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## THE WORLD; In Peru's Shining Path, U.S. Sees Road to Ruin

By BARBARA CROSSETTE

In Congress, the State Department, the Organization of American States and private research and human rights organizations, the sense is growing that the astonishing momentum being shown by the Shining Path rebellion in Peru is the toughest post-cold war policy test on the horizon for the Western Hemisphere. "Put out of your mind the F.M.L.N., the Sandinistas, the M-19 of Colombia and other South American insurgencies," Bernard W. Aronson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, told a recent Congressional hearing. "Sendero Luminoso is in a category by itself."

"Make no mistake," he warned. "The result could be genocide" if Sendero Luminoso -- the Shining Path -- were to take power in Peru. Quoting Shining Path's leader, Abimael Guzman, the Assistant Secretary said the movement believes in the violent replacement of one class by another -- to remake Peruvian society just as the Khmer Rouge set out to reduce Cambodia to the Year Zero. "The revolution will triumph, according to Guzman, after the Peruvian people 'cross over the river of blood,' " Mr. Aronson said.

According to Gabriela Tarazona-Sevillano, a Peruvian visiting professor of international studies at Davidson College in North Carolina, the insurgency already controls one-third of Peru, and the Government has placed territory with more than half the population under a state of emergency. Testifying before the House subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs, Professor Tarazona-Sevillano said Shining Path's beliefs are a political synthesis based on the thinking of Marx, Lenin, Mao and the Peruvian philosopher Jose Carlos Mariategui. Many of its adherents are descendants of indigenous Indian people who have for centuries nurtured a resentment of the mestizo descendants of Spanish conquerors.

Shining Path's brutality is deplored by human rights organizations and

governments alike, and they hold no hope of bringing it into the political mainstream. Its tactics include the burning of ballot boxes and the public "executions" of moderate local leaders and others, including nuns and priests, who are seen as rivals for the allegiance of the poor. In wildly exaggerated demonstrations of Maoist precepts, children have been killed for political "crimes." Amnesty International says the guerrillas routinely torture, mutilate and murder captives. More than 23,000 people are thought to have died in a decade. Provoking Repression

"Acts of sabotage and extreme violence are deliberately used to provoke violent responses on the part of the state, further exacerbating the rift between civil society and the nation's security forces," Alexander Wilde, executive director of the liberal Washington Office on Latin America, told members of Congress. In reacting to Shining Path's brutality, Peru's military has spread its own "climate of terror," Amnesty International said in a report in November. Ambushes have been met with army massacres. Most victims are poor Indian peasants in rural areas, where whole villages have been punished by troops led by urbanized upper-class officers.

Experts agree that Shining Path is self-sustaining, earning the money it needs through the narcotics trade. It appears to have no direct backing from abroad, giving Washington no leverage through third countries.

If fears are growing in Washington, so is a sense of helplessness. What can stop a self-generating movement like this? Victory for Shining Path would bring "a major test of the new world order," said Representative Robert G. Torricelli, a New Jersey Democrat who heads the House Western Hemisphere subcommittee. "What is the responsibility of the international community when a terrorist movement takes over a country?"

At the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based forum for leaders from the Americas, a formal study will ask whether concepts of sovereignty have changed enough in recent years that collective outside responses to internal crises might be workable. Those who believe the climate has been altered point to the United Nations' current peace efforts in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, or the efforts of the O.A.S. to bring compromise to Haiti. Skeptics, however, counter with fears that Latin America's nationalistic armies may be dangerously unready, and no one seems prepared to propose an international mission to Peru.

In Congress, parallels are frequently drawn between Peru now and Cambodia

in the early 1970's -- often from different political viewpoints. In 1973, unwilling to sustain an American war in Cambodia against Vietnamese Communist sanctuaries and supply routes, or the Cambodian Government's war against the Khmer Rouge, Congress cut off all money for Cambodia's defense. Many critics of the Vietnam War cheered, thinking the Khmer Rouge would be better than the Lon Nol regime.

Last fall, citing human rights abuses by the Peruvian military and fearing that the United States would be drawn into another foreign war, this time against Shining Path in the cocaine production center known as the Upper Huallaga Valley, Congress curtailed military assistance to Peru over the objections of the Bush Administration. Some American involvement in narcotics eradication continues, however.

"To confront drug trafficking in Peru is to confront Sendero," Mr. Aronson says. That is what worries members of Congress. Mr. Torricelli describes United States narcotics agents as "sitting ducks" in somebody else's war. "Perhaps we should be involved in the effort to defeat Shining Path," Mr. Torricelli told Mr. Aronson. "Perhaps we should not. But the one thing that we must avoid is getting involved through the back door. We have been down that road before."

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A version of this article appears in print on March 22, 1992, on Page 4004002 of the National edition with the headline: THE WORLD; In Peru's Shining Path, U.S. Sees Road to Ruin.

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