

Peruvian government is holding the line against terrorism

by Cynthia Rush

Within days of shutting down the Peruvian Congress and judicial system on April 5, President Alberto Fujimori announced dramatic measures against the country's drug trade and subversive groups. He sent in the Air Force to assume control of the Upper Huallaga Valley, the country's main coca-producing region, and promised to shut down all clandestine airstrips. He also lifted banking secrecy, made money laundering a crime, and fixed tough jail sentences for anyone who protects drug traffickers or terrorists. Police raided the major prisons, where jailed members of the Pol Pot-like Shining Path narco-terrorist group had established "liberated zones" and openly collected weapons and proselytized.

Fujimori's actions, which are backed by 80% of the people, came not a moment too soon. The country's court system was non-functional. Peruvian press has revealed that between 1981 and 1992, the justice system absolved 943 individuals accused of terrorism. Another 989 cases didn't even make it to the courts. Within the past two months, the Supreme Court absolved Shining Path founder Abimael Guzmán of most charges against him. Of 552 terrorists sentenced to jail terms, 219 of them were released in 1991.

Speaking before the emergency session of the Organization of American States (OAS) on April 13, Peruvian Foreign Minister Augusto Blacker Miller told his Ibero-American counterparts that as a result of the narco-terrorist offensive, Peru was "facing the possibility of disintegration as a nation and [loss of] control of its territory."

Destroy the Armed Forces

In the face of the Shining Path onslaught, one might expect the United States to support Peru, help rebuild its Armed Forces, and let up on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) harsh austerity demands. But the Bush administration is doing just the opposite—seeking the destruction of the institution of the Armed Forces to ensure a takeover by Shining Path. What Secretary of State James Baker has achieved in terms of power-sharing arrangements in El Salvador and Nicaragua, in which the FMLN guerrillas and Sandinistas help run their respective governments, he now wants to do in Peru: "negotiate" Shining Path's ascension to power.

The Bush administration would rather deal with pro-IMF communist guerrillas, than face the threat of nationalist militaries coming to power who might break with IMF policy. Hence the obsession with dismantling Peru's—and all Ibero-America's—Armed Forces under the guise of doing away with "human rights abuses" and making the military "more democratic."

Speaking April 12 on NBC's Meet the Press, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft defined that obsession in clinical terms. Asked if there were not inconsistencies in an administration policy which backed the brutal Chinese dictatorship, but at the same time condemned Fujimori, even though he enjoyed broad popular support, Scowcroft offered this twisted reasoning: "Fujimori is trying to do the kinds of things that we want done, but we have to be very careful that we don't give encouragement to forces, even for good reasons, who want to do the kinds of things that destroy democracy. The heart of democracy is that the rules are more important than winning."

The destruction of the Armed Forces *is* the administration's operant policy, as revealed by Peter Hakim, director of one of the Anglo-American establishment's key policymaking entities, the Inter-American Dialogue. In a recent conversation with a journalist, Hakim repeated Washington's line that there is no difference between Peru's Armed Forces and Shining Path, and that both equally threaten "democracy." The problem, he said, "is that Shining Path is gaining ground due to the *lack* of democracy, not a surplus. . . . The military were acting with no civilian control whatsoever, the worst violators of human rights in Latin America, and this was feeding the Shining Path insurgency."

Complaining that Fujimori never tried to forge alliances with members of the political opposition—many of whom deliberately sabotaged the government's attempts to aggressively combat Shining Path and drug trafficking—Hakim ranted that with his recent actions, Fujimori "has lost all moral authority. . . . What difference does it make if Shining Path or the right-wing dictatorship wins?" The first task to establish democracy in Peru, he concluded, "was not closing Congress but getting the military under control."

Reluctant Ibero-Americans

This is the strategy behind James Baker's performance at the April 13 OAS meeting where he had reportedly hoped to garner enough support to impose tough sanctions on Peru. Baker failed, due to the efforts of a few countries who aren't willing to totally succumb to U.S. threats. During the meeting, Mexican Foreign Minister Fernando Solana stated that his government "is profoundly convinced that each country has its own political culture . . . and that each country's democracy can only be strengthened and consolidated from the standpoint of its own historical experience."

Solana also attacked the tendencies "of two or three countries within the OAS" which favor the creation of a multinational force to defend democracy, an undisguised reference to the United States, Venezuela, and Argentina. The Mexican foreign minister stated his government's firm opposition to the creation of any timetable for the return of democracy to Peru. "Impose nothing," he said. "It is the Peruvians who must solve their country's problems."

But this didn't prevent Baker from threatening that "this democratic hemisphere cannot and will not accept the undemocratic assault on constitutional processes that we have witnessed in Peru." He told the gathered Ibero-American foreign ministers that "there can be no business-as-usual with a Peru that isolates itself from the democratic community." He recommended that a high-level OAS mission immediately travel to Peru and that a "national dialogue" be initiated inside the country "involving all Peruvian democratic forces and groups."

The final resolution voted on by the foreign ministers "greatly deploras" events in Peru, and adopted Baker's proposal for sending an OAS mission to the country. It also called for sending a delegation from the body's Human Rights Commission, an ominous sign given that during their last visit to Peru, commission members spent their time meeting with jailed narco-terrorists and drug dealers looking for evidence to bolster the international human rights lobby's campaign against the Armed Forces.

Argentine Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella, one of the loudest advocates of condemning Fujimori, complained to the media after the meeting that there "was no consensus" among the ministers for sanctions against Peru of the type imposed against Haiti last fall. Except for total U.S. stooges like Venezuela's Carlos Andrés Pérez, who has broken diplomatic relations with Lima and is hysterically lobbying his counterparts in other nations to do the same, the rest of the continent is proceeding cautiously. Why?

Ibero-America is in a situation of extraordinary ferment. Populations are fed up with the IMF's "adjustment" policies which have been rammed down their throats by compliant governments. They are also fed up with the corrupt politicians who have ignored the plight of the people they allegedly represent, while stuffing their own pockets. In this lynch-mob atmosphere, most other heads of state, whose popularity

is not exactly soaring, are reluctant to condemn Fujimori, a political outsider who says he is acting to defend his people against corrupt politicians and institutions.

Washington organizes the opposition

Fujimori's domestic opposition, much of which is in league with the Anglo-Americans in wanting to hand power over to Shining Path, is lobbying for international support—which is all it has—for its contention that Fujimori is no longer the country's legitimate President. On April 9, a group of 123 parliamentarians met secretly in rump session and swore in Second Vice President Carlos García y García as Peru's "constitutional President." Subsequently, First Vice President Máximo San Román, who was out of the country at the time, announced he would accept the role as Peru's new President, and traveled to the OAS meeting to demand official recognition.

The OAS foreign ministers did not recognize San Román, but, outrageously, James Baker demanded that "both sides" be heard and allowed San Román to address a private ministerial session. Baker's attitude is instructive. Carlos García y García, an evangelical minister; is openly pro-terrorist. Following a massacre last year in a Lima neighborhood, in which a reporter for the newspaper of the narco-terrorist MRTA was killed, García called a press conference in Congress together with Yehude Simons, president of the MRTA's legal front Patria Libre, and accused the Armed Forces of carrying out the massacre. San Román was just in El Salvador on a trip sponsored by the Agency for International Development and has openly called for implementing "the El Salvador solution" in Peru.

'The people are sovereign'

One element of opposition strategy rests on the proposal put forward by the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD), and its director Hernando de Soto, a long-time asset of the Washington, D.C.-based Project Democracy apparatus which gained notoriety during the Reagan administration. The ILD still counts among its loyal followers people like Finance Minister Carlos Bologna, and hopes to create rifts within the cabinet that could work to its advantage. Bologna is rumored to be on his way out of the cabinet, reportedly due to disagreements over various aspects of Fujimori's policies, particularly the latter plan to raise military salaries.

The ILD proposal entails negotiations between Fujimori and the banned congressmen, using the good offices of former United Nations secretary general Javier Pérez de Cuellar, to reach some kind of "consensus" regarding "a return to democracy." This is essentially what the OAS delegation will propose as well. But Fujimori is having none of this. Responding to the proposal to have Pérez de Cuellar mediate, Fujimori stated, "I only listen to the people, who are sovereign." As for "consensus," the President warned, "you can't negotiate with those who have destroyed Peru."

The corrupting path of Congress and the courts

The press coverage below provides chilling evidence of how a corrupt judicial system made it impossible to arrest and convict mass murderers from Shining Path, as does Foreign Minister Augusto Blacker Miller's charges against the judiciary and Congress for blocking the anti-subversive effort.

La República, April 10: "This is why the Fujimori coup took place: the decision of the Supreme Court absolving Abimael [Guzmán] served as a detonator." (Guzmán is the founder and present leader of Shining Path. During President Fujimori's early 1992 trip to Japan, Guzmán was tried *in absentia* by the Peruvian Supreme Court, and was absolved of all charges. He remains at large.) *La República* also cited the decision of the Constitutional Guarantee Tribunal to strike down government decrees intended to help in the anti-terrorist battle, and the outrageous freeing of over 100 jailed terrorists by corrupt judges and employees of the National Penal Institute.

Expreso, April 13: "Between the years of 1981 and 1992, the judiciary absolved 943 people accused of terrorism. Another 989 cases never even came to trial. In the same period, the Public Minister refused to even charge another 2,747 persons linked to terrorists. That is to say, that in these 11 years a total of 4,679 persons tied to terrorism were not convicted. Moreover, of the 552 subversives who were convicted, 219 were freed in 1991. All of them were freed by one judge: Arturo Zapata Carbajal."

Foreign Minister Augusto Blacker Miller speaking before the OAS in Washington, D.C., April 13: "The government of national unity . . . has been set up to prevent the onslaught of a civil war [which] would lead to disintegration of the nation. . . . In recent months, Peru found itself in a political crisis, in a context of violence that jeopardized the very existence of the state and the nation. . . . Peru was facing the possibility of disintegration as a nation and [loss of] control of its territory. . . ."

"Today, the homicidal activity of terrorism occurs throughout the country. . . . And yet, even with this scourge constantly in action, many sectors of public opinion internationally have a completely distorted understanding of the daily life of the people of Peru. Contributing to this is . . . also a systematic campaign of disparagement undertaken by some Peruvian politicians who, under the standard of protecting human rights, carry out activities aimed precisely at undermining those rights, and what is worse, have sought to restrict the activities of the government in its efforts to fight against this scourge.

"They [Shining Path] don't care if they have to eliminate

thousands or millions of human beings . . . one of the spokesmen of Shining Path in Europe recently declared that they don't care if it will take millions of deaths to bring them to power. . . . [They are] one of the bloodiest and most inhuman terrorist movements of all modern history, a murderous group comparable only to the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot in Cambodia, a group that has systematically eliminated all opposition, the right or the left, and even all those of who might potentially be an enemy someday. . . ."

"In Peru, drug trafficking and terrorism are two sides of the same coin. For several years now, the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru [MRTA] group have joined together in a criminal alliance with the drug traffickers in the Huallaga region. The former provide protection and the second provide money and weapons. That is why I am totally convinced when I say that Shining Path is the richest terrorist group in the world, because each year they have about \$100 million at their disposal. . . . We have already found ourselves in situations in which the terrorists have had weaponry that was far more sophisticated than that of our own troops. And the easy money available to them from drug traffickers means that each day, corruption is becoming more and more ingrained in our institutions and in the very fibers of our society."

"Given this situation, President Fujimori presented to Congress . . . the Comprehensive Strategy for Pacification. . . . This strategy is to attack both of these problems. . . . We would combat terrorism by directing our efforts against the destruction of the heads, the thinkers of the organizations of this murderous group. At the same time we would try to cut off their financing. . . . Nevertheless, I think that what is truly surprising is the fact that my Parliament gave us no alternative, and instead just decided to vote down each of these provisions. This meant that the government was left without any tools in its hands . . . necessary to attack these two serious scourges that affect our society."

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