Sharp Dressed Men

Peru's Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement

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PREFACE

This report examines the rise and evolution of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), the nature of the threat it poses to political stability in Peru, and the strategic and organizational characteristics that distinguish MRTA's revolutionary program from that of its ideological competitor, the Shining Path. The study is founded on a data-based assessment of the insurgency in Peru and interviews conducted by the author with members of the Peruvian security and political establishment. It is one of a series of studies carried out as part of a larger project, “Andean Futures: A Comparative Political, Economic, and Security Assessment,” sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

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SUMMARY

Túpac Amaru (MRTA) began its campaign to overthrow the government of Peru on what appeared to be a promising note. Dissatisfaction with the prevailing order, represented by the government of Fernando Belaúnde, was clearly mounting among elements of the country's legal left. While the great majority of the left still hoped to find a parliamentary solution to Peru’s intense social and economic divisions, a growing minority appeared to be prepared to look for solutions wherever they could find them. Against this backdrop, MRTA moved to offer a middle alternative to what it argued were the restricted horizons of the prevailing order on the one hand and the highly radical political solution offered by the Sendero Luminoso (SL, or Shining Path) on the other. Its revolutionary program, on the face of it, struck a sympathetic chord, certainly in comparison to SL's ideological and programmatic extremism. Armed with this agenda and longstanding ties to the legal left, MRTA set out to broaden its base of support and ultimately turn it into a viable military instrument against the state. Between mid-1984 and 1987 it enjoyed some measure of success. Movement operations during this period were on the upswing. MRTA looked like it might become a prominent force in Peruvian politics, and many observers believed it might eventually overshadow Sendero as an instrument of revolutionary change. This was not to be. By the end of 1988 it was evident that MRTA was on a downward curve. This trend continued into 1989, through 1990, and into 1991. The available data indicate that the decline was not arrested in 1992. Although it is still able to command national headlines, it is clear that MRTA does not pose a viable challenge to the central government.

Túpac Amaru's position is quite likely to become more difficult as time goes on. As MRTA's fortunes waned, Sendero's position became increasingly secure. Against the predictions of many observers in the early and middle 1980s, by the end of 1990 the Shining Path had moved well beyond its original base areas in Ayacucho to either control or contest for control over a significant slice of rural Peru. This development, in turn, led to a deepening polarization in Peruvian society as growing elements of the population were forced to choose between accepting the consequences of a Sendero victory or backing the prevailing political order. MRTA's prospects were further restricted accordingly. Until the April 1992 coup, political polarization had not resulted in a split between the legal left and the standing order as the
movement had hoped, but between the Shining Path and everyone else. As the threat posed by Sendero became increasingly apparent, MRTA’s prospects for capturing a meaningful percentage of the traditional left declined. Any large-scale political shift by the legal left, under these circumstances, would risk playing into the hands of the Shining Path by further undermining the authority of the state without substantially improving MRTA’s larger revolutionary opportunities. The risk equation dictated that the legal left take a conservative course and continue to work within the system, regardless of its differences with the center. For MRTA, in this respect, the “political middle” proved to be not an opportunity but a trap. Far from seizing the political high ground, the movement found itself squeezed between the revolutionary momentum of the Shining Path and a political system that was circling the wagons.

The April 1992 coup gave MRTA an unexpected political boost. In one move, President Fujimori, in association with the military, re-drew the political landscape by cutting the legal left out of the standing order. In overturning the constitution and dissolving the congress, Fujimori effectively forced the legal left into the middle as well. It is now operating outside of the tightening circle of wagons looking in. While large elements of this diverse political group can be expected to reenter the system at some point in the future through nonviolent means, other elements will certainly have become radicalized by the coup and can be expected to attempt to return to power by force. Some subset of this group is likely to be absorbed into the Túpac Amaru. While this development will certainly improve the movement’s outlook in the short run, it will have no influence over the movement’s long-run prospects for becoming an important force in Peruvian politics. Stated in other terms, MRTA is likely to become more popular and possibly more active, but it is not likely to become any more effective as a threat to the standing regime than it has been to date. As detailed in this study, the movement will continue to suffer from the strategic and organizational limitations that have hampered it since 1984. These constraints can be expected to bound MRTA’s horizons, even if the April 1992 coup indirectly results in a marginal upswing in movement operations. Under these circumstances, any such increase in MRTA activities will play to the benefit of Sendero, which, even in the wake of Abimael Guzmán’s capture, is still the only force well organized enough to take advantage of a further breakdown of regime authority.

What went wrong? As the author argues, it is not a case of what went wrong; MRTA’s problem has been that things were never quite right. From the outset, the movement set down an inappropriate revolu-
tionary path. MRTA has not succeeded in posing a viable challenge to the government of Peru because it cannot succeed, given the environment it is operating in and the methods it has sought to employ. Building on the mythologized experiences of the July 26 Movement and the Cuban revolution, the group from the outset showed a strong deterministic bias in its views on the nature of the revolutionary process and the role of the revolutionary organization as an agent of radical change. Revolution, in its conception, is a spontaneous act. While the target regime was to be ultimately deposed in the wake of a protracted, gradually escalating guerrilla campaign, the movement’s base of mobilized support was to be self-generated. Revolutionary organization, in this scheme, was to play a limited role. MRTA’s potential strength, it was argued, lay with the mounting, unrequited pressure within Peruvian society for major social and political change. The movement had only to release, capture, and channel this revolutionary energy into a directed campaign against the incumbent regime to win. As a practical matter, this involved not organization but action. Organization, which in MRTA’s view is not an instrument of mobilization but a means of coordinating the activities of its constituencies once they are already on board, was something that would take care of itself with time.

Sendero, by contrast, has based its program on a quite different set of assumptions about the dynamics of the revolutionary process. These differences have been responsible for its comparative success. While the Shining Path, like MRTA, acknowledges that the underlying basis for revolutionary change rests on long-run historical forces over which the movement can have little short-run control, harnessing these forces to a revolutionary objective, in its view, is ultimately a problem of organization, not a problem of catalyzing a popular response. Organization, in this sense, has meant building a grass-roots, village-based alternative to the state. It follows that the movement’s chief measure of performance is provided not by the scope and intensity of its military actions, but by the scope, depth, and vitality of its organizational forms. The movement’s ability to pose a political and military challenge to the state, certainly in the face of a sustained response by the standing regime, is believed to be a by-product of its slowly developing institutional base. This is thought to be true of every stage in the revolutionary process: building a core party apparatus, mobilizing an initial base of popular support, extending this base throughout the countryside, and ultimately undermining and replacing the prevailing order. There is nothing inevitable, in this view, about revolutionary outcomes. Social revolutions need not begin, having begun they need not succeed, and having succeeded they need not
result in the social and political changes that prompted the revolution in the first place. If Sendero proves able to absorb and overcome the loss of Abimael Guzmán, it will be due in no small measure to the complexity and resiliency of its institutional base.

Abstracting from the Peruvian case, Túpac Amaru and the Shining Path can be considered, respectively, to be high-profile and low-profile revolutionary organizations. The latter, as the author argues, is an objectively more viable revolutionary approach than the former. For the high-profile organization, success will ultimately depend exclusively on the prior weakness of the state and the revolutionary readiness of society. The revolutionary organization itself is not an important variable. Its only real responsibility is to provide the spark that sets the revolution in motion and the conduit for channeling revolutionary sentiment. This is to be achieved through the presumed power of militant example. For the low-profile organization, by contrast, revolution is effectively considered an institutional contest. This contest is pursued by undermining the institutional architecture of the state and replacing it with one's own institutional alternative. In the terms used above, popular support is mobilized from the bottom up rather than the top down, through a staged process of organization building. Success, under this strategy, is much less sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the state and society. While state and society will obviously continue to place outer bounds on the expected success of any revolutionary challenge, regardless of its organizational complexion, within these bounds the low-profile organization can succeed where its high-profile competitor will fail. Unfortunately for Túpac Amaru, success in this schema is not a function of looking good, but of being good.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Jennifer Duncan of RAND for her careful and time-consuming work constructing the statistical database on political violence in Peru that was used in this and several previous studies on the Peruvian insurgency. As in the case of my previous work on Peru, this monograph could not have been written without the help of many observers within the Peruvian political and security establishment who were willing to share their perspectives on the present and likely future course of both the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement and the Shining Path. While not always in agreement, these individuals were a valuable source of both information and insights into the history, ideological complexion, and inner workings of MRTA and Sendero. Finally, I would like to thank Norris Cotton, Caryn Hollis, and George Tanham, each of whom read and commented on an early draft of this study. I would also like to thank Roger Benjamin and Michael Swaine for the many interesting hours we have spent discussing the institutional basis of social revolution.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the premise that organization matters in the success or failure of revolutionary enterprises. With few exceptions, the successful revolutionary takeover has not been the result of an "eruption" of the masses, but of the careful and time-consuming efforts of a revolutionary elite to build a countervailing institution to the state. Revolution, in short, is a deliberative act, involving a gradual process of undermining the authority structure of the state and replacing that structure with a revolutionary alternative. As a deliberative act, such an enterprise's success or failure will hinge in part on the way in which it is conducted and the vitality of the revolution's organizing agent. As I have argued elsewhere at greater length, this makes the examination of revolutionary process in general and revolutionary organization in particular important for the larger understanding of how revolutions succeed and fail.\(^1\) This view contrasts sharply with both much of the scholarly literature, which effectively reduces revolution to an automatic response to social dysfunction and the inability of the state to either address or contain societal demands, and the prevailing view within much of the policy community, which largely considers it to be a military encounter. While each contains elements of the truth, both perspectives ignore the central role played by revolutionary organization in the process of revolutionary change.

This report has two purposes. The first is to examine the origins, evolution, and revolutionary prospects of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Though MRTA was established in 1982 and has been operating openly since 1984, it has received little scholarly attention. Scholarly interest in the ongoing war in Peru has focused almost exclusively on MRTA's more violent competitor, the Sendero Luminoso (SL, or Shining Path). Despite the movement's claim to be the illegal arm of the country's large and influential legal left, the Túpac Amaru has received only passing comment. The second purpose is to examine the role of revolutionary organization in effecting revolutionary change. Here, MRTA will be used as a case in point to elucidate an issue of larger theoretical interest for the study of how and why revolutions get under way and ultimately succeed or fail. Organization, I will argue, is one of several key determinants of

success. While there is obviously more to revolution than effective organization, it is the necessary condition for effecting political change in the face of a functioning if unpopular apparatus of state influence and control. Organization cannot transform a stable societal-state relationship into a hotbed of revolutionary ferment, but it can make the difference in turning an unstable but otherwise controllable social base into an effective challenge to the prevailing order, surviving the opening engagements, and winning or losing once this challenge is under way.

Peru offers an unusually interesting opportunity to examine the relationship between organization and revolution. The country hosted two failed revolutionary enterprises in the mid-1960s, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) founded by Luis de la Puente Uceda, and Héctor Béjar Rivera’s National Liberation Army (ELN). Both groups commenced operations in early 1965, which de la Puente declared would become the “year of the guerrilla.” Within eight months of beginning the armed struggle Béjar had been captured and imprisoned and de la Puente had been killed, ending the revolution. Autopsies of these failures have determined that “the cause of death” was due to the complete absence of guerrilla planning and organization. Today we have the opportunity to examine two quite different guerrilla organizations operating side by side, in a common environment, for a common intermediate objective, the destruction of the standing regime. While MRTA has clearly proved to have considerably more staying power than its predecessors in the mid-1960s, it is also demonstrably less successful than the Shining Path, despite the latter’s evident extremism and purported lack of natural popular appeal. The reasons for its success, I will argue, have much to do with organization.

The present study was inspired by discussions I have had with members of the American and Peruvian policy, intelligence, and academic communities over the past several years concerning MRTA, Sendero, and the future course of the war. There is a persistent and influential body of opinion which argues that MRTA is a potential revolutionary

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3 This cannot be accounted for by the fact that Sendero, which commenced operations in May 1980, has been operating as an armed force four years longer than MRTA. Túpac Amaru has entered its ninth year of active operations. Its position at the nine-year mark is considerably weaker and more fragile, as we will see, than the Shining Path’s was at an equivalent point of time (1989). Nine shared years of experience, furthermore, some of it competing over the same turf, have provided us with a good opportunity to compare each group’s attributes.
"contender" in the struggle for political power in Peru. This view, I believe, has been the result of a flawed analytical framework for evaluating the likely effectiveness of revolutionary organizations. In some cases, perhaps, it is the result of no analytical framework at all. MRTA has impressed many analysts because it looks good in terms that many observers can readily understand, both in the United States and in Peru. Túpac Amaru, as we will see, has mastered the art of publicity. It is often on stage. When it is, it is invariably represented by the faces of earnest young men and women or Ché Guevara look-alikes adorned in natty uniforms, new web gear, and polished boots. Its leadership has "society" connections and longstanding ties to the country's major leftist parties, it boasts a range of foreign revolutionary ties, it is "high tech" by local standards, and elements of it have benefited from military training abroad. In the minds of many observers, these are the attributes of dangerous insurgents.

Túpac Amaru, I will argue, is a "high profile" organization. What you see is what you get. Since its inception, it has chosen to pursue short-term operational goals, usually designed to keep the group in the headlines, rather than look to the future and gradually build the grass roots organization necessary to pose a long-term institutional challenge to the standing political order. As a general rule, MRTA's military profile is not the by-product of the movement's investment in an expanding organizational presence, but an attempt to substitute for such presence with armed propaganda. The movement, in this respect, operates much more like a terrorist organization than a true insurgency, which must ultimately construct a countervailing institutional structure to the state if it is to go on to seize power. This characteristic, typical of movements influenced by the Cuban model of revolutionary change, stands in sharp contrast to the organizational strategy of the Shining Path. As I have argued elsewhere, the Shining Path, despite the calculated drama of many of its actions, is a "low profile" organization. It is founded on a quite different revolutionary tradition that acknowledges the key role played by organization in the process of countering and supplanting the state. This distinction has been and will continue to be a serious liability to Túpac Amaru's efforts to field an independent challenge to the standing regime and a disadvantage in its increasingly violent competition with Sendero.

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4See, for example, Gordon H. McCormick, From the Sierra to the Cities: The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path, RAND, R-4150-USDP, 1992, pp. 18–19.
The study will begin with an examination of MRTA's early development, some of the movement's relevant ideological and organizational features, and its stated program to seize power. Its meaning in practical terms will be examined in Section 3, in which I will provide a brief statistical picture of MRTA's armed actions since 1984. Where appropriate, the movement's operating profile will be compared and contrasted with that of the Shining Path. In the final section of this report I will provide an organizational comparison of the movement based on the framework established in Section 2 and the profile of the MRTA and Sendero presented in Sections 3 and 4. The conclusions will address the nature of the challenge MRTA poses to national stability in light of its organizational complexion, its institutional prospects, and the presence of a better organized competitor.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The data on terrorist actions used in this analysis are drawn from RAND's "Andean Political Violence Data Base." The data base was developed and is being extended to support RAND analysis on a range of projects related to the Andean area. It is derived, in part, from RAND's Chronology of International Terrorism and has been updated and expanded to provide a higher level of detail on the developing insurgency in Peru. These efforts have been supported by both RAND and a variety of RAND's project sponsors. The Peruvian data set is based on four primary sources: RAND's Chronology of International Terrorism, the Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo through its weekly and monthly publications Resumen Semanal and Informativo DESCO, Control Risk International, and the Peruvian national and provincial daily and weekly press. All of these sources base their statistics on open-source reporting. Each source has been reviewed, correlated, and cross-checked to provide an integrated statistical picture of the war in Peru down to the provincial level. It is our belief that the result provides a highly conservative picture of the conflict. There is a great deal more going on in Peru than open-source reporting can capture. This is certainly true of Sendero, which is operating beyond the view of the press in large parts of the country. With this in mind, the data employed in this study should be considered a cross sample of a more violent reality.
2. THE RISE OF THE TÚPAC AMARU

The genesis of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement can be traced to the bitterly waged reorganization of Peru's legal left that preceded the transition from military to civilian rule in 1980. The movement's primary roots extend back to 1976 and the founding of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR). From the outset, the PSR was composed of two related but distinct components: the party's open membership, which reflected a wide range of socialist ideals, and an inner core known simply as "the organization," which served as the clandestine, militant arm of the party's radical minority. Growing tensions between the moderate and radical factions of the PSR led to an open split in the party's ranks in July 1978. The breakaway faction, represented by Luis Varese, Vladimiro Guevara, and the members of "the organization," reorganized under the banner of the Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Party (PSR-ML). The creation of the PSR-ML, which served as the self-proclaimed "armed wing" of Peru's legal left, was the first step toward the subsequent establishment of the MRTA in June 1984. The stated objective of the newly established organization was armed agitation and the radicalization of the country's legal left.1

A second influence in MRTA's development can be traced to the organizational remnants of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR).2 In the wake of MIR's defeat at the hands of the armed forces in 1965, the movement had fractionated into a series of small, quasi-independent splinter groups, with little in common but their name and a shared antipathy for the prevailing political order. The first apparent effort to reunify the organization took place in 1978, with the formation of the Popular Democratic Unity (UDP) party. The objective of the UDP was to reorganize MIR and various other disparate elements of the left into a united front in Peruvian politics. Such efforts at achieving unity, however, proved short-lived. From the out-

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2MIR, itself, was formed from a breakaway group of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), designated APRA Rebelde (Rebel), which took issue with the party's move toward respectability in the 1950s. The break was led by Luis de la Puente Uceda and inspired by the Cuban revolution. A relative of APRA's founder, Victor Haya de la Torre, de la Puente abandoned his party affiliation in 1962 to form MIR. In 1965 MIR took up arms against the government and was crushed. De la Puente himself was killed in battle.
set, differences among the constituent organizations of the UDP were
rife. As in the case of the PSR, the most serious of these involved a
sharp dispute over the party’s declared intention to pursue its agenda
through the electoral process. Opposing this decision was MIR-“El
Militante” (MIR-EM), which broke with the UDP to serve as a rally-
ing point for those within the party who believed that electoral pol-
itics should be supported by armed action. MIR-EM and a series of
other MIR splinter groups that subsequently abandoned the UDP
would later reorganize under the banner of MRTA.

The final step in the movement’s genesis began in 1980 with the rise
of the United Left (IU). As the UDP had done, IU sought to provide
an umbrella organization under which the traditional left might come
together as a force for open political change. From the outset, the
PSR and UDP were participants in this effort. Their participation,
however, was predicated on the exclusion of their radical scions
within the PSR-ML and MIR-EM, which were denied any affiliation.
With IU holding down the left pole of the open political debate, each
group, once and for all, found itself beyond the boundary of legitimate
politics. By choice and now reinforced by circumstances, the PSR-ML
and MIR-EM found themselves occupying the political space between
the parliamentary left on the one hand and the ideological extreme
represented by Sendero on the other. This fact, and a shared
proclivity to armed action, brought the two organizations together
between 1981 and 1982 in a series of negotiations known as “the
convergence.” The result was the establishment of MRTA. The new
organization adopted the name “Túpac Amaru” in November 1983 and
continued to undergo a period of internal development and
consolidation into the first part of 1984. MRTA opened the revolu-
tionary struggle in June.3

IDEOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The movement’s first communiqué under the Túpac Amaru banner
was issued in June 1984 as a “manifesto” containing twelve “platform
planks” defining the movement, its principles, and its objectives.
According to this statement, MRTA considered itself to be continuing
down “the path chartered by Luis de la Puente Uceda and Guillermo
Loboto.”4 Its objective, following from the example set by de la

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3The movement’s inaugural action, which was not claimed until two years later,
was actually carried out on May 31, 1982, with an attack on a branch of the Banco de
4Ibid., p. 15.
Puente, MIR, and the PSR-ML, was to serve as the militant, if autonomous, arm of the parliamentary left. The manifesto called on the United Left, APRA, progressive elements within the church, and the Shining Path to join in a common armed struggle. The first step in this effort was to be a stepped-up campaign of armed agitation designed to focus popular attention on the need for change and give “radical definition” to those within the left who continued to hold out the hope that fundamental reforms might be realized without violence. Expressed in general terms, the reformation of Peruvian society, in MRTA’s collective view, could only be achieved through a process of dismantling Peru’s existing political and economic institutions and replacing them with a system based on the principles of “popular democracy,” “land reform,” a “socialist economy,” “administrative morality,” and ultimately a “new Peruvian identity.”

At the present time, MRTA has argued, the left is unable to achieve these goals because it is in the throes of a divisive internal struggle. This struggle, manifest in a sharp division between the social reformers of the legal left and the dogmatic militarists of the Shining Path, is alleged to have undermined the unity of purpose necessary to effect political change. The predominant force among the reformists is said to be the social democrats, who in their quest for “democratic conquests” have ignored the debilitating consequences of “bourgeois-imperialist domination.” At the other extreme of the political spectrum is said to be the ultraleft, which “finds itself captive of its own childishness and sectarianism.” The militarism of the latter is considered to be even more dangerous to the ultimate success of the revolution than the passivity of the former. “The ultraleftist proposal,” it is argued, “seeks to forcibly accelerate the social, political, and military polarization of society” and has resulted in “a premature confrontation with the enemy under a condition of political-military weakness.” MRTA has answered this struggle by making a virtue of necessity and controlling and attempting to expand the space between these two extremes. “In the face of the left’s crisis,” it has argued, “a space is widening, making room for an alternative revolutionary current” which can serve as an “axis” or rallying point for the final unification of the left. Strength and, ultimately, revolutionary change, it is hoped, will flow from unity.

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Examined more closely, it is clear that MRTA’s ideological base is a complex of quite different and often contradictory undercurrents. One recurring theme is found in the movement’s self-conscious appeal to Peruvian nationalism. This is expressed not in modern terms, but in a use of and reference to themes and symbols from indigenous Peruvian society. The Peruvian people, according to MRTA, “are heirs to a very ancient and glorious past.” This past is said to encompass more than four centuries of struggle and national resistance spanning the “heroic resistance of Manco Inca to the Spanish conquest,” the “glorious anticolonial struggle of Túpac Amaru in 1780,” Peru’s struggle for independence, “the Andean resistance in the war with Chile,” the “insurrections in Trujillo, Cajamarca, and Ayacucho in the 1930s,” the “sailors’ uprising” in 1948, the “land seizures of the 1950s and early 1960s,” the “MIR and ELN guerrilla movements of the mid-1960s,” and “the aggressive National Strikes” conducted throughout large parts of Peru in the late 1970s. These and similar struggles are a legacy, it is argued, which must be incorporated into the contemporary revolutionary struggle. “Whether successes or failures, victories or defeats,” each is “a living lesson which enriches the revolutionary task of today.” As an “authentic national social movement,” MRTA must “work to recover its historical consciousness and transform [Peru’s] combative past into a force for national liberation.”

A second theme that has shaped MRTA’s political orientation is that of populism. MRTA considers itself a popular mass movement. In its own words, despite its “proletarian nature” the group is made up not of a single class but of a cross section of the country’s dispossessed and those enlightened elements of society who identify with their cause. As one party document has stated, “Alongside the laborers, there is a place for the poor and the communal peasant, the semi-proletariat, casual and itinerant workers, office employees, revolutionary women intellectuals, artists of the people, committed Christians, patriotic policemen, soldiers and officers.” The revolution, in this respect, is considered to be the responsibility not of any particular group within society, but of all of those who share a common sense of justice, regardless of their social and class origins. This view is reflected in the movement’s program for social and political change, which speaks of building a “socialist democracy” characterized by “freedom, justice, dignity, and development”; and in its view of the nature of the revolutionary process, which is presented as a cooperative, mutually supportive endeavor between MRTA’s leadership group.

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and the masses. MRTA as a party, in this respect, is considered to be nothing more than the “most advanced and conscious sector” of society itself. It is said to be “closely tied” to the people and their image of the future.

These indigenous and populist undercurrents have been brought together under the rubric of a “native” Marxism. MRTA has borrowed selectively from Marxism-Leninism. While sharing much of its vocabulary and claiming to subscribe to many of its organizing principles, the movement has deviated significantly from the orthodox faith. This is particularly apparent in its approach to domestic society which, in the tradition of José Carlos Mariátegui, is influenced as much by features unique to Peru’s past as by the classic tenets of Marx or Lenin. The movement’s ideological interpreters come closer to the mark when they speak to the problem of “Yankee imperialism.” While the vehemence of their position on this issue is driven as much by anti-Yankee sentiments as by concern about the predatory impact of neo-imperialism on Peruvian society, their views are expressed in fairly standard terms. Peru’s economic relations with the West in general and the United States in particular are believed to have resulted in the distortion of the Peruvian economy and a resulting condition of economic and political dependency. Breaking this relationship, it is argued, is a key precondition for harnessing the productive potential of the Peruvian people. In this vein, MRTA’s opening communiqué declared that “the war which we begin today is a continuation of the open and clandestine war we Peruvians have waged against foreign and internal oppressors [for years].” The struggle “will not cease until the people, in arms, succeed in defeating the Yankee imperialist, its allies and its repressive forces.”

A final related theme is that of “militant internationalism.” MRTA, by its own admission, would like to “be recognized as one more detachment in the Great Proletariat Army struggling against class enemies.” The rebellion in Peru, in this respect, is argued to be part of a “continental” effort to throw off “the yoke of North American domination” and a Latin component of “the global struggle for a new economic order.” The movement, in its self-conception, is “part of an international revolutionary current which began with the first triumph of the Vietnamese Revolution and gradually increased in force with

10CC/MRTA, “El Partido,” p. 46. See also the discussion in CC/MRTA, “Línea de Mases,” El Camino de la Revolución Peruana, pp. 64–74.
11MRTA broadcast, Radio Imperial, Lima, June 1, 1984.
the subsequent triumphs of revolutionary struggles in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.\textsuperscript{12} This strong internationalist sentiment does not appear to have been shaken by perestroika, the disintegration of the Soviet state, and the crisis in international Marxism that has followed in their wake. While acknowledging these events, MRTA has argued that they have no bearing on the course of the revolution in Peru or the Third World at large, which it believes is rooted in a reality that is well explained by Marxist precepts. In a broadcast made in mid-1990, MRTA declared that "the imperialists of the right are mistaken when they state that what has happened in Eastern Europe constitutes the historical failure of socialism. This is not true. It represents the failure of a certain model of socialism." In Peru and Latin America, the MRTA spokesman went on to argue, "capitalism and bourgeois democracy have brought only hunger and poverty. To speak of change is to affirm revolution and socialism."\textsuperscript{13}

Túpac Amaru has cast its ideological net broadly. This has been a result, in part, of the movement's diverse ideological heritage. MRTA's early unification could only have been achieved if the various views and positions of its constituent elements were properly represented. It has also been due, however, to a conscious attempt to find a revolutionary alternative to the Shining Path and the parliamentary left. Success, in MRTA's calculation, can only be achieved through the gradual "strategic convergence" of the left. The movement's ideological foundation, it asserts, had to be broad enough to capture these elements as they gradually abandoned their respective positions and began to move toward those staked out by MRTA. For the "reformists," this will be achieved at such time as they reject the electoral process in favor of armed action. For "the ultraleft," i.e., Sendero and its sympathizers, this will be achieved when it abandons its "authoritarianism" and agrees "to work with the masses" rather than "use them as cannon fodder."\textsuperscript{14} The political dynamic that will eventually precipitate this convergence, according to MRTA, is a natural one, born of the growing frustrations associated with the parliamentary process on the one hand, and growing popular intolerance for the excesses of the Shining Path on the other. This dynamic, shaped and encouraged by MRTA, is to eventually result in a unified, broad-based revolutionary front capable of challenging and deposing the standing regime.

\textsuperscript{12}CC/MRTA, "El Partido," pp. 46–47.
\textsuperscript{13}MRTA broadcast, Radio Libertad, Lima, August 14, 1990.
\textsuperscript{14}CC/MRTA, "El Partido," p. 44.
PARTY, ARMY, AND FRONT

Túpac Amaru's early organizational forms reflected its origins. The weak party and support structures of the FSR-ML and the various MIR factions that had coalesced around the MRTA banner were simply "reassigned" to the collected leadership of the newly formed organization. MRTA's predecessor organizations were highly personalized and poorly institutionalized, and they enjoyed only a narrow and geographically limited support base. The latter is confirmed by the group's early operational profile, which was largely limited to Lima and other major urban centers along the coast, notably Trujillo, Chiclayo, and Chimbote. This was supplemented by a small presence in Arequipa city, Huancayo, and a political "outpost" in and around Tarapoto inherited from MIR-IV. The first apparent effort to extend the movement's scope of operations beyond these areas occurred within several months of its decision to commence the armed struggle, when a team of cadre were ordered to Cuzco to begin recruiting and to establish an armed presence. In a move reminiscent of de la Puente's failure in Cuzco nine years earlier, the core members of this team were arrested within two months of their arrival, ending MRTA's presence in Cuzco department for the next five years.\footnote{\textit{Oiga}, December 17, 1984, pp. 13–18.}

Túpac Amaru, during this period, operated as an organization in name only. During its first year of activity, at least, it continued to serve as an effective front group for various factions of the radical armed left, rather than a self-defined organizing body in its own right. The group's organizational superstructure and decisionmaking procedures evolved slowly. The nominal administrative apparatus that emerged out of this process has been discussed at some length in MRTA documentation. Designated authority within Túpac Amaru is now said to reside with an "Executive Committee," which is to serve as the movement's central decisionmaking body. Directly under the executive committee is the "General Command," which has the task of coordinating the movement's military and political activities at the national level. Command and control, according to MRTA documentation, is exercised through four subordinate regional committees: the Lima committee, covering movement actions in and around the capital; the northeastern committee, covering San Martín, Piura, La Libertad, and Cajamarca; the central committee, responsible for
Pasco and Junín; and the southern committee, which presides over MRTA activities in Arequipa and Cuzco.\textsuperscript{16}

Much like Sendero, the people of MRTA can be broken into three subgroups, referred to loosely as the party, the army, and the front. The character of these groups and the role they play within the larger organization, however, are quite distinct from those found within the Shining Path. This is particularly evident in the case of the party, which in turn has led to significant distinctions in the way that MRTA conceives of an army and a front. In contrast to Sendero, which from the outset viewed the creation of a cohesive and functioning “vanguard party” to be an essential precondition for building a revolutionary movement, MRTA has argued that a “Revolutionary Party” is “constructed in the midst of the revolutionary war itself.” In the Cuban tradition, it views the vanguard to be a product rather than a precondition of the revolutionary process, “created through action” and the “true and actual management of the revolutionary struggle,” rather than something that is separate from and precedes the mobilization of a mass base and the initiation of the armed struggle.\textsuperscript{17} Armed action thus precedes and ultimately leads to a party organization, in contrast to the orthodoxy of Sendero, where the party organization is responsible for initiating and controlling armed action.

Túpac Amaru, in this respect, does not consider itself to be a party in the strict Leninist sense of the term, but rather an “embryo in the creation of a Revolutionary Party” that will postdate the takeover. The validity of this approach, it claims, is demonstrated by the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions and the “advanced revolutionary processes” that it considers to be under way in Guatemala, Colombia, and, until recently, El Salvador. What is needed, in these cases as in the case of Peru, is not a “single revolutionary party” codified by a common set of ideological and behavioral precepts, but a “military command” that understands the role of power and force in the process of revolutionary change. The party, to the degree it is coming into being, is not an organization in its own right, but a loosely coupled collection of individuals who have been given “party” status because they have made “the revolution their life’s profession” and are capable “of placing the revolution’s interests above personal ones.”\textsuperscript{18} They are

\textsuperscript{16}Details of this organizational scheme can be found in CC/MRTA, “Reglamento,” El Camino de la Revolución Peruana, pp. 58–63. In the same publication see also “Estatutos,” pp. 49–53.

\textsuperscript{17}CC/MRTA, “El Partido,” pp. 42–44.

\textsuperscript{18}CC/MRTA, “El Partido,” pp. 43, 45.
"the movement's finest."19 The party group, in this respect, is not a
decisionmaking body, but primarily a body of decision implementors
who serve at the behest of the movement's leadership. While this
leadership, we can presume, is composed entirely of party members,
all party members are by no means leaders or even decisionmakers in
the movement. To the degree they are, it is not their party status but
their positions within the organization's national command structure
that confers authority.

As this discussion suggests, MRTA is a military organization that
functions as a political and social force. This again stands in contrast
to the Shining Path, which is first and foremost a political and social
organization that, in turn, is slowly building a guerrilla army.20
While MRTA's leadership group wears a "political hat" and serves as
the movement's political spokesman, these roles are secondary to the
business of preparing for and carrying out the armed struggle. Where
Sendero's defining instrument is the party, MRTA's is the
Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), said to be made up of the
Tupacmarist Popular Army (EPT), the Popular Militia, local self-de-
defense forces, and the movement's terrorist arm in the cities, the
"urban commandos." The key to the future, in MRTA's view, rests
with the development of the EPT, which is the organizational expres-
sion of the group's "strategic plans and objectives." The foundation
of the EPT is being laid by the movement's rural guerrilla columns,
which are presently operating in several areas of the country. These
columns, which are controlled at the regional level, are considered to
be the movement's most important organizational form. The number
of operative columns, it is said, will grow with time and will gradually
be brought together under the unified command of the EPT. The in-
tensity and scope of MRTA's national campaign and, hence, its mili-
tary position vis-à-vis the standing regime, will grow accordingly.21

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19 Apart from these qualities, the party member must "be a model of surrender,
sacrifice, honesty, and consistency. He must reject machismo and sexual discrimina-
tion with the same steadfastness with which he opposes the enemy. He must reject in-
dividualism and practice collectivism, reject the cult of personality and have genuine
respect for his leaders and chiefs. Following the heroic example of so many dear com-
rades who have given their lives for the revolution, or find themselves in the enemy's
prisons, (the party member) must make an effort to create a New Man, in the image of

20 This thesis is developed in Gordon H. McCormick, "Organizational Perspectives

21 The principal unit within the EPT, according to MRTA documents, is the
"command," which appears to correspond to the guerrilla column. Each command is, in
turn, broken out into five "companies," which are composed of three "squadrons," which
are organized from three "squads," which are composed of three "triads," "commandos,"
or three-man cells. The movement has also created a corresponding rank structure in
The most active components of the FAR are the movement's so-called urban commandos. While MRTA likes to think of itself as a rural guerrilla movement, most of its actions over the course of the past seven years have been carried out in town. As one might expect, the formal organizational structure associated with MRTA's (largely ideal) rural apparatus is not replicated in the city. While the "urban commando" is said to provide the building blocks for the creation of urban "squadrons" and "detachments," these seem to be largely nominal designations. The balance of MRTA actions in the cities are carried out by small teams or cells operating autonomously or in very loose coordination with one another under a common urban command. A special class of commando, which is said to constitute the movement's *fuerzas especial*, is "comprised of combatants possessing great ideological steadfastness, superior physical abilities, and a high level of training." These groups were created to operate "in the enemy's rear area in a decisive manner" against high-value targets. Although the majority of the MRTA actions that can be attributed to them have been conducted in Lima, such groups are supposed to be able to operate in "rural, suburban, and urban areas" with equal facility. These units appear to have been responsible for most of the movement's high-profile actions in the capital, resulting in some of its best press exposure.

Túpac Amaru's front organizations are referred to collectively as the United Anti-Imperialist Front (*Frente Unico Anti-Imperialista*). The nature of this front is broadly defined to include virtually any domestic or foreign group or organization that is supporting MRTA interests. Within Peru, these might include student groups, neighborhood associations, peasant associations, pro-MRTA elements within the trade union movement, and even individual sympathizers within the parliamentary left. The designated purpose of the movement's domestic front is to serve as an example and ultimately a catalyst for the radicalization of society. This is to be accomplished through staged protests, minor acts of sabotage, infiltrating and "turning" groups and associations currently tied to the legal left, propaganda campaigns, radical discussion groups, etc. These and similar actions which the triad is commanded by a lieutenant (*teniente*), the squad is led by a second lieutenant (*sabteniente*), the squadron (also referred to as a platoon) is commanded by a captain, and a company is led by a major. Like a great deal else about MRTA's organizational format, this breakdown represents an ideal rather than a real structure. By this standard, each fully manned "command" or guerrilla column would have an order of battle of four hundred and five men, not including "officers." In fact, on very few occasions have we ever seen an MRTA column operate with more than half that number. Even this is likely to require a great deal of prior planning to organize.

are intended to stimulate and channel popular grievances and encourage further, localized support for a revolutionary alternative. In fact, MRTA’s front “organizations” generally represent little more than loosely controlled and ideologically undefined collections of MRTA supporters and sympathizers. Very little effort has gone into ensuring that these groups serve as a set of integrated instruments of MRTA policy. In the absence of clear, operational linkages between the “front” and the “underground,” the value of the front concept has been notably reduced.\textsuperscript{23}

Túpac Amaru’s international front is more interesting but ultimately of less practical significance than its domestic counterpart. From the outset, MRTA has considered itself to be one player “in an international struggle . . . of oppressed peoples against imperialism.” This ideological bond, which the movement undoubtedly hoped could be translated into a stable source of foreign material assistance, has led to a number of links with revolutionary actors throughout Latin America, including Cuba, the Sandinista party, the April 19 Movement (M-19), Alfaro Lives Dammit (AVC), and the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR). Beyond Latin America it has established links with Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and is suspected of having had some contact with the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO). Apart from alarming a number of intelligence observers and bolstering its image as a potential contender, these ties have had little bearing on MRTA’s long-term effectiveness. Foreign support does not a revolution make. Although MRTA’s foreign links have indeed resulted in some limited material aid in the way of arms, ordnance, uniforms, and related equipment, limited training support, and the occasional “joint operation,” it has had a tactical rather than strategic impact on the group’s activities.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{THEORY OF VICTORY}

Túpac Amaru’s theory of victory shares elements of both the Cuban revolutionary model and the staged, protracted strategy of Sendero. Like the many Fidelista movements that came and went throughout Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, MRTA’s game plan in Peru has emphasized the natural spontaneity and political awareness of the country’s various revolutionary classes. While the state, we are

\textsuperscript{23}For a general discussion, see CC/MRTA, “Línea de Mases,” pp. 64–69.

\textsuperscript{24}The “internationalist” principles that underlie these linkages are articulated in CC/MRTA, “El Partido,” p. 47. See also “Estrategia,” El Camino de la Revolución Peruana, pp. 38–41.
told, will finally be overthrown at the end of a military struggle that pits an increasingly powerful guerrilla organization against an increasingly fragile and disorganized national army, the guerrillas' success will ultimately turn on the assistance they receive from their admirers. This assistance, for the most part, is expected to be freely given. Large segments of the Peruvian population, in this view, are waiting for revolutionary guidance to give focus and expression to their discontents. Such guidance is provided not through the step-by-step creation of a network of grass-roots organizations, but through action and the power of example. MRTA operates on the assumption that its support base—that is, the societal infrastructure required to underwrite its expansion—will grow naturally in the course of demonstrating its willingness and ability to resist the standing regime and the nobility of its cause. This process is referred to as "the natural fusion of arms with the masses."

MRTA acknowledges that the revolutionary process in Peru will be a lengthy one in which the guerrillas—having begun weak—end strong. Today, Túpac Amaru has claimed, "we are weak and the enemy is strong. But with a just line, it is possible to change our weakness into strength and the enemy's strength into weakness." This metamorphosis will begin during the revolution's "guerrilla phase," which represents the initial stage of the conflict, and be completed during a final "war of movement and position," which will see the organization finally depose the standing regime. The government, MRTA has argued, is attempting to disrupt this process by trying "to force [the movement] into a quick and short war." This is being accomplished by "concentrating superior force in a small area in order to achieve a decision." In the face of such a strategy, it is said, MRTA must be prepared to "disperse its forces," expand the theater of operations," and "prolong the conflict." While the cutting edge of the revolutionary process is represented by the Tupacamarist Popular Army, "armed struggle and political struggle" must be carefully integrated whenever it is practical to do so. The former "helps to mobilize the people for war, developing their conscience and organization," while the latter "expresses their participation in war." Such integration must be achieved through a carefully orchestrated propaganda effort in which the movement's actions are presented and explained to its potential support group. With time, it is argued, the war will assume its own violent dynamic as the state and its supporters "remove their masks and use increasingly repressive measures to control the masses."
This will fuel the conflict and ultimately result in an expansion of the movement’s popular following.25

MRTA’s conception of the early stages of the revolutionary process reads as if it were taken directly from the pages of Régis Debray.26 The guerrilla phase of the conflict, it is argued, will be characterized by hit-and-run actions against “the bourgeoisie regular army” with “popular irregulars” who, while few in number, will enjoy “high mobility,” “know the lay of the land,” have “the element of surprise,” and “can count on the population’s support.” The government, for its part, will be “forced to defend territory comprised of numerous potential targets.” The guerrillas, by contrast, “have nothing to defend,” a fact which “makes the enemy vulnerable and the guerrilla invincible.”27 In the course of this phase of the struggle the insurgents will be pursuing a specific set of political and military objectives. Politically, their objectives are to publicly demonstrate “the guerrilla’s indestructibility” and the enemy’s corresponding vulnerability, and to establish a rural support base. Militarily, their objectives are to begin the process of constructing the EPT; attrite, demoralize, and scatter the enemy’s forces; and begin the protracted process of “incorporating the masses into the war.” As guerrilla power and influence begins to wax, that of the regime will wane.28

MRTA does not appear to have spent a great deal of time talking about “the war of movement.” But based on their image of the EPT, the instrument that would be charged with prosecuting any such “war,” it appears that their view of this phase of the revolution looks similar to that envisaged by Sendero in its own final two stages of armed insurrection: the “expansion of the rural support base” and the “siege of the cities.” In theory, three related variables will determine when the time has come to begin the transition from the hit-and-run tactics of the guerrilla war to the quasi-conventional military campaign that MRTA believes will characterize the final period of the rebellion: the state of the Tupacamarist Popular Army, the state of the bourgeoisie national army, and the strength of MRTA’s rear support area. In the course of the guerrilla phase, MRTA envisions that the EPT will gradually grow stronger and the national army will grow correspondingly weaker until the two are more or less evenly matched.

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28 Ibid., pp. 55–56.
in the countryside. This process, it is believed, will result in the gradual consolidation of MRTA's rural “revolutionary base” which, in turn, will presumably provide the support structure required to initiate the war of movement. The period of transition is equivalent to Sendero’s point of “strategic equilibrium.” Beyond this point, the insurgents operate from a position of strength against an adversary that has lost the initiative.

The revolutionary process, in MRTA’s words, “is created by the masses and will evolve wherever they may be, in the countryside or the city.” For “historic, economic, social, and political-military reasons,” however, the “main stage” of the conflict is set in the countryside. There are three reasons for this. First, the highlands have long been the focal point of Peru’s history of political resistance. Armed with this precedent, the latter-day highland campesino should be prepared to rise up once again. Second, the social and economic conditions that have given rise to Peru’s tradition of rural rebellion are not believed to have changed fundamentally since the days of the conquest and the consolidation of Spanish rule. The present struggle, which is believed to be a continuation of this tradition, will logically be rooted in many of the same rural areas it was in the past. Finally, the administrative and security apparatus of the state are clearly much weaker in the countryside than they are in the cities, “facilitating the creation of revolutionary forces.” Time, in the countryside, is said to be the ally of the guerrilla force that enjoys the support of the masses. As long as common people “support and nourish” the revolution, the rural-based movement, it is argued, will be permitted to grow and develop beyond the horizon of control of the central government. From this position of relative security, the movement can act at its own initiative, rather than be forced to react to the counterrevolutionary initiatives of the state. ²⁹

Guerrilla operations in the city are designed to support the mass struggle, raise the “fighting spirit” of the people, and “lay the groundwork for the people’s insurrectional offensive.” The insurrection is said to represent “the main venue of revolutionary violence for the urban masses.” The primary function of MRTA actions in the city is to prepare the way for such an uprising at some point in the distant future. “The revolution and the [urban] insurrection,” in MRTA’s view, “are intertwined in a single process.” As in the Cuban model, MRTA believes that a mass urban uprising could well presage the endgame of the revolution. In a replay of the final days of the Batista

regime, government collapse in this scenario would follow in the wake of a final, uncontrollable outbreak of popular unrest, encouraged if not controlled by Túpac Amaru. Alternative scenarios, representing modifications of the Cuban approach, include a series of partial insurrections, each resulting in the progressive, incremental erosion of state influence and control, or a general insurrection that results in the physical dismemberment of the state and marks the shift from the guerrilla phase to a final war of movement. In either case, urban "agitation," "harassment," and "sabotage," leading to a widespread uprising of the urban dispossessed, is a significant variable in MRTA's vision of the revolutionary process.
3. MRTA: AN OPERATIONAL PROFILE

The differences in the underlying organizing philosophies of MRTA and the Shining Path are as great if not greater than those that divided those two major actors of the Mexican revolution, the "bandit-based" movement of Pancho Villa and the "agrarian-based" organization of Emiliano Zapata.¹ Like the former, Túpac Amaru is a movement that stands apart from its self-designated social base, in whose name it makes revolution. MRTA's stated purpose is to inspire those who admire its cause to join it in deposing the standing regime. It is a loosely coupled organization with a broad social following whose theory of victory rests on building a counter to the Peruvian army. The movement measures its own strength and that of its adversaries in conventional military terms and shows little talent for social organization. Sendero, by contrast, has sought to work within and "on" society to create an organizational base that is closely integrated with its constituency. SL's style, ideological position, and ultimately its political objectives are obviously quite different from those that once characterized the Morales agrarian movement, but like the forces of Zapata, its strength lies in the links it has forged with selected, allied elements of the peasantry, not in its capacity to field a guerrilla force per se. In contrast to MRTA, Sendero's theory of victory does not rest on building a counter to the Peruvian armed forces, but on establishing an institutional counter to the state. Power, it surmises, is a byproduct of this position.

These differences have been expressed in operational terms in a very different approach to the use of force. Although both groups have conducted their share of armed propaganda, the emphasis that each has placed on "stylized" versus "substantive" action is quite noteworthy. In line with its larger counterinstitutional agenda, Sendero has used force primarily as an instrument for gaining and consolidating control over targeted elements within society in targeted areas of the country. As a practical matter, this has involved the movement in efforts to systematically eliminate or neutralize the political infrastructure of the state, check the ability of the army to protect this infrastructure, and impose its own alternative administrative structure in its wake.² As suggested earlier, MRTA's primary operational objec-

²This characterizes Sendero's modus operandi in the countryside. In the cities, the character of its armed actions more closely resembles that of MRTA. Even here, how-
tive is to illustrate its own potency and the nobility of its cause and, in so doing, serve as a rallying point for society's dispossessed. In line with this objective, the movement has used force primarily for demonstrative effect, as an instrument of expression rather than as a means of carrying out concrete operational tasks.\textsuperscript{3}

**SOME GENERAL TRENDS**

Túpac Amaru opened its campaign against the government of Peru on June 1, 1984, in Lima by officially occupying "Radio Imperial" and broadcasting its first communiqué. This was followed eight days later by the occupation of "Radio Independencia," where the movement repeated its earlier declaration of purpose and its intention to overthrow the standing regime. Between that time and the beginning of 1991, MRTA is estimated to have carried out some 1772 armed actions throughout Peru. As illustrated in Figure 1, these actions can be broken out into two statistical periods. The first, between 1984 and 1987, is a period of expansion. MRTA operations during this period rose from an opening low of 26 incidents during its first six months of activity to a seven-year high of 438 armed actions three years later. Some 46 percent of all MRTA actions over the past seven years were carried out during this period of operations. The second period has been one of marginal decline. From the movement's operational high point in 1987, its annual operating profile declined 22 percent to 342 actions in 1988, appeared to stabilize at 344 registered actions in 1989, and declined again to 279 armed actions in 1990. The movement's 1990 total represents a 36 percent decline from the position it achieved in 1987. While the data for 1991–1992 are not yet complete enough to say whether this trend has continued, an analysis of our preliminary statistics suggests that the pattern has not been reversed.

\textsuperscript{3} Luis Varese put his finger on this distinction in 1983 when, noting that Sendero never attempts to explain, justify, or even take credit for its actions, he concluded that "the comrades of Sendero have a very strange conception of propaganda." Varese, of course, was judging the organization from his and MRTA's very different perspective of revolutionary action. From this perspective, the Shining Path's "silent revolution" does indeed appear to be strange. Sendero, for its part, has dismissed MRTA and its sympathizers as "objective allies of reaction." See Oiga, December 17, 1984, pp. 13–18.
MRTA has accounted for approximately 9 percent of the political violence in Peru since 1984. As illustrated in Figure 2, the movement's high point by this criterion was again achieved in 1987, when MRTA actions accounted for approximately 16 percent of the country's total armed incidents.\(^4\) Almost 40 percent of these actions, as we can see in Figure 3, were carried out as bombings. These were followed by armed assaults, which account for 32 percent of the movement's activities, and by armed occupations, which account for an additional 13 percent. The remaining 17 percent of its activities have been divided among a variety of other less "routine" activities, including kidnappings, assassinations, and the occasional engagement with one or more elements of the Peruvian security establishment. As illustrated in Figure 4, the movement's favored target has been domestic business, which has been the object of some 33 percent of its attacks. This has been followed almost evenly by attacks against social targets, which have accounted for 17 percent of the movement's seven-year total, against the army and the police, which constitute

\(^4\)My working definition of political violence, in this case, encompasses all armed actions by organized revolutionary actors on the left and all armed actions against the left by vigilante groups on the right. These figures, therefore, do not account for violent clashes between nonrevolutionary social elements such as organized labor, unless these activities can be tied directly to revolutionary agitation.
16 percent of the total, and against government and related political targets, which account for some 14 percent of its operating profile. The remaining 19 percent of the movement’s activities have been divided between armed actions against the press, the diplomatic community, the international business and banking community, and a handful of energy targets.

From the outset, Túpac Amaru set off down a very different path to armed revolutionary action than the Shining Path. In contrast to Sendero, MRTA has sought, with varying degrees of success, to run a clean campaign. This sentiment was expressed by Victor Polay in a recent interview with the Peruvian press, in which he noted that MRTA was a revolutionary organization that answers to a higher “moral authority” and would “prefer to avoid war.”5 Sendero, he went on to note, had become “a killing machine. They force themselves on the people by murdering their leaders, by destroying their organizations, [and] by stating that only they possess the truth.”

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5La República, May 26, 1991, pp. 14–15. MRTA communiqué, broadcast on Lima television (channel 5), April 18 and 19. During the communiqué, MRTA demanded that “all groups in the struggle strictly adhere to the Geneva treaty on internal warfare.” Similarly, during the interview reported in La República, Victor Polay recommended that the International Red Cross be permitted to enter Peru to monitor the war. The Fujimori government, he declared, was blocking the presence of the Red Cross because “they are concealing atrocities.”
Figure 3—MRTA: Tactics

Figure 4—MRTA: Targets
Such actions, in Polay's words, "are not those of true revolutionaries but of murderers," who have "made death their raison d'etre." The "dominant classes," for their part, "have responded to the revolutionary armed struggle with a brutal dirty war. Towns have been destroyed, thousands of innocent people have been murdered, tortured, or have disappeared through the enforcement of a suspicious law." MRTA, by contrast, is said to "defend humanism even in the midst of war." The movement "will never accept a peace attained in the cemeteries, a peace which is a product of submission and servitude." A lasting peace, in MRTA's view, will be the product of social justice.

This assessment is substantiated by an examination of the casualty count associated with MRTA actions over its first seven years. As illustrated in Table 1, there were only 257 deaths (not counting terrorists killed) attributed to MRTA attacks between mid-1984 and the end of 1990. This number was almost equally divided between civilians (139) and members of the police and military (118). This figure is remarkable. First, it represents only 2 percent of the civilians and security-force personnel killed since 1980, and only 3 percent of those killed since mid-1984. As a death rate it represents one person killed for every seven actions, a fact that confirms MRTA's stated reluctance to bring people under fire. This track record contrasts sharply with that of the Shining Path. To MRTA's 257 deaths, Sendero is credited with over 11,300 killings between 1980 and 1991. An estimated 1947 or 17 percent of these are security personnel, while over 9360 or 83 percent are civilians. These figures represent 98 percent of the people estimated to have been killed by insurgents since 1980, and 97 percent of those killed since 1984.

MRTA's program to seize the ethical high ground is critical to its self-image and the image it wishes to portray to its would-be supporters. By standing on the side of "justice" and "humanity," the movement is

<table>
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<th>Civilians</th>
<th>Security Forces</th>
<th>Terrorist</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>MRTA (SL)</td>
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<td>22 (618)</td>
<td>220 (2054)</td>
<td>323 (5063)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low jungle</td>
<td>7 (61)</td>
<td>16 (59)</td>
<td>27 (259)</td>
<td>50 (379)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>118 (1947)</td>
<td>389 (6838)</td>
<td>646 (18153)</td>
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able to substantiate its claim to be a popular organization and the only agreeable alternative to either the standing regime or the Shining Path. It has pursued this image by consciously adopting many of the qualities of Hobsbawn's "noble robber," who wins the admiration and loyalty of the underclasses by playing the role of "champion, the righter of wrongs, [and] the bringer of justice and social equity." A key element of this profile, as Hobsbawn observes, is "moderation in the use of violence." The noble robber takes from the rich, gives to the poor, and "doesn't kill too much." When he does, it is justified by circumstances, either as an act of self-defense or in the name of some higher societal code. As the self-appointed representative of society's disadvantaged, the noble robber is obliged to operate by the same ethical standard that binds his constituency. He will be judged accordingly. If he violates this moral imperative, he will be rejected and isolated from society. If he stands by his principles, it is said, he can expect to earn the respect and support of those whose interests he has set out to defend. If his resistance to the standing order is to be turned into revolution, this support will clearly prove to be critical.

This view, as we will discuss in greater detail shortly, serves as the conceptual basis of Túpac Amaru's approach to social mobilization. The movement's would-be supporters, it is believed, must be persuaded to climb on the revolutionary bandwagon. This is not likely to occur, MRTA has argued, unless the revolutionary organization that is orchestrating this move not only represents and advances their interests but also expresses their values. Excessive violence, and certainly any attempt to employ coercion as an instrument of social control, will ultimately prove to be detrimental. Just how much this sentiment is driven by conviction rather than tactical reasons is not entirely clear. As a practical matter, however, it does satisfy certain clear purposes. First, it makes a virtue of necessity. MRTA is far too weak institutionally to operate with a heavy hand and survive. Its societal base is quite underdeveloped, leaving it vulnerable to either exposure by or resistance from those it would attempt to influence by force. Second, MRTA's attitude toward the use of force has given it another, politically charged avenue for pressuring the legal left. As a willing if sometimes reluctant participant in the prevailing order, the parliamentary left can be and has been cast in the role of moral villain for not breaking with the regime on human-rights grounds. Finally, to the degree that it is able to contrast its own principles of action with those of both the state and the Shining Path, MRTA bolsters its own organizational legitimacy at the expense of its two prin-

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6 Hobsbawn, pp. 41–87.
principal adversaries, which it claims, not without reason, are destroying the social fabric of Peru.

This position has been operationalized by a targeting strategy that has consistently emphasized symbolic action. As suggested earlier, MRTA’s primary operational objective is to demonstrate its potency and, through so demonstrating, serve as a rallying point for frustrated elements of the parliamentary left. Like its philosophical predecessors in the Tupamaros and M-19, in pursuing this policy the movement is walking a fine line between impressing and alienating its chosen constituency. Selective violence discriminately and “justly” applied in the name of the common good can be an effective means of focusing attention on a group’s political agenda and stimulating popular support. By the same token, an organization’s public support will erode if its actions are perceived to be excessive, indiscriminate, or unjust. Since justice is in the eye of the beholder and since it is seldom easy to determine what one’s constituency will accept or reject, movements that follow such an operating philosophy tend to resort to symbolic action, making a practice of attacking “objects” rather than people.7 MRTA is no exception. Of the 1772 armed actions attributed to the movement since 1984, as many as 590 or 32 percent can be classified as stylized attacks against the symbols of the state, the capitalist economy, or international imperialism. Only 17 percent of its actions appear to have been designed to place individuals or groups at risk. Such attacks remain the exception rather than the rule.

Perhaps in an effort to compensate for its relative humanity, Túpac Amaru has shown a penchant for carrying out the spectacular act. This, again, stands in contrast with Sendero, which has spent much less time preparing for the occasional “big operation” and much more time building the institutional infrastructure required to wage a broad-based military campaign on a day-in and day-out basis. Stated

7Such self-imposed constraints tend to pose a dilemma over time as a movement’s targeted audience becomes accustomed to its style of operations. If the revolutionary group is to retain the limelight, it must either resort to ever more spectacular attacks, a response difficult to sustain indefinitely within its self-imposed ethical parameters, or expand its parameters and change its behavioral norms, becoming more brutal. It is not surprising that, faced with this dilemma, revolutionary organizations often cross the line of propriety and carry out actions that end up harming their carefully cultivated public image. This dilemma will also tend to be exacerbated by the guerrillas’ own success, which can be expected to elicit an ever stronger and more repressive reaction from the standing regime. In the face of such a response, pressure will build within the organization to begin to target government and security personnel directly, in retaliation for real or perceived excesses committed against the guerrillas and their allies. A negative dynamic is thereby set in motion that can result in a rapid degeneration in the tone of the war, and increased levels of violence.
in other terms, where the Shining Path has been driven by the desire to expand its area of operation and raise its "daily average," MRTA has been motivated by the notably more narrow goal of increasing its capacity to carry out the infrequent if often more difficult operation against the high-visibility/high-publicity target. These operations are typically marked by either the notoriety or individual significance of the objective, as in the case of MRTA's uncharacteristic assassination of Peru's former defense minister General Enrique Lopez Alujar, or the drama associated with the act itself, as in the case of the well-publicized escape of Victor Polay and 47 other MRTA prisoners from Canto Grande penitentiary. Such actions generate enormous press exposure, presenting the image of an organization that is able to operate with shock, decision, and surprise at times and places of its own choosing. In MRTA's view, these and similar actions are the essence of armed propaganda. Armed propaganda, in turn, is believed to be the essence of the revolutionary process.

This theme is continually being underwritten in MRTA propaganda, which from the outset showed a much more sophisticated understanding of public relations than that of its Shining Path competitors. This was due in part to the movement's quite different approach to revolution, which in the Fidelista tradition emphasizes style over substance, and in part to its comparatively mainstream political origins, which counseled that, all things being equal, there is a direct relationship between publicity and popular support. This and the symbolic, often spectacular, and consciously "selfless" quality of many MRTA actions have combined to give the organization considerable press appeal, a quality they seldom miss an opportunity to improve upon. In clear contrast to Sendero, MRTA feels the need to explain itself—its goals, its values, the reasons underlying its actions, and its organization. This is usually carried out through one of three mechanisms: its own media establishment, Voz Rebelde (Rebel Voice); forced broadcasts over radio and television; and the deft manipulation of the Peruvian press. These efforts have had an unquestionable payoff, enhancing the group's attractiveness to potential recruits and giving it an addi-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{8}}\text{The escape from Canto Grande, billed "The Great Escape" by the Peruvian press, was indeed an urban spectacular. It resulted in months of positive publicity. The escape occurred through a 250-meter tunnel that ran from the basement of a private house just beyond the prison walls into the prison compound. The tunnel had clearly taken many weeks to construct. An inspection following the breakout revealed air compressors, electric lights, explosives, and various types of engineering equipment. The escape was described as "daring and outrageous." The bold nature of the enterprise and the fact that it was carried out under the eyes of prison authorities led to speculation in the press that the prisoners had escaped with the complicity of elements of the then outgoing APRA leadership. Victor Polay was recaptured in Lima in June 1992.}\]
tional measure of political leverage against both the regime and the legal left. Most important, they have had the intended effect of giving the movement an image of strength, vitality, and direction that far exceeds its real revolutionary potential.

THE WAR IN THE CITY

MRTA opened its campaign against the government of Peru as an urban movement. With few exceptions, the skeletal organizations inherited from the PSR-ML and the MIR were urban-based. The movement's early operations were a product of this organizational inheritance. This is confirmed by the data, which show that over 65 percent of its armed actions between June 1984 and January 1985 were conducted in or around Peru's major urban centers. This profile set the tone for MRTA operations over the next two years. Between the beginning of 1985 and the end of 1986, MRTA operations in the cities rose at a faster rate than its operating profile nationwide. The movement's urban count jumped from an estimated 17 actions in 1984 to 95 operations in 1985 and 193 actions in 1986. These figures constituted 80 percent of the movement's total armed activities in 1985 and an impressive 86 percent of its total actions in 1986. The great majority of this activity was carried out in and around the capital. Between MRTA's opening operations in June 1984 and the end of 1986, some 55 percent of its total actions and 88 percent of its activities in the cities were carried out in Lima. The high point of this activity occurred in 1986, when MRTA conducted 152 attacks in the city for approximately 68 percent of its nationwide total.

The balance between urban and rural actions began to shift in 1987, which marked the beginning of a concerted attempt by MRTA to expand its rural front. Although the movement's city-based actions that year increased almost 43 percent to 276 incidents, they did not keep pace with the rapid increase in armed actions in the countryside. The result was that MRTA urban actions in 1987 constituted approximately 63 percent of the group's national total, down 23 points from the previous year. This trend has continued and has ultimately been accelerated by a significant drop in the scope of MRTA's urban presence in the intervening three years. As of the end of 1990, the urban trend witnessed prior to 1987 appears to have been reversed. The

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significant drop in the movement’s national profile between 1987 and the end of 1990 has occurred principally in the cities. Whereas MRTA conducted an estimated 276 urban actions in 1987, it is estimated to have carried out only 112 in 1990. These latter actions accounted for only 40 percent of the national total. As illustrated in Table 2, the biggest single drop occurred in the capital. Whereas Lima accounted for 162 actions in 1987, 37 percent of the movement’s national total, in 1990 it accounted for only 76 operations and 27 percent of the total. MRTA’s operating profile in Lima over this period declined at a faster rate than its general decline nationwide.\textsuperscript{10} While the capital remains MRTA’s single most important operating area, its relative importance has decreased with the movement’s general decline in the cities.

The majority of MRTA actions in the cities can be broken out into one of two different classes of operations: symbolic attacks, discussed above, which are carried out as a form of armed propaganda; and sustaining attacks, which are designed to provide the movement with the financial and material backing necessary to underwrite its continuing revolutionary activities. Again, by far the most common type of urban action is the symbolic attack. Within this category, MRTA’s single favorite target set consists of what it believes to be the domestic symbols of “monopoly capitalism” and the state, followed by the symbols of international imperialism and foreign domination. Among the former, MRTA has hit such targets as the National Oil and Mining Society, the Peruvian Construction Guild, Petro Peru, the Society of National Industries, most of the country’s major banking firms, the Joint Armed Forces Command, the presidential palace, and the ministries of education, agriculture, and the interior. Among the latter, the movement has targeted the local offices of the Sears Roebuck Company, IBM, Kodak, the U.S.-owned Southern Peru Copper Company, Diner’s Club, Occidental Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, Eastern Airlines, the Bank of London, the Nestles Company, the U.S. embassy, the U.S. Cultural Center, the offices of U.S. AID, and the residence of the U.S. ambassador. Two of its favorite targets have been Citibank, which has been attacked eight times, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, which has been struck on six occasions over the past

\textsuperscript{10}As in the case of Sendero, MRTA’s difficulties in the cities can be attributed in large measure to the inherent difficulties and dangers associated with operating in an urban environment. For a discussion, see McCormick, \textit{From the Sierra to the Cities}, pp. 55–73.
four years. In the latter case, MRTA evidently sought to squeeze maximum symbolic value out of its early attacks by not only bombing the interior of the chicken franchise but shooting up “the colonel” and dynamiting “the bucket.”

Table 2
Actions by Region: Department and Year

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<td>342</td>
<td>344</td>
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Related to these are actions carried out in solidarity with MRTA's distant allies in “the international front against imperialism.” As revealed by their choice of causes and targets, this “front” is defined broadly, to include elements as ideologically diverse as the Sandinistas and FMLN on the one hand and Libya and Iraq on the other. Over the past seven years, solidarity actions have been directed against a wide range of targets. One of the first such attacks occurred in late 1985 against the Colombian embassy and the Lima offices of Avianca, in response to M-19's bloody siege of the Supreme Court in Bogotá. Similarly, the car bombing of the U.S. ambassador’s residence in April 1986 was linked to the U.S. air strike on Libya; the June 1986 attack on the Honduran embassy was overtly tied to the decision to resume providing military assistance to the Honduras-based “contras”; the attack on the Salvadoran embassy in November 1989 was designed to demonstrate MRTA's support for the FMLN's ongoing fall offensive; and MRTA attacked the residence of the U.S. embassy guard in January 1990 and the Panamanian embassy a month later to protest the invasion of Panama and the overthrow of Manuel Noriega. Most recently, in January and February 1991, the movement conducted a series of attacks against U.S. diplomatic and business interests in Lima to protest the beginning of the Gulf War and to express its support for Saddam Hussein. In these cases and others, MRTA has sought to reinforce its larger, “internationalist” identity through attacks against foreign targets in Lima.

Túpac Amaru's wide-ranging symbolic attacks against Peru's domestic and foreign commercial communities often disguise an underlying material motive. Such attacks often actually fall into the second category of activity, designed to provide the movement with the financial support needed to carry on. These actions, while not politically motivated per se, are a necessary part of doing business. This is particularly true of an organization like MRTA, which, in view of its limited territorial claims, does not enjoy much of a “tax base.” During the movement’s formative period, just prior to and after 1984, this problem was managed in a characteristically haphazard manner. The movement appears to have simply taken what it needed when it needed it. In the intervening years, MRTA's efforts to solve the support problem have become more systematized. By far the largest portion of its operating funds now appears to be collected through the imposition of “war donations” and the sale of “revolutionary bonds.”

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11 MRTA's revolutionary bonds come as nicely printed certificates in varying denominations, sporting a likeness of Micaela Bastidas in the center, flanked by crossed
tional business community. Enterprises are forced to contribute a regular payment under threat. If one does not comply, one’s business is destroyed. This practice, of course, is common enough among revolutionary organizations the world over, which effectively bankroll their activities through politicized extortion. In Lima, however, it has become another “fixed cost” of commercial life. Many large and small businesses alike are believed to be making payments to MRTA, Sendero, or both groups simultaneously. MRTA, in particular, is believed to have made this a routine process and is known to commonly conduct enforcement attacks in and around Lima. While it is not always possible to distinguish these actions from those intended to express its opposition to Peru’s capitalist economy, their underlying objective is not symbolic but substantive. Threats, once made, must be carried out if the organization is to retain its credibility and continue to enjoy a positive cash flow.

As suggested at the beginning of this discussion, MRTA has suffered a number of urban setbacks in recent years. At the high point of its activities in 1987, the movement was represented in 10 of Peru’s 24 department capitals. Approximately 37 percent of its urban actions were carried out in Lima, some 36 percent were carried out in the cities of Arequipa, Cajamarca, Huancayo, Trujillo, and Chiclayo, and the remaining 27 percent were distributed among the towns of Huánuco, Ayacucho, Moyobamba, and Tacna. Its local presence in most of these cases was generally quite weak, but the movement was on the rise, and it could look forward to expanding and further differentiating its urban presence in the future. This promise has not been realized. While MRTA still retains a respectable presence in

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12 Not surprisingly, this has also given rise to many “copycat” extortion schemes by individuals or criminal gangs posing as guerrillas. Quoted “tax” figures in the past were running as high as $10,000 and $20,000 a crack. See Control Risk Information Services, Monthly Report, April 1989.

13 The same motive underlies most of MRTA’s known kidnappings. MRTA appears to have been involved in kidnappings from an early period in its campaign. While ransom kidnappings in Lima in particular were quite common throughout the mid-1980s, they tended to be attributed to the many organized kidnap gangs that preyed on the city’s economic elite. It was not until the capture and interrogation of Alberto Galvez, one of the movement’s leaders, that attention turned to the MRTA. The first open kidnap case attributed to the movement involved one Hector Jeri, a retired Air Force general and then a commercial executive. In return for his release, MRTA demanded, among other things, a $3 million ransom and the publication of a manifesto explaining its action and goals. Since then, the movement has been clearly linked to at least ten kidnappings. The actual number of abductions carried out by the movement, however, is much higher. MRTA itself confirmed this in February 1988, when it announced in a communiqué that it had been responsible for 102 kidnappings since 1984.
Lima, its urban position beyond the capital has either been contained, as in Huancayo, Trujillo, Chiclayo, and Moyobamba, or has effectively disappeared, which has been the case elsewhere. The only town of any size in which MRTA was operating in 1990 where it was not active in 1987 was Cerro de Pasco. This downturn was felt in the capital as well. While Lima in 1990 still accounted for some 68 percent of the movement’s urban activities and approximately 27 percent of its actions nationwide, the movement conducted 53 percent fewer operations in the capital that year than it did in 1987. By this measure, MRTA actions in Lima fell at a faster rate than the movement’s operational decline throughout Peru writ large.

This profile stands in sharp contrast with Sendero, whose urban position has grown substantially over the past several years. Three years into its campaign, in 1983, the Shining Path was represented in 21 department capitals. Although its presence in at least half of these cases was quite fragile, it proved to be laying the groundwork for bigger things to come. This is evident when we compare the group’s total urban actions in 1983 with those in 1990. In 1983, Sendero carried out 618 urban actions outside of Lima for approximately 33 percent of its national total. In 1990, this figure, while still accounting for 33 percent of the total, had risen to an estimated 1202 actions, a 94 percent increase in seven years. The same was true of Sendero actions in Lima, where the movement carried out an estimated 184 actions for 10 percent of its national count in 1983, and some 634 actions for approximately 17 percent of its nationwide total in 1990. In eight different department capitals—Huaraz, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Huánuco, Huancayo, Trujillo, Chiclayo, and Cerro de Pasco—Sendero carried out more armed actions in 1990 than MRTA’s total urban count beyond Lima. In Huancayo alone, Sendero in 1990 is estimated to have conducted more than 400 separate actions, a figure more than twice as large as MRTA’s urban total, including Lima. Collectively, the Shining Path managed to conduct almost ten times as many urban attacks in 1990 as Túpac Amaru.

MRTA’s profile in the cities is unlikely to improve dramatically in the foreseeable future. Nor is it likely to significantly decline. While it is very difficult to build a broad-based and secure revolutionary organization in the city, it is a relatively simple task to maintain a small network of urban militants who, if active, can generate a political impression that is considerably greater than their numbers warrant. This task will be comparatively easy in Lima in particular, where the movement has succeeded in building a functioning underground and enjoys a real if still limited base of support. Even in Lima, however, expanding this core base will prove difficult. The problem MRTA
confronts in Lima as elsewhere is the same one it has faced in the cities over the past seven years, the need to "capture" a targeted constituency that has already been brought into the mainstream of Peruvian political life through its association with the legal left. Like Sendero, MRTA has been faced with the problem of not only "winning over" a political support base, but "winning it away" from a set of institutions that tie its members to the very system the revolutionaries are working to overthrow. This has not been easy for the Shining Path. But it has proved to be even more difficult for MRTA, despite its urban origins, its links to the traditional left, its comparatively moderate message, and its continuing efforts to present itself as the heroic representative of the urban underclass.

THE RURAL INSURGENCY

MRTA’s rural campaign did not begin in earnest until late 1987. The opening act in this campaign was the well-publicized capture of the town of Juanjui (population 12,000) in central San Martín department on November 6. This operation, carried out before the cameras of scores of reporters who had been given advance billing of the assault, was a testament to both MRTA’s well-tuned sense of publicity and the government’s poor ability to deal with an escalating rural insurgency. In what was its first large-scale rural action, a column of some 80 MRTA insurgents, sporting freshly starched uniforms and armed with M-16s, marched into town, seized the local Civil Guard, Republican Guard, and Peruvian Investigative Police quarters, and carried out a day-long short course on the objectives of the revolution before the assembled village. At the end of the day, the column moved out and headed down the road to the small town of San José de Sisa, with reporters and cameramen in tow. Leaving the next day in commandeered vehicles, the guerrillas moved through the villages of Salado and Shatoja, ending up in the town of San Martín de Alao on September 8, where they were reported to have organized a local sports festival and lectured on the movement’s goals. As one account put it, “No one was in pursuit except newsmen,” who had been briefed on the column’s intended evacuation route. This continued for several more days as the column moved north along the Sisa River.

14McCormick, From the Sierra to the Cities, pp. 54–60.
15The uniforms used in this operation were allegedly provided by the Sandinistas. The rifles came from stocks that were traced to Vietnam and possibly provided through Nicaragua.
through San Martín department. On November 12, six days after the attack, MRTA and the press bid farewell on the Amazonas border.

The Juanjui operation proved to be a major publicity coup, providing the movement with unprecedented attention from the press, the public, and the Peruvian government. Film footage of the incident, including a staged trial of town officials and three captured policemen, was shown two nights later in Lima on the evening news. The film also included an interview with the operation's leader, Victor Polay, who stated that the assault was "a declaration of all-out war" against the standing regime and would be followed by a series of similar actions in the future.\(^{17}\) The government, for its part, was humiliated. Despite the advance publicity, the military had not received word of the impending attack. Once the attack was on, furthermore, it proved incapable of coming to the aid of the town's defenders. It was not until November 7, some 30 hours after the assault, that the first reinforcements arrived from Tarapoto, 62 miles away. Even then, no attempt was made to follow the column and its news train once Juanjui itself was rescured, despite foreknowledge of its destination. Under pressure to respond forcefully, the government declared San Martín and the remaining open provinces of Huánuco to be under emergency rule on November 10.

As Polay predicted, Juanjui marked a clear attempt by MRTA to move beyond the cities and expand its presence in the countryside. Prior to late 1987, the movement could be described as an urban organization that engaged in periodic rural forays. While the group could claim a rural position, it could not boast a true rural presence anywhere. By 1988 this was beginning to change, as MRTA began to make a conscious effort to establish a rural revolutionary base, first in San Martín and later in La Libertad, Huánuco, Junín, Ancash, Pasco, and Ucayali. The course of this campaign is illustrated in Figure 5 and Figure 6, which chart MRTA actions by region and the mix of MRTA's urban and rural operations from mid-1984 until the end of 1990. Taken as a seven-year average, rural actions have constituted approximately 38 percent of the movement's total armed operations. But only some 28 percent of group actions were carried out in the countryside before November 1987. As an annual percentage, even this number was on the decline, from a high of 34 percent in 1984 to a low of only 14 percent in 1986. This trend was reversed in

\(^{17}\)Polay also admitted during this interview that MRTA had sent a special squad to Colombia to be trained for this operation by M-19.
Figure 5—MRTA: Actions by Region and Year

Figure 6—MRTA: Urban vs. Rural Actions over Time
1987, when MRTA is estimated to have conducted 162 rural actions throughout Peru for 37 percent of its national total. While the movement's rural count declined slightly to 140 actions in 1988 with the general decline in MRTA activity nationwide, these constituted 41 percent of its annual total. This decline stabilized in 1989 with 137 rural actions for 40 percent of the national count, and rose again in 1990, when 60 percent of the movement's operations, 167 actions, were conducted in the countryside.

As these figures indicate, MRTA appears to have held the line in the countryside, even as its general posture nationwide has slowly declined. While this, at first glance, might appear to be a notable accomplishment, it disguises the fragmented and ultimately fragile nature of MRTA's rural position. One measure of this position is provided in Table 3, which illustrates the dispersion and intensity of MRTA actions over the past seven years. Although political violence in Peru is typically discussed at the department level, it is important to bring a higher level of detail to bear and examine guerrilla actions at the province level if we are to build a working picture of the war. This is certainly true in the case of MRTA, which is revealed to be highly concentrated in a very small number of provinces throughout the country. As illustrated, while MRTA at one time or another has operated in 66 of Peru's 183 provinces, an estimated 74 percent of the movement's total armed actions have been carried out in only 11 provinces. Approximately 54 percent of this total, furthermore, was carried out in and around the capital, defined by Lima's province borders. The high point in the scope of MRTA activity occurred in 1988, when the data show it was operating in 38 provinces in 15 of the country's 24 departments. This declined to 35 provinces in 1989 and only 18 provinces in 1990, a drop that corresponded to the general decline in the movement's activities. Equally significant is the fact that while MRTA has been able to operate in 66 (36 percent) of Peru's provinces since 1984, it has managed to maintain a continuing presence in only five of them since 1987—Lima, Huancayo, San Martin, Chiclayo, and Trujillo. All but San Martin province in San Martin department are urban operating zones, and three of the five—San Martin, Lima, and Huancayo—are areas of original movement activity. As an organization, Túpac Amaru has clearly not come very far since mid-1984. Despite the periodic acclaim it has received for the occasional drama of its activities, what emerges from this assessment is a picture of an organization that is able to operate in strength in only a few places at a time, and fewer places yet for any extended period of time.
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<td>15 (214)</td>
<td>76 (266)</td>
<td>152 (379)</td>
<td>162 (246)</td>
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<td>118 (304)</td>
<td>76 (634)</td>
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<td>6 (89)</td>
<td>23 (98)</td>
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<td>29 (174)</td>
<td>15 (330)</td>
<td>12 (417)</td>
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<td>39 (33)</td>
<td>14 (18)</td>
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<td>16 (61)</td>
<td>10 (13)</td>
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<td>0 (5)</td>
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<td>36 (80)</td>
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<td>3 (29)</td>
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<td>28 (97)</td>
<td>38 (106)</td>
<td>35 (121)</td>
<td>18 (106)</td>
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*Represents the total number of provinces MRTA and the Shining Path have operated in for the period 1984–1990.
MRTA's prowess as a revolutionary actor is called into question further when these criteria are used to compare the group to Sendero. Using the data presented in Table 3, we see that the Shining Path has operated in 168 of the country's 183 provinces since 1980, an area that represents approximately 87 percent of Peru's national territory. As of 1990, the movement was represented in 106 provinces, down from the ten-year high of 121 registered at the time of the municipal elections in November 1989. The current figure represents most of the country's strategically significant regions, including all but eight of Peru's highland provinces. Equally interesting is a comparison of Sendero activity levels in MRTA's eleven operating theaters. In every case but one, Huallaga province in San Martín department, Sendero has registered a higher level of armed action since 1984. Taken collectively, the difference in each group's operating profile in these selected provinces is dramatic. Whereas MRTA registered 1313 actions between 1984 and the end of 1990 for 74 percent of its seven-year total, Sendero carried out 5345 actions for only 32 percent of its estimated count over the same period. By this criterion, Sendero is more than four times as active as MRTA in the latter's area of greatest strength, even though these areas collectively account for less than a third of the Shining Path's total number of armed actions since 1984. Even in Lima, which has accounted for 40 percent of MRTA actions over the past seven years, Sendero's operating profile is more than three times as high, yet accounts for only 13 percent of its seven-year total.

In short, although MRTA set out four years ago to establish a secure presence in the countryside, the single region of the country in which it has managed to do so is in northern San Martín department. MRTA is able to maintain a variable position in several other regions of rural Peru, but there is no indication that it has managed to lay down roots among rural populations outside of the San Martín area. The underlying reason for this failure, which I will discuss shortly, lies in the movement's organizing philosophy. The proximate cause, however, lies with the Shining Path, which has gone after MRTA with the same determination that it has shown in its work to undermine the Peruvian state. While the confrontation between MRTA and Sendero has been played out in the cities as well as the countryside, notably in Huancayo and Lima, it has had the greatest impact out of town, where MRTA has been consistently displaced from positions that once appeared to be secure. The first confrontations between the two movements occurred in Huánuco department and the upper Huallaga river valley (UHV) in mid-1987. Túpac Amaru was displaced out of the UHV into the lower valley north of Campanilla by
the fall of that year. Since this time, similar actions have occurred in Cajamarca, La Libertad, and northern Ancash, once major operating areas, where MRTA’s rural position appears to have been effectively eliminated; in the vicinity of the jungle city of Pucallpa in Ucayali department, where the movement’s once-strong position in 1989 has been replaced by that of the Shining Path; and most recently in the strategic Mantaro river valley of western Junín department, where Sendero has come to overshadow MRTA and emerge as the principal institutional alternative to the state.

Similar problems have been faced in eastern Pasco department in the Villa Rica, Oxapampa, and Puerto Bermudez regions, where MRTA sought to establish a rural presence in 1989 with its displacement from Ucayali. The problem here has not been the Shining Path, however, but the native Ashaninka. Friction between MRTA and the Ashaninka began to build almost immediately in the aftermath of the former’s first moves into the area in mid-year. Events came to a head in December when the movement kidnapped Alejandro Calderon Espinoza, the chief and spiritual leader of the 43 tribes of the Ashaninka Campas Federation. The kidnapping, which was carried out in an attempt to bring the Indian population under MRTA control, had quite different consequences than its authors had intended. The abduction led to a series of Indian-MRTA confrontations, which saw the Ashaninka going after the guerrillas with bows and arrows, blowpipes, and curare-dipped darts. These events escalated into early January 1990, when MRTA finally murdered Calderon, resulting in an Ashaninka declaration of war against Túpac Amaru, the Shining Path, and the local narcotics trade. Seven MRTA prisoners were immediately executed, and some 2000 Indians moved into the countryside to track down and destroy the insurgents. These events have been fatal for MRTA’s hopes to establish a rural base of operations in eastern Pasco department and eventually in eastern Junín. Where Sendero has managed to either control, eliminate, or disperse Ashaninka populations in its own areas of operation, thereby extending its political zone, MRTA has effectively been defeated and displaced.

As MRTA has been displaced from most of its major rural operating areas over the past two to three years, it has managed to develop very little else to take their place. The only other departments where the movement is known to have carried out even a handful of rural ac-

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tions over the past year are Piura, Lambayeque, and Arequipa. Its military and political position in these areas, however, is insignificant. MRTA rural actions in these departments in 1990 accounted for no more than 3 percent of its annual operations in the countryside and only 2 percent of its national total. If the movement's residual rural actions in Junín, Pasco, and Huánuco departments are added to this total, the resulting figure still only accounts for approximately 13 percent of MRTA's rural count and less than 8 percent of its combined rural and urban activities throughout the country writ large. In short, although MRTA set out in 1987 to establish a secure revolutionary base in the countryside as a prelude to returning to the city and overthrowing the central government, the single region of the country where it has managed to do so is in San Martín. Even here, its position is arguably a precarious one. One reason for its relative success in the area has been the army's preoccupation with Sendero. Operating as they do at the end of a tenuous supply line from Lima, Peruvian security forces in the greater Huallaga river valley have been pushed beyond the limit of their capacity to contain the Shining Path. They have had little time for Túpac Amaru. Should this change, MRTA's position in the area would likely become increasingly tenuous. To complicate its local future still further, Sendero has once again begun pushing north from its positions in the upper valley into and past the area of Juanjui. This movement has led to a series of recent armed confrontations with MRTA, which again has been forced to abandon once apparently secure positions. Should this move continue, the army, which is headquartered in Tarapoto between MRTA's base areas to the north and Sendero to the south, could find itself in the ironic position of effectively defending the movement from SL efforts to extend and consolidate its control over the valley.

Even if MRTA succeeds in maintaining and eventually strengthening its presence in northern San Martín, it is a long way from Lima. This is true not only geographically, but politically and strategically. Indeed, the movement has managed to find a relatively secure hideaway in northern San Martín largely because it is of little interest to others. The region does not enjoy the political significance of the neighboring departments of Cajamarca and La Libertad, the large population and narcotics-related financial base of the upper Huallaga river valley, or the strategic significance of the central highlands and the areas immediately surrounding Lima. It is isolated and insulated from events elsewhere in Peru and can be expected to play little role in the country's future, with or without a guerrilla presence. If MRTA is ever to realize its goal of building a rural springboard from which to launch a "war of movement" against the prevailing order, it will have find somewhere else to do so. The problem it will confront,
of course, is where. Even if the movement were able to overcome its own organizational limitations and adopt, at this late date, a more effective approach to social mobilization, there are few likely places left. The strategically significant areas of rural Peru have by now been largely divided up between Sendero and the army. Neither of those forces, at this point, can be expected to grant MRTA the incubation period it would need to create a secure social movement in their zones of political control.
4. ORGANIZATION AND REVOLUTION

As the previous discussion suggests, MRTA is not the potential revolutionary contender that its early admirers would have us believe. Its program, in large measure, was based on the premise that it would eventually be able to capture large elements of Peruvian society that were affiliated with the legal left, both within and out of the cities. This has not occurred on anything like the scale the movement expected. It has certainly not occurred on the scale that would be necessary for MRTA to pose a significant political challenge to the standing regime. These limitations are given further definition when the movement’s track record is compared to that of the Shining Path. As noted in the opening pages of this study, MRTA and Sendero are, for all intents and purposes, competing for the same political constituencies in the same areas of rural and urban Peru. After nine years of common activity it is evident that one organization has been successful and the other has not. While Sendero is still a long way from the presidential palace, it is certainly much closer to this objective than Túpac Amaru. At this writing, furthermore, it is still an organization on the move, despite the capture of Abimael Guzmán.¹ Its progress has not been rapid, but it has been sure, even in the face of increasing efforts to suppress it.² Túpac Amaru, by contrast, is a group whose best years clearly lie behind it. While it is unlikely to disappear from the political scene altogether, it is equally unlikely to ever regain the relative prominence it enjoyed in 1987.

How can these differences be accounted for? As suggested at the outset, they can be explained by each movement’s very different approach to the role of revolutionary organization in promoting, shaping, and directing a peasant-based rebellion. A successful revolution, in the end, will naturally turn on the condition of both society and the state, all things being equal, but it will also turn on the organizing philosophy of the revolutionary challenger. This principle is apparent in Peru, where both Sendero and MRTA opened the armed struggle facing equivalent contextual opportunities and constraints. The ob-

²See McCormick, The Shining Path and the Future of Peru.
jective environment within which and against which each group has been operating over the past seven years has been the same. This fact allows us to effectively factor out the state and society as working variables in any comparative evaluation of the two movements. While they will obviously play a critical role in shaping the real outcome of the revolution, they are not of central importance in explaining the relative success of the Shining Path or MRTA's relative failure. This must be attributed to their respective approach to revolutionary organization, which is to say their approach to "making" revolution.

STRATEGY VERSUS TRADITION

It is a thesis of this study that all revolutionary movements must be able to satisfy three fundamental tasks within society or some significant element of society if they are to pose a challenge to the state. We can define these as (1) penetration, which refers to a movement's ability to "get inside" targeted social groupings as a prelude to "turning" them to the service of the organization's various political objectives, (2) transformation, in which the organization first consolidates its position of dominance within the targeted group, neutralizes any potential internal and external challenges to this position, and then redirects some portion of its resource base to the service of the revolution, and (3) application, in which these resources are used to underwrite the further development of the revolutionary organization, further undermine the organization of the state, and extend the movement's zone of control. Collectively, these tasks constitute the process of social mobilization, which begins with the revolutionary

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3Neither can this be attributed to the fact that Sendero began its armed campaign four years before MRTA. As suggested earlier, the success differential of Sendero and MRTA looks almost as great if we compare SL actions between 1980 and 1987 with MRTA's initial seven-year profile between 1984 and 1991. While one might also argue that MRTA faced an "alerted" security establishment by the time it opened its own campaign, thereby beginning the armed struggle from a position of disadvantage, the character of the Peruvian countermultiparty effort over the past seven years actually speaks to the opposite proposition. The greater perceived threat posed by the Shining Path has led the military to focus its attention on Sendero and Sendero's primary operating areas. It has often effectively ignored MRTA. To the degree this has been true, the Shining Path has actually taken the heat off MRTA, not compromised its prospects a priori. Similarly, it is not possible to argue that by the time MRTA appeared on the scene Peru was already carved up, leaving the group with no other choice than to wage a rear-guard campaign. Many of MRTA's early operating areas, such as Cuzco and Arequipa, were effectively virgin territory when the movement sought to open up its first local fronts. SL's greatest territorial gains, furthermore, have been made in the past five years. Throughout much of the country, therefore, the movements have competed side by side for the same population base.
confronting an "unreconstructed" society and ends when this social base is brought under revolutionary control and turned against the residual architecture of the targeted regime. Success as a social mobilizer, all things being equal, will be a key determinant in the movement's level of success as a revolutionary force.

Achieving social mobilization and translating a mobilized popular base into directed collective action, in turn, requires organization. The importance of organization as a mobilizing device has been expressed nicely by Joel Migdal, who observed that a central factor determining "the probability of peasants' participation in revolutionary movements is the degree to which revolutionary leadership appears with an organizational framework capable of absorbing peasants and then expanding power through their recruitment." First, would-be supporters require guidance if they are going to be brought into a supra-village movement built on a revolutionary theme. The issue of organization subsequently takes on additional importance when the movement in question confronts the problem of channeling the power conferred by a mobilized base of support into a coordinated, strategically conceived program of revolutionary activity. Such a task is in the nature of organization itself, which has been defined as "structures of differentiated roles" through which power or, in the context of the present discussion, mobilized support is transformed into collective action. Not only are the efforts of the many, under these conditions, "organized" and coordinated to support movement objectives, they are translated into a force that is greater than the sum of its parts. A superior philosophy of organization, in this respect, is essential if the revolutionary movement expects to carry the day against an adversary that at the beginning of the campaign enjoys all the advantages.

As a practical matter, the approach of most movements to social mobilization and institution building is not objectively derived, but is made up of inherited products of familiar revolutionary precedent. As

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John Dunn has observed, “Revolutions belong to a tradition of historical action in the strong sense that virtually all revolutions in the present century have imitated—or at least set out to imitate as best they could—other revolutions of an earlier date.” These successful cases of the past, as Chalmers Johnson has noted, establish paradigms that are adopted by latter-day revolutionaries who hope to replicate the success of those who preceded them by replicating their experience. “Paradigmatic cases of revolution,” in Johnson’s words, “have supplied answers to other people’s questions about why to revolt and what to build in the place of targets of revolt, but their primary influence has been in the area of how to succeed at revolt.” They have not only established the fact that a successful revolutionary takeover is possible; they also provide a set of procedures or rules of thumb for how to go about doing it. In the terms employed above, they offer a model for constructing a revolutionary organization and a game plan for mobilizing popular support. For those who come to the problem with the objective of replacing the established order but no prior experience in overturning governments, a revolutionary paradigm provides an immediate, if prepackaged, recipe for action.

The successful adoption of a revolutionary paradigm is subject to several variables. The first and most obvious is whether the model in question is appropriate to the operating environment faced by those who are going to set about to apply it. The paradigm being considered, whatever its origins, was developed to address specific problems of social mobilization and organization building under a specific set of historical conditions. What the guerrilla must determine is the degree to which his chosen paradigm “fits” his own operating context. A second problem, identified by Johnson, is the gap that exists between the paradigm and the paradigmatic case. The two, he observes, are never identical. The paradigm, while based on a historical case, has been shaped by victorious revolutionaries “in accordance with what they believe, want to believe, or want others to believe really happened.” The question that must be addressed here is the degree to which those who adopt the model will be enlightened or misled by its recommendation. Finally, under the best of circumstances, a revolutionary paradigm provides shorthand guidance for conducting a revolutionary takeover. It provides a set of guiding principles and procedures and a broad conceptual framework that the revolutionary can use to begin the day-to-day job of designing, ordering, and carrying

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7Ibid., p. 110.
out specific operational tasks. Actual success or failure can often hang on the details. The question, in this case, is what else must the guerrilla know to win?

Revolutionary movements face a set of practical problems which follow from these considerations. First, they must choose their model carefully. If the paradigm in question is inappropriate to the constraints and opportunities that define the operating environment, a group may never succeed in posing an effective challenge to the standing regime, much less go on to seize power. Second, having adopted a revolutionary paradigm, the movement will inevitably be faced with the need to "customize" whatever approach it has embraced to satisfy the dictates of its local situation. Regardless of how well the model "travels," the specific context that gave rise to the paradigm in the first place is unlikely to be duplicated in the new circumstances under which it is being applied. The successful revolutionary organization will recognize this fact and be prepared to modify the original doctrine to address its specific problems. Finally, in adapting a paradigm to local operating conditions, close attention must be given to filtering the real lessons of the paradigmatic case from the revolutionary legends that were developed in its wake. The success of the historic revolution on which the contemporary guerrilla wishes to model his own program to seize power is a fact. The paradigm of action that emerged from this event, even under the best of circumstances, is a highly interpretive presentation of how it was accomplished. Before setting off to reproduce the historical case, the successful revolutionary will take the trouble to ensure that the rule-book he is following corresponds to the case he is attempting to recreate. To the degree it does not, he must be prepared to alter it accordingly.

8The problem here, of course, is that few revolutionary movements "choose" their paradigms in the first place. Organizations, like individuals, are a product of their past. They seldom have the opportunity to choose a revolutionary model on the eve of the armed struggle; rather, they tend to have long before assumed a paradigmatic orientation. This orientation, in most cases, was originally adopted for political rather than practical reasons. In some cases, perhaps, it was never really expected to be put to the test, but rather was chosen for its popular or intellectual appeal. In other cases, it may have been embraced simply to differentiate its adherents from those who had adopted competing revolutionary models. Whatever the reason, the inherited paradigm is often uncritically executed at the time the decision is made to take up arms. To the degree that this is true, the revolutionary group's model of action is less a product of strategic calculation than it is an organizational legacy.
APPLYING THE WRONG PARADIGM

MRTA's relative failure as a revolutionary organization can be considered in light of the above discussion. Túpac Amaru, as we have seen, has sought to replicate a historical test case by adopting and modifying the model of action passed down from the Cuban revolution. Its failure, in large measure, can be attributed to the considerations we have just identified. First, the experience of the Cuban revolution provides a grossly inadequate guide to conducting a rebellion in Peru. Despite its many weaknesses, the Peruvian state clearly represents a more robust and entrenched institutional challenge than the ineffectual "Caribbean-style dictatorship" which faced Fidel Castro. Second, MRTA's efforts to modify and adapt the Cuban model to the special conditions of Peru have proved inadequate. While its own governing doctrine represents, in many respects, a considerable improvement over the simplified formula for seizing power handed down from the 26th of July Movement, it has largely failed to put these revisions to work. Instead, it has fallen back on the basic operational and organizational themes laid down many years ago by Castro, Guevara, and Debray. Finally, it has paid too little attention to distinguishing between the myth and the reality of the Cuban experience. Many of the key principles of the Cuban paradigm have nothing to do with the real reasons behind the success of the Cuban revolution. Indeed, the Cuban "model" arguably represents an extreme case of divergence between the real lessons of experience and revealed legend. To the degree the movement has been influenced by this myth, its prospects of success have been further undermined.9

The negative influence of the Cuban model is clearly revealed in the movement's approach to popular mobilization. Like the Cuban paradigm, and in sharp contrast to the Shining Path, MRTA's philosophy of revolution ultimately relies upon the spontaneity of the masses to provide it with the manpower and material support it must have to win. The unspoken assumption underlying this approach to popular mobilization is that Peruvian society is in a state of extreme social disequilibrium. The movement's would-be constituency, in this respect, was believed to be either already primed for revolt or soon to be so primed with the escalating social crisis. This crisis, according to the movement's theorists, was leading to the polarization of the par-

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liamnary system. The corresponding tensions within the system were becoming intense and would eventually be uncontainable. When this point was reached, it was argued, the left would break with the prevailing order and move into the waiting arms of MRTA. What was required under these circumstances, in MRTA's perspective, was not a grass-roots program of local contact, indoctrination, and organization, but an action program designed to capture the popular imagination and inspire its constituency into taking up arms, joining the revolution, and throwing off the yoke of the standing political order. The movement's operational task, in this respect, was to sharpen and accelerate the process of polarization and prepare to receive its following.

Expressed in the terms used above, MRTA has rejected the view held by the Shining Path that social mobilization must proceed in a series of stages, beginning with the penetration of targeted elements of society and ending with the employment of a mobilized popular base against the state and still unmobilized elements within society. Social mobilization, in Sendero's view, is an iterative process in which targeted elements within society are brought into the revolution by stages and in parts, one or more slices of population at a time. Having mobilized some segment of society, the revolutionary organization is in a position to employ this base as a springboard to extend its mobilization efforts to other areas of the country. Each iteration in this process supports the next as, in phases and over time, the organization gradually emerges as a potent challenge to the state. In MRTA's conception, by contrast, the process of mobilization effectively occurs simultaneously, without the direct intercession of the revolutionary organization. It is a catalytic event, in which the movement's natural constituency, spurred by the drama of guerrilla actions, discovers its revolutionary consciousness and joins the rebellion. Because the act of mobilization is effectively occurring as an automatic psychological adjustment among a specific social class within society (which is presumed to share a basic belief system), when the adjustment occurs it is expected to occur broadly, throughout the entire class. The revolution, in this scheme, is not won in a process of graduated escalation keyed to the gradual development of the guerrilla's popular base, but by posing an overwhelming military challenge to the state in the wake of the expected shift in popular sentiment toward the revolution.

The paradigmatic antecedents of MRTA's philosophy of revolution are also evident in its approach to building a revolutionary organization. Indeed, they are apparent in its view of the role of organization itself in promoting and controlling a peasant revolution. Insofar as MRTA
effectively reduces revolution to a military act, it remains unconcerned with the problem of constructing an institutional counter to the architecture of the state. This task, in its view, is not part of the process of winning; it is a problem of governance to be considered once the movement seizes power. In line with the prominence conferred within the Cuban paradigm to the “guerrilla band,” the movement’s vitality is ultimately believed to be determined by the number, size, and tactical prowess of its guerrilla columns and urban commandos. There is considered to be little relationship, furthermore, between the creation of grass-roots guerrilla institutions and the strength and endurance of the potential military challenge posed by the guerrilla army. If mobilization is a spontaneous act, spurred by the power of example, it is important to operate, not organize. Indeed, in MRTA’s view, until a guerrilla movement demonstrates through its own actions that resistance is possible, organization is impossible. Until such time, there is nothing to talk about.

In direct contrast to Sendero, then, which considers political organization to be the necessary foundation of social mobilization, MRTA has opted to use armed action as a means of effectively bypassing the organizational requirement and proceeding directly to mobilization. Where Sendero seeks to create, turn, or capture local organizations as a preliminary step toward enmeshing and eventually incorporating targeted populations into its program and ultimately into its movement, MRTA acts in the expectation that its targeted constituency will rally. The basis of the revolution, in the first case, rests with the integrity and vitality of the guerrilla’s interlocking, grass-roots associations. Collectively, these constitute an institutional counterpart to the state and the foundation of the guerrilla’s political and military position. The basis of the revolution, in the second case, rests with the individual guerrilla combatant and, through him, the guerrilla band or column. Success or failure rests on the inspirational power of their example. The guerrilla, for his part, must be a “teacher-fighter,” “who need know little more than what is required of a good man or soldier.” His stoicism and self-sacrifice should inspire others to follow in his footsteps. The guerrilla band, for its part, must be an “armed nucleus” that uses its limited resources to dramatic effect to move its followers to arms. Nothing stands between the guerrilla band and its constituency but the need for publicity. Generating such publicity, in MRTA’s view, requires not organization but courage, discipline, and a willingness and ability to act.

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In line with this view and the organizing principles espoused by the Cuban model, MRTA has given short shrift to the internal functions played by a central party apparatus and a unifying ideology. As a military force, MRTA is not believed to require an overarching political architecture, only a functioning chain of command. Like their Cuban and Nicaraguan predecessors, MRTA spokesmen argue that the creation of a ruling party will take place in the course of the revolutionary process. Those who have risen to leadership positions throughout the course of the armed struggle will naturally become party leaders under the new regime. For similar reasons, the movement has felt no need to further define its purpose and organizing parameters by sharpening its ideological position. Ideology, in the movement's view, is not considered to be a set of defining principles that can be used to forge a tightly knit political organization; it is a broad, loosely formulated collection of themes that must remain broad and loosely formulated if it is to retain its general appeal. MRTA is a casually defined "party of combatants" that have come together to wage an armed struggle to topple and replace an unjust social order. Organizational cohesion, in its calculation, is provided by a shared sense of social justice and a common antipathy for the standing political system. While a self-avowed Marxist-Leninist organization, it has consistently subordinated ideological principle to the principle of action and the desire to build a broad base of support among the country's underclass. Party development, ideological stricture, and the primacy of political over military forms are considered to be the attributes of the ultraleft.

MRTA's ORGANIZATIONAL FAILURE

MRTA's philosophy of organization has had a number of deleterious implications for its long-term effectiveness as a revolutionary movement. First, its approach to social mobilization has left it disconnected from its targeted constituency. This is true even among elements that can be said to sympathize with its objectives and might otherwise be inclined to support its cause. In contrast to Sendero, which has sought to build an integrating series of linkages between itself, as organizing agent, and the populations or social groups that it has targeted for mobilization, MRTA has failed to construct an architecture for tying itself to its would-be supporters. The results, at first glance, appear to be paradoxical, in view of each movement's natural appeal and their quite different approach to the issue of social violence. Sendero, justly noted for its heavy-handed methods, has proved to be a successful social mobilizer. MRTA, by contrast, while enjoying a much broader base of natural appeal within Peruvian soci-
ety and certainly a more benign political force than the Shining Path, has failed to develop a secure base of support within any social or geographical sector of the country. Organization-building, in this case, has proved to be a superior alternative to an unorganized appeal to arms based only on popular sympathies. Whereas Sendero has set out to penetrate and ultimately insinuate itself into locally targeted populations, thereby incorporating them into its larger revolutionary program, MRTA has effectively waited for operational support for its program to materialize on its own, independent of any direct action by the movement to go out and make it happen. The result is that MRTA remains a populist-based organization without a meaningful popular base.

Second, in the absence of a unifying party apparatus, MRTA has suffered from a divided leadership group. The divisions that existed at the time of the organization's unification in 1984, both within and between the movement's original PSR-ML and MIR cadres, have never fully been resolved. MRTA has been and remains characterized by a collection of sometimes contending points of view and corresponding organizational factions. While it often speaks to a "unity of purpose," the need to maintain a "hierarchy of command," and the importance of "organizational discipline," it remains a loosely directed and loosely coupled revolutionary organization. The movement's central decisionmaking bodies, the executive committee and the general command, reflect these divisions. Authority within these groups is determined not by position, but by one's personal authority and the strength of one's following or faction within the movement. They are not decisionmaking hierarchies, but decisionmaking collectives. As such, they have served less as a mechanism for strategic planning, which is their nominal function, than as a forum for fielding and resolving the divergent political and operational perspectives of the inner core. Because unity within the group is not a function of party hierarchy and party authority, it must be continually reinforced or "renegotiated" by ensuring that agreement is reached on matters of group policy. Such an approach to centralized decisionmaking, needless to say, is both inefficient and ineffective. One can surmise that issues which should be aired are not, in an effort to avoid group conflict, while suboptimal policies will tend to be adopted to ensure group consensus.

Third, the movement's weak organs of central command and control are matched by a corresponding lack of coordination among the group's local commands. As suggested earlier, real authority within MRTA resides with the movement's four regional commands, which conduct their own show in their own way with little interference from
the center. There is little evidence of cooperation among these subgroups and a number of clear and important differences in the manner in which they tend to conduct themselves. The de facto autonomy if not outright independence of the regional command is reinforced by the sheer size and rugged topography of Peru, the highly dispersed nature of MRTA activities, and the absence of a reliable communications net. The Shining Path, of course, has faced similar difficulties. In recent years it has sought to manage the problem of controlling a nationally based movement through the increasing use of radio communications. Even before this development, however, it could depend upon a clearly defined hierarchy of command to retain a high measure of group cohesion. While circumstances often dictated that Sendero’s regional committees operate with decisionmaking autonomy, it was an autonomy conferred from the center to the periphery for reasons of tactical propriety, rather than a symptom of the weakness of the leadership group. The authority to confer and withdraw such autonomy was never in dispute. It was defined by the party hierarchy and lay in the hands of the Central Committee and the movement’s commanding National Directorate.

MRTA’s problems have been reinforced by the movement’s eclectic, poorly defined ideological base. Ideology serves a number of important functions for the revolutionary organization. Perhaps the most significant of these is the role it plays within the organization itself, both as a guide to action and as an instrument of organizational solidarity. Ideology, in this sense, is the conceptual counterpart to the central party. It provides a benchmark for determining the “correct” political line and an objective aid in forging a common position within the group. In the absence of a central party, a common, clearly articulated ideological frame of reference is an essential component of group cohesion. Ideological purity, under these conditions, will confer authority, which can be used in turn to build group unity, establish a hierarchy of command, and, ultimately, employ the movement as a revolutionary force. In the absence of both a central party and a common ideological framework, the revolutionary group arguably lacks both a rudder and helmsman. Collective action, under these circumstances, will depend upon consensus, and consensus will tend to be achieved through compromise. Such a situation has effectively characterized MRTA since 1984. Although the movement’s ideological position, as noted earlier, was left deliberately ill-defined in an effort to appeal to the greatest possible cross section of support, it has failed to serve its proper role as a force for unification within the movement. MRTA still speaks with a common voice, but to the out-
side world its image of unity disguises a divided leadership and a poorly unified organization.

These factors have had a significant influence on MRTA's revolutionary performance since 1984. First, they have denied the movement the popular "critical mass" it requires to pose an escalating threat to the incumbent regime. Its effective popular base, i.e., the percentage of the national population it has mobilized to support its revolutionary program, does not appear to have grown in the past four years. In view of the movement's reduced area of operations, it may well have decreased. Second, weakness at the top has denied the movement the impact and the economy of effort that can be achieved through high-order coordination. The diffusion of decisionmaking authority within MRTA has made it almost impossible to develop a coherent and nationally based operational plan. This has made it difficult for it to pose more than a localized threat to the authority of the standing regime. Third, for similar reasons, the movement itself shows little national cohesion. The organization's membership, like the structure of the group itself, can be regionally differentiated, a distinction that is further reinforced by its underlying political divisions. Even at this level, without a commonly defined and clearly articulated ideological position, the various local components of the movement are likely to lack the necessary institutional glue to hold the group together in the face of sustained pressure from the prevailing order to destroy it. Carrying out a successful armed takeover, more so than most other collective endeavors, requires unity of purpose, discipline, and teamwork. In their absence, the revolutionary group leaves itself open to disruption and, ultimately, destruction.

Collectively, these factors have seriously limited MRTA's revolutionary horizons. The degree to which this is true, again, is illustrated by the relative success enjoyed by the Shining Path. All things being equal, MRTA could be in a position similar to that achieved by Sendero—that is, a position that poses a clear potential danger to the standing order—but it is not. What is not equal between these two groups is their approach to organizing a revolutionary challenge. Working from the bottom up rather than from the top down, SL has sought to construct a countervailing institution to the state. This has been achieved with organizational forms and organizing methods that are effectively the mirror image of those adopted by Túpac Amaru. This approach, which replicates the three-stage mobilization sequence illustrated in the opening pages of this discussion, has given Sendero a secure foundation among elements of Peru's rural population. It has also provided SL with the advantages of centralized leadership; a disciplined, complex organization; and a high measure of group sol-
idarity, both within and between its various regional components. These qualities account for SL's durability and dynamism. The Shining Path has not only proved to be a difficult movement to defeat, it has proved to be a difficult organization to even contain. Objectively, this has been due in part to the weak institutional structure of the state. Relative to MRTA, however, it has been due also to a superior strategy of revolution, that is, a superior concept of revolutionary organization.
5. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Túpac Amaru began its campaign to overthrow the government of Peru on what appeared to be a promising note. Dissatisfaction with the prevailing order, represented by the government of Fernando Belaúnde, was clearly mounting among elements of the country's legal left. While the great majority of the left still hoped to find a parliamentary solution to Peru's intense social and economic divisions, a growing minority appeared to be prepared to look for solutions wherever they could find them. Against this backdrop, MRTA moved to offer a middle alternative to what it argued were the restricted horizons of the prevailing order on the one hand and the highly radical political solution offered by the Shining Path on the other. Its revolutionary program, on the face of it, struck a sympathetic chord, certainly in comparison to SL's ideological and programmatic extremism. Armed with this agenda and longstanding ties to the legal left, MRTA set out to broaden its base of support and ultimately turn it into a viable military instrument against the state. Between mid-1984 and 1987 it enjoyed some measure of success. Movement operations during this period were on the upswing. MRTA looked like it might become a prominent force in Peruvian politics, and many observers believed it might eventually overshadow Sendero as an instrument of revolutionary change. This was not to be. By the end of 1988 it was evident that MRTA was on a downward curve. This trend continued into 1989 and through 1991. The available data indicate that the decline was not arrested in 1992. Although it is still able to command national headlines, it is clear that MRTA does not pose a viable challenge to the central government.

Túpac Amaru's position is quite likely to become more difficult as time goes on. As MRTA's fortunes waned, Sendero's position became increasingly secure. Against the predictions of most observers in the early and middle 1980s, by the end of 1990 the Shining Path had moved well beyond its original base areas in Ayacucho to either control or contest for control over a significant slice of rural Peru. This development, in turn, led to a deepening polarization in Peruvian society, as growing elements of the population were forced to choose between accepting the consequences of a Sendero victory or backing the prevailing political order. MRTA's prospects were further restricted accordingly. Until the April 1992 coup, political polarization had not resulted in a split between the legal left and the standing order, as the movement had hoped, but between the Shining Path and every-
one else. As the threat posed by Sendero became increasingly apparent, MRTA's prospects for capturing a meaningful percentage of the traditional left declined. Any large-scale political shift by the legal left, under these circumstances, would risk playing into the hands of the Shining Path by further undermining the authority of the state without substantially improving MRTA's larger revolutionary opportunities. The risk equation dictated that the legal left take a conservative course and continue to work within the system, regardless of its differences with the center. For MRTA, in this respect, the "political middle" proved to be not an opportunity but a trap. Far from seizing the political high ground, the movement found itself squeezed between the revolutionary momentum of the Shining Path and a political system that was circling the wagons.

The April 1992 coup gave MRTA an unexpected political boost. In one move, President Fujimori, in association with the military, re-drew the political landscape by cutting the legal left out of the standing order. In overturning the constitution and dissolving the congress, Fujimori effectively forced the legal left into the middle as well. It is now operating outside of the tightening circle of wagons looking in. While large elements of this diverse political group can be expected to reenter the system at some point through nonviolent means, other elements will certainly have become radicalized by the coup and can be expected to attempt to return to power by force. Some subset of this group is likely to be absorbed into Túpac Amaru. While this development will certainly improve the movement's outlook in the short run, it will have no influence over the movement's long-run prospects for becoming an important force in Peruvian politics. Stated in other terms, MRTA is likely to become more popular and possibly more active, but it is not likely to become any more effective as a threat to the standing regime than it has been to date. As detailed in this study, the movement will continue to suffer from the strategic and organizational limitations that have hampered it since 1984. These constraints can be expected to bound MRTA's horizons, even if the April coup indirectly results in a marginal upswing in movement operations. Under these circumstances, any such increase in MRTA activities will play to the benefit of Sendero, which, even in the wake of the capture of Abimael Guzmán, is still the only force well organized enough to take advantage of a further breakdown of regime authority.

What went wrong? As I have argued here, it is not a case of what went wrong; MRTA's problem has been that things were never quite right. From the outset, the movement set down an inappropriate revolutionary path. MRTA has not succeeded in posing a viable chal-
leng to the government of Peru because it could not succeed, given the environment it was operating in and the methods it sought to employ. Building on the highly interpreted experiences of the July 26 Movement, the group from the outset showed a strong deterministic bias in its views on the nature of the revolutionary process and the role of the revolutionary organization as an agent of radical change. Revolution, in its conception, is a more or less spontaneous act. While the target regime was ultimately to be deposed in the wake of a protracted, gradually escalating guerrilla campaign, the movement's base of mobilized support was to be self-generated. Revolutionary organization, in this scheme, was to play a limited role. MRTA's potential strength, it was argued, lay with the mounting, unrequited pressure within Peruvian society for major social and political change. The movement had only to release, capture, and channel this revolutionary energy into a directed campaign against the incumbent regime to win. At the operational level, this involved no organization but action. Organization, which in MRTA's view is not an instrument of mobilization but a means of coordinating the activities of its constituencies once they are already on board, was something that would take care of itself, by itself, with time.

Sendero, by contrast, has based its program on a quite different set of assumptions about the dynamics of the revolutionary process. These differences have been responsible for its comparative success. While the Shining Path, like MRTA, acknowledges that the underlying basis for revolutionary change rests on long-run historical forces over which the movement can have little short-run control, harnessing these forces to a revolutionary objective, in its view, is ultimately a problem of organization, not a problem of catalyzing a popular response. Organization, in this sense, has meant building a grass-roots, village-based counter to the state. It follows that the movement's chief measure of performance is provided not by the scope and intensity of its military actions, but by the scope, depth, and vitality of its organizational forms. The movement's ability to pose a political and military challenge to the state, certainly in the face of a sustained response by the standing regime, is believed to be a by-product of its slowly developing institutional base. This is thought to be true of every stage in the revolutionary process: building a core party apparatus, mobilizing an initial base of popular support, extending this base throughout the countryside, and ultimately undermining and replacing the prevailing order. There is nothing inevitable, in this view, about revolutionary outcomes. Social revolutions need not begin, having begun they need not succeed, and having succeeded they need not result in the social and political changes that prompted the revolution in the
first place. If Sendero proves able to absorb and overcome the loss of Abimael Guzmán, it will be due in no small measure to the complexity and resiliency of its institutional base.

Abstracting from the Peruvian case, Túpac Amaru and the Shining Path can be considered, respectively, to be high-profile and low-profile revolutionary organizations. The latter, as I have argued, represents an objectively more viable revolutionary approach than the former. For the high-profile organization, success will ultimately depend exclusively on the prior weakness of the state and the revolutionary readiness of society. The revolutionary organization itself is not an important variable. Its only real responsibility is to provide the spark that sets the revolution in motion and the conduit for channeling revolutionary sentiment. This is to be achieved through the presumed power of militant example. For the low-profile organization, by contrast, revolution is effectively considered an institutional contest. This contest is pursued by undermining the institutional architecture of the state and replacing it with one's own institutional alternative. In the terms used above, popular support is mobilized from the bottom up rather than the top down, through a staged process of organization building. Success, under this strategy, is much less sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the state and society. While state and society will obviously continue to place outer bounds on the expected success of any revolutionary challenge, regardless of its organizational complexion, within these bounds the low-profile organization can succeed where its high-profile competitor will fail. Unfortunately for Túpac Amaru, success in this scheme is not a function of looking good, but of being good.