system that had reproduced the inequalities and exploitation of the colonial period and perpetrated systematic violence against social groups traditionally excluded from society. The failure of the state to represent and include a large majority of its members aggravated and perpetuated the unequal conditions, making violent confrontation almost inevitable. Similarly, Jesuit Felipe Mac Gregor identified the roots of the problem in unequal and exclusive social structures. In his view, given that violence emerged in response to

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<sup>5</sup> Senado de la República (1998) *Violencia y pacificación, Informe General*. Mimeo, p.20, quoted in. Portocarrero (1998: 95).

structural causes, the solution had to come from a transformation of the social structure<sup>6</sup>.

A more influential interpretation at that time was offered by the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, appointed president of the *Comisión Investigadora de los Sucesos de Uchuraccay*<sup>7</sup> (Commission of Enquiry into the Uchuraccay Incident), created in 1983 by President Fernando Belaúnde Terry to clarify the circumstances surrounding the killing of eight journalists by peasants from the community of Uchuraccay. In the report (Vargas Llosa et.al. 1983) and later in his novels<sup>8</sup>, Vargas Llosa described Sendero Luminoso as a movement of bloodthirsty fanatics, detached from life and common sense, possessed by a doctrinarian delirium, committed to destroying and killing, irrational and without capacity for dialogue, which had to be combated at any cost. Additionally, Vargas Llosa presented the Indian as a primitive being, with no culture or education.

Thus the senderistas were stigmatised as fanatics, as irrational robots, by a large majority and justified for their legitimate resentment and hatred against an unjust and unequal order by others. But a common factor in these public discourses was the dehumanisation of the senderistas; they were seen as the means of a cause, as members of a community with no individuality.

In academia, the relationship between Sendero Luminoso and the Andean world was the aspect most discussed. The anthropologist and political analyst Carlos Iván Degregori and the historian Alberto Flores Galindo were pioneers in this field. Degregori has studied the origins and evolution of the PCP-SL for decades, and continues to contribute to our understanding of this period of violence. He has written several books on the subject, and is considered one of the main references for analysis of the PCP-SL. In his book *Ayacucho 1969-1979. El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso*, Degregori developed an early interpretation of the emergence of the PCP-SL that has prevailed throughout his entire work: that Sendero Luminoso emerged as a result of an encounter between a provincial university elite and a young social base, also provincial (Degregori, 1990). He characterised the senderistas as the new

<sup>6</sup> APEP (1993) *La raíz del problema*, Lima, quoted in Portocarrero (1998: 97).

<sup>7</sup> The Comisión was chaired by Mario Vargas Llosa and included Abraham Guzmán Figueroa and Mario Castro Arenas. The intellectuals Juan Ossio, Fernando Fuenzalida, Luis Millones, Max Hernández and Fernando de Trazegnies were consultants.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Lituma en los Andes*. In *La utopía arcaica* the idea of Sendero's fanaticism and irrationality is elaborated by the author. Portocarrero (1998: 93-94).

*mistis* (*mestizos*), influenced by education and Marxism, with no linkages to peasants.

In his view, the PCP militants were searching for order; both in their explanation of the world and in their project for a new society, and Marxism-Leninism would provide a hierarchical order with the party at the top of the pyramid (Degregori, 1993). According to him, this proposal found echoes in a young population that had suffered a painful process of detachment and that desperately needed a clear and full explanation of the world (*ibid*: 37). Degregori believed peasants had no deep motives to enrol in Sendero Luminoso's insurrection. On the contrary, he argued that peasants organised to resist and fight the PCP-SL because of its disrespect for Andean culture, its social institutions and cultural expressions. Thus, he explained peasants' participation either as a result of the methods of terror and coercion practised by the Senderistas, or of the pressure exerted by peasant's sons, radicalised by the party. In other words, Degregori denied the possibility of teachers, young students and peasants sharing a common horizon of ideas, feelings and motives.

In contrast to Degregori, Flores Galindo believed that the PCP-SL had an Andean base, which explained its initial success among peasants, especially in the Andean regions. He drew this idea from the fact that the combatants of the armed conflict were not strangers to the rural world because either they were born there, spoke Quechua or had relatives in those communities. He argued that in the early years of the armed conflict, the PCP-SL was capable of drawing in many peasants (Flores Galindo, 1988: 382-383).

In *Buscando un Inca*, Flores Galindo reconstructed the resistance of the Andean people to domination, from colonial times until the present, arguing that under the influence of Christian tradition, the Andean people had elaborated a utopian discourse, "the Andean utopia", which idealised the Inca Empire as a regime of justice and wealth and created an expectation of re-establishing this glorious past. As with Christian notions of the Final Judgement and the return of Christ, this new order would only be possible after a period of chaos and total destruction led by a messiah (Portocarrero, 1998). Flores Galindo identified the emergence of the Andean utopia in early Colonial times and traced it to the present, first in the peasant movements of the 1950s and 60s and then in Sendero Luminoso.

Flores Galindo suggested that the Senderista discourse emerged from this mythic religious background, which comprised the entire Andean people: “the messianic preaching of Abimael Guzmán found a fertile ground in the millenarist conceptions of the peasant culture, nourished by the teachings of the Christian Church and the hatred and anger accumulated during centuries of domination” (ibid: 116). Thus, he argued that the leadership and support bases shared the same belief in the social order, based on antagonism and in revolution or Pachacuti as the only means of change. Given this background of collective memories and expectations, we should not be surprised at the initial sympathy of peasants for a revolutionary discourse that sought to reverse the current order and whose leadership appeared as a semi-god.

More recent research in the areas of Ayacucho (in particular, the works of José Coronel and Ponciano del Pino) have shed new light on the characteristics of the PCP-SL’s support bases and sympathisers in this region, which permit different interpretations from Flores Galindo’s original work. Based on studies in three different areas in Ayacucho, Coronel demonstrated that the PCP-SL’s main support bases came from peasant communities in the valley, which were more connected to markets and where education played a crucial role. In contrast, traditional communities in the highlands were the first to resist and fight against Sendero Luminoso to preserve their traditional systems of authority and cultural practices; findings that clearly contradict Flores Galindo’s preliminary hypothesis (Coronel, 1996: 102). Ponciano del Pino’s study in the Apurímac valley in Ayacucho revealed that religion was an important factor in the type of relationship established between the communities and the PCP-SL. The evangelists became a strong force of opposition against the PCP-SL based on their beliefs that they were living in apocalyptic times, in which Sendero represented the devil; the anti-Christ that had to be defeated (del Pino, 1996: 118).

The sociologist Gonzalo Portocarrero approached the subject from a multidisciplinary perspective, integrating the historical and structural roots of violence with the influence of leadership and ideology as efficient mobilising forces to convert frustration and hatred into energy oriented to destruction. In his book *Razones de Sangre. Aproximaciones a la violencia política* (1998), Portocarrero asked what kind of people could find Sendero Luminoso’s proposal seductive, concluding that probably the typical example was a young person filled with impulses and anxiety, who wanted to be good and thoughtful, but who, lacking clear direction, was led to give up his privacy and autonomy in exchange for peace, direction and meaning.

According to him, the Senderista discourse appealed basically to highly educated young people from Andean popular sectors, with Catholic formation and leftist political socialisation, and who were searching for meaning (Portocarrero, 1998: 61).

He then asked what could have linked the provincial intellectual elite grouped around the university (from where the leadership of the PCP-SL emerged) with the young students that later became the cadres and the backbone of the party, and finally with the peasants closest to the markets and the modern world (ibid: 119). Inspired by Flores Galindo's reflections, Portocarrero suggested a platform of common meanings as a basis for affinity and dialogue between these apparently distinct groups: "More precisely, in sharing a mentality weakly shaped by rationalism where tradition and faith are powerful forces whereas questioning and discussion are still incipient. Where the influence of religious thinking is decisive and where leadership tends to be authoritarian" (ibid: 119). In explaining the successes of the Senderista discourse, Portocarrero argued that the PCP-SL was capable of linking strong ideas present in the collective imaginary of the Peruvian society. As a result many saw their own drama reflected in the totalitarian discourse of the PCP-SL (ibid: 66).

From a gender perspective, Narda Henríquez linked the motivations of the women militants to their different forms of militancy. At the top were the cadres committed to the ideological proposition and popular war, with an adherence to the party and to the leader that was not questioned. Below were the emerging cadres, second-rank militants with ideological preparation that combined social sensitivity with personal experiences of exclusion and injustice. Following them were the sympathisers with less political conviction and understanding of the war, who saw in the PCP-SL an opportunity for change, a channel to alternative forms of power (Henriquez: 2006: 21).

At this point, one must ask why conflict and confrontation were seen as the only means to change the situation of inequality, and, most importantly, why these ideas found echoes in an important sector of Peruvian society. Sinesio López has shed light on this matter arguing that only from an experience of violent oppression, which is lived without relief and with hatred, can one come to imagine conflict as an absolute and contrary dynamic, in which oppression is only surmountable by death or unconditional submission by one of the parts. In this line, Portocarrero stated that only in a colonial society where 'the other' is a radical stranger – an oppressor – and where in addition there exists a delayed expectation of justice, can such an

idealisation of violence penetrate deeply into the common sense of a large majority, in particular a radicalised youth (ibid: 38). According to these interpretations, the motivations for joining the PCP-SL were rooted in a continuous and unbearable situation of abuse by an other (represented as the white, the rich and the authorities – those who have power), that could only be overcome through its total destruction.

From different perspectives, these analysts and scholars attempted to account for the emergence of the armed conflict and understand its nature and the motivations of its leaders and militants to embark on a war against the state that demanded the use of extreme violence and terror. Based on historical, sociological, political, anthropological and cultural approaches, combined with a strong element of intuition, they tried to provide answers to their ongoing questions as to why the PCP-SL emerged and who was behind it. They applied themselves to this endeavour in a context of great uncertainty and lack of information about the PCP-SL and its militants, providing interesting insights and useful elements for understanding the period of violence that Peru was experiencing.

In summary, the official discourse characterised the militants of the PCP-SL as fanatics, irrational robots radicalised by a dogmatic and extremely violent discourse under the leadership of international communism. A small group explained violence as a result of the perpetuation of abuse and exploitation of the indigenous population and the failure of the system to integrate the diverse groups that made up Peruvian society. In the academic community, two main positions prevailed: one that viewed the PCP-SL as a millenarian liberation movement with an important Andean base, and a second which described it as the confluence of an intellectual provincial elite with a young student base, also provincial, and with no peasant support.

Today, in light of new evidence and with the existence of a comprehensive study of the armed conflict elaborated by the CVR, it is possible and necessary to develop and deepen our understanding of the PCP-SL, to learn more about its leaders, members and sympathisers and what their motivations for joining or supporting the party were. The testimonies collected by the CVR, in particular those from the prisons, as well as the thorough analysis of the armed conflict developed by the Commission responsible for elaborating the CVR's final report, provide extraordinary sources of information that enable us to get inside the minds of the Senderistas, to understand their reasons for joining the party, and to help us to see them as individuals.

### 3. Voices from the war

During the two decades of armed conflict, and especially during the years between 1991 and 1995, the government imprisoned thousands of people accused of terrorism and treason<sup>9</sup>. The CVR estimates that around 20,000 people passed through the prisons between 1980 and 2000. In 2007, there were still around 2,000 prisoners accused of terrorism. However, this is not a homogenous group in that they differ in their affiliations and positions in regard to the armed conflict. The *acuerdistas* maintain their militancy in the PCP-SL and adhere to the Peace Agreement proposed by Abimael Guzmán. *Proseguir* is a small group that expresses its desire to continue the ‘people’s war’. A minority is made up of members of the *Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru* (MRTA), the *desvinculados* who have abandoned their militancy in the PCP-SL or the MRTA, the *independientes* who state they never participated in the PCP-SL or MRTA, and the *arrepentidos* that have had recourse to the *ley de arrepentimiento* (CVR, 2003, V: 458).

Because the prisoners were key actors in the armed conflict and in the process of reconciliation, the CVR organised visits to prisons to hear their testimonies. Between 2002 and 2003, it collected 1,158 testimonies in 21 prisons in the country. A total of 60.4% of the prisoners (700 out of the 1,158) have been identified as militants of Sendero Luminoso, 10.4% as members of the MRTA, 27.5% have no political affiliation and 2% belong to ‘others’.

The archive has been organised in such a way that it does not allow searching for testimonies by political affiliation, birthplace, age, gender, mother tongue or occupation. Therefore, I had to select a sample from the 1,158 testimonies using as criteria the type (male or female) and location of the prison. My purpose was to have a group that was balanced between men and women (50 per cent of each) in order to have a representative group of women (despite the fact that men are a majority in the complete database), and to have a diverse group in terms of place of birth. Therefore, I reviewed testimonies from the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres de Chorrillos* (Women’s Maximum Security Penitentiary of Chorrillos) and

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<sup>9</sup> In 1992, most of the leadership, including the leader and founder of Sendero Luminoso, Abimael Guzmán, were captured.

the *Penal Miguel Castro Castro*<sup>10</sup>, both in Lima and where most of the leadership of the PCP-SL is imprisoned, the *Penal de Cachiche* in Ica and the *Penal Yanamilla* in Ayacucho, where the majority of prisoners were born in other regions besides Lima<sup>11</sup>. In total, I reviewed 121 testimonies, 41 from the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres de Chorrillos*, 40 from the *Penal Miguel Castro Castro*, 20 from the *Penal de Cachiche* and 20 from the *Penal Yanamilla*. This subset includes members of the PCP-SL and the MRTA, as well as prisoners who claim not to belong to any of these organisations.

The testimonies of the CVR provide an inexhaustible source of information. They describe the facts and narrate the experiences of the individuals and communities that were affected by the violence of those years. They tell us who were the victims<sup>12</sup> and who the perpetrators and reconstruct their stories, opening up an invaluable and unimaginable opportunity to get closer to the lives and minds of the people who were directly or indirectly involved in and affected by the war. Through this material, it is possible to reconstruct fragments of the militants' and leaders' biographies, trace back how they got involved with the PCP-SL and why its ideology appealed, how the organisation worked and the type of relationships that were forged among the different levels of authority, and what position, if any, they have today, after almost three decades, regarding the armed conflict and their participation in it.

However, it must be noted that the archive of the CVR is by no means exhaustive and probably biased, as it is likely that many members and sympathisers of the PCP-SL, particularly those belonging to the *Fuerza de Base*<sup>13</sup> (Quechua-speaking, peasants from rural areas) either died in combat (the PCP-SL used peasants as bait in their confrontations with the armed forces) or were murdered or disappeared during the initial years of the armed conflict when the armed forces exercised a

<sup>10</sup> This prison also includes an important number of prisoners from the provinces, however, the majority of these are held in different prisons in the provinces of Peru.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, all the prisoners of my subset from the Penal de Cachiche and Penal de Yanamilla were born in provinces other than Lima.

<sup>12</sup> Based on the testimonies, the CVR has registered the information of 23,969 persons murdered or disappeared. Combining the database of the testimonies collected by the CVR with the databases of the Ombudsman on the reports of forced disappearances presented to the Public Ministry and of the reports of human rights violations registered by NGOs, the CVR utilised the Multiple Systems Estimation technique to estimate that 69,280 persons were murdered or disappeared during the armed conflict; 46 per cent of them were victims of the PCP-SL, 30 per cent of the state, and 24 per cent of other actors (these include the *rondas campesinas*, the self-defense committees, the MRTA, paramilitary groups, non-identified agents and victims of situations of armed combat).

<sup>13</sup> According to Benedicto Jiménez, the *Fuerza de Base* (Base Force) was made up of people from the communities where Sendero Luminoso had entered and won supporters [...] and they constituted the reserve of the Local Force and the Main Force. Coronel PNP Benedicto Jiménez Bacca, 2000, *Inicio, Desarrollo y Ocaso del Terrorismo en el Perú. Tomo I*, p. 110, quoted in CVR (2003, Appendix I: 1).

counter-terrorist strategy of indiscriminate killings and disappearances. The CVR reports that 47 per cent of the victims of the armed conflict were murdered or disappeared in Ayacucho; 37 per cent of these acts were perpetrated by state agents. Even though the CVR does not provide information regarding the political affiliation of the victims, it is likely that an important number of the victims of state agents in Ayacucho were either militants or sympathisers of the PCP-SL (CVR, 2003, Annex 4: 85-87).

### **3.1 The Senderista imprisoned**

Before trying to sketch a profile of the Sendero Luminoso militant, it is interesting to learn more about the leadership, in particular about Abimael Guzmán. To do so, we have reviewed different secondary sources, including a recent book by journalist Santiago Roncagliolo on the history of Abimael Guzmán and Sendero Luminoso, Degregori's book on the emergence of Sendero Luminoso and the chapters of the final report of the CVR on the PCP-SL and the Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSCH).

Abimael Guzmán was founder and top leader of the PCP-SL. He was born in 1934 in Mollendo, Arequipa. Because his parents were not married, he was registered as "natural son" of Abimael Guzmán, a conservative manager of rural estates, and Berenice, a humble woman who had suffered much. All the sources available indicate that his mother died when he was ten years old; however, his stepsister told Roncagliolo that she did not; instead, she abandoned Abimael and moved to the highlands of Puno with her new husband. Abimael was sent to live with his uncle in Callao, Lima, where he was excluded from the rest of the family, until his father's wife brought him back to Arequipa to live with her family. He was no longer poor but in the rigid provincial aristocracy that was not enough; he was ridiculed by his school friends for being illegitimate. Books became his unconditional companion. Based mainly on a book published by Abimael's sister, Susana Guzmán, Roncagliolo portrays an image of Guzmán as a shy child who disguised his feelings behind formal and serious manners, who was very reflective and who never cried (Roncagliolo, 2007: 31-32).

He studied Law and Philosophy at the *Universidad de San Agustín* of Arequipa, where he came into contact with Marxist ideas through his university friends and books. However, those who knew him remember him as a quiet person, very

theoretical and not involved in politics. His closest teacher, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Rivas, never imagined him as a leader: “Abimael was no organizer and less an agitator. Only a high-level theoretician” [...] “He did not have the English humour or the Russian tenderness, only a solid German brain” (ibid: 36-37).

In the 1960s, the *Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga* (UNSCH) in Ayacucho began to attract teachers from different parts of the country. Guzmán was among the new teachers arriving at the UNSCH in 1962, and by 1964, he had been appointed Director of General Studies and one of the main promoters of the political work of the *Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario* (FER) and the Peruvian Communist Party in the UNSCH and in Ayacucho. Afterwards, he was appointed Human Resources Manager, which gave him power to hire and appoint teachers. He also gained strong influence in the Faculty of Education (CVR, 2003, II and V).

In 1964, the Peruvian Communist Party split into two factions: the pro-soviet *PCP-Unidad* that followed the official line of the Soviet Union of Nikita Khrushchev and the pro-china *PCP-Bandera Roja*, which identified with Mao Tse Tung. The majority of the peasant bases and communist youth joined the *PCP-Bandera Roja* while the proletariat aligned with the *PCP-Unidad*. Guzmán followed the *PCP-Bandera Roja*, under the leadership of Saturnino Paredes. Guzmán’s personal and ideological differences with Saturnino Paredes led him to create a Red Fraction within the *PCP-Bandera Roja*, but in 1969, after his trip to China, he finally separated from Paredes and created his own party based on the UNSCH: *the Partido Comunista del Perú – Por el luminoso sendero de Mariátegui*. The majority of the student and teacher bases followed Guzmán while the peasant bases aligned themselves with Paredes.

Guzmán and his followers embarked on a reconstruction of the Communist Party based on a dogmatic reading of the work of José Mariátegui, founder of the Socialist Party of Peru, and the radicalisation of ideological orthodoxy. They arrived at the conclusion that Peru was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society and that the regime of General Juan Velasco Alvarado was fascist. The Marxist-Maoist idea that social order is based on permanent conflict was taken as a necessary and inescapable law by Guzmán. In line with Mao’s orthodoxy, he saw violence as natural and an inexorable phenomenon, a necessary manifestation of conflict, which constituted a founding act that dynamised the physical and social world and accelerated progress leading to a better society. In other words, violence not only destroyed the old unequal and decadent order, but led to a new and promising future, where the

oppressed and excluded became new citizens with equal rights. Violence was therefore glorified, seen as positive and necessary. There was no bad conscience, as neither morality nor science was betrayed; on the contrary, by acting upon violent impulses, we were honouring them. In this sense, the Senderista discourse succeeded in creating and maintaining a good conscience in its militants.

In an interview with Guzmán in *El Diario* newspaper given in 1988, known as *Entrevista del siglo* (Interview of the Century), Guzmán narrates that from his early childhood he had experienced the struggle of the people, episodes that deeply marked him. He presents himself as son of the class struggle and the party, as if he had no natural parents, and mentions that he has no friends, only comrades, giving the impression that he has no private life. To some extent, Guzmán dehumanizes himself because he considers himself a superior being, comparable to a semi-god.

Augusta La Torre, Guzmán's former wife and second in command in the PCP-SL, was the daughter of a Communist Party leader who introduced Guzmán to the party. She studied in a Catholic school and was part of the small bourgeoisie of Ayacucho. At the UNSCH, she enrolled in the Faculty of Education. Professor Luis Lumbreras describes her as a "very strong women, with a well defined personality, very sharp", and with a "strong anxiety for change, for getting things done" (Roncagliolo, 2007: 58-59). She died in 1988 in unclear circumstances. The official version of the PCP-SL is that she died of heart disease, but the police believe that Augusta was murdered by Elena Iparraguire, possibly with Guzmán as an accessory.

Elena Iparraguire, Guzmán's current partner and third in command in the PCP-SL, was the daughter of a Colonel of the Republican Army and leader of the *Partido Aprista Peruano*. As a child, her mother says that she was very sensitive to her fellow man, which motivated her to do social work in kindergartens in shanty towns, experiencing the abandonment and extreme poverty of her country. Elena suffered because she felt powerless to do anything for them; however she did organise the parents in protests to the Ministry of Education to ask for improvements in the schools. Like Augusta, she studied in a Catholic school, with her later education at the *Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle, La Cantuta (UNE)*, where she discovered the PCP-SL, and she is also described as a strong woman. Iparraguire joined *Socorro Rojo*, an organization that helped prisoners of the armed conflict, where she met Augusta La Torre and became her close friend. In 1970, Iparraguire travelled to Paris to study education for mentally challenged children,

and returned to Peru enthused by May 68 and the revolution. In 1973, she met Abimael Guzmán in a conference he put on about the Communist Party, where she was impressed by his oratory. Afterwards, Iparraguirre decided to go into hiding, following Guzmán and abandoning her husband and two children (ibid: 180-182).

Oscar Ramírez Durand – comrade Feliciano – was military chief of the PCP-SL and became number three in the organisation after Augusta’s death. As engineer and son of an army general, he skilfully combined military strategy with the manufacture of home-made bombs. When Guzmán and Iparraguirre were captured, Feliciano became the leader of the PCP-SL and it was soon clear the he lacked Guzmán’s political and theoretical capacity to organise his militants. He is described as an irascible and furious person who loses control easily and who does not tolerate mistakes (Roncagliolo, 2007).

Feliciano and Guzmán did not get along. The former argues that in the 1970s, Guzmán used the figure of Mariátegui to attract militants but once they joined the party, he replaced him, becoming the only leader. Likewise, he argues that Guzmán purged the Communist Party of its older leaders in order to manipulate the youngest ones. However, his strongest criticism was of Guzmán’s absence from the countryside: he directed military operations from his comfortable shelter in Lima while Feliciano struggled in the Sierra leading the guerrilla force. When Guzmán agreed from his confinement to a Peace Agreement with the state, Feliciano considered him a “criminal, a bourgeois, a psychopath, a parasite, a traitor, a coward, an old-fashioned Stalinist and a dogmatic” (ibid: 195).

Different testimonies point out that the Central Committee of the PCP-SL operated as a clan. Ramírez Durand criticizes Abimael Guzmán for having both his partners at the maximum level of authority within the organization: “Mao criticizes the creation of a clan; that in the same party structure there are several members of a family. This is inconsistent, Guzmán has his two partners and there will be no criticism. He established a clan, a stronghold” (Roncagliolo, 2007: 124)<sup>14</sup>. A former militant of the political organisation *Vanguardia Revolucionaria* declared to the CVR that Abimael Guzmán surrounded himself with groups from different social backgrounds who had family ties: “the link was the peasants’ son who was studying in the university; but

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<sup>14</sup> “Mao critica que se forme un clan, que en una misma estructura partidaria estén varios miembros de una familia. Esto es inconsecuente, [Guzmán] a sus dos parejas las junta allí y no va a haber ninguna crítica. Él establece un clan, un feudo”.

they did not incorporate them as political leaders, these were Guzmán, Cárdenas, Morote, Casanova. This was the type of leader they had [...] because in the end, Sendero began to function as a closed group”<sup>15</sup>.

In what follows, we describe the profile of the militant of Sendero Luminoso using as our main source of information the database obtained from the 700 testimonies of the prisoners identified as members of the PCP-SL<sup>16</sup>. The first thing that stands out is the large representation of men (81.7 per cent male vs. 18.3 per cent female). This is consistent with the situation in the political groups within the universities. According to the CVR, these were basically male organisations, not only because of a larger presence of men in the leadership, but because of the subordination of women in the political sphere, which was linked to strength and domination behaviours, characteristics usually associated with men.

However, a different version has been put forward by the few studies that analyse the presence and role of women in the PCP-SL. Information from the Intelligence Service of the government revealed that out of the 19 members of the PCP-SL’s central committee<sup>17</sup> eight were women, and out of the five members of the Political Bureau two were women. The Permanent Committee, the top level of authority of the party, was composed of Abimael Guzmán, known as President Gonzalo and leader of the PCP-SL and two women, his former wife Augusta La Torre – comrade Norah – and his current partner, Elena Iparragirre – comrade Miriam. In other words, the second and third persons in the hierarchy of the party were women. Comrade Norah was also in charge of the Popular Womens’ Movement (*Movimiento Femenino Popular*) – the PCP-SL’s organisation for women – and of the North Zone of Lima, which for Sendero Luminoso was the most important (Henríquez, 2006: 22). Robin Kirk’s study (1993) on the women in Sendero, *Grabado en Piedra: las mujeres de Sendero Luminoso*, found that women’s participation was crucial to the PCP-SL’s expansion as they commanded squads and were in charge of different military operations and intelligence actions. Laura Zambrano – comrade René – led the Regional Metropolitan Committee of the PCP-SL and under her leadership Sendero destroyed pylons, initiated fires, and undertook propaganda actions. She organised special

<sup>15</sup> “el vínculo era el hijo del campesino que estaba estudiando aquí en la Universidad y que los acompañaba, pero no incorporaron a éstos como dirigentes políticos, ya fueron los Guzmán, los Cárdenas, los Morote, los Durand, los Casanova, éste fue el tipo de dirigente que tuvieron, eso era porque los otros llegaron siempre siendo los de logística a segundo orden porque al final Sendero [el PCP-SL] empezó a funcionar como grupo cerrado”. CVR (2003, V: 582). Ex-militant of Vanguardia Revolucionaria.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 1.

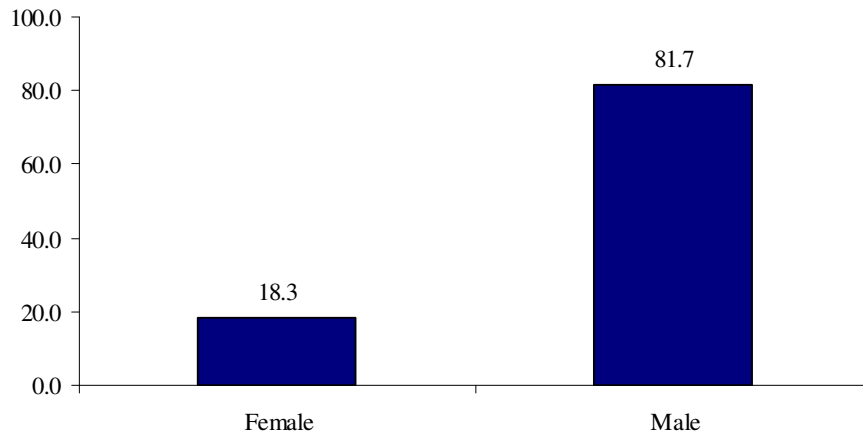
<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2.

detachments dedicated to annihilation, sabotage, infiltration of armed or police forces and recruitment in universities. For Mavila León, this was more a result of women's ability to implement Guzman's vision rather than of their political or programmatic abilities<sup>18</sup>.

If women were as important as these studies show, how to explain then the small presence of female prisoner's accused of being militants of Sendero Luminoso? The studies and testimonies reviewed do not provide information in this regard. A possible explanation is that, in fact, women occupied important positions within the party as leaders of the Central Committee and military commissions, which gave them power and visibility in the outside world, but in number, they represented a small fraction compared to men.

Carlos Álvarez, a pastoral agent who regularly visits the country's prisons to promote culture within them, relates that to start with the women of Sendero in the prisons showed no marks of their gender. Their obsession with equality was so strong that they refused to wear make up or to dress in a feminine way. But he recalls that suddenly, at one New Year's Party, they wore make up and skirts, and were even anxious to dance. For him, this was a turning point, a sign that they were behaving less as revolutionaries and more as ordinary women. The next step was the progressive appearance of a sense of humour in their conversations (Roncagliolo, 2007: 231).

**Figure 1: Gender of the PCP-SL militants**



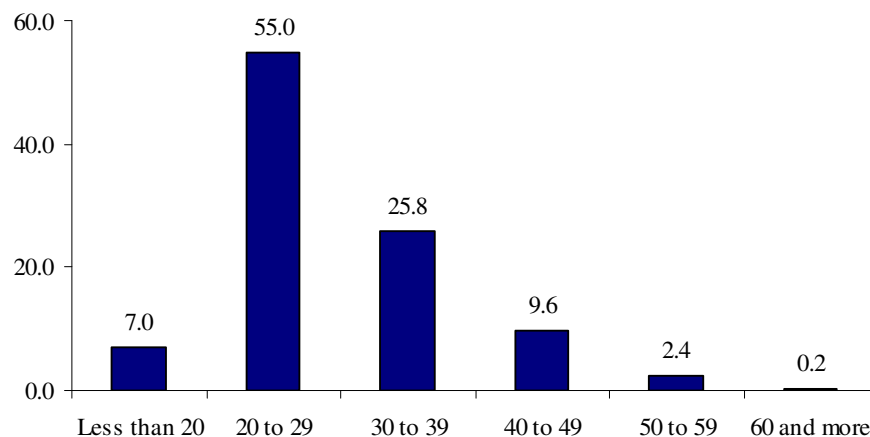
Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.

<sup>18</sup> R. Mavila León, "Presente y Futuro de las Mujeres de la Guerra" en Revista *QUEHACER* N° 79, DESCO, Lima Septiembre-Octubre 1992, quoted in CVR (2002, VII: 56).

Author's calculations.

By age, more than half (54.9%) of the militants were young at the time of their detention, between the ages 20 and 29, followed by those between 30 and 39 (25.8%). This fact is consistent with the PCP-SL's strategy of recruiting children around the age of 12 in the countryside and students from universities in the cities.

**Figure 2: Age at detention of the PCP-SL militants**



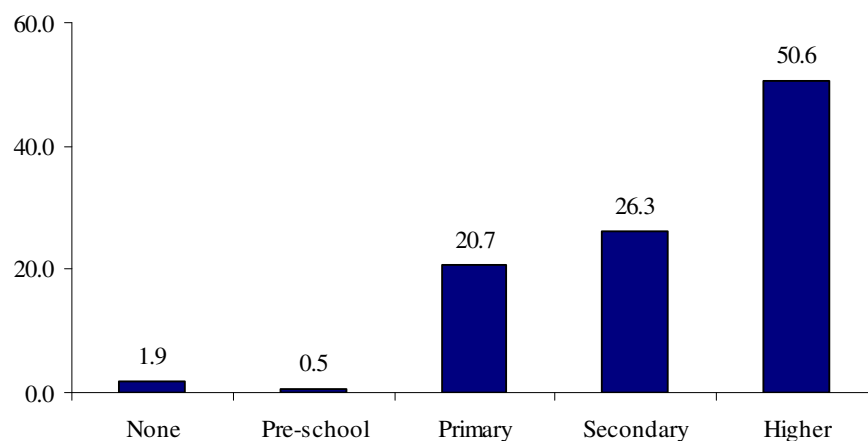
Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Author's calculations.

As expected, given the university origins of the PCP-SL, half of its members had higher education and 26.3% and 20.7% had finished secondary and primary school, respectively. Only 1.9% were illiterate. By gender, the women militants had better educational levels than men. Chávez's study show that 57% of women sentenced to prison had higher education compared to only 31% of men and that 10% had completed postgraduate studies, compared to 4% in the case of men. This contrasts with the national averages: only 11.7% of men have completed higher education, 19.0% secondary school and 11.5% primary school (INEI, 2005), with the situation even worse in the case of women, revealing the selective nature of the PCP-SL and the role education had within the party.

A member of the leftist political group *Juventud Mariateguista* argued that what differentiated the militants of the PCP-SL from the rest was precisely their tendency towards study and dialogue, which in time tended to decline as their tendency towards intolerance and coercion grew.

“Sendero [the PCP-SL] gets to this stage [1981-1982] having gone through an ideological phase, [which was] basically the task of creating an academic environment. They were not bad people; they were the best within the university, in the classes, very hard working. Book in hand, following Guzmán’s tradition, with the book under the arm [...] with me at least and with other people they were receptive but hard, implacable in the academic sphere, they did not accept superficial people<sup>19</sup>.

**Figure 3: Educational attainment of the PCP-SL militants**



Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Author’s calculations.

By occupation, 22.2% were students from universities or technical institutes, 19.7% peasants, 16.7% merchants, 10.6% independent workers, 8.9% local officials and leaders, and 6.4% professors and teachers. This information shows that peasants represented an important sector of support for the PCP-SL, almost equivalent to that of students, thus contradicting Degregori’s interpretation that the PCP-SL had no links to the peasant population. The following testimony describes how peasants participated in acts of vandalism led by the PCP-SL:

“This raid of Sendero in Allpachaca, on the Universitys’ *fundo*, had an estimated contingent of peasants from the surroundings of at least three to four hundred. [...]”<sup>20</sup>.

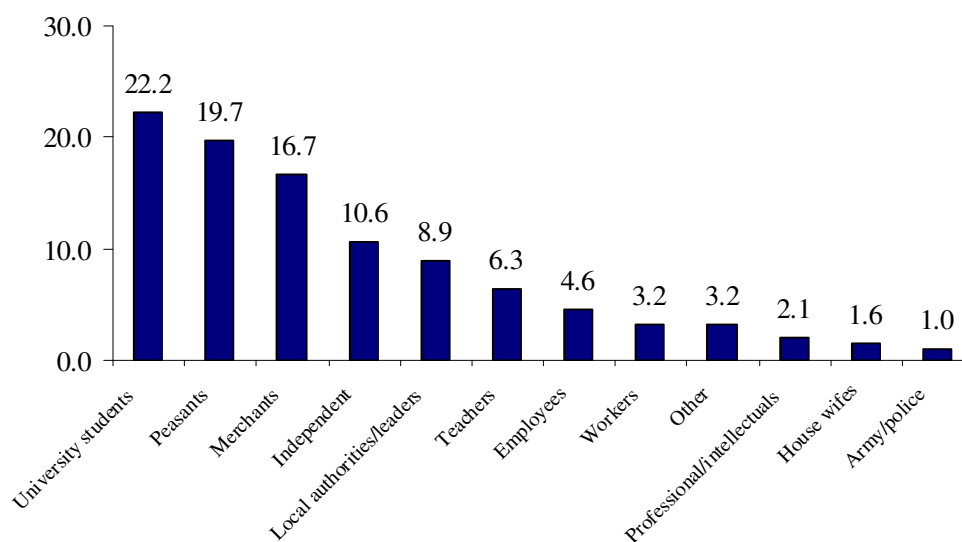
<sup>19</sup> “Sendero [el PCP-SL] llega a esta etapa [1981-1982] vivió una etapa ideológica, básicamente una labor de construir en el ámbito académico. No eran malos, eh, eran de lo mejor que había en la Universidad, en las aulas, tipos muy estudiosos. Libro en mano, siguiendo la tradición de [Abimael] Guzmán, con el libro en el sobaco [...] conmigo por lo menos y con mucha gente eran receptivos pero muy duros, implacables en el plano académico, no aceptaban a la gente superficial”. CVR (2003, V: 615). Member of the *juventud Mariateguista*, 1983-1988.

<sup>20</sup> “Esta incursión de Sendero [el PCP-SL] en Allpachaca, al fundo de la Universidad, con un contingente de campesinos de los alrededores del fundo se calcula que fueron por lo menos trescientos o cuatrocientos campesinos”. CVR (2003, V: 590).

However, we cannot conclude that peasants were an important support base as they could have been coerced to join and support the PCP-SL, as in fact happened in many cases. In addition, when discussing peasant participation, we must bear in mind Coronel's findings that suggest that there were different responses from peasants towards the PCP-SL. There was in fact an important sector, those more connected to the markets and with higher education, who felt attracted by the PCP-SL's discourse of taking power through a revolutionary war. However, the more traditional communities were not willing to change their traditional systems of authority and were opposed to Sendero's doctrine (Coronel, 1996).

In the case of women, the study of Coral (quoted in CVR, 2003, VIII: 56) reveals that the first cells of women militants came mainly from among middle-class students and professionals and in a smaller proportion from the urban marginal sector.

**Figure 4: Occupation of the PCP-SL militants**



Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Author's calculations.

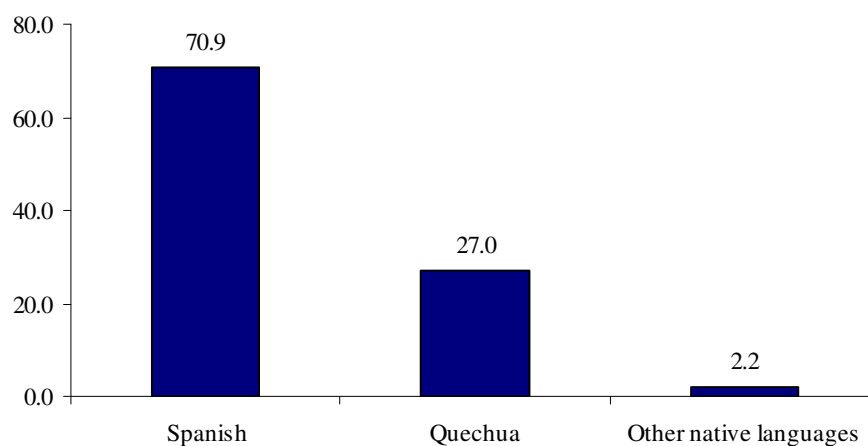
In contrast to Flores Galindo's hypothesis of an Andean base to the militants of the PCP-SL, the testimonies reveal that 70.85% of the prisoners spoke Spanish as their first language, compared to 26.98% who spoke Quechua and 2.17% another native language<sup>21</sup>. As mother tongue is commonly used as an indicator (albeit a poor one<sup>22</sup>)

<sup>21</sup> According to the 1993 Census, 16% of the population had Quechua or other native language as their mother tongue.

to define ethnicity in Peru, we can argue the PCP-SL is mainly composed of whites and *mestizos*, while indigenous people represent less than a third. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that three out of 10 were born in Lima, compared to one out of 10 born in Ayacucho. Furthermore, almost 60 per cent came from urban areas. However, as mentioned before, many of the victims of the state agents were murdered or disappeared in the department of Ayacucho, where 70% of the population speaks Quechua, which could explain the small representation of this group in prisons (INEI, 1993).

Journalist Santiago Roncagliolo, after his visit to the prison of Castro Castro and the *Penal de Máxima Seguridad de Piedras Gordas*, describes the senderistas as “not as Andean as the reservists of the army and not as white as those from the MRTA. The majority are *mestizos* with higher education and a provincial accent” (Roncagliolo, 2007: 226).

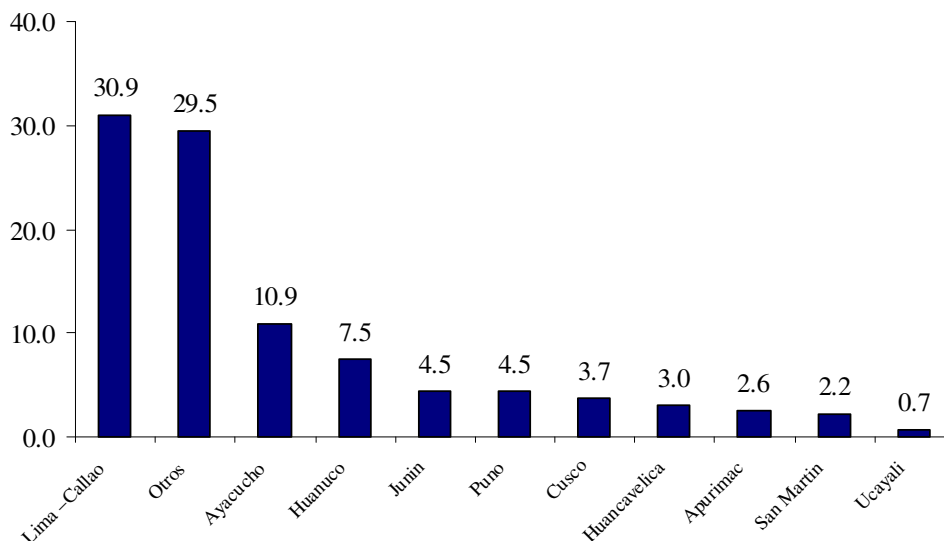
**Figure 5: Mother tongue of the PCP-SL militants**



Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Author's calculations.

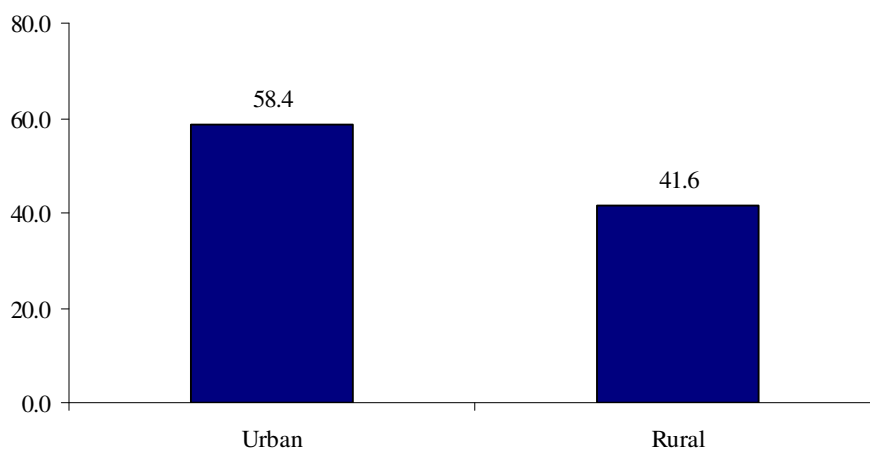
<sup>22</sup> Mother tongue as an indicator of ethnicity works well in the Sierra, where Quechua-speaking people are usually from an indigenous background. However, in the north, where many people speak Spanish regardless of their ethnic origin, mother tongue is a poor indicator of ethnicity.

**Figure 6: Birth place of the PCP-SL militants**



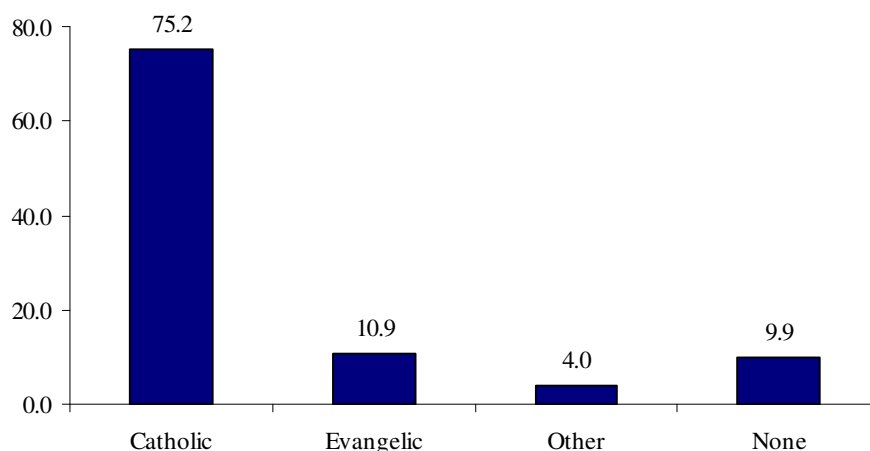
Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons. Author's calculations.

**Figure 7: Area of residence of the PCP-SL militants**



Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons. Author's calculations.

Finally, an important feature of the PCP-SL's militants is their religious affiliation: 75.2% were catholic, 10.9% evangelical, 4.0% other and 9.9% had no religious affiliation. This is consistent with the strong presence of Catholicism in Peru, where, according to the 1993 National Census, 88.9% of the population declared themselves to be Catholic.

**Figure 8: Religion of the PCP-SL militants**

Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Author's calculations.

Although we do not have information on the economic status of the prisoners, based on qualitative testimonies collected by the CVR we could argue that the majority of the PCP-SL's militants (although not the leaders) came from poor backgrounds:

“They were kids with no cultural level, they came from humble homes [...] Generally, their parents were peasants [...] and they [the sons] only came to the cities to study [...] [their parents] were poor, retired, besides that, the kids had to do all sort of things to survive, they had to resort to the dining rooms to eat”<sup>23</sup>.

Comparing the database of the 700 prisoners accused of belonging to the PCP-SL<sup>24</sup> with the sample of 121 testimonies selected in this study, one finds significant differences with respect to gender (half of the sample are women), birth place (50% were born in Ayacucho compared to only 10% in the complete database), occupation (students from universities and technical institutes almost double the number in the complete database) and mother tongue, where almost half of the sample speak Quechua as their mother tongue compared to only a third in the complete database. Additionally, a larger proportion in the sample was under 20 years of age at detention which means they were children when recruited by the party. However, the way the

<sup>23</sup> “Eran chicos así un poco que no tienen nivel cultural, venían de casas humildes [...] generalmente, los padres eran gente de campo [...] y ellos venían solamente para estudiar a la ciudad [...] [los padres] eran de escasos recursos, eran pensionados, aparte de eso, los chicos tenían que vérselas de mil formas para subsistir, recurrían al comedor para comer. CVR (2003, V: 669). Former student of Anthropology at the UNCP.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 1.

sample was selected is the source of some of these differences, as the purpose was to have a balanced sample by gender and place of origin in order to have a representative number of women and militants from the provinces.

The objective of this section has been to learn more about the leadership and militants of Sendero Luminoso using the information provided by the prisoner's accused of belonging to the PCP-SL in their testimonies to the CVR, as well as other secondary sources. With respect to the leadership, they were mostly middle-class intellectuals, born in regions other than Lima and described as having a very strong character. Additionally, women had a very strong presence within it. In regard to the Senderistas, the profile of the militant of the PCP-SL that emerges from this analysis is of a young catholic male with a good educational level, a student, peasant or merchant, predominantly Spanish speaking and who lived in the city. However, this characterisation does not necessarily reflect the actual profile of the militant of the PCP-SL, as there are indications that a large number of the party members, in particular Quechua-speaking indigenous peasants, died or disappeared during the armed conflict. In addition, several studies show that women's presence and participation in the PCP-SL was much more significant than suggested by the data.

### **3.2 Motivation of Sendero Luminoso militants**

What could have attracted these provincial intellectuals and young students towards a radically violent position that sought to destroy the system and build a new society? Based on the sample of testimonies reviewed and some of the testimonies included in the CVR's final report, this section intends to shed light on the PCP-SL militants' reasons for joining the party. We must be aware, however, that we are looking at a very diverse group in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, age, area of residence and occupation. The motivation for becoming member of the party will probably differ between a radical leftist political activist, a university student from the UNMSM in the capital city of Lima, a housewife and an indigenous peasant living in the highlands of Ayacucho.

The main reasons that appear to have drawn militants and sympathisers towards a violent position included attraction to the PCP-SL's revolutionary discourse aimed at changing the unequal system, a need to restore order and fight corruption, a strong sense of grievances many people felt and witnessed, and a desire for revenge for the

indiscriminate repression and abuses against civilians committed by the governments in power.

### 3.2.1 The power of ideology

Peru is a country with high levels of poverty and profound inequalities. More than half of its population lives in poverty and around a fifth in extreme poverty. However, these figures hide significant differences between urban and rural areas and regions. Poverty and extreme poverty are much higher in rural areas, at 72.5 and 40.3 per cent, respectively. The capital city of Lima lies in the coast and is the centre of economic growth, while the *Sierra* – once the prosperous empire of the Incas – and the *Selva* constitute the poorest regions of the country, with levels of poverty around 80 per cent, where one out of two children suffer from chronic malnutrition (Giugale et al, 2006: 537). Thirty years ago, when the PCP-SL decided to embark on an armed struggle against the state, the situation in the country was even worse, after a decade of military dictatorships and deep economic crisis.

A commonplace in the testimonies of members of the PCP-SL from the prisons is an attraction to the PCP-SL's discourse of social justice and revolutionary violence to change the unjust situation experienced by a large majority. The biography of Isabel<sup>25</sup>, a combatant of the PCP-SL imprisoned in the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres de Chorrillos* is emblematic of the situation of many young people attracted to Sendero's discourse of social justice. Born in Lima in 1962, daughter of a senator of the APRA (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*, Popular American Revolutionary Alliance) and the oldest of four siblings, Isabel lost her parents in early childhood and went to live with her uncles and grandparents. She entered the UNMSM to study Law in 1979, a time when many people in the campus were talking about the PCP-SL. She was very moved by the death of the Ayacucho Senderista Edith Lagos<sup>26</sup> at the hands of military forces and, as a young idealistic woman, identified with her. This event marked her life and put her in a dilemma: “to get my degree, as we said, joining the system, or to be brave enough to take arms as in the

<sup>25</sup> CVR, Testimony 700057. Female, born in Lima in 1962, Law Student at the UNMSM, combatant of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>26</sup> The PCP-SL capitalized on the death of Edith Lagos as many saw represented in her Ayacucho's rebel spirit. “El perfil de Edith Lagos, una chica de una familia acomodada con rasgos mestizos, típicos ayacuchanos, ya tenía toda la aureolea previa de perseguida, encarcelada, liberada de la prisión y trabajo en el campo y aparece ejecutada, entonces se convierte en un símbolo de las jóvenes mestizas de Ayacucho y de un ideal, la personificación del ideal y la entrega por una causa en la que ella es víctima, cosa que después va a revertirse totalmente por las acciones de Sendero [el PCP-SL]”. CVR (2003, V: 591). Ex-militant of the FER Antifacista.

countryside<sup>27</sup>. This antagonistic perception of the future, either submit to the system or fight against it, was typical of young people, as if no dialogue in between was possible.

Her youngest brother Harold experienced similar feelings. Together they searched for members of the PCP-SL within the university and started training in the party's doctrine by reading Marxist documents, attending party meetings and collaborating with the PCP-SL in minor tasks until they became combatants. In 1983, Isabel was arrested for her participation in an attack on a bank. In jail, she was tortured but, as she declares in her testimony, "as a combatant, I had to put myself in the worst situations, and one of them was to be raped [...] inside the prison, the Communist Party Sendero Luminoso had an organised life, nonetheless, I gradually stopped participating in it"<sup>28</sup>.

After six years, at the age of 27, she was released from prison, but was rejected by her family and unable to register in the *Registro Nacional de Identificación y Estado Civil* (National Registry Agency) to get identification documents and reintegrate into society. Soon, she started becoming involved with members of the PCP-SL and had a child with one of them. "[...] the situation was more serious now that I had a child to support. On the other hand, I was still interested in the politics of the PCP-SL even though all that had happened to me was different from what the party had told me"<sup>29</sup>. In 1994, Isabel was captured for the second time and sentenced to life imprisonment. After her capture, her brother Harold continued fighting for the PCP-SL and died in an attack by the PCP-SL in Lima. Another brother visited her regularly in the prison and was imprisoned in 1984 despite having, she claimed, no link to the PCP-SL. He died in the massacre of Senderistas in the Lurigancho prison in 1986.

Like Isabel, Elizabeth<sup>30</sup> was born in Ayacucho but migrated to Lima with her parents and eight brothers because the situation in Huamanga was very tense and difficult

<sup>27</sup> "lograr el título, como decíamos ensamblarnos al sistema o atrevernos a coger las armas como en el campo". CVR, Testimony 700057. Female, born in Lima in 1962, Law Student at the UNMSM, combatant of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>28</sup> "Como combatiente tenía que ponerme en las peores situaciones, y una de ellas era que me violen [...] en el interior del establecimiento Penitenciaría, el Partido Comunista del Perú – Sendero Luminoso tenía una vida organizada, sin embargo, ella poco a poco dejó de tener participación en la vida interna".

<sup>29</sup> "[...] la situación era cada vez más grave debido a que ahora tenía un niño a quien mantener. Por otro lado, aún me interesaba la política del Partido Comunista-Sendero Luminoso pese a que todo lo que me había sucedido era diferente a lo que me dijo el Partido".

<sup>30</sup> CVR, Testimony 700041. Female, born in Ayacucho in 1963, independent worker, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

due to the political violence: “There started to be reports of disappearances of people by the *sinchis* [special forces created by the police to fight terrorists], who settled in the city and if there was an attack, they arrested any one, especially if they were young”. After arriving in Lima, Elizabeth began working as a domestic servant and then decided to sell clothes, travelling to Huancayo in 1986. There, she met a group of Senderistas who asked her to join the party, telling her that it was a necessity, that they needed her collaboration. She accepted and joined the PCP-SL because “I was young and witnessed so many injustices that I sympathised with Sendero’s discourse of fighting for social justice”. When interviewed by the CVR, Elizabeth recognised that she had done something wrong; that the PCP-SL’s way of acting was not right and she had now distanced herself from their ideology.

Rosa<sup>31</sup> was born in 1970 in Lima. Between 1973 and 1974, she and her four brothers settled in the district of Villa El Salvador, a relatively new settlement in the south of the city created in the 1970s as a result of massive migration from rural areas. She was very impressed by the energy and dynamism of the settlers in demanding public services. In 1988, Rosa entered the Faculty of Nursing at the UNMSM, where she worked in very poor areas, and participated in debates about the national situation. These experiences made her more aware of the problems of the country and she decided to join the PCP-SL. In her own words, “there comes a time when one has to say that if you are not on this side, you are on the other”<sup>32</sup>.

Although Pilar<sup>33</sup> claims to be innocent, her vocabulary and ideas give some indication that she was involved to the PCP-SL. Born in Lima in 1967, she went by herself to Ayacucho to study Education at the UNSCH, becoming delegate for students from her faculty and of the Women’s wing. In Huamanga, she “opened her eyes before such a cruel political and social reality that the country lived”. In her testimony, she refers to the genocide and subversive policy of the state, a vocabulary commonly utilised by the Senderistas.

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<sup>31</sup> CVR, Testimony 700054. Female, born in Lima in 1970, student of Nursing at the UNSMS, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>32</sup> “Llega un momento en que tienes que decir que si no estás de este lado, lo estás del otro”. CVR, Testimony 700054. Female, born in Lima in 1970, student of Nursing at the UNSMS, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>33</sup> CVR, Testimony 700059. Female, born in Lima in 1967, student of education at the UNSCH, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

José<sup>34</sup> was born in Piura in 1964 but migrated to Lima at the age of 19 to study at the UNMSM. When he arrived in Lima, he was very upset by the poor living conditions he witnessed in the city. At the university, he experienced the effervescence and political proselytism of the PCP-SL and the MRTA and identified with the MRTA's discourse, which was the reason he began collaborating with the organisation by robbing cars and food from private companies to give out in the shanty towns. In his testimony to the CVR, he argues that the MRTA was proposing a "second economic and political independence of Peru" and that his crime was to try to change things because he believed in a more equal, just and democratic society. He demands more jobs and argues that as long as the inequalities are not tackled, the problem will remain.

Unfortunately, few of the testimonies make references to the personal lives of the militants, making it difficult to reconstruct their biographies in order to find any connection to their violent position. However, we can identify some common elements in the lives of these militants. First, the majority of them were young students from public universities studying in the Faculties of Social Sciences, Education and Nursing who had to make important sacrifices to pursue their studies, such as migrate to another city, leave their families and friends and work to pay for their studies. Second, they were born or lived in the peripheries of Lima, in the poorest districts of the city, which gives us an idea of the difficult living conditions that they must have faced in their lives. Finally, they had a strong concern for others and a sense of duty, a personal mandate of doing something to change the unequal and unjust situation in which the majority of people lived.

The socialisation conditions which favoured radical ideological and political positions were also similar for this generation of young people. During this period, the left had a dominant presence in the political scene and in people's daily lives in Latin America and in Peru. The influence of Marxism was particularly strong among young people attracted by the ideals of social justice and human rights. The proliferation of leftist parties and social movements and particularly the success of the Cuban revolution placed the idea of revolutionary change in the minds of many people. In Peru, for a certain urban group of intellectuals, political affiliation became one more phase of natural growth: adolescence and socialism were identified.

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<sup>34</sup> CVR, Testimony 720037. Male, born in Piura in 1964, student of Literature at the UNMSM, member of the MRTA, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

In general, violence became an important component of the radical discourse inspired by several political traditions. The idea of the use of violence was part of the discourse of the leftist parties operating within the universities. As a result, the universities became a sort of 'nest' of revolutionary ideas; the walls were covered with graffiti, the Plan of Studies was modified to include several courses on Marxism, and political activity among teachers and students expanded into all aspects of the university life. In the words of one teacher: "[...] in that period, it was a discussion, [just] as nowadays we discuss total quality, efficiency, more productivity and more profits"<sup>35</sup>. In addition, an attitude of political confrontation prevailed, favouring conflict instead of dialogue and the search for consensus. In this context, it is not surprising that a radical discourse seeking a drastic change through revolutionary violence appealed to some segments of society.

The PCP-SL also received the sympathy of people who, although they were against revolutionary violence, shared the ideas of social justice that Sendero Luminoso utilised in its discourse:

"[...] as the terrorist actions increased, the PCP-SL's discourse initially obtained the sympathy of a sector of the population who felt this was a response to the neglect in which Ayacucho lived. In these types of responses one encounters a combination of Ayacucho regionalism with national and international revolution."<sup>36</sup>

"[...] and the other thing is that there were too many injustices [...] we heard about so much oppression, so much misery and that the student had to participate in this internal war but as part of the revolutionary movement, that is, the people's war of that period. Then, not everyone (me, for example) went to the war.

Nonetheless, we very much sympathised with all the positions and ideas of the Communist Party, and until today, I think that if it hadn't been for the historical circumstances and other things the situation would have been very good for the large majority"<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> "Para esa época, era una discusión como ahora se discute la calidad total, la eficiencia [...] la mayor productividad, la mayor rentabilidad [...]". CVR (2003, V: 662). Teacher of Economics at the UNCP.

<sup>36</sup> [...] "a medida que fueron aumentando las acciones subversivas, el discurso del PCP-SL logró inicialmente obtener la simpatía de un sector de la población que sentía que ésta era un respuesta al abandono que vivía Ayacucho. En este tipo de respuestas se encuentra una amalgama de suerte de regionalismo ayacuchano con la apuesta por la revolución nacional y mundial". CVR (2003, V: 588).

<sup>37</sup> "Y lo otro era que había demasiadas injusticias [...] se hablaba de tanta opresión, de tanta miseria y que la participación, de que el estudiante debía, tenía que tener en esa Guerra interna, pero como parte del movimiento revolucionario o sea la guerra popular de esa época. Entonces, no todos, como yo, han ido a la guerra. Sin embargo, simpatizábamos mucho con todas la posiciones y las ideas del Partido Comunista, y hasta el día de hoy pienso que si no hubiese sido por circunstancias históricas y otra cosa la situación hubiera sido muy buena para las grandes mayorías". CVR (2003, V: 616). Student at the UNE, 1990-1991.

Another element of the PCP-SL that attracted members was the leadership's ability to put its discourse into practice (with the exception of the MRTA), in contrast to other leftist political parties. The legal left participated in the elections of 1979 and became part of the democratic system after years of advocating revolution. As a result, it lost its legitimacy among the student population, while those who promoted armed struggle, led by the subversive groups, were seen as embodying the accomplishment of all the unfulfilled promises of the left, but mainly appeared as a vehicle for violent change of their precarious living conditions (CVR, 2003).

### 3.2.2 The search for a new moral order

The PCP-SL also utilised punishment of those who exhibited immoral conduct to attract new members and to legitimise its actions, both in rural and urban areas. This strategy initially became successful in the Andean communities. For example, in Vilcashuamán (Ayacucho) – a strong base of support of the PCP-SL – members of the party arrived in the early 1970s with a discourse of justice and equality, both strong desires of a population subject to an exploitative system under the local power structure. The highland communities initially supported the PCP-SL attracted by its discourse of reestablishing order through public punishments of peasants who flouted the communities' norms (Portugal, 2006).

Within the universities, the PCP-SL initially earned the sympathy of students because, along with their intense political proselytising undertaken in study groups, they claimed that through their punishments, they encouraged the dismissal of teachers who were incompetent, corrupt, immoral, and sexual blackmailers. Testimonies collected by the CVR in public universities reveal that students were tired of the bureaucratic inefficiency and the corruption of authorities and teachers. The *Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú (UNCP)* was administered by a state commission led by three members, who were very discredited due to the corruption they had created within the institution.

“The student movement emerged with strength against this commission, taking control over the university in 1980 for more than two months: this is how a student movement was created that aimed to change this [...] this brought as a result a process of reorganisation of the university”<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> “El movimiento estudiantil emergió con fuerza en contra de esta comisión, realizando en 1980 una toma del local central de la Universidad que duraría algo más de dos meses: ahí se formó un movimiento estudiantil por querer que eso cambia y que su punto culminante fue el ochenta, en el cual

“[...] they called a teacher’s meeting [...] they sat us in chairs and [...] in the room there were the students who started insulting the teachers, they called them corrupt, a number of insults [...]”<sup>39</sup>.

At the UNMSM, the PCP-SL brought order to the corruption of the authorities and employees from the university, and became an alternative for many students who rejected the increasing corruption within the dominant leftist parties.

“By mid-1986, the failure of the modernising project of the university led by the political parties of the *Izquierda Unida* was evident, which led to a loss of legitimacy of these parties. The universities’ management, with the hegemony of the PCP *Patria Roja*, focused on managing the crisis and taking advantage of it. In this context, the PCP-SL encountered the conditions to grow among a radicalised sector of the students that started linking the legal leftist parties with corruption”<sup>40</sup>.

The presence of the PCP-SL also contributed to changing teachers’ behaviour:

“[...] the sexual blackmail of teacher’s disappeared and this was very positive within the university. There was fear and respect because these groups stated that these actions were negative and that they should not be taking place and therefore they would punish them”<sup>41</sup>.

The wide perception of Peru as highly corrupt, particularly among the youth, facilitated their identification with a party that continuously criticised and drew attention to the acts of corruption in all spheres of society. By constructing an image of a disciplined party capable of reestablishing order through exemplary punishments, the PCP-SL appealed to a profound desire for order and discipline in Peru’s chaotic and corrupt society.

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tomamos el local central [...] y que trajo como consecuencia un proceso de reorganización de la Universidad”. CVR (2003, V: 664). Student of Anthropology at the UNCP.

<sup>39</sup> “Llamaron a una reunión de profesores [...] nos sentaron a los profesores en sillas y [...] en el auditorio estaban los entudiantes, empezaron a insultar a los profesores ¿no?, les decían corruptos, en fin un serie de insultos [...]”. CVR (2003, V: 662).

<sup>40</sup> “Para mediados de 1986 ya era evidente el fracaso del proyecto renovador que, en algún momento, encabezado por partidos integrantes de la *Izquierda Unida*, lo que se tradujo en una pérdida de legitimidad. La administración de la Univerisad, con hegemonía de PCP *Patria Roja*, se dedicó a manejar la crisis y sacar las mayores ventajas de ésta para sí misma. Es entonces cuando el PCP-SL encontró las condiciones para crecer entre un sector radicalizado del estudiantado, que comenzó a relacionar a los partidos de izquierda legal con la corrupción”. CVR (2003, V: 633).

<sup>41</sup> “Desapareció, y fue muy positivo dentro de la Universidad, el chantaje sexual de los profesores, desapareció el cobro para aprobar a un alumno, había cierto temor, cierto respeto porque estos grupos en las incursiones señalaban que estas acciones negativas no tenían por qué estar sucediendo y que los castigarían”. CVR (2003, V: 669). Former student at the UNCP, member of the theatre group *Movimientos*.

### 3.2.3 A sense of grievance

Another trait that recurs constantly in the testimonies of the members of the PCP-SL, in particular young students from rural and poor backgrounds, is their direct or indirect experiences of exclusion, discrimination and abuse throughout their lives. The early feelings of vulnerability tend to become exacerbated over time as they try to fit into the system and move upwards through education but, as illustrated in these testimonies, are discriminated against because of their social class, their place of origin, their gender or their colour:

“In Huamanga, young people from intermediate cities and small towns arrived at the university with big expectations, but in the end, they acknowledged that the opportunities for social mobility were few because of the centralist and unequal structure of the country. The uncertainties that this generated in the young people was filled by a political proposition based on political fundamentalism, a culture of confrontation and an ideologised reading of the social processes the country was experiencing.”<sup>42</sup>.

“[...] the PCP-SL appealed to anger [...] I don't know if hidden, direct, open anger and that was I think the message that began attracting many students from the UNE to Sendero Luminoso. This class hatred; the large social inequalities that existed: people with so much money and people with no money, because we were all in that situation”<sup>43</sup>.

“I saw that they had radicalism, not a political radicalism but an emotional one, that is, they were kids with much contained anger”<sup>44</sup>.

The economic and social crisis of 1987 and 1988 forced many students, especially the poor, to abandon their studies. The number of students registered at the UNMSM declined from 45,354 in 1987 to 26,028 in 1988, and remained at that level until the late 1990s (CVR, 2003, V: 634). Based on the testimonies collected, the CVR concludes that “the reduction in the possibilities of personal development and the uncertainty towards the future led a group of students towards violent positions, a situation that was seized upon by the PCP-SL”. However, the majority of the student

<sup>42</sup> “En Huamanga, jóvenes de ciudades intermedias y pueblos pequeños llegaron a la Universidad con grandes expectativas, pero a la larga iban comprendiendo que eran muy pocas las posibilidades de movilidad social por la estructura centralista y desigual del país. Las incertidumbres generadas en estos jóvenes fueron llenadas por una propuesta política basada en el fundamentalismo político, la cultura del enfrentamiento y una lectura ideologizada de los procesos sociales que experimentaba el Perú”. CVR (2003, V: 600).

<sup>43</sup> “El PCP-SL apelaba a rabias [...] no se si ocultas, rabias directas, abiertas y creo que ese fue un poco el mensaje que fue jalando a muchos estudiantes cantuteños a Sendero Luminoso. Ese odio de clase, esa gran diferencia social que había: gente con tanto dinero y gente que no tiene, porque todos estábamos en esa misma situación”. CVR (2003, V: 619). Former student leader of the UNE 1989-1922.

<sup>44</sup> “Yo veía que ellos tenían un radicalsimo, pero no un radicalismo político sino un radicalismo emocional, es decir, eran chicos con mucha rabia contenida”. CVR (2003, V: 652). Former student leader of History at the UNMSM.

population remained indifferent towards the tense social and political context, or even developed diverse strategies to restrain the increasingly aggressive actions of the PCP-SL. One of the most interesting experiences was the creation of the *Coordinadora de Defensa de San Marcos*, made up of Christian communities and political parties of the legal left, which aimed to change the meaning of the graffiti of the PCP-SL in an attempt to create and spread new concepts about the peace problem:

“Many people from the left, militants of political parties, basically from the *Izquierda Unida*, grouped in this sort of *Coordinadora*, and above all, I remember there was a large contingent of catholic groups. From them, there appeared a group of people clearly not linked to the PCP-SL which received constant threats”<sup>45</sup>.

“This is what we had in [the Faculty] of *Letras* and in other parts; the graffiti remained the same but they added things and afterwards it ended up completely different, it disappeared and even ended up expressing the opposite if that was the case”<sup>46</sup>.

Narda Henriquez, in her book *‘Cuestiones de género y poder en el conflicto armado en el Perú’* (2006: 23), quotes the following testimony from a middle-rank militant of the PCP-SL imprisoned:

“[...] what has driven me is the oppression, the misery that I have experienced first hand [...], then, when the time came, one said: that is enough. There was an internal war in Peru. The people, the poor, faced the dilemma of what to do: to support the revolution or to support the counter-revolution. Each one decided what path to follow”<sup>47</sup>.

The militant presents her ideological evolution as a result of her direct experiences of poverty, and mentions that when she was imprisoned in *Canto Grande*, she found ‘all the answers’ in the party and then she became a member of Sendero Luminoso.

<sup>45</sup> “En esta suerte de coordinadora se agruparon alguna gente de izquierda, militantes de partidos políticos inclusive, básicamente de *Izquierda Unida* y, sobre todo, recuerdo que había un buen contingente de grupos católicos de base; bueno, a partir de ellos, apareció un referente de gente que claramente deslindaba con el PCP-SL y, por lo mismo, ese núcleo empezó a ser una suerte de blanco de amenazas”. CVR (2003, V: 645). Former militant of the Leftist Christians.

<sup>46</sup> “Lo mismo es lo que hubo en [la facultad de] *Letras* y en otras partes; la pinta estaba tal cual, sino que se le daba aditamentos y después terminaba completamente diferente, desaparecía o incluso terminaba diciendo lo contrario si es que ese era el caso”. CVR (2003, V: 646). Former militant of the Leftist Christians.

<sup>47</sup> “[...] lo que a mí me ha llevado son las causas de opresión, miseria, porque yo en carne propia he vivido [...] Entonces llegado el momento uno decía: basta ya. Había una guerra interna en el Perú. El pueblo, la gente pobre, se vió en la disyuntiva de qué hacer: o apoyas la revación o apoyas la contrarrevolución. Ya cada quién se definía qué camino tomar”.

Ethnic domination and racism, although in retreat, are experienced as injustices that must be resisted. This fertile ground is compounded by a combination of lived experiences of abuse and injustice coupled with profound feelings of detachment and not belonging. Even though the process that leads to this state of suffering is individual and private, behind it there exist social conditions, in particular poverty and racism, which facilitate and make them typical and reiterative within society.

The PCP-SL channelled hatred and frustration derived not only from social and ethnic discrimination, but also from gender. By using a discourse that emphasised the elimination of a system that discriminates against women and the establishment of a new order more just for them, the PCP-SL appealed to women from different sectors: housewives, workers, students and, in particular, professional women. According to Narda Henriquez, the armed struggle became a promise of emancipation for women. Based on an analysis of several documents of the PCP-SL, Henriquez traces the main proposals the PCP-SL offered to women, summarized in three main ideas: (i) women's emancipation is associated with the destruction of the right to property, (ii) women suffer a triple oppression; from the state, the family and the husband, that together embody the ideology of the feudal system, and (iii) women must join the armed struggle (ibid: 20).

Balbi and Callirgos find specific messages to professional women in the official Senderista newspaper, *El Diario*: "Each year, the problem of the training and performance of professionals in general and of women in particular gets worse. This is linked to the crisis of Peruvian society because the state is more and more reactionary; it denies them a future. What can professional women expect from this old system? In synthesis: nothing. In an order where professionals see their ideals of making a future and serving the people shattered [...] the only way of a professional women is to assume the role that intellectual history demands; to participate in the revolution"<sup>48</sup>. "Young students see their futures cut short, that the old state denies them the possibility to develop as professionals, and that they cannot expect anything from the state"<sup>49</sup>. The iconography of Sendero always presented the women closer to the leader Guzmán, giving them greater prominence than men. Guzmán also valued women, offering them a future of equality and happiness, a place within the organisation similar to men and visibility in the outside world. This strategy

<sup>48</sup> "Mujeres profesionales en la lucha de clases. Bregan en difíciles condiciones de trabajo y formación", in *El Diario*, September 13, 1991, quoted in Barrig (1993: 100).

<sup>49</sup> "Por la emancipación de la mujer. Combatir y resistir!", in *El Diario*, March 26, 1992 (ibid: 100).

proved to be successful as no other political party, regardless of their political line, had considered women in their discourse.

The fact that highly educated women joined the PCP-SL could suggest that their professional expectations were not met in a labour market that pays lower salaries to women and limits their access to high-level positions. According to Barrig (1993), frustration among professional women was the backdrop that explains the appeal to women of Sendero's violent alternative.

### 3.2.4 The desire for revenge

A crucial element that led to increasing affiliation with the PCP-SL, in particular in the Andean regions, was a desire for revenge. Initially, the armed forces carried out indiscriminate repression and violence to restrain and defeat the insurgents, leading to massive killings and massacres in the Andean communities. Reacting against this, many peasants, artisans and students joined the party to avenge the deaths of their families and relatives.

The testimony of Andrés<sup>50</sup> illustrates how his desire for revenge was so strong that he joined the PCP-SL to compensate for his loss and hatred. He narrates that around 1981 and 1982 red flags with the sickle and hammer appeared in trees and on the top of hills. Then, in 1983, terrorists arrived and began organising his village, explaining the goals and objectives of their actions in different districts and inviting the population to come out of their houses, to abandon the village and hide in the mountains, arguing that the repression would kill them. The population, pressured by the Senderistas and thinking that the police or the army would come after them, went to hide in the mountains taking their children, food, bedding and plastic to make precarious tents to sleep. His mother did the same to preserve her health and the lives of her sons; leaving her house and her land, she went to the mountains<sup>51</sup>. They

<sup>50</sup> CVR, Testimony 720036. Male, born in 1973 in Ayacucho, Chief of Security of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

<sup>51</sup> "Aproximadamente en el año 1981 a 1982, en los árboles y en la cima de los cerros aparecían izadas, banderas rojas con la hoz y el martillo [...] el año 1983, llegaron los subversivos y empezaron a organizar mi pueblo, explicándoles los fines y objetivos de sus acciones en las diversas circunscripciones del territorio nacional, e invitaron a toda la población a salir de sus casas, abandonar el pueblo y refugiarse en los montes y quebradas, argumentando que la represión vendría por ellos y les daría muerte [...] la población, al verse presionados a salir por los Senderistas y creyendo que vendrían los policías o militares a darle muerte, fueron a los montes y quebradas llevando consigo a sus pequeños hijos, sus víveres, frazadas y plásticos para confeccionar carpas y pasar la noche [...]. Mi madre, también hizo lo mismo, quien por preservar la salud y vida de sus hijos, abandonando su casa, sus chacras, fue a los montes [...]". CVR, Testimony 720036. Male, born in 1973 in Ayacucho, Chief of Security of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

experienced many difficulties running away from the army, the police and the *ronderos*<sup>52</sup>. In 1984, when Andrés was between 10 and 11 years old, his family was returning to their home to bring more food to the mountains. On the way back, his mother and sister-in-law were captured by the army and *ronderos*, beaten and taken to an abandoned house:

“[...] I could hear loud screams and pleas for mercy of many women [...] there were around 18, all women, they concentrated them in a small house and I was watching; the soldiers entered the house and came out, and the next day, at 2 p.m., around forty soldiers shot them [...] from then on, I experienced a critical situation and had no one at my side, because with my little sister, we were together and slept together”<sup>53</sup>.

Andrés, resentful towards the *ronderos* and soldiers over his mother’s death, joined Sendero Luminoso. From that moment, he collaborated with the Senderistas carrying out several tasks such as moving supplies to different places, vigilance and communication.

In 1998, during a raid Andrés was captured by the army. In his testimony to the CVR, he argues that he got involved with the PCP-SL because he was deceived and forced in a moment of desperation and loneliness, and because he was resentful against the soldiers who killed his mom. He joined the PCP-SL not out of conviction, but out of a fear of dying<sup>54</sup>.

To sum up, the attraction to a revolutionary discourse, discontent with a corrupt system, profound grievances experienced and witnessed and the desire for revenge were the common elements that brought together intellectuals, students and peasants in the same act: to rebel against their exploiters and overturn the current order. A longstanding tradition of authoritarian leadership and a lack of critical reasoning were indispensable for the evolution of the cult of President Gonzalo.

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<sup>52</sup> The *ronderos* were peasants from the communities that organised *rondas campesinas* to protect their communities from Sendero Luminoso and the army.

<sup>53</sup> [...]pude escuchar fuertes gritos y pedidos de piedad de muchas mujeres [...] como 18 personas eran, todas mujeres, allí concentraron en una casita, y yo estaba mirando del frente; los militares entraban y salían de esa casa y al día siguiente, metieron una ráfaga del patio; eran casi 40 soldados [...] Desde ese momento, atravecé una situación crítica y no tuve a nadie a mi lado, pues con mi hermana chiquita, juntos andábamos y dormíamos juntos” CVR, Testimony 720036. Male, born in 1973 in Ayacucho, Chief of Security of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> CVR, Testimony 720036. Male, born in 1973 in Ayacucho, Chief of Security of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

### 3.3 *Methods of recruitment*

The PCP-SL utilised different methods of recruitment depending on the characteristics and motivations of its potential militants and the conditions it encountered (see Portugal, 1996). Their methods also varied over time. During the decades between 1960 and 1980 the universities provided a fertile ground for political activism. The proliferation of political parties from the left and student unions created an environment of permanent debate and questioning of the situation in which many Peruvians lived. In this context, ideology prevailed as a mechanism to gain supporters. However, the situation was not homogenous within and among universities, and many students and teachers rejected the PCP-SL's extremely violent discourse. Public universities with a large number of students from the poor provinces of Peru were more open to the PCP-SL's ideology. This was the case of the UNSCH in Ayacucho, the UNCP in Huancayo, the UNE and the UNMSM, both in Lima. A different situation prevailed in private universities with students from the upper and middle social classes such as the *Universidad de Lima*, *Universidad del Pacífico* and to some extent, the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*, where the PCP-SL had almost no presence.

In rural areas, the terrain was more uneven and the PCP-SL had to resort to a combination of strategies. During the period of preparation of the war and in the first years of the armed conflict, the PCP-SL found fertile ground to build its project<sup>55</sup>, developing long-term systems of indoctrination. The PCP-SL undertook its political work among the young population, including children, through the creation of the *escuelas populares* (people's schools), and organised the older population into different social organisations that eventually replaced the traditional institutions within the community. To strengthen their links to the peasant population, the PCP-SL participated in community tasks. This allowed them to establish relationships based on trust, rather than fear and coercion. Gradually, the PCP-SL established its new order, incorporating the local authorities into the party and avoiding drastic changes and disturbances to the functioning of the prevailing economic structures.

After a few years, some communities became discontented with the presence and control of Sendero Luminoso. In these situations, the PCP-SL adopted a harsh strategy that involved the use of coercion, threats, violence and terror to subordinate

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<sup>55</sup> Jose Coronel and Ponciano del Pino's studies in Ayacucho show that communities in the valley, with previous presence of political parties, connected to the markets and with a large student population tend to support the PCP-SL's project.

the population. The use of violence against the civilian population intensified over time, killing local officials and anyone considered an enemy of the party in popular trials, and restricting peasants' freedom to mobilise and trade. This was the watershed that ended the initial passive or even supportive attitude of the population and facilitated a "collaborative" relationship between the armed forces and the rural population organised in *rondas campesinas* (see Portugal, 2006).

### 3.3.1 Indoctrination and seduction

The first stage to prepare for a people's war against the state consisted in recruiting cadres for the organisation. As it had been born within the UNSCH, the PCP-SL's leadership began its indoctrination and recruitment among young students and teachers. The insertion strategy of the PCP-SL within universities consisted in implementing a 'pedagogical project' that presented a schematic vision of the world and history that justified violence. Guzmán took advantage of his power as Director of General Studies to change the Plan of Studies and introduce courses inspired by the manuals of Marxism-Leninism elaborated by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (CVR, 2003, V: 581). Through the introduction of courses on Historical and Dialectical Materialism in the curricula and the creation of different spaces of ideological debate and exchange, the PCP-SL gave rise to dogmatic positions that discredited anyone who thought differently or was critical, and promoted a discourse and critical vision of Peruvian society that contributed to the reproduction of a collective image of violence, as revealed in the following testimony:

"[...] when I entered the university, dialectical materialism opens your eyes [...] I understood the process more, the process of struggle, that the people had always fought and will fight and that that fight is useful for transformation. We studied the French revolution, that it was bloody, that there had been excesses, that it was violent, yes, but it served to transform society and that is what counts. If that had not occurred, how many more years would have passed in order for capitalism to become what it is now? It would have taken more time; they have had three hundred years to take power and stay in it"<sup>56</sup>.

The courses on Marxism and the institutionalised practices defining an instrumental use of violence played a central role in the dissemination and transmission of

<sup>56</sup> "[...] cuando ya ingrese a la Universidad, el materialismo dialéctico, el materialismo histórico te abre los ojos [...] Comprendí mas el proceso, el proceso de la lucha, que el pueblo siempre ha luchado y luchara y esa lucha misma sirve para transformar. Se estudio la revolución francesa, que ha sido sangrienta, que ha habido excesos, que ha sido violenta, si, pero eso de que sirvió, de transformar a la sociedad y eso es lo que pesa y ahora y pues, si no se hubiera dado esa situación, ¿Cuántos años mas hubieran pasado para que pueda devenir todo lo que es el capitalismo ahora? Hubiera demorado mas; ellos han tenido trescientos años para tomar el poder y consolidarse en el poder". CVR (2003, V: 615). Student at the UNE, 1985-1990, militant of PCP-SL, imprisoned in the prison Santa Mónica in Lima.

revolutionary ideas and aggressive attitudes. The influence of the curricular changes was particularly strong within the Faculties of Education, Social Sciences and Agronomy, where there was a larger presence of students from rural settings, small towns and intermediate cities. The PCP-SL also gained an important presence within the Faculties of Social Service, Obstetrics and Infirmary, usually female careers, which helps explain the outstanding participation women had in the political work of the PCP-SL. In contrast, students of Economics and Engineering were less exposed and attracted to the PCP-SL's influence (CVR, 2003, V: 581).

Within the universities, teachers were crucial for the expansion of the PCP-SL. Although a large majority remained indifferent or neutral, simply "letting things happen", there was an important group that were committed to the ideology and project of the PCP-SL:

"[...] There were teachers that sympathised a lot with the PCP-SL because they were selective. Therefore, one knew what to expect, that is, if the PCP-SL entered and a person knew that he was honest, there were no problems [...] it felt relatively safe, in contrast, those who were dishonest, corrupt, then they were shaking because they would be judged [by the PCP-SL]<sup>57</sup>.

"There were some teachers that started to show that level of sympathy and one saw that they had meetings regularly [...] It was not a large sector, but enough to convince the student masses"<sup>58</sup>.

"[...] on one occasion, I was invited to a meeting [...] At the beginning, they presented as they were, that is, as a group of intellectual professors that wanted to fight for moralisation and more academic progress [...] those who presented started giving a number of slogans that I identified because I had heard them in my students and some colleagues [...] In those meetings they gained teachers from all the university"<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> "habían profesores que simpatizaban mucho con el PCP-SL, porque eran selectivos. Entonces, uno sabía a qué atenerse, es decir, si el PCP-SL entraba y uno sabía que era honesto, no tenía problemas [...] se sentía relativamente seguro, en cambio, los que eran deshonestos, corruptos, entonces estaban temblando porque podía llegarles el juzgamiento". CVR (2003, V: 672). Teacher of Education at the UNCP.

<sup>58</sup> "Habían algunos docentes que sí realmente empezaron a mostrar ese nivel de simpatía y se veía que ya ellos tenían pues sus reuniones casi permanentes [...] No eran una buena cantidad, pero era suficiente como para poder convencer a las masas estudiantiles". CVR (2003, V: 672). Teacher of Zootechnics at the UNCP.

<sup>59</sup> "en una ocasión, me invitaron a una reunión [...] Al principio se presentaron como que no eran, o sea, era un grupo de profesores intelectuales que querían luchar por la moralización y el mayor desarrollo académico [...] los que se presentaron empezaron a dar una serie de consignas que yo identifiqué, porque los había escuchado a mis alumnos y algunos colegas [...] En esas reuniones captaban profesores [...] de toda la Universidad". CVR (2003, V: 672). Teacher of Education at the UNCP.

In the UNE, Nilda Atanasio<sup>60</sup>, former student of Abimael Guzmán and an important leader of the PCP-SL, prepared the ground for the emergence of the party through ideological debates with the radicalised sectors to discredit them:

“[Nilda Atanasio] said “bring me Mr. So-and-so, that was the name of an important leader of *Pukallacta* and a man of power within the university and “we will undress him and show him that he knows nothing, because they know nothing, they only repeat phrases, pure cliché, Marxism is not only about mentioning Marxism or quoting a phrase”. She did not like any quotes, nor any apologia, nor any reference to the authority of the genius, then she never trained a student to shout, she trained people, she created the first Senderista group within the university. And her mission was not for the war but for building a network that could dominate the university thinking about the war for the next years probably”<sup>61</sup>.

The problem was not the teaching of Marxism, but how it was taught. The CVR’s interviews with teachers from the universities where the PCP-SL had a strong presence reveal that many of them, in hindsight, believe that Marxism was badly taught and assimilated even worse by students:

“Many became Marxist at the last minute. And Marxism, instead of contributing to creativity [...] restricts it because the curricula were based on the most basic Marxism such as that of Martha Harnecker, or the one some soviet thinkers did, with dialectical materialism [...] the problem was solved and there was nothing more to do, only introduce some phrases, some truths or semi-truths and that was it [...] that meant that the university education, in particular in Social Sciences, lacked profound analysis or creativity in order to solve or try to analyse social problems [...] the general tendency was towards macro-structural analysis; daily life, personal problems, apparently less important, were left aside”<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Nilda Atanasio was married to Hugo Muñoz, also a teacher at the UNE and a militant of the PCP-SL who was murdered in 1992, together with nine students from the UNE by the *Grupo Colina*, a paramilitary group created by the government of Alberto Fujimori. After his trip to China (1965-1966), Abimael Guzmán organised a group of professors from the UNE: the Group of Intellectual Work of Mariategui. From this experience, Nilda Atanasio later began the work of selection and indoctrination of Senderista cadres at the UNE. In 1986, Nilda left the country separating from her husband and her links the PCP-SL.

<sup>61</sup> “decía “traigamos a fulano de tal”, que era un hombre fuerte de Pukallacta y el poder de la Universidad y traerlo acá, “y lo desnudamos y le demostramos que no sabe nada, porque no saben nada, solamente son fraseros, puro cliché, el marxismo no es solamente mencionar marxismo o repetir alguna frase, alguna cita”. No le gustaba ninguna cita, ni ninguna apología, ninguna alusión a la autoridad del genio, entonces ella nunca formo un estudiante para gritar, formo gente, o sea que ella germinó el primer núcleo Senderista en la Universidad. Y su misión no era otra, no era para la guerra sino era para ir construyendo un tejido que podía dominar la Universidad en función de la guerra, para los años siguientes probablemente”. CVR (2003, V: 613). Member of the leftist political movement *Juventud Mariateguista*, 1982-1987.

<sup>62</sup> Se hacen marxistas de última hora muchos profesores. Y el marxismo [...] en vez de ayudar a la creatividad [...] más bien, la aplanan, la anulan, porque los contenidos curriculares [...] se basaban más bien en el marxismo más simplón [...] en uno como el de Martha Harnecker, o el que hacían algunos estudiosos soviéticos, con el materialismo dialéctico, histórico [...] el problema estaba resuelto y no había nada más que hacer, tan solo incorporar algunas frases, algunas verdades o semiverdades y ya [...] eso hacía que la formación universitaria, sobre todo en el área de Ciencias Sociales, carezca de profundidad o de creatividad para poder resolver o tratar de analizar los problemas sociales [...] la

The PCP-SL's political work went beyond the classroom to other areas of the campus through strategic control of dining rooms, university residences and transport services, which gradually transformed into spaces of ideological debate and indoctrination. The PCP-SL's discourse emphasised improvement of food rations and transport services, winning the sympathy and support of students, especially the poorest who depended on these services to survive. It also expanded to different faculties where it combined people's schools with propaganda. Consequently, the PCP-SL started absorbing different leftist parties, experiencing an exponential growth and gaining control of strategic spaces within the university.

"[...] their domain was first the dining room, the residence, some important areas of the faculties, in particular in Social Sciences and Humanities. Afterwards, it start to expand to other faculties, but then it was a huge apparatus, a huge party, we could not do anything, we did not grow, we fragmented, there was no internal counterweight, Sendero was alone in 88, its friends that remained could not do anything"<sup>63</sup>.

"They usually made the speeches in the dining room, people from the party grouped [...]. It was headquarters of the party. There, all the people were organised and went out to the faculties"<sup>64</sup>.

"Everything was planned in the dining room [...]university protests [...] a mobilisation, the leaders organised, they kept us [...] at lunch time [...] and there they talked about their ideology and openly cried "viva!" to the PCP-SL, President Gonzalo, the armed struggle [...] and from there they took us to block roads [...]"<sup>65</sup>.

"[...] the graffiti [in the dining room] was very pretty, with messages that alluded to the PCP-SL, and I was surprised, sometimes I considered that to be very good, but other times I disagreed, that is how the force and power of the PCP-SL was seen, Abimael Guzmán was considered the most important living Marxist on the earth"<sup>66</sup>.

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tendencia general es al análisis macro o estructural; la vida cotidiana, los problemas personales, aparentemente menos gravitantes, eran dejados de lado". CVR (2003, V: 665).

<sup>63</sup> "[...] su dominio fue primero el comedor, vivienda, ciertos eslabones importantes de las facultades, sobre todo de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades. Después se fue trasladando a otras facultades, pero ya era un aparatado, era un partido enorme, ya no podíamos hacer nada, nosotros no crecíamos, nos disgregábamos, no había el contrapeso interno, Sendero queda solo en el 88, los amigos que quedaron no pudieron hacer nada". CVR (2003, V: 618). Member of the Juventud Mariateguista, 1983-1988.

<sup>64</sup> "En el comedor generalmente se hacían las charlas, se agrupaba gente del partido [...] Allí era cuartel del partido. Allí era donde se organizaba toda la gente y salían ya a las facultades". CVR (2003, V: 618). Sympathiser of the PCL-SL, imprisoned.

<sup>65</sup> "Ahí se gestaba todo [...] las protestas universitarias [...] una movilización, los dirigentes organizaban, nos retenían [...] a la hora de almuerzo [...] y ahí ellos se manifestaban, hacían escuchar su ideología y abiertamente hacían vivas por el PCP-SL, por el presidente Gonzalo, por la lucha armada [...] y de ahí nos sacaban a bloquear las pistas [...]". CVR (2003, V: 618). Former student of Education at the UNCP.

<sup>66</sup> "[...] las pintas [en el comedor] eran bien bonitas, con mensajes alusivos al PCP-SL y me sorprendía, por momentos lo veía muy bien, y por momentos discrepaba, ahí se veía ya, pues, la fuerza, el poder más alucinante del PCP-SL, considerando a Abimael Guzmán como el más grande marxista viviente en la tierra". CVR (2003, V: 649). Former militant of UDP, student at the UNMSM.

Another space where the PCP-SL undertook its political work was the cultural groups, including dance, popular music and theatre, where it established the need to link art with a “class position” and the “armed struggle”. Similarly, the PCP-SL infiltrated cultural political events spreading messages of support for armed struggle.

“They [the members of the PCP-SL] focused everything in relation to class struggle, for example, they gave that meaning to a dance that is danced to the right of Mantaro River that represents the process of harvesting maize and is danced with the sickle”<sup>67</sup>.

“I attended political cultural events; sometimes they presented their ideas but the fact that they were controlling who entered and who exited is part of a black campaign like many that have been created against the Communist Party”<sup>68</sup>.

When Guzmán was expelled from the UNSCH in 1975, he and many of the PCP-SL’s leadership began intense political work in other spaces of Ayacucho’s society, in particular in the rural areas of the poor provinces of the Centre of Ayacucho (Vilcashuamán, Huancasancos, Cangallo and Victor Fajardo), where Guzmán aimed to build support bases for his armed struggle.

“Between the years 1977 and 1979 it was evident that the militants of the PCP-SL travelled to the provinces of Victor Fajardo and Cangallo to create people’s schools and gain followers; simultaneously as they worked in these areas, they continued getting supporters at the university, in particular in the faculties of Education, Social Sciences and Agronomy”<sup>69</sup>.

“They had a job, they created people’s schools, they controlled the neighbourhood through the Neighbourhood Federation, syndicates; there was good work with secondary students, also with the SUTE (Teachers’ Union)”<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Ellos [los integrantes del PCP-SL] todo lo enfocaban en relación a la lucha de clases, por ejemplo, le daban ese sentido a una danza que se baila a la margen derecha del río Mantaro, en la que representa un proceso de la cosecha de maíz, y se baila con la sickle”. CVR (2003, V: 649). Ex-leader of the Juventud Aprista en Derecho, student at the UNMSM.

<sup>68</sup> “Yo sí he asistido a los eventos políticos culturales; a veces, ellos ingresaban a exponer sus ideas, pero que estuvieran controlando quién entre o quién no entra eso es parte de una campaña negra como muchas que han montado contra el Partido Comunista del Perú”. CVR (2003, V: 649). Militant of the PCP-SL, former student of Law at the UNMSM.

<sup>69</sup> “Entre los años 1977, 1978 y 1979 es bastante notorio que [los militantes del PCP-SL] viajaban específicamente a las provincias de Víctor Fajardo y Cangallo a formar escuelas populares y captar estudiantes; al mismo tiempo que trabajaban en estas zonas, seguían consiguiendo militantes en la Universidad, específicamente de las facultades de Educación, Sociales y Agronomía”. CVR (2003, V: 587). Presentations of the Workshop “Universidad y violencia política”.

<sup>70</sup> “Ellos tenían un trabajo, hacían escuelas populares, ellos controlaban los barrios a través de la federación de barrios, gremios; había un buen trabajo con estudiantes de secundaria, a nivel de SUTE”. CVR (2003, V: 587). Former leader of the Teachers’ Union.

The creation of the *Planteles de Aplicación Guamám Poma de Ayala*<sup>71</sup> in the early 1960s by teachers from the UNSCH provided an effective mechanism to expand the PCP-SL's political work to secondary students. Students from the Faculty of Education at the UNSCH were required to do teaching internships in urban and rural secondary schools. Here, the militants of the PCP-SL taught courses on Marxism and trained children in the PCP-SL doctrine.

This author's findings (Portugal, 2006) show that the PCP-SL utilised the large number of students of the Faculty of Education who became militants during their studies at the university to expand its project in rural areas. Many of them were born in the communities where they settled as teachers. Therefore, they were considered 'sons' of the community and easily accepted. In addition, students and teachers from other provinces settled in the communities to reinforce the political work of local teachers, staying for long periods and participating in community tasks in order to gain people's trust. In some cases, they even married local women, establishing relationships of kinship with the family and hence getting closer to the community. Once the population stopped seeing them as 'foreigners', they began their formal indoctrination through 'people's schools', which taught war techniques to peasants and students and trained them to become members of the *Ejército Guerrillero Popular (EGP)*, the military force of the party.

Another method Sendero Luminoso utilised to attract members that turned out to be very successful was the glorification of the militant, especially if he died for the cause of the party. In this sense, Guzmán seduced his followers with the idea that death, for a just cause – "a better future" – would make them heroes, ultimately giving sense to their unfortunate existence. Militants who perished in action were converted into martyrs and role models, honoured and recognised because of their moral superiority, and given special funerals and ceremonies. Consequently, the expectation of a glorious sacrifice sustained fanaticism among its militants.

This idea was put into practice through the concept of the 'quota of blood' the party had to sacrifice in order to expand and succeed. Guzmán proposed this quota as part of a strategy of war, an inevitable cost of war:

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<sup>71</sup> This platform grouped students from the Faculty of Education and coordinated their teaching internships in secondary schools in urban and rural areas.

“[...] we know that the reaction has committed, commits and will commit genocide, of that we are sure. In consequence, we face the problem of the quota; the fact that to annihilate the enemy and preserve our own forces we have to pay a cost of war, a cost of blood, the need to sacrifice a part for the success of the people’s war”<sup>72</sup>.

Guzmán cleverly manipulated the psyche of his followers, altered their moral principles and made them believe that hatred and the desire to harm were legitimate emotions that had a rational foundation. Many texts of the PCP-SL expressed the idea that class hatred was a noble and higher feeling, something one should be proud of as it was completely normal and fair that the oppressed mass engendered hatred against their exploiters and resisted exploitation through revolutionary violence. By presenting himself as the ‘messiah’, the chosen one who would free the unprivileged from oppression and exclusion, Guzmán succeeded in transforming his scientific and rational explanation of reality into a religious revelation. He created two images of himself: the ideal militant, obedient and committed to sacrifice his life for the cause, and the highest leader, who must be obeyed at all times (Portocarrero, 1998: 23). In this sense, Guzmán played a symbolic role, as parent in the private and individual world of his militants and as liberator of society, a historical personality with which anyone can identify. The construction of this idealised figure found resonance in a society with a tradition of caudillismo, which desired and demanded an authoritarian leader. In summary, the glorification of violence and death were at the centre of the PCP-SL’s discourse and recruitment success.

### 3.3.2 The breakdown of family relationships

A successful indoctrination demanded the destruction of all ties of the militant with society, starting with his or her family. Guzmán believed that to become part of the Senderista community and commit to the armed struggle, the militant had to renounce his or her private world. He himself argued that he had no friends, only comrades, and that he was son of the party, not of his natural parents. According to this philosophy, to become a Senderista, the militant must abdicate his or her own individuality and autonomy, considered a sin and immoral, giving up family and friends. In fact, Guzmán demanded the PCP-SL’s militant’s exclusive dedication to the cause and made them sign letters of submission to President Gonzalo,

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<sup>72</sup> “sabemos que la reacción ha aplicado, aplica y aplicará el genocidio, de eso estamos sumamente claros. Y en consecuencia se nos plantea el problema de la cuota; la cuestión de que para aniquilar al enemigo y preservar las propias fuerzas hay que pagar un costo de Guerra, un costo de sangre, la necesidad del sacrificio de una parte para el triunfo de la Guerra popular”. Entrevista del siglo, *El Nuevo Diario*, September 24, 1988.

renouncing their life, family and personal aspirations, and putting their lives in the service of Guzmán and his cause (Barrig, 1993: 100). In order to become militants and gain power within the party, women were forced to abandon their families, clan and religion –considered means of oppression of women – and submit unconditionally to Guzmán and his plans, and to worship him as a god. In this sense, Tamayo (1996) argues that:

“The Senderista option strengthens the image of women’s’ submission, devotion and loyalty. The important presence of women in the leadership of the PCP-SL was an effective configuration to guarantee ‘no internal competition for power’ and to favour the cult of the image of the leader [...] In the case of the women of Sendero, we have a phenomenon where adherence to one leader and winning his recognition makes significant ones own existence, relieving the feeling of a lack of power caused by material conditions and exclusion from the political community”<sup>73</sup>.

Elena Iparraguirre, when asked if it was difficult for her to abandon her husband and children, answered “not really. For years I had been doing political work and having clear that my life would be dedicated to the revolution. Once the opportunity presented, it was natural to abandon everything” (Roncagliolo, 2007: 235). Journalist Robin Kirk interviewed a Senderista woman in a prison in Lima and to the question as to whether she had children, the Senderista answered: “That is secondary. Also it is secondary where they are”. When asked what she felt about leaving her children to join the war, she answered: “The biggest inheritance that one can leave them: a new society. That is what makes us happy” (quoted in Barrig, 1993: 100).

As an orphan, the militant was adopted by the father and mentor: Abimael Guzmán. Within the party, the militant encountered a community of people that shared similar feelings and thoughts, a collective identity that set him or her apart from the rest. However, no filial, loving or friendly relationships were allowed within the party (with the exception of those for Guzmán). The natural human need for affection and love was repressed and replaced by feelings of anger and hatred.

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<sup>73</sup> “[...] la opción Senderista no hizo otra cosa que potencializar la imagen de sujeción, devoción y lealtad femenina. La importante presencia de mujeres en la cúpula de poder de Sendero Luminoso resultaba una eficaz configuración para garantizar la ‘no competencia interna por el poder’ y para favorecer el culto a la imagen del líder (...) Nos encontramos en el caso de las mujeres de Sendero, ante un fenómeno donde la adhesión incondicional a un caudillo y la obtención de su reconocimiento, hace significativa la propia existencia, aliviando el sentimiento de carencia de poder provocado por las condiciones materiales y la exclusión de la comunidad política”.

In the camps where the families recruited by the PCP-SL lived, the children no longer belonged to their families. The Senderistas told them “your family is history; now you are growing with us”. When the children were between 11 and 12 years old, they were separated from their parents and the mass to become part of the next combatant group of the PCP-SL. In this way, they only lived for the revolution. Any kind of affective relationship was strictly prohibited, with everything valued in class terms and people’s war. They were no longer called by their names or their place in the family (father, mother, son) but by their condition as combatants, comrades and companions (del Pino, 1999: 176-77).

This submission appealed in particular to those who had found no route for personal development. The fact that many of the militants were young and poor migrants living in university residences or in rented apartments away from their homes facilitated and accelerated the process of conversion and identification with the “new father and family”.

By establishing a set of rituals that each militant had to go through to become part of the “community”, the PCP-SL distorted its political nature and became more like a religious sect. These symbolic rituals reinforced the idea of belonging, of being part of a community where everyone had gone through the same thing:

“First, one had to do the bread and butter work [...] put up flags, graffiti; then, the next step was to do look-out, it was more strategic, with greater responsibility [...] and in that way, little by little, they gave you more responsibility; then [...] you started doing field work, which they call actions, dynamiting, killing [...]”<sup>74</sup>.

The next phase was to join a military cell, for which it was necessary to eradicate any sensitivity of the militant towards death:

“A kid told me that they had to prepare by killing dogs, first small ones, then bigger ones, they killed them in different ways, then they became stronger and when they were prepared, ready, then they joined the teams”<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> “Primero había que hacer trabajo básico [...] poner banderas, pintas; luego otro paso ya era hacer trabajo de contención, de campana, era un poco más estratégico, de mayor responsabilidad [...] y así, poco a poco, te daban mayor responsabilidad; después [...] ya entrabas a hacer el trabajo de campo, lo que llamaban ellos acciones, dinamitar, matar [...]”. CVR (2003, V: 670). Former student of Education at the UNCP.

<sup>75</sup> “Un chico me contaba que tenían que prepararse matando perros, primero pequeños, después más grandes, diversas formas de matarlos, entonces se endurecían y, cuando estaban ya endurecidos y preparados, listos, entonces entraban ya a formar parte de los equipos”. CVR (2003, V: 670). Teacher of Education at the UNCP.

The literature about the years of political violence in Peru abound in the notion of problematic natural filial relationships (see Faverón Patriau, 2006). The idea of collective suicide was present from the beginning of the conflict. The bulletin of the *Centro Universitario de Huamanga* described the social situation of Ayacucho in these terms: “it smells of humiliation and dishonour, of violation and the suicide of sons, parents, and authorities” (ibid: 16)<sup>76</sup>. Alonso Cueto, in his novel *Pálido cielo*, also talks about affiliation to Sendero Luminoso as a form of suicide, that begins annihilating kinship relationships by creating differences and antagonistic positions within the family. Gustavo Faverón concludes that membership of Senderista necessarily implies the shutting off of family relationships (ibid: 17).

### 3.3.3 Paternalism and clientelism

To be militant of the PCP-SL involved having access to a number of benefits and advantages. As human resources manager at the university, Guzmán was in charge of appointing teachers. He used this power to appoint candidates based not on their academic merits but on party clientele.

“For every teacher that was outside the ideological orientation of Sendero they searched for any reason [...] a small mistake was increased and considered academic incapacity ... and in that time Abimael Guzman was Director of Human Resources”<sup>77</sup>.

Many teachers and authorities build opportunistic relationships with the PCP-SL in order to preserve their jobs and positions of power, as illustrated in this testimony from a teacher of Sociology at the UNCP:

“Deans, we had one in the Faculty [...] who had nothing to do with the PCP-SL, but they allied [...] not because of principles but for survival [...] for mutual benefit, they did not wanted to be touched as authorities. Therefore, they watched and let things happen, they made things easy for them [...] some who had nothing to do with the ideology but they accommodated very well to preserve their jobs”<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> “huele a humillación y a oprobio”, “a violación y suicidio de hijos, padres, y autoridades”.

<sup>77</sup> “Todo docente que no estaba dentro de la orientación ideológica de Sendero [el PCP-SL] se le buscaba cualquier motivo [...] un error pequeño era agrandado y calificado como incapacidad académica, eso era motivo de tacha, y en ese entonces el director de Personal era Abimael Guzmán”. CVR (2003, V). Former leader of the Teachers’ Union.

<sup>78</sup> “Decanos, nosotros tuvimos uno en la facultad [...] no tenía nada que ver con el PCP-SL, pero se aliaron ¿no? [...] no por principios, sino por sobrevivencia [...] Por conveniencia mutua, no querían que los tocaran como autoridades. Entonces miraban, dejaban, daban las facilidades y se hacían los locos [...] Unos que no tenían nada que ver con la ideología, pero que se acomodaron muy bien ¡no! para preservar sus puestos”. CVR (2003, V: 672). Teacher of Sociology at the UNCP.

At the beginning, many students, in particular those from poor provinces of Ayacucho, found in the PCP-SL a sort of social safety net that the state failed to provide. In the UNSCH, the presence of Antonio Díaz Martínez, prominent leader of the PCP-SL, in Student Welfare allowed the party to build clientelist relationships with the students for whom the dining room and the university residence were crucial for their survival. Therefore, behind a revolutionary and radical discourse, the PCP-SL appealed to the paternalism and authoritarianism they openly criticised in traditional parties.

Within the universities, the dining rooms were crucial for the PCP-SL's expansion and consolidation, as they constituted a necessary condition for the survival of students from poor backgrounds who were usually living by themselves in the city or in the university residence. Through the control of this space, the PCP-SL created feelings of gratitude towards the party:

“Two thousand students [...] at lunch and at breakfast there was an average of six to five hundred students, the same at dinner”<sup>79</sup>.

“[...] it started growing through the dining room [...] because all the Faculties go to the dining room; in the second place [...] these are the poorest students, in third place, on Saturdays and Sundays there was a solidarity meeting with the students from the dining room [...] they prepared a special sort of informal communal pot [...] obviously this space was crucial for the political message [...] we did political work and identified cadres [...] in the elections, almost all the candidates that we presented for the Student Federations came from the dining room. They were poor people, who had decided to fight, to change”<sup>80</sup>.

In the UNMSM, the PCP-SL focused its political work on students from the poorest social strata, in particular those coming from the periphery or immigrants, emphasising access to basic needs in its speeches:

“A new group of students got together to fight for our demands such as more rent, better studying conditions, against the rise in fares [...] I remember that we fought because they started to charge for registrations [...] The Faculty of Education played a very important role, honestly, Education, Social Sciences

<sup>79</sup> “Mil doscientos estudiantes [...] en el almuerzo y en el desayuno habría pues un promedio de seiscientos a quinientos estudiantes, de igual manera en la cena”. CVR (2003, V: 670). Student at the UNCP.

<sup>80</sup> “[...] fue creciendo a través del comedor [...] porque al comedor van todos las facultades; en segundo lugar [...] son la gente más pobre, en tercer lugar, con los estudiantes del comedor los sábados y domingos era un encuentro de solidaridad [...] se hacía un especial de ollas comunes informales [...] obviamente ese escenario era importantísimo para el mensaje político [...] realizábamos labor política y se identificaba cuadros [...] en las elecciones casi todos los candidatos que presentamos para los centros federados eran del comedor y con decisión ¿no? Gente pobre, decidida a luchar, a cambiar”. CVR (2003, V: 663). Gabriel, former student of Chemistry at the UNCP.

and Law were three Faculties that stood out and have always been at the vanguard of all this work”<sup>81</sup>.

The PCP-SL also took advantage of the frustration of young students who, despite having access to higher education had limited opportunities for upward social mobility. This was particularly strong within the Faculties of History, Education and Basic Sciences, where students needed a lower score to enter the university and had the expectation of later moving into other disciplines. This is among the key spaces within the university were the Committees for Struggle for Internal Transfer (*Comités de Lucha por el Traslado Interno*) (CVR, 2003, V: 652).

In the countryside, many children lost their parents as a result of the massive killings perpetrated by the armed forces, sometimes with the collaboration of the *rondas campesinas*. Initially, they followed the Senderistas out of revenge, but eventually they developed a dependant relationship as Sendero provided food, clothing and security. Andrés narrates in his testimony to the CVR that he and other orphans witnessed the arrival of the Senderistas, who tried to convince them to follow them. Many children, without really knowing what they were doing, joined Sendero.

“[...] from that moment, I was involved in that situation, honestly without knowing anything about politics, because they said ‘we are fighting for the poor, for the peasant, this war will succeed and then we will take power and live a harmonious life’. I barely understood about politics, I as a small kid was going about without reasoning much. Of course, I felt a bit comfortable because I depended on them: my cloth, my food”<sup>82</sup>.

### 3.3 4 Terror and coercion

The PCP-SL based its activity not only on the orthodoxy of its arguments and the disqualification of its opponents, but also on the use of physical violence and harassment to maintain control. When the power of ideology and the use of clientelist relationships proved not strong enough to win supporters, Sendero Luminoso resorted to the use terror and coercion as means of cooption.

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<sup>81</sup> “Un nuevo grupo de estudiantes nos juntamos para luchar por nuestras reivindicaciones como mayor renta, mejores condiciones de estudio, contra el alza de pasajes [...] Recuerdo que peléabamos porque comenzaban a cobrar las matrículas [...] Un papel muy importante allí cumplió la Facultad de Educación, sinceramente Educación, Sociales, y Derecho fueron tres facultades que han destacado y siempre han estado en la vanguardia de todo este trabajo”. CVR (2003, V: 652) . Militant of the PCP-SL, former student of Physical Education at the UNMSM.

<sup>82</sup> “[...] desde ese momento estaba involucrado en esa situación, sinceramente sin saber nada de la política, porque decían: ‘estamos luchando para la gente pobre, para el campesino; esta Guerra va a triunfar y luego vamos a tomar el poder y viviremos una vida armoniosa’. Casi no entendía de la política, yo como chibolito, sin razonar mucho estaba andando. Claro, un poco cómodo me he sentido porque de ellos ya dependía: de mi ropa, de la comida” *ibid*: 4.

“In that period there was ideological terrorism because I attended a university assembly and Sendero [the PCP-SL] led the syndicate, there I observed that they attended because they were obliged to attend and anyone who opposed or disagreed was completely crushed<sup>83</sup>.”

Students and teachers that actively opposed or were indifferent to the PCP-SL were constantly threatened:

“The PCP-SL subdues the majority, they were very scared, and there was panic. People did not want to run the risk<sup>84</sup>.”

“[...] there are students that are taking bully and intimidating positions through verbal and in some cases physical aggression [...] many students have stopped attending classes because of this intimidation<sup>85</sup>.”

“I was connected to one of the groups of the *FER Antifacista* but had to retired in 84-85 because in early 84 it was very hard to do go to the countryside or to undertake the regular academic activities because you did not know who you were talking to in the classrooms, both the pressures from Sendero [PCP-SL] for a discourse as well as the vigilance of the Intelligence Service<sup>86</sup>.”

“In first place, the president of the association [...] then, she resigned, then the vice-president left the country [...] Gustavo Gómez, well, the rest also resigned, we all made a public resignation, a report and an evaluation of all teachers<sup>87</sup>.”

“They proposed a new plan, and then the famous flyers came, they even set on fire my department, my desk, everything [...] and a huge poster appeared threatening that if I did not leave they world kill me. Nonetheless, I stayed in the Faculty because I believed I was doing nothing wrong, nothing that was not good for the degree<sup>88</sup>.”

<sup>83</sup> “En esa época, hay ya un terrorismo ideológico, porque asisto a una asamblea universitaria que era el parainfo universitario, y Sendero [el PCP-SL] dirigía el sindicato, allí observé que asistían porque tenían la obligación de asistir y el que se oponía o discrepábamos era totalmente apabullados”. CVR (2003, V: 584). Former leader of the Teachers' Union.

<sup>84</sup> “[...] a la mayoría los sometía, la mayoría tenía mucho miedo, había mucho pánico. La gente no quería exponerse”. CVR (2003, V: 668). Teacher of Sociology at the UNCP.

<sup>85</sup> “[...] hay estudiantes que en están asumiendo posiciones matonescas y de intimidación mediante agresiones verbales en unos casos, físicas en otros [...] han dejado de asistir muchos alumnos por la intimidación antedicha”. CVR (2003, V: 673). Dean of Chemistry at the UNCP.

<sup>86</sup> “Yo mismo, que estaba vinculado a uno de los grupos del FER Antifacista me retiro en 84-85 porque a inicios del 84 la cosa se hace muy difícil para salidas mínimas al campo o para el desarrollo regular de tus actividades académicas, porque ya no sabes con quién estás dialogando en el aula, tanto presiones de Sendero [PCP-SL] por un discurso como el asunto de vigilancia del Servicio de Inteligencia”. CVR (2003, V: 591).

<sup>87</sup> “En primer lugar, con el presidente de la asociación [...] entonces ella renunció, íbamos quedando vicepresidente [...] optó por salir del país [...] Gustavo Gómez y, bueno, el resto ya optó por renunciar, hicimos todos una renuncia pública, una especie de informe y balance a los docentes”. CVR (2003, V: 671). Teacher of Zootecnia at the UNCP.

<sup>88</sup> “Se planteó un nuevo plan y ahí vinieron los famosos volantes, hasta incendiaron mi departamento, mi escritorio, todo [...] y apareció un cartelón amenazando que si no me iba me mataban. Sin embargo, yo me quedé en la facultad porque yo pensaba que no estaba haciendo nada malo, nada fuera de lo que era favorable para la carrera”. CVR (2003, V: 672), Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the UNCP.

The majority of teachers, however, adopted a passive or neutral attitude out of their fear of losing their jobs or their lives: “Fear had defeated us, fear was generalised”<sup>89</sup>.

In the universities where it gained a presence, the PCP-SL started combating opposition through crimes. In the UNCP, it captured three student member of the APRA and killed them, leaving a sign over their bodies that said: So die the scoundrels of Rodrigo Franco<sup>90</sup>! Viva the PCP! Viva the EGP! (CVR, 2003, V: 673). In the UNSCH, the PCP-SL murdered a student accused of using the name of the organisation for extortion. From then on, many students were murdered and authorities threatened (CVR, 2003, V: 591).

“Jorge Munguía Crisóstomo, leader of the JCP and member of the Students’ Federation, active opponent of the PCP-SL in a session of the University’s Council on February 28 reported that he was assaulted and threatened with death by people from the PCP-SL; in a session on March 2 Jorge Munguía asked Jorge Huarocc, a known Senderista student, to stop threatening the students through their table companions. On May 25, Jorge Munguía was murdered by a Senderista column when he was travelling to Satipo”<sup>91</sup>

“On July 18, Professor Luis Aguilar Romani from the Faculty of Pedagogy and sympathiser of the MRTA was attacked by three elements who located him at the office of the Dean, who witnessed the shooting. Days after, he died”<sup>92</sup>.

Several testimonies collected by the CVR describe how the PCP-SL utilised different mechanisms to force people to join and collaborate with the party. Rocío<sup>93</sup> narrates how she was coerced by members of the PCP-SL when she was studying medicine at the UNMSM in 1990, and how she collaborated with the subversive organisation. In the campus, as with other public universities, members of the terrorist organisations had infiltrated as students. In 1992, many members of the PCP-SL, also studying medicine at the university approached her and asked for her collaboration tending wounded people. She refused to help, but did not know who to

<sup>89</sup> “El temor nos había vencido, el temor era generalizado”. CVR (2003, V: 671). Teacher at the UNCP.

<sup>90</sup> The *Comando Rodrigo Franco* was a paramilitary unit created by the state as part of their counter-terrorist strategy. Rodrigo Franco was the name of a prominent aprista leader killed by the Senderistas.

<sup>91</sup> “Jorge Munguía Crisóstomo, dirigente de la JCP e integrante de la federación de estudiantes, activo opositor del PCP-SL; en la sesión del 28 de Febrero del Consejo Universitario denunció que fue agredido y amenazado de muerte por gente del PCP-SL; en sesión del 02 de Marzo Jorge Munguía pidió a Jorge Huarocc, conocido estudiante Senderista, «que deje de estar amedrentando a los estudiantes a través de quienes conforman los comensales» (Acta de sesión del CU, 02.03.89). El 25 de Mayo, cuando viajaba a Satipo, Jorge Murguía fue asesinado por una columna Senderista que lo bajó del carro”. CVR (2003, V: 673).

<sup>92</sup> “El 18 de julio es atacado el profesor de la Facultad de Pedagogía, Luis Aguilar Romani, de simpatías explícitas con el MRTA, por tres elementos que lo ubican en la oficina del decano Jaime Cerrón Palomino, testigo directo, cuando descerrajan varios tiros dejándolo agonizante, días después fallecería”. CVR (2003, V: 673-674).

<sup>93</sup> CVR, Testimony 700043. Female, born in Lima in 1966, Student of Medicine at the UNMSM, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

turn to, feeling helpless. Besides, in the university they lived a situation of constant danger “the university was infected with terrorists, I could not run away”<sup>94</sup>. When she refused to cooperate, they forced her to go to different places to tend wounded people.

Jackeline Aroni, member of the PCP-SL, threatened Rocío and forced her to abandon her home. She was told that if she did not join the party, she would be considered an enemy, besides, “she had to define herself”. Pressured by Jackeline, Rocío abandoned her home and moved to different places with members of the PCP-SL. After five months, she decided to escape in spite of the constant threats that she and her family would be murdered: “[...] but I was not a member of that organisation, I wanted to recover my freedom”<sup>95</sup>.

Another example of how the PCP-SL utilised its power to force people to help them in specific tasks is illustrated in the testimony of Elizabeth<sup>96</sup>. She was born in Ayacucho but migrated to Lima because the situation in Ayacucho was very tense and difficult as a result of the war. In Lima, she started working as domestic servant, and in 1986 moved to Huancayo to work on selling clothes, where she met members of the PCP-SL, who asked her to become part of the organisation and work with them. “They told her that it was a necessity, they asked her to travel with the clothes she sold to serve them as alibi so nothing would happen to them”<sup>97</sup>.

In the countryside, the PCP-SL attempted to install a system of collective production where a proportion of the harvest had to be given to the party to feed the EGP:

“Before the emergence of social problems, the population of Chacari lived a harmonious life; however, at the beginning of 1981, due to the presence of a teacher Antonio Palomino, born in the district of Pujas, province of Vilcashuamán, who worked at the community’s school, two young strangers (probably university students) started coming. These youngsters met frequently with teacher Antonio, and together, they were apparently planning terrorist actions [...] one day, his wife informed him that the couple of youngsters, including the teacher, called an assembly forcing the population to participate in a harvest, threatening them that they would burn their houses if they did not participate [...]”<sup>98</sup>.

<sup>94</sup> “el ambiente de la Universidad está infectado de terroristas, no podía huir”. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> “[...] pero yo no era miembro de esa organización, yo tenía que recobrar mi libertad”. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> CVR, Testimony 700041. Female, born in Ayacucho in 1963, independent worker, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>97</sup> “Le dijeron que era una necesidad, le pidieron que viaje con la ropa que vendía y serviría como una cuartada para que no les pase nada”. *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> “Antes del surgimiento de los problemas sociales, refiere que los pobladores de Chacarí, vivían en completa tranquilidad; sin embargo, a principios del año 1981, debido a la presencia de un profesor

Sendero Luminoso did not differentiate according to age or gender. Children were also murdered, abused and forced to join the party, otherwise they were killed. The seizure and use of children in the hostilities was a widespread and systematic practice of the PCP-SL from the beginning of the armed conflict, which intensified between the years 1983-1985 and 1987-1990. According to the database of the CVR, of the total kidnappings and conscriptions by Sendero Luminoso registered with a record of age, 20.5 per cent were children, and from all the acts undertaken against children by the PCP-SL, conscription and kidnapping represented 42 per cent. A total of 80 per cent of them occurred in the regions of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Huanuco and Junin and 76 per cent of the victims of these recruitments were boys.

The most common way to recruit children was through the schools, a method that persisted in the region until 1987 (CVR, 2003, V: 615). The testimonies collected by the CVR describe how the terrorists entered the schools and recruited the tallest, strongest and brightest students.

“Those between 10 and 12 years old were taken to the mountains. They [the PCP-SL] told the teacher they would bring them back after three months. He opposed them and was therefore murdered”<sup>99</sup>.

“[...] the terrorists came, during the night and asked for support, and they took our students; we had two students of nine and 10 years old [...] you can imagine how they trained these children with armaments [...]”<sup>100</sup>.

Although some of the recruitments were not forced<sup>101</sup>, the majority were carried out through coercion, deception and violence. Many participated under pressure and fear of retaliation. When the communities and families refused to give a “quota” of their

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Antonio Palomino, natural del distrito de Pujas, provincia de Vilcashuamán que laboraba en la escuela del lugar, comenzaron a llegar dos extraños jóvenes, que pudieron haber sido estudiantes universitarios. Estos jóvenes tenían permanentes reuniones con el profesor Antonio, y juntos, aparentemente, estaban planificando a escondidas acciones subversivas [...] un día, su esposa le informó que el par de jóvenes, incluido el profesor, en una asamblea que convocaron, habían obligado a los pobladores, a participar en una cosecha, amenazándoles que si no participaban, sus casas serían quemadas [...]”. CVR, Testimony 720035. Male, born in Ayacucho in 1940, farmer and artisan, accused of being member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho, pp. 1-2.

<sup>99</sup> “A los mayorcitos, entre 10 a 12 años, se los llevaron al monte. Al profesor le dijeron que después de 3 meses los devolvían. Se opuso y por eso lo mataron”. CVR. Testimony 302135. Satipo, August 1992.

<sup>100</sup> “[...] venían los terroristas, de noche nomás, a pedir apoyo, y se llevaban a nuestros alumnos, entre ellos tenemos dos alumnos mayorcitos de 10 y 9 años [...] se imaginan ustedes cómo le iban adiestrando a esas criaturas con armamentos [...]”. CVR. Testimony 100483. Lucanas, 1983 y 1984.

<sup>101</sup> The children who joined the PCP-SL did so to receive benefits such as payment, to revenge the murder of a relative, because of their need for belonging and because of their admiration for some of the ideals these groups claimed to have. See Carpio, 2002: 51)

children voluntarily, the Senderistas enrolled them violently after threatening or murdering those who opposed them:

“Your child has to come with us until his death; the terrorists told me [...] If you do not let him come with me, we will kill all your family”<sup>102</sup>.

“[...] I saw that they gathered the other children and took them violently to the mountains (some kids resisted), the terrorists grabbed one of them, they beat him even harder and forced the other kids to grab him hard and in the presence of everybody, they cut his hands, feet, genitals and finally his neck [...]”<sup>103</sup>.

Valencia narrates that in May 1989, around 50 Senderistas arrived at the community of Ccsancaccay in the district of Vinchos shouting “we are taking all the kids that are 13 years old”, and in this way 15 youngsters, men and women, were seized from their parents. When some women and a few peasants refused to give their children, they were immediately murdered with a shot to the head. Eight male peasants and six women died.

The testimonies of Armando<sup>104</sup> and Abilio<sup>105</sup> narrate the stories of how they were captured by the PCP-SL and held as prisoners for several years. Armando was 10 years old when he and his family were living in Huanta and captured by around 50 Senderistas and taken to the jungle. They travelled for several days by foot and then by boat until they reached a small town.

“In that place, the Senderistas told us ‘here you are going to work’ [...] these are our lands because the government will not give us food. They grouped us to the squad N.1 in the charge of comrade Tiburcio [...] The squad was composed of 20 people who had working tools and two shotguns [...] Every morning, all the families went out in groups to carry out assignments given by the chief of the group and during the night they did shifts keeping watch, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons they met to study big red books about Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and *Pensamiento Gonzalo*. After one to two weeks the guerrillas came back and called an assembly where they gave us

<sup>102</sup> “Tu hijo tiene que acompañarnos hasta la muerte, me decían los subversivos [...] Si no dejas que vaya con nosotros tu hijo, matamos a toda tu familia”. CVR. Testimony 313453.

<sup>103</sup> “[...] vi que a los demás niños los reunieron y a punta de golpes los estaban llevando hacia el monte (algunos niños se resistían, entonces) los terroristas cogieron a uno de ellos, lo golpearon aún más, y obligaron a los otros niños para que lo agarren fuertemente, y en presencia de todos le cortaron las manos, los pies, los genitales y finalmente el cuello [...]”.

<sup>104</sup> CVR, Testimony 720041. Male, born in Huanta in 1976, prisoner of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

<sup>105</sup> CVR, Testimony 720030. Male, born in Ayacucho, farmer, kidnapped by the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

talks, that could last the whole day; they also taught us how we should escape towards the river or how to hide in case the army arrived “<sup>106</sup>.

“In Anapati we cultivated beans, yucca, maize and all kind of fruits. After the harvest, we distributed a proportion of the food to the guerrillas [...] the Senderistas assessed the work of the conscripts; if they failed to carry out their jobs, they were punished with no food. The best trained people in the camp became part of the guerrilla force”<sup>107</sup>.

His family continued praying and meditating according to their religion, until one of the chiefs of the squad found out and told them “here, it is forbidden to profess any religion”. In these camps “we met people from different places (Tambo, San Miguel, Huanta, etc.) who had been recruited like us [...]. There were families that had been there for years, and tired of that kind of life, many escaped”<sup>108</sup>.

In 1992, Armando and his family decided to escape by boat along the Ene River. The Senderistas were waiting for them at the river mouth:

“[...] they took us out and put a rope around my parents neck, first they hanged my father, then my mother, my brother Vidal tried to escape and they shot him in the back while another seized me –‘if you escape we are going to kill you like your brother’ [...] I started crying and could not speak [...] They took me back and put me under the supervision of Mrs. Tania, telling her ‘you are going to take care of this child who has no parents’<sup>109</sup>.

Armando was moved, together with four other people to Viscatán, to work for the Senderistas:

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<sup>106</sup> “En ese lugar, los Senderistas nos dijeron aquí van a trabajar [...] estas son nuestras tierras, porque el gobierno no nos va a dar de comer. Nos agruparon al pelotón N.1, a cargo del camarada Tibourcio [...] El pelotón estaba integrado por 20 personas, quienes contaban con herramientas de trabajo y 2 escopetas [...] Todas la mañanas, las familias salían en grupos al campo a cumplir tareas asignadas por el jefe de grupo y por las noches cumplían labores de vigilancia en turnos, los días sábados y domingos por las tardes se reunían para estudiar unos libros grandes y rojos, sobre marxismo, leninismo, maoísmo y pensamiento Gonzalo. Cuando llegaban de una o dos semanas los guerrilleros, nos convocaban cualquier día a asamblea popular donde nos daban charlas, que podía durar todo el día, también nos enseñaban cómo debíamos escapar hacia el río o cómo escondernos si llegaran los militares”. CVR, Testimony 720041. Male, born in Huanta in 1976, prisoner of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

<sup>107</sup> “En Anapati se cultivaron frijoles, yuca, maíz y toda clase de frutas. Después de las cosechas, se distribuía una parte de la alimentación de los guerrilleros [...] Los Senderistas evaluaban el trabajo de los reclutados, si incumplían, eran sancionados, no les daban alimentos. Las personas más preparadas del campamento, pasaban a ser guerrilleros”. CVR, Testimony 720041. Male, born in Huanta in 1976, prisoner of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> “nos bajaron y a mis padres le pusieron una soga al cuello, primero lo ahorcaron a mi papa, luego a mi mamá, mi hermano Vidal trató de escaparse y le dispararon por la espalda, mientras otro me agarraba –si escapabas como a tu hermano te va a pasar[...] Me puse a llorar y no podía hablar nada [...] Me regresaron y me pusieron a cargo de la señora Tania, diciéndole –a este muchacho los vas a cuidar, ya no tiene padres”. *Ibid.*

“[...] we walked for a week and arrived in a valley [...] there was no stable population, we lived in groups and slept in tents made of wood with a plastic roof, one night in one place and the other night in another place. We worked all day, part of what we produced they took to Putis [...] those who had relatives murdered by the Senderistas could not leave Viscatán, our job was to work the land”<sup>110</sup>.

Abilio remembers that around 1981, when he was eight years old, the terrorists captured him, his family and other members of his community and took them to the district of Llochegua, where they stayed with the Senderistas for six years. In late 1987, they were transferred to Viscatán, grouped with the others and forced to sow wheat, yucca, potato, and bananas. They lived in the mountains in provisional huts because they were constantly moving and were watched by the local forces, for which reason they could not escape. He mentions that the leaders of the PCP-SL were from the town, with good education, and taught the mass how to use guns<sup>111</sup>.

Manuel narrates the incursion of Sendero Luminoso into his community and how they kidnapped children:

“When I was at my sister’s house in Matsuriñay, there were incursions of Sendero in the year 1994; they took the children and threatened to kill us if we refused, we knew they brought people and killed, burned houses, everything; once they told me ‘I will come back and take you’, then, we escaped to the mountains, my sister was scared, I have come to Centro Cullana with my sister, escaping, all the people have come”<sup>112</sup>.

The Senderistas created the “pioneer children” or “red pioneers” organisation, with children recruited, who were forced to carry out multiple tasks such as surveillance, carrying messages, espionage, provision of food and supplies, transporting of flags and ammunitions, and cleaning and working the farm. However, children under 11 did not participate in incursions or the attacks.

“I was a little boy, I did not know how life was, I practically opened my eyes to that, I thought that was the truth, sure, I had entered and the companions of

<sup>110</sup> “[...] caminamos casi una semana, llegamos a un valle [...] no había una población estable, vivíamos en grupos y dormíamos en carpas hechas de palo y techo de plástico negro, una noche en un lugar y otra noche en otro. Trabajábamos todos los días, parte de lo que producíamos llevaban cargando a Putis [...] Quienes teníamos parientes muertos por Senderistas, no podíamos salir de Viscatán, nuestra tarea era trabajar la tierra”. *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> CVR, Testimony 720030. Male, born in Ayacucho, farmer, kidnapped by the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla in Ayacucho*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>112</sup> “Cuando estaba en casa de mi hermana en Matsuriñay, había incursiones de Sendero en el año 1994, se llevaban a los chicos y amenazaban con matar si nos negábamos, sabíamos que traían gente y mataban, quemaban casa, todo; y una vez me dijo vuelvo otra vez y te voy a llevar, entonces escapamos al monte, mi hermana asustada, me he venido a Centro Cullana, escapando junto con mi hermana, toda la gente se ha venido”. CVR, Testimony 700040. Male, born in Junin, ashánika, farmer, kidnapped by the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla in Ayacucho*.

Sendero Luminoso looked after us and taught us, from five to ten years old we were pioneers and undertook the tasks of surveillance and espionage”<sup>113</sup>.

“They studied and worked, they selected the rice and work to their capabilities from seven years old until they were 12, and then they took up weapons. They studied their politics, a teacher taught them every day, and they made them a wooden gun and they played with their teachers”<sup>114</sup>.

“The Main Force taught the pioneer children older than 12 how to use weapons, spears, slings and how to make bombs. From this age, they were trained to participate in armed actions and confrontations. When I was a child, Sendero appeared and I no longer lived in peace in my house. Sendero did not teach us School, they only taught us physical training, they taught us how to use weapons [...] my organisation was called the Main Force. They were made up of youngsters of different ages from 12 to 30, men, women and children from the highlands, natives [...]”<sup>115</sup>.

One of the main reasons that the PCP-SL preferred to recruit young cadres was because it was more difficult to change an adult’s conception of life as they were already ‘contaminated’ by the system. Young people, on the other hand, were easier to convert as they could absorb the new ideology with less resistance (Granados, 1987). In addition, the children recruited represented the hope, the future of the party within their vision of an extended war: “the children would become the human reserve”. They would be the contingent that would replace those who died in combat: “To make the children actively participate in the people’s war; they can undertake a number of tasks through which they can begin to understand the need to transform the world, change their ideology and adopt the ideology of the proletariat”<sup>116</sup>.

In summary, Sendero Luminoso’s initial strategy for winning followers consisted in ‘brainwashing’ through a dogmatic use of ideology. Guzmán was a ‘snake charmer’ who succeeded in converting his Pensamiento Gonzalo into a scientific truth that no one could question, otherwise they would be considered a traitor and purged from

<sup>113</sup> “Yo estaba chiquito no sabía cómo era la vida, yo prácticamente abrí mis ojos a eso, pensaba que era la verdad, claro, he entrado, los compañeros de Sendero Luminoso nos cuidaban y enseñaban, de 5 a 10 años éramos pioneros y cumplíamos la tarea de vigilancia y espionaje”. CVR, Testimony 202001.

<sup>114</sup> “Estudiaban y trabajaban, escogían arroz y trabajaban a su capacidad de 7 añitos para arriba hasta los 12 y de ahí agarran armas. Estudian pura política de ellos, un profesor les enseña todos los días, le hacen un arma de palote y juegan con ellos con sus profesores”. CVR, Testimony 302132.

<sup>115</sup> “La Fuerza Principal enseñaba a los niños pioneros, a partir de los 12 años, el uso y manipulación de armas, lanzas, hondas y la elaboración de bombas. Desde esta edad eran entrenados para participar en acciones armadas y en los enfrentamientos. Cuando yo era niño apareció Sendero ya no vivía tranquilo en mi casa. Sendero no nos enseñaba Escuela solamente nos enseñaban adiestramiento físico, nos enseñaban a manejar armas [...] Mi organización se llamaba Fuerza Principal. Integraban jóvenes de diversas edades de 12 a 30 años hombres mujeres y niños conformado por gente de la sierra, gente nativa de todos sitios viene”: CVR, Testimony 332054. Child of thirteen years old narrates the recruitment and conscription of twenty families in the native community of Puerto Nuevo Ashaninka in Junin in 1988.

<sup>116</sup> Document *Línea de masas* prepared by the magazine *Sol Rojo* for the internet. [www.solrojo.org](http://www.solrojo.org).

the party<sup>117</sup>. The lack of critical reasoning among the population and the need for a radical change in their lives facilitated the internalisation of a totalitarian vision of reality. Sendero Luminoso cleverly combined the power ideology with the provision of a number of material benefits that included appointments for teachers, free transport and food in the universities' dining rooms, salaries and opportunities for social mobility, and other less tangible benefits, such as the sense of belonging to a community and the opportunity to make history. But in time, and under special circumstances, Sendero moved from intellectual manipulation to the use of physical force and violence, spreading a culture of terror.

#### 4. Thirty years after the war

Now that the armed conflict is over, how do Senderistas assess the ideology of the PCP-SL and their affiliation to the party? The testimony of Pilar, a prisoner of war, reflects the position of the *arrepentidos* – militants who regret their participation in the PCP-SL and recognise they were wrong. During her time in prison, she reflected and changed her ideas, and came to the conclusion that what she had done was not right, that the PCP-SL's way of acting was not right. When she became involved with the PCP-SL it talked about justice; she was young, 26 years old and had seen many injustices, and that was why she became involved with them. Now, in prison, she asked the CVR to analyse the situation in the country, everything that provoked the war. She considers that as long as injustices and poverty exist, problems will not be solved and the government and society must help to solve them<sup>118</sup>. Similarly, María, a former member of the PCP-SL, said she thinks violence is outrageous, she does not share their ideas, nor agree with the damage caused, and questions the use the PCP-SL made of innocent and naïve people<sup>119</sup>.

Isabel told the CVR that “she would like to ask all of them for forgiveness; that she has sinned and that she wants to be self-critical in order to be able to see all that happened”. She considers that “the mistakes were on both sides” and she is “worried that children will grow up with resentment, that other youngsters will rise up again. They need to know all the effects of a revolution”. She “believes in national

<sup>117</sup> In fact, Sendero Luminoso was sometimes called ‘shampoo’, because of its effectiveness in washing peoples’ brains.

<sup>118</sup> CVR, Testimony 700059. Female, born in Lima in 1967, student of education at the UNSCH, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>119</sup> CVR, Testimony 720027, p. 8. Female, born in Junín in 1973, accused of being member of the MRTA, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

reconciliation, that there is a need to register everything that has happened in the last twenty years”<sup>120</sup>.

Rosa, sentenced to prison for her militancy in the PCP-SL, declared to the CVR that she expects the CVR to be impartial and to analyse the facts in a complete way in order to ascertain the reasons that armed conflict emerged. She considers that a policy must be taken to avoid the problems the country experienced in those years and also believes that “poverty, hunger, misery and social inequalities are real conditions for the emergence of terrorism and that the PCP-SL unleashed a war in the countryside where the poorest live”<sup>121</sup>. Felipe recognises the mistakes of the PCP-SL, stating that even “Doctor Abimael Guzmán Reynoso publicly recognised that there were mistakes, that it is necessary to clarify the truth in order to have a political solution”<sup>122</sup>. He says that “he would be willing to ask for forgiveness for the acts he could have committed, but not for thinking that this society needs to be transformed for the good of the people, the majority that live in this land called Peru. They cannot impute that as crime of treason to the country”<sup>123</sup>.

Andrés, former militant of the PCP-SL, declares in his testimony that:

“[...] I had wrong ideas because violence does not bring about any benefit to society, on the contrary, lots of poverty [...] The state has to promote the search for peace and justice, and for that, it must eradicate poverty. I am willing to ask for forgiveness and a public apology [...] because I regret having been involved with Sendero Luminoso”<sup>124</sup>.

On the other hand, there are still important sectors of the PCP-SL’s militants in prisons (the members of *Proseguir*), who continue to believe in armed struggle as the only means of changing the system. A recent interview by Caretas with Elena Iparraguirre, former leader of the PCP-SL, girlfriend and then wife of Abimael Guzmán, shows her firm commitment to the *Pensamiento Gonzalo* and to the revolution, and her militancy within the prisons. She organizes 300 Senderistas

<sup>120</sup> CVR, Testimony 700057, p. 11. Female, born in Lima in 1962, Law Student at the UNMSM, combatant of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>121</sup> CVR, Testimony 700054. Female, born in Lima in 1970, student of Nursing at the UNSMS, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penitenciaría de Máxima Seguridad de Mujeres* in Chorrillos.

<sup>122</sup> CVR, Testimony 720022. Male, born in Ayacucho in 1956, merchant, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

<sup>123</sup> CVR, Testimony 720022. Male, born in Ayacucho in 1956, merchant, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

<sup>124</sup> “tuve ideas equivocadas, ya que la violencia no trae ningún beneficio a la sociedad, al contrario, mucha pobreza [...] El Estado debe promover la búsqueda de la paz y la justicia y para ello debe derrotarse la pobreza. Estoy dispuesto a pedir perdón y una disculpa pública [...] pues estoy arrepentido de haberme vinculado a Sendero Luminoso”. *Ibid*, p. 10.

imprisoned in the Santa Mónica prison and tells them to prepare summaries of the news from Peru and the world, take dance lessons with the dance teacher and Senderista Maritza Garrido Lecca and tries to convince them that the armed struggle that took the lives of thousands of people was worth it. When asked if she regrets the massacre of Lucanamarca<sup>125</sup>, she answered with the same coldness and the same words that Abimael Guzmán used 20 years ago to answer the same question:

“We reaffirm what we said in the Interview of the Century given by Abimael Guzmán to “El Diario” in 1988 (in which he justifies the massacre so other communities learnt a lesson). A civil war occurred, in sum. And as Marxism teaches us, a war, a revolution cannot avoid going through a civil war, that is what happened in the countryside in Ayacucho, Apurimac and Huacavelica, a peasant war that no one can deny”<sup>126</sup>.

In a similar tone, when asked if she regrets the armed struggle, she answered:

“We made mistakes but the revolution was worth it because the Peruvian state was rubbish and that was the only way to end the inequalities. Our followers were around 70,000 people by the early 1990s which made it impossible for us to manage all the members who unleashed terror in Lima and in the main Andean regions with bombs, blackouts, selective murders of high level officials. They taught them to use guns before understanding the political ideology”<sup>127</sup>.

“The only way to take power was through the armed struggle. Violence was a necessity. Our targets were the powerful but I recognised that everything got out of control. It was the quota of war.”<sup>128</sup>

Born in the peasant community of Cusibamba, in the province of Cangallo, Ayacucho, Felipe<sup>129</sup> shows no sign of a bad conscience for his militancy in the PCP-SL and does not deny his sympathy with the process, “like every thinking citizen”. He considers himself a political prisoner because he “is not in prison for being a rapist,

<sup>125</sup> The killing of 69 peasants by Shining Path in and around the town of Lucanamarca on [April 3, 1983](#).

<sup>126</sup> “Nos reafirmamos en lo dicho al respecto en la entrevista del siglo que dio Abimael Guzmán a “El Diario” en 1988 (donde reivindica la massacre para que sirva de escarmiento a todas las demás comunidades campesinas). Se desarrolló en síntesis una Guerra Civil. Y como el marxismo nos enseña, una Guerra, una revolución, no puede evitar pasar por una potente Guerra Civil, que fue lo que hubo en el campo ayacuchano, apurimeño y huacavelicano, una Guerra campesina que nadie puede negar”. *Caretas*, May 3, 2007, p. 51.

<sup>127</sup> “Cometimos errores, pero valió la pena la revolución, porque el Estado peruano era un porquería y era la única manera de acabar con las diferencias. Nuestros seguidores fueron cerca de 70,000 personas a inicios de los años noventa; lo cual hizo imposible que pudiéramos manejar a todos los miembros que desataron el terror en Lima y los principales departamentos andinos con bombas, apagones, asesinatos selectivos a las más altas autoridades. Les enseñaron a usar armas antes de entender la ideología política-ideológica”. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>128</sup> “La única manera de llegar a Palacio era a través de la lucha armada. La violencia era una necesidad. Nuestros blancos eran los poderosos, pero reconozco que todo se descontroló. Fue una cuota de la Guerra”. *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>129</sup> CVR, Testimony 720022. Male, born in Ayacucho in 1956, merchant, member of the PCP-SL, imprisoned at the *Penal de Yanamilla* in Ayacucho.

murderer, stealing a chicken, or a drug dealer, but derived from the sociopolitical process the country experienced for twenty years; therefore, obviously the causes are political and social”.

## 5. Final remarks

The phenomenon of Sendero Luminoso has attracted a diverse group of specialists who have attempted to characterise the political organisation and explain its emergence and expansion over almost two decades. A commonplace in the interpretations offered by these specialists was that the PCP-SL emerged in the sierra, in the department of Ayacucho and that it was led by a group of provincial intellectuals rooted in the *Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga* whose chief was Abimael Guzmán. Where they differed was on the motivations of the PCP-SL for embarking on a war against the state and on the profile of its militants. The official discourse supported the idea that the PCP-SL was part of an international communist plot, seeing it as an exogenous phenomenon, a ‘cancer’ that had to be eradicated. Failing to understand the real causes behind the emergence of the PCP-SL, the governments in power initially conducted an annihilation offensive in line with the counterterrorist strategy recommended by the armed forces of the United States, which implied indiscriminate repression.

On the other hand, the academic community committed itself to a deeper understanding of the situation the country was experiencing. The early interpretations of the Senderista phenomenon saw the roots of political violence in the persistence of an exclusive and abusive colonial order. As this was a structural problem, the solution demanded a profound change of social structures. This position was harshly attacked as it was seen as justifying the cause of the PCP-SL.

The creation of the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* has made it possible to reach a consensus on the causes of the political violence and to collect valuable information that deepens our understanding of the PCP-SL. Based on the testimonies of the militants of the PCP-SL in prison and on the final report of the CVR, as well as other recent analyses, this paper has attempted to deepen our understanding about who the militants of the PCP-SL were, what their motivations for joining the party were and what mechanisms of indoctrination Sendero Luminoso

utilised to win supporters. Three main conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, the profile of the militant of the PCP-SL that emerges from the information collected by the CVR is a young catholic male with a good educational level, a student, a peasant or a merchant, predominantly Spanish-speaking and living in the city. However, this characterisation does not necessarily reflect the real profile of the militant of the PCP-SL, as there are indications that a large number of party members, in particular indigenous peasants, died or disappeared during the armed conflict. In addition, several studies show that women's presence and participation in the PCP-SL was much more relevant than is suggested by the data.

Second, the testimonies reveal that the ideological discourse of the PCP-SL that spoke out on behalf of the oppressed and defended social justice through revolutionary violence appealed in particular to young students from poor backgrounds who had suffered some form of exclusion and discrimination as a result of the unequal system. In the case of the indigenous population, mostly peasants, what appears to have initially attracted them towards the PCP-SL was its ability to restore order in their communities through punishment of thieves, alcoholics and corrupt people. The desire to avenge the abuse and indiscriminate repression of the government also became an important reason for joining the PCP-SL.

Finally, the PCP-SL utilised a number of mechanisms to gain supporters, depending on the conditions it encountered. The strong presence of political proselytism and the highly ideological environment within the universities made them the ideal places to begin indoctrination. The introduction of courses on Marxism in the General Studies curricula, as well as institutionalised practices defining an instrumental use of violence, played a central role in the dissemination and transmission of revolutionary ideas and aggressive attitudes of the PCP-SL. Out of conviction or because of their lack of opportunities, an important sector of students voluntarily joined the party and fought for its ideals. However, not every member of the PCP-SL was committed to its ideology and cause. In some cases, the PCP-SL used its power to manipulate and blackmail its dissidents by building clientelist relationships. When the opposition was too strong to counteract, the PCP-SL adopted violent mechanisms including threats, torture and killings. This explains why the PCP-SL was the main perpetrator in the armed conflict, responsible for 54% of the deaths.

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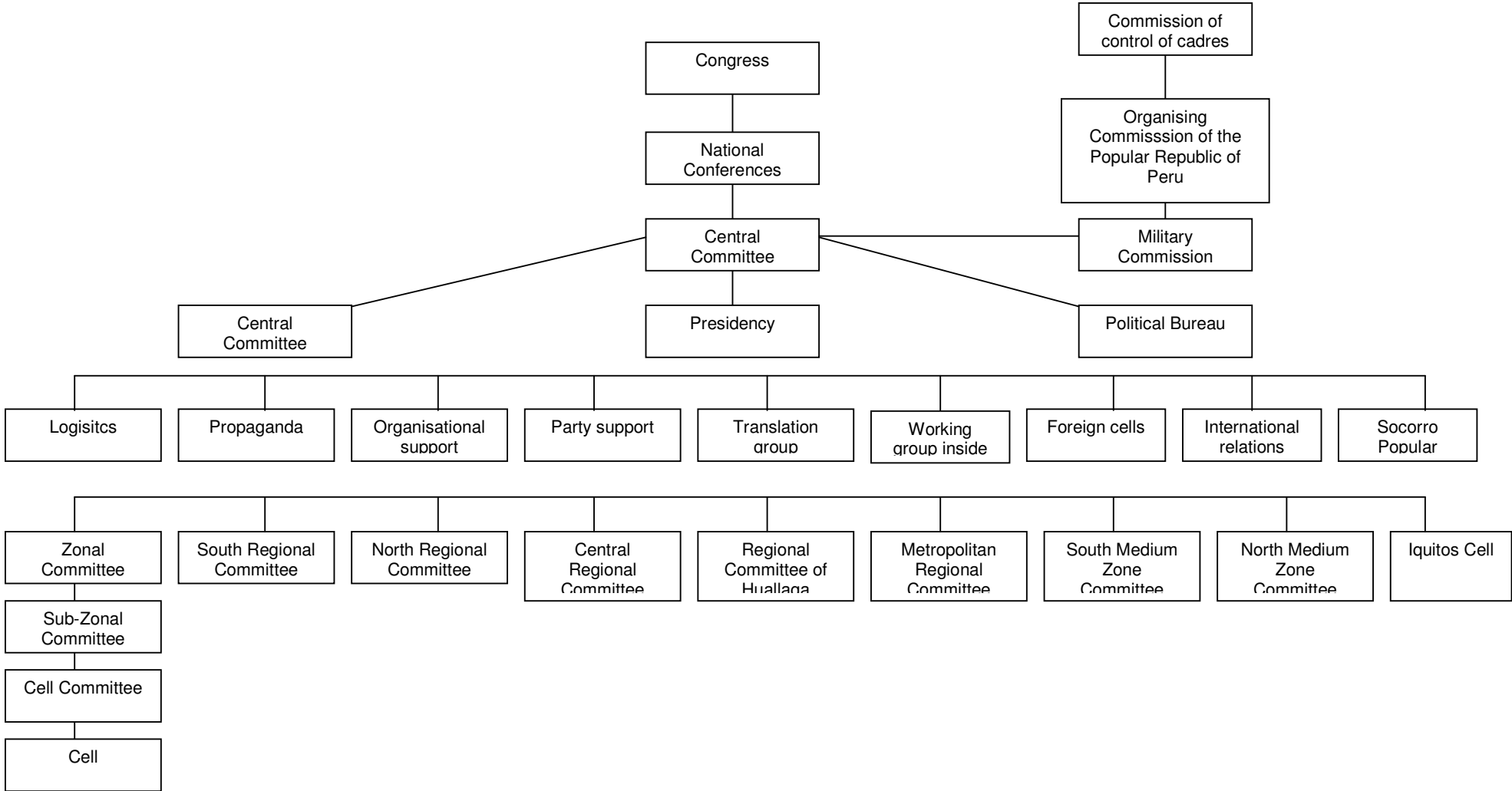
### Appendix 1: Characteristics of the militants of the PCP-SL in prisons

Characteristics	Total testimonies from prisons		Political Affiliation		Sample revised
	Cases	%	PCP Sendero Luminoso		
			Cases	%	Cases
<b>TOTAL</b>	1158	100.0	700	100.0	100.0
<b>GENDER</b>					
Total	1158	100.0	700	100.0	100.0
Female	192	16.6	128	18.3	50.0
Male	966	83.4	572	81.7	50.0
<b>CURRENT AGE</b>					
Total	1143	100.0	688	100.0	100.0
Less than 20 years					
	1	0.1	1	0.2	0.0
20 to 29	77	6.7	34	4.9	3.3
30 to 39	602	52.7	360	52.3	36.7
40 to 49	319	27.9	202	29.4	43.3
50 to 59	112	9.8	72	10.5	6.7
60 to 69	30	2.6	18	2.6	3.3
70 to +	2	0.2	1	0.2	0.0
<b>AGE AT DETENTION</b>					
Total	1081	100.0	655	100.0	100.0
Less than 20 years	89	8.2	46	7.0	26.7
20 to 29	597	55.2	360	55.0	56.7
30 to 39	273	25.3	169	25.8	6.7
40 to 49	97	9.0	63	9.6	0.0
50 to 59	24	2.2	16	2.4	3.3
60 to 69	1	0.1	1	0.2	0.0
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>					
Total	1050	100.0	632	100.0	100.0
None	30	2.9	12	1.9	10.0
Infant	6	0.6	3	0.5	3.3
Primary	213	20.3	131	20.7	13.3
Secondary	299	28.5	166	26.3	20.0
Superior	502	47.8	320	50.6	30.0
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>					
Total	1043	100.0	629	100.0	100.0
Married/Domestic Partner	516	49.5	323	51.4	30.0
Single	487	46.7	273	43.4	56.7
Separated/Divorced	33	3.2	27	4.3	0.0
Widow	7	0.7	6	1.0	0.0
<b>RELIGION</b>					
Total	891	100.0	524	100.0	100.0
Catholic	687	77.1	394	75.2	56.7
Evangelical	81	9.1	57	10.9	3.3
Other	44	4.9	21	4.0	0.0
None	79	8.9	52	9.9	16.7
<b>MOTHER TONGUE</b>					
Total	1060	100.0	645	100.0	100.0
Spanish	792	74.7	457	70.9	63.3

Quechua	252	23.8	174	27.0	43.3
Other native language	16	1.5	14	2.2	3.3
<b>OCUPATION</b>					
Total	1027	100.0	630	100.0	100.0
University and technical students					
	231	22.5	140	22.2	40.0
Peasants	214	20.8	124	19.7	16.7
Merchants and salesman	171	16.7	105	16.7	13.3
Authorities and local leaders	95	9.3	56	8.9	0.0
Independent workers	93	9.1	67	10.6	3.3
Professors	53	5.2	40	6.4	0.0
Employees	45	4.4	29	4.6	0.0
Other occupations	44	4.3	20	3.2	16.7
Workers	42	4.1	20	3.2	0.0
Professionals and intellectuals	15	1.5	13	2.1	0.0
House wives	15	1.5	10	1.6	3.3
Armed forces and police	9	0.9	6	1.0	0.0
<b>BIRTH PLACE</b>					
Total	1146	100.0	695	100.0	100.0
Apurimac	64	5.6	18	2.6	0.0
Ayacucho	23	2.0	76	10.9	50.0
Cusco	54	4.7	26	3.7	0.0
Huancavelica	40	3.5	21	3.0	0.0
Huanuco	31	2.7	52	7.5	3.3
Junin	34	3.0	31	4.5	6.7
Lima –Callao	101	8.8	215	30.9	30.0
Otros	370	32.3	205	29.5	6.7
Puno	8	0.7	31	4.5	0.0
San Martin	65	5.7	15	2.2	0.0
Ucayali	356	31.1	5	0.7	0.0
<b>AREA</b>					
Total	1146	100.0	695	100.0	
Urban	677	59.1	406	58.4	
Rural	469	40.9	289	41.6	

Source: Comisión de la Verdad y Rconciliación. Database of testimonies in prisons.  
Prepared by author.

**Appendix 2: Political structure of the PCP-SL**



Source: Jiménez, Benedicto. 2000. *Inicio, desarrollo y ocaso del terrorismo en el Perú*, Tomo I. Lima: Sanki, quoted in CVR (2003, Appendix 3). Prepared by author.