

## Andean Report by Carlos Potes

### Economic integration idea is back

*A new consensus on jointly renegotiating debt has surfaced in Peru and been echoed in Bolivia.*

After Peruvian President-elect Alán García Páerez's recent call for "a change of attitude toward our creditors and the IMF," both Peru and the entire Andean region have again taken up proposals for economic integration and joint debt renegotiation along the lines of Lyndon LaRouche's 1982 *Operation Juárez*. When 96% of the Peruvian population voted against the incumbent government in the first round of elections April 14, a major obstacle to such initiatives was removed: The ousted Belaúnde government had kept Peru squarely on the side of Ibero-America's creditors, and now the Peruvians have clearly demanded anti-IMF action of the incoming government.

The new consensus on the debt was endorsed by the head of the Peruvian Catholic Church, Cardinal Juan Landazuri Ricketts, who emerged from a meeting with García Pérez May 5 saying that "foreign debt payments cannot be serviced by sacrificing our brothers, who need bread and well-being." Cardinal Landazuri told the press that "we have spoken [with García] about the Peruvian situation, and we agree that our Peruvian brothers require first of all a solution to the food problem, rather than give away our resources to foreign interests."

Peruvian Vice-President-elect Luis Alva Castro further elaborated the need for a common Ibero-American position vis-à-vis "the commercial banks and the IMF." Speaking at a meeting of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) held in Santia-

go, Chile, in the first week of May, he said that a solution to Ibero-America's economic crisis "can only be reached by common agreement and joint action of all Latin American countries," and invited the heads of state who will attend García's inauguration in Lima July 28 to take the opportunity for a summit meeting to discuss the debt.

The new political reality which is emerging in the Andean region after the Peruvian elections is typified by statements such as that of Bolivian Ambassador to Mexico Mario Guzmán Galarza, who told *El Sol de México* May 6 that Ibero-America must choose from two options: "To unite and politically negotiate a solution which doesn't cancel democratic life, or, on the other hand, to surrender the interests of every population, and hand the present and the future of the region to selfish and inhuman groups which only see in Latin America a land for conquest."

At the same time, the CEPAL meeting in Santiago concluded that Ibero-American countries must "exert their power of joint negotiation." Also Sebastián Allegret, permanent secretary of the Latin American Economic System (SELA), meeting with García Pérez in Lima May 6, said, "There can be no doubt of the need for joint action . . . international financial authorities must understand Latin America's desperate situation."

Indeed, as the Peruvian case exemplifies, IMF "conditionalities" have brought the region to the threshold of a biological holocaust such as that un-

folding in Africa. Economic conditions for many Peruvians have fallen below the survival limit, with per-capita consumption levels down to 38 grams of protein and less than 1,500 calories a day. Average milk consumption has dropped to 12 liters a year, 10 times less than the recommended international standard. Human consumption of animal feed has become commonplace, and for some families the only source of meat is stray dogs. Another entrée on the IMF "menu" is mashed cardboard, dipped in flour and flavored with salt, onions, and hot pepper.

According to the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development (AID), 10 million Peruvians out of a population of 18 million suffered chronic malnutrition in 1983, and infant mortality was above 100 per thousand children. According to the Medical College of Peru, one out of two children under five years of age is now malnourished. Even AID's statistics, based on grossly underestimated official reports, point to an imminent outbreak of pandemics: Out of every 10,000 Peruvians, 25 have tuberculosis, which claims some 4,000 lives a year. Most cases are attributed to malnutrition.

The Peruvian Foundation for the Control of Malaria and Other Tropical Diseases reports that malaria has reappeared in epidemic proportions. Eighty thousand cases were reported in 1982 alone, and 7 out of 10 inhabitants of jungle areas have contracted it. Malaria, once virtually eradicated, has also broken out elsewhere. Mexico reported 81,640 cases in 1984, up from 25,734 in 1980. Venezuelan Rural Endemics Director Miguel Angel Otero expects "at least 14,000 cases this year." And other diseases once under control, such as yellow fever, whooping cough, sandfly fever, and diphtheria, are making a comeback.