

Andean Report by Cynthia Rush and Luis Vásquez

U.S. handing power to narco-terrorists

Charging "human rights violations," the U.S. refuses to back Peru's Army against Shining Path.

Peru's murderous Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) guerrillas, who model themselves on Cambodian killer Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, have reached new heights of barbarism with the assassination in August of three foreign Catholic priests. This brings to nine the number of foreign Catholic priests and religious workers murdered by Sendero since 1987. The recent killings represent an effort by the narco-terrorist group to drive foreign priests out of the country, where they provide a crucial presence as well as social assistance in remote areas all but forgotten by the government. Eighty percent of Peru's priests are foreigners.

The U.S. State Department, Pentagon, Congress, and human rights lobbyists have spent recent months shrieking about "human rights violations" committed by the Peruvian Army in its pursuit of Sendero. The U.S. Congress has held up \$95 million in military assistance to Peru's Armed Forces, and scads of congressmen have descended on the country to dictate to President Alberto Fujimori's government the conditions it must meet to be "certified" before any funds can be released.

Yet, there is a deafening silence from these same groups when it comes to the atrocities committed by Shining Path. Few in Washington have denounced the murders or the fact that the group is now threatening to kill the coordinators of soup kitchens, often the only source of food for slum-dwellers on the outskirts of Lima. Don't these qualify as human rights violations?

The answer lies in the fact that

Washington's policy toward Peru has nothing to do with human rights, but rather with the bankers' plan of wiping this impoverished country off the map in pursuit of a policy of usury and debt collection. The rest of the world is rejoicing in the liberation of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from communism. Yet in the case of Peru, everything the U.S. demands—above all adherence to the International Monetary Fund's "free market" austerity policy—is causing any national institution which might offer resistance to the communist Sendero's onslaught to crumble.

The purpose of Washington's vociferous human rights campaign in the case of Peru is to dismantle its Armed Forces, which, as ill-equipped and impoverished as it may be, represents one of the country's few important remaining institutions.

That this is U.S. policy was revealed in an article in the Sept. 16 *Christian Science Monitor* by Holly Burkhalter, Washington director for Human Rights Watch, one of the groups monitoring the Peruvian Army. After accurately reporting on Sendero's latest crimes, Burkhalter went on to claim that "grievous human rights abuses by the Peruvian Armed Forces and police themselves make it difficult for foreign governments to support them in the war against Sendero."

Burkhalter makes the outrageous claim that the Army has killed almost as many people as Sendero has, and warns that any international assistance to counterinsurgency efforts will simply "enhance Sendero's strength." The only way to prevent Peru from becom-

ing another Cambodia, she says, is to guarantee "human rights reform" within the Army. That is, by granting supranational organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) or the U.N. the right to go into Peru to "monitor and protect human rights"—and do away with what remains of sovereignty in the process.

The Peruvian Armed Forces and police "must also make dramatic changes in their practices so as to be worthy of international assistance against Sendero Luminoso," Burkhalter concludes.

Official Washington is following the vicious policy Burkhalter outlines. Henry Kissinger's clone Luigi Einaudi, now U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, met at the Pentagon earlier in September with the head of the Peruvian Armed Forces' Joint Command, Gen. Arnaldo Velarde Ramírez. Together with special White House adviser William Price and Assistant Secretary of State for Narcotics Affairs Melvin Levitsky, Einaudi told the Peruvian general that even though they all wanted to "help," only the U.S. Congress could make the final decision on release of funds.

The Sept. 9 edition of Peru's *Carretas* magazine reported that visiting U.S. congressmen indicated they wanted to "condition" aid to Peru's Armed Forces; an aide to Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.) explained that this would likely include the policy known as "tranching"; that is, aid is released in dribs and drabs, or tranches, and the country must satisfy arbitrary "human rights" criteria to be approved for the next installment. In El Salvador, this has led to gradual cession of power to the communist FMLN guerrillas. If applied to Peru, Sendero will march to power virtually unopposed. Then, Peru will indeed be ruled by what one Catholic priest has called "the sons of darkness."