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The following was taken from a reporting cable from American Embassy in Lima.

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The Early Sendero  
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1. Some chroniclers of the Sendero Luminoso (SL) suggest that SL brutality is a recent development and largely a response to military and police violence. Our studies of the early behavior of Sendero Luminoso suggest otherwise.
2. The first victim of SL violence was Benigno Medina, the owner of a small ranch in the Ayacucho department village of Ayzarca. On Christmas Eve, 1980, 30 terrorists entered Ayzarca and detained Medina. He was dragged into the community's church. His family, including his son and two daughters, were held in a nearby building. Medina was stripped and staked out, chest upwards, on the dirt floor of the chapel. The terrorists, led by Lima physician Eduardo Mata, cut off medina's ears and slit his tongue, tip to back. They then emasculated him, amputating his penis and testicles. A daughter described in recent press interviews the experience of listening to their father's cries of agony while he bled to death on the floor of the church.
3. A Catholic priest who has served in the Apurimac/Ayacucho area for the past 20 years described to Poloff in some detail accounts he has collected from peasants fleeing to his parish from SL violence in the north of Apurimac and Ayacucho departments during the first three years of terrorist violence, 1980-83. The father opined that from the beginning these terrorists were bestial in the treatment of their enemies.
4. According to this priest, SL had a particularly effective method of dealing with peasants who refused to cooperate or who were captured fleeing from towns controlled by the terrorists. The entire community was convoked to the town square. The captured renegade was brought before the assembled peasants for a people's trial. Convicted, he was stripped and tied to a post in the square. A sharp knife was produced. Each member of the community, adults and children, were forced to go forward and cut a piece of flesh from the victim.

According to the testimony of peasants who have spoken to this priest, it often took as long as an hour for the victim to die from blood loss or shock.

5. While there is little question now of the brutality of SL, during the early years of SL violence such reports rarely appeared in public accounts. Political section contacts in the legal left explain that during those first four or five years the Peruvian left refused to criticize SL, believing that these accounts of torture were invented or exaggerated by the police and army.

Thus, claims of SL brutality were suppressed or ignored, even in the conservative press. According to our Marxist friends, SL violence has always been characterized by its brutality, it is just that in the past three or four years the legal left has finally stopped apologizing for the terrorists whose rhetoric at least, closely matched their own.

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#### The Meanings of Death

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6. Some Peruvian cultural anthropologists theorize that there are symbolic meanings in the methods of execution used by SL. Beheading or garroting is often used by the terrorists. Inca emperor Atahualpa was garroted by Pizarro in 1533. These social scientists conclude that SL is attempting to create a cultural tie between the peasants of the twentieth century, their forefathers, and their common oppressor: the White, European elite. When Jose Gabriel Tupac Amaru's revolution (he of MRTA fame) against the Spanish was crushed in 1781, the Spanish staked members of his family in the Cuzco Plaza de Armas and tortured them to death. Tupac Amaru was quartered and beheaded. Parts of his body were scattered to the far corners of the once inca empire. Thus the origin of SL's people's trials and public executions.

7. Whether or not SL killers consciously make any of these anthropological links, it is certainly true that the peasant of the sierra derives meaning from SL brutality. A priest who has lived and worked in the sierra of Junin Department for more than a decade explains that the peasants do not so much decry the inhumanity of SL brutality. What they fear, claims this priest, is the mutilation of the corpse. In that regard the Catholic teaching of the

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literal corporal resurrection matches traditional Indian beliefs that the same body laid into the earth will be resurrected to immortality. Witness Atahualpa's terror that he would be burned at the stake as an infidel and thus accepted a Christian baptism from Valverde (and subsequent strangulation) so his corpse could be preserved.

8. Our Junin priest as well as Protestant missionaries from Junin note that following SL public executions it is common for the terrorists to order that the bodies of victims not be touched or moved for at least 24 hours. A common element among these killings in Junin during the past two years is corpses left in the sun amidst rooting swine and hungry dogs fighting over the human remains. This type of defilement of corpses horrifies these Indians.

9. The May killing of Australian Sister McCormack in Huasahuasi, Junin is a case in point. Remarkable in that incident is the account of a 13 year old girl who defied the terrorists, took holy water from the church and anointed the nun's body, then covered it with the mantle from the altar. Even so, the Sister's body was unmoved for 24 hours from the spot in the town square where she was shot to death.

#### ----- Desensitizing the Children -----

10. Guzman promised that his revolution would create a river of blood in Peru and that victory would occur when the people "crossed the river of blood to the other side." The evidence suggests that SL starts training its cadre from a very early age that nothing has meaning, not even life, beyond the party and the revolution.

11. In January 1990, SL intercepted a bus traveling between Andahuaylas and Abanca, Apurimac Department. There were two young French tourists aboard, a man and a woman. Poloff spoke with a Peruvian nun who was a passenger on the bus. She stated that the two were shot once through the head by the leader of the SL column, the only member of the group over 16. The French male appeared not to be dead, despite the head wound. The column leader selected the apparent youngest member of the group.

The witness guessed his age to be 13. The lad picked up the largest rock he could heft, walked over to the still living victim, and repeatedly struck the man over the head with the small boulder until the skull was completely crushed.

12. 1990/91 reports from the Ene/Tambo River Valley of SL brutality against the Ashaninka Indians and local colonists are terrifying in their brutality. Tongues cut from adults and force-fed to their children. Gasoline poured over living victims and then set afire. A 14 year old child struck on the head with a machete, shot, stabbed, and dumped in the river only to survive and be treated by Blue Venture medics.

13. The killers of Sister McCormack in May 1991 and Sister Maria Rivas in September 1990 (also in Junin department) were both females in their early teens. According to witnesses, the two were the youngest members of the invading SL columns. In May 1991 an SL column comprised almost entirely of 14 to 16 year olds killed four women and five of their children in Ayacucho. The victims were beaten and stabbed to death for having participated in a program to provide milk to infants in a rural Ayacucho feeding program.

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#### An Almanac of Brutality

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14. In addition to the incidents noted above, we repeat several accounts of recent SL violence which we believe illustrate the brutal nature of that violence.

-- On May 31, 1989 environmental reporter Barbara D'Achille was captured by terrorists in Huancavelica Department. She was stripped naked, stoned to death, then shot.

-- Sometime in June or July 1989 police in Junin department found the body of a fellow officer killed by SL. The terrorists had cut off his lower jaw. They had slit open his stomach and chest, emptied it of its organs, and had then, one at a time, squatted over the man and defecated into his chest cavity. When his fellow officers found him, the corpse was filled with human feces.

-- On November 22, 1989 two tourists (an Australian and a New Zealander) were taken from a bus traveling between Ayacucho and Nazca. Both were shot to death and tortured. It is not clear whether the torture preceded or followed the killing. The young woman was so badly slashed in the chest and stomach that her torso had to be bound to hold her entrails so her body could be moved.

-- On November 27, 1989 U.S. reporter Todd Smith was beaten, burned, and garroted. His body was so badly brutalized that a close friend was initially unable to make a positive id.

-- On August 22, 1990 two Mormon missionaries were killed in Huancayo City. One of the youths had a knife driven through his neck and between his spine

-- On May 23, 1991 the 29 year old mayor of Pachacamac was traveling with his wife and two of his four children. His car was intercepted by an SL assassination team. His wife and children were taken from the car. Two of the terrorists physically held his children's heads up and forced them to watch as the other killers machine-gunned their father and then exploded a large dynamite charge placed in his lap. It is common for SL to dynamite the corpses of its victims.

15. Though the brutality is exaggerated, SL killers appear calm and dispassionate as they dispense "popular justice." There are few accounts of raging violence, uncontrolled blood lust, or rampaging troops randomly slaughtering their victims. Perhaps the single most frightening aspect of Sendero Luminoso violence is that what these terrorists do, they apparently do for ideological reasons.

#### Brutes in a Brutal Land

16. The terrorists, of course, are not the only players in Peru who commit brutalities. This cable is not intended to justify the violence of other groups as a reaction to SL violence. Nor is it our purpose here to prove that SL is more violent than other Peruvian "players," though that certainly is the opinion of almost all who study this issue. Rather, our single hope is to present a stark contrast to SL's propaganda effort to describe itself as a

as a popular revolution, and to deny the occasional portrayal in the foreign press of SL as the "robin hood" of Latin America.

17. The truth is otherwise. Sendero Luminoso is a lusus which ranks high in the pantheon of history's real and fictional monsters.