

Andean Report by Mark Sonnenblick

Peru reels from narco-terrorism

The country may yet stem the terrorist tide, now that pro-Soviet Prime Minister Armando Villanueva is out.

On May 8, the Socialist International's top man in Peru, Armando Villanueva, finally resigned from his posts as prime minister and interior minister. Villanueva had managed to cling to power despite tremendous opposition, until terrorists assassinated two congressmen April 27 and May 6. Terrorists have murdered dozens of local officials throughout Peru, but this was the first time they had struck against congressmen.

Pressure for Villanueva's ouster began building March 27, when a 300-man Shining Path battalion lay siege for five hours to the police post in the town of Uchiza, which lies in the heart of the cocaine-producing area, the Upper Huallaga Valley. The police were finally forced to surrender to the narco-terrorists, after Villanueva refused to send reinforcements.

"What happened here was a lack of political decision in response to repeated requests by the zone commander for reinforcements," Gen. Edgardo Mercado Jarrín (ret.) wrote in a Peruvian strategic policy journal in May. "So long as narcotics traffic is not destroyed, so long as [we] do not get tough with narcotics traffic, the possibilities for subversion to expand are much greater."

Terrorist confidence that they could act with impunity under Villanueva was again evidenced April 28. Terrorists had previously moved in small groups disguised as peasants. But now, a uniformed column of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rolled in two trucks and a jeep out of the jungle toward Huancayo, a key central Andean city.

This time, however, the Army intercepted them, killing 62 MRTA soldiers. President Alan García flew to the site, and praised the Army for its action. "This dramatic spectacle is very sad and tragic, but it is necessary for democracy to defend itself, and it is absolutely essential that the Army and elected government of the republic get to work to finish off this threat. While this blow may be one of the strongest, it cannot be the only one," he said.

It may seem obvious that a democracy should defend itself from assassins. But such was not the case under Villanueva, nor is it the case in neighboring Colombia today, where the "human rights" of murderers come first. *EIR's* repeated alerts that terrorism targets the whole Andean Spine were confirmed by the 62 dead MRTA soldiers, six of whom were citizens of Colombia, Bolivia, or Ecuador.

The following day, García flew to the Huallaga Valley for two days of meetings with the military high command. García warned that the terrorists were attempting to seize the cocaine center as their first "liberated territory" in Peru.

"Little by little, subversives who act in other areas of the national territory are converging around Tocache, and if we don't act immediately, we run the risk of seeing the Upper Huallaga converted into an almost independent zone. . . . Narcotics traffic and terrorism intend to make a 'pocket' of this zone from which to feed subversion elsewhere in Peru."

By then, terrorists had begun picking off congressmen. The first victim was Eriberto Arroyo, a Communist

who had recently switched sides to support anti-terrorist peasant militias. The second, May 6, was Pablo Li Ormeño, a member of García's APRA party.

On May 8, Villanueva and the entire cabinet resigned. García named 88-year-old Vice President Luis Alberto Sánchez as prime minister, who pledged, "I want the armed forces and police to understand that Peru is at war against subversion."

Sánchez is the oldest living "State Department socialist" in Ibero-America. Who is named to fill the cabinet posts of Interior and Economics will give a better idea of whether the Sánchez government is prepared to eradicate narco-terrorism. Any attempt to enforce more IMF austerity—policies which Sánchez has been associated with over the years—will tip the balance in favor of the terrorists.

Rumors that former Deputy Interior Minister Agustín Mantilla is under consideration as the next interior minister, sent the terrorists' supporters in the "human rights" lobby screaming. One of Villanueva's first actions was to fire Mantilla, an advocate of tough action against the narco-terrorists.

No matter who is named, the job will not be easy. On May 10, Shining Path launched a three-day general strike in the Huancayo region with 50 bombings of factories, banks, public buildings, and buses. The city of 450,000 people was paralyzed.

As Gen. Mercado Jarrín explained in his analysis, the Huancayo area is Lima's food supply and the source of its water and electricity. "Whoever dominates the central mountain range, dominates the territorial heartland, and whoever dominates the territorial heartland, dominates Peru." Shining Path is everywhere there, in schools, in unions, and in peasant organizations.