

Peru Asks Embassies to Deny Asylum to NSIPS 5

The Peruvian government is pressuring the Mexican and Venezuelan embassies in Lima to reject requests for political asylum from journalists of *New Solidarity International Press Service* in Peru.

Luis Vasquez, NSIPS director, and Sara Madueno de Vasquez, his wife and associate director of NSIPS, sought asylum Jan. 21 in the Mexican Embassy, while three colleagues, Ronald Moncayo, Hector Cuya, and Jorge Melendez entered the Venezuelan embassy the same day. The five were under extreme political harassment and feared for their lives.

The Peruvian government alleges that the five Labor Committee members are not being politically repressed, since they do not belong to a political party. The last three months of arrests, deportations, surveillance, and harassment of Labor Committee members in Peru was simply part of an investigation of Vasquez's technical violation of Peru's press law, the government has said.

NSIPS along with the International Caucus of Labor Committees — of which the five are members — have stepped up an international campaign to secure the safe passage of the five journalists out of Peru.

The Labor Committees are providing the Mexican and Venezuelan governments with full documentation of the political nature of the Peruvian government's actions. The following is a partial chronology:

*Oct. 18 — Officials of the State Security Division of the Policia de Investigaciones del Peru (PIP) enter and search NSIPS Lima office, arresting Vasquez and Gretchen Small. According to the arresting officer, Comisario Superior Ruiz, the press service was being investigated for "connections to terrorism" and for distributing a "clandestine newspaper, Nueva Solidaridad." He said that NSIPS materials in English would be read by Interpol.

*Oct. 21 — Deputy Minister of the Interior, Col. Arrisueno, says that Small will be released without charges, but that Vasquez will be held for further investigation of "subversive agitation."

*Oct. 27 — Hector Cuya is arrested by the PIP during a search for "hidden weapons" in Small's apartment. Following his release, Cuya and two other NSIPS staff members were subjected to constant surveillance and harassment by a team of PIP agents.

*Nov. 2 — PIP returns to NSIPS offices, removing all remaining files and property from the officially sealed offices.

*Nov. 26 — Fernando Lozano, a student leader at the Catholic University in Lima, is arrested.

*Dec. 3 — Lima papers report that the 22 year-old Lozano died of a "heart attack." His body was badly bruised and battered. When NSIPS confronted Commissioner Ruiz on the Lozano death, he responded: "No, we (State Security Police) didn't do it; it was the Guardia Civil. The Guardia Civil did it."

*Dec. 4 — NSIPS post office box is closed by order of the State Security Police Director Col. Pena Salcedo, via Ruiz. NSIPS is notified that anyone found distributing

Nueva Solidaridad — now defined as a "clandestine" paper — would be arrested.

*Dec. 9 — Vasquez is charged with: "violation of press law" and being the "intellectual author" of NSIPS international press releases detailing IMF austerity and coup plans for Peru. The judge can order the arrest of any NSIPS staff members in Lima cited in the State Security report as "collaborators" in the alleged crimes.

*Jan. 1 — Interior Ministry authorizes the opening of seven news weeklies, mostly right-wing publications. NSIPS remains closed.

*Jan. 7-10 — Vasquez, released Dec. 28, is under constant surveillance and harassment by agents of the PIP. The PIP established surveillance operations to watch the activities and homes of other NSIPS staff members and collaborators.

Peruvian Gov't. Admits Political Repression

Peruvian President Morales Bermudez and Interior Minister Cisneros have admitted that the Peruvian military government is jailing trade unionists and leftists for political "crimes". Cisneros made the admission to Peruvian reporters two days ago while boarding a plane at a Lima airport. In response to further questions on the suppression of numerous leftist magazines and newspapers, Cisneros said, "The political moment is not convenient to reopen certain press organs, particularly those that are most politically polarized." The following day Morales Bermudez said that there were "some" political prisoners being held.

Five persons — members of the Latin American Labor Committees and correspondents for *New Solidarity International Press Service* — are currently in the Mexican and Venezuelan Embassies in Lima requesting political asylum.

A spokesman for NSIPS in New York said this morning that, "The government admission of political imprisonment and suppression of the press is irrefutable proof that the government is lying to Mexico and Venezuelan officials about the case of our correspondents. The admissions of gross violations of civil liberties should constitute proof to these countries of the immediate necessity for granting the five political asylum and pressuring the Peruvians to issue our employees safe conduct passes out of the country."

"It must be made clear internationally that Peru today is fast becoming another Chile, run by the same U.S. multinationals and intelligence operatives who overthrew Allende in 1973 and who staged the 1964 coup in Brazil," a Labor Committee spokesman said.