

# Peruvian Rebel Offers Grim Prophecy

## Shining Path Leader, in Rare Interview

By Michael L. Smith

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Abimael Guzmán, the shadowy leader of Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, has broken a 10-year public silence to deliver a chillingly detailed vision of revolutionary change for this battered South American country.

In a lengthy interview published last month by a Lima newspaper, the elusive chief of Latin America's most fanatical insurgency discussed his group's violent ideology and its repercussions on fragile democratic institutions. He said Peru is headed for wholesale conflict marked by armed uprisings among workers and the dispossessed.

The interview appeared to dampen prolonged speculation that Guzman, 53, might have been seriously ill, smuggled out of the country for safekeeping, or was dead. He is known to suffer from a blood disorder that requires regular medical treatment. His last known appearance occurred in January 1979, when he was briefly detained by police.

The 41-page interview appeared on July 26 in the Lima tabloid *El Diario*, which over the last two years has become a mouthpiece for Shining Path. Some critics doubted reporters had actually interviewed Guzman in person. They noted no photographs were offered. But most analysts have accepted the text as an authentic expression of Guzman's thinking as well as an inimitable performance by the guerrilla leader.

Better known to his followers as Chairman Gonzalo, Guzman sounded upbeat about the prospects of a collapse of resistance to his guerrilla forces. "The crisis conditions into which the outmoded system of Peruvian society has entered indicate that these decisive years will accelerate conditions and develop the revolutionary situation powerfully," he was quoted as saying.

Guzman, who once taught philosophy at the National University of Huamanga in Ayacucho, gave a pedagogical explanation of Marxist ideology, party organization and guerrilla tactics, and also demonstrated an acute reading of Peruvian politics.

He seemed to be moving up his own timetable for revolution, since he refrained from referring to long periods of a "prolonged people's war." He was quoted as saying the party must prepare now for the final assault.

"Our process of the people's war has led us toward the apex. Consequently, we have to prepare for insurrection, which will be the taking of the cities," he said.

In anticipation of this coming stage of warfare, Guzman leveled criticism against shortcomings in his own organization, saying it has not made enough inroads in urban centers: "The majority of our militancy is peasantry, and a limitation which we have is the insufficient number of workers."

Reasserting an apocalyptic prophecy of Shining Path taking power some day, Guzman tried to reassure Peruvians that a future guerrilla government would respect both religious freedom and the rights of small property holders.

One question raised by the interview is how Guzman expects to sustain his revolution without international allies. He had scathing criticism of communist leaders from Cuba's Fidel Castro to China's Deng Xiaoping for yielding to the corrosive effects of revisionism.

Guzman said ideological purity was necessary to maintain the Peruvian party's independence and self-reliance.

Veteran watchers of Shining Path's evolution noted Guzman's silence on one particular subject. In early June, Peruvian antiterrorist police captured the guerrilla group's top military commander, Osman Morote, in a combination of intelligence work, good fortune and a glaring breach of guerrilla security measures.

Morote, long Guzman's closest collaborator, was nabbed at a safehouse with four others and more than 40 notebooks detailing the group's organization and internal debates.

"Guzman had to make a public appearance to shore up morale and reassure cadres and followers that someone was in command of the apparatus," said Federico Velarde, a political analyst.

While Guzman may indeed have broken his silence due to Morote's capture, the interview was also a natural step for the guerrilla leader, given the higher public profile his movement has taken over the past 12 months.

Previously, Shining Path looked down on political activities that were not directly linked to armed struggle. The group's estimated 1,000 to 3,000 combatants confined guerrilla actions to the countryside, except for political sabotage and selective assassination in cities to make its presence felt in the political system. The organization and its top leader consistently refused any contact with the media and rarely claimed responsibility for attacks.

Shining Path formally calls itself the Communist Party of Peru, although it disclaims any international communist affiliation. Its cadres now are battling both the ruling APRA party and the socialist United Left coalition in unions, university student bodies and shantytown organizations.

In April, Shining Path joined a coalition of radicalized students that won student elections at Lima's San Marcos University, the oldest and largest in the country.