

# Peruvian President Calls For Latin American Unity

## Alan García is warmly received in Mexico

During his visit to Mexico in March, President Alan García of Peru put forth the revolutionary idea that Latin America is capable of developing on the basis of its own resources and without the help of foreign credit; a revolutionary thesis that has probably been present in the thoughts of Latin Americans during the five centuries since colonial empires changed the population and customs of the continent.

It is revolutionary because Alan García dares tell Latin Americans that foreign credit is not essential for their well-being. He insists that the continent's southern hemisphere has sufficient agricultural and mineral resources for its own independent development. This move towards self-sufficiency would involve radical changes in personal and social consumer patterns: García emphasized that Latin Americans have to free themselves of foreign consumer habits—must quit imitating patterns from Japan, Europe or the United States—and adjust to their own local conditions.

### Towards a Latin American Alliance

The Peruvian president was in Mexico on March 24 and 25 for meetings with Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado. They issued a joint statement defending non-intervention and self-determination for all nations, and reaffirming the commitment of Mexico and Peru to dedicate maximum efforts to achieve peace in Central America through Contadora and its Support Group.

The presidents declared that the foreign debt problem is a result of the prevailing international economic order, and that dealing with it requires national decisions, long-term international solutions and political dialog based on the acceptance of co-responsibility by both debtors and creditors.

They stated their belief that the formation of the Latin American community is imperative and declared their support for such organizations as the Latin American Parliament, the Group of Eight and the SELA (Latin American Economic System.)

De la Madrid and García also called for a reversal of the protectionist trade policies by the industrialized nations and for an end to the current trend of net capital transfers from developing nations towards the industrialized ones.

Finally, the two condemned the arms race and called for the suspension of nuclear tests, the reduction of atomic arsenals and the prevention of the arms race in space.

During a press conference held in Los Pinos, the presidential residence in Mexico City, Alan García outlined his policies on Peru's foreign debt. García's views are not as radical as Cuban leader Fidel Castro's, who has declared on several occasions that Latin America is really a creditor and not a debtor, and thus is not morally obliged to repay debts negotiated with

capitalist banks.

But President García does have an ethical justification for not laying out exorbitant amounts of foreign currency in debt repayments, and for investing this money at home. He says that even if something goes awry in the application of his economic proposals, "the people will have eaten well for some years, and that is historically significant."

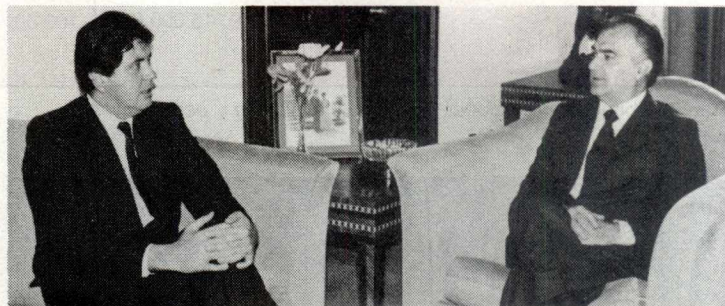
Alan García became president of Peru at the end of July 1985, when his party, the Popular Revolutionary American Alliance, APRA, came to power for the first time in its 60 years of existence. His government inherited a critical economic situation and a foreign debt of some \$14 billion.

In 1984 Peru (led by President Belaunde Terry) was paying—or was expected to pay—35% of its export earnings to the

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Presidents Alan García and Miguel de la Madrid.

foreign banks in debt payments. Unable to sustain this rate, the government announced in May 1984 that it could no longer pay. In his inaugural speech more than a year later, Alan García announced that Peru would pay no more than 10% of its export earnings toward servicing the debt. The next day, the United States government decreed the suspension of economic and military aid to the Andean country, in reprisal for the de-facto moratorium.

The Peruvian economy responded well to the new government's policies, with an increase of 4% in the Gross National Product in 1985, of 8% in 1986 and a forecast 6% for 1987. For Alan García, the most significant effect of the economy's reactivation is that "the people are eating more, they are eating better, and they are educating themselves."

He told the press that in 1985 Peru earned some \$3 billion from exports and paid \$300 million to service the debt. The country's main exports are crude oil, copper and other metals, petroleum products and coffee.

President García also outlined possible ways of resolving the foreign debt crisis. In the first place, he proposed bilateral negotiations between debtor countries and financial institutions.

Secondly, and if the first fails, unilateral action such as that taken by Peru and Brazil. Then he proposed joint action by Latin American countries to stimulate economic growth, together with changes in consumer patterns.

While he called for a joint continental solution to the problem of Latin America's debt—which stands at nearly \$400 billion—he said he did not mean to export the Peruvian model, that the foreign debt has political and ethical implications, and that each country has its own solution, which Peru respects. This was a deferential reference to the host country, Mexico, which has consistently announced that it intends to fulfill its obligations with

foreign banks, and which in fact continues its bilateral negotiations with these banks and the International Monetary Fund.

### Strain Between Civilians and the Military

Asked about terrorism in Peru, President García replied that his government has to be "very clear and very serious" in its measures in response to the wave of violence currently plaguing the country. He said that over a thousand members of the government's security forces have been killed in the line of duty during his administration.

Nobody at the press conference mentioned the mutiny at the prisons of Lurigancho, El Frontón and Santa Bárbara in June

"invasion" of three university campuses last February, apparently with a clear conscience. He stated that his government is a defender of university freedoms and that the schools (San Marcos, La Cantuta and the National University of Engineering) were neither invaded nor occupied, but raided at night and during vacations, in the presence of journalists and civil authorities, in search of arms and subversive material. Newspaper reports of the events say that some 4,000 police were involved in the operation and that there were close to 800 arrests. Of these, 200 people were still being detained at the end of March.

The president had a nationalist answer for a key question posed at the press conference, regarding the guerrilla group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso): Who did he think provided

### Alan García and Miguel de la Madrid defended the principles of non-intervention and self-determination of all nations

1986, where some 350 prisoners were killed, including 124 who had already surrendered—with nobody certain of García's role in the tragedy. The incident could well have been an indicator of strain between the civilian government and the military—tensions that are growing this year with Mr. García's attempts to create a single Ministry of Defense to incorporate and command the three branches of the military, the army, navy and air force. This move is strongly opposed by the military, especially by the Air Force.

President García did answer a question about the



President Alan García with Mexican Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepúlveda.

Photo from Novedades archive.

the money and arms for the organization? He answered that the Peruvian government has no evidence of foreign support for the group and he presumes that Shining Path is internally motivated, financed and armed.

Alan García has an imposing appearance and a lively style. He is tall, good-looking, young—for a president—at 38, witty and clever with the press, a friend of bohemians and intellectuals alike, eager to mix with the people and break through security provisions. Several times during his visit to Mexico he caused extra worries and work for security forces when he disregarded their rules and regulations.

He is a singer who doesn't let the presidency stand in the way of a good time: he visited Mexico's most famous outdoor night-spot, the Plaza Garibaldi, and sang with the mariachis. Mexico City newspapers carried front page photos of the Peruvian head of state singing—accompanied by a marimba—outside City Hall after he was declared a Distinguished Guest of the city.

During his visit to Mexico, Alan García talked about ethical values, about living austere and adopting new non-consumerist habits, but he did not mention adopting "austerity programs." He talked about the common history of Mexico and Peru, their Aztec and Inca pasts and shared colonial heritage. He recognized the impact of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 on the formation of his own political party, founded in 1926 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre.

And he told reporters that he has proposed, together with President De la Madrid, a meeting of the presidents of the Group of Eight, that is, of the four member nations of Contadora (Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela) and its Support Group (Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) in order to strengthen their efforts to achieve peace in Central America. ★

Jacqueline Buswell

## Leopoldo Zea: Mexico and Peru Share Common History

Alan García is a man willing to undertake the project of Latin American integration, respect for the right to self-determination of the Latin American peoples and the problem of the foreign debt. This is the conclusion reached by Leopoldo Zea, distinguished Mexican philosopher and Director of the Coordination and Distribution Center for Latin American Studies of the UNAM, after a meeting with the Peruvian President during the latter's recent visit to Mexico (see story).

García's commitment to Latin American integration, states Zea, is based on a recognition that the countries of the region "share a common origin, were united for three centuries under Spanish domination, then neo-colonialism and now have a

common problem with the debt."

The Mexican philosopher highlighted the participation of García's government in the Contadora Support group. In Zea's view, Peru considers that "Mexico's stand in international affairs has been very clear."

On García's meeting with Mexican counterpart Miguel de la Madrid, Zea stated that the United States had watched the encounter closely, "given that the U.S. has accused both countries of supporting Nicaragua for ideological reasons."

Finally, Zea stressed that in Mexico there exists great good feeling towards the Peruvian people and Alan García's government, for both countries have many problems and interests in common.