

# Peru's New President of Counterrevolution

Peru has had its elections and the elections have had the desired result: a new face has been chosen to preside over the armed counter-revolution.

Well over 100,000 troops and police poured into the streets of the cities and towns April 14th—one for every 80 registered voters who faced harassment and even the possibility of death if they failed to obtain an official mark in their voter's book and an official stain on their voting finger. The democratic whirling of helicopters filled the skies of Lima, Ayacucho and other cities, while armoured cars and tanks kept "democracy" safe down below.

What kind of democracy is this? Lenin once wrote that the rule of capital, which often clothes itself with the sham of bourgeois democracy in the imperialist countries, stands naked in the countries oppressed by imperialism. Here in Peru, which after all was supposed to be a big success story for democracy in the backyard of U.S. imperialism, 29 of Peru's 153 provinces—the central mountain areas where the revolution is strongest—are now emergency zones under direct military rule. In these provinces Peru's constitution and all pretense of rights have been formally suspended. In the rest of the country, since July 1984 the military has enjoyed legal authority, given to them by the duly elected

civilian president, to set up more emergency zones wherever it wants and to direct the police and other repressive forces involved in the anti-guerrilla struggle.

In fact, the constitution itself, written in 1979 under the tutelage of the armed forces, declares the armed forces to be the ultimate arbiter of the country's destiny. This is a formal declaration of the reality made clear by Peru's history of repeated armed forces coups and even clearer by the last five years in which the counterrevolutionary war against the guerrillas has increasingly taken on the character of a war against a broad section of the people, especially in the mountain countryside as well as the shantytowns of the big cities.

The revolutionary forces report that the number of those killed in combat or made to "disappear" in the secret mass executions that have become a hallmark of the Peruvian armed forces has reached 10,000. In the department of Ayacucho, the historic centre of the revolutionary armed struggle, 1% of the population is said to have been killed since the armed forces occupied the region at the end of 1982, according to the International Movement of Catholic Jurists.

The armed forces cannot be said to have acted against Peru's "democracy," however. Their mass roundups, death squads, torture,

rape, mass executions and systematic efforts to rid whole areas of the countryside of their inhabitants have all been discussed, decided and wholly blessed by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government and all the appropriate government organs. Other participants in this general orgy of democratic approval have included the U.S., the "socialist" governments of France and Spain, as well as the ruling Socialists and Christian Democrats of Italy, and of course the Pope, along with Peru's "United Left" opposition and its admirers in many countries, and last but not least, Fidel Castro.

## **Election Boycott and Offensive**

Two months before the elections the Communist Party of Peru (PCP, called Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path by the press) put out the slogan, "Don't Vote—Step Up Guerrilla Warfare to Seize Power for the People." The purpose of the boycott was to oppose electoral illusions with a clear conception of what Peru's problem is and how to solve it, to wage a political campaign against the elections to increase support for and participation in the guerrilla war. In some areas where it is particularly strong among the masses, the PCP did try to stop the elections; in many others where it was not actually able to prevent the elections from taking place it



The Marx quote at the bottom of the cartoon says: "the oppressed are authorised to decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to represent and repress the people in parliament."



This cartoon, entitled "1985 Elections Carnival," was widely circulated as a leaflet by the PCP during the year before the elections. Pictured are: 1) Uncle Sam, 2) the Soviet bear,

3) outgoing president Belaunde, 4) APRA's Alan Garcia, 5) the United Left's Alfonso Barrantes, seated beside other candidates 6) Armed Forces head Julian Julia 7) "criminal

front," a play on the term "national front", 8) the Army, 9) Marines, 10) Air Force, 11) Peruvian Investigations Police (detectives) 12) Civil Guard (rural police), 13) Republican Guard (of prisons, borders, public buildings, 15) "cannon fodder," Armed Forces controlled vigilante gangs

16) Jesus Oropesa, National Agrarian Confederation leader burned alive by police, 17) Huancayo United Left Mayor Munoz, killed by the government, according to his local supporters quoted in the Peruvian press. This contradicts the government's claim—widely quoted by pro-United Left types abroad—that the PCP was responsible, 18) the national flag, turned into the white flag of capitulation, 19) the government's new banners, 20) children killed in a government-organised massacre.

unleashed military blows to inflict damage on the enemy.

In two widely circulated pamphlets, one addressed to the people of Ayacucho (see *A World To Win* No. 2) and the other signed directly by the Party's Central Committee (see this issue), through wall posters and handbills particularly aimed at peasants who are often illiterate, and through spoken agitation carried out in the countryside, the villages, on buses temporarily seized by the guerrillas and in the urban shantytowns, the PCP exposed the underlying nature of the Peruvian society which these elections were meant to preserve: a society dominated by imperialist capital, semi-feudal landowners and bureaucrat capitalism tied to both of these pillars of the reactionary order.

On election day, two polling stations in affluent areas of Lima were bombed and the Aviation Ministry attacked. Telephone exchanges were reported bombed in Huancayo and Huanta, in the department of Ayacucho.

On April 20th, six days after the elections, six electric power pylons on the eastern outskirts of Lima were blown up, plunging the city in total darkness while the hills above the city were lit up with the now-familiar bonfires forming the shape of a hammer and sickle.

Major attacks were reportedly launched in the mining area of Pasco during the first week of May, prompting the authorities to announce that the PCP was beginning to mount an offensive. Despite the roundup and detention of 10,000 people in Lima May 9th, the official residences of the ambassadors of the U.S., the USSR and China were attacked. (The PCP has denounced the current Chinese regime for betraying Mao's line, overthrowing the revolution and imposing a new reactionary dictatorship.) A week later an important paper factory was burned down. Major clashes between guerrillas and the army were also reported that week in Trujillo, in northern Peru.

These revolutionary military activities have continued in the months since the elections. On June 8th Lima and six other major cities were blacked out simultaneously. The

spectacular series of attacks on key power pylons demonstrated the government's increasingly embarrassing inability to control large areas of the countryside through which these power lines pass, especially in the mountains. That night a parked car filled with dynamite blew up in front of the presidential palace in the centre of Lima, producing panic among the swarms of police and other security forces stationed there. Two of them were reported shot and wounded in the course of the evening's confused events. The car was later reported to have been stolen from Peru's Attorney General. In the darkness, dynamite is said to have resounded in explosions at the Ministry of Defense, the court building the PCP has labeled the "Palace of Injustice," the embassy of Argentina (whose chief of state was at that moment conferring with President Belaunde in the presidential palace), and once again, the U.S. embassy.

There are no accurate figures available at this writing on the extent of the election boycott itself. There have been complaints from election officials quoted in the press which indicate that up to 18% of the ballots cast were blank or spoiled (for instance, marked with revolutionary slogans). There are no reliable figures available at all on how many people abstained from voting, although even the most pro-government estimates have not dared put this figure at less than 20%, and other equally unconfirmed estimates run at over twice that. There have been as yet unconfirmed reports that the government was unable to hold elections in hundreds of villages in the central and south-central mountains and some urban areas.

It is revealing, however, that Leonor Zamora, the mayor of Ayacucho, long a bitter enemy of the PCP and the revolution, announced that she would spoil her ballot "in solidarity with the strong current in the emergency zone." In other words, nobody else was going to vote and she wouldn't either. Of course, her complaint was not that the elections themselves were a reactionary farce—she violently opposed the PCP's boycott in 1983

when she was running for mayor—but "there is no security for the voters, the elections should be cancelled." In essence, this was a call for more military presence—more "security"—while at the same time, as an exercise in shameless demagoguery, a kind of anti-election campaign stunt to further her own political career, her gesture gives a glimpse of the strength of the election boycott.

### **"Chronicle of an Election Foretold"**

Long before these elections the PCP had predicted that the regime's strategy would be to declare the holding of any elections at all a victory for the government and a sign of the weakness of the guerrillas. This is just what happened. On the morning of election day, a spokesman for the U.S. government pronounced the holding of elections itself the real victory while expressing apparently genuine unconcern about the outcome. This judgment was duly repeated throughout the ranks of the legions of foreign and domestic reporters.

For instance, much fuss has been made about the fact that an election station was placed on the campus of the University of San Marcos, despite the omnipresence of PCP anti-election slogans on the walls of the university. But if the government's ability to put a polling booth in an area in the middle of the capital city, for at least a few hours, amidst an all-out display of military strength—if this is a question, then how strong can the government really be?

Much is also made of the fact that for the first time since World War II one Peruvian civilian regime was about to be followed by another, without a military interregnum. It seems that this is supposed to mean that the country's armed forces have undergone some change of heart or that the U.S. under Reagan has repudiated the brutally open military means that up to now have periodically reinforced U.S. domination. In fact, the desperation with which they grasped at the straw of a scheduled polling shows how much they needed some new faces to shore up the counterrevolution,

both to renew the increasingly tattered banner of "democracy" waving over the regime's concentration camps now infamous the world over, and to get rid of a president whose isolation was dramatically illustrated when his party could barely muster 5% of the votes in the April elections, obviously lacking the confidence even of Peru's propertied classes.

A Lima newspaper entitled its election coverage, "Chronicle of an Election Foretold," a play on the title of the best-selling Gabriel García Márquez novel, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, in which a whole town becomes reduced to mere spectators to the unfolding of a murder announced long in advance. Well over a year ago, the "opinion polls" and the opinion-makers (such as often-quoted unnamed U.S. State Department "analysts") had announced the inevitability of the election's outcome.

Nevertheless, it took seven weeks of counting before the figures came out acceptably and Alan García of the APRA party was declared the winner, despite the inconvenient fact that he failed to meet the constitutional requirement of winning over 50% of the votes (he was reported to have won 45%). To make García's victory possible, the runner-up candidate, Alfonso Barrantes of the United Left coalition, who'd been reported to win 21%, withdrew from the race. The Electoral Commission announced that its reasons for dispensing with the legally-required run-off elections were two-fold: to avoid "wasting money," and to avoid giving the guerrillas "a new occasion to show their violent hostility to all popular consultations." Or, as García warned in the face of the Belaunde-controlled Congress' initial reluctance to change the election rules and allow the Electoral Commission declare him the winner, "Let's not shake up democracy too much."

What else can this be considered except a confession about the fragility of the whole political structure and the need to move on quickly before the whole charade collapsed in the face of the revolutionary armed struggle and its political and ideological strength?

### APRA's "Modern" Servility

García's APRA party is well-suited for the role it is being called upon to play. It has proven its ability to combine "nationalist" demagoguery with pro-imperialist and reactionary politics, a style in vogue in several Latin American countries lately, including Venezuela (whose ruling party is linked to APRA) as well as Argentina and Colombia. Such a fashion suits U.S. imperialism's present needs well right now. It is a kind of nationalism characterised by such thin tricks as the Venezuelan government's "independent" declaration of an economic austerity programme the equal of any imposed by the International Monetary Fund, then turning around and "refusing to negotiate" with the IMF. This is one particular trick which García may well imitate, according to a *New York Times* article written to reassure confused American bankers who exhibited unfounded jitters around García's election.

APRA was founded in 1924 under the influence of the bourgeois Mexican revolution and the then-bourgeois revolutionary Kuomintang in China, although unlike the KMT at that time, the APRA has always been violently anti-communist. More recently, it became a member of the Socialist International. Today APRA is affiliated with the "socialist" governments of Spain and France whose loyalty to the U.S. bloc is incontestable. (In fact, García, who at age 36 is said to be bringing about a "modernisation"—that is, Europeanisation—of Peruvian politics, was trained in Madrid and Paris.)

The much-publicised talk about the possibility of the elections resulting in a coup was based to some extent, on the fact that the armed forces had launched several coups, most recently in 1962, to keep APRA out of office. It was this 1962 coup which after an interval of military rule brought Belaunde to power for the first time, the next year.

However, in 1968 the Armed Forces turned around, threw Belaunde out, and proceeded to steal—that is, to implement—APRA's historic programme of na-

tionalisation of foreign enterprises. This led many Apristas, along with much of the so-called left today united behind Barrantes, to provide the new government with many of its cadre. APRA's alliance with the military and its increasingly indispensable role for the ruling class was symbolised by the fact that APRA brokered the military's reinstatement of civilian politics and helped engineer a civilian stamp of approval on the new armed forces-inspired constitution 12 years later. Belaunde returned to office in 1980 as a consequence of this move.

Without trying to summarise the evolution of the relations between APRA, Belaunde and the armed forces themselves, this history certainly makes it clear that in Peru it has always been the armed forces whose vote counts.

APRA once enjoyed something of a "populist" reputation as a party whose offices were always open to a man looking for work or even just a free haircut. This has a lot to do with its efforts to build up a political machine in better-off, more capitalistically-developed areas of the country and among somewhat better-off strata, both through extensive patronage and its demands for nationalisation. The other side of the coin is that it never won any significant support in the countryside. When the nationalisation of U.S. oil companies and other enterprises was finally carried out in 1968 by the military, it did not in any way lighten U.S. imperialist domination of Peru—which has tremendously increased according to any objective economic standard—nor even much effect the particular financial interests involved, such as the Rockefeller interests, which continue to rake off superprofits through loan capital instead of direct industrial investments.

Robbed of much real point in demanding more nationalisations—although he did—García's call for a "nationalist, democratic and popular government" rested upon one main programmatic promise: that he would stand up to the "foreign banks that profit from our misery" by forcing them to accept a limitation on Peru's payments of its

foreign debts to no more than 20% of the amount brought in by the sale of exports.

Peru's \$13.5 billion debt to imperialist governments and banks is a consequence and reflection of its enslavement to foreign finance capital. This debt has jumped by 50% in the last five years, while the country has plunged deeper and deeper into economic disaster. Now theoretically Peru is supposed to pay 80% of its export earnings to the U.S. and other imperialist governments and banks. But for almost a year it hasn't been able to pay a single cent. For all practical purposes the country is bankrupt. García's proposal could only be welcomed by any realistic imperialist.

#### Gold-Medal Revisionism

APRA's partner in this passionless election drama was the United Left candidate, Lima mayor Alfonso Barrantes, who easily matched APRA in the vagueness of his rhetoric and the viciousness of its intentions. His campaign slogan, "against imperialist exploitation, for defense of life and the fatherland" came down to demanding that Peru declare a total moratorium on debt payments—in other words, making a slogan of the status quo under Belaunde. This, from a "socialist" whose coalition includes pro-Soviet, pro-Chinese revisionist and pro-Albanian parties, in other words, nearly the entire legal "left" of Peru, and which in turn has been much touted as an example to follow by opportunism of various stripes all over the world!

Of course both candidates were alike in their attitude towards that revolution and the party leading it, since they were in agreement on continuing Peru's subjugation in the first place. No one was shocked that García, in a "surprise" visit to Ayacucho (made a "surprise" allegedly for security reasons, which relieved him of having to explain why few came out to welcome him) confined his criticisms to "small-time corrupt judges and bad policemen" without *mentioning* the armed forces who have directly carried out the bulk of the bloodbath and who are legally in charge of all the other forces involved. What did

surprise a couple of people is that Barrantes, that "socialist," also never mentioned the armed forces during his campaign, not even uttering the hypocritical wishes for a more constitutional counterrevolutionary war sometimes expressed by others in his coalition. Instead Barrantes seemed to compete with García in presenting himself as an implacable foe of the PCP and the revolution it is leading.

The question of the counter-revolutionary actions of the armed forces, like the question of Peru's subjugation itself, was simply covered over by a conspiracy of silence entered into by these two self-styled "leftists" carrying out an election campaign while the armed forces were carrying out the most bloody carnage in Peru's history.

A Peruvian liberal writing in the Spanish press cried out in amazement when García went so far as to say that Amnesty International's documented charges of what it called "human rights violations" by the Peruvian armed forces "remained to be proven"—a stand that, as the columnist pointed out, not even the most pro-government press in Lima had dared take—while Barrantes didn't even take García up on this unbelievable assertion. And these men were supposed to be rivals!

One could conclude, as some people charitably disposed towards the Garcías and Barrantes of this world have done, that they avoided the subject out of fear that the armed forces would otherwise block their way into office. But there is more at stake here than personal opportunism. The whole election charade these men were partners in had no other purpose than to politically and ideologically strengthen the counter-revolution and its murderous efforts.

Without a Barrantes, García's inevitable election just wouldn't have been the same. The political aims of the counterrevolution required the participation of this counterrevolutionary "revolutionary" in order to play out the electoral farce to the fullest. To enhance it, some masks were necessary. When the United Left released its presidential programme it suppressed the section

detailing how it proposed to deal with the armed struggle—all the better to rope in the gullible. But Barrantes, like García, appeared before the armed forces' "school of higher studies," in other words, its political command, to explain his programme. The scholarly generals pronounced themselves fully satisfied. The Navy—the Navy that includes the Marines, the Navy whose actions in the mountains have given birth to the new word among the peasants for strategic hamlets—"navalisation"—awarded Barrantes a medal just before the elections.

The bottom line for Peru's ruling classes and their armed forces was expressed by Armed Forces head and Minister of War General Julian Julia, who said that no matter which party won, "there is no possibility of a military veto. A United Left government would be a great experience to go through, and as for the APRA, our differences with them are past history."

Julian also said, "For us the communist danger is represented only by Sendero Luminoso and not by the United Left. The eventual triumph of the United Left would not mean any danger because its Marxism is developed within the framework of the democratic institutions." The armed forces, of course, are Peru's most important "democratic institution."

The differences between APRA and the United Left are perhaps best explained by García, who told a news agency that he and his "good friend" Barrantes actually shared the APRA programme. Recalling that Barrantes was once an APRA member, García remarked that the real problem with the United Left is that Barrantes does not have control over all the forces within his coalition. This later point seems to have been a slap at the pro-Soviet forces and other elements whose main difference with the APRA is a preference for Soviet imperialism over the U.S.-bloc variety.

#### Blessings Expected and Otherwise

In the weeks before he assumed office, García did everything possible to make clear what to expect from his government. He made his pilgrimages: to Spain, to discuss

possible Spanish-government support for his proposed "reduced" IMF payments; to Italy, for similar talks with the Italian government and to receive, from the Pope, the same blessing the Pope had just given Belaunde; to France, which owns 35% of Peru's foreign debt, where he "just went to buy some books." After that García was to head to the U.S. for the ultimate blessing.

But the strangest benediction came from Fidel Castro. In an interview in the Madrid newspaper *El Pais*, given in January 1985—three months before the Peru elections—Castro delivered a Latin American foreign policy lecture to the U.S., advising it not to push its weight around too much, or else "a social outbreak could occur in Latin America, where there are large masses of peasants, workers, students, intellectuals and middle strata in an increasingly desperate situation. One would have to be blind not to see that....Look at Peru: what will Alan García find when he receives the presidential sash? An insupportable economic situation, insoluble social problems and guerrillas in the mountains. Nobody can explain the increasing activity of these guerrillas because nobody knows very well what Sendero Luminoso thinks, what it is and what it wants."

Castro can read and knows very well what the PCP thinks of all forms of revisionism, Castro-type included. The PCP has made it plain to all who care to know that it is leading a revolution to liberate Peru from imperialism and serve the world revolution and not to follow Castro in trading one imperialist master for another. Perhaps here Castro is following a policy noted before among some pro-Soviet forces, of on the one hand attacking and defaming the PCP and on the other leaving the door open to try to seek some advantage by dressing up as possible allies of the revolution. But with this offer of sympathy and understanding to Peru's future chief executive executioner, faced with what is apparently the most horrible thing Castro can imagine, "Sendero Luminoso," Castro is certainly making a contribution to clarifying



*"Long live the First Anniversary of the Ayacucho Prison Breakout! Long Live the Guerrilla War! Long Live the Communist Party of Peru!"*

pro-Soviet revisionism's position in relation to the Peruvian (and all other) revolution.

### First Bloody Measures

"My government will have the authority and the energy to combat terrorism," García proclaimed as he prepared to wrap the presidential sash around his belly, "it will be us or them." At the same time he announced the first measures he intended to carry out upon taking office July 28th.

First, the return to his post of General Huaman, "political-military commander" of the area Belaunde had put under military rule, until Belaunde replaced him. Huaman, politically linked to APRA and the United Left, had been fired for publically complaining that "military means are not enough" to crush the revolution. Apparently he thinks that with the elections and García in its arsenal, the armed forces can do better now, although he will find that the "emergency zone" has more than doubled since he last commanded it, due to the successes of the PCP's offensives of the last year.

Huaman's civilian fan club is fond of pointing out that he speaks Quechua and comes from Huanta, a province in the northern part of the department of Ayacucho. He's even referred to abroad as a sort of "people's general." A lawyer for a peasant organisation, however, has been quoted as saying it would be better to compare him with Pizarro—the *conquistador* who led in subjugating Peru's Indians and wiping out eight million.

Under Huaman's command, during the first six months of 1984, when he was in charge of all administrative and military matters in the emergency zone, the Marines set up their notorious concentration camp in a Huanta sports stadium, organised paramilitary death squads and carried out large-scale search and destroy operations which resulted in the depopulation of entire areas of the province. It was toward the end of his command that the first of a series of mass graves of the armed forces' victims were uncovered in Huanta.

In addition, according to

Amnesty International, which studied information available to them about the 600 "suspected guerrillas" that the armed forces under Huaman's command *reported* killed in the emergency zone during those six months, "a great many" of the dead "were killed after surrendering or being captured," and as for the rest, "a great number had nothing to do with the guerrillas." So when Huaman says "military means are not enough," he apparently does not mean that any drop of blood should be spared. He simply means that in any war, no matter how counterrevolutionary, the reactionaries' military efforts must always be accompanied by efforts to win the "hearts and minds" of their victims and others.

Secondly, García announced, members of the police and armed forces accused of "violating the rights of man" would be brought to court—sent to the same courts that have so far failed to take any steps against any of them no matter how flagrant the evidence and admissions, and sent by the same man who declared that any such accusations of the "rights of man" "remained to be proven."

### Target: Fronton

Lastly, the Fronton island prison near Lima has become an embarrassment to the government because of the intense and determined political activities of the nearly 400 suspected revolutionaries kept there. In April 1982, after the PCP began carrying out its "jailbreak policy," most notably in the taking of the departmental jail in Ayacucho, Belaunde had suspected revolutionaries from jails all over the country concentrated in this closed-down island dungeon. Later, this government policy turned into its opposite, because despite vengeful conditions imposed by the government, such as cutting off water for drinking, cooking and sanitation, the murder of six of the prisoners and the shooting and wounding of 30 more, and countless other attacks, the revolutionaries became even more dauntless, treating the prison as a place to train politically, ideologically and physically for future combat.

Now García has announced that he will carry out a policy proposed under Belaunde, to remove the revolutionaries from Fronton and scatter them in other prisons around the country. This plan has been denounced in a letter smuggled out of Fronton. Such a move might well involve serious clashes with the prisoners, just as the removal of the prisoners to Fronton from other prisons in the first place was accompanied by beatings, assaults and the shooting of one prisoner. The plan's purpose, the prisoners say, is to isolate them and make it easier for them to be selectively killed or "disappeared." Belaunde was not able to carry out this plan that García is now promising to fulfill. But after all, being able to do more to try to smash the revolution is what this "reformer" was chosen for.

García and his government may think that the elections and dumping Belaunde has won them some authority, but they have some problems to solve—problems for which they have no real solution. And as far as the armed forces being the arbiter of the country's destiny, to do that they have to win the war. Just who will arbitrate Peru's destiny—its long-time oppressors, with all their tricks and guns, or the armed masses of people, led by the proletariat and its party—is a question that will be settled on the field of battle. □