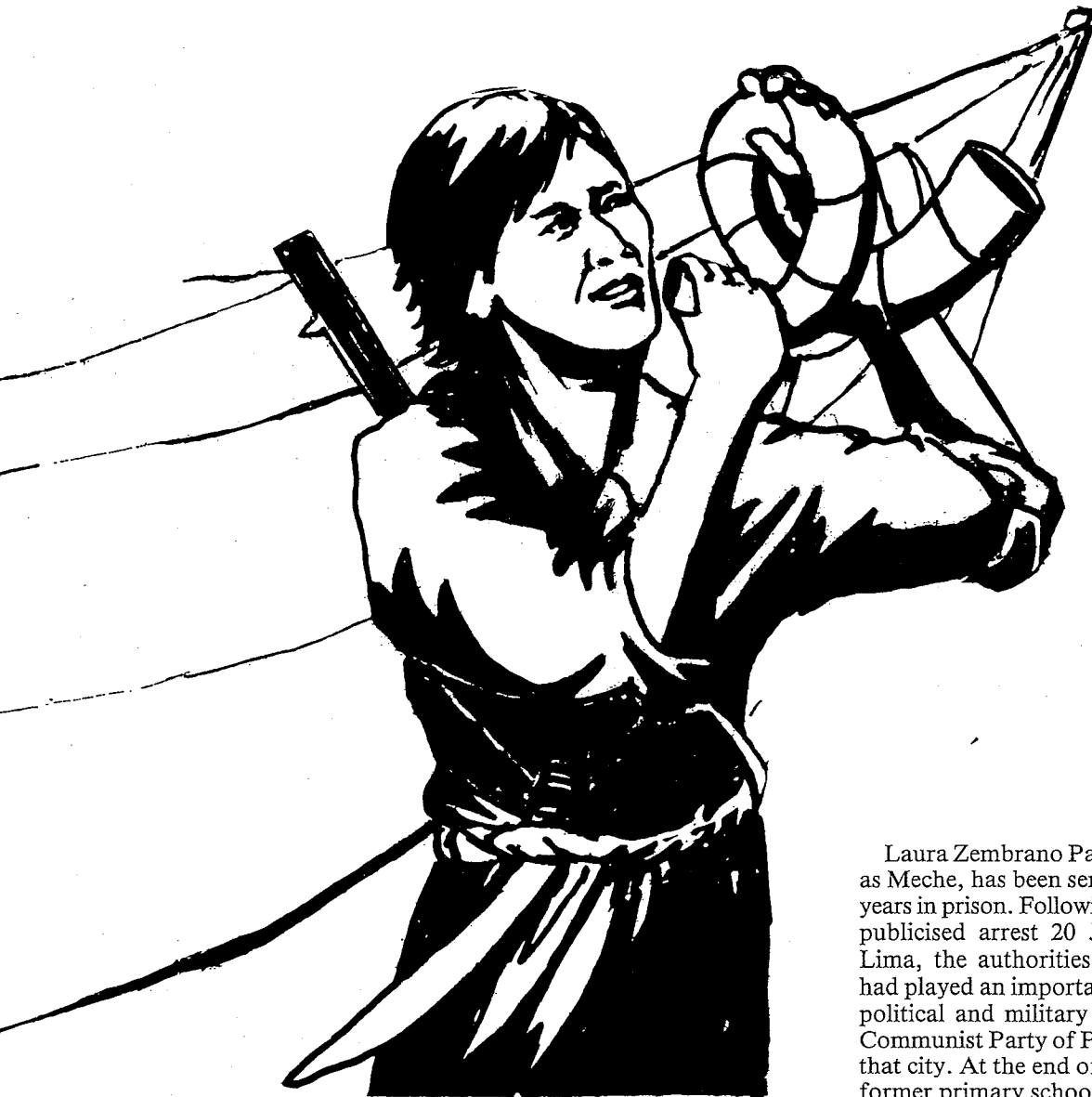


From Callao Prison:

Comrade Meche Undaunted



Laura Zembrano Padilla, known as Meche, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison. Following her highly publicised arrest 20 July 1984 in Lima, the authorities claimed she had played an important role in the political and military work of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) in that city. At the end of the year the former primary school teacher was

tried and convicted under the March 1981 "antiterrorist" Decree 46. This presidential decree outlawed the PCP and created a legal definition of "terrorism" which includes any expression of support for the armed struggle the PCP is leading.

Quickly after Meche's arrest, a worldwide campaign backed by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement was launched to prevent the Peruvian authorities from completing their attempts to kill this revolutionary fighter held in the Callao women's prison along with 84 other women suspected of being revolutionaries. These women have all been repeatedly assaulted.

Indications are that comrade Meche is still alive, maintaining her revolutionary stand despite extensive torture, upholding Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the line of PCP Chairman Gonzalo, and continuing to fight from within the Callao prison itself. The 17 December 1984 issue of the Peruvian magazine *Equis X* published her response to written questions the magazine had submitted to her. The interview appears to be authentic.

Her reply is dated 5 December 1984. Asked her opinion of the legal process which had just ended, she is quoted as saying that she has been sentenced "for being a communist, for having taken up this most powerful ideology...."

"Throughout the whole trial the judiciary, specifically the Seventh Court, has taken a political position in favour of the government and the system. The so-called autonomous judiciary has operated through a concoction of oppressive laws: Decree 46 which is a truly terrorist law...."

"The trial has been a shameful and disgusting comedy, where the judges, degraded and servile, pretended to be impartial and serve 'justice.' They praised and justified inconsistent testimony that not even the PIPs [undercover police—*AWTW*] at the trial could support, testimony which could not even be taken as indirect reference. There is not the slightest proof of any of the acts I have been accused of; but their so-called 'criterion of conscience' was enough for them to convict me. Deaf and blind reactionary justice

has been put into motion in defense of the old worn-out exploitative and oppressive order, demonstrating even more deeply its counterrevolutionary essence, exposing even more the black entrails of the legal system and the sacred judiciary. But this legal butchery and its sentences cannot bend the sons and daughters of the people who have stood up and defied them in the Revolution...."

"I was arrested on the 20th of July by two women police and remained in the hands of the Civil Guard until the 23rd. During those days the reaction tortured me in every way, seeking to break my will and to force me to make false confessions by the most filthy and perverted humiliations aimed at my revolutionary morale...."

"Then I was transferred to DIR-COTE [the special "antiterrorist" police—*AWTW*], remaining in their dark dungeons until Saturday August 4th. I was subjected to three kinds of torture: 1) Psychological warfare, consisting of being kept standing for four days on end without sleep or rest, threatened, constantly watched and humiliated. 2) When they failed to achieve their objectives in this way they began beating various parts of my body, especially vital organs such as the kidneys, lungs and head. 3) Afterwards the tortures centred on what's known as "suspension," being hung in the air with hands tied behind my back, and beaten all over my body. Then I was submerged in acid and excrement, as they tried to annihilate me physically...."

"The Communist Party of Peru, in defense of our people's sacred rights, began the heroic armed struggle in May 1980. This far-reaching revolutionary act opened the doors of armed rebellion, of the uprising of the masses, especially the poor peasants, to conquer state power for the proletariat and the masses of people, unfolding a Democratic revolution in order to go on to the Socialist revolution and Communism, which is our final goal...."

Asked to reply to the government's charges that the guerrillas are carrying out massacres and assassinations, she is quoted as responding, "It is the State which is unleashing counterrevolutionary

warfare against the people and their party. The Armed Forces were sent in at the end of 1982 as the main force in this counterrevolutionary war, and the only method they found to hold back the party and the armed struggle is slaughter.... That is their democracy and their respect for human life. There are no rights to be respected, only cruelty, brutality and mad rage; this is how they want to stop the revolution. The reaction dreams of drowning the revolution in blood, but this blood they are shedding is making the revolution grow. These reactionary hyenas are dreaming of feeding on the carcasses of the people, but the powerful flames of the armed struggle will burn them up. The party's goal is to change the world; the new world will defeat the old one.

"The reaction has started a campaign against the party. There has been a serious plot to blame the party for the assassination of the United Left mayor in Huancayo, which it did not do. They also accused us of killing children in Blacon, Sachabamba and elsewhere, but they always leave their tracks and the truth comes out in the end. The government, the Armed Forces and the police are the ones carrying out the massacres and the genocide they blame us for, but the truth is coming out and this campaign is backfiring against them. The party applies its sanctions through people's trials and not through massacres; the people's justice that is marching forward, the people's hammer and shield, does not use cruelty, brutality or rage. Such acts are part of the government's political plan and part of how they are setting the stage for their elections [referring to the April 1985 presidential elections—*AWTW*]."

Comrade Meche is also quoted as saying, "What is developing today is a political conjuncture in which the forces of two republics confront each other. One of them is outmoded, rotten and shot through with its own contradictions; the other, a new republic, a new social order, a new dictatorship which is the first really free republic in our country, is arising from the masses themselves in the heat of the armed struggle...." ■