

Police strike in Peru: García foils bid by bankers, communists

by Gretchen Small

For any who doubted that Moscow and Western financial interests are converging in their efforts to overthrow the government of President Alan García of Peru, the events of May 15-19 demonstrate, in a kind of macabre street theater, just how closely the bid to bring down the García government is coordinated by these forces.

The Moscow-backed Communist Party of Peru has launched a "revolutionary" turn, allying openly with the terrorists against García. And since the return of former Prime Minister Manuel Ulloa to Peru in April, the Socialist International and its "new right" associates have started a new campaign against García's economic policies—the limitation on foreign debt payments, and the replacement of "free market" liberalism with dirigism, marshalling the country's resources toward national economic priorities.

A prominent role in the anti-García mobilization is that of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD), the leading arm in Peru of the "Project Democracy" apparatus, which ran the Iran/Contra covert operations in the United States. The ILD charges that García is guilty of "mercantilist" totalitarianism. Instead of García's dirigism, Ibero-American nations must adopt the "informal economy" as the basis for their economic growth, argues Swiss-Peruvian banker Hernando de Soto, the ILD's chief, in his book *El Otro Sendero (The Other Path)*. The ILD admits that the "informal economy" is a euphemism for the black, or illegal, economy—largely the drug traffic. Yet U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams gave an interview to Lima's *El Comercio* on May 14, attacking "mercantilism" and promoting "the informal economy."

García has shown no signs of weakening in his commitment to reordering the international financial system. As long as he continues to enjoy widespread popularity in the country, including from the Catholic Church and a major section of the Army, such discredited representatives of the IMF's drug-economy as Manuel Ulloa have no power to change the country's policies. But Project Democracy has another card to play, as suggested by de Soto's assertion to the *Wall Street Journal* three years ago that he has developed the best "connections to the underground" of anyone in Peru. It is in the

narco-terrorist underground, that his strategy complements that of the Soviets.

On May 15, members of the Civil Guard, the largest of Peru's three police forces, went on strike. For three weeks prior, *Nuevo Diario*, the mouthpiece of Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*), the most violent of Peru's terrorist groups, had organized for the strike, coordinating with former police officials fired for corruption and involvement in drug traffic. There was widespread anger in police ranks over poor working conditions, low wages, and the growing number of officers killed or wounded in the war launched by the terrorists.

Organizers of the strike proclaimed that it was modeled on the police strike of Feb. 5, 1975, which triggered the final phase of the conspiracy to overthrow Peru's nationalist President Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado. The participation of the CIA in that strike, upon orders of then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, is a matter of public record—as is the role of the Soviet-allied Peruvian Gen. Leonidas Rodríguez, whose refusal to deploy Army units to protect Lima allowed riots to spread. Leaders of the anti-Velasco strike appeared in public this May 15, to egg on the anti-García strike.

By mid-day May 15, strikers had seized key police headquarters, and began marching through Lima to force other policemen to join their ranks. Demands ranged from salary increases, to calls for the police hierarchy to be eliminated, commanders to be "democratically elected," and even for "repression" against terrorists to end. García, scheduled to deliver a speech in Uruguay on May 15, delayed his departure to meet with the Armed Forces Joint Command. The military was deployed to protect Lima, where the strikers were concentrated.

García attempted to separate honest grievances from terrorist demands, stating that the government recognizes that policemen are on the front lines of the war against terrorism, but calling on them to return to their posts. Catholic Church leaders urged the policemen to return to the negotiating table. On the other side, leaders from the radical wing of the United Left coalition, members of Ulloa's Popular Action party, "conservative" Francisco Diaz Canseco (a follower of Rev. Sun Myung Moon), and the Navy's "loose cannon," Fernan-

do Olivera, joined the rally of striking policemen. The banker-socialist alliance was displayed for all to see.

Peru's press had been warning for weeks that Shining Path was planning spectacular terrorist acts for May 18, the seventh anniversary of its first act of terrorism. Now, Peruvians instead watched policemen, wearing civilian clothes, many with their faces covered by scarves in the manner of terrorists or thieves, firing their guns in the air, and commandeering buses to mobilize their forces. Army units were stationed 200 meters outside key police headquarters held by strikers, but were ordered to hold their fire unless fired upon.

A police negotiating commission began meeting with government officials, announcing in the dawn hours of May 17 that an agreement had been reached. But agitators instead spread the strike, passing along the rumor that Army intelligence had "kidnapped" members of the police negotiating committee. The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), a terrorist group currently engaged in devising a joint strategy with the Peruvian Communist Party against the government, published a communiqué calling upon the police to coordinate their strike with the Communist Party-organized May 19 general strike.

The crisis had reached its most critical point, as the hard core made clear that their goal was not resolving police needs, but striking at the government itself. The President's office issued a communiqué, following a meeting between García and the Joint Chiefs. It charged that "infiltrated elements who are not members of the police forces, and some inflamed policemen, have continued their attitude into today." During a police march, strikers had even surrounded the President's convoy, firing their revolvers around the car.

"The agitators' goal is very clear. This is an attempt to . . . maintain the abnormal state of affairs through May 18, on which day one more year of the initiation of the criminal activity of Shining Path is completed, and into the 19th, when a trade union confederation has called a labor strike." The government's role, the communiqué concluded, is "to guarantee the security, tranquility, and authority of the democratic system." The police were given until May 18 to return to work; if they refused, the Armed Forces would restore order, "using the force that they deem necessary."

Project Democracy networks weighed in on the side of the terrorists. César Hildebrandt, of the Ulloa-associated magazine *Caretas*, used his television program that night to defend the "rights" of the terrorist support apparatus. Bedoya Reyes, head of the pro-IMF Popular Christian Party, which is allied with Ulloa's Popular Action party against García, gave his backing to the Communists' general strike for May 19.

The government's decision broke the back of the strike. Police headquarters were cleared, without force, and strikers began returning to work. While the Army blocked an attempt by 1,000 hard-core police rioters to storm the Congress on May 18, other police representatives signed an agreement

ending the strike, and specifying that formal negotiations—not under the gun of a strike—would begin immediately.

Moscow's 'liberation war'

After García's successful navigation of the police strike, the Communist Party's general strike on May 19, organized by the CP-controlled General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), seemed an anti-climax. No one missed the significance of the fact that the CP had called the strike—as a show of force against the government's economic and anti-terrorist policies—for May 19, the day after Shining Path's "terrorist anniversary," and four days after the police strike. The worst of the confrontation over, the CP's strike extended the atmosphere of tension in the country for another day, but without the dramatic political impact the party may have hoped to gain immediately.

The importance of the strike lies not in the events of May 19, but in the CP's strategy of building a centralized national liberation movement, along the lines the Soviets have found effective in Central America. The speed with which Moscow is proceeding in its hard-line retooling of its international Communist movement, in the face of the imminent Western financial collapse, can be seen most sharply in the current political debate occupying the Peruvian Communist Party.

The party has scheduled its Ninth National Congress for May 27-31. Much of the radical leadership of the United Left (UL) party has been invited, along with representatives of peasant and labor unions. Already announced for that event is the adoption of a resolution censuring the current president of the United Left coalition, Alfonso Barrantes, because of his insistence that the UL put national interests over ideology, and provide critical support for García. The excuse for the censure motion, is Barrantes' recent private meeting with the U.S. ambassador, dubbed "treason" by the Left; but behind it lies a plan for a broader reorganization of UL into a "political army of the revolution."

The general strike, like the scheduled "National Popular Assembly" to follow—a sort of "soviet" formation bringing together peasant, worker, and other "popular" organizations—are the key steps to building the "mass political struggle," the communist paper *Unidad* informed its readers May 18.

Those terms are those used to describe the formation of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. *Unidad's* coverage of the preparations for the CP's Ninth Congress, underlines the point. Named "For a Revolutionary Alternative to Power," the Congress has the task of "bolshhevizing the party." Regional congresses have adopted resolutions demanding that "errors" of support for García be corrected, and the party's designation of his government as "national reformist," changed to "bourgeois, pro-imperialist, and fascist tendencies." A mobilization of the party to enter into an alliance with the MRTA has begun, as *Unidad* warns that any party leaders who stand in the way will be pushed aside.