

Andean Report by Sara Madueño

Citizens resist 'Fujishock'

Peruvians are making their voices heard against the Fujimori government's violent IMF austerity policy.

Since taking office in late July, President Alberto Fujimori has unleashed unprecedented economic disaster on Peru, with the "shock" program imposed at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Sept. 25 issue of the London *Financial Times* reported that production dropped by 40% in August, and independent economists are predicting a further drop of 25.8% in the GNP in the last quarter of 1990. Most small businesses, which employed over 75% of the country's economically active population, have practically disappeared, unable to withstand the government's anti-inflationary measures.

Inflation for the month of August was 397%, according to the National Statistical Institute, but the increase in the cost of the monthly market basket of food staples was 471%. The vast majority of Peruvians is trekking to public soup kitchens for meals, where the nutritional value of the food is poor. The Catholic Church, through its Bishops' Conference, has sounded the alarm over the depth of the economic and moral crisis. The infant mortality rate nationally is now 80.7 per 1,000 live births, and even higher in the provinces.

While Peru's creditors and local oligarchy applaud Fujimori's achievements and praise his brand of "democracy," growing sectors of the population have indicated they are fed up and are demanding other policy options. The Independent Solidarity Movement and the Schiller Institute are providing leadership to this nascent resistance.

Citizens are finding within them-

selves the moral reserve to fight the IMF's demand that Peru be wiped off the face of the map. Entire cities, often led by local authorities, are organizing protest actions to reject the government's policies. In such important southern cities as Arequipa, Cuzco, Puno, and Tacna, protest demonstrations occur almost daily, including trade union, academic, and business organizations as well as housewives and others.

Exemplary was the popular response in Arequipa, on Sept. 18. The Radio Melodía radio station had called on the population to halt its activities at noon and noisily protest the government's economic policies. Housewives banged on pots, drivers honked their horns, fire engines and ambulances sounded their sirens, and some churches even rang bells. Everywhere in the city—at universities, factories and businesses—paralysis was total. At the same time, Radio Melodía played the National Anthem. Protests occurred simultaneously in Tacna and Camana in the south, in the mountain city of Huancayo, and in the northern city of Cajamarca.

The Fujimori government, and institutions which back it, appear determined to apply the bankers' dictates, despite the protest. In fact, a number of conferences held recently in Lima have openly promoted genocide and population reduction.

On Sept. 20-21, the Latin American Journalist Association (FIAP), backed by West Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation, sponsored a conference in Lima on "Journalism and the Environment." Discussion

centered on population as the central factor in environmental pollution and speakers condemned the "Western" development model for having destroyed the environment. The anti-development hysteria at this gathering was such that one speaker branded Japan as "eco-terrorist" because of the level of industrialization it had achieved.

Earlier in September, a "Peruvian Labor Gathering" attended by all the major trade union federations touted the same line. Sponsored by the unknown Latin American Development Association, the conference was called to discuss the UNICEF report which was to have been presented with much fanfare in New York on Sept. 30. Under the guise of wanting to help the world's sick and impoverished children, the report states, among other things, that the high infant mortality rate in the developing sector coincides with "a high birth rate and rapid demographic growth." This fact, it says, causes "millions of people to overexploit the environment" in order to survive.

UNICEF concludes that the protection and survival of children can best be guaranteed in the developing sector by exchanging debt for programs that protect the environment. Many of the trade unionists who attended the conference agreed that if Peru wants to integrate itself into the world economy—as demanded by bankers—the government must necessarily dictate "birth control measures."

Finance Minister Juan Carlos Hurtado Miller indicated the government's willingness to sacrifice Peruvians to the bankers' agenda. On a recent trip to Argentina, he told reporters there that Peru would honor its foreign debts no matter what and would push debt-for-equity schemes to allow creditors to buy up whatever part of the country they wanted.