

Emergency Bulletins from the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzmán

IEC Emergency Bulletins offer the most current information on the developments of the campaign and activities from around the world. These are published by the international office in London. In the US, Canada, and Mexico, contact the IEC-US to receive them by postal mail -- a subscription is \$1.50 per bulletin to cover the cost of postage and reproduction.

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The Japan Embassy take-over on 17 December 96 by armed members of the MRTA is still unresolved after nearly three months.

The MRTA continues to hold more than 70 hostages. Among them are top government ministers, Supreme Court judges, generals, Ambassadors, Japanese businessman and the younger brother of Alberto Fujimori. What follows is based on an article written by N. Shen a contributor to *A World to Win* magazine, on 29 January 97, which was circulated worldwide on a limited basis.

The MRTA has demanded the release of more than 400 prisoners accused of MRTA membership; payment of "war tax"; that "the government commit itself to changing its economic course in favour of a model which aims for the well-being of the great majority," and safe passage to the jungle for the released prisoners and those carrying out the embassy take-over.

Despite face to face negotiations set up by a panel of mediators the Fujimori government has repeatedly declared that it will not give in to MRTA demands. He has stated his unwillingness to negotiate anything but the release of the hostages in exchange for the safe-conduct of the MRTA commando out of the country.

BACKDROP TO THE EMBASSY TAKEOVER

In 1980, the Communist Party of Peru began a People's War that has aroused and armed above all the peasants and other poor people to throw off the system squeezing the life out of them. In seeking to drown a righteous rebellion in blood, three Peruvian governments in succession napalmed villages and sent the Armed Forces into suspected "subversive zones" to rampage, rape and kill. The vast majority of the 30,000 people dead in the last 17 years of this war were killed by government forces. A great many of them were unarmed civilians.

The Fujimori regime brought this brutality to new depths. In a U.S.-backed coup d'etat in 92, Fujimori sent the Armed Forces to shut down the Congress and other sources of opposition from within the ruling circle. The best example of how he has run the country since then is his 1995 "law of amnesty", which decreed that no government official, civilian or military, could be punished for any crimes committed in the course of the war. Specifically this was meant to close down investigations and pending trials and free those already convicted in notorious cases. Some of these

included the Barrios Altos murders, in which the "Colina Group", a secret Army death squad, machine-gunned 15 people attending a suspected pro-PCP fundraising barbecue in a Lima slum; the Cantuta case, in which the Colina Group kidnapped and murdered nine students and a professor suspected of being PCP sympathizers; and Operation Aries, an Armed Forces offensive in May 94 that Fujimori bragged was a "mini-Vietnam". Though the Armed Forces blocked efforts by the Red Cross and legal human rights groups, the latter later collected evidence that the military indiscriminately murdered captured peasants and carried out massive rocket attacks against Upper Huallaga villages suspected of being PCP base areas.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

In street roundups during the last year, the regime detained about half a million people, nearly 2 percent of the country's population. In addition to the almost 4,000 people the Fujimori regime sentenced to 30 years or life for "terrorism", there are several thousand more political prisoners. The conditions in the cold dungeons where they are held and tortured have been condemned by a number of international bodies as among the world's most brutal.

The demand to free political prisoners is just. The IEC supports the demand that all political prisoners and prisoners of war be freed, regardless of what organisation they are accused of supporting. We also reject the calls being made, especially now that a spotlight is being cast on these injustices, for a "systematic review of trials" in order to distinguish between the "guilty" and the "innocent." Fujimori has no right to make such distinctions whereas the people have every right to rebel against oppression. The regime and the U.S. have implemented some pilot plan to reduce some of the political pressure that exposures of Fujimori's repression have brought on them by letting out a few people, so that those considered real revolutionaries can be kept locked up or killed.

MRTA AND THE PCP

The MRTA has made it very clear that its demands are to favour their own members and supporters and no one else. In their communiques the MRTA has strongly distinguished itself from the PCP, not only in term of political line and programme but also in terms that imply that the regime should distinguish between "good" revolutionaries such as them and "bad" revolutionaries such as the PCP. For instance, in its communique No. 3 after the embassy take-over, the MRTA said, "We reject being compared to Shining Path [PCP], which we have repeatedly condemned for the use of an irrational violence that affects the people itself." There is no doubt that the PCP and MRTA are two very different kinds of organisations. And naturally both organisations would want to draw attention to their ideological, political, and organizational distinctions.

But the MRTA seems to feel a necessity to attack the PCP in a way that is little different to the way the regime and its imperialist backers categorize anyone who dares to rise against injustice. They frequently refer to PCP as "terrorists" and take pride in having attacked and killed its combatants. This necessity to emphasize differences and attack PCP is perhaps explained best by their 30th December 1996 communique: "We confirm that the only possible solution is through listening to our requests and proceeding to free all our detained comrades. We think that a gesture of this nature would help give the first steps to an overall solution to the problem of political violence through the path of dialogue and a more permanent peace accord." The above statement makes it abundantly clear that the MRTA is fighting to negotiate a peaceful coexistence with the regime based on some reforms. PCP Central Committee, however, has insisted on continuing the war through to the end as the only way forward.

In a recent interview Fujimori acknowledged that plans are being vigorously pursued for a bloody end to the embassy takeover even while they are engaged in negotiations with the MRTA. The latest news reports from Peru speak of tunnels being dug under the embassy compound. While it is

impossible to foresee how the event will unfold and what the imperialist backers of Fujimori will tell him to do, there is every reason to be concerned that he is preparing to commit a terrible crime.

The IEC condemns the recent government military maneuvers and holds the regime responsible for any bloodshed in the embassy.

LIMA EL DIARIO REAPPEARS DESPITE DIFFICULTIES

The IEC has recently received two issues of the El Diario published in Lima by the PCP. The Eldiarios are June and October 96 issues. The reappearance of the paper in support of the continuation of the People's War is a significant development. For nearly two years since the bust-up of the underground paper, the only Eldiario published in Lima was that of the supporters of the peace negotiations line promoting a "capitulationist Right Opportunist Line", as it is called by the PCP and RIM.

Both issues contain brief reports of PCP military actions, analysis of current affairs and the state of economy in Peru, and exposures of the regime. The front-page headline of the June issue is "From Andes to the Himalayas, People's War Blazes Victoriously!" with an editorial on the subject and a centrefold article saluting the CPN(M) and the RIM for the initiation of the People's War in Nepal. On page three under the title "NEW TYPE OF CULTURE" there are two photographs. The first is a guerrilla theatre performance in a Peruvian prison and the second is a street graffiti from Colombia depicting slogans: "Rally to the Defence of Our Red Flag Flying in Peru!" and "Prepare the Initiation of the People's War in Colombia!" A centrefold article salutes proletarian internationalism and declares that, "Peoples War is developing from the Andes to the Himalayas as the only path to liberation." The editorial states that the initiation of the People's War in Nepal is a much needed and welcome support and reinforcement strengthening the prospects for the future birth of the People's Republic in Peru.

The October issue has an editorial strongly upholding RIM and its unity based on the 1984 Declaration and 1993 resolutions and documents. There is also a drawing by a Peruvian revolutionary artist inspired by the initiation of the People's War in Nepal.

GERMANY: IEC SUPPORTERS PICKET FUJIMORI

In October 96 Alberto Fujimori made an official visit to Germany and was received by the German President Herzog in Bonn. The main purpose of his visit was to promote his economic policies and encourage German capital investment in Peru. As part of his German tour he had a scheduled visit to the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce where he gave a talk on prospects for lucrative profits awaiting German investors in Peru.

Peruvian and host officials very much aware of the widespread solidarity with the Peruvian people that had given rise to public demonstrations and pickets everywhere he went, made it a matter of policy to keep his visit secret till the very last moment.

Less than 24 hours before his visit to Hamburg various political forces learned of his intended visit and began mobilising for a picket in front of the Chamber of Commerce. A leaflet by the Revolutionäre Kommunisten (RK) was distributed the day before his arrival in Hamburg calling upon people to support the people of Peru waging People's War under the leadership of the PCP and participate in the picket. Several thousand leaflets were distributed in different areas of the City and there was a lot of interest and concern due to the ongoing support work carried out for several years.

On short notice about 80 people came to the picket the next day, among them Peruvians, Kurds and Turks. The Peru-Group Hamburg, consisting of supporters of various political organisations in Peru including the MRTA, also participated. The Peru-Group brought banners condemning atrocities of the regime specially the rape of women by the military. The RK and the TKP/ML (Maoist Party

Centre) had several Mao flags and banners reading "Down With the Fascist Fujimori Regime! German Imperialists, Hands Off Peru and all Latin America!" and "Down With the Right Opportunist Line! Support the CC of the PCP! Victory to the People's War in Peru!"

The German police and the secret service, that have become infamous for standing aside and watching racists burn refugees to death in Lubeck and giving free reign to Islamic Republic of Iran's agents to assassinate Iranian activists in Germany, had saturated the area armed with riot gear and live ammunition. True to their political nature they were on high alert to make the visit as pleasant as possible for the butcher of Lima. But the German police were about as successful as Fujimori has been in quashing the voice of dissent and rebellion in Peru. While they were successful in preventing a demonstrator setting alight a life-size effigy of Fujimori, they were unable to arrest the protestor amid scuffle and commotion. And while they had concentrated their forces around the Chamber of Commerce, around 30 of the demonstrators had regathered in the harbour waiting for Fujimori to arrive for his scheduled cruise. Fujimori had to be escorted nervously past the demonstrators into the pleasure boat amid loud slogans and insults in German, Turkish and Spanish. For some reason the boat did not sail for 10 minutes and the whole time he had to bear the wrath of the demonstrators as a reminder of the fury of the poor in Peru and their international supporters.

Several papers reported the protest with pictures and TV news showed footage of the pickets. It is probable that the news of the protest was broadcast in Peru.

PRISON CONDITIONS

For a number of years now UN, AI, and other human right organisations have condemned the Peruvian regime for violating international standards regarding the treatment of political prisoner. The IEC Bulletins and other material have contained reports and information on the plight of the political prisoners and the criminal policies of the regime towards them. It has been of utmost importance and still continues to be so that the crimes of the regime be exposed and people around the world continue to demand that the rights of the prisoners be respected.

What follows is a brief description of the El Callao naval prison as the first in a series of articles on Peruvian prisons and political prisoners.

EL CALLAO

In April 1993 Peruvian government moved Dr Guzmán to a newly built prison inside the marine base in Callao port, Lima.

The prison consists of eight cells approximately 2 by 2 meters. It is arranged on two adjacent rows in a rectangle of 4 by 8 meters. There is no provision for artificial light in the cells although they have a small ceiling aperture to allow sunlight in, but these are remote controlled and can be shut at any time. Likewise, the water flow to the hand basin and toilet in the cells are rationed to certain times each day.

After the first year of total isolation, prisoners are allowed a daily 30-minute walk in the yard alone, and a monthly half hour visit with members of the immediate family. In Dr Guzmán's case no visits of the sort have taken place at all. The walls are thick reinforced concrete with acoustic provisions to prevent voice or Morse contact between prisoners. The prison is designed and maintained in such a way that contact, even visual, between prisoners and the outside world (including the guards) is reduced to an absolute minimum while the prisoners are aware that they are being watched at all times by remote controlled cameras. Letters to and from prisoners are strictly controlled by the National Intelligence Service (SIN), and Fujimori himself has to give permission for such communications.

There is no access to books, magazines, papers, TV or radio. The only information allowed them is through edited videos in a TV room.

Food is rationed and no prisoner is allowed supplements provided by anyone from outside and there is no prison shop to buy anything. Prisoners usually lose weight rapidly and are reduced to skin and bone. The mother of a prisoner told media reporters she could not recognize her son because he was "reduced to a ghost of himself." It is not known if prisoners receive any medical attention at all.

This prison is designed to create a sense of total isolation and deprivation. Fujimori himself has described it aptly as a tomb for the living and said, "nobody has a long life where [Dr Guzmán] is held."

PEOPLE'S WAR

Since the capture of PCP Chairman Gonzalo, Peru's President Fujimori has repeatedly boasted that he would guarantee the complete defeat of the People's War, giving various dates for this accomplishment. This wishful triumphalism has been punctured time and again by actual developments.

One telling exposure of their lies and distortions has been the fact that they have continued their programme of intense repression aimed at the masses of people and particularly at those areas where the People's War has dug deep roots. Far from lifting the state of emergency, which gives the army draconian powers over the population, the US-backed Fujimori regime has recently continued it once again in two thirds of the country.

The emptiness of the regime's boasting was revealed further when, despite the continuing outcry from human rights groups in Peru and internationally, on October 12 a large majority in the parliament approved the continuation of the use of "faceless" judges. "The faceless judges must continue their functions", proclaimed Gilberto Siura, a legislator from Fujimori's New Majority-Change 90 Party. "The achievements obtained in judging and sentencing these criminals are positive." This policy has come under increasing fire including after the international exposure accompanying the arrest and trial before "faceless judges" of the American Lori Berenson for "treason". The regime has made a big show of freeing a few dozen people whom it admits were "wrongfully" convicted in this way, and it has made every effort to portray these as simply "excesses" of a basically sound system. However, even this carefully orchestrated sideshow has caused problems for the regime, as several of those released have given press interviews to expose that they were tortured into signing confessions and to detail the abysmal conditions in Peru's prisons. (see accompanying article)

The MRTA occupation of the Japanese embassy has also drawn a spotlight both on conditions in Peru's prisons and on the social unrest seething throughout the country. After a lot of hype about Peru's "miracle economic growth", it has grown increasingly clear to all that what growth there was took place through short-term economic fixes and that the results for most of Peru's people have been increasing impoverishment and hardship. Even figures from the government itself -- which are disputed by most outside observers for being heavily biased -- say that 47 percent of the population live in poverty and 19 percent in extreme poverty. A Reuters report cites one British news analyst, John Crabtree from Oxford Analitica, who pointed out that the gap between rich and poor had undeniably increased under the Fujimori regime. The report goes on to note that "half of Lima's population live in shanty towns where water is scarce and garbage dumps are meticulously raked over for scraps of food". The commentator goes on to observe that the gap between the rural poor in the countryside and the urban elite has also increased, and even quotes a Western diplomat admitting that "it is inevitable that some people will not tolerate this". (Reuters, 23 Dec 96)

At the beginning of the year, the regime claimed that there couldn't be more than 600-700 PCP guerrillas left -- now, they report that they have arrested 700 "rebels" in 1996; theoretically, the arithmetic is easy -- in practice, yet another telling exposure of the empty triumphalism of the Fujimori regime has been the ability of the People's War to carry on. Here we can only give a sample from some of the news reports of actions that have taken place since the last EB, including a

wave of activity that took place in October in numerous parts of the country, including the Upper Huallaga valley and the Ayacucho area, and a few actions involving columns of 50 or more guerrillas.

* Among actions in October were the dynamiting of a Lima TV station, Global Television, which has broadcast among other things a number of emissions promoting the Right Opportunist Line calling for an end to the People's War.

* In early October, reports came in that at least 100 guerrillas from the People's Liberation Army took over the communities of Matireni, Shimapango and Chikireni in the River Ene region of Peru's central jungle, home to many Ashaninka Indians, killing several soldiers and members of the infamous rondas. A military outpost in Pichakia in the same region was also attacked and the town taken over as well, in an action that resulted in the death of several other soldiers. There were also reports of a number of actions in the Tingo Maria department, leading to the resignation of over 30 mayors in the area. There were also a series of actions in the central Huanuco department and Huancavelica, in which several soldiers were killed. In a town near Lima, Ventamilla-Callao, nearly 100 guerrillas also briefly took over an urban neighborhood. Red flags were raised, speeches given, and graffiti promoting the PCP and the People's War was left behind.

At the same time, 2000 troops were deployed in the central Andes in an effort to "hunt down Comrade Feliciano, the military leader of the Shining Path guerrilla group", as government spokesman put it. Numerous reactionary Sendero watchers have decried the failure of the arrest of PCP Chairman Gonzalo to put an end to the People's War and have promised that if only once more the government can manage to "cut off the insurgency's head", then the People's War can finally be defeated. Instead, the regime's troops have been striking out blindly, bogged down in inhospitable terrain, and subject to defensive countermeasures that have demoralized them and sapped their will to fight. Police sources have now admitted that owing in part to defensive actions by the revolutionary forces, it is likely that Comrade Feliciano and the rest of the guerrilla forces have been able to evade the army sweep.

* In December, a column of over 50 guerrillas took over another town in northern Peru in the province of Chiclayo.

Besides the actions of the People's War itself, most of which go unreported in the Peruvian and international press, another telling sign of their worry over the "return of Sendero", as they are calling it, is that the US has just announced a step-up of several tens of millions of dollars in its military aid to Peru. According to the New York Times, "The Defense Department's preliminary plans include regular visits to the Peruvian jungle by scores of Navy Seal and Green Beret trainers. They also call for supplying Peru with more than 100 patrol boats outfitted with M-60 machine guns, VHF radios, and satellite-linked tracking and communications gears."

The US claims this step-up in military aid is for the "war on drugs". This is a thin - and very hypocritical - cover for their concern about the People's War itself. First, not only have US imperialist henchmen played a key role in overseeing the drugs trade for years, but the Fujimori regime is up to its neck in the drug traffic as well. Recently, a top drug czar, "el Vaticano", revealed that he had made protection pay-offs to Fujimori's right-hand man, Vladimir Montesinos, who heads up Peru's intelligence services. An indication of their real concern can be gathered from a statement by a US State Dept official in reference to the river regions that are an important focus of the People's War, that "What you are talking about is imposing control over areas that the central government has never controlled." (Revolutionary Worker, 23 Feb 97).