Indians in *Pensamiento Gonzalo*: The Influence of 20th-Century Peruvian Intelligentsia on Shining Path’s Ideology

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Abstract
During the last decades of the 20th century, Shining Path conceived Indian culture mainly as part of feudalist-capitalist alienation. Consequently, this insurrectionist organization aimed to mobilize the indigenous communities around a class-oriented revolutionary project. Although the academic literature has acknowledged and studied this process, its historical roots in the intelligentsia of the early 20th century remain under-examined. To contribute to their research, this article first analyzes the “neo-indigenist and indigenist discussion” of the first decades of the century, mainly through the works of Manuel González Prada, Luis Eduardo Valcárcel, and José Uriel García. The article will then focus on José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre to explore the discussion around the implementation of socialist thought in Peru. Finally, this research analyzes the influence of the previous authors on the configuration of Shining Path’s ideology, *Pensamiento Gonzalo*. The article argues that Shining Path intensified three tendencies of the 20th-century Peruvian intelligentsia: the need to assist Indians in the development of an effective discourse, the legitimation of revolutionary violence, and the Peruvian bourgeoisie’s leadership of the Indians. In conclusion, Shining Path’s ideology should not be regarded as a *rara avis*, but as the result of a dogmatic application of Maoism to already existing discussions of the Indian problem.

Keywords
Shining Path, Peru, socialism, Indians, peasants, *Pensamiento Gonzalo*

Introduction
The confrontation between the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso* or *Sendero*) guerrilla and the Peruvian government was one of the most brutal civil conflicts endured throughout Latin America during the 20th century. Until the capture of their leader, Abimael Guzmán, the violence of the *Senderistas* reached extreme levels in the context of the revolutionary struggle against the Peruvian government and the repression of any kind of internal dissidence, especially in indigenous zones (Starn & La Serna, 2019). Thus, the radicalism of Shining Path is evidenced not only by its military tactics but also by the organization’s conception of the revolutionary subject, which led to the preponderance of the peasant and the invisibility of the Indian, under a logic that virtually obliterated any attempt at cultural recognition. Because Shining Path considered the Peruvian peasantry to be alienated, it assumed the task of reeducating society through violence. By exposing the economic exploitation suffered by the lower classes, Shining Path believed that it could lead a revolution, overthrow the capitalist system, and develop a communist society.

Extensive academic work has tried to analyze and understand every aspect of Shining Path’s existence, including its emergence, internal organization, deployment, and expansion across Peru (Degregori, 1990; Starn & La Serna, 2019). Numerous authors have also focused on various related areas, such as the ideological configuration of the party (Krehoff, 2006; Starn, 1995), the movement’s impact on Peruvian society (Mallon, 1995; Rénique & Lerner, 2019), the peasant armed response through *rondas campesinas* (Degregori et al., 1996; Starn, 1993), or the influence of the conflict on Peruvian art (Lambright, 2016; Saona, 2014; Vich, 2015).

In a complementary approach, the main goal of this article is to analyze the key contributions of several Peruvian thinkers to demonstrate that the emergence of Shining Path’s...
Pensamiento Gonzalo—and its subsequent effects on Peruvian society—proceeds from a historical construction that can be traced back to the consolidation of the Peruvian urban bourgeoisie, to the country’s first socialist authors, and, later, to the influence of Maoist thought. This is relevant because Pensamiento Gonzalo is often portrayed as the “turning point,” the explanatory variable for the absence of a consolidated indigenous movement in Peru, without consideration for other factors, such as the lack of political opportunities within indigenous communities resulting from the land problem. It suggests that the emergence of Shining Path is not completely novel but has its roots in Peru’s historical process around the “Indian problem” and its ultimate reconsideration within Marxist-Maoist theory. In De la Cadena’s (1999) words, “they [Shining Path leaders] were part of the Peruvian academic culture and they occupied a social space which, as any other, was under historically constructed power relations” (p. 40).

Following this line of thought, the present article argues that Shining Path’s ideology was highly influenced by three tendencies developed by several leftist Peruvian authors in the 20th century: (a) the need to assist Indians in the development of an effective political discourse, (b) the legitimation of violence in the political agenda, and (c) the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the leadership of the Peruvian cause.

The article first explores the influence of Maoism on Guzmán’s Pensamiento Gonzalo, which reflects the Peruvian conception of the indigenous revolution from a peasant-based insurrectionist perspective. Moreover, preexisting Peruvian attitudes toward the role of the bourgeoisie and the legitimate use of violence in the Indian struggle were integrated with the Marxist revolutionary theory. On one hand, the bourgeoisie continued to lead the revolution because it was more conscious of the feudalist-capitalist alienation and, consequently, helped Indians assume their “peasant” identity. On the other hand, violence was legitimated as the only way to achieve a revolution and prevent the emergence of revisionist agendas within the organization.

This article analyzes both primary and secondary sources, relying specifically on the works of Peruvian authors González Prada, Uriel García, Valcárcel, Haya de la Torre, and Mariátegui. These authors were selected for their relevance and influence on the development of the Peruvian leftist thought, as well as for their individual contributions to the study of indigeneity (i.e., the Indian problem and the role of the Indian in Peruvian society). Nonetheless, they should not be regarded as a homogeneous group as they had considerable differences that led to relevant discussions and political struggles. This article states that, despite these differences, they shared key points that can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century and influenced Shining Path’s Pensamiento Gonzalo. In this sense, González Prada, Uriel García, and Valcárcel certainly influenced Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui’s political ideas. In turn, Mariátegui, as the founder of the Peruvian Socialist Party, was one of the ideological cornerstones of Shining Path. Finally, the article also analyzes Maoism and its direct influence on the configuration of Shining Path: According to Abimael Guzmán, Pensamiento Gonzalo is the application of Maoism to the Peruvian context and a direct answer to the alienation suffered by Peruvian indigenous communities.

The article first explores Pensamiento Gonzalo and its main characteristics, taking into account the relevance of the Indian problem within its configuration. The following section exposes the indigenist and neo-indigenist authors’ different conceptions of the place of the Indian within Peruvian society and how the Peruvian bourgeoisie progressively took on a leading role in the conflict. To exemplify how socialist thought was shaped and applied to the Peruvian context, the article analyzes José Carlos Mariátegui’s socialist views, with a focus on the application of communism in Peru and Haya de la Torre’s ideas developed around a Pan-American socialist discourse. The next section studies Mao Tse Tung’s influence on Pensamiento Gonzalo, particularly on the conception of the peasant as the revolutionary subject and the defense of the “from the countryside to the city” revolution. Finally, the article returns to an analysis of Abimael Guzmán’s perspective to unravel the links between Maoism and early 20th-century Peruvian socialist authors.

In conclusion, the article argues that Shining Path’s ideology is not a rara avis, but rather stems from a process of adaptation and radicalization of the ideological background of several Peruvian authors of the 20th century regarding the Indian problem. More concretely, Shining Path (1988) exacerbated a process that developed throughout the century, supported by Maoism, namely, the reeducation of Indians under the leadership of the Peruvian bourgeoisie (De la Cadena, 1999) based on socialist ideology and accomplished through the use of violence. This way, the Peruvian bourgeoisie sought to achieve its revolutionary goals and repress any kind of political dissidence.

All in all, the article contributes to building a better understanding of the Shining Path conflict in Peru in its relationship with the land problem and the Indian problem. It examines how these conceptions permeated the political intelligentsia’s developing comprehension of the country’s reality, paving the way for the emergence of a violent political movement entrenched in this very discussion.

The Relevance of Pensamiento Gonzalo in the Configuration of Shining Path

Shining Path in the Face of the Land Reform and the Indian Problem

During the 1980s and until the 2000s, Peru was immersed in a cruel civil conflict that affected the entire country with different levels of intensity. The main subjects in the struggle were the Peruvian government and Shining Path—Maoist
guerrillas who sought to defeat the official government and establish a communist political system by declaring a “popular war” in 1980. Rural areas, in which the majority of the indigenous population resided, were the most affected, especially during the first stages of the civil conflict. Indigenous people were the target of Shining Path’s attempts to recruit fighters for their rural militias and of violent repression. These behaviors were rooted in Sendero’s belief that Indians were “alienated” people who, after adequate reeducation, could become active guerrilla militants (Theidon, 2004).

This conception is based upon notions developed in the context of the land problem and the historical processes undergone by Peru. Although Shining Path exacerbated the conception of indigenes as peasants, the issue dates back centuries in Peruvian history. Méndez-Gastelumendi (2001) has studied how the fixation on the European conquest as the panacea of historical explanations has denied historicity to Andean peoples, construing them as “remnants” and, ultimately, “ethnic” (p. 158). The Peruvian Revolution, which took place between 1968 and 1980, when a branch of the Peruvian army overthrew President Belaúnde Terry for nonfulfillment of his campaign promises and established a socialist-leaning military government, is of special interest.

Among other policies, this government nationalized the oil wells and implemented a particularly intense land reform, which jeopardized the oligarchic system. The Decree Law No. 17716 lowered the ceilings on landholding to a maximum of 150 hectares, expropriated any land beyond that threshold, and eventually distributed it between peasant cooperatives and societies (Albertus, 2020; Degregori, 1990). Nonetheless, inspired by Western socialism, this revolution also declared the “social death” of Indians. From that moment, Peruvian Indians were encouraged to refer to themselves as “peasants” (Yashar, 2005, p. 258). Moreover, their culture suffered a process of appropriation whereby a rhetoric glorifying the Inca past coexisted with a descending judgment of the Indian. This apparently contradictory situation officialized an indigenous discourse and neutralized its potential political connotations (Méndez-Gastelumendi, 1995).

Although the study of this issue exceeds the aim of this article, it is necessary to point out how the Indian problem, as well as the national problem, refers to a long-standing problematic situation incorporating a myriad of subjects at different temporal stages. For example, De la Cadena (1998) distinguishes three main periods during the 20th century, which reflect the progressive abandonment of the concept of “race” and its replacement by an analysis based on “culture” and “class” (p. 144). Nonetheless, this author evidences that under an apparent ethnic conflict—which, in fact, had socio-economic features—lay a regional conflict between Lima and the provinces, a political struggle between the traditional elites and the emerging intelligentsia, or even with the establishment of masculine roles in the political arena (De la Cadena, 1999).

The Consolidation of Shining Path’s Pensamiento Gonzalo

Based on the cultural consequences of the issues surrounding the Indian problem, the main tenets of Shining Path’s ideology, Pensamiento Gonzalo, were developed by the organization’s leader, Abimael Guzmán. Guzmán’s ideas regarding the role of the Indian in a Marxist revolution reinforced previous notions developed by other leftist Peruvian authors. As a result of the war and the indoctrination process established by Shining Path in Peru, the indigenous subject was exchanged for the peasant, the substitute of the proletarian class, considering the agrarian nature of Peru.

The main characteristics of Pensamiento Gonzalo can be traced throughout Guzmán’s multiple public speeches and interviews. The tenets of Pensamiento Gonzalo derive directly from Marxism–Leninism–Maoism, with Shining Path Maoism representing the latest phase of Marxism. In fact, Guzmán considered Pensamiento Gonzalo to be the application of Maoism to the Peruvian context. The revolution was led according to principles derived from Mao’s thought because, according to Guzmán (1988), it is an allmighty ideology and the purest expression of Marxist theory.

Consequently, Pensamiento Gonzalo is heavily anchored in Guzmán’s (1988) interpretation of Maoism, which often results in a Manichean view of the Peruvian political context, a radicalization of Mao’s ideas, and the belief that, for Peru, there is no alternative: “Without the ideology of the proletariat there is no revolution, without the ideology of the proletariat there is no class perspective, without the ideology of the proletariat there is no communism” (p. 7).

More concretely, Guzmán fostered a sense of superiority of the Marxist ideology and understood that the party had an undeniable goal: the instauration of a communist government through a “popular war” (Degregori, 1990, p. 158). To reinforce this idea, the individual agency of the militants was often represented as capable of defeating death or, alternatively, dying for the revolution. According to Guzmán (1988), party members should be fearless, committed to the party’s ideals, and willing to serve whenever necessary. Thus, the official fanatical discourse suggested that contemporary Peruvian society could be split into two: those who support the revolution and those who oppose it. This leads to the defense—in absolute terms—of the ideology under a dogmatic and messianic logic. Further interpretations of the Peruvian reality are “justified” by authors such as Mariategui, who Guzmán maintains would have been a Senderista, had he been alive.

The defense of Maoism within Pensamiento Gonzalo was heavily supported by the idea that Maoism—the heir of Marxism—is an ideology based on science (Guzmán & Iparraguirre, 2002). According to Abimael Guzmán (1988),

It [Maoism] is an ideology but it is also science [. . .]. To sum up, it is the ideology of the proletariat, Marx’s biggest creation [. . .]
it is a scientific ideology that has given men a theoretical and practical instrument to transform the world. (p. 6)

Owing to these Maoist influences, anti-revisionism became a key aspect of Shining Path. Guzmán himself identified it as one of the most important factors in starting a revolution, adding that even the criticism, within the Bolshevik party, of Stalin’s excessive cult of personality should be rejected as all revolutionary processes must have strong leaders. This constitutes a self-legitimation of Guzmán’s role in the Shining Path organization and in the implementation of the popular war.

The popular war and the use of violence are central to Pensamiento Gonzalo. As the instauration of a communist dictatorship of the proletariat became the core tenet of the Shining Path military campaigns, the use of force was legitimated in two ways: first, when directed at the government’s infrastructure, and second, as a tool to convince people to join the organization and repress any potential “traitors.” As a result, it is impossible to know whether Shining Path militants shared the group’s ideology and tactics or were forced to join it. Regardless, the cultural dimension of the indigenous subject was neglected as achieving the revolution was Shining Path’s ultimate goal.

Thus, the main characteristics of Pensamiento Gonzalo illustrate a “Black or White” interpretation of the Peruvian reality, in which the popular—and violent—revolution was prioritized to radically change the country. For Abimael Guzmán, Peru’s agrarian nature must be considered when applying Maoism to the Peruvian context. For this reason, Shining Path’s ideology was heavily influenced by Mao’s radical legitimation of violence and his anti-revisionist paranoia.

### Indigenism in Peru: The “indigenism” and “Neo-Indigenism” Discussion

After centuries of colonialism—a system that distinguished, among Indians, between criollos and mestizos—the construction of a Peruvian nation encompassing the whole of society was perceived as one of the most relevant needs of the new state. Therefore, the “Indian problem” implied not only the recognition of the indigenous subject as part of the Peruvian citizenry but also the integration of indigenous culture and traditions into the country’s national identity (Funes, 2006). Nevertheless, during Peru’s first century as an independent state, the marginalization of indigenous communities continued, and even worsened, in both material and cultural terms. During the 19th century, the gamonalismo system increasingly concentrated land ownership and generated oligarchic relationships between landowners and the indigenous peasants (López, 1978). Tellingly, the 1961 agricultural census showed that 1% of the landowners controlled 80% of the private land (Albertus, 2020).

Within this context, during the 19th and 20th centuries, several thinkers and artists developed theories on Peru and its indigenous nature, including the “Indian problem,” the recovery of Andean culture, and the role of the Peruvian state within this process (Deustua & Rénique, 1981). These researchers sought to denounce the loss of the ayllu communal territories and the oppression experienced by the indigenous communities. In addition, they shared four commonalities: an emphasis on the analysis of regional problems, respect for the cultural composition of Peru, the defense of local interests, and the promotion of progress across the country (Lenci, 2004). Interestingly, most of the authors who developed this line of thought were not Indians but mestizos or criollos who belonged to the Peruvian upper middle urban society. More concretely, in the 1920s, intellectuals from the Peruvian highlands merged regionalism and indigenism in a political discourse that was used by both liberal and left-wing politicians (Hunefeldt et al., 2014).

Méndez-Gastelumendi (1995, 2000, 2011) has conducted extensive research to unravel the issues surrounding Peru’s national identity, tracking the ethnic exclusion of Indians down to the process of independence and the following decades, when this tendency crystallized in the Costeño-Andino differentiation. In her work, the author notably criticizes the “Andean utopia,” an intellectual approach to indigenous peoples that relies on an instrumental use of history to promote alternative realities sustained by an idealized Inca past (Méndez-Gastelumendi, 2011, p. 57).

In this sense, discussions on the development of Peru’s national identity focused not only on the role of indigenous communities in the state and their protection from landowners, but also on the nonindigenous population that had embraced Western values and ideas (Kristal et al., 1991).

Despite these commonalities, indigenous thought was characterized by heterogeneity as it included literary approaches to indigenous traditions—for example, El padre Horán (Arétegui, 1969) or Aves sin nido (Matto de Turner, 2014)—as well as cultural, economic, and political essays—7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana (Mariátegui, 1969) or La misión social de la Universidad del Cuzco (Cosio, 1922). In fact, some authors have argued that the Peruvian academic movement suffered a process of politicization and evolved from a cultural perspective to develop an indigenous social-political agenda (Tamayo Herrera, 1980).

Ivan Degregori (2000) points out that Shining Path originated and developed in the reinforcing authoritarian contexts of Andean peasant–mestizo elite relations. After the disappearance of large landowners (hacendados) at the end of the 1970s, as a result of a reform spurred by indigenous popular protests, a cooperative system was imposed, in part as a way to prevent future uprisings. This system was ineffective and, in the eyes of indigenous people, a mere replacement for the old haciendas. Resistance started to emerge between neighboring communities, in particular because cooperatives began to lease the land of “non-associates” in exchange for labor and hire non-associates at low wages. Consequently, people resented both the state and the cooperatives for depriving them of their right to land and for perpetuating an
exploitive elite. This situation frustrated further peaceful organizing among communities that were now distrustful of each other (Degregori, 2000). According to Theidon, the Land Reform (1969–1975) also created a political vacuum that facilitated—and even legitimated—Shining Path’s deployment over the countryside (Theidon, 2004).

An alternative theory elaborated by Valcárcel (1981) identified three different moments: “regional indigenism,” developed in Cuzco and Puno; “national indigenism,” which describes the spread of indigenist ideology across the country; and “institutional indigenism,” when indigenism was finally incorporated into the Peruvian political agenda (Valcárcel, 1981, p. 256).

Despite the variety of views and methodologies, the focus of many discussions during the second decade of the 19th century was the essence of the indigenous nature: specifically, “indigenism” (a way back to Inca values) and “neo-indigenism” (the construction of a new concept of the Indian). Some authors differentiated between “indigenism” and “Indianism” depending on the relevance of the Inca past and the importance of the ethnic element within the conception (García, 1973).

On one hand, the “indigenist” theory argued that Indians were the heirs of a very developed and sophisticated civilization level with Western civilization. In Valcárcel’s (1975) words, “Here is the greatest silent tragedy which has been the theatre of Peru for four hundred years, caused by denying a cardinal truth: Peru is an Indian nation” (p. 108). Valcárcel implies that a continuity exists between the citizens of the Inca Empire and the Indians of the 19th century and, although oppressed by the Spanish colonizers, the Indians were the protectors of the Peruvian heritage and therefore the sovereign population of Peru. According to this “restorationist” view, the country should reconsider its Western nature and recover its forgotten Inca values (Kuon Arce et al., 2009, p. 195).

Nonetheless, this continuity cannot be considered in literal terms but concerns the essence and values of Andean culture:

> It should not be a resurrection of El Inkario in the superficial features [...]. We will have to give up a lot of beautiful things that we miss like romantic poets. [...] Points of light in the cerebral shadow announce the upcoming of the Intelligence in the current subhuman aggregation of the old Keswas. (Valcárcel, 1975, pp. 22–23)

In this sense, it is necessary to point out the influence of Valcárcel on the socialist thinker José Carlos Mariátegui, who believed in a primitive communism in the Inca ayllus, which was turned into a feudalist system during colonization. Mariátegui (1994) asserted the recovery of Inca values and the recognition of the indigenous communities were the revolutionary subject of Peru’s connect with the socialist project:

The Incan communism and the socialist project do not only share related nature, consangunuity or substantial similarities, but also concrete mediation elements: economic, social, political and cultural features, solidarity and cooperation habits, and the natural socializing factor existing in the communities. (p. 260)

Focusing again on Valcárcel, the role of the Peruvian intelligentsia involved two important tasks: the recovery of Inca traditions and the education of indigenous communities (Valcárcel, 1975). In the first task, researchers were to rescue the forgotten Incan culture, which was repressed—and often destroyed—during colonization (Mariátegui, 1969). This so-called recovery also incorporated other dimensions of Inca thought, such as traditions, literature, values, religion, and even the organization of the political system. However, it was also deemed necessary to implement pedagogic strategies to put an end to colonial servant culture and further enrich the Inca heritage. Indeed, “if the present Indian remembered his past, ending five centuries of unconsciousness, he would be able to recover his building potentialities” (Valcárcel, 1981, p. 217).

Although this “indigenist” perspective is useful for bringing to light the discrimination and exclusion faced by Indians, authors such as Degregori (2012, p. 43) have stated that indigenism is an external vision that acts as a ventriloquist representation of indigenous people. According to him, it negates the independent agency of indigenous people, often turning them into victims in need of the protection and redemption of the criollos or mestizos. Thus, the conception of Indians as “weak” that was previously used to evangelize indigenous communities during the European conquest was also applied by the Peruvian academic community in the 20th century.

Alternatively, other authors understood indigenism in a more inclusive manner. The main critics of neo-indigenist theory relied on the relevance of ethnicity and the continuity between the citizens of the Inca Empire and the Indians of the 19th century (Solís, 2001). According to José Uriel García (1973)—the most notorious researcher of this theory—the aim of rebuilding the Tahuantinsuyo, although unviable and utopic, was sustained by an ethnic conception of indigenous identity. He felt that the Indians’ future should not be focused on reviving the past “Glorious Inca Age” but on constructing a new future based on the pre-Columbian and colonialist periods. In Uriel García’s (1973) words, “Although the Incan society is gone forever, the Indian society has skills and potentiality, hence it could make history” (p. 77).

Other relevant aspects were developed, bolstered by this affirmation, such as the rejection of the ethnic element of indigenous identity, the active inclusion of mestizos and criollos in indigenous projects, and the precedence of material claims (often related to agrarian issues) over cultural ones. By this logic, Indians are seen as the result of Peruvian historical processes, including colonization and independence. Therefore, this “New Indian” should create a different identity project: an Indian concept capable of integrating new
Peruvian identities (e.g., mestizos, criollos) and of responding to the most relevant needs of the indigenous communities. The “historical regeneration” of indigenous identity would complement the recovery of Inca culture and values using the Western materialist methodologies developed by Peruvian mestizos (García, 1973).

Although this inclusive new identity was aimed at recovering indigenous culture while including nonethnic Indians, in the middle to long term, it would weaken Indian identity, reinforcing the notion of Indians as “alienated peasants.” This process was established through three essential points: the prioritization of the “land problem” in the indigenous agenda, the conceptualization of the Indian as an alienated subject, and the progressive legitimation of the use of force.

On the first point, the new generation of Peruvian researchers (e.g., Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui) argued that the main Indian grievance was the gamonalismo, the semifuedal land regime that turned Indians into peasants. In this sense, a materialist analysis can be useful to understand the Peruvian socioeconomic reality, as well as the political organization necessary to create a strong indigenous movement. Hence, a materialist theory (and socialist-Marxist views) was progressively legitimated within the processes of indigenous liberation as academic debates and political discussions centered around the relevance of the land.

Despite sharing the purpose of freeing and empowering the indigenous communities, mestizos played a key role in the configuration of Indian identity. With the need to reeducate Indians (to remember the “Glorious Inca Past” or create a “New Indian” identity), the Peruvian urban middle class became “masters” within Indigenism. Thus, it is no coincidence that intellectuals, including Valcárcel and Uriel, officially considered Indians to be “little brothers fallen into disgrace” (Grupo Resurgimiento, 1927). For De la Cadena (1999), they were joined in this by “political scientism,” which regarded education as capable of creating morally correct and superior individuals (p. 45).

Second, the cultural colonization suffered by Indians and the subsequent repression of their culture and traditions were increasingly incorporated into the Marxist concept of “alienation.” This further legitimated the Peruvian intelligentsia not only as the rescuer of Indian culture, but also as a necessary leader in the “re-education” process. This nesting process was evidenced in the 1930s, when José Uriel García argued that redeeming the Indian would require the imposition of different ideas and feelings, including some which conflicted with the indigenous culture of the time (García, 1973). The development of these ideas indicates that the conception of the Peruvian bourgeoisie as the necessary leader of the indigenous people is entrenched in the development of Peruvian socialist thought.

Finally, Manuel González Prada, a Peruvian thinker with socialist-anarchist influences, denounced the republican project and the republican leaders as perpetuating the colonialist government (Rénique & Lerner, 2019). In doing so, he provided a relevant element for the transition from indigenism to socialism when defending the legitimacy of an armed response. Although Prada developed an extensive body of work on the role of the Peruvian urban middle class in Pacific indigenous inclusion, he added that an indigenous armed response could be legitimated if the Peruvian population refused to partake in the transition: “If the oppressor’s consciousness does not change, it will be changed by the use of force” (González Prada, 1924, pp. 336–337). In this sense, González Prada reclaimed the belligerent indigenous discourse lost after the repression of the uprising led by José Gabriel Condorcanqui (also known as Tupac Amaru II) in the 18th century.

Although the Peruvian intelligentsia expressed explicit support for the indigenous cause, it was still imbued with paternalism. In particular, for Degregori (2012), the indigenist academic production often put forth a multifaceted essentialist idea of indigenous people: first, through an attempt to “redeem the Indian” by criollos, mestizos, the proletariat or the middle class, and second, through the process of essentialization (p. 43). Essentialization occurs when Indians’ agency is recognized as either inherently good or extremely violent. In both scenarios, the aid or protection of an external actor is necessary and, as a result, the legitimacy of the Peruvian intelligentsia within this process becomes easier to establish.

In summary, the radical indigenism of Uriel, Valcárcel, and González Prada created the necessary context for the development of socialist-based theories of Peruvian Indigenism, namely, the materialist analysis of Peruvian society, the submission of the indigenous movement to the urban vanguard, and the legitimation of the use of force to achieve the revolutionary goal. For example, José Uriel García—one of the main defenders of the “New Indian” concept—approached socialist-communist views, was a member of the Kuntur review, and actively participated in the Peruvian Congress. These initial links between indigenism and socialism initiated a process of integration that continued into the following decades with Haya de la Torre’s and Mariátegui’s socialist proposals, eventually leading to Abimael Guzmán’s Pensamiento Gonzalxo ideology.

The Socialist Discussion

In the 1920s, the cultural discussion was surpassed by the need for a political movement that could serve as a catalyst for change in Peru. In this sense, the progressive youth of the time, represented by José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, tried to develop a political agenda that could simultaneously respond to the country’s national, regional, and international problems (Castro, 2015).

Both authors, clearly influenced by González Prada and most probably by Valcárcel and Uriel, developed a neo-indigenist conception arguing that Indians should focus on creating a new societal project respecting and integrating their culture...
and traditions. Following this line of thought, Haya de la Torre promoted a political movement, the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Revolutionary Popular Alliance or APRA), to unify Latin America around a socialist discourse. Despite the growing divide between them, caused by the consolidation of APRA as one political party, Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui shared a common view of the agrarian nature of the “Indian problem.” Indeed, they both believed that the land was key to the Indians’ oppression and that indigenous communities would benefit from integration into the Peruvian mestizo society:

APRA has been pictured by its admirers as a grass-roots lower- and middle-class reform movement designed to end foreign and oligarchical domination of the economy, to incorporate the Indian mass into national life, and to democratize the socio-political structure of the country. (Davies, 1971, p. 626)

In the gnamonalismo system, Indians—mostly farmers—were tied to the land and forced to serve the landowners in a pseudo-feudalist logic. As a result, Indians were not only exploited, but also culturally repressed: Indigenous culture, traditions, and language were progressively replaced by mestizo Western values (Kuon Arce et al., 2009). Therefore, according to the socialist researchers and politicians, Mariátegui and Haya de la Torre, the root of indigenous oppression was the unequal distribution of land that differentiated between servers and landowners.

Nevertheless, the socialist movement comprised two different wings: APRA Pan-American socialism and Mariátegui’s Marxism applied to Peru (Flores Galindo, 1980; Starn, 1995). The characteristics of this divide, such as the revolutionary political agenda, the influence of Marxist views, or the international nature of Haya de la Torre’s project have been widely studied (Coronel & Cadahia, 2018; Germaná, 1977; Soifer & Vergara, 2019). Indians were to play completely different roles in the transformation of Peruvian society and become the vanguard of the revolutionary army—in Mariátegui’s view—or part of the international alliance of oppressed peoples of Latin America—according to Haya de la Torre.

From Mariátegui’s perspective, Indians lacked a political agenda of their own as a result of their alienation during colonization, which explained the failure of indigenous uprisings in past centuries. In addition, the few attempts at a serious reconstruction of indigenous identity based on an idealized return to the Inca empire rejected the benefits of modernization and denied the Peruvian reality of the previous 5 centuries. Concretely, in “Peruanicemos el Perú,” Mariátegui (1970) rebuked “innocuous apologies for the Inca past” or “dreams of Utopian restoration” (p. 74). Moreover, Peru should no longer be considered the Tahuantinsuyo, but a semi-feudal bureaucratic-capitalist state highly influenced by U.S. imperialism (Mariátegui, 1970; Starn, 1995).

In this context, Marxism was construed as a tool to give a “constructive, modern sense to the indigenous cause”; Through socialism, Indians could understand the origins of their oppression, establish political objectives, and recognize potential strategic alliances (Mariátegui, 1986, p. 249). Specifically, Indians should be included in the revolutionary forces focused on overthrowing the capitalist state and replacing it with a new socialist society capable of putting an end to Peru’s two main problems: imperialist domination and an oppressive political-economic structure (Mariátegui, 1969). In fact, Mariátegui is considered to be the first author to propose a socialist revolution in Latin America, a noncapitalist region that lacked a mature proletarian class (Sosa Fuentes, 2007).

Although socialist thought gained traction, Degregori (2012) argues that the indigenist paradigm continued to permeate Peruvian society: According to Marxist theory, Indians and peasants were the victims of imperialism. In concrete terms, indigenous people were considered “poor peasants” who required the support and leadership of socialist groups often self-denominated as campesinistas.

Although Peru was primarily an agrarian country, Mariátegui’s concept of the Indian was influenced by Western Marxist theory and by authors like Valcárcel, Uriel, and González Prada (e.g., Mariátegui, 1969, 1970). The Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) differentiated clearly between the agrarian social bases and the proletarian leadership. Despite agreeing on the need to educate Indians, their objective was not the recovery or development of indigenous culture, but the understanding of the Indian problem as a land problem. Thus, Mariátegui’s Socialist Party promoted the substitution of particular cultural views: Indians needed to understand that their oppression was the result of the land structure created by the semi-feudal, capitalist system (Martinez de la Torre, 1974).

Mariátegui’s argument focused on two points: the Indians’ subordination to the proletariat and an increasing hostility toward nonrevolutionary progressive movements. On one hand, the alienation of indigenous communities caused by the feudalist and capitalist governments implied that the leader and architect of the revolution should be the proletariat, given that this group was more conscious of the economic nature of its oppression. On the other hand, the Socialist Party understood that any movement opposing the revolution would be considered an enemy of the Peruvian people. In fact, this element was a breaking point with Haya de la Torre’s APRA, which favored a noncommunist political alliance involving the urban bourgeoisie.

As evidenced in this discussion, Mariátegui adapted Marxist-Leninist theory to the Latin American reality, and thus considered the Indian problem—the national problem—to be a land problem and used the Indian as the revolutionary subject in lieu of the proletariat (Mariátegui, 1970). Therefore, the conception of the Indian as a subject became dominated by the concept of the peasant; indigenous “ignorance” was really an agrarian “alienation.” In this sense, Mariátegui proposed a holistic theory in which Indians, although the national revolutionary subject, required the leadership of the proletarian class.
Valcárcel’s and Uriel’s intelligentsia fostered the revolutionary vanguard, which was more conscious of the alienation suffered by Peruvian society and of the threat posed by nonrevolutionary organizations.

**Pensamiento Gonzalo: Between Mao and Mariátegui**

The irruption of Shining Path in Peru can be better understood through the movement’s ties to Maoism and its peculiar interpretation of the revolutionary subject, which contributed to the emergence and consolidation of its ideology, *Pensamiento Gonzalo* (Degregori, 1990). The instauration of the new indigenist thought set the ground for Shining Path to emerge; by the time Abimael Guzmán initiated his guerrilla campaign against the Peruvian government, it had already developed a particular understanding of the revolutionary process.

Because Shining Path’s ideology was heavily based on Maoism, its practical implementation of the revolution featured several key characteristics in line with the notion of the Peruvian Indian constructed by *Pensamiento Gonzalo*. The ideology developed by Abimael Guzmán sought to offer a valid alternative to the Marxist revolution outside of the European context in which Marxism was initially developed. One of the main challenges for Shining Path was that the revolution had to be conducted within an indigenous and agrarian context. Accordingly, Guzmán advanced his political thought based on the contributions of Mao Tse-Tung and José Carlos Mariátegui, two leaders who examined the conditions for a Marxist revolution to succeed in specific non-European scenarios (Guzmán & Iparraguirre, 2002). More concretely, Mao established that the peasantry, not the proletariat, was the revolutionary subject. Hence, the revolution had to start in the rural areas where most peasants were settled.

Guzmán explicitly recognized the importance of the Russian revolution and stated that the revolutionary process could not continue without first embracing Marxist-Leninist theory. Mao went one step further, affirming that revisionism should be rejected and, ultimately, depurated. According to him, revisionism is normally accepted because it enables opportunists to push their reformist agendas, which encourages the creation of individual factions within the party (Darling, 1969). Thus, revisionism endangers the party and the revolution because bourgeois ideologies can easily infiltrate it:

> The key point of this movement is to rectify those people in positions of authority within the Party who take the capitalist road. . . Of those people in positions of authority who take the capitalist road, some are out in the open and some are concealed. . . Among those at higher levels, there are some people in the communes, districts, countries [xian], special districts, and even in the work of provincial and Central Committee departments, who oppose socialism. (Mao, cited in Macfarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006, p. 13)

This radical conception of revisionism created a Manichean vision of reality and implicitly rejected any claim beyond the material dimension of the revolution. Indigenous claims could thus easily be assimilated to the revisionism that must be defeated at all costs. Therefore, cultural or political claims related to indigenous identity were received by Shining Path as atavism, peasant alienation, and, on some occasions, the result of bourgeois infiltration (Degregori, 1991). For example, Antonio Díaz Martínez, a high-ranking member of Shining Path, pointed to this alienation when describing peasants as people with so much “love, and [who] feel attachment and gratitude for the Pachamama, becoming unable of breaking their ties with her” (Díaz Martínez, 1969, p. 249).

Hence, even if *Pensamiento Gonzalo* claimed indigenous causes as Shining Path causes, revisionism would ultimately depurate them and transform them into material demands more in line with the proletariat’s struggle:

> The socialist doctrine is the only doctrine that can give a modern, constructive sense to the indigenous cause. The indigenous cause, located within its truthful social and economic terrain, and taken to a realist political perspective, is backed up by the will and discipline of a class that has flourished in our historical process: the proletariat. (Guzmán, 1976)

Officially, Shining Path (1988) was acknowledged as a political organization aligned with “Marxism–Leninism–Maoism, though mainly Maoism.” Hence, Mao’s ideology was pragmatically useful for three reasons: First, it recognized the peasantry (not the Indians) as the revolutionary subject in agrarian countries; second, it identified the rural areas as the starting point of the revolution; and third, its anti-revisionist paranoia legitimized high levels of repression, particularly against the Indians and the mestizo population (Guzmán & Iparraguirre, 2002). These characteristics would be key when the guerrilla strategy was deployed in Peru: Indians were considered “the soldiers of the revolution” and, as the offensive started in the countryside with the aim of reaching the main cities, the rural areas became Shining Path’s headquarters. Eventually, the people who rejected the movement or refused to join it were brutally repressed:

> Mao conceived this type of war [guerrilla war] as passing through a series of merging phases, the first of which is devoted to organization, consolidation, and preservation of regional base areas situated in isolated and difficult terrain. Here volunteers are trained and indoctrinated, and from here, agitators and propagandists set forth, individually or in groups of two or three, to “persuade” and “convince” the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside and to enlist their support. The militia is not primarily designed to be a mobile fighting force; it is a “back-up” for the better-trained and better equipped guerrillas. The home guards
form an indoctrinated and partially trained reserve. They function as vigilantes. They collect information, force merchants to make “voluntary” contributions, kidnap particularly obnoxious local landlords, and liquidate informers and collaborators. Their function is to protect the revolution. (Griffith, 1961, pp. 20–21)

Moreover, according to Shining Path, indigenous populations had to be reeducated because they were not aware of their own alienation. This idea of reeducating Indians permeated Valcárcel’s and Uriel’s line of thought. Indeed, both stated that indigenous populations needed a vanguard to help them define their political agenda. Nevertheless, Shining Path took this notion further and, in practical terms, only considered Indians to be the soldiers of the revolution: “the armed fight that we have to develop is an agrarian revolution starred by peasants with the direction of the proletariat” (Guzmán, 1976). Moreover, Pensamiento Gonzalo reinforced the importance of its ideology within the process of “re-education,” going so far as to mention Shining Path’s militancy as a way to obtain “purification and rebirth” (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación [CVR], 2003a). According to Guzmán, “the masses must be taught with convincing facts. You must drive home ideas into them” (Guzmán, 1988).

In fact, some authors (i.e., La Serna, 2012; Starn et al., 1994) have pointed out that the subordination of the individual to the party aimed not only to erase feudalist-capitalist alienation, but also to promote a cult of personality around Guzmán. In Scott Palmer’s (1992) words: “Shining Path is fundamentally the creation of one person, Professor Abimael Guzmán Reynoso” (p. 261).

Although Maoism insisted on the relevance of the peasantry, Mariátegui’s contribution helped Shining Path articulate a novel conception of the Indian. As previously explained, Mariátegui highlighted the importance of indigenous mobilizations within the socialist revolutions of Latin America and considered Indians to be the proletariat (i.e., the revolutionary subject) of Peru (Mariátegui, 1974). Equating Indians with the proletariat and emphasizing the relevance of the peasantry under Mao’s thought initially contributed to the neutralization of the Indian as an indigenous subject. This would lead to a process whereby the Indian’s identity was based on class, ultimately neglecting his cultural identity and the cultural dimension of his grievances. In fact, Shining Path presented ethnicity—as well as feminism—as a “secondary contradiction,” which should be subordinated to the material class dimension (López López, 2017; Starn et al., 1994, p. 19):

The war is directed by the proletariat and is starred by the peasantry. The peasantry is the base of the national democratic revolution and is the base of the popular war. This war is a peasant war or is not a war at all. (Guzmán, 1976)

Although Shining Path emphasized the importance of the Indian in the revolutionary process, its hierarchical structure—always helmed by Guzmán, seconded by a select group of academics—excluded Indians from the most critical political decisions. Shining Path was concentrated around a hermetic central committee perpetually distanced from the military struggle and thus limited to a planning role, leaving the implementation of its decisions to the militants themselves. According to Starn (1995), this behavior reflected a silent racism because, “despite claims of radical upheaval, the new party’s internal organization replicated the colonial stratification of regional society: a privileged elite of white professionals commanded a mass of brown-skinned youth of humble origin” (p. 93).

In fact, even the design of the political education process, which was directed by professors in the rural zones, illustrated the vertical structure of the organization and the apparent separation between Shining Path’s “academy” and its armed wing (CVR, 2003b, pp. 19–21):

The revolution in the country, the destruction of the feudal system and imperialism can only be achieved through a democratic national revolution lead by the proletariat. The proletariat, in order to fulfil its historical role, should ally with the peasantry. The peasantry outnumbers the proletariat but it doesn’t lead the process. (Guzmán, 1974)

Marxist doctrine commands that a party must organize and indoctrinate its members. Although Mao’s revolutionary tactics are based on this Marxist conception, he further stated that revolutionary violence is necessary to maintain the purity of the organization and to prevent the emergence of revisionist anti-revolutionary elements (Griffith, 1961). As a result of this unlimited use of violence within and without the movement, Degregori (1988, 1991) labeled Guzmán’s political project as an “authoritarian Utopia” (p. 245).

In any case, this idea promotes violence as central to Maoist thought and, consequently, to Shining Path’s “from the countryside to the city” guerrilla strategy. The actual implementation of this tactic affected indigenous populations in several ways. First, they were exposed to the government’s brutal response as the Senderistas hid in rural zones once the cities were attacked. Second, the repression experienced by indigenous populations was heavily influenced by the revisionist paranoia previously mentioned. Thus, indigenous people became the target of violence by both Shining Path and the government. Whereas the former tried to lure the Indians into their cadres and punished them when they refused to cooperate, the latter treated them as potential Senderistas.

Nonetheless, Indians should not be considered passive subjects incapable of developing their own political agency. On the contrary, researchers have studied, for example, the rondas campesinas, communal organizations initially aimed at providing security against the abigeos (robbers), which eventually established themselves as useful groups against Shining Path, especially during Alberto Fujimori’s presidency (e.g., Degregori et al., 1996; Stern, 1998). In fact, Starn (1993) explains that the rondas should not be approached
solely as a response to the Shining Path threat, but as two different phenomena intentionally conflated by the Peruvian government. Similarly, Méndez-Gastelumendi has examined the long-standing relation between military authorities and indigenous communities in Peru, focusing on the 19th-century independence war. In particular, she has described the establishment of guerrilla-war strategies against the Spanish troops through efficient communication between soldiers, local leaders, and insurgent groups (Méndez-Gastelumendi, 2011). As a result of this organization, Shining Path’s hegemony in Ayacucho was increasingly jeopardized, forcing an eventual strategic redirection of the military operations from the countryside to Lima.

However, the idea of preserving the purity of the revolution, implementing extreme revisionism, and justifying the use of violence is not entirely new, although it was exacerbated within Pensamiento Gonzalo. The ideology justified repression, with the argument that it helped maintain the “purity of the revolution” at all times. In this sense, repression could be considered a consequence of revisionist paranoia because the revolution became a categorical imperative that must be defended: “war is an absolute necessity for the realization of our revolution” (Guzmán, 1974). Some analysts indeed suggest that Shining Path’s ideology was characterized by its “impurity fear” and that, as a result, the movement constructed a discourse leaving no room for nuances (Krehoff, 2006). In fact, the idea of the “two-front fight” borrowed from Maoism implied the existence of a Black-or-White reality in which the Pensamiento Gonzalo ideology was given absolute preponderance.

This revisionist paranoia would clearly endanger not only indigenous populations, but also Peruvian civil society as a whole. However, indigenous communities paid a particularly high price: As guerrilla warfare started in rural areas, where the majority of Indians lived, these populations were often the victims of the violence targeted at revisionism. For instance, in 1983, 80 peasants were killed in Lucanamarca because they were regarded as collaborators of the Peruvian government (Starn, 1995). In 1993, 55 Ashaninkas were murdered in Satipo after they refused to join Shining Path, who later severed the ears of 14 hospitalized children (“55 indios asháninkas . . . ,” 1993).

Furthermore, the establishment of a “blood quota” by the guerrilla’s leaders left indigenous communities in a vulnerable position as war became the primary revolutionary tool. In fact, Shining Path leaders maintained that the eventual triumph of the revolution could not be achieved without an “inevitable blood bath” (Degregori, 2000).

Thus, Shining Path exploited the indigenous communities’ demands and grievances that aligned with its political project. The organization was particularly successful in attracting youth in the Andean regions, who, as a result of the cultural and political situation, felt unrooted and demanded security against common crime (Degregori, 1988, 1991). In fact, Degregori signals a relevant parallelism in Shining Path’s and Maoist discourses as the insurgent organization became a “good landlord,” which protected the people from bandits and bad local bosses—referring to them as the evil shenshi of Maoist thought (Degregori, 1988, p. 43).

Although the indigenous communities’ claims to the right to land and autonomy were defended as causes of the peasantry, Abimael Guzmán only initially recognized the existence of an “indigenous” dimension of the revolution:

Despite the rhetorical recognition of the indigenous dimension of the revolution in Guzmán’s discourse, in practical terms, the indigenous population’s demands were excluded from Shining Path’s political programs and Indians were seen as potential cadre members inside the organization. Shining Path exploited one of the indigenous communities’ main grievances, the demand for the fair redistribution of land, and emphasized its material significance in lieu of its cultural dimension: Whereas indigenous people considered their land to be at the center of their identity and way of life, Shining Path saw it as an assertion of the peasantry.

Simultaneously, Shining Path believed that guerrilla warfare should not be reduced to military actions as its ultimate goal was to transform the society in which it developed:

[... ] revolutionary war is never confined within the bounds of military action. Because its purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and to replace them with a completely new state structure, any revolutionary war is a unity of which the constituent parts, in varying importance, are military, political, economic, social, and psychological. (Griffith, 1961, p. 7)

This idea would then be developed and adapted by Abimael Guzmán in his concept of “generated organizations.” These organizations were meant to replace the institutions that remained from the old political order; hence, Shining Path would implicitly neglect any other kind of organization, including indigenous ones. This is especially noteworthy as organizations provided logistical and financial support for Senderistas and potential Shining Path members. These organizations rejected revisionism, a key aspect of Maoism, which is crucial to understanding Shining Path. In this sense, the defeat of the old political order not only implied the replacement of its institutions, but also the establishment of a unique and valid revolutionary struggle, that of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This posed an immediate threat to Indigenism, as any claim beyond the material dimension of the class struggle was seen as revisionism and, consequentially, had to be depurated because it potentially jeopardized Shining Path’s revolution.
As evidenced by the preceding analysis, Shining Path was the product of a radical application of Maoist principles and the tertigiveness of Mariátegui’s analysis of the Peruvian reality. First, the “re-education” of Indians was implemented in a paternalistic manner, neglecting any real participation or inclusion of their identity-related grievances. Whereas Valcárcel, Uriel, and Mariátegui stated that the urban intelligentsia should guide the revolution, Shining Path treated Indians as mere peasant soldiers, obviating their indigeneity. Second, repression and violence were portrayed as necessary to achieve the revolution and maintain its purity: For Shining Path, violent war was the only method for changing the status quo, and whoever challenged this idea was considered an enemy. This created a scenario under which extreme violence was legitimated as a means to obtain the Senderistas’ longed-for political change.

Mallon (1995) emphasized the continuity between the Peruvian left-wing authors and politicians concerning political relations with the indigenous communities:

The lack of dialogue between the opposition political groups and the indigenous traditions and practices would be, therefore, an important characteristic of the Peruvian political process along the 20th Century. The discourse of a classist and militant left wing, reproduced this lack of dialogue during the 60’s and 70’s. During the 80’s, the Shining Path view about popular war would turn this blindness and lack of dialogue in active contempt. In fact, within the Shining Path strategy of the total war and the blood quota, culture and communal politics should be smashed like an insect. (p. 122)

Other authors have gone further, considering that Shining Path’s influences can be tracked down to the very origins of Peru (Stern, 1998). De la Cadena (1998) exposes how Shining Path shared an evolutionist view of Indians with the conservative intelligentsia, sustained by the belief that “the inferiority of indigenous pre-rational knowledge unquestionably and absolutely subordinated ‘that’ society to their intellectual and social paradigms” (pp. 158–159). More concretely, this author affirms that both projects reflected a European form of exclusion called “racism without race,” a continuum that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century (De la Cadena, 1998, p. 160; Stolcke, 1995). Complementarily, Starn (1995) goes a step further and states that Shining Path’s theoretical inspiration was rooted more deeply in “the Enlightenment imperatives of reason and progress” and the Judeo-Christian tradition of salvation than in an original Peruvian experience of Marxism (p. 400).

Conclusion

This article studied the formation and evolution of Pensamiento Gonzalo during the Shining Path uprising. More specifically, the research focused on the ideological background of the 20th century, arguing that Shining Path’s political thought was the result of a gradual adaptation and radicalization of early 20th-century Peruvian thought on indigenous national identity, increasingly combined with socialist ideology.

The article first examined Valcárcel, Uriel, and González Prada, who recognized the relevance of Indians to Peruvian society and the need for strong leadership by the urban intelligentsia to reeducate Indians and lead them to a political uprising. In the words of Valcárcel (1971), “the Indigenous proletariat awaits its Lenin” (p. 29).

This article subsequently described how Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui were involved in the adaption of socialist thought to a Latin American reality, confronting Pan-American socialism with national communism. Mariátegui considered Indians to be the genuine revolutionary subjects of Peru and therefore the only political actor capable of igniting a socialist eruption. However, he believed that, because of their semifeudal and capitalist alienation, Indians required the leadership of the proletariat, who were more conscious of the socioeconomic structure oppressing the Peruvian population and aware of the revolutionary path leading to socialism.

Finally, Abimael Guzmán’s incorporation of Maoist theory exacerbated the peasant character of Indians, rejecting their indigenous nature and submitting them to a materialist analysis. In addition, Pensamiento Gonzalo’s anti-revisionist campaign provoked the violent repression of indigenous culture, which was perceived to contribute to an anti-revolutionary discourse created to demobilize the Peruvian peasantry. Coupled with “from the countryside to the city” guerrilla warfare, these ideas dramatically radicalized the revolutionary process, both outside and inside Shining Path.

In this sense, this article demonstrated the continuity between the first studies of González Prada, Valcárcel, and Uriel at the beginning of the 20th century and the ideological basis of Shining Path’s Pensamiento Gonzalo. This continuity can be summarized by three characteristics: (a) the recognition of Indians—peasants as the main subjects of political change, (b) the necessity of overthrowing the establishment and creating a new society, and (c) the natural leadership of a more illustrated and politicized minority. Table 1 illustrates this process.

Concerning the first characteristic, the indigenous population was unanimously recognized as the key subject in the transformation of Peruvian society. However, the original conception of Indians promoted by Valcárcel and Uriel García was increasingly replaced by the notion of “peasants,” which was better suited to Haya de la Torre’s and Mariátegui’s socialist ideology. This process in turn influenced Abimael Guzmán’s Pensamiento Gonzalo that rejected and repressed any non-peasant conception of indigenous people.

The second characteristic, closely related to the first, illustrates the relevance of the socialist ideas that were progressively introduced in Peru. In this sense, cultural conceptions of the reconstruction of the Inca Empire or the generation of new, more inclusive identities were replaced by materialist interpretations focused on a revolution capable of overthrowing the
Leadership: Peruvian intelligentsia

Main objective of the revolution: Recovery of the Tahuantinsuyo

Construction of a new Peruvian identity

Subject of political change: Indians

Indians/peasants

Socialist revolution

Peasants

Socialist revolution

Leadership

Proletariat

Proletariat (headed by Shining Path)


demi feudal capitalist Peruvian state. As a result, the Indian problem was gradually replaced by the “land problem.”

Finally, this article demonstrated that the 20th-century Peruvian authors shared a negative—or at least pessimistic—opinion of the Indians’ political vision: Despite being the most relevant subject in the country, the Indians were thought to lack the political mobilization and historical perspective necessary to foster the emergence of the new Peruvian society. As long as they remained unaware of their own oppression and ignored the origins of their problems, they would remain politically demobilized. Therefore, González Prada, Valcárcel, and Uriel García—and, later, Mariátegui and Guzmán—maintained that the first efforts to organize the indigenous communities should be led by a nonindigenous and non-peasant minority which, thanks to its superior understanding of the Peruvian reality, could ignite the indigenous uprising.

Consequently, Pensamiento Gonzalo’s Shining Path was not a rara avis, but the result of the progressive adaptation and further exacerbation of the first attempts at answering the “Indian problem” in Peruvian society at the beginning of the 20th century. Abimael Guzmán thus understood Peru within a very specific conception of socialist ideology, which resorted to a strict materialist analysis, redefining Indians as peasants who required the leadership of the proletariat (incarnated by Shining Path) to overthrow the capitalist state and establish a revolutionary communist government.

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