

Rape Victim's Cry for Justice End in Peru Gunfire

by Ray Sanchez (Newsday)

Rape and social justice drove one woman to the fold of Tupac Amaru, the Peruvian rebel group that held hostage 72 people for months. She was killed during Pres. Fujimori's attack on the residence of the Japanese ambassador where the hostages were held.

LIMA, Peru—Luz Dina Villoslada decided to take up arms with the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement a few days before her 17th birthday. A month before her 21st birthday, she was dead.

Luciano Villoslada remembers that humid spring day that his sister Luz sealed her fate by deciding to become a revolutionary.

In an impoverished village in Chanchamayo in central Peru's remote jungle region, their 14-year-old sister had been kidnapped and raped a month earlier by the son of a wealthy landowner. The local authorities couldn't be bothered to even investigate. "They paid off the police and the justice," Luciano Villoslada, 27, said "Justice went against us."

"My sister said our family was never going to be trampled by the upper classes again. 'We always have to hold our heads up,' she said. 'I will always stand up for my family so that no one steps all over us again'."

Luz Dina Villoslada's search for justice ended in the blaze of gunfire that erupted after army troops stormed the residence of Japanese ambassador in Peru. For 126 days, the peasant rebel and 13 Marxist comrades from the Tupac Amaru held 72 hostages in the diplomatic compound hundreds of miles from the poor farm-

ing community where Luz Dina was recruited in May 1994.

Luz Dina Villoslada's life, as recounted by several members of her family, is a portrait of the enormous inequalities that plague a nation slowly rebuilding from hyperinflation and a bloody guerrilla insurgency. It is the tale of a hardworking Catholic-school student who learned to sell fruit with her family at the age of four and gradually became disillusioned with a country where nearly half of 24 million inhabitants live in poverty.

In her family's sparsely furnished home in Lima, where 16 people each night squeeze into five small beds, Luz Villoslada was remembered in a makeshift altar surrounded by white votive candles. On a tiny wooden table draped in white cloth, a pair of Villoslada's size 5-1/2 aerobic shoes, two pairs of jeans and several brightly colored blouses were neatly piled in front of a class portrait from her high school graduation in December 1992.

Luz Dina Villoslada was born on 23 May 1976, in the village of Puerto Victoria in Chanchamayo, a 12-hour bus ride from the capital. On a tattered cot in their wood-slat shack, Eligia Villoslada gave birth to the third of nine children. They affectionately referred to her as little gringa because of her light complexion—a nickname that many years later became her *nom de guerre*.

"All my daughters were white, but she was the whitest," said Eligia Villoslada, 46. "Her hair was like cotton, even her teeth, they were so big and white. That's why we called her La Gringuita."

In a country where the light-

skinned elite control the nation's wealth, her father, Enrique, 46, an Indian peasant, recalled: "We were so happy because she was this beautiful gringuita. She was the whitest of all the children and so pretty."

In the countryside, the Villoslada family made a living off the land, growing and selling fruits and vegetables. All the children learned to work early, but Luz Dina Villoslada, who was selling fruit at four, particularly enjoyed helping support the family.

"I remember a graduation," Eligia Villoslada said. "We couldn't believe how many people there were. It started in the morning and we sold all day long—fruits and sandwiches. At the end of the day I had a stack of money and Luz Dina was so excited. She said, 'Mami, this is business!'"

But life in the provinces was difficult. The jungle was filled with guerrilla activity and the repression by army troops searching for the subversives. And the nation's antiquated justice system favored the wealthy, especially in the countryside.

When Luz Dina Villoslada's sister was abducted and raped by the son of a coffee plantation owner in April 1993, the family's inability to bring charges against the rapist enraged her, Luciano Villoslada said.

"How many people are dying of hunger?" Enrique Villoslada asked? "How many of us have been mistreated by the authorities? How many people have begged for justice but have not gotten it? Justice is only for those who have money, not for us."

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