

BOLIVIAN POWER STRUGGLE THREATENS NEW VIOLENCE

The clandestine rivalry between Bolivian junta president Barrientos and the commander of the armed forces, General Ovando, has burst into the open this week and is threatening to resolve itself by violence. Barrientos' position seems to be the stronger at the moment as recent events have worked to his advantage, while Ovando has apparently made some serious miscalculations.

Until the assassination attempt against him on 21 March, Barrientos was losing support, and his efforts to force political parties into a coalition behind him had foundered. Furthermore, the prevailing opinion within the cabinet and the military was that Barrientos had to resign from the junta if he wished to campaign for the presidency. News of the shooting however, immediately rallied civilian and military sympathy for him.

Ovando's attempt to displace Barrientos as junta president on 22 March, plus his flirtation with the offer of a presidential nomination by center and rightist political parties, has revealed his hostility to Barrientos, and is forcing all political parties

to define their positions. Barrientos' peasant supporters in Cochabamba and the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) are calling for Ovando's dismissal.

MNR leader Hernan Siles Zuazo has proposed a pacification plan which includes suggestions that elections be postponed, the cabinet be purged of Ovando supporters, and the armed forces high command be reorganized. Siles has also recommended that Barrientos resign from the junta at a later date and entrust the government to a triumvirate of solid Barrientos supporters.

The MNR has called out its armed militants to demonstrate on behalf of Barrientos when he returns to La Paz from Cochabamba. The demonstrations are aimed at pressuring Barrientos into accepting the peace-keeping formula and at securing a promise of substantial MNR representation in a future government. The US Embassy considers violence in La Paz likely as a result of the demonstrations.

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