

Coca Cultivation

Article Summary

Peru: Two Regions Legalize Coca-leaf Cultivation, Federal Government Condemns Move (Friday, August 19, 2005)

Two regional governments in Peru have decided to legalize coca cultivation. The government of Cuzco led the legalization movement with a decision in late June, and the government of Huanuco followed the next month. The decision brought harsh condemnation from the government of President Alejandro Toledo and especially from Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero. Cuzco's leader in the declaration of legalization responded to his federal critics with strong rhetoric, speaking of indigenous heritage and regional autonomy.

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Peru: Note On Coca Cultivation Tuesday, November 21, 1989

On Nov. 16, Remiro Castro de la Amata, president of the Information Committee and Education Center for the Prevention of Drug Abuse (CEDRO), told reporters that an estimated 380,000 ha. are planted with coca. He pointed out that a farmer in Peru earns \$5,000 per hectare of coca, compared to an average \$605 per hectare of legal crops. Castro de la Amata spoke during the presentation of a book sponsored by CEDRO, "Basic Cocaine Resin: A Multidisciplinary Study," comprised of contributions by 14 authors. (Basic data from Xinhua, 11/17/89)

Lesson One

One of the issues involved in the conflict over coca cultivation in Peru is the importance of regional vs. federal laws. In the case described in the article, the regional governments of Cuzco and Huanuco have enacted laws that are not consistent with the policy of the central government. Your two groups will be arguing this issue in front of the Supreme Court of Peru.

- Group 1: Your group consists of representatives of the President's administration and Peru's central government. In order to argue against the regional coca cultivation laws enacted by Cuzco and Huanuco, you need to convince the Supreme Court that all laws should be consistent throughout the entire country, with no variation for regional differences. Organize an argument that outlines the dangers and drawbacks of regional governments making laws that are not consistent throughout the country. Present your argument to the Supreme Court.
- Group 2: You and your group are representatives of the regional governments of Cuzco and Huanuco. You believe that local differences should be reflected in regional laws, rather than diverse areas being subject to laws dictated by the central government. Hence, you believe that your regions have the authority to legalize coca cultivation based on the regions' histories of coca use. Your task is to argue against the representatives of the central government by convincing the Supreme Court that regional governments should be able to enact laws that fit the needs of their specific populations. Present your argument to the Supreme Court.

Lesson One Content Links

"Wikipedia definition of Federalism"

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalism>

"Wikipedia discussion of States' rights"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States'_rights

"CIA World Factbook: Peru"

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pe.html>

"Historical Text Archive: Federalism and Centralism in Latin America"

<http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=307>

Lesson Two

You are an advisor of an important US Senator, Nelly B. Lian, who is a member of the Senate Foreign relations Committee. Senator Lian has long been concerned with Coca cultivation and drug trafficking. She is frustrated with the inability to stop coca cultivation and has recently heard of the "balloon effect." She has asked you what the effect is and why it has made eradicating coca so difficult. Research the effect and in a short report explain to Senator Lian what it is, how it works economically, and why it has frustrated attempts to wipe out the farming

of coca in South America.

Lesson Two Content Links

"CPI Online: The Stubborn Balloon Effect"

<http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/blog/archives/000044.htm>

"Coca Cultivation in the Rainforests of Columbia"

http://news.mongabay.com/2005/0402-rhett_butler.html

"Wikipedia: Coca Eradication"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coca_eradication

"Washington Post: The Perils of Destroying Columbia's Coca Crop"

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/liveonline/01/world/bigwood_011201.htm

"Stop the drug war: UN says Columbia Coca Cultivation Down, Experts Say not Really"

<http://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/279/colombiacoca.shtml>

"US State Department: Official Reports Drop Coca Cultivation in Columbia"

http://www.usembassy.it/file2003_10/alia/a3103006.htm

Lesson Three

You and your group are farmers from the Putumayo region of Colombia. In recent years, you have all turned to the cultivation of coca plants. You know that it is risky and illegal and that the coca will be processed into cocaine for export, probably to the United States. However, as a farmer, you can make much more money growing coca than you can raising other crops, making a better life for your family. With your group, discuss what the government can do to convince you to change from growing to other crops. Compose a letter to President Uribe telling him who you are, what you do, and how his administration could help you make a successful transition to the cultivation of legal crops.

Lesson Three Content Links

"BBC: Peru's Coca Farmers Stage Protest"

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2965423.stm>

"National Geographic: An illegal cash crop sustains local farmers and a 40 year old guerilla movement in Southern Columbia"

<http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0407/feature2/index.html>

"Food and Agriculture Organization: Offering Bolivian coca growers legal alternatives"

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/field/2004/35907/>

"University of Northern Iowa: Eradication of illicit crops and alternative development "

<http://www.uni.edu/ihsmun/resources/GUIDES/Eradication.htm>

"United Nations Information Service: Sustainable elimination of illicit crops, promotion of alternative crops stressed as third committee debates drug prevention strategies"

<http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2000/shc298.html>

Peru: Two Regions Legalize Coca-Leaf Cultivation, Federal Government Condemns Move

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Two regional governments in Peru have decided to legalize coca cultivation. The government of Cuzco led the legalization movement with a decision in late June, and the government of Huanuco followed the next month. The decision brought harsh condemnation from the government of President Alejandro Toledo and especially from Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero. Cuzco's leader in the declaration of legalization responded to his federal critics with strong rhetoric, speaking of indigenous heritage and regional autonomy.

First Cuzco, then Huanuco Cuzco's regional president, Carlos Cuaresma, announced on June 19 that his government would permit free cultivation of coca. Cuaresma said the measure would recognize "plantings of coca leaf in the Cuzco valleys of La Convencion, Qosnipata, and Yanatile" as "zones of traditional production with a legal character." Subsequent reports on Cuaresma's decree said that the valleys of Pichari and Quimbiri would be excluded. The regional ordinance stated that coca production in the department of Cuzco, 1,165 km southeast of Lima, "is destined for medicinal, ceremonial, religious, and cultural use" and for "chaccho" (Quechua for chewing coca leaf).

The ordinance stipulates that coca for these uses is to be acquired legally by the state company for coca-leaf buying, Enaco, "for its respective marketing." The order also defines coca leaf "as regional biological, cultural, and historical patrimony, and a botanical resource integrated with the culture and cosmivision of the Andean world and the customs and traditions of medicinal culture." Cuaresma promulgated the measure during a Cuzco ancestral festival that coincided with the southern hemisphere's winter solstice, which was presided over by four Incan priests in the plaza of Inca leader Tupac Amaru II. In the ceremony, the priests made tributes to Pachamama, or Mother Earth, and sang the song Coca Quintucha, a hymn of the inhabitants of the southern Andes that presents the crop as sacred.

Previously, Cuaresma gave a message condemning narcotics trafficking and affirming the constitutionality of liberalizing coca cultivation. Cuaresma is an ex-member of Congress with the Frente Independiente Moralizador (FIM), which maintains a shaky governing coalition with President Toledo's Peru Posible (PP) party. Cuzco, Peru's central tourist center and the former imperial capital of the Incas, soon got company from the region of Huanuco in its efforts to legalize coca production. After a series of cocalero campesino protests in the regional capital, 415 km northeast of Lima, the local government accepted the request to legalize the leaf. Regional councilor Antonio Pulgar said the measure would not increase the amount of coca grown, since it only recognized areas already authorized for such cultivation.

In Peru, 9,000 hectares are designated as legal for growing coca for traditional use, but international organizations say that more than five times that number of hectares are currently planted with coca. Many Peruvians find that the coca leaf, when chewed, fights fatigue and reduces hunger, and brewed as a tea it is ideal for fighting altitude sickness. The press office of the Huanuco government said cocalero leader Iburcio Morales called on the government to legalize the cultivation of the crop in July. Morales, from Valle del Monzon, then led a series of protests to get the government to accept the measure. Valle del Monzon is one of the major areas in Huanuco where coca is grown. Political fight to lead cocalero group

ousts "Mama Coca" Morales assumed the leadership of the Huanuco cocalero movement in May, displacing Nancy Obregon as head of the Confederacion Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras del Peru (Conpaccp).

Obregon, known as Mama Coca, left a turbulent cocalero meeting in Huanuco in mid-May, braving thrown bottles, rocks, shouted insults, and spittle. She was repudiated within the movement for allegedly approving of a government decree in early 2004 calling for "the gradual and concerted eradication of the coca leaf," which would be a complete betrayal of stated cocalero aims. Obregon acknowledged attending the meeting where the decree was being readied, but she said she never approved of it. "There is political manipulation by the leadership of Valle del Monzon," where the Conpaccp meeting was taking place, said Obregon. For many campesinos in the streets of Valle del Monzon, however, her denial meant little. Lima daily La Republica reported that one resident raised his fists above his head, shouting "Out, traitor!" while others surged against the group of her bodyguards. "I had never seen a cocalero leader that was able to poison the population in this way," said Obregon of Morales.

Minutes before the attacks on Obregon, Morales reportedly told the crowd, "We have to continue with our feet firmly planted because in Monzon and other valleys we must unite in defense of the coca leaf, blessed plant, sacred plant of our ancestors. Therefore we must spill our blood defending it at all costs." Morales' success two months later in forcing the Huanuco regional government to legalize the leaf's cultivation appeared to have solidified his prominence as a cocalero leader. Nonetheless, some analysts proclaimed the death of a national cocalero movement after the May meeting. "Iburcio Morales is the one who has the backing of the campesinos because he is the most radical defender of coca cultivation," said sociologist Jaime Antezana. "And he will never want to unite with" ostensible moderates like Obregon or others. Antezana claimed that Morales held the meeting in Monzon to protect his leadership and that Conpaccp as a national organization had died. Cocalero and indigenous-issues specialist Roger Rumrill also argued that the cocalero movement in Peru had never been a national, monolithic movement, but rather a set of competing interests. The unity that Obregon had built, said Rumrill, "is breaking down."

Toledo's Cabinet condemns legalization

Controversy rained down from the top levels of the Toledo government after Cuaresma announced his intentions. Leading the verbal charge were Cabinet chief Ferrero and ex-interior minister Fernando Rospigliosi. Cuaresma's declaration "is a transcendental step on the staircase leading the country into chaos," said Rospigliosi after the regional president announced his ordinance. Chaos in the country led to Rospigliosi's censure and resignation in 2004 after town residents in Ilave in the department of Puno lynched their mayor. The mayor had contacted Rospigliosi days before his death, seeking protection from the growing mob (see NotiSur, 2004-05-07).

The order to legalize coca growing in Cuzco brought Rospigliosi to the conclusion that "if some thought that the anarchy in which Bolivia has been submerged was distant, now they should start to rethink it. If the folly of Cuaresma is permitted, Peru will have taken a decisive step on the road to chaos that now blossoms above us." Ferrero asked the Tribunal Constitucional (TC) to block the regional order, warning that, if it went through, the legal cultivation of coca in Peru would shoot up from 9,000 ha to 36,000 ha. "In the name of the national government we want to show our absolute disagreement with an order by the regional government of Cuzco that wants to give legal validity to whatever may be the quantity of coca cultivated in that department," said Ferrero.

Nils Ericsson, president of the Comision Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas (Devida) or Peru's anti-drug czar, attacked the legalization measure in Huanuco, saying "the Valle del Monzon is basically a zone for drug production, from there [comes] the pressure from the narcotrafficking sector to obtain a

legality that can only be described as beyond all reason and irrational." Cuaresma maintained an openly defiant stance against the government and Ferrero followed suit, saying that "the autonomy of the regions is now in play. If the government continues advancing, the Cuzco puma may awaken, and we will declare Cuzco an autonomous and independent region."

Governability has been an increasing difficulty in Peru during the Toledo administration, with multiple fatal incidents occurring as different groups jockeyed for power in various parts of the country (see NotiSur, 2004-11-05, 2005-01-14). Ricardo Soberon, a specialist on drugs and the Amazon, said that the Cuzco ordinance was "a rock in the shoe for the Cabinet of Ferrero; he hasn't known how to handle it, which has turned the social scene in the country from warm to hot." Stresses within the Cabinet began to show publicly, particularly as FIM figures close to Toledo's government, like Fernando Olivera, decided to back Cuaresma's stance. In August, Olivera briefly replaced Ferrero after most of Toledo's Cabinet resigned.

This may be a propitious time for Peruvian coca growers. Even as the US is keeping its spending on anti-narcotics efforts in Colombia at similar levels to previous years, it is reducing such aid to Peru and Bolivia. As growers find themselves increasingly squeezed in Colombia, other countries will become more attractive areas for cultivation (see NotiSur, 2005-04-08). According to the UN, there were 50,300 ha of coca plantations in Peru last year, an increase of 23%. Peru, Colombia, and Bolivia produce most of the coca that goes on to be processed into cocaine and sold around the world. With cultivations in Colombia under military and herbicidal pressure, the "balloon effect" appears to be shifting more production into Peru and Bolivia.

[Sources: Inter Press Service, 11/10/03; The Miami Herald, 02/08/05; Opinion (Bolivia), 06/15/05; El Mercurio (Chile), 06/21/05; La Razon (Bolivia), 06/22/05; Associated Press, 06/29/05; La Republica (Peru), 05/05/05, 05/13/05, 05/16-18/05, 05/23/05, 06/22/05, 06/24/05, 07/08/05, 07/14/05; El Nuevo Herald (Miami), 02/15/05, 06/21-23/05, 07/20/05; El Comercio (Peru) 02/15/05, 02/22/05, 02/24/05, 03/04/05, 07/13/05, 07/15/05, 07/21/05, 08/01/05, 08/08/05]

Standards

National Standards (McREL) <http://www.mcrel.org/>

- ***Civics Standard 3***
 - Understands the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good
- ***Civics Standard 6***
 - Understands the advantages and disadvantages of federal, confederal, and unitary systems of government
- ***Civics Standard 7***
 - Understands alternative forms of representation and how they serve the purposes of constitutional government
- ***Economics Standard 2***
 - Understands characteristics of different economic systems, economic institutions, and economic incentives
- ***Economics Standard 3***
 - Understands the concept of prices and the interaction of supply and demand in a market Economy
- ***Economics Standard 10***
 - Understands basic concepts about international economics"
- ***Language Arts Standard 1***
 - Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- ***Language Arts Standard 2***
 - Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- ***Language Arts Standard 3***
 - Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- ***Language Arts Standard 4***
 - Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- ***Language Arts Standard 7***
 - Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- ***Language Arts Standard 8***
 - Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes



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