

## Andean Report by Mark Sonnenblick and Carlos Méndez

### Cocaine pushers gain high ground

*The Bush administration okayed Peru's alliance with drug growers in the name of fighting terrorism and servicing debt.*

The "Andean Strategy" against cocaine production which George Bush unveiled Sept. 5 has been stillborn in Peru, with the silent help of top officials inside his administration. They are strangling the war on drugs to promote the Establishment's campaign to legalize narcotics.

"The new anti-drug strategy hasn't arrived here yet," a senior U.S. official in Lima told the Dec. 6 *New York Times*. He said that the special funding promised by Bush might trickle in starting in February. "There is a good deal of misgivings among the people in Washington, in both the Executive branch and in Congress as to whether you can effectively invest money in anti-drug programs in Peru," was his excuse.

President Alan García is playing his part in the legalization game. Four years ago, when García was waging all-out war on the cocaine producers, then-Treasury Secretary James Baker III shot down his plea for anti-drug assistance. Baker wanted to punish García for leading a challenge on debt Peru owed to the Wall Street banks. Now, García has come full circle. He says that instead of a war on drugs, the U.S. government should buy all the coca from peasant growers or pay them to plant other crops.

On Dec. 1, Gen. Alberto Arciniega, the political-military chief of the Upper Huallaga Valley emergency zone, led a rally of 30,000 coca-growers in the town of Uchiza. They carried banners reading "Peasants demand peaceful substitution of their coca bushes," and "Eradication, no!" According to the daily *El Comercio*,

General Arciniega "used a microphone to tell them that his command supported the coca-growing peasants. He was given a thunderous ovation by the multitude." Endorsing the assassination last year of more than a dozen DEA-funded coca eradication workers, Arciniega proclaimed, "manual cocaine eradication is not the solution, and the people won't allow it. . . . In a place where everybody is a coca-growing peasant and there is no way of beating them, they must be properly organized."

Arciniega told *Sí* newsweekly, "I have been given the specific mission of destroying subversion. For some, the solution is immediate eradication of the [coca] plants, along with confiscation of already-produced drugs and destruction of clandestine airports. My orders are: Hands off the peasant coca grower. He is an informal vendor." He argued that if coca eradication were to resume, "every peasant attacked, would the next day become one more Sendero Luminoso [terrorist] and subversion would have 150,000 combatants there."

A protest from the U.S. ambassador? Hardly. The *Times* reported, "United States officials say they accept the Peruvian argument that the guerrillas must be attacked first, opening areas in which the police will be able to move against drug traffickers."

This new "anti-subversive strategy" was not invented by General Arciniega, nor by the Peruvian government, but rather by the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD). IAD, headed by Sol Linowitz, openly sought "selective" legalization of drugs and an alli-

ance with drug traffickers in its report, "The Americas in 1989: Consensus for Action." The report maintained that, "If they are left alone, traffickers and growers will often support national police and armies in combatting guerrillas.

"Eradication efforts, however, have occasionally driven guerrillas and traffickers to work together. In 1984-85, in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley . . . local cocaine dealers provided army commanders with intelligence on Sendero Luminoso. But since then, intense eradication programs have made the central government the enemy of both guerrillas and the coca growers. . . . [T]he fight against cocaine could threaten democratic governments as seriously as drug trafficking itself."

IAD Executive Secretary Abraham F. Lowenthal presented the report to García and the Peruvian public in June. Within days of this visit by the pudgy Harvard clone of Henry Kissinger, General Arciniega boasted that the government had decided to ally with the cocaine growers to fight Sendero. Arciniega denied to *Sí* magazine that the Army collects taxes or bribes from the narcos, but confessed, "The only way they help us is with food, because we can't feed all the troops with our budget."

Shortly after Lowenthal's visit, García named César Vásquez Bazán as finance minister. Vásquez worked out a reconciliation between García and the International Monetary Fund under which his government would obtain \$1.5 billion cash annually from the cocaine traffickers with which to resume debt payments to the IMF and the banks. García thus embraced the IAD's position that "the jobs and foreign exchange from drug trafficking are quite important to these countries exhausted by debt and depression."