

How Peru is defeating narco-terrorism

by Luis Vásquez

Here are excerpts from a presentation given on July 23 by EIR's Lima correspondent, Luis Vásquez, at the Bogotá seminar on "The Peace Processes in Peru and in Colombia." See EIR Aug. 7, pp. 43-53 for a report on the seminar.

What has happened in my country, Peru, since 1990, is the only effective peace process that has been carried out anywhere in the continent in recent years. "Peace" in El Salvador, for example, is a total fiasco: what was mounted there was a more explosive time bomb than existed previously. Peru still has many problems—economic ones, for example—but with respect to security and the threat that hovered over the country in 1990, in which the integrity and existence of the nation itself was on the brink of the abyss, that danger is being successfully dealt with. We are not yet safe—no country is, given the *global* narco-terrorist offensive unleashed by London—but the strategy adopted by the Fujimori government has saved the nation.

How did Peru confront this problem? Peru's situation from 1990 to 1992 was an extremely critical one, very similar to that which you Colombians are facing at this moment. Peru was a destroyed country. The institutions of government had practically lost control of 60% of the territory. That 60% was controlled by the guerrillas, by Shining Path and the MRTA. The capital city of Lima was practically under siege. The narco-terrorists had nearly achieved a military and political strategic balance. At the time, it was highly probable that Shining Path would have total victory in taking over the country.

It was a very well-planned scheme. They hoped that with 5,000 political-military cadre, they could enter Lima and rapidly become an army of 150,000 people, with each militant capable of pulling another 30 combatants around him, during the taking of Lima. There were also weapons deposits stashed around the capital city for that operation. The city was under psychological bombardment. Shining Path controlled electricity and food supply into the city. They controlled the exits and could cut off the food supply at will.

The Constitution and legislation were completely unfavorable to the national institutions, with regard to their ability to combat Shining Path's offensive. The Constitution was used fraudulently by the terrorists: They couldn't be detained for more than 24 hours; interrogations had to be of one sort or another; terrorists had many rights, but no obligations. The Constitution was one of the terrorists' most important

weapons. The population was practically defenseless.

Shining Path also had Congress, which was not made up of terrorists, but was intimidated by them, and in certain cases was paid by them. They would approve no law, no constitutional reform, that would allow actions to be taken against terrorism. At the same time, the entire judicial system was at the terrorists' disposal, due either to corruption, because they received bribes from Shining Path and the MRTA, which kept substantial sums (and still do), or through fear—judges and their families were killed, to prevent the judges from trying and convicting terrorists captured by the authorities.

Those terrorists who were convicted went to jails which were . . . totally controlled by them. The jails became terrorist training schools, where irregular warfare was taught, where terrorist plans were prepared.

It was a very dramatic situation. Those of us who lived through that know at what point a nation can be paralyzed, and at what point a population can be terrorized. The fighting spirit of the population had nearly disappeared. Two million people fled the country: Those who could pay for a ticket to live elsewhere, or those who could send their children abroad, did so.

A miracle?

And what happened? Many say a miracle happened: Alberto Fujimori appeared. Many in other countries say, "If we had a Fujimori here, things would be different." But Fujimori is no miracle. We could say that miracles are in fact human beings; they occur because of human intervention. God helps those who help themselves. Divine intervention is not magical.

Fujimori was the result of the intervention of determined elites, primarily military, but also civilian, who saw that they had to create a political alternative, an executive adequate to the task of dealing with the situation. Fujimori was one of 15 Presidential candidates in 1990. Those elites knew the situation, and listened to those who agreed with a program of fighting narco-terrorism. When they asked candidate Mario Vargas Llosa, he rejected that program, because he was a globalist. Vargas Llosa said that the worst sins of humanity are nationalism and religion. Vargas Llosa was committed to an economic package within the policy of globalism, and with regard to security, would have handed over everything. So, the elites understood that they had to prevent Vargas Llosa from winning the Presidency, and decided to launch Fuji-

mori's campaign.

On this matter of elections: Really, we shouldn't have such respect for so-called "democratic" elections in our countries. Democracy is a system that has certain problems, which often enables those with the greatest amount of money, who can buy television time, who can change public opinion from night to day, to win.

What was done in Peru was an intelligent thing. This problem was seen, and Fujimori was launched in such a way that, from one moment to the next, he became the most popular candidate. In the beginning, Fujimori was a candidate who, to fill his electoral slate, had to choose his own relatives, because he didn't have enough supporters otherwise. Then, Fujimori went to the people, and there were demonstrations of support for him. Who pulled this off? Everyone in the country knows. He won the first round, and from then on, Fujimori ran his campaign from the military circle. From the very beginning, a civil-military alliance was forged, with a very well-defined project for saving the country.

Fujimori won the 1990 elections, and until 1992 there was a transitional period, in which nothing was done because they wanted to use the, shall we say, "legal" channels, to fight narco-terrorism. But this didn't work, because the Congress continued to reject those projects and all the institutions continued to be inclined toward narco-terrorism.

The 'Fujimorazo'

So in 1992, it became necessary for the state to run a "self-coup." There was a political pronouncement by Fujimori, which was backed by the Armed Forces, through which everything was put in order: Congress was closed for defending Shining Path; laws creating special courts were imposed; universities were shut down, putting an end to the autonomy which allowed them to function as bastions of terrorism; there was prison reform, and so forth. That was in April 1992. It had immediate effects. In September of that year, Abimael Guzmán, chief of Shining Path, was captured, and the entire leadership of Shining Path and the MRTA began to fall.

Afterwards came the repentance laws [which allowed guerrillas to surrender], which were a very important weapon for this war against the narco-guerrillas. Laws regarding peasant self-defense groups were also decreed, which were essential for military operations. Once the terrorists were defeated, Peru was successful in reducing drug production.

All of this is proof that decisive measures, taken with great courage against even threats from abroad, are key to pacifying a nation. One must not forget that when the 1992 pronouncement was made, the vast network of heavily funded NGOs wanted to put the Peruvian government and its Armed Forces in the dock of the accused. The United States government, headed by Bush, led the campaign to get Peru condemned internationally. In 1992, a meeting of the Organization of American States was held, where Peru was accused of having

shattered institutional order, and proposals for isolating Peru with economic sanctions were made. All U.S. military aid to Peru was suspended.

Fujimori took the 1994 elections by storm, because 98% of the population was in complete agreement with what he had done in 1992. He didn't need to make an electoral campaign then. He went out into the streets and people hailed him. This overwhelming electoral support prevented the supranational institutions of the NGOs, the OAS, the United Nations, etc., from destroying Peru.

The U.S. role

I should add that there was a critical period, in 1993, when the U.S. administration changed. Bush lost the 1992 elections, and Clinton took over. General Bedoya said a moment ago that we have to depend on U.S. cooperation. In fact in Peru, up until 1993, we waged the battle for the country with our fingernails, and it was very rough. Peru lost military and economic assistance; direct transmission to us of radar images was suspended, and this was the radar which detected all the planes used by the narco-terrorists to transport coca—they transported coca and coca paste to Colombia, and returned with money and weapons. And when Bush cancelled that cooperation, leaving us without electronic assistance or radar, it was impossible to make headway in the fight against narco-terrorism. Bush's actions favored the narco-guerrillas.

With the Clinton administration, there was a change of political will, and cooperation with Peru is the prevailing tendency now. There are people in the U.S., for example in the Southern Command and in the White House anti-drug office led by Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), who know that narco-terrorism does exist, and who have supported the Fujimori government's anti-drug actions.

Moreover, we must look at Lyndon LaRouche's role in the United States; as you know, he is the founder of *EIR* magazine, and represents a key political current in that country. LaRouche has promoted this type of cooperation, because he thinks it's in U.S. national interest to support sovereign nation-states in Ibero-America—Peru, for example—in the war against narco-terrorism. Otherwise, narco-terrorism will destroy all nations on the planet.

So, as of the end of 1993, there was a change in the U.S. attitude, and things were easier. Thanks to this collaboration, Shining Path's and the MRTA's air transport power was destroyed. Right now, there is not a single plane that dares to take drugs out of Peru's coca-producing region to be refined in Colombia or any other country. They've had to look for other alternatives, such as using the rivers, or opening up trails in the jungle, but this isn't so easy. This policy of cooperation with the U.S., with respect for sovereignty, doesn't exist in the Colombian case—although there is a political debate inside the U.S. on this subject, which I hope will have a positive outcome.