

Andean Report by Mark Sonnenblick

Civil war menaces Peru

Communist narco-terrorists want Peru to grant them a share of political power, as they have won in Colombia.

The assassination of the number-one leader of Peru's miners' union, Saúl Cantoral, Feb. 13 "is the start of civil war," Peruvian Deputy Yehude Simons declared in an interview published in *Oiga* weekly Feb. 20. Simons, the most shameless mouthpiece of the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) terrorists, is very closely involved with MRTA operations, not just its defense. He has "terrorism" charges pending against him, but social democratic Prime Minister Armando Villanueva and other enemies of President Alan García within the ruling APRA (American Revolutionary Alliance Party) have shielded him by refusing to waive his parliamentary immunity.

Simons charged that Cantoral had been assassinated by the Rodrigo Franco Command, which he claimed was trained by rightist factions of the APRA party. Simons predicts, "In Peru, there is such energy that this would be a Lebanized civil war, an Aghanistan type of war, everyone against everyone, between right, left, and APRA groups."

Oiga and *Sí* magazines, which represent dirty "right-wing" networks, agree with Simons. *Oiga* says that anti-communist death squads killed the labor leader and clumsily tried to pin it on the Chinese-run Shining Path. *Oiga* concludes, that the Cantoral murder was the product of "a diabolical mind which morbidly incites the terrible consequences a civil war [would bring] to a country like Peru."

Peru is already in civil war. Since Shining Path went on the warpath in

1980 and MRTA in 1985, about 15,000 people have been killed as a result of their violence, the government estimates. The terrorists would like nothing better than a formal declaration of civil war. They would obtain belligerent status, and the areas where they are strongest would effectively be the "liberated territory" they claim it to be. Nations like Libya or Cuba would be able to openly supply them with arms. And Amnesty International, Americas Watch, and the State Department would be better able to ensure that captured terrorists were treated like "prisoners of war," rather than as the murderers and traitors they are.

President García and the nation's armed forces are unlikely to tolerate any formal juridical status to terrorists seeking not only to overthrow a government, but to exterminate all vestiges of civilized life, like Pol Pot did in Cambodia or Khomeini in Iran. Rather, the immediate goal is to obtain the kind of "dialogue" Colombian President Virgilio Barco has conceded to the M-19, the Colombian template from which Peru's MRTA was molded. The "dialogue" and "truce process" in Colombia has just served to give the narco-terrorists a chance to consolidate their political gains and prepare for the next wave of irregular warfare. With each round of peace talks, the guerrillas gain more concessions. Step by step, they march toward dual power and then state power.

The MRTA and M-19 are part of the "Americas Battalion," a terrorist international engaged in coordinated struggle up and down the Andean

Spine of South America. Simons spoke of the Americas Battalion and told *Oiga*, "The insurgent groups in Latin America are sympathetic towards Peru's revolutionary group. Don't forget that Che Guevara spoke of creating many Vietnams in Latin America. This is what is happening, not only in Peru but also in Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile."

Violence is increasing. In apparent retribution for Cantoral's murder, Carlos Cabanillas, labor relations director for the huge Centromin Peru state mining company and brother of the education minister, was kidnaped briefly Feb. 15. His captors interrogated him about company policy toward the miners' union, left him injured on a beach, and assaulted him again when he finally returned home.

During the past few months, the terrorists have tightened their noose around Lima and escalated assassinations of military officers. On Feb. 21, Shining Path dynamited 10 electricity pylons, blacking out most of Peru's coast. The MRTA immediately went on a bombing spree in Lima, causing five deaths. Within a 24-hour period, five police officers were assassinated in various parts of the country.

Shining Path is showing its strength in Ayacucho, the impoverished highland region where it got its start. It ordered an "armed strike" to paralyze the region Feb. 21-26. Despite great efforts by security forces to calm the populace, trucks and buses disappeared from the highways and people from the streets. Prefect Pastor Núñez noted, "People strike not out of political conviction, but out of fear." The terrorists intimidated by assassinating several village mayors loyal to the national government and by planting dynamite mines under the highways.