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Peruvian Rebels' Influence

Extends to Lima's Doorstep

Economic Crisis Said to Benefit Guerrillas

By Eugene Robinson
Washington Post Foreign Service

HUAYCAN, Peru—In this forsaken little settlement a dozen miles outside Lima lies Peru's latest nightmare.

One day a few weeks ago, according to Huaycan residents, Shining Path revolutionaries incited a raid on the potato fields of a local landowner. Hundreds of people—whether afraid of Shining Path, sympathetic to the insurgents or just desperately hungry—ripped the potatoes out of the ground and carted them off.

It seems a minor incident, except that Huaycan is at the por-

tails of Lima on the Central Highway along which much of Lima's industry lies. The road also links the capital with the agricultural valley that supplies much of Lima's food. Huaycan's walls are covered with Shining Path graffiti, and observers of the group say the town is becoming a stronghold of the guerrillas.

The nightmare is that with Peru's economy in shambles and poverty deepening, the millions living in shantytowns and hamlets around Lima will turn to Shining Path as a viable alternative, or at least not oppose the guerrillas when they appear—that soon

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Peruvian Economic Crisis Feeds Fears of Guerrillas Gaining Popular Support

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there might not be one Huaycan, but hundreds.

"That's what I worry about," said Carlos Ivan Degregori, a scholar with the Institute of Peruvian Studies. "We're in such a hypercrisis, such a situation without hope, that many people see no exit. I fear that Shining Path can get neutrality or even sympathy from some poor sectors, especially young people."

Until now mostly a rural phenomenon, the guerrilla insurgency not only has launched a major new offensive in the countryside in recent months but has stepped up its activities in metropolitan Lima, where nearly a third of Peru's 20 million people live.

Shining Path is held responsible for assassinating 17 mayors of Andean towns last year and has stepped up killings of soldiers and policemen. The guerrilla group also has shown a new presence in coastal regions to the north and south of the capital, and along the length of the Central Highway heading east. The pattern formed is a rough semicircle around Lima.

Some see the campaign as a genuine attempt to surround and strangle the capital. Others scoff at the notion that Shining Path is that powerful, and see instead an effort to provoke a military coup—which the guerrillas would see as hastening their intended revolution.

Shining Path has described its philosophy as the fullest development of "scientific" communist thought, a step beyond Maoism. It addresses Peru's racial divisions by claiming to champion the poor Indian minority.

As difficult as the group's ideas and methods might be to understand, even for Peruvians, there is a developing consensus here that the government of President Alan Garcia is losing ground in the war against Shining Path. Most of the country's population lives under a state of emergency, and Garcia has given the armed forces and police a virtual free hand in the battle.

This month, the government tried to regain the initiative by announcing a "total war" against subversion and appropriating \$21 million for arms and equipment. Prime Minister Armando Villanueva said about 14,000 lives have been lost to political violence since 1985 and called on all political parties to join a national effort against Shining Path and smaller guerrilla groups.

Shining Path is thought to include no more than 3,000 armed guerrillas but to have 10 times that many sympathizers. The government has been accused of repeated human rights violations in which innocents are killed. The guerrillas' influence continues to spread.

"We will not win with the rifle," said retired Gen. Adrian Huaman, former leader of the war against Shining Path, in an interview with

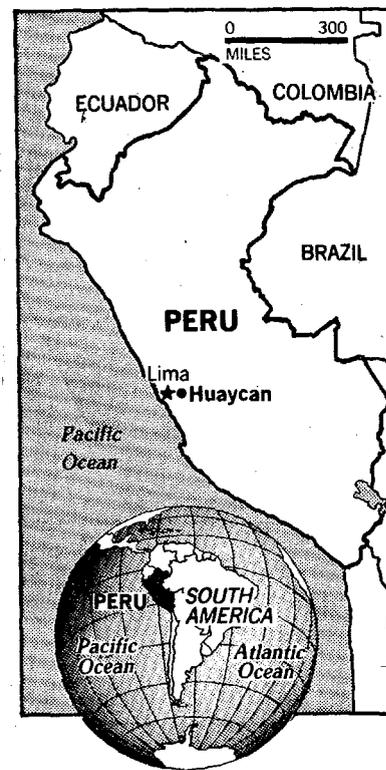
the newspaper La Republica. "What we have to do is influence the people, . . . convince them that the current system is better." Huaman's view of the problem as political rather than military was largely responsible for his losing his command nearly five years ago.

Shining Path has spread from its birthplace in the mountain city of Ayacucho, southeast of Lima, up the spine of the Andes into northern Peru and the Upper Huallaga Valley—source of up to half the world's supply of cocaine. There the guerrillas are reported to act as intermediaries, winning for the peasants higher prices for their coca leaves from drug traffickers.

The drug trade is potentially a vast source of funds for Shining Path, and the weaponry the group might be able to purchase is of great concern to the 15 to 20 U.S.-Drug Enforcement Administration agents who are actively supporting Peruvian authorities in their campaign to eradicate coca in the valley.

The nine U.S. helicopters used in the campaign "get shot at all the time," by both traffickers and Shining Path, said Craig Chretien, chief DEA agent here. But so far, he said, agents have not encountered sophisticated weaponry. "We really wonder where the money's going," Chretien said.

Shining Path's weapons of choice are dynamite—plentiful in this mining nation—and arms that they



BY LARRY FOGEL—THE WASHINGTON POST

steal from soldiers and police. The group is not known to receive any aid from outside the country.

The history and evolution of Shining Path are complex.

The full name of the group is the Communist Party of Peru for the Shining Path of Jose Carlos Mariategui. Mariategui was a journalist and political scientist of the 1920s

to whom all of Peru's leftist factions pay homage.

Shining Path originated in Ayacucho, a mountain city of 100,000 residents who are more likely to speak the Indian language Quechua than Spanish. It is home to the University of Huamanga—a venerable school that in the late 1960s and 1970s came under the control of a formal, rather authoritarian academic named Abimael Guzman.

Guzman is now known by the nom de guerre "Comrade Gonzalo." Some think him dead, but most believe he is alive and at the helm of the insurgency he created. His ideology was rooted in Chinese communism.

Shining Path, according to the scant public record, considers the "Gang of Four" of Cultural Revolution fame as heroes and the current Chinese leadership "revisionist." The group's first violent action, destruction of ballot boxes, occurred on May 17, 1980.

Shining Path uses Peru's ethnic divisions and racism to advantage, proclaiming itself the avatar of the disadvantaged Indian millions, long ignored or oppressed by Lima's Spanish-origin elite. It also seeks to evoke the days of the Inca empire's glory.

Shining Path operates through small cells, and tries both to win the loyalty of villagers and to intimidate them. In some remote areas, where the Peruvian state has never had

much of a presence, Shining Path has in effect become the law. Townspeople know the guerrillas will protect them if they cooperate and kill them if they do not.

Few believe that Shining Path can "win," in a classic military sense. But at the same time, few believe the insurgency can be eliminated anytime soon.

And since the capital is assumed to be Shining Path's ultimate goal, in many ways the most important battles now being fought are in places like Huaycan.

Few in the bootstrap shantytown of 24,000 are willing to talk about Huaycan's notoriety as a haven for Shining Path. People seem more concerned with daily life. The government provides Huaycan with virtually nothing. Townspeople are on their own, and are proud, for example, of the three communal dining rooms they have built.

"It's a shame this reputation has to come to us, we who are already suffering so much," said Miguel Espejo, 22, who works for the Roman Catholic parish. "We would like to concentrate on the positive things we are doing, but people in Lima now automatically say Huaycan and Shining Path in the same breath.

"Yes, Shining Path is here. Not a majority, just a few, but they are here. But what I think is that this place is like everywhere else. I think you can find Shining Path anywhere."