

From *El Diario*

Armed Shutdown in the Jungle Hills: An Eyewitness Account

The armed shutdown had already begun in the Upper Huallaga Valley. Still, the guerrillas had not yet made their appearance. We had seen them before, many times, agitating or marching, but this time was to be different. The soldiers of the People's Guerrilla Army would be in action. This report covers their actions and the active participation of the local peasants.

During the armed shutdown, as we knew, the peasants stayed away from their fields for security reasons.

During the course of the day, the radio constantly broadcast a communique from the Armed Forces military-political command of the zone announcing a curfew as a precautionary measure directed against the night of protest scheduled to begin at 6 pm.

Still, by late afternoon the atmosphere was very tense. The villagers prepared to assemble along different sections of the Carretera Marginal [the road that runs along the whole length of the foothills, connecting them to the rest of the country — *AWTW*]. In the cities, everyday activities had ceased completely. The night of struggle was to begin at 6 pm sharp.

It was at this time, exactly, that someone came to the village to fetch us. A robust housewife, about 40 years old and known only as "Micaela", led us off the main road through a rock-strewn path that wound up into the mountains. With our cameras, tape recorder, light luggage and an indescribable excitement, we were headed towards our meeting with the illegal People's Guerrilla Army.

Almost at nightfall, after an hour and a half of walking, we reached a lonely hut in the midst of thick vegetation. Our guide asked us to wait.

She continued walking alone. We

sat down inside, and by candlelight had some coffee and fried plantains to quiet our stomachs, while we chatted briefly with the family who were our hosts. Soon we hear "Micaela's" voice again, calling from outside, telling us we were to continue on our way.

As we left the hut a lantern's light surprised us. There were two youth, whose faces, which we could barely see, showed they were unmistakably from the countryside. He seemed to be about 23 years old; she was no more than 16. Still, there was something that clearly marked them from all the others present: each carried a rifle over the shoulder. In the midst of the immense jungle, we found ourselves face to face with two guerrillas of the clandestine PCP.

Speaking slowly and softly, they greeted us and invited us to walk with them, this time in the direction of the Carretera Marginal. They took the lead, and our guide motioned to us that we should march behind in single file.

When we got to the road, a lorry was waiting for us with the motor running. Three people were in it. As we climbed in, accompanied by our inseparable guide, 10 others emerged from where they had been hiding, camouflaged in the thick brush. Most of them wore uniforms consisting of thick green pants, a dark polo shirt, rubber boots and a knapsack. Only six or seven wore caps, but all were armed with a rifle or large-calibre shotgun. Handgrenades, a machete and a lantern completed their equipment.

We sat in the back of the lorry, while the armed youth around us faced outward, watching attentively. Their weapons were at the ready and pointed forward along the road. Thus we set off, slowly, heading south on the Carretera Marginal.

From *El Diario*

Class-conscious

The fighting shutdown carried out by the people of Lima began at midnight last night, called by the powerful Carretera Central Class-Conscious Workers' Struggle Committee, which "calls upon the masses to fight and resist, unitedly, for the next 72 hours, against the APRA government and its revisionist accomplices."

This day of revolutionary struggle is very different from those strikes carried out in the past. The vicious circle of mere economic struggle is being broken, and the struggle is being taken up for political power, against APRA's fascism and corporatism and its criminal plans for the people.

During these three days of direct class confrontation between the bourgeoisie and landlords, and the workers, peasants and masses of people and progressive forces, our people will take to the streets to fight, with all the forms of struggle at their disposal, putting their immense and previously pent-up energies into play to repudiate the government....

(*El Diario*, 27 September 1988)

Yesterday's beginning of the shutdown... was marked by armed confrontations, a great many road-

We had gone quite a distance when the lorry pulled off the road and into another of the many villages in the region. From then on, we continued our journey along the Marginal on foot, separated into two groups, each along one side of the road. Two armed men walked ahead, at a safe distance, and two more a little ways behind, to assure the security of the guerrilla unit.

Five hundred metres further on, a shout suddenly rang out: "A car, take cover, comrades!" In the distance, faint lights could be seen. We left the road and threw ourselves

Shutdown in the Capital

blocks, sabotage and protest demonstrations.

An outstanding feature of this historic day of struggle was the participation of armed militias of the clandestine PCP, who went out to the masses and exhorted them to take part in the People's War....

There was massive absenteeism in factories and commerce, and public transport was reduced to a few bus lines; absences were also numerous at schools and medical facilities.

Starting at dawn hundreds of workers from the big factories of the area strew tree trunks and stones across the roads, raising banners reading, "Fight and Resist! It's Right to Rebel!"

Showing the full support of the people for this 72-hour stoppage, groups of shantytown dwellers also participated alongside the wage workers, pulling tree trunks across the streets and amassing piles of tyres on the asphalt, dousing them with petrol, so that the anti-riot police found themselves amid thick smoke.

Starting around 6 am, heavily armed military forces also assembled. They used armoured vehicles to cordon off this district of the capital. When the repressive forces were further reinforced, a confronta-

tion could be foreseen.

Just when one would think that the workers would retreat before the military encirclement, suddenly there rang out the sound of homemade explosives thrown by the combative demonstrators....

Inevitably, repression was unleashed and the air was filled with tear gas and rifle fire as the soldiers shot indiscriminantly into the crowds of workers, who dispersed immediately.

Near the El Hilado textile factory, at the 8.5 kilometre mark along the Carretera Central, two workers fell, gravely wounded by the soldiers.... Three Civil Guard police were also wounded in the fierce fighting that broke out after the explosions.

At the same moment, demonstrators broke into the Fiestas petrol station at the 2.5 kilometre mark of the roadway and set it afire....

Later nearly five kilometres of the Carretera Central were almost totally occupied by the Armed Forces, who proceeded to arrest anyone they could find....

(*El Diario*, 28 September 1988)

...on the second day of the 72-hour shutdown, after the first day's many acts of sabotage, road-

blocks and lightning demonstrations, the Armed Forces commanders ordered the military occupation of this important industrial belt.

Thus, at about 5:30 am, the shantytown Huaycan was raided by hundreds of soldiers... who arrested dozens of people and warned the inhabitants that they had better not take part in the struggle.

With the panicky deployment of military forces, amounting to 800 soldiers and Leopard commando units and the Special Services Unit of the Civil Guard, the area was brought under control. But they failed to halt the continuation of the shutdown which today enters its third and final day.

Although there were no actions or roadblocks, unlike the first day, agitation among the workers continued for the second consecutive day. The majority of workers remained on strike, and many factories remained paralysed....

Along with these strikes (in major factories) there was also the participation of the shantytowns... where thousands of people did not go to work.... Schools and markets were also closed....

(*El Diario*, 29 September 1988) □

into the brush. Hidden there, we imagined the worst.

After 30 seconds of high-tension waiting, the same voice announced, "You can come out now, comrades." The approaching vehicle turned out to belong to the guerrillas. It carried food for the compact mass of villagers who, further on, worked to blockade the Carretera Marginal. This was the most important activity carried out by the PCP during the armed shutdown.

In fact, at the edge of the district around Aucayacu, a town located on the last asphalted section of the

roadway, a veritable army of villagers had already begun work in the darkness to completely block the road.

About 5,000 people appeared before our eyes, working like ants. Peasant axes felled giant coconut trees across the roadway. Cries of "Timber!" rang out constantly amidst the thick dust. At dawn, when the villagers completed their prodigious efforts, trunks, whole trees and tons of stones completely cut off 300 kilometres of roadway.

We were there for almost eight hours, recording the peasant's hard

night's work, lightened with great quantities of lemon soda and songs vigorously sung into our tape recorder. All this took place under the watchful eyes of a strong guerrilla unit, who stood ready to fight in case of an attack.

Around dawn on the 21st of July, the masses began to return to their villages, making their way with great difficulty around the stones strewn on the road. We were accompanied by the guerrilla unit, about 200 guerrillas in all, towards an encampment in the jungle....

(*El Diario*, 23 September 1988) □