

Peru's Shining Path: near the end?

Luis Vásquez Medina explains why their Maoist origins—though denied by U.S. 'experts'—may be precisely the reason their time is running out.

When the Peruvian police raided a luxurious mansion on the outskirts of Lima before dawn June 1, culminating a lengthy intelligence operation, they were greatly surprised to find the "general archives" and "Museum of Military Campaigns" of the Shining Path terrorists. The residence, in one of Lima's most exclusive neighborhoods, had been the site of the latest national congress of Shining Path's Communist Party of Peru at the end of 1989.

During the ensuing days, another four houses, all in wealthy parts of the city, fell into police hands. According to the police, more than 100 people were arrested, including no less than three members of the terrorists' central committee and practically the whole logistics, finances, and documentation staff of Ibero-America's bloodiest narco-communist organization.

The most significant find were the files showing the real identities of the band's top and middle-level commanders and listings of legal fronts providing backup to the terrorists and of people cadre should turn to in event of emergencies. According to the Lima press, the names and addresses of prominent Peruvian political leaders appear on the list.

Demonic destruction

Ten years ago, dogs were found hung from Lima telephone poles with signs reading "Deng Xiaoping, traitor to Mao." It was the announcement of the beginning of Shining Path's armed struggle, which has since then caused the country 18,000 deaths and \$15 billion in material losses. The terrorists fire-bombed factories, dynamited hundreds of electrical transmission towers, and bombed research centers. They raged particularly against agricultural experimentation stations in the backward highlands region. Their systematic liquidation of these centers and murders of hundreds of extension agents and teachers have thrown Peru back at least a decade in agricultural development, something really demonic in a country in which the majority suffers from malnutrition.

Shining Path insists that it is a strictly Peruvian movement, without international connections and support structures. U.S. government "Shining Path experts" such as D. Scott Palmer and Cynthia McClintock have long vouched for its "autochthonous" nature. In fact, Shining Path's origins

and current development are tightly linked to the international communist movement.

In the Shining Path of Bukharin

Shining Path is the belated product of the "Bukharinite" line expounded in the famous "Congress of the Oriental Peoples" convoked by the Communist International (Comintern) in the the Soviet city Baku in July, 1920. That heterodox position argued that world revolution would necessarily advance by means of revolutions in the backward colonial and neo-colonial countries. To accomplish this, the Bukharinites contend, Marxists should take into account millenarian autochthonous ideologies, which in syncretism with Marxism could forge an alliance between the immense peasant masses of those countries and their incipient worker vanguards.

For many Marxists, the Chinese Revolution of 1949 confirmed this hypothesis. And, in fact, the leadership of the first socialist revolution in a backward country was trained in the Bukharin line by Borodin.

The founder of the Peruvian Communist Party, José Carlos Mariátegui, argued the same thesis in the 1928 Comintern at which the South American branch of Comintern was formed. The core strategy Mariátegui propounded in his writings was that the path to socialist revolution in Peru would not begin with the small and incipient working class, but from messianic rebellions of the backward Indian majority seeking to reestablish the Incan society which existed before the Spanish Conquest.

He founded the Peruvian Communist Party on that idea. When the split between China and the Soviet Union took place in 1964, the Maoists took a larger ratio of the Peruvian Communist Party than in any other country outside of China. Mariátegui's *Seven Essays on the Peruvian Reality* was the bestseller at the colleges. A faction calling itself "In the Shining Path of José Carlos Mariátegui" was born inside the Maoist Red Fatherland party. In 1970, it split out under the name "Communist Party of Peru: In the Shining Path of José Carlos Mariátegui," presenting itself as the most radical and authentic followers of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

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Between 1966 and 1970, there took place in Peru what a Rand Corp. sociologist called “the biggest peasant revolts of the century aside from the Chinese Revolution.” More than 3 million Indian peasants mobilized for invasions of large landed estates. Abimael Guzmán’s group, which was involved in the ferment, grew stronger during this period. Intelligence reports from the period speak of the presence of Chinese advisers in the Peruvian countryside. This peasant wave was only brought under control by Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado’s 1969 agrarian reform.

The links between Abimael Guzmán, or “President Gonzalo,” as he prefers to be called, with the Beijing cliques were confirmed by the many gifts from China exhibited in the Shining Path museum which police discovered on raiding their Lima headquarters June 1.

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There *does* exist an ultra-radical communist international, whose roots are in the Beijing soil which has protected Shining Path from its inception. This Maoist international, which orchestrates the Shining Path support campaign in Europe and in the United States, has held two international congresses in London, with the participation of Shining Path, the Sikh terrorists from India, the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, the Revolutionary Communist Party of the United States, among others.

Abimael Guzmán began as a former professor specializing in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. From the time he came to the University of Huamanga in the backward Andean city of Ayacucho in the 1960s, he delved into Indian messianism. That is the “blood and soil” ideology which supports a revanchist utopia of the Indian race for the resurrection of the Incan Empire. The role of the University of Huamanga and the stream of U.S. and French anthropologists who worked there was vital for the design of Shining Path as an ethnic separatist movement.

The myth through which Shining Path manipulates the Indian population is the “Inkari” myth, according to which the Spanish, in order to consolidate their conquest after killing the Inca (in 1533) dismembered the Inca’s cadaver and buried the pieces in the far corners of Peru. The myth says that from the moment in which Mother Earth (*Pachamama*) embraced the remains of her son, the Inca, the pieces of the cadaver began to move under the earth with the intention of reuniting. Once the corpse of the Inca is complete, the body will resurrect itself and the redemption of the Indian race will be a reality. Shining Path tells the Indians that that moment is about to come and to accelerate it, “the earth must be bathed with blood.”

Shining Path is finished

Abimael Guzmán, according to the best intelligence sources, is about to die. It is known that he has suffered from a rare form of leukemia of the red blood cells for more than 15 years, which should now be in its final stages, if it has not finished off the criminal. His wife, Alejandra La Torre, who lives in exile in Sweden, surreptitiously entered Peru a few months ago with the intent to bid him adieu. It is believed that her entry was detected and was one of the tracks which led police to the safehouse and the capture of the Shining Path files.

Neither the death of its founder, nor a successful but isolated police action, could assure Shining Path’s destruction. Hopes for a prompt victory here in Peru are encouraged by other more profound aspects on the international plane. The Tiananmen Square student rebellion and the unmasking of the oppression of the Chinese people, has had enormous effects on the minds of young Peruvian students. All the propaganda of a bucolic Communist China in which everyone was well-fed and happy was nullified, the moment television transmitted the images of Chinese tanks rolling over students who demanded liberty and progress for their people.

Although Shining Path has mobilized thousands of miserable and backward peasants as cannon fodder, hundreds of its leaders were recruited in the country’s universities, including the most prestigious private colleges. Today, according to military intelligence reports, Shining Path’s recruitment in Lima universities is practically nil.

Massive desertions of the gang’s cadre have taken place during the past few weeks. In Ayacucho, dozens of their military cadre turned themselves in to the Peruvian army. On May 17, Shining Path’s tenth anniversary, a leaflet appeared in Ayacucho announcing that a faction was laying down arms and quitting the battle. Two of the top Shining Path leaders operating out of Europe, the anthropologist Julio Casanova and Luis Kawuata, also announced their separation from Shining Path in late May. They claimed that other leaders were using the movement’s funds, gathered from its cooperation with cocaine trafficking, for their personal benefit, putting them in bank accounts outside Peru.