

Andean Report by Peter Rush

Menchú descends on Peru

The Nobel Peace Prize winner is lining up with the U.S. State Dept. to back terrorists against the Peruvian military.

Rigoberta Menchú, the self-professed Guatemalan terrorist who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her defense of armed insurgency, came to Lima on Feb. 19 to help organize a mass movement against the Peruvian Armed Forces. She had intended to stay a week, but she was driven out of the country only two days after publicly giving support to the narco-terrorist Shining Path at a press conference on Feb. 20. Her mission there was to further the efforts of the U.S. State Department to stop Peru's highly successful campaign against the Shining Path murderers, by using her involvement in the "indigenist" uprising in southern Mexico to breathe new life into their badly battered Shining Path cousins in Peru.

The immediate pretext for her mission was the decision made in the second week of February by all three branches of the Peruvian government that military men accused of killing 10 pro-Shining Path students at Cantuta University in the summer of 1992, be tried by a military court. During Feb. 7-11, the Congress passed, President Alberto Fujimori signed, and the Supreme Court ratified a constitutional amendment that permitted the court to send cases to a military court, as opposed to a civilian one, based on a 3-2 majority. The court had just previously ruled 3-2 to send the Cantuta case to a military rather than a civilian judge.

As publicly explained by leaders of the so-called human rights lobby in Peru, a civilian trial could be turned into a public media circus, and would permit accusations against the top lev-

els of the military, including Armed Forces Commander Gen. Nicolás Hermoza, to be aired, with the hope of forcing them to resign, effectively destroying the anti-Shining Path campaign.

Menchú, the U.S. State Department, and the human rights mob are in fact demanding that civilian judges try *all* terrorism cases, rather than military judges as at present. This would turn back the clock to the way matters were before President Fujimori's April 5, 1992 reorganization of the judiciary and his institutionalization of military trials for terrorism cases. Previously, judges routinely freed almost everyone arrested, either because of death threats from Shining Path or because of bribes.

Both U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Alexander Watson and U.S. Ambassador Alvin Adams have intervened into Peruvian domestic politics over the past few weeks, demanding that a civilian court try the Cantuta case and that all Shining Path prisoners, including hundreds already convicted, be tried, or retried, by civilian judges. Peru's Congress acted contrary to this U.S. pressure, and Fujimori told Adams to mind his own business, saying on Feb. 10, "What is important is the autonomy of the state. We should close ranks because Peru is a sovereign country, and we must maintain this independence."

Menchú, fresh from backing the Zapatista uprising in Mexico for the past seven weeks, arrived in Lima Feb. 19 to attend a four-day conference of the "Latin American Congress

of Rural Organizations," most of which organizations are terrorist or pro-terrorist. At a press conference on Feb. 20, Menchú announced a crusade against "impunity" for members of the Armed Forces accused of "human rights violations," and stated, "I have just come from Geneva, from the United Nations, and I know the level of concern" on this issue.

Partway into her press conference, a reporter from *EIR* demanded that she state whether she still backs armed struggle, as she had declared in her 1982 book *I, Rigoberta*. He also asked her if she was aware that her campaign against the Peruvian Armed Forces represented direct support for Shining Path.

A flustered Menchú tried to dodge the question, stating that "all armed conflicts have their origins." But when asked point blank, she refused to repudiate to any degree the use of terrorism and armed uprisings. Clearly unnerved, she launched into an hysterical defense of her 1982 book, saying, "That book is my life, my history, it is me, and I identify with it. . . . It is a sacred part of the memory of the peasants and the peoples."

EIR, along with a reporter from *La Mañana*, demanded that she condemn the massacre last year by Shining Path of hundreds of Ashaninka Indians, and insisted that she acknowledge that Shining Path committed genocide in this instance. Menchú refused to condemn Shining Path, and instead launched into an attack on the Peruvian Army for alleged killings and tortures.

Most of the media in attendance were stunned by this virtual admission of support for terrorism, and for Shining Path in particular, and they covered the exchange prominently the next day. Within 24 hours, Menchú had left Peru, three days ahead of schedule.