

Andean Report by Luis Ernesto Vásquez

Peru doesn't want to fight drugs

The García government's new "anti-subversive" strategy is national suicide: Drugs and terrorism are inseparable.

If nothing else, General Alberto Arciniega, the political-military commander of Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley emergency zone—Ibero-America's leading coca-growing region—will go down in Peruvian history as frank. Thanks to this quality, so rare among public figures, the world has learned from his mouth what the Alan García government's "new" anti-subversion strategy is really all about. This new policy began to be implemented at the beginning of this year, and is premised on the creation of a tactical alliance with the peasants who produce coca for the drug-trafficking cartels. The argument offered in its defense can be summed up thus: one mustn't repress the coca trade, lest the coca-growing peasants turn to the Shining Path terrorists.

This strategy is so far advanced that General Arciniega himself, when asked by the Lima magazine *Sí* "Does there exist payment [to the military] for the support and security provided the coca growers?" answered: "They don't pay us a quota, because we aren't in control; a quota is something demanded, [and] I don't ask them for anything in exchange. The only thing they help us with is supplies, because with the budget we get, we couldn't feed all the troops."

General Arciniega has been both cautious and precise in specifying responsibilities, and has repeatedly asserted that he is only following orders from the Joint Command of the Armed Forces, which in turn is subordinate to President García in his capacity as supreme commander of the

Peruvian Armed Forces.

What is clear is that General Arciniega has the total support of the executive leadership of the ruling APRA party. Defense Minister Gen. Julio Velásquez Giaccharini himself defended Arciniega from accusations that he is hindering the fight against the drug trade, accusations made just a few weeks earlier by a high-level official of the U.S. State Department. Everything, in fact, seems to suggest that relations between the current leadership of the Armed Forces and the APRA executive couldn't be better, to the point that the APRA congressional bloc has just approved a bill which will allow the Armed Forces command to remain in their posts for five years.

It would be totally legitimate for any Peruvian citizen to doubt the sincerity of the APRA government when it insists it is going to fight the drug trade. For example, it has not gone unnoticed that Economics Minister César Vásquez Bazán has completely legalized the informal dollar market in Peru, effectively turning it into one of the main sources for restoring the country's monetary reserves, despite his own admission that the dollar market is one huge drug money laundry.

What is happening is that the García government has forgotten a key moral precept: No nation can be built on the basis of criminality. The argument that export of coca can be used as the basis for national economic development is nothing more than an immoral complement to the efforts of the international drug mafia to legalize

narcotics consumption. Although the government's new strategy is presented as a nationalist option, there is every evidence that it was in fact prepared by the Inter-American Dialogue, an entity created in 1982 by the Aspen Institute, and which openly proposes the "selective" legalization of drugs. Three prominent Peruvians are members of the Inter-American Dialogue: FREDEMO presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa, and former ministers Pedro Pablo Kuczynski and Javier Silva Ruete.

In its 1989 annual report, the Inter-American Dialogue says, "if they are left in peace, the traffickers and growers will often support the national police and army in combatting the guerrillas." The example given by the Dialogue's report is, of course, Peru. That report was publicly presented in Lima last June, by the executive director of the Inter-American Dialogue, Abraham F. Lowenthal. Lowenthal met at the time with President Alan García.

Since then, spokesmen for the argument that terrorism and the drug trade cannot be fought simultaneously have been crawling out of the woodwork everywhere. The same is true for those who justify the legalization of narco-dollars.

Of course, there are also those who oppose all this. The Association of Retired Officers of the Peruvian Armed Forces published a communiqué Oct. 17, which said: "We hold the present [military] command responsible, with its pusillanimous attitude, for progressive institutional deterioration." And on Sept. 24, conservative journalist Patricio Ricketts Rey de Castro published an article in the daily *Expreso*, entitled "One cannot choose between the drug trade and terrorism," in which he explained why "either both are defeated together, or neither will be defeated."