

Revolutionaries, or Vulgar Shysters?  
MRTA: THE GUERILLA OF PEACE TALKS

By: Luis Arce Borja

On Tuesday December 17, an MRTA commando composed of 22 guerillas seized the Japanese embassy in Lima. More than 900 people were taken hostages, among them officials of international organisms, foreign diplomats, government ministers, Police chiefs, parliamentarians, executives and businessmen. This event took place during the reception to commemorate the birthday of the current Japanese Emperor.

More than 40 days have passed from this moment and little by little the murky background of the Japanese embassy seizure has begun to emerge into the light of day. The abundant publicity surrounding this action has failed to disguise the farcical and even ridiculous situation into which the participants, both the raiders as well as the government itself, have mired themselves into.

This piece - without going into the issue of whatever the final outcome of the seizure of the Japanese embassy may be - aims to demonstrate that the action of the MRTA has no revolutionary objectives at all, and, on the contrary, it is principally an action serving the political-military plans of the Peruvian regime and US imperialism.

The MRTA action, despite all its showmanship, has the cynical objective of promoting dialogue with - and capitulation before - the Peruvian government. This capitulation hides behind the courtesan's veil of "lasting peace agreement".

### Dialogue, Peace Agreement and Capitulation

When Peruvians realised that one of the political planks of the group that had seized the Japanese embassy in Peru was to demand that "the government should change the direction of its economic policy" and that "peace with social justice" should be established, they understood all too well that they were faced with a new and farcical fraud staged by the MRTA.

Ordinary folk, those who in Peru are suffering like martyrs on the cross, know from their own experience that the Peruvian regime would change its economic model is a feat as impossible as inserting a camel through the eye of a needle, and, that peace with social justice could be achieved under the present system and with the same rulers currently in power, is even more unlikely. Aha! Peace and social justice with Fujimori in control?. Remarkable sermon from those glib MRTA shysters.

But this unique combination of clever-by-half political banality of the MRTA leaders is even more clearly revealed in their first public communique issued following their action of December 17. In that document they lachrymosely assert: "the MRTA is an organisation that has always been ready to hold talks, but we were always rejected and scorned by the government...". What a tragi-comical state of affairs!. We have learned somewhere in the Marxist Classics that only that which has been won in the field of battle can be stamped in the negotiating table. In other words, if one of the negotiating partners has no military strength in the ground at all, it is little or nothing what they could demand or secure in any negotiations.

The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), having no strategy for the seizure of power, and guiding themselves by a strange ideological cocktail (Guevarism, Castrism, Aprism, Tupacamarism, etc.) has never been a serious threat to the stability of the Peruvian State, and even less to that of the imperialist interests in Peru. This group tried to be taken notice of by staging theatrical and movie-like activities which the Peruvian media has always been happy to promote.

The MRTA emerges in 1984 linked to the reactionary Apra regime of Alan Garcia Perez and to the United Left (IU). From its very beginnings it undertakes tasks geared at dispersing the forces within the people's camp and "fighting against Shining Path". In its 12 years of activity, the MRTA achieves no important development. In 1985, one year after having began its armed actions, they entered into an alliance with the fascist regime led by the Apra party. In 1990, the MRTA approached the Fujimori regime seeking negotiations. This group, ever more isolated and riven by its internal vendettas, has not and never has had, any significance in Peruvian politics.

In their second communique the MRTA went even further. With little sense of shame, they announced that their seizure of the Japanese embassy had the aim of "taking the first steps for a global solution to the problem of political violence by means of dialogue and a permanent peace agreement". Aha!, what they really want is to sign a permanent peace agreement with one of the most brutal and criminal regimes in Peruvian history.

"Dialogue", and "permanent peace agreement", are the key ideas synthesising the political aims of the MRTA in seizing the Japanese embassy in Lima. This action only serves them as

a publicity stunt to drum up support for "peace agreement" and to provide them with a minimal amount of clout in the negotiating table.

That is why the media in Peru and abroad has portrayed this affair with so much spectacular glee and moving benevolence. Nestor Cerpa, "commander" of the embassy raiding group was given access to radio talk shows, press and Television. Uncharacteristically, the government, instead of censoring or curtailing information about this event, rather encouraged and provided ample leeway for the media to propagandise the "good egg character and humane nature" of the guerillas of the MRTA.

### **What Hides Behind the Seizure of the Japanese Embassy**

Within the frame work of "peace agreement", the "set of demands" posited by the MRTA in exchange for the lives of the hostages, is but a political sop aimed at disguising the murky background of the seizure of the Japanese embassy in Lima. The MRTA synthesises its demands in the following four points. 1) The release of MRTA prisoners; 2) That the regime changes its economic policies; 3) A "war tax"; and 4) that the commando that took over the embassy be transported to the Amazon jungle.

These points - as a complement to capitulation - have a totally irrelevant political content that can only serve the interests of the government. Let us look into this in more detail: What would be the problem for the regime in releasing 400 prisoners if these have previously capitulated, reneging from the armed struggle, and, moreover, "integrated themselves into the political life of the country".

Who would entertain any doubts that in such capacity those prisoners would only serve to support the political and military plans of the regime?. We can show similar examples all over Latin America when groups of similar aims as the MRTA negotiated with and capitulated before the imperialist puppet regimes of the region. In Ecuador, the nearly extinct "Alfaro Vive Carajo" movement today only serves as Christmas decoration for the official political system.

In Colombia, the M-19 sold out its "armed struggle" so as to take part in elections. In El Salvador, the former guerillas have become part of the police forces of that state. In Guatemala, the URNG guerillas, after 36 years of armed struggle, signed a peace treaty with the pro-imperialist regime of Alvaro Arzu. With this capitulation, the URNG gives up its weapons in order to become a "single party" and to "incorporate itself into the democratic system".

The demand of the MRTA for the government to change its economic policy, is nothing but a "salute to the flag". Its content is empty demagogy which serves them only for publicity's sake. Can anyone imagine that it would be enough to seize an embassy and to lay hands on a few hundred hostages in order to force a reactionary regime to change its sinister and anti-popular economic policies?.

If the MRTA had really in mind the promotion of the interests of the Peruvian poor, why have they not demanded as a condition for releasing the hostages that the government decrees a raise in wages and salaries for the workers?. The two remaining points, (war tax, and the MRTA commando being given transportation), could well be the demands of any vulgar gang of bank raiders. Easy to grant and without any major political implications.

### **Who Benefits from the MRTA's Action?**

To look into this issue it is sufficient to elucidate what are the aims and what is being negotiated by the MRTA. What is the gist of the issue being discussed between the Peruvian regime and the MRTA?. This group has expressed its willingness to sign a "lasting peace agreement" with the Peruvian regime. We have to take this as the basic element in order to see exactly what are the political reasons for the raid and seizure of the Japanese embassy.

Two are the direct beneficiaries of the peace proposals of the MRTA. The first beneficiary is the Peruvian regime, and the second one is no other than US imperialism itself. A "peace agreement" between the MRTA and the government, leaving aside the political and military insignificance of this group, serves for reinforcing the political plans and anti-insurgency schemes being applied by this regime since 1990. There are several political reasons which make of the "peace agreement", a god send for Fujimori. One of this reasons is related to the adverse political situation engulfing the regime.

And what are the elements underpinning such an adverse situation?. Firstly, there is the Maoist guerilla led by the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), which despite the regime's silly propaganda about "defeat of Shining Path" continues to be the number one problem besieging the Peruvian state. Fujimori promised to liquidate ("erase from the map") subversion by the end of July 1995. This propaganda slogan has turned into a sharp boomerang against the government.

The logic trend of the Maoist guerillas is towards its growth and strengthening. Even the very enemies of the guerillas recognise this fact today. Here is a recent expression of this:

"We are facing a reconstitution of Shining Path ... In other words, they have been able to counteract the defeat inflicted upon them by the capture of its top leadership, and are again experiencing growth, enrolling new people, training and setting them into action". (Fernando Rospigliosi, Caretas magazine, May 23, 1996).

Another serious element in the national situation is the sharpening of the economic crisis and the increase of poverty in Peru. Fujimori's ballyhooed "economic spring" turned out to be less productive than a drop of water in the middle of the desert. The auction of state enterprises has ended and now there are more poor and unemployed people in Peru than they were in 1990.

To these conundrums, we can add the direly felt aftermath of the shameful defeat at the hands of Ecuador in the military clashes of January 1995. Due to this the state has embarked into an extravagant arms race further weakening Peru's fragile economy. This situation will exacerbate even more social conflicts and poverty in the country.

As a final ingredient, we must take note of the drugs trade, which if in the one hand renders a substantial income for the State, has on the other generated an atmosphere of generalised corruption within the military high command, the police, the judiciary and within the top ranks of the government itself.

### **"Peace Agreements" and Counter-Insurgency Schemes**

In the field of counter-insurgency, the "peace agreement" posited by the MRTA has a concrete aim in mind: Attempting to isolate the Maoist guerillas. It is a sure fire bet that in conjunction with the negotiations between the MRTA and the government, the media will launch a gigantic misinformation campaign directed to promote the civic and patriotic values of the negotiating guerillas.

Along side this, they will intensify their campaign to portray the guerilla forces of the Communist Party of Peru as a gang of heartless cut-throats, terrorists who kill the civilian population for sport.

That is why it is not accidental that the MRTA, in the same communique in which they propose the "lasting peace agreement" with Fujimori, hurls hysterical mud against the Maoist guerilla. In their third communique issued after December 17, they say: "We do not accept to be continuously likened to Shining Path, an organisation we have condemned in various opportunities because of their use of irrational violence against the people themselves".

The punch-line of this communique is really worthy of Ripley. It shows the counter-revolutionary police-like role that the so-called followers of Tupac Amaru aspire to undertake if the government would accept their "peace" proposals. Barely bothering to conceal this role, they say: "our request should be granted and that would in the long term give rise to an inclusive and lasting peace. Towards this aim we shall jointly and responsibly work for".

The people of Peru, together with the peoples of all Latin America, have abundant experience obtained at the cost of their own blood of the methods (repression, crime, kidnapping, disappearances and inhuman imprisonment) used by various regimes, civilian or military, in order to impose what is known as "inclusive and lasting peace". And towards this end the MRTA says that it "shall jointly and responsibly work for".

### **The Yankees' Benefit**

The Yankees doubly benefit here. On the one hand, the "lasting peace" proposed by the MRTA buttresses their puppet regime in Peru, and that in itself plays in favour of the economical and political interests of the great US conglomerates whose tentacles strangle the country. But the greatest dividends for the USA are to be found in linking the actions of the MRTA within the counter-insurgency "peace building" policies they are implementing in Latin America.

We should not overlook the fact that in Latin America and other parts of the world, "dialogue" and "peace agreement", have become institutional tools in the counter-insurgency plans and strategies rigged for imposing "peace" within countries faced with internal wars. "Peace agreements", real or fraudulent, render enormous political benefits for imperialism and reactionary regimes alike. The only victims of these "agreements" (capitulation) are the masses of the poor, those who during years and decades have sacrificed themselves and contributed thousands of lives in order to get nothing at all at the end of the day.

In Peru, the fraudulent concoction known as the "peace letters from Shining Path" (a police plot launched in 1993) has become the fundamental element and basic premise of the regime's

current anti-insurgency strategy.

It is the MRTA itself who gives us proof of its intentions in serving US imperialism. This proof was delivered and stamped as a veritable present of love packaged with golden ribbons and every possible frill. We are referring here to the release of Jose Maria Argot, Guatemala's ambassador in Peru who was among the hostages in the Japanese embassy. This diplomat was, according to the MRTA itself, set free in "recognition of the peace agreement, signed on 29 December between the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala (UNRG) and the government of that country". The release of this diplomat, was interpreted by the Peruvian media itself as a "signal on the part of the MRTA of its aim for achieving some kind of similar agreement with the Peruvian government".

However, it is not only the case of the release of the Guatemalan diplomat what shows up how the MRTA beseeches the favours of the US government. Showing little embarrassment the MRTA alleges in its communique number 1 that the seizure of the Japanese embassy is an action in "condemnation of the interference of the Japanese government in our motherland's political life by consistent support for the human rights violations inflicted by the Peruvian government".

So, now it is the Japanese empire the hand directing policy and governance in the Peruvian regime?. And what role does US imperialism play?. It is clear that the Fujimori regime defends and defers to the interests of Japanese imperialism, as well as those of other imperialist powers, be these Great Britain, France, Germany, etc. But the issue remains that it precisely US imperialism who is the main enemy of the Peruvian people. That this empire is the one which decides, in accordance with its methods and interests, what kind of regime and what kind of policies must predominate in the country.

Peru, like the majority of other Latin American countries, is part and parcel of US imperialism's "backyard". Within that "backyard" whatever the Japanese, or any other imperialist power, may do, must have the consent and imprimatur of the USA.

What a great service for the US regime is rendered by the MRTA when they affirm that it is Japan who is responsible for the "violations of human rights" in Peru. Even the most ignorant of analysts knows well that the bloodthirsty counter-insurgency plans of the Peruvian regime, as well as its economic policies, are manufactured and buttressed by the US government and not by the Japanese.

#### A Few Conclusions

Someone may attempt to gainsay us pointing out that it is not that clear that the action of the MRTA favours the regime and imperialism. To advance this thesis they would allege that the seizure of the Japanese embassy has had world wide resonance and has brought to light the weakness of the state and its police forces. That it has demonstrated that the Fujimori regime keeps millions of Peruvians sunk in abject misery. That in Peru prisoners are kept in "tombs for the living" and that "human rights are violated". And finally, that contrary to Fujimori's assertions, the guerilla forces are active and have not been liquidated.

To all this we can only point out at two factors:

Firstly, whatever negatives the MRTA and the media may have revealed about the Fujimori regime, loses its impact since the main "complainant" (the MRTA) is offering to sign a "lasting peace agreement" precisely with such a government. The simple and logical question of any ordinary citizen is: How is it possible to come to a "peace agreement" with the same regime you are accusing of "violating human rights", of murdering prisoners in slow motion, of starving to death millions of Peruvians?. Wait a minute!: Here someone is lying, would say to himself/herself the most naive of observers.

Secondly, the seizure of the Japanese embassy, which at the onset was presented as a dramatic event, has evolved, after more than 40 days into an amusing and circus-like sideshow involving no major danger for the regime. There are no casualties that may put pressure one way or another. The "rebels" from their "own free will" have released more than 80% of their haul of captives, among them several war criminals, for example, the Chief of the anti-terrorist police.

It is a dead certainty that the action of the MRTA, aimed as it is to the signing of a "peace agreement" with Fujimori, would in the end be promoted as an event "officially marking the victory of the regime over subversion".

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