

Fujimori provokes London's ire

by Sara Madueño

On June 16, after a cabinet meeting which lasted into the early morning hours, Peru's President Alberto Fujimori signed a law, passed by the Congress two days prior, which grants amnesty to military, police, or civilian persons accused or convicted of acts "derived from or originating from actions, or as a consequence, of the fight against terrorism," for participating in the coup attempt of November 1992, or for the crimes of disloyalty or offense to the nation and Armed Forces.

The amnesty law was a skillful response of the Fujimori government to the brutal international pressures put on Peru after its Supreme Military Tribunal upheld, on June 6, a lower court's conviction of Gen. Carlos Mauricio on charges of disloyalty and offense to the nation and Armed Forces, based on public statements made during the January-February border conflict with Ecuador.

General Mauricio, as a top adviser to the British monarchy's defeated candidate for President of Peru, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, was considered an "untouchable." Despite his smashing defeat at the polls, Pérez de Cuellar, a member of the International Board of Prince Philip's World Wide Fund for Nature, former U.N. secretary general, and honorary president of the Inter-American Dialogue, heads a political front, the Union for Peru (UPP), run by the very "intellectuals" who relentlessly defended the terrorists while attacking the military during 12 years of war. The UPP's number one campaign has been to paint the military as the enemy of peace, not the terrorists.

In the days before Mauricio's appeal was heard, Amnesty International declared him its "prisoner of conscience," demanding his "immediate and unconditional freedom." Sixty retired U.S. military officers signed a letter containing the same demand, while Pérez de Cuellar named the general a member of the Executive Committee of the UPP.

Despite that, not only did Peru's highest military court refuse to overturn his conviction, but it increased his sentence, from 12 to 14 months in prison.

Fury in Great Britain

But even though Mauricio and the other military enemies of the Peruvian government have been freed, London and its errand boys are livid. By freeing the officers accused of excesses in the anti-terrorist war, the amnesty law blocks

their strategy to generate an unending stream of human rights cases against the military—whether "facts" bear out the accusations or not. The amnesty, however, establishes that the Peruvian military will not be tried for winning the war against Shining Path and the other terrorists.

Coming in the midst of an across-the-board campaign against the militaries of all Ibero-America on the same spurious "human rights" grounds, London did not hide its displeasure. John Illman, Great Britain's ambassador in Lima, attacked the amnesty law for equating genuine crimes with "thought crimes." "One has to distinguish between persons who have expressed their positions, their personal ideas, and other criminals," he intoned. The London *Guardian* criticized the "autocratic style" of Fujimori, demonstrated by such "authoritarian" measures as the promulgation of the law, and warned that this "act, considered a concession to the military . . . endangers the recuperation of Peru's international position." The latter, a not-so-veiled threat that London could again isolate Peru financially.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns echoed the British line on June 15, criticizing "the substance of the amnesty law," as well as "the peremptory manner in which it was passed." Burns added that, with this, Fujimori "demonstrates to the world a lack of serious commitment to the protection of human rights."

The Peruvian magazine *Oiga* reminded Fujimori in its editorial on June 12 that some in London had raised death threats against him, citing the question which the *Financial Times*'s Sally Bowen had recently asked Fujimori: "What would happen with Peru if the presidential helicopter crashed, or if an assassin's bullet hit its target?"

National interests come first

Fujimori emphasized that the amnesty law was passed for the sake of "national reconciliation," calling the law "the best homage to those who fell in the fight against terrorism, the members of the forces of order, civilians, peasants, students, and also to the mistaken youth who rose up against the State. . . . The amnesty passed, which does not justify, but leaves behind, occurs in the context . . . of laying certainly painful bases for true reconciliation."

The head of Peru's Congress, Víctor Joy Way, added, "Here, in Peru, nobody legislates according to what pleases the United States, the Washington Office on Latin America [one of the most prominent non-governmental organizations defending terrorists' rights in the Americas], or Amnesty International. We legislate for the well-being of the country." The recently named archbishop of Ayacucho, Juan Luis Cipriani, endorsed the law, because it "aims to pacify, reconcile, and bring tranquility to Peruvians." He urged "that one not react out of revenge," adding, in what many considered a reference to Pérez de Cuellar, "What I ask is moderation from the politicians, who appear more to be seeking personal promotion than truth and justice."