

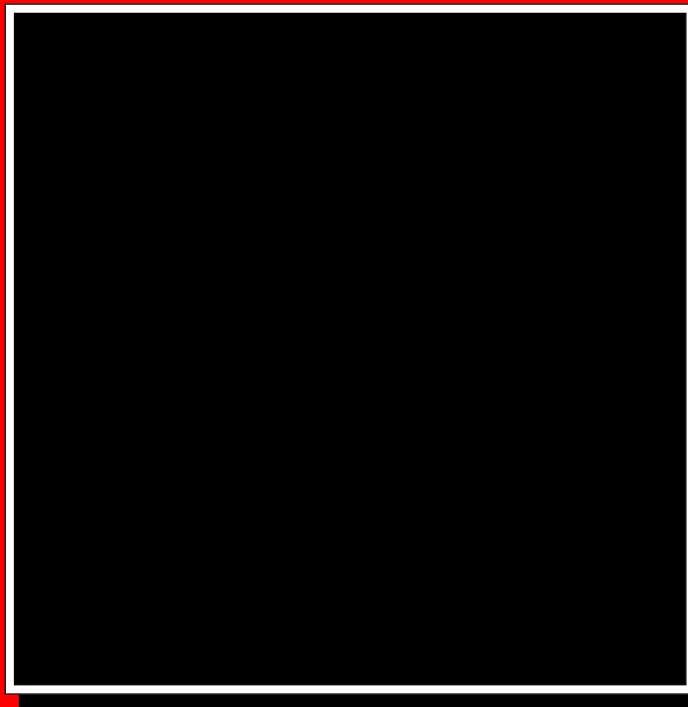
Spring 1998

Colombia

A Human Rights Quarterly

Bulletin

us\$3.00



**Samper —
do you hold
Colombia's
future in
your
hands?**

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Inspired Works

Good issue Fall/Winter of *Colombia Bulletin*. I mean good in its full coverage. Of course the news is terrible and people like me do feel frustrated. But we have to forge ahead to try and influence US aid. I got a lot out of your *Analysis and Arms Watch*. Carlos Salinas' article provided a lot of nuts and bolts activist pressure ideas which gave me hope and inspired me to write to my representatives.

Keep the faith.
B. Long,
Talkeetna, Alaska

Enclosed is my check for a one year subscription. I have reproduced copies of your cover letter to leave at my church and, hopefully, attract additional subscribers.

Victor,
Savannah, GA

More CBs Needed

The *Colombia Bulletin* is very helpful. We make photocopies of the most useful articles to distribute at meetings and demos, and the magazines themselves are sent to like minded organizations and trade-unions — so if you can afford to send more, they won't be wasted!

Teresa
London, England

Enclosed is my subscription. I would like extra copies to pass out at the April 16 town forum with my congressman Martin Olav Sabo (Appropriations Committee). Enclosed is \$ for the extras. We're organizing!

Rick
Minneapolis, MN

"Violence in Colombia"

Your magazine is getting better and more comprehensive with each number. Congratulations and keep up the good work. You might be interested to know that a new updated edition of "Violence in Colombia" (current paperback edition by Scholarly Resources is out of print) is in the works, and we're hoping to add a significant amount of new material on the contemporary crisis.

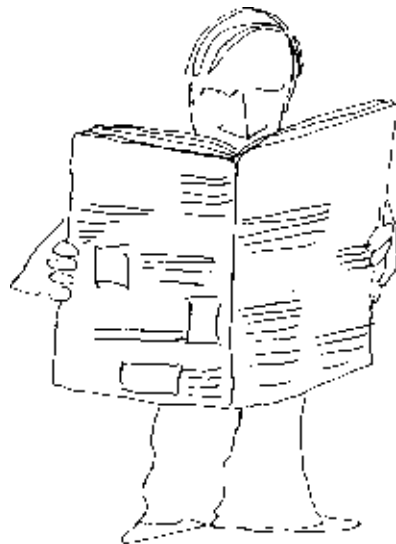
Charles Bergquist
Seattle, WA

Letters

Important Service to the International Community

Just a brief note to let you know how much I value your work of publishing *Colombia Bulletin*. Your publication is rendering an indispensable service to the International Community concerned with human rights. Colombia stands as a case study of the historic denial of human rights in many parts of the world, and your *Bulletin* is an invaluable contribution to change that situation.

Gonzalo Castillo-Cardenas
Pittsburgh, PA



Cline, United States

One of these days, when my financial condition improves, I will make an additional contribution to your magnificent effort. . . . Your analyses warns all of us what other country's futures may very well be. (Enclosed is my check to continue my sub for the second year.)

Yours,
Don Irwin, PA

I was happy to discover that the *Colombia Bulletin* exists. It is great resource on Colombia. Is there any chance that you can produce the *Bulletin* more frequently?

Anna
Evanston, IL

Returning to My Roots

I loved your *Bulletin* - very informative! Especially to one adopted at infancy from Bogotá. ¡Gracias! I studied in the Javierana for six months last year. I speak and can read Spanish, but am so happy there's the *Bulletin* in English that I can really understand and learn about the injustices of *mi tierra del olvido*.

Laura Blum,
Bryn Mawr, PA

German Activists On-Online

Finally, the "German Coordination for Human Rights in Colombia" has got e-mail! We coordinate human rights activities of German NGOs in relation with the European network of NGOs working on human rights in Colombia. From PBI-Colombia we knew that you distribute some information about the human rights situation in Colombia that may be interesting for us. So I would like to ask you if its possible to include us in your mailing list, the information may be English or Spanish. Thank you very much and best wishes.

Gundula

Information Appreciated

I recently read a short Internet listing concerning *Colombia Bulletin*. Needless to say, it caught my interest (although the review was rather uninformative). I'm not familiar with your publication. Can you please send me further information and how to obtain a copy? Any info will be greatly appreciated. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Dan Chicago, IL

From Each According to Ability

Thanks for the free sample. I'm unable to subscribe because I'm old. Here's a donation and best wishes.

Helen,
San Pedro, CA

Discovered On-line

I just found your web page. I am very interested in hearing from you and receiving your winter *Bulletin*.

Maria
Colorado

Colombia Bulletin
"A Human Rights Quarterly"

Volume 3, No. 1
May 1998

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Colombia Bulletin seeks to forge strong connections for information and activism between the U.S., Europe, and Colombia by reporting accurate and up-to-date information on the struggle for human rights in Colombia.

Colombia Bulletin (ISSN 1096-2174) is published quarterly by the Colombia Support Network -Wisconsin Interfaith Committee on Latin America. The views expressed in the articles contained herein represent those of the author(s).

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Subscriptions: 4 issues: US\$25 for individuals and non-profits, US\$50 for institutions, US\$12.50 for student/low income. For outside the U.S. and Canada, add US\$10 (airmail).

Subscriptions: *Colombia Bulletin*, c/o CSN, P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI USA. Phone (608)257-8753 Fax (608)255-6621

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Advertising rates: Progressive groups-businesses, US\$100 per 1/6 page per issue, with discounts for non-profits or advance purchase.

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Special Report from the Colombia Support Network



No End in Sight for Paramilitary Massacres in Colombia

By the Colombia Support Network

THE CRIMINAL ACTION of paramilitary groups against the civilian population has reached an unprecedented scale in Colombia and there seems to be no end in sight.

Among the more prominent cases reported by the Colombian media in the period between October 1997 and February 1998 is the fact that no less than 125 people were murdered by groups under the command of Carlos Castaño, chief leader of the so-called Farmers Self-Defense Groups of Córdoba and Urabá (Auto-defensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá, ACCU). In addition, this slaughter has resulted in the displacement of more than 3,500 peasants from the area. The courageous denunciation of these massacres has further resulted in the death of a prominent human rights activist.

The following report, therefore, focuses on massacres (a massacre is defined as an assassination of 4 or more people) that took place in the vicinity of the National Park of Nudo de Paramillo, Antioquia (a state in the northwest portion of Colombia). Three municipalities in the area surrounding the park were victim to a bloody incursion by paramilitary of the ACCU self-defense group at

the end of 1997, leaving 35 dead and at least 2,500 displaced, one after the other, all in the north of the department of Antioquia.

Carlos Castaño had in fact announced to the press his intention to "sleep easy in the National Park of Nudo de Paramillo before the end of December."¹

Massacres in Ituango in the settlement of El Aro and surroundings (15 dead, around 2,100 displaced):

Between the 25th and 30th of October of 1997, the settlement of El Aro in the north of Antioquia was terrorized by an incursion on the part of paramilitaries who killed 5 of its inhabitants and another 10 in surrounding villages of Ituango. This violence caused the displacement of some 2,100 peasants who fled to the main towns of Ituango and Puerto Valdivia.

Denunciations throughout the prior year by the Human Rights Committee Héctor Abad Gomez and by the parish priest of the settlement of Santa Rita of Ituango, Jairo Guerra, were of no effect. Paramilitary groups of the ACCU and members of the armed forces continued their joint patrols in the rural area around Ituango.²

According to Jesús María Valle, town councilor and president of the HR

Committee Héctor Abad Gomez, the situation was not new: "Since September of last year [the paramilitaries] have killed 130 peasants. We knew something terrible was going to happen. We denounced this situation in writing to the governor Alvaro Uribe Velez, to the commander of the Army's Fourth Brigade, General Carlos Alberto Ospina Valle, and to the regional Public Prosecutor but no one paid any attention."

According to the daily *El Tiempo*: "Between the 23rd and the 28th of the past October, Farmers' Self-Defense Groups of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU) arrived in the area to repel the 36th front of the FARC guerrillas. The battle began in Onganía and after the fighting three 'paras' were dead. The ACCU contingent asked for reinforcements and at least 80 men joined them. They came in by way of Taraza, followed the streams of Candela and Pugui and reached the settlement of El Aro, where they brought the population under control and forced it to abandon the village."⁴

The paramilitary arrived thus in El Aro on Saturday, October 25 with the intention of "finishing off the guerrillas." They brought the inhabitants out from their homes and gathered them in the main square. There, in front of everyone, they killed the first four victims, Andres Mendoza, Wilmar Restrepo, Rosa Maria

Barrera y Dora Angelica Areiza. They proceeded to go through the dwellings in search of firearms and robbed the inhabitants their few belongings.⁵

For the time, El Aro became the paramilitaries' center of operations against the guerrillas with whom they had armed encounters in the surrounding area. The population was forced to remain in the square for five days, and made to remain standing most of the time. At mealtimes the women were sent to their homes to prepare food. During the four nights all were forced to sleep out in the open.⁶

According to witnesses, because there were two paramilitaries killed in the fighting with the guerrillas, the paramilitaries in turn killed two peasants who were planting beans nearby, Alberto Correa and a youth of 16, because "to have been working there they must have known there were guerrillas in the vicinity." Witnesses tell of a helicopter that arrived with paramilitaries and a wounded guerrilla for interrogation. He died before speaking and the paramilitaries proceeded to dismember the body in front of the inhabitants.⁷

Before leaving El Aro, the paramilitaries killed Marco Aurelio Areiza, the village's 64-year-old shopkeeper, first tying him to a tree in the square, gouging out his eyes and his heart, and spreading salt over his body. His wife and daughters were brought over by force to look upon the remains. "The poor woman threw herself on the corpse so that the children wouldn't see the state it was in," said one of the peasants.⁸ The shopkeeper had been forced to serve the paramilitaries during their stay in El Aro and his wife forced to cook for them. The argument for killing Marco Aurelio was that he must have served the guerrilla the same way he was serving them. The paramilitaries finally set fire to the village, killing the pigs and the chickens. They took with them a total of 1,300 cattle and 130 horses and mules.⁹

A final assessment showed that of the 68 dwellings, 47 were left in ruins and four others in a poor state. Likewise, on the small farms through which they passed, paramilitaries leveled 10 other houses and killed four more peasants: Arnulfo Sanchez, 68; Jaier Diaz, 22; Fabio Zuleta, 44 and Omar Cadena, 27.¹⁰

The inhabitants of El Aro also accuse the Army of complicity in the massacre. "There were people who attempted to flee during a moment of inattention by the paramilitaries, but they did not get very far, as the Army was nearby and turned them back to the village."¹¹ Furthermore, by official account, the

Army supposedly did not arrive in the locality until 10 days after the denunciation and 15 days after the day of the massacre¹², despite the fact that the daily *El Tiempo* had already published an article on October 30 about the displacement of 1,200 peasants who had arrived in the municipality of Valdivia and

Death Toll Soars in Meta

Bogotá's daily *El Tiempo* reported that the regional and sectional directors of the Public Prosecutors of Oriente announced that between October 1997 and February 1998 a total of 124 bodies have been uncovered in Granada, a municipality in the south of the department of Meta. The directors reported that, to date, the homicides have been perpetrated with firearms, in an individual or selective manner, and that the investigations of these violent deaths are in a preliminary stage.

The jurisdictional domain of the Public Prosecutors of Granada includes the municipalities of Fuente de Oro, Mesetas, La Uribe, Lejanias, Vista Hermosa, San Juan de Arama, Mapiripan, Puerto Concordia, El Castillo, La Macarena, and Puerto Rico.

As *El Espectador* stated on February 13, the Defensoria del Pueblo—headquartered in Meta—says the Ariari region has become a zone of violence and terror and costing the lives of one to two people daily.

The organization paid visits to the municipality of Lejanias, where the people say they are under siege by the ACCU and were forced to abandon the municipality near the towns of Ganada and Castillo.

Apparently, the ACCU also went to Medellín del Ariari on February 9, terrorized the community and removed some people from their homes. They stated that the individuals wore garments of exclusive use of the Armed Forces and displayed a red band on one of their arms.

According to the Defensora of Meta, Rocio Lopez de Robinson, 30 of the 120 deaths occurred during the month of October last year and five of the victims appeared cremated. In November 25 violent deaths were registered, and in December, 21 people murdered, among whom were traders, peasants, farmers, dairy farmers, and livestock farmers.

Meanwhile, *El Espectador* published the news that another 46 people may have died recently as a result of actions by armed paramilitaries or guerrillas in Turpial, district of El Anzuelo, in Mapiripán. The accusations were voiced by Ana Silvia Linder, representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross—with seat in Villavicencio—confirming having received calls in which the existence of a new massacre in the region announced. The commander of the Fourth Division of the Army, Brigadier-General Jaime Humberto Cortes Parada, declined to make comments on the matter and indicated that they are merely rumors intended to discredit and to disturb the electoral process.

El Tiempo & El Espectador

Mini-Glossary: FBI—Peace Brigades International • FARC—The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (leftwing insurgents) • ACCU—Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba (rightwing paramilitary group) • WNU—Weekly News Update on the Americas (see page 45 for more information on WNU) • *El Colombiano*—newspaper based in Medellín • *El Tiempo & El Espectador*—Bogotá newspapers.

denounced the deaths of the first 6 peasants.

The troops that arrived in the settlement after the massacre belonged to the Girardot Battalion, part of the Army's Fourth Brigade, under the command of Colonel German Morantes. This is the same battalion accused by the local in-

habitants of carrying out joint patrols in the region alongside the paramilitaries. On arriving in El Aro on November 11, Colonel Morantes announced to the press that the Army was going to rebuild the town. For his plan of action, as a first step, a camp would be established and the provision of food would be verified.

Then, once the peasants returned, there would be health brigades.¹² However, a reporter from the daily *El Colombiano* who visited the zone pointed out: "It is likely that few people will return to El Aro given the scant guarantee of security, in spite of the Army's assertions to the contrary."¹³

In face of the polemic raised by accusations from human rights groups who for some time had been denouncing joint patrols by army and paramilitary groups, Colonel Morantes made a point to state that these accusations were "unfounded and dangerous." He added: "Whenever there has been cause to suspect such complicity we have taken action. Two months ago I relieved the entire troop, but because it is possible that undesired friendships can develop, not because of concrete incidents."¹⁵

Press reports also indicate more peasants displaced from other localities around Ituango such as San Bartolo, Buenavista and Badillo, where 200 peasants left the village of La Manga.¹⁶

On November 24, other news recounted an incursion in Eparasi such as recently occurred in El Aro of Ituango, which provoked the displacement of some 700 peasants from another 8 settlements located in the National Park of Paramillo.

According to the mayor of Ituango, Jose Milagros Lopez, "the inhabitants made a journey of four days on mule back, to denounce that armed men had arrived on November 15 in the village of Badillo, had killed at least four people, destroyed some bridges, and set fire to the school and to another 17 dwellings."¹⁷ According to this mayor's description: "There is nothing but jungle in that area, a territory where the dwellings are dispersed, at a distance from each other as much as one hour's journey on foot. There, in the midst of a subsistence economy, are inhabitants who have never received any attention from the national government; impoverished peasants and undernourished, victims of a war they do not deserve."¹⁸

Three months after the massacres, the daily *El Colombiano* revisited the settlement of El Aro to report that "the village has not been reconstructed be-

Paramilitary Leader Castaño Sentenced in Absentia

Fidel Castaño, founder of the paramilitary ACCU was sentenced in absentia on January 6th to 28 years in prison by a Colombian court for his responsibility for the deaths of six campesinos in Pueblo Bello, Antioquia department. The victims were among 43 Pueblo Bello-area residents killed by ACCU between 1989 and 1990. The court also sentenced Castaño for the murder of Antioquia political leader Alfonso Ospina in November, 1989. Rumors have circulated for some time now that Fidel is dead and his brother, Carlos Castaño, now heads ACCU.

—[*El Colombiano*, 1/7/98] via WNU #415

CP: Armed Forces Conceal Presence of Putumayo Paramilitaries

Colonel Diego Gativa Arias, commander of the 24th Army Brigade with headquarters in Santa Ana (Putumayo), announced to the media that "the garrison under his charge has no evidence of the presence of paramilitaries in the zone" (*El Espectador*). Other Army spokesmen told *El Tiempo* that "they have not had proof of the existence of bodies or mass graves."

However, all the testimonies of the authorities and of local dwellers point to a long-standing paramilitary presence in the Putumayo. Carlos Castaño, paramilitary chief, announced it two years ago on the occasion of the National Summit of Self-Defense Groups.

What is the reason that the Army denies the paramilitary presence in the department of Putumayo? Why does the Army hasten to affirm that the guerrilla is responsible for the deaths when everyone points to the paramilitary?

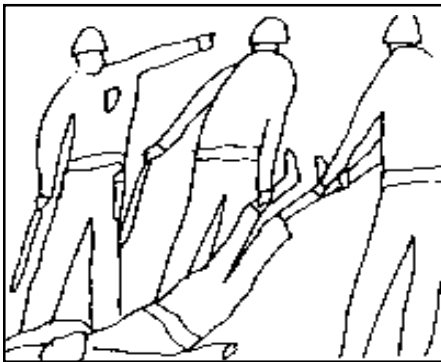
The Public Prosecutor should look for answers to these questions because this military attitude is the same as that towards numerous paramilitary massacres carried out in the country. Suffice it to track the Mapiripan, Chaparral and Paravando massacres, among others, in the newspapers, to always find the same attitude, which is also that of the Minister of Defense Gilberto Echeverry. When confronted by the question of the deaths in Colombia, he has stated: "What's that?"

All Colombia and the international community turn their eyes again toward the lax government of Ernesto Samper and the bipartisan Colombian political class which have allowed and still allow the unpunished actions of the paramilitary in the country. This latest massacre has taken place in a completely militarized department. The Colombian Communist Party demands answers as well as concrete actions from the government to stop this criminal wave of blood.

Central Executive Committee of the Colombian Communist Party

cause the materials sent to the site were worthless; furthermore, the community is not organized and the departmental administration does not have the funds to attend to their needs.” It reported that only 100 peasants had returned to El Aro after remaining for a period of three months displaced in Puerto Valdivia. ¹⁹

The denunciations made by Jesus Maria Valle, president of the HR Committee Hector Abad Gomez, cost him his life. A group of assassins entered his office in Medellin and assassinated him with two shots to the head this past February 27, 1998. ²⁰ (See “Human Rights Activist Murdered”, page 34.)



Massacres in the Rural Area of Dabeiba (14 dead and at least 400 displaced):

On Tuesday November 25, ACCU paramilitaries entered by another flank of the National Park’s Nudo de Paramillo, arriving in the villages of La Balsita, Tocumal, Buenavista and Galilea where they murdered 14 peasants, accusing them of being “auxiliaries to the guerrillas”.

According to people of the area, this was not the first action of the paramilitaries there. “For more than a year now since they first arrived, list of names in hand, they have eliminated at least 180 peasants.” ²¹ The mayor of Dabeiba confirms this adding that “for quite some time now, the population bleeds to death in silence, without the attention of those who have the constitutional obligation to protect their lives.” ²²

On November 22 the paramilitaries drove through Dabeiba by truck. “There were around 50 or 60 armed men. We all saw it and no one said anything,” said one of the witnesses. ²³ It should be

noted that Dabeiba has a military detachment of the Girardot Infantry Battalion and of the Convivir groups, which are the legalized armed civil patrols that do intelligence work for the Army. According to the daily *El Colombiano*, “The massacre that occurred between the evening of Tuesday and the dawn of Wednesday was, according to the peas-

ants affected and to other local inhabitants, evidence of the evident ties between paramilitaries and certain members of the forces of public order.” ²⁴

Other witnesses state that since June, 1997 the paramilitaries had ordered the inhabitants of the village of San Juan de Urama “to vacate the farms and close down commerce because they believed

Army Major, Police Officers Arrested For Ties to Death Squads

Reuters reported that four members of Colombia’s security forces were arrested and accused of having links with right-wing death squads. Justice officials said the arrests were the first in the insurgency war in which active members of the police or the army have been detained on charges of official ties to right-wing paramilitary groups. A statement from the chief prosecutor’s office identified the suspects as an army major in Cordoba Province and three police officers in Bolivar Province. The four have been also charged with several murders, including that of a mayor-elect in Bolivar last November.

A Little “Rambo” Does Not Go A Long Way

by Dennis Grammenos

The U.S. State Department’s “certification” process has become a spring ritual anticipated, in Bogotá, with a peculiar blend of keen interest and dismissive contempt. Once again, in these days that prefigure the release of the “certification,” one can be excused for exhibiting a certain degree of cynicism if one were to observe that the Colombian media are peppered with reports of arrests of individuals or groups of individuals that have been implicated in some paramilitary atrocity or other.

Just recently an Army major and three police officers were arrested on charges of participating in death squads. Now come reports of the arrest of a man known as “Rambo,” one Luis Alejandro Cardozo Gongora. “Rambo” has been a henchman in the service of the brothers Fidel and Carlos Castaño Gil — large landowners, notorious paramilitary warlords, and (many claim) major drug lords.

According to General Ismael Trujillo Polanco, the director of the “Dijin” or Directorate of the judicial police, the intelligence organization responsible for the arrest, there is a list of 300 names of individuals who have been positively identified as belonging to formations that have been implicated in atrocities, many with links to the narcotics circuit. In the case of “Rambo”, Dijin has information that implicates him in the narcotics circuit as a liaison between drug-traffickers and paramilitaries. Among other information, it is known to the authorities that “Rambo” visited Jairo Correa Alzate, a notorious drug lord, at the “maximum security” penitentiary in Itagui (Antioquia).

“Rambo” was arrested in La Dorada (Caldas), seat of Castaño paramilitary forces, but by the looks of it General Trujillo Polanco would find neither of the names of Fidel or Carlos Castaño Gil on the long list of names he mentioned. (See related stories: “Paramilitary Leader Castaño”, page 6 and “Caught in the Crisis”, page 31.)

we collaborated with the guerrillas.”²⁵ Prior to these threats many had left, including the parish priest. The stores that ignored the order to close down were burned. For this reason, on November 25 when the peasants sighted the paramilitaries, they ran from their homes and hid in the forest for several days. One of the survivors reports that “those killed were the ones who came out to see if the armed guys had left, and there they were picked off one by one.”²⁶

The 22 dwellings of the village were burned. Peasants killed in hamlets in the vicinity of San Juan de Urama of Dabeiba were the following. In the settlement of La Balsita: Edison Areiza 17 years old,

Ricardo Monroy and Luis Alberto Avendano. Killed in Tocumal: Oscar Valderrama, 60-year-old minister of the evangelical church, and his 25 year old son Luis Alfonso. In Buenavista: Florentino the local schoolteacher 20 years old and his father, Ananias Guisao, 46 years old; also Angel Montoya and Milton David, both 30 years old, apparently hanged. In Galilea another 5 peasants were murdered.²⁶ In the settlement of Antesaes, peasants were told to leave their homes, their animals, and their lands “because a helicopter would arrive the next day to bomb the locality”.²⁷

Around 400 peasants from the affected villages were forced to move to

the outskirts of Dabeiba. But that was not all. As denounced by the mayor Gabriel Eduardo Gonzalez, the head of the Convivir groups, Jhon Mario Rodriguez, threatened the drivers who had been hired by the city council to assist in the transportation of some of the displaced. According to the mayor, those from the Dabeiba Convivir groups who “are displeased because they would have preferred that everyone remain silent about the bloodshed.”²⁸

THE MASSACRE OF PEQUE (6 dead):

In an unprecedented action, and following upon other violent incursions in the area, on December 6 a group of 150 paramilitaries arrived at the municipal capital of Peque. By phone, they requested permission of the local Chief of Police to “do a cleansing of the municipality”³⁰, meaning permission to kill those whom they considered “auxiliaries of the guerrillas”. The Chief of Police opposed the request and prevented the paramilitaries from reaching the center square, where the police entrenched themselves. The paramilitaries kept the village under siege during two days and killed five of its inhabitants in the outskirts. Curiously enough, the police Chief’s report to his superiors was published by the daily *El Colombiano*, providing a unique testimony of the events.

The report begins with the fact that “On the day of December 6 at around 1:00 four trucks drove in from the direction of Dabeiba with approximately 150 paramilitary troops, who disembarked three kilometers outside the perimeter of the town. Then, at 14:00 hours I received a call from an individual alias “Pelusa”, apparently the leader of the group, who said: “Listen, chief, we are here to carry out a cleanup of the town and I need to take out some people, and I need to take some cattle to feed the men.” To this I responded: “Look, in the rural area you do as you wish, but you’ll do no work here in town, you won’t even set foot in it,” to which he responded, “Well, OK. We’re going in by hook or by crook.”³¹

According to the chief, at 6:00 p.m. on that day the paramilitaries attempted to reach the main square of the town, but the police called out to them that if

Eight Massacres in Ten Days in the North

Nine Colombian campesinos were murdered in two attacks by paramilitary groups in the villages of La Jagua de Ibirico and La Paz, Cesar department, police sources reported on Dec. 2. Two days earlier reports came out about a massacre of 19 campesinos in Dabeiba, Antioquia. In a ten day period paramilitary groups committed eight massacres, killing more than 100 people. On Dec. 1, more than 20 heavily armed men in military garb entered the Casacara farm in La Jagua and dragged from their homes those people whose names appeared on a list they were carrying. The victims were then lined up against a wall and shot to death; seven people were killed and one other disappeared.

—*Agencia de Noticias Nueva Colombia*

ACCU Murders 23 in Antioquia

Paramilitary death squads murdered 23 campesinos in the municipality of Urrao in Antioquia. There were some 150 selective murders in the town during 1997, but since the paramilitary groups left Urrao in December there had been little violence, until a group of some 300 individuals identifying themselves as members of the ACCU entered the community of La Encarnacion on April 28. The paramilitaries selectively pulled 10 people from a bus, accused them of being members or supporters of the FARC, and murdered them. The paramilitaries then killed another 13 people in the community of El Maravillo. The FARC’s 34th Front is based near La Encarnacion.

Some 200 local residents have fled to the town of Urrao. Despite the paramilitary group’s orders that campesinos leave the area, several of the widows said they want to return. “They already killed our husbands, we’re alone with our children, we want to work the land,” said one mother whose husband was murdered. Ironically, Urrao was in the midst of its own peace process when the attacks took place; church leaders had met with spokespeople of the FARC’s 34th Front to negotiate the rebel’s departure from La Encarnacion. Now, said one campesino, “Peace is very far away, while we keep dying in the solitude of our countryside, without help from anyone.” —[*El Colombiano*] WNU#431

they entered they would shoot, upon which the paramilitaries retreated. On December 7 at 5:00 a.m. businessman Ricardo Antonio Carvajal was killed. On December 8 they set up roadblocks at all the exits out of town and some 20 people were stopped. In answer to a request for help from the police chief, the Army sent a helicopter which remained only 40 minutes, discharging some shots in a “rural zone near the municipal center” and then leaving.³² Following another frustrated attempt to enter the main square, on December 8 the paramilitaries killed Aicardo David Higuita, 20 year old; Jose Torres, 45 years old; Francisco David, 35 years old; Carlos Tuberquia, 35 years old and Arcadio Villa. At midnight on December 8, five trucks arrived, picked up the bodies and left town on the road leading to Medellín.”³³ And finally, the chief informs his superiors that “I have received death threats from the leaders of the groups of Santa Fe de Antioquia, Frontino and Dabeiba, for actions of the Police which were in fulfillment of their legal duties.”³⁴

The daily *El Tiempo* informed about the takeover on December 9, after being been in telephone contact with the parish priest, father Tulio Mario Velazquez, who confirmed the siege. “According to the priest, the Police has not permitted them to enter the town. The Mayor requested reinforcements from the state government of Antioquia. The Fourth Brigade sent helicopters with artillery, but, following some skirmishes and some shots, they were unable to land due to bad weather.”³⁵

On February 14 1998, in an isolated incident, the police announced that, in the town of Frontino, Antioquia, it had killed the individual who was the alleged coordinator of the takeover of Peque, when he turned on police who attempted to search him. He was said to be named Edwin Alvarez Cano, nicknamed “Pelusa” and one of the paramilitary leaders of the ACCU. According to police, at the time of his death “the individual was carrying a list on which appeared the names of former mayors, councilmen, community leaders and politicians of the west of Antioquia.”³⁶

The Colombia Support Network has

Paramilitary Massacres Wipe Out Families Near Pavarando

Details of violence that left at least 45 people dead in Urabá (north) on the weekend of December 17 remain somewhat unclear. FARC’s 57th Front reported in a communique that the people died in a paramilitary attack and in the subsequent rebel response on Dec. 17 and 20 near the rural zone of Pavarando, on the border of Antioquia and Choco departments in the jurisdiction of Mutata, Antioquia. FARC said that members of rightwing paramilitary “self-defense” groups, with the complicity of the army, murdered 16 campesinos on the Canoclaro, Remacho, Llanorrico and Urada estates. Then the paramilitary groups burned the Buenavista farm where they were ambushed by a column of the FARC’s 57th Front, killing 28 paramilitary members and one rebel. A commission of the Attorney General’s office traveled on December 23 to Pavarando in an effort to verify the reports of the massacre. Since the violent weekend, 670 people have arrived in the town of Pavarando fleeing paramilitary violence in the surrounding area in Choco department; they join 3,500 other displaced campesinos who have been in Pavarando for nine months.

—*El Colombiano* 12/24/97 & 12/28/97

At least 40 people were killed in three days of violence in the Colombian town of Riosucio, near the Panamanian border, over the weekend of Dec. 20. Jaime Velasquez, an operator of the state-run telecommunications company Telecom, told the private radio network Radionet that entire families were massacred by rightwing paramilitary groups. Velasquez said he has reliable information that dozens of bodies are still at the scene several days after the massacre. The Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP) reported that 40 campesinos were murdered by paramilitary groups. “The paramilitary groups are targeting the civilian population,” said CINEP director and priest Gabriel Izquierdo. The bishop of Apartado, Tulio Duque, also reported that several families were attacked.

Jaime Cadavid, an official of the presidential council for the displaced of Antioquia department, told Radionet that his office confirmed 13 deaths. The massacres took place at farms near a camp of people displaced from the community of Pavarando; their return to Pavarando, scheduled for Dec. 20, has been postponed. Army sources reported that clashes broke out in the area between combatants of the FARC and the rightwing paramilitary ACCU, and said that a number of combatants on both sides were killed.

—*El Diario-La Prensa* 12/21/97 from EFE; *El Colombiano* 12/20/97; *La Republica* 12/21/97 from AFP via WNU #412

Follow-up

The national Attorney General’s office confirmed on Jan. 23 that at least 16 people were killed and another 11 left missing in massacres that took place last December near Pavarando, in Urabá on the border of Antioquia and Choco departments. The army’s 17th Brigade in Urabá had claimed that the massacres never happened, and accused local campesinos and the Center for Research and Popular Education—a respected human rights organization—of inventing the story in a campaign to discredit the armed forces. The Attorney General’s office is continuing to investigate the massacres.

—*El Colombiano* (Medellín) 1/24/98]

—WNU #417

also documented further paramilitary actions in the rural zone of Urrao (which left five dead), in the hamlet of La Horqueta, Tocaima, Cundinamarca (which left 13 dead), in the vicinity of Pavarando, Choco (32 dead, 800 displaced), in Putumayo (40 dead, at least 200 displaced), and in La Ceja, Antioquia (7 dead, 60 displaced). ■

For more information, contact the Colombia Support Network National Office, P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI 53701, csn@igc.apc.org

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Dec. 10/97. Paramilitaries complete their sweep of Paramillo.
- (2) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Nov. 13. Paramilitaries have free range of Ituango.
- (3) *Ibid.*
- (4) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Nov. 11/97. Army to reconstruct the settlement of El Aro.
- (5) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Nov. 14/97. The horror is over. Five days of hell in El Aro. By Jairo Arboleda.
- (6) *Ibid.*
- (7) *Ibid.*
- (8) *Ibid.*
- (9) *Ibid.*
- (10) *Ibid.*
- (11) *Ibid.*
- (12) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Nov. 11/97. Army to reconstruct the settlement of El Aro.
- (13) *Ibid.*
- (14) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Nov. 14/97. The horror is over. Five days of hell in El Aro. By Javier Arboleda.
- (15) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Nov. 13/97. Paramilitaries have free range of Ituango.
- (16) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Nov. 19/97. More displaced in Ituango.
- (17) *El Tiempo*. Nov. 25/97.
- (18) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Nov. 25/97. The way of the cross of the peasants of Ituango continues.
- (19) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Jan. 21/98. In El Aro desolation, abandonment and fear persist.
- (20) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Feb. 28/98. Defender of Human Rights is assassinated.
- (21) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Dec. 1/97. Terror in San Juan de Urama.
- (22) *Ibid.*
- (23) *El Colombiano*. Dec. 2/97. Convivir group interferes with transportation of the displaced.
- (24) *Ibid.*
- (25) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Dec. 1/97. Terror in San Juan de Urama.
- (26) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Dec 1/97. Paramilitary assault in Dabeiba.
- (27) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Dec 1/97. Paramilitary assault in Dabeiba.
- (28) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Dec. 3/97. We walk fleeing death. By Juan Diego Restrepo.
- (29) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Dec. 3/97. The head of the Dabeiba Convivir to be investigated.
- (30) *El Colombiano*. Medellín. Dec 10/97. I fulfilled my duty. The report on the frustrated attempt to take Peque.
- (31) *Ibid.*
- (32) *Ibid.*
- (33) *Ibid.*
- (34) *Ibid.*
- (35) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Dec. 9/97. Paramilitaries surround Peque.
- (36) *El Tiempo*. Bogotá. Feb. 14/98. Presumed chief of ACCU paramilitaries shot down.

Paramilitaries assassinate 14 people in Antioquia and Cesar

At least 14 people were assassinated in February by paramilitaries who invaded three localities of the departments of Antioquia and Cesar, police sources reported. Six of the victims were assassinated by the United Self-defense of Colombia in the municipality of La Ceja, Antioquia, while other eight suffered a similar fate in two settlements in Cesar.

At dawn on February 24, a group of heavily armed and hooded men appeared in La Loma. They removed several inhabitants —whose names were on a list— from their houses, and after they had tied the victims to posts, they shot them. La Loma farmers fled the paramilitaries, trekked to the hamlet of La Ceja and requested protection. The farmers gave accounts of six victims who had been killed, the majority women, but they indicated that they could more because the shootings continued even after they had fled from that location.

In the other incidents, in the municipality of Gamarra in Caesar, ACCU assassinated a woman whom, as in the previous case, they had forcefully removed from her house; following the same procedure, they killed another other seven people in the settlement of Codazzi. —*Radio Cadena Nacional*

'Emerald King' Arrested

The Associate Press reported that Colombia's top emerald entrepreneur has been arrested for allegedly sponsoring paramilitary death squads. Victor Carranza, known as the "Emerald King," was captured in Bogotá. An arrest warrant for the 56-year-old was issued in December after an anonymous witness provided evidence that Carranza was behind massacres of alleged guerrilla sympathizers. Hundreds of people have been slain in the past year by landowner-backed paramilitary units in regions considered guerrilla strongholds. Carranza is a millionaire cattlemen with vast landholdings. More than a decade ago, Carranza drove leftist rebels out of the mountainous central region where 60 percent of the world's emeralds are extracted. After defeating the guerrillas, Carranza battled Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha of the Medellín drug cartel over control of the emerald belt, 60 miles north of Bogotá. Carranza was arrested the following year for forming paramilitary death squads but was freed by authorities*. He then consolidated political control to include much of the vast southeastern plains. (See also "Colombia's Blowback", page 14.)

* *The case could not have been stronger. Testimony was given by former paramilitaries who worked under Carranza, naming mass graves on Carranza's ranches, and explaining the open relationship between Carranza and the armed forces, police, and DAS. One testified that Carranza never paid a traditional salary but would hand out large sums of cash when he visited his various ranches. When there was an important assassination, he would give a bonus by taking them to the Quipama emerald mine. Key witnesses confessed to a series of crimes and told where common graves were located. Raids were conducted at various private ranches which discovered bodies, military issue weapons, as well as military communications equipment. The investigation also uncovered the disappearance or murder of 26 others including elected officials and candidates from the Patriotic Union, activists, and trade unionists. Upon hearing such testimonies, the judge in charge of the case ruled they "did not deserve merit because such testimony is typical of a pathological liar," and absolved all 40 suspects, including Carranza. The judge was later promoted, while, 19 of the 30 books containing the record of the investigation mysteriously disappeared. —C.B. Editor*

U.S.-Funded Troops Back Paramilitary Massacre

by WNU

On January 8 of this year, Associated Press cited US Embassy officials—speaking on condition of anonymity—saying that the U.S. government is withholding \$10 million in “non-lethal” US military aid to Colombia already approved by the US Congress, pending full details from Colombia about collusion between the army and paramilitary death squads. While the Colombian police and judiciary have received more than \$1 billion over the past decade in U.S. aid—designated for anti-drug efforts—some direct aid to the military has been held up over human rights accusations.

According to AP, Washington began to reconsider military aid last year because of the growing strength of Colombia’s leftist guerrillas, who are said to control 40% of the countryside. To be legally eligible for the aid, Colombia signed an August 1 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on “end use monitoring” in which it promised to provide a list of all military units accused of rights violations; detail the alleged abuses; and verify that the cases are being investigated. The navy and air force have delivered their lists, but the army’s is still pending, US officials said. The “non-lethal” aid that has been held up includes night vision goggles and flak jackets.

Aid to the police continues, as do subsidized military sales. Between direct aid, regional aid, and defense draw-downs—all subject to different regulations—the figures on total U.S. aid to Colombia are unclear. “I doubt anybody really knows how many different programs result in the transfer of military equipment and assistance to Colombia,” says Carlos Salinas, Latin America program officer for Amnesty International in Washington. In a Dec. 29, 1997 letter sent to the *Washington Post*, Salinas

points out that “since 1989, Colombia has been the number one recipient of US security assistance in the Western Hemisphere.”

The latest charges focus on the army’s role in allowing rightwing paramilitary groups to fly into southern Colombia to commit massacres. Last May, the paramilitary groups formed a national front and began to move into the southeastern region, where the military had taken over major towns and airstrips in 1996 as part of an anti-drug strategy.

This region is Colombia’s main coca-growing area and a traditional stronghold of its largest leftist guerrilla group, FARC.

Massacre in Mapiripán

On July 12, 1997, some 120 paramilitary fighters landed in two chartered planes at a military-controlled airport in San José de Guaviare, according to judicial investigators and civil aviation officials. Assault rifles and machine guns were boxed as cargo. No one recorded

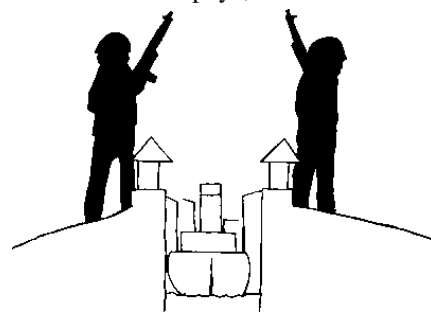
Panamanian Leader: U.S. Supporting Colombian Paramilitaries

The British weekly *The Economist* suggests that—with the intention of having Panamá request that it not withdraw its troops at the end of 1999—the U.S. may supporting Colombian paramilitaries who are battling the FARC on Panamanian territory. A member of the Panamanian president’s Revolutionary Democratic Party, Miguel Bush, stated that the U.S. pays, trains and even directs operations of Colombian paramilitaries to pressure Panamá to accept the continued presence of troops from Washington in this Central American country.

Meanwhile *Inside the Pentagon* says that 2,000 U.S. military personnel, most of them Air Force technical staff, will be stationed at the Multi-national Anti-Drug Center (MAC). The bulletin suggests that intelligence flights and other operations will take off there.

Other sources suggest that the Jungle School in Fort Sherman will also stay on, and that between 700 and 1,000 further military personnel will be stationed there, supposedly “in training”. It is also rumored that the Pentagon has little enthusiasm for the MAC, because it does not want to bear the cost and because it is not keen to take on an anti-drugs role.

The extent to which the U.S. military should become involved in the war against drugs was the subject of recent disagreement between Gen. Barry McCaffery, the “drug czar”, and William Cohen, the Secretary of Defense. Apparently, an indication of this disagreement is that currently within the administration it is McCaffery who is pressing the hardest for the setting up of the MAC. Either way, it seems the future U.S. presence in Panama is more a “down-sizing” than a pull-out.



their 2:30 pm arrival in the airport's log book, reported it as suspicious or prevented the paramilitaries from setting out by speedboat for the town of Mapiripán, in Meta department, where they tortured and killed some 30 alleged guerrilla sympathizers over a five-day period. The army denies any knowledge of the flight, as do the anti-narcotics police. Next to the airstrip is the police barracks that houses a team of US advisers and pilots who are part of Colombia's drug fumigation program.

Mapiripán's municipal judge, Iván Cortés Novoa, told a Colombian reporter that he made eight frantic telephone calls to an army battalion commander 40 miles away in San José del Guaviare, pleading for help. But the regional commander, Gen. Jaime Umberto Uscategui, refused to send soldiers to stop the killings. "Every night at dusk, they killed five or six defenseless people, civilians cruelly and monstrously massacred, first tortured," Cortés wrote in a letter faxed on July 21 to his superior in the regional capital of Villavicencio. Cortés, later forced by death threats to flee the country, said that he witnessed 26 murders and that most of the bodies were thrown into the Guaviare River. Some victims were cut

up alive with cleavers and several people who tried to pull relatives' bodies from the river were themselves killed and tossed in, said a representative of the government human rights office who interviewed witnesses. The official said all the witnesses were too terrified of reprisal to make formal complaints.

The Miraflores Murders

A second paramilitary killing spree, this time in the southern garrison town of Miraflores, Guaviare department, began on Oct. 18—the day before Barry McCaffrey, head of the White House Office of Drug Control Policy, arrived in Colombia to show support for the military and police, and to campaign for increased US military support to combat the growing influence of the so-called "narco-guerrillas".

Control of Miraflores has been considered crucial to the government's efforts to halt the cocaine trade, anti-narcotics police officials say. The US government routinely dispatches anti-narcotics advisers there.

The Miraflores case has attracted special attention because anti-narcotics police were present at the time of the murders. Local residents say that the

paramilitaries were taken directly to a joint military and police base in Miraflores when they arrived. After leaving the base on the morning of Oct. 18, the paramilitaries strolled down the block and killed four people on a central street of Miraflores—in broad daylight and in plain sight of the military and police base, 100 yards away.

In a letter to the United Nations (UN) human rights representative in Colombia, Almudena Mazarrasa, five Miraflores residents said that the killers identified themselves as paramilitary fighters and carried a list of the victims they were seeking. The paramilitaries moved freely about the town, communicating with walkie-talkies, over a three-day period. As this was going on, "the police, army and navy did not make an appearance," the residents wrote in the letter. (The Colombian navy has a small river patrol contingent in Miraflores.)

The paramilitaries remained in Miraflores for two days, living in a motel adjacent to the army and police base. Just before leaving on October 20, they killed two more local residents, according to a formal complaint filed by then-mayor José Icardo Pérez Castillo. On October 20, Colombian soldiers called from a public phone for a private plane to collect the "paras," said Héctor Guaviata, a jeep driver who witnessed the arrival of six paramilitary fighters in Miraflores.

Local residents also charged that soldiers escorted two of the paramilitaries to the small plane that picked them up at Miraflores' landing strip. [AP 1/8/98] Several days later the paramilitaries returned, attempted to extort money from several shop owners, and then departed.

Access to Miraflores is primarily by air, and the anti-narcotics police register everyone who steps off a plane. Army and police officers in Miraflores say that it would be impossible for anyone to enter the town without the knowledge of the military. However, both the police and the army in Miraflores denied knowledge of a paramilitary attack. [CSM 1/16/98] Lt. William Donato, base commander of the anti-narcotics police, said he was not present during the attack, which he dismissed as a "psychological operation" by the guerrillas to intimidate

U.S. Marines Beat Up Woman

Four U.S. Marines stationed at the embassy in Bogotá, have been charged with beating a Colombian woman at the embassy who refused to have sex with them. The incident took place on December 28. The charges were filed by Johana Villalba, a 25-year old single mother who works as a waitress in a Bogotá bar.

Villalba says that the four U.S. Marines came to the bar where she worked and invited her to a party. She agreed and got into the car with them. Instead they took her to the garage of the U.S. embassy, she says, where one of them said he wanted to have sex with her. She initially refused, but after the soldier continued to pressure her, she finally said she would have sex with him if he paid her \$50. The Marines then beat her. When she managed to escape the room, the other three Marines chased her and beat her. She escaped the embassy grounds and was picked up by the Colombian police and taken to a clinic, where it was confirmed that she had been badly beaten.

Villalba said that the next day she returned to the embassy to demand compensation, because her injuries would keep her from work for at least 10 days. An official whose name she can't remember offered her \$150 in exchange for not filing a lawsuit. The U.S. embassy acknowledged that an "incident" took place but declined further comment.

—*Clarín* (Buenos Aires) 1/21/98 from *AFP*, WNU #418

local residents. He said the police do not normally patrol the town or investigate killings, because of the heavy presence of guerrillas. However, he confirmed that “no airplane arrives without its passengers being registered and their belongings searched by the police.”

After the allegations against the military were widely publicized, armed forces commander Gen. Manuel José Bonett transferred Uscategui, the battalion commander, and his division commander, Gen. Agustín Ardila, to desk jobs. Ardila then resigned. Four top officers in military intelligence were denied promotions, forcing them to retire.

In a December 29 interview with AP, Bonett said the men were relieved of duty in connection with the massacres, but he refused to discuss details of the case. Bonett denied that military units support or ignore paramilitary operations. “I’ve publicly declared them enemy No. 1,” Bonett said of the paramilitaries. At the time Bonett made this statement, not one of 180 leading paramilitary figures for whom arrest warrants have been issued had been captured, noted AP. [AP 1/8/98] Nor have any military officers been prosecuted in connection with the Mapiqipán or Miraflores massacres, despite direct pressure from the Clinton administration [DMN 1/10/98; CSM 1/16/98], and despite Bonett’s admission in a recent interview that informal collaboration between soldiers and paramilitaries may take place in “some isolated cases.” [CSM 1/16/98]

Police Involvement “Disturbing”

“At this point in time I don’t think the US can safely fund the Colombian military,” Human Rights Watch/Americas (HRW/A) research associate Robin Kirk told the *Christian Science Monitor*. “This is not the case of rogue officers out of control,” said Kirk. “It’s a practice that, at the very least, is tolerated at the highest levels.” She described the apparent involvement of anti-narcotics police in the incident as particularly troublesome because of their normally strict compliance with international human rights conventions. The killers’ presence at a police checkpoint only

I doubt anybody really knows how many different programs result in the transfer of military equipment and assistance to Colombia.

—Carlos Salinas

minutes before the attacks began “points to direct contact between the paramilitaries and the anti-narcotics police,” said Kirk. “We regard this as very disturbing.”

Kirk has reason to be troubled by the charges, which emerged less than six months after she gave HRW/A’s “Seal of Approval” to U.S. military aid to Colombia’s anti-narcotics police. On July 16, 1997, Kirk sent a memo to John Mackey, an aide to Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY). The memo, which accompanied a statement in Spanish from HRW/A, reads: “Dear John: This is a statement we made today in Colombia regarding U.S. military aid to fight drugs. In it, we state very clearly that we are not opposing aid to the Anti-Narcotics Police because of their good human rights record,

but continue to oppose aid to the Army.... You’re fully welcome to refer to this as the HRW ‘Seal of Approval’ for police aid, if you wish. Hang onto it—it doesn’t come often!” The memo was included in the Congressional Record of July 30, 1997, as part of a discussion on foreign appropriations. According to Kirk, the Miraflores case marks the first time in years that Colombia’s anti-narcotics police have been implicated in a major human rights case.

In fact, police agents have been linked to the murder of civilians in anti-drug operations since at least 1992. In early February, two former agents of the National Police were arrested in Medellín by the Attorney General’s office after the office’s Human Rights Unit accused them of participating in a 1992 massacre in Medellín’s Villatina neighborhood. The massacre was one of many that took place in Medellín and its neighboring municipalities between 1989 and 1993, as police carried out a fierce pursuit of members of the so-called Medellín drug cartel. ■

Sources: AP 1/8/98, *Christian Science Monitor* 1/16/98, Fax of letter to WP, AP 1/8/98, CSM 1/16/98, *Dallas Morning News* 1/10/98, DMN 1/10/98, CSM 1/16/98; DMN 1/10/9, CSM 1/16/98, Congressional Record 7/30/97 (House)

Rebels Target American Advisers

According to Reuters, a rebel commander who recently handed the Colombian army its worst defeat in over 30 years has warned that he will begin targeting U.S. military advisers, accusing them of heading covert counter-insurgency operations. FARC chief Fabian Ramirez said his fighters were in “combative mood” after their recent victory and are ready to strike at thousands of army reinforcements being airlifted into Caqueta province.

Two weeks ago, 300 FARC guerrillas attacked the army’s crack Third Mobile Brigade—a cornerstone of the military’s anti-guerrilla strategy—killing 83 soldiers and capturing 43 others. “The claim that the United States is combating drugs in Colombia is a sophism. All the military and economic aid it is giving to the army is to fight the guerrillas,” Ramirez said.

“Most [Colombian army] battalions have U.S. advisers so it is clear that Colombian rage will explode at any moment and the objective will be to defeat the Americans.” Last year, the line between the anti-drug and anti-guerrilla wars became blurred when White House drug czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey authorized the use of U.S. aid to combat what he dubbed “15,000 narco-guerrillas.” FARC has always denied any links with drug cartels.

—*The Independent* (London)

COLOMBIA'S BLOWBACK

Formerly CIA-backed Paramilitaries are Major Drug Traffickers Now

by Frank Smyth

The CIA has long backed anti-communist allies who, either during their relationship with the agency or later, ran drugs. This comes as no surprise. As early as 1960, U.S. military manuals encouraged intelligence operatives to ally themselves with “smugglers” and “black market operators” to defeat communist insurgents, as reported by Michael McClintock in his seminal book *Instruments of Statecraft*. In fact, the CIA did just that. Take Southeast Asia. Later in that same decade the agency allied itself with, among others, the Hmong in Laos, who, according to historian Alfred W. McCoy in his book *The Politics of Heroin: The CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, were trafficking opium. Or Afghanistan. There in the 1980s the CIA backed the Mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, according to Tim Weiner of *The New York Times*, the same Mujahedeen have controlled up to one third of the opium (used to make heroin) reaching the United States.

Colombia is an even better example today.

In addition to suffering from rampant common crime, Colombia is a country crippled by two ongoing, political campaigns. One is a three-decade war pitting the CIA-backed Colombian military and allied rightist paramilitaries against formerly pro-Moscow and pro-Havana, leftist guerrilla groups. The other campaign is the drug war, where the battle lines are far less clear. Elements of all these sides are involved in Colombia's drug trade, which includes the processing of about 80 percent of the world's cocaine, the base substance of crack.

The CIA is no exception. Since 1995,

The U.S. was looking for a way to try to help. But if you're not going to be combatants [yourselves], you have to find something to do.

an elite CIA counter-drug team commanded by, progressively enough, a woman, and staffed mainly by young, competent technocrats, has been instrumental in apprehending all top seven leaders of Colombia's Cali cartel. But back in 1991, another CIA team played a different role. More interested in supporting Colombia's dirty counter-insurgency than its counter-drug efforts, this team helped forge and finance a secret anti-communist alliance between the Colombian military and illegal paramilitary groups, many of whom are running drugs today.

Why was this alliance made secret? Colombia had outlawed all such paramilitary groups two years before in 1989. Why did Colombia do that? A Colombian government investigation had found that these same paramilitaries had been taken over by the Medellín drug cartel led by the late Pablo Escobar. At the time, Escobar and his associates were fiercely resisting U.S.-backed pressure for Colombia to pass extradition laws intended to make them stand trial in the United States on trafficking charges. So they took control of Colombia's strongest paramilitaries, using them to wage

a terrorist campaign against the state. These same paramilitaries, based in the Middle Magdalena valley, were behind a wave of violent crimes, including the 1989 bombing of Avianca flight HK-1803, which killed 111 passengers. Investigators concluded that the bomb was detonated by an altimeter, and that the perpetrators had been trained in such techniques by Israeli, British and other mercenaries led by an Israeli Reserve Army Lieutenant Colonel, Yair Klein. (See “Former Israelis Charged,” page 16. The Colombian military had helped protect this training, to the point of even being in radio contact with the paramilitaries' training base, while Escobar had paid the mercenaries' fees.

The CIA, however, ignored these facts when it decided two years later to help renew—in secret—the alliance between the Colombian military and paramilitary groups. By then, even though the cold war was over and Eastern bloc aid had long since dried up, Colombia's leftist insurgents were still relatively strong. And many trade union, student and peasant groups, among others, provided them with political and sometimes even logistical forms of support. CIA officers knew that paramilitaries—civilians usually led by retired military officers—could provide the Colombian military with plausible deniability for assassinations of suspected leftists and similar crimes. “A vast network of armed civilians began to replace, at least in part, soldiers and policemen who could be easily identified,” writes Javier Giraldo, a Jesuit priest and founder of Colombia's Inter-Congregational Commission for Justice and Peace. “They also started to employ methods that had been carefully designed to ensure secrecy and generate confusion.”

But neither the CIA nor any other U.S. agency admitted that it was still backing Colombia's counter-insurgency campaign. Instead U.S. officials claim that all U.S. support to Colombia, since 1989, has been designed to further the drug war. "There was a very big debate going on [about how to best allocate] money for counter-narcotics operations in Colombia," said retired U.S. Army Colonel James S. Roach, Jr., who was then the top U.S. military attaché in Bogotá as well as the Pentagon's ranking Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) liaison there. "The U.S. was looking for a way to try to help. But if you're not going to be combatants [yourselves], you have to find something to do."

Do, they did. First an inter-agency team including representatives of the U.S. embassy's Military Advisory Group in Bogotá, the U.S. Southern Command in Panama, the DIA in Washington and the CIA in Langley made recommendations to completely overhaul Colombia's military intelligence networks. Then the CIA independently provided funds to incorporate paramilitary forces into them. It didn't matter that these paramilitary forces were illegal in Colombia at the time. Nor did it matter that they had been outlawed explicitly over the growing influence of the late Pablo Escobar and his Medellín drug cartel in directing them.

In addition to drug trafficking, Colombia's nefarious paramilitaries had already been implicated in widespread human rights abuses. This led the Defense Department, for one, to discourage the Colombian military from incorporating them into these new intelligence networks. "The intent was not to be associated with paramilitaries," said Colonel Roach, who was also in regular contact with CIA officers in Bogotá. He says they had another approach. "The CIA set up the clandestine nets on their own. They had a lot of money. It was kind of like Santa Claus had arrived." CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield declined to comment.

News of these clandestine intelligence networks was first brought to light by Human Rights Watch, in November 1996 released U.S. and Colombian military documents, as well as oral testimony, to show that both the Defense Department and the CIA, in late 1990, encour-

aged Colombia to reorganize its entire military intelligence system. In May 1991, Colombia formed 41 new intelligence networks nationwide "based on the recommendations made by the commission of U.S. military advisors," according to the original Colombian order which established them. Later, four former Colombian operatives from one network in central Colombia's Magdalena valley testified that it incorporated illegal paramilitary groups, paying them to both gather intelligence and assassinate suspected leftists. Though U.S. officials still maintain that they sup-



ported this intelligence reorganization as part of their drug war efforts, the same Colombian order quoted above instructs these new intelligence networks to fight only "the armed subversion" or leftist guerrillas.

Indeed most of Colombia's leftist guerrillas, especially among the formerly-pro Moscow FARC, are also involved with drugs. But a U.S. inter-agency study recently ordered by the Clinton administration's former ambassador in Bogotá, Myles Frechette, found the guerrillas' role to be limited to mostly protecting drug crops, and, to a lesser degree, processing operations. Meanwhile, rightist paramilitaries allied with the military protect far more drug laboratories and internal transit routes, according to both U.S. intelligence and Colombian law enforcement authorities. In fact, according to one Colombian law enforcement report, drug trafficking today is—again—the paramilitaries' "central axis" of funding.

Similarly, according to another report from a different law enforcement entity, this one about the Magdalena valley in 1995 by top detectives from Colombia's Judicial and Investigative Police, the military and paramilitaries there are allied "not only for the anti-subversive struggle, but also to profit and open the way for drug traffickers." One paramilitary suspect it names is "the well-known narco-trafficker Victor Carranza." (See "Emerald King," page 10.) A contemporary of Medellín's Escobar, Carranza first established himself by rising to the top of Colombia's lucrative emerald trade

CIA Absolves Itself in Contra-Crack Scandal

After a one-month delay, Inspector General Frederick Hitz of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency released a report on January 29 denying any link between the agency and cocaine running by supporters of the Nicaraguan contras in the 1980s. Former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency agent Michael Levine notes that the report was released while the media were devoting most coverage to a White House sex scandal. Although CIA head George Tenet said Hitz "left no stone unturned," the CIA investigators had no authority to compel testimony from leading contra operation figures like Duane "Dewey" Clarridge, who simply refused to cooperate.

—[Washington Post untitled opinion piece 1/30/98] WNU #419

among the Bo-yacá mountains, and by wiping out a large guerrilla front there at the same time. Soon Carranza also became a major landowner, buying large swaths of it in the eastern plains of Meta, a province chok-ed with drug crops as well as laboratories. Today Colombian police identify Carranza as both a multi-ton level drug trafficker, and one of the key leaders of Colombia's many illegal paramilitary groups like, in Meta, the infamous "Black Snake." Human rights groups have accused Carranza of engineering assassinations as well as massacres.

There is no evidence that Carranza has ever been either a CIA asset or informant. But his anti-communist credentials are unquestionable. And he runs frequently in military crowds. Military eyewitnesses say that military officers in Villavicencio, Meta have even met him inside the Los Llanos hotel there which he owns. U.S. officials too know a lot about him. "Carranza comes up constantly in intelligence reporting," one such expert says. An old-fashioned gang-

Colombia formed intelligence networks based on recommendations made by U.S. advisors. At least one involved illegal paramilitary groups, paying them to gather intelligence and assassinate suspected leftists.

ster, "Don Victor", as he is respectfully called by his men, still frequents the emerald mines and likes to be the first to pick out the largest stones from the best veins uncovered. Yet, Carranza remains untouchable, even though one of his purported lieutenants, Arnulfo Castillo Agudelo, also known as "Scratch", was arrested in 1995 impli-

cated Carranza in circumstances involving over 40 corpses which had been exhumed—six years before—on one of Carranza's Meta ranches. "Scratch" declined to be interviewed in Modelo prison in Bogotá. Carranza, who avoids publicity, was also unavailable for comment.

In recent years, Carranza has been expanding his operations in central Colombia throughout the Magdalena valley. The above police report notes: "Carranza is planning to acquire Hacienda Bella Cruz [there] to use as a base for his activities, [and] bring in 200 paramilitary operatives from Meta." Witnesses say that it is now teeming with armed men, who have displaced hundreds of local peasants. In total, Carranza and other drug suspects have bought about 45,000 acres of land throughout the Magdalena valley, according to Jamie Prieto Amaya, the Catholic bishop there, quoted in the Bogotá news-weekly *Cambio 16*.

Still another suspect is Henry Loaiza, also known as "The Scorpion". Demon-

Former Israeli Officers Charged With Aiding Paramilitaries

According to judicial sources, a human rights public prosecutor has decided to charge four former officers of the Israeli Army on counts of "instruction and training of paramilitary terrorists."

The measure, adopted after concluding the fact-finding stage of a case that investigates the actions of paramilitary groups financed drug traffickers, also affects Luis Alfredo Rubio Rojas, the former mayor of the town of Puerto Boyacá, in the center of the country.

The former Israeli officers were identified as Yair Klein, Terry Malynk, Izedalka Abraham and Ishak Shosny Merariot. A sixth person identified as Carlos Arturo Alvarez, alias "Trampas", was also charged in the same case.

According to the charges, the foreign former-officers were contracted towards 1988 by the narcotics trafficker Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, "El Mexicano", who died in December 1990 during a police raid.

In 1989, the Administrative Department of Security sent to tens of countries of the world a request of interdiction against Klein, who was being accused of being a mercenary in the service of "El Mexicano."

In August of that year, a television program exposed aspects of the activities of Klein and other mercenaries in a training-camp for paramilitaries in Magdalena Medio, in the heart of Colombia. (See related story, above.)

The following month, a British mercenary confessed that he and 11

compatriots had been contracted along with the Israelis by Rodriguez Gacha to aid the "Movement Death to Kidnappers" (MAS), an extreme right-wing organization.

According to the Colombian authorities of that time, the Israeli and British mercenaries were contracted to organize "death squads" and to assassinate to the leaders of the FARC, against whom Rodriguez Gacha had declared a "war without mercy."

The leaders of MAS "were rich people of Puerto Boyacá", whose mayor of then, Luis Alfredo Rubio Rojas, also was touched by the accusation.

The case against the Israelis will continue and it will be possible to be judged in absentia, said the judicial source. —Radio Cadena Nacional

strating the importance of paramilitaries to the overall drug trade, he was one of the top seven Cali cartel suspects arrested with CIA help since 1995. Like Carranza, "The Scorpion" is also implicated in several specific civilian massacres of suspected leftists carried out jointly by military and paramilitary forces, including the 1989 Trujillo massacres (involving chainsaws) near Cali. Other drug suspects identified by the Colombian police include military officers like Major Jorge Alberto Lazaro, a former Army commander also accused of ordering paramilitaries to commit mas-

sacres in the Magdalena valley. Today this same central Colombian valley, which runs almost 400 miles north toward Caribbean ports, is a major corridor for both processed drugs and precursor chemicals.

The CIA helped enable Colombia's military and paramilitaries to collaborate in the dark—more than a year after the Berlin Wall fell. By so doing, the CIA has facilitated crimes involving both human rights and drug trafficking. Such behavior was reprehensible during the cold war. It's completely indefensible now. ■

NOTE: This article was published last

fall by Amnesty International the Netherlands. It was also published last fall in Spanish by Transnational Institute (Amsterdam) jointly with Acción Andina of the Centro de Documentación e Información (based in Cocha-bomba, Bolivia) as a chapter, "La Mano Blanca en Colombia," in Crimen Uniformado: entre la corrupción y la impunidad, 1997.

Frank Smyth, a free-lance journalist, has written about drug trafficking in *The Village Voice*, *The New Republic*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

U.S. Renews Military Aid to Colombia

The U.S. has stepped up its military aid to Colombia, the *Washington Post* reported Dec. 27. An agreement worked out over the summer will allow U.S. aid totalling about \$37 million in fiscal year 1998 to be used by the Colombian military for counter-insurgency activities as part of a larger program against drug trafficking. The aid mainly consists of spare parts, communications equipment, ammunition and maintenance for helicopters, boats and other vehicles.

The aid is supposed to be used only in a geographic area defined as "the box," whose exact boundaries are classified but which covers roughly the southern half of Colombia. The U.S. and Colombian governments claim that "the box" is virtually free of paramilitary influence, but human rights groups say there is strong evidence that paramilitary organizations were behind several recent massacres of civilians in southern Colombia, the *Post* reports.

And while the Colombian army continues to officially deny any involvement with paramilitary groups, the *Post* refers casually to human rights violations committed by "the Colombian army and the rightwing paramilitary groups it sponsors..."

The article also notes that "leaders of the army-backed paramilitary groups have been implicated in large-scale drug trafficking, but have not been singled out as targets of the anti-drug



efforts in the same way that the guerrillas have."

Eduardo Gamarra, a political science professor and narcotics expert at Florida International University, told the *Post*: "There is strong evidence that both [paramilitaries and guerrillas] are involved in drug trafficking. But the U.S. determination on the guerrillas is that if some are involved, then all are involved. With the paramilitaries, the determination is that if some are involved, not all are involved. It is a perverse assumption."

According to the *Post*, an August 1 memorandum of understanding between Colombia and the U.S. specifies that only Colombian army units vetted by the U.S. can use U.S. equipment in the designated area. The U.S. can monitor use of the aid, and the Colombians must certify every six months that any suspected human rights violations are being investigated and prosecuted.

Colombian ambassador to the U.S. Juan Carlos Esguerra responded to the *Post* article on the same day it appeared, telling the press that U.S. military aid will only be used against those drug traffickers who are linked to the guerrillas, and emphasizing that the aid will not be used exclusively against rebel groups. Esguerra indicated that on December 29 he will request that the *Post* print a correction to the article, because it contained what he considered to be inaccuracies, including that the military aid accord was signed in secret and that half of Colombia is under rebel control. According to Esguerra, information about the accord was given to the press of both countries when the accord was signed last June. [Notimex 12/27/97]

—WNU #413

It's Time to Internationalize the Peace Process

by Marc Chernick

The guerrilla war in Colombia is more widespread and more violent than at any point in the last 30 years. Today the conflict is no longer fought principally between guerrillas and the Armed Forces. The most striking transformation of political violence in the last decade is the rapid expansion of local private armies or paramilitary forces, many with only loose ties to the state. The violence amounts to a new kind of dirty war—different from the state-directed terrorism of the Southern Cone in the 1970s. In Colombia, although there is overwhelming and well-documented evidence of official human rights violations by the military and other state actors, the chief source of terror now comes from groups with roots in Colombia's fractured and deeply-conflicted civil society.

For 15 years, government negotiators have attempted to reach a negotiated settlement to the decades-long insurgency. Although there have been some successes with certain groups—most notably with the April 19th Movement, M-19—the principal guerrilla movements, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), have remained outside the legal political system. Failure to reach peace in the 1980s has led to a more atomized society, a weaker state and several new armed challengers, all of which make the goal of reaching a durable peace immensely more complicated. It has also led to an explosion of violence and human rights violations. The official impulse by the government has been first to deny responsibility for the human rights violations, and then to plead for special understanding of the complex social and

political conditions of the country. Today, however, denial amounts to less than a finger blocking out the sun.

The figures on violence alarm and overwhelm. In 1996, there were 26,664 murders in Colombia, according to the National Police. Such figures place Colombia among the most violent places on earth, with a per capita homicide rate only surpassed recently by El Salvador and South Africa. Yet while homicides due to crime and social violence in the other two countries have spiralled upwards in post-conflict situations, political violence and human rights violations have dramatically receded. Not so in Colombia, where the political conflict endures together with very high levels of social violence and crime.

Of the total number of murders last year in Colombia, 3086 or 13% of these were committed for political reasons. These include 1106 persons killed as a result of combat between government and guerrillas. Keep in mind that during the 17 year Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, 2,994 persons are believed to have been killed or disappeared for political reasons.

Who is responsible for the killings? The Colombian Commission of Jurists has identified, where possible, the authors of politically-motivated murders and massacres, dividing up responsibility among the military (which includes the police and special units), paramilitary and guerrillas. For 1996, they concluded: When it was possible to attribute authorship, the Armed Forces were responsible for 10.89% of all political deaths; paramilitaries and rural security cooperatives were responsible for 61.74% (60.54% and 1.22 respectively); the guerrillas were responsible for 27.38%. The figures highlight just how decisively the paramilitary groups have moved to the forefront of Colombia's political violence. The paramilitary

U.S.: "Only Fighting Drugs"

The Clinton administration said on March 17 that the U.S. has not sent military advisers to Colombia to support counterinsurgency operations. "I suppose everyone knows that U.S. assistance to Colombia is strictly for the fight against drug trafficking," said State Department spokesperson James Rubin. Rubin's comment was in response to statements made by a FARC commander who said that the U.S. has sent to Colombia "many more advisers than what is said officially and their principal target is not drug traffickers but the guerrillas."

Despite Rubin's comments, U.S. and Colombian officials have become increasingly frank about the use of U.S. antinarcotics aid against Colombia's leftist rebels, under the pretext that the rebels are "narcoguerrillas," engaged in drug trafficking. While this strategy is being talked about as new, U.S. officials have known since at least 1994 that antinarcotics aid and training to Colombia may be used in counterinsurgency efforts. A U.S. Southern Command memo dated April 8, 1994 points out that US counter-drug training and equipment can be used in counterinsurgency missions.

The DEA plans to increase its support operations for Colombian police. Colombian authorities are currently getting help from the DEA in such areas as exchange of intelligence information, training for National Police agents and provision of equipment that improves efficiency.

—[*El Colombiano*; *El Diario-La Prensa/AP*—WNU #425

groups can be divided into three sub-groups: those with connections to the Armed Forces, those organized by local officials and landholders (who are increasingly drug traffickers), new state-sponsored self-defense groups, and various combinations of all of these. Some operate directly with the support of the Colombian Armed Forces. Others are more independent, but nonetheless operate in zones patrolled by the military.

There is a long tradition of paramilitary violence in Colombia. The Colombian military has possessed the right to arm civilians since 1965. In 1987, then Minister of Government, Cesar Gaviria, publicly identified 128 paramilitary groups. Two years later, the government suspended the military's right to arm civilians. Yet the attempts to dismantle the paramilitaries were limited and unsuccessful. Today the groups have multiplied and the scope of their operations are increasingly national. The paramilitaries have prospered for a simple reason: They have proven to be a more successful counter-insurgency strategy in certain zones than the official military strategy, which has been unable to defeat or even arrest the growth of the guerrillas.

In the last three years, a new form of paramilitarism has appeared. In what can only be deemed a bizarre misreading and mishandling of Colombian politics and society, the government of President Samper began a new policy of arming civilians in rural security cooperatives, now named Convivir. The Convivir groups have become one more armed band, responsible for some killings, though now openly and directly linked to the state. One observer likened the act of creating Convivir groups to dowsing a fire with gasoline.

The rise of paramilitary violence has led to the spread of dirty war. The list of victims is mind-numbingly long. Amnestied guerrillas, leftist political activists, human rights groups, labor leaders and others are all targeted. Impunity for all crimes in Colombia is about 97%. Last year, impunity for political assassinations was 100%. The violence of the guerrillas on one side and the paramilitaries on another continue to obstruct the space for a democratic opposition; a sizable percentage of those individu-

als who have attempted to create a democratic opposition have faced a premature death. Such was the fate recently of two researchers from the Jesuit institute, CINEP, in Bogotá, who were killed in their home at 2:00 am on May 19, 1997, as part of a larger campaign by paramilitary groups to silence human rights groups and NGOs.

Victims of the dirty war include the leftist political party, the Union Patriótica, which has witnessed the assassination of thousands of its officials and follow-

ers since its founding in 1985, including 2 presidential candidates, 3 senators, 3 representatives to the House of Representatives, 6 departmental deputies, 89 town councilmen, and 9 mayors and many more local candidates. Members of the political movement Esperanza, Paz y Libertad that grew out of the peace accords with the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) in 1990 have also faced a campaign of extermination, this time primarily by members of the guerrillas that refused to accept the peace process but

Army Tries to Regroup After Defeat

The Colombian army continues to lick its wounds from a serious defeat in battle with leftist rebels of the Southern Bloc of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) in the area of Caguan, in southern Colombia. The National Army confirmed on March 9 that 73 soldiers were killed in the fighting; 36 rebels were also reportedly killed, and their bodies buried in three common graves in the combat area. The FARC is holding 43 soldiers hostage and another eight are missing.

Members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (CICR) were finally allowed into the area of the fighting on March 8, after remaining in the town of Cartagena del Chaira because the army had prohibited them from entering the area. Pierre Gassmann, head of the CICR in Colombia, said CICR members were helping families displaced in the violence. Gassman also visited the Larandia military base near Florencia, capital of Caqueta department, in order to try to get information about casualties. The media has been barred from the area. On March 10, Gassmann called on the FARC to explain whether the 32 soldiers who have allegedly been wounded are among the 43 they are holding hostage. Gassman said that the CICR team has been combing the area for wounded people and has not found any.

"This is without a doubt the biggest defeat in the 35-year history of confrontation against the insurgency," said Alfredo Rangel, a security analyst who has worked for President Ernesto Samper. "The army is unable to contain or control the guerrillas and is temporarily losing the confrontation." Analysts say that the FARC's defeat of the army in southern Colombia is especially significant because the rebels overwhelmed the Mobile Brigade 3. "This is Colombia's elite fighting force," said Sergio Uribe, a political scientist at University of the Andes in Bogotá. "These are not conscripts; they are professional soldiers. They were outwitted and out-intelligenced."

On Mar. 11 the Colombian police reported that a group of 25 FARC rebels had attacked a helicopter that was transporting money for a bank 70 km northwest of Bogotá, in central Colombia. One police agent, one rebel and three civilians were killed. The rebels destroyed the helicopter and made off with over \$100,000 in cash.

The government announced on March 12 that it has created a new 5,000-troop anti-guerrilla unit to rout the rebels from their southern stronghold. The "Counter-Guerrilla Task Force" will be based in Caqueta and made up of troops from the army, the police, and the marine infantry, with support from the air force.

[*El Colombiano*, WP, *Clarín*/Reuters; *El Universal* (Caracas)/Reuters, *La Tercera*/wire services; *CNN en Español* from AP]—WNU #424

also by paramilitary bands in Urabá.

The Guerrilla War and the Drug War

Central to an understanding of Colombia's political violence is the guerrilla war. Direct casualties from combat in action are relatively low, as we have seen. But the guerrilla war lays the foundation on which many other forms of violence have been built. The guerrilla war justifies steadily increasing military spending. The war has prevented a reorganization of the Armed Forces away from its strategic orientation of counter-insurgency and internal security. Be-

cause of the war, the government has created special security zones throughout the country—thus suspending democracy in these areas—and can appoint military officials to local political office in these areas, as the Samper Government recently did in preparation for local election on October 1997. The war criminalizes most protest and dissent and provides the principal justification for the continued violation of human rights. The guerrilla war is the principal justification for the paramilitary armies.

In Colombia's degenerating conflict, where the military has ceded its legitimate monopoly on arms to the paramili-

taries, the guerrillas too have been transformed. No longer able to receive logistical, financial or military support from the outside, the guerrillas have vastly increased their involvement in criminal and terrorist activities, such as kidnapping, murder and extortion of productive and commercial activity in the coca/cocaine, petroleum, cattle and other agrarian sectors. The FARC maintains extensive political control in the coca growing regions in the Amazonian region east of the Andes. The ELN has targeted the petroleum sector in the northern part of the Eastern Plains. Some have argued that the guerrillas are now little more than organized criminal syndicates, or that they are "narco-guerrillas." Yet both the FARC and the ELN still maintain a political agenda, recruit and train followers, assert political control, organize and administer services to local populations and use their power to influence local, regional and national politics. As Samper's first Peace Commissioner declared, the guerrillas are still primarily political actors with whom the government can negotiate, even as they have increased their involvement in criminal activities.

During the last decade, officials have continually asserted that the country is a victim of the illegal drug trade in cocaine and heroin. It is true that the drug trade has contributed to the violence. It has funneled new resources — both financial and military — to old adversaries. It has created new social sectors, particularly the drug entrepreneurial *nouveau riche* who have invested so heavily in the Colombian countryside and in developing Colombia's paramilitary infrastructure. But the roots of the contemporary violence are much deeper than the current drug export boom; they tap into long-festering political conflicts whose resolution has been deferred for decades. The drug trade may have heightened and accelerated the violence; it did not cause it.

Perhaps the most significant impact of the drug trade is that it has internationalized the conflict, not only through the massive inflow of foreign capital, but through the U.S.-sponsored anti-narcotics war. Since 1989, Colombia has be-

Colombian Violence Hits Panama

A group of 40 to 50 armed individuals—or as many as 200 according to some local media—attacked a police station in the small town of Boca de Cupe, in Panamá's Darien province on November 15. Three police agents were wounded as they fled; according to press reports, one police agent died when he threw himself into a river to escape the shootout. Local press reports said that the assailants cut the electricity in Boca de Cupe and robbed a health center and a shopping center, taking medicines and an electrical energy generator. The town is home to some 600 indigenous Panamanians of the Embera tribe, living alongside many Colombian immigrants, many of whom are undocumented.

Authorities have not identified the attackers, but media sources have suggested that they are either leftwing guerrillas or rightwing paramilitary groups from Colombia which operate in the jungle regions around the Panamanian border. Several months ago the Panamanian government sent a contingent of some 2,000 specialized counter-insurgency police troops to try to control the border situation. However, the police have had little success. Some observers have suggested that the Panamanian government's apparent passivity concerning the situation in Darien is a tactic to justify the presence of US soldiers in the area.

FARC has denied responsibility for the attacks in Darien. Panamanian daily *La Prensa* reported that a FARC representative spoke with members of the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) over the weekend of Nov. 23 and told them that the authors of the attacks in Darien belong to a dissident group "not linked" to the FARC. "The policy designed by the leadership bodies of the FARC prohibits, under any consideration, the incursion of its men in the territory of neighboring countries," said a communique sent by the FARC to Panamá's military command, as reported by the daily *El Panamá America*.

Panamanian daily *El Universal* quoted FARC diplomatic commission member Olga Martínez, who blamed the attacks on paramilitary groups supported by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with the goal of maintaining US military bases in Panama. PRD legislator Miguel Bush also charged that the armed attacks in the Darien are orchestrated by the CIA, in an attempt to demonstrate Panamá's alleged inability to protect the canal.

[*La Prensa* (Honduras)/AP; *El Colombiano* /AFP, Notimex]—WNU #408

come the largest recipient of U.S. military aid. In the early 1990s, there was some concern over whether US drug monies were being re-directed to the counter-insurgency war, in violation of U.S. military assistance requirements authorized by Congress. As a result, for several years, funding was diverted exclusively to the police and to special

anti-narcotics units. However, in the last two years, notwithstanding the official crisis in U.S.-Colombian relations as a result of allegations of drug monies in the Colombian presidential campaign, the U.S. has once again begun to provide military assistance to the Armed Forces in its anti-narcotics campaign. The United States officially “de-certified”

Colombia in 1996 and 1997, declaring that the government is not sufficiently cooperating in the “War on Drugs.” Yet despite decertification, the United States has begun to bypass the Colombian presidency and to work directly with the Colombian Armed Forces. This year, Colombia is scheduled to receive approximately 100 million dollars

War is Not Child's Play

by *Yadira Ferrer*

The Red Cross, the UN children's fund (UNICEF), non-governmental organizations and state institutions in Colombia are attempting to rescue children involved in the armed conflict.

Under the slogan “War is Not Child's Play”, the participating entities are seeking to raise the awareness “of the parties involved in the armed conflict so minors do not suffer from the rigors of the conflict and have other options,” Red Cross human rights coordinator Fabricio Lopez told IPS.

He added that efforts were also going into the development of specific programs for the “readaptation and re-socialization” of the children.

The Red Cross is participating in the campaign as a neutral intermediary, seeking to provide protection and assistance to children affected by the conflict.

The first results were produced on January 30, when the insurgent National Liberation Army (ELN) released five 12 to 15-year-olds it had held for a year. The ELN claimed the minors were informants of a paramilitary group which killed peasant farmers in the town of Media Luna in the department of Cesar in early 1997.

The release operation—whose security aspect was coordinated by the local Red Cross—was the fruit of a year-long process of informal talks between the Institute of Family Welfare and the People's Defender and

two imprisoned ELN leaders, Felipe Torres and Francisco Galan.

What surprised many were the children's tears and resistance to being separated from the guerrillas. According to UNICEF's Cecilio Adorno, the release of the children was a positive event “which could trigger a process of cutting children's connections with the armed conflict.”

It is difficult to understand “that so many children could be involved in a bloody conflict,” but the growing violence has trapped them, said Adorno.

In its report “Invisible Soldiers”, UNICEF says there are close to 50,000 children fighting in more than 20 wars worldwide. But reliable statistics are impossible to obtain, it adds, because armed forces refuse to acknowledge the existence of minors in their ranks.

At least 4,000 minors are fighting with Colombian guerrilla and paramilitary groups, while 3,000 are performing compulsory military service, according to the Institute of Family Welfare, which says the parties to the conflict see teenagers as ‘perfect’ soldiers because they make few demands, have an adventurous spirit and learn easily.

On Tuesday, Almudena Mazarasa, the UN's special human rights delegate in Colombia, protested the large number of children participating in the armed conflict and called on local authorities to resolve the problem.

The campaign to free young combatants has coincided with the nomi-

nation of the “Children's Mandate for Peace”, a Colombian movement against violence, for the Nobel Peace prize. The young leaders of the “Children's Mandate for Peace” were nominated by Jose Ramos Horta, leader of the East Timor independence movement and 1996 Nobel laureate.

Ramos Horta said he was “deeply moved” by the work carried out by the youngsters “through their brave and peaceful campaign.”

Around 2.7 million Colombian children voted for peace in the October 1996 Mandate, which was coordinated by UNICEF and the Network of Initiatives for Peace, comprised of 30 NGOs. An average of 4,300 minors die violent deaths annually in Colombia.

The Mandate promotes tolerance and the right of children to grow up in a safe environment.

The children's movement served as the basis for a similar “Citizen Mandate for Peace”, in which adults voted for an end to violence in Colombia.

Ana Bernal, director of the Network of Initiatives for Peace, said the Mandate's candidacy for a Nobel Peace prize is recognition of the work carried out by children, who paved the way for a broader citizen movement.

Mexico followed the lead of Colombia's children in 1997, when 3.9 million minors voted for peace.

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in anti-narcotics assistance, the highest in the hemisphere. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have charged that U.S. military aid and equipment have been provided to units accused of gross violations of human rights. Moreover, they cite evidence of clear relationship between U.S.- trained officials and several paramilitary groups.

Partly as a result of the above accusations which were based on an exhaustive investigation and good documentation, the U.S. Congress passed the Leahy Amendment which denies military aid to any foreign military unit involved

in human rights violations. The amendment is a step forward but remains incomplete. The amendment raises a fundamental, almost philosophical question. Can individual units be distinguished from the military institution as a whole? Further, there are logistical issues such as can end use of military equipment be adequately monitored? Most troubling, the Leahy Amendment did not prevent a large increase of military aid to Colombia for 1996 and 1997, despite the continued violations of human rights.

Beyond the murky relationship be-

tween the drug war, anti-guerrilla operations and the dirty war, the U.S. has begun pressuring Colombia to step-up coca eradication efforts, although there is clear evidence from Peru, Bolivia and Colombia that targeting poor coca farmers has only temporary or negligible effects in reducing the flow of drugs. Moreover, in Peru and Colombia, forced crop eradication policies have repeatedly driven farmers into the arms of guerrillas, or in the case of Bolivia, militant peasant unions. After backing off from such efforts in the mid-1990s and re-directing anti-narcotics efforts to dismantling the large cartels, the United States has once again begun to focus on the small farmer. The strategy failed in Peru and Bolivia precisely because it threatened the very livelihood of peasants and displaced entire families and communities. The effect in Colombia was similar. In August and September of 1996, 241,000 people marched in the coca growing zones of Colombia to protest the government's forced eradication policies. After a standoff and several violent confrontations resulting in a number of deaths, the government formally backed down though the military continued some operations. After the marches ended, several of the peasant leaders were subsequently "disappeared;" they were accused of being guerrilla collaborators.

Grassroots Support for the Peace Process

In recent years, there has been a movement to "humanize" the conflict and to support the application of international humanitarian law. After much clamor, the Samper Government finally signed the Protocol II of the Geneva Convention that protects the rights of civilian populations in cases of internal war. If all sides — guerrilla, paramilitary, government — were to respect Protocol II, many of the human rights violations throughout the country would diminish. But Colombia's war is not a conventional irregular war. The principal site of conflict is not the battlefield. Nor is it primarily between armed combatants. Colombia's guerrilla war is largely a dirty war. Its modus operandi is human rights

Soldiers Kill Five in "Regrettable Error"

Five people died and six were wounded on Jan. 24 in the Colombian department of Cundinamarca when army soldiers stationed at a roadblock fired indiscriminately at passing vehicles. The soldiers claimed they were shot at first by rebels; survivors who witnessed the incident said the soldiers fired without provocation. On Jan. 26 army commander Gen. Mario Hugo Galan called the incident a regrettable error that could have been avoided, and announced drastic sanctions for those responsible. The army continues to insist that the soldiers were trying to ward off a rebel attack when they shot at the passing cars.

[*El Colombiano*]-WNU #418

Ex-EPL Rebels Protest Arrest of Leaders

A demobilized Colombian rebel group denied on January 19 that 300 of its members had picked up arms again. Local press reports said that 300 members of the political party Hope, Peace and Freedom—made up of demobilized members of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) rebel group—had taken refuge in the mountains after DAS agents (the secret police) arrested EPL regional leader David Mesa Pena for extortion, kidnapping and murder.

Since the 1991 peace accords, the political party says over 100 of its members or supporters have been murdered, most of them in northwestern Colombia. The organization says it "feels betrayed" by the government, and asked the Colombian president to stop the "dirty war" against its members.

A group of nearly 200 demobilized EPL dissidents from the Nueva Granada neighborhood of San Pedro de Urabá seized the Apartado mayor's office on Jan. 21 in a peaceful protest against Mesa's arrest, and to demand guarantees that other EPL members not be arrested. The protesters left the mayor's office on Jan. 23 after winning revisions of decree 1385, which dictated the terms of their demobilization.

Mesa led the EPL dissidents from 1991 to 1996. He surrendered in 1996 with 300 other men to the rightwing paramilitary group Campesino Self-Defense of Cordoba and Urabá.

[Notimex 1/19/98; *El Colombiano*]-WNU #417

violations, by actors from all sides. The only solution is a formal suspension of the armed conflict through a negotiated peace. The question, then, is: Who should be invited to sit at the negotiating table? At the least, the government and the guerrillas should be invited. Yet one should not rule out the military and the paramilitaries, particularly within regional negotiations.

If the past fifteen years of peace negotiations are any indication, Colombia cannot reach a viable peace agreement without international mediation. The conflict is too widespread and encompasses too many actors and interests to be managed by the Colombian government, or the government and guerrillas alone. Now is the time for international involvement, from the NGOs to foreign governments and international organizations. Colombian politics have coexisted with violence for the last 50 years. For most of those years, the violence has been a steady, low-intensity burn on the body politic. Today Colombian violence is no longer a low-intensity conflict. The first time the violence heated up, from 1948 to 1953 at the height of the civil war known as La Violencia, the combatants found a way to make peace. As levels of violence begin to rival those of the 1940s and 50s, there is an urgent need to seize the initiative and begin a national and international campaign to search for a viable peace.

Unlike in previous eras, there are now international precedents for peace-making, from Central America to Southern Africa. Already, the United Nations has opened a permanent office to monitor human rights in Colombia. The European Union has become something of a counterweight to the United States anti-narcotics policies, keeping the issue of human rights violations high on the agenda. Colombian and international NGO's, the church and some foreign donors are active in working with grassroots initiatives for peace. There is currently a move to call a plebiscite for peace. The Education for Peace Project, supported by Catholic Relief Services and the Colombian Bishops Conference, is supporting mobile human rights training teams. The Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace has been carefully constructing a record of

U.S. Military Advisors Training Venezuelan Forces on Colombian Border

MARACAIBO, Venezuela — Zulia State Governor Francisco Arias Cardenas has said that the presence of US instructors on the Colombian border has to do with training and exchange programmes with the Venezuelan armed forces and in no way constitutes aggression or meddling in the internal affairs of the neighboring country.

He claimed not to have details on this mission's agenda, neither does he know the precise location of the exercise camp. However, Zulia army sources confirmed on Sunday [26th April] that the group of instructors comprises nine soldiers, led by a captain, who have been stationed in Machique de Perija since 23rd April. They will stay in that zone for three months training rural National Guard commanders in actions against kidnappings, guerrillas and drug trafficking.

In Bogota, radio networks, television stations and newspapers highlighted this news. Commentators connected this training with preparations for a possible US military intervention. The key to this could be recent statements by the head of the Miami-based Southern Command, who rates Colombia as very dangerous for US security, even more so than Cuba, due to the guerrillas' headway in their quest to seize power.

Nevertheless, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Burelli Rivas, who was in the Colombian capital, responded to these rumours on Wednesday [29th April] by stressing the coordination between Colombian and Venezuelan armed forces, as well as the atmosphere of camaraderie and integration in the relations between the two countries.

Asked about the possibility that Venezuela could be used as a base for an intervention in the neighbouring country, Arias Cardenas said that "the position we have established and continue to maintain is the people's self-determination and our respect for the sovereignty of nations. We neither agree with nor endorse the presence of a multilateral force to fight Colombians, much less with Venezuelan participation, going in for a joyride, getting involved in the internal affairs of another country."

He warned that Colombia's situation must be resolved only by Colombians, and that if a force is to become involved in this conflict, it should perform the task of an overseer with personnel who will guarantee that the war will respect the Geneva Convention and other international treaties. It should never be a force that would side with one of the warring parties...

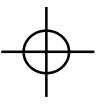
—*El Nacional* (Venezuela)

the violence, serving as an unofficial Truth Commission before the conflict is brought to an end. Only a comprehensive peace process can unravel the complex maze of violence that is inundating the country. A peace process will not end all the violence. It will not stop the flow of drugs northward. But it will sub-

stantially reduce the human rights violations where men and women are murdered for their political beliefs or because they were simply suspected of supporting one side or another. ■

This article was first published in a LASA Forum, Fall, 1997

Marc Chernick is a member of the LASA Task Force on Human Rights and Academic Freedom. He lived in Colombia for over six years where he taught at the Universidad de los Andes and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Currently, he is Director of the Andean and Amazonian Studies Project and teaches in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. Comments can be sent to: chernicm@gunet.georgetown.edu



END THE WAR!

It's time to protest. Our government funds, trains and supports the Colombian military. Our tax dollars translate into the murders of thousands of Colombians every year.



Justicia y Paz Raided

As we go to press we have learned that over 20 heavily armed counterinsurgency troopers swarmed out of trucks and took over the Bogotá office of Justicia y Paz (Intercongregational Committee for Justice & Peace) for several hours on May 14 supposedly to search for evidence of an ELN cell involved in the assassination the day before of former Defense Minister, Gen. Landazabal. Nuns and others were forced to kneel at gunpoint, and questioned and photographed by the military. This was the first time the military has been bold enough to attack Justicia y Paz at their office; high military officers have been outraged because the meticulous human rights group has a database of many atrocities that they would rather remain 'oscuro'. Nunca Mas (Never Again) has been documenting crimes against humanity in Colombia from the 1970s on, creating the data upon which Colombia's eventual Truth Commission will permit the dead to speak from the grave.

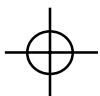
Human rights defenders fear the attacks will continue. Twenty-seven human rights advocates were murdered in 1997. The Colombian Conference of Bishops head, Monsignor Giraldo Jaramillo, Archbishop of Medellín, condemned the raid. "This process was to strike terror, as we all know this action under these circumstances normally precedes extrajudicial executions," he said. He also stated a legal demand to see the so-called evidence used to justify the raid, and laid ultimate responsibility at the feet of President Samper.

The U.S. is complicitous in the neoVietnamization of Colombia. The CIA pretends to fight drugs but its involvement in narcotics trafficking is well-documented. The D.E.A. was tied up a long time ago by the U.S. Southern Command. Our military furthers the war effort. And our embassy in Bogotá (aided by reactionary media cronies) broadcasts its insistence that the guerrillas could be involved with drugs—not the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Colombian army, paramilitary bands or Colombian banks.

U.S. progressives and human rights groups have historically been paralyzed by the pitfalls of Colombia's complex dynamics and by the smoke generated by propagandists of the "war on drugs". It's time to move forward. It's time to protest the pathetic 15-year record of torture, disappearances and murder. It's time to end the presence of U.S. military advisors who are teaching counter-insurgency to Colombia's military. End the millions of U.S. dollars sent for the war effort. End the S.O.A. training of 10,000 Colombian troops. Stop the U.S. surveillance equipment, military equipment and helicopters. And it is time to stop the U.S. governmental denials, omissions and its feigned blindness to the endless deaths being generated by this complicity.

The *Bulletin* has laid out the sad truth of the situation. And here is our challenge: Can you in good conscious, finish reading this magazine, then go on with your daily life, enjoying your cup of coffee or cheap gas at the expense of thousands of Colombian lives? There are many things that you can do that will help stop the Colombian dirty war:

✓ **Pass this magazine on** to interested friends, or let us know that you want us to mail them a copy;

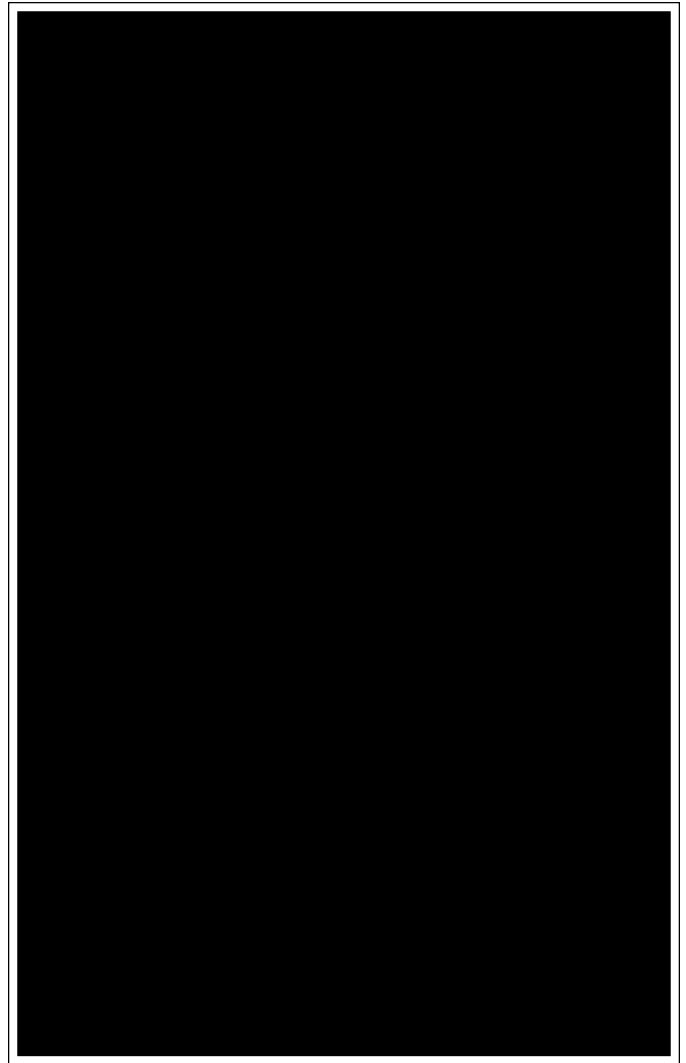




- ✓ **Write or call your representatives** demanding accountability for the US role in Colombia;
- ✓ **Let Colombian officials know** that you are watching in disapproval and that you are lobbying your government accordingly;
- ✓ **Write letters of support** to terrorized communities in Colombia offering your words of encouragement; and
- ✓ **ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE:** Link up with a local CSN chapter or contact CSN for a list of people near you who want to start a group. It is easier than you think and CSN is eager to help you each step of the way including delegations to Colombia, U.S. tours about Colombia, organizing materials, protests, creating sister-community relationships, lobbying and much more.

Right now, someone in Colombia is being tortured, someone is dying, someone is grieving their dead. At least nine more will die before the day is over. And tomorrow promises the same.

Pledge your opposition. Act now. Before it's too late.



Act Now!

The U.S. is already at war in Colombia. It is using paramilitaries as its troops. PROTESTS PLANNED FOR BOSTON, LOS ANGELES, SEATTLE, OHIO, CHICAGO, TORONTO & MORE!

Get involved!
Register your protest!

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VISIT THE COLOMBIA SUPPORT NETWORK WEBSITE AT <http://www.igc.org/csn>

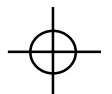
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Interviews From Exile

By Michael López

Aida Abella

Why don't you start by explaining how you became politically active.

Well, I became politically active at a young age. At 18 I was a student leader at National University. I finished my degree in psychology and

pedagogy and began working for the Ministry of Education. I was president of the union there for 13 years and then I was president of the Federación de Trabajadores del Estado (Government Workers Union) for five years. I dedicated half of my life to the union movement. When I was president of the Federación de Trabajadores del Estado, the CUT (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores) was formed. I was involved in its foundation and was secretary of Women's Affairs. I then went on to be the Assistant Secretary General, elected with support of the left, by the Colombian Communist Party, the Patriotic Union, and defenders of human rights. I then took part in the Constituent Assembly. After that I again hooked up with the trade union movement, but the Patriotic Union asked me to be their candidate for election to the Bogotá city Council. I ran for office and was elected, and the next time around I was elected by twice as many votes. From then on I remained active as a union leader as well as in politics, for a good part of my life, about 25 years. But it

took its toll, standing up for the marginalized, defending the voiceless. Being a voice for the left. There were many threats against us. I was first threatened in 1973 during a strike by government workers, as president of the union of the Ministry of Education. We received a threat saying they were going to kill the union leaders.

This was in Bogotá?

Yes. After that, in December 1979, during the period of widespread torture and police raids, my house was raided. My sister, my brother-in-law, and my husband were taken away for 8 days and tortured. My brother, a student leader, was detained and suffered a cerebral dysrhythmia due to torture and the repeated "submarines" to which he was subjected. We then had to sell the house, because it was raided another two times, and was also machine gunned. That was in 1980. I then received another series of threats. I have a whole collection of them. All my life, whenever we undertook a movement, a strike or a protest, we always received death threats. In 1985, I received a horrifying threat. We received a letter with two rifles mimeographed on it, saying we were the next ones on the list to be executed.

Nevertheless, I survived all those years of threats. Those of us in the union movement, we were always being followed. Our union office and home phones were always tapped. We sold our house and moved. We had to take many precautions over the years to protect our young children. I then had two young kids that I had to look out for. When I entered the Constituent Assembly the threats grew worse. Almost every day I received death threats. They accused me of being a voice for the insurgents, and ever since I was in the Constituent Assembly I had bodyguards. In 1992 I became president of the Patriotic Union and was elected to the city council. I constantly received death threats. We could no longer attend parties or have any social life. We always kept great caution whenever we moved about, as we knew our enemies were watching us closely. Then, in 1996, we denounced the massacres occurring in Urabá and handed over to the attorney general's office a list of paramilitary leaders and their whereabouts. We told them where they could find the head of the autodefensas de

Forced to leave Colombia after repeated threats and attempts against their lives, Aida Abella and Carlos Andres Perez Berios talk about Colombia and exile

Aida Abella is a leader of the Patriotic Union political party and served on the Bogotá City Council. After many years of activism and union struggle, accompanied by numerous death threats and attacks, she fled Colombia in 1996 after a failed bazooka attack on the streets of Bogotá.

Carlos Andres Perez Berios, of the Patriotic Union, was the mayor of Chigorodo in the Urabá region. After making great gains to end corruption and begin public works that are still in place today—even used by the paramilitaries themselves — Carlos fled Colombia with his family after threats, illegal arrest, and torture. He went to Ecuador, but Colombian state agents followed him there. He and his family fled to Switzerland to join the growing exile community in Geneva.

Córdoba y Urabá. This came out in the press and ten days later someone fired a rocket from an armored vehicle at us, but they missed. I survived because of my bodyguards, whom I trusted. I never accepted government bodyguards. We also figured that they had been following us. We were constantly followed by motorcycles or cars.

They knew that the last person I would suspect would be a worker. So, they dressed the killer up as a manual laborer. Some of the men sitting in the front of the truck wore baseball caps, others not. It was a perfect set-up. They also drove a car that looked a lot like the ones used to repair Bogotá's aqueducts. Two days later I left the country. After I escaped unscathed, I immediately took part in a political debate at the Bogotá city council. I blamed the army chief Harold Bedoya, accusing him of being the co-sponsor of paramilitary groups. The threats immediately intensified. They called restaurants next to city hall, saying that they were going to blow it up because I was there. I couldn't even go home. I knew that they had been extremely insulted. I not only survived their attack on me, but I brought it out into the open and made a political debate out of it. The army is the sponsor of the paramilitary groups and will often be the ones pulling the trigger. In my case, without a doubt, members of the security forces were responsible for the attack.

Are you saying that a soldier, not a member of a paramilitary group, was responsible?

There is ample evidence from the council sessions, and the council police frequently told me that I was "hot". When someone is "hot", it means that they are going to be killed. I know they felt terribly offended by the council debates and the denunciations about the situation in Urabá, where our people were being assassinated by the Army, either directly or in covert actions led by paramilitary groups. For these reasons I decided to leave immediately.

And you left directly for Switzerland?

We went into political exile. We had resisted for more than 20 years — for 23 years.

Was that the first actual attempt on your life?

There had been two previous attempts. In 1994, I had been to the UN Human rights commission to denounce how a group had been brought to Bogotá. We were informed that this group was going to kill us. Manuel Cepeda and I were at the top of their list. We made the denunciation because the Attorney General's office had been informed. They sent out a group to look for

the hired killers. They found them in a Bogotá hotel, but let them go. In 1993 as well, another group was sent to Bogotá. They had paid them, had negotiated the contract in public, but someone overheard them. We knew exactly in which hotel they were staying, at Residencia Cosmos, on the 18th Street between Caracas Avenue and 13th Avenue. The hired killers were staying there. The Attorney General's office was informed, went, and found them there. They were all armed. They all carried gun permits, and the Attorney General's office asked me to press charges against them. But if I lodged this complaint with the Attorney General, it would have backfired against me, because in Colombia, victims are al-

What is happening is a low intensity war, the systematic elimination of all political opposition, including the assassination of more than 4,000 members of our political party in every region of the country...

ways blamed. Victims are always guilty of their misfortunes, and this is one of the facets of the "dirty war" in Colombia. This is the painful reality.

Do they know you are here?

They know I am in Switzerland, but they don't know exactly where I am.

Do you think they would send someone here?

It would be difficult, but not impossible. In the threats they made before I left they said they would look for me no matter where I went. The week after I went into exile, there were a number of calls to the headquarters of the Patriotic Union saying "No matter where she is, we will find her." They are very resourceful. The state is behind them. That's all, but it doesn't bother me.

So what are you doing now?

In exile, we maintain the struggle, although our circumstances have obviously changed. We see the need to work in defense of human rights. We did this in the union movement, in politics, and being in exile we will continue. The horrific situation in Colombia should not be repeated in other countries. What is happening is a low intensity war, the systematic elimination of all political opposition, including the assassination of more than 4,000 members of our political party in every region of the country, people of all ages,

from the most humble member to a Senator of the Republic. They have tried to get rid of our offices by bombing them. The entire world must know about this. We are absolutely convinced that there is not one general in the Colombian Army without blood on his hands, who has not taken part in the killings of political opponents and this dirty war. We know that this series of atrocities, including the massacres such as the

recent one in Mapiripán, are the direct work of the army, without having used the paramilitary groups as a cover. The Colombian government, the state, which is responsible for all this pain and suffering, must pay. They must pay not only for the assassination of political opponents, but also for the assassination of union leaders, human rights workers, students and youth, who have fallen in the struggle to build a democratic Colombia, to build a lasting yet just peace with social justice.

Workers Rights Under Attack

Workers Decapitated in Amalfi

Police reported on November 20 that armed individuals dressed in military clothing with high-powered weapons murdered three miners and another worker in Amalfi, a town in northeastern Antioquia. Three of the victims were decapitated. All were local residents with no prior records.
—[EC 11/21/97]—WNU #408

Unionists in Prison

Eighteen members of the Union Sindical Obrera (the petroleum workers' union in Colombia) are in prison for union activities and the denunciation of human rights abuses. Some have now been in prison for between 2 to 5 years without sentencing and all are charged with crimes that carry possible sentences of 40 to 60 years.

The union members have been victims of a uniquely Colombian legal apparatus known as "faceless justice" (*justicia sin rostro*). Hoods hide witnesses' faces and they are only known by a pseudonym - they go with police and point people out. It has become quite a lucrative business for some of these "professional witnesses" - they are able to make the same accusations but under different pseudonyms, corroborating their own evidence. The police encourage this practice because it helps them build cases against people who denounce the state's human rights abuses.

On behalf of our 18 brothers we are compelled to launch this campaign at an international level, since our efforts to secure justice for them here in Colombia have been without success. Please express your concern by sending a letter to the Attorney General of Colombia and help encourage our brothers by also sending the letters of support to them in prison.

*In solidarity,
Freddy Pulecio*

Secretary General, Union Sindical Obrera - USO

WHAT YOU CAN DO

✉ **Send letters** to Attorney General Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento (fax #288-2828)

✉ **Send letters to the prisoners.** Contact the Canadian Colombian Association to request more information at P.O. Box 591 Station "A", Toronto, ON M4V 1E4 Canada; Phone: (416) 535-8303, (416) 465-2552; E-mail: gaviota@sprint.ca ; david.raby@utoronto.ca

What do you think that the United Nations can do for Colombia?

We have great hopes and wish that a Special Rapporteur be named for Colombia. All those defending human rights were hoping that the Rapporteur be sent over, but the governments here decided that the UN office of the high commissioner would be better. So we have the UN office, but we believe that the seriousness of the Colombian case deserves a strengthening of international presence there. The internal situation in Colombia must have a greater echo on the international scene. The European Parliament has adopted a number of resolutions, and various congresses in different European countries have called attention to the dramatic human rights situation in Colombia. But we think that there must be a greater international presence in Colombia, in order to pressure the army to abandon its dirty war, killing civilians in the most horrific way imaginable. It appears that Mapiripán as a repetition of Trujillo, where chainsaws were used in the massacre. There is much work for us to do abroad, and that is why we are here, taking advantage of our good luck, which allowed us to live a little bit longer.

Carlos Andres Perez Berios
Please tell me about your political life in Colombia.

I was mayor of the town of Chigorodo, Antioquia in the Urabá region from 1992 to 1994. Before being mayor, I was the municipal councilor in Chigorodo. I then went on to be the president of the town council, but my political career, as a spokesperson for the popular and social movements in Urabá, working with the Patriotic Union came to an abrupt end. The military in Urabá put me on trial, but it was a total sham. As well, all the other UP mayors in Urabá were put on trial. Many of them are still sitting in jail, some of them in Bogotá others in Medellín. I was lucky enough to get out of jail after spending one year there. I was able to prove how unjust the charges

were. Unfortunately, my troubles did not end there. After leaving jail, my family and I received death threats and we had to flee to Ecuador. There I received the support the NGOs. I spent four months in Quito. But the intelligence forces of the Colombian State Security, the DAS, were going to “disappear” me. They were working together with Ecuadorian intelligence. I was staying at a hostel with other Colombian political refugees. One day when I was out, a number of those refugees were disappeared. They were released one month later, but some of them had lost an eye, others had lost their hearing, and the women had been tortured. Thanks to a campaign by Ecuadorian NGOs, my wife and I avoided a similar fate. You could call me a survivor. I seem to have been very lucky. I survived the extermination of the Patriotic Union in the Urabá region. I survived the repression and the dirty war and was able to get out of jail, while my friends received 10 year prison terms. The injustice I suffered while detained in a disgusting smelly hole at Bella Vista jail is so great, I can't find words to describe it.

You were in Bella Vista jail?

I was held at Bella Vista in the same wing as the people from the Medellín Cartel, together with members of paramilitary groups, government officials as well as common criminals. The Colombian Constitution and the penal code are very clear that no one accused of a crime may be detained together with convicted criminals. The most painful thing was to be with people who freely admitted, while talking in the cafeteria, to having killed more than 80 people. One 26 year old from the Medellín Cartel said to me, “Mayor, I've decided to read the Bible.” Because when he was with Pablo [Escobar] he killed more than 100 people. Some had killed 60 people, others 70. I had to spend a year together with these people, being unjustly imprisoned and suffering incredible indignities, after having been the mayor of Chigorodo.

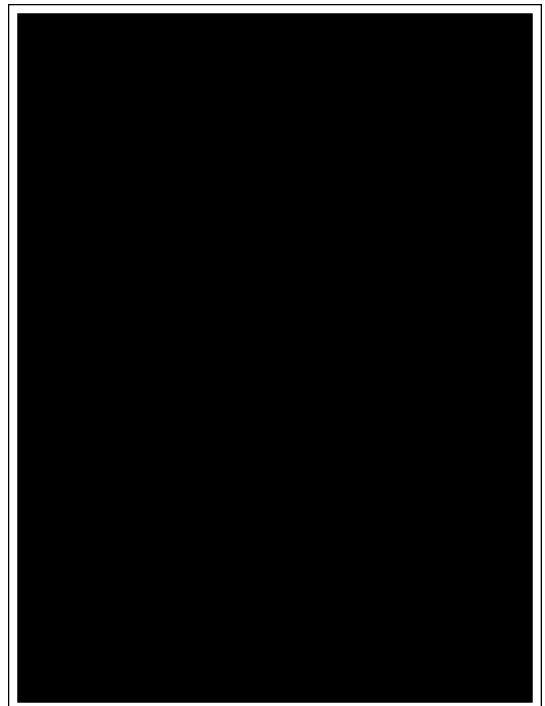
What did you, as mayor, accomplish there in Chigorodo?

Our administration achieved more for Chigorodo than any other in the past 100 years. We undertook projects that had never been done before, like a sanitary landfill, a marketplace, a master plan for the sewer system. We completed the educational infrastructure, hiring teachers, all the basic stuff. To improve the quality of life, we re-organized the tax collection process so that people would pay on time. These resources were then re-invested back into the community. I also attacked corruption within the administration. I

fired engineers, doctors, people who had been stealing money from the town for six or seven years. During the two years I was mayor, we accomplished more than in the previous century, and all this work is still bringing benefits to Chigorodo. The Patriotic Union brought tremendous benefits to the people of Urabá which had been governed for the last 100 years by the Right. That is why the Antioquia bourgeoisie, the Urabá bourgeoisie, the banana growers, the big landowners, the military working together with the paramilitary groups, came up with this strategy called the “Plan Retorno,” intended to wrest power in the Urabá region back into their hands. They said that power was in the hands of the left and the Patriotic Union and with the threat began the assassinations, imprisonment, and disappearances, and the appearance of the paramilitary and the “peasant Self-defense” groups.

Who leads these groups?

These groups were headed by Carlos Castaño, but in Urabá, the military were very involved with them. It would have been impossible for them to have taken over the entire Urabá region if they did not have the support of the army. You could say that they are one and the same, because everyone in Urabá knows that the army and the paramilitary groups carry out joint patrols. There is something else that I wanted to tell you. Look at Arboletes where I was born. In the region of Arboletes, the paramilitary groups have organized “cooperatives”, and the mayors are named by the paramilitary groups. All the mayors in Urabá, except for Gloria Cuartas and the Mayor of Mutata, are controlled or manipulated by paramilitary groups. The mayors of the October 26 [1997] elections are all under the sway of paramilitary groups. They will be front-men for the paramilitaries, even the one in Necocli, who is being presented as a consensus candidate. This is what they call “democracy”, a consensus representing the support of the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the banana growers, and the army. The Patriotic Union, the Com-



Carlos Andres Perez Berios

munist Party, all the religious or left-wing forces have been eliminated in Urabá. There is no Political opposition left in Urabá. Everything is controlled by the army. My grandfather was the founder of Arboletes in Urabá. He arrived there at the end of the last century. He began cultivating virgin lands. It used to be all jungle and moun-

tains. We all grew up there. Some of my brothers and sisters were born in Apartadó, others in Chigorodo. We watched the arrival of the guerrilla groups in the sixties, the founding of the unions, and the peace process with the EPL. I was an observer to that peace process when I was president of the town council and then as mayor I also took part in the peace process with the Socialist Renewal Current of the ELN. I was the only mayor native to Urabá to participate, always trying to contribute to the peace process, but peace has always eluded us. I have faith that some day people will realize that Urabá needs peace to bring about the region's development.

Workers Rights Under Attack

Paramilitary Attack on Coca Cola Union

Among other examples of paramilitary violence against trade unionists that could be cited, there is the particular case of the Karepa Coca-Cola plant in the Urabá region of the Department of Antioquia. The following information is based on testimonies provided by leaders of the union involved (SINALTRAINAL, an affiliate of the CUT).

Persecution of the union began with the firing of an Executive Board member, who eventually got his job back. Continued efforts to break the union eventually led to the development of a relationship between local management and the paramilitary unit in the region. Following the tabling of union demands on November 30, 1996 and no response from the employer, one of the union members was killed at the workplace on the morning of December 5. Later the same day, an effort was made by the paramilitaries to kidnap another worker but the latter managed to escape. This led to a sacking and burning of the union building on company premises. According to union testimonies, the paramilitary openly claimed credit for the attack.

On the following Monday, the paramilitary units entered the factory threatening union members that they must leave the premises by 6 p.m. and the area within three days. Pre-designed letters of resignation from the union, which according to the testimony were generated on company machines (minus company letterhead), were then given to the unionists. Forty-two letters of resignation were signed under duress and most of the union leadership were displaced to Bogotá.

While one witness suggested that local Coca-Cola management may also have been intimidated by the paramilitary forces, the overall thrust of the testimony clearly identified Coca-Cola franchisees throughout Colombia as being virulently anti-union and quick to charge union activists with terrorism.

The union represents workers at other food & drink-based multinationals (Pepsico and Nestles) and spoke of Coca-Cola as the worst employer to deal with in the industry.

Paramilitary violence in general dates back to the early 1980s, but there is now is strong evidence of Western (Northern) mercenaries being brought in to train these paramilitary units. Legislation adopted to combat paramilitary groups has been ignored. (See ICCHRLA report for a more complete discussion.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

✉ **Contact the Canadian Colombian Association** at: P.O. Box 591 Station "A", Toronto, ON M4V 1E4 Canada; Phone: (416) 535-8303, (416) 465-2552; E-mail: gaviota@sprint.ca; david.raby@utoronto.ca

What have you been involved with since you arrived in Geneva?

I have focused on denouncing the ongoing, persistent human rights violations carried out by the Colombian state. I am working once again, as I did in Colombia, with an NGO, the American Association of Jurists, at the UN. For the past two years, I have been involved in some important work with them. I have written documents for to the United Nations such as "Internal Refugees in Colombia," as well as a document about the situation in Urabá. The later also discusses paramilitary and "self-defense" groups. I have also has the opportunity to speak at the UN Commission and well as the Subcommittee. I've taken part in the debate with NGOs around the creation of the UN High Commissioner's Office in Colombia. We support the creation of this office, so that Colombia may know real peace and a state ruled by law, because the biggest problem facing Colombia is Impunity. I understand impunity as going beyond economic, social and cultural rights. Latin American governments, especially the Colombian one, have never invested in outlying regions, to overcome their underdevelopment. This is how I understand impunity, so that citizens have access to education, culture, so they can develop and improve their quality of life. Impunity goes beyond unpunished crimes. It means analyzing the roots of armed struggle, why people protest, why there is petty crime. I think that if there were jobs and opportunities for people, if their rights were respected, people would focus on our country's development and progress.

What do you think is the key to obtaining these objectives?

I think that the social movement in Colombia, the unions, NGOs, different left-wing sectors, democratic personalities, even the justice

system, will have to focus on this. The problem in Colombia is impunity from the point of view of lack of social spending, the unequal distribution of wealth, and opportunities for all. There has been a serious [armed] conflict in Colombia for over the last 35 to 50 years. We have armed insurgents, the guerrilla movement. We now have paramilitary groups carrying out counter-insurgency operations. We must attack the roots of the causes of these problems. Colombians must find a way to sit down together and understand that there must be equal opportunities for all. If people can't come to realize this, Colombia's future will be very bleak. I think that there are many people who understand this. They continue to

promote this proposal, supported by different NGOs, the United Nations, that there must be a negotiated political settlement to the conflicts in Colombia. We must fight against impunity, and for a better redistribution of wealth. This gives us great hopes, to see that people continue work for democracy in Colombia. I'm far from home, but my mind is still stuck there in Colombia. I can not forget my country and my people. I wish that I could go home tomorrow, to be in Urabá, in Chigorodo, with my people and my culture. But I am strengthened by the fact that I can take advantage of this historic opportunity and denounce the atrocities committed in Colombia by state terrorism. That is my role here in Europe. ■

WOMEN TAKE A STAND IN THE FIGHT BETWEEN CORRUPTION & JUSTICE

Caught in the Crossfire

When Olmyra Morales heard the low flying airplane approach she rushed out the door to call her children. "But there was no way I could protect them," she told me during an interview in the offices of a human rights organization in Bogotá, Colombia. "As our houses are made from wood, the poison filters in. It lands on the water, and on the food crops."

Olmyra was talking about the chemical herbicide Ultra Glyphosate, which was sprayed on 45,000 acres of coca fields in the summer of 1996. The children vomited, and later their hair fell out.

To survive, she organized the first demonstration against aerial fumigation in Miraflores, a town in the Guaviere department, a large state in the remote southeastern part of Colombia, where an estimated 97 percent of the local economy is derived from coca. "We organized a women's group that was open to everyone: farmwomen, prostitutes, professors...we joined hands and put ourselves on the highway of Miraflores and the helicopter launch pad."

The protest movement mushroomed. By the end of November, 1996, an estimated 241,000 people had participated in massive marches - one of the largest peasant mobilizations in Colombian history. According to Coletta Youngers of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), they were protesting not only aerial eradication, but lack of government support for economic development and the increasing presence of the Colombian military.

I travelled to Colombia twice in the last year and a half with delegations from the Women's

International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Colombia Support Network and the Colombia Media Project. My impression is that this rich and beautiful country has been singled out for singular punishment in the "war on drugs". Former Ambassador Myles Frechette told us that he refused to communicate with president Ernesto Samper, who was in the doghouse for having accepted campaign financing from druglords. Yet the Samper government has acquiesced to US demands for aerial fumigation - unlike Bolivia and Peru, in which an historic indigenous relationship to the coca plant has made fumigation an impossible political option. Nevertheless, Colombia has been "decertified" for two years for perceived shortcomings in its anti-narcotics efforts. As a result, tiny environmental and population projects have been cut, while military assistance continues to flow. In fact, US assistance to the Colombian anti-narcotics police and military increased more than fivefold last year, to over \$100 million.

Olmyra lived in the vast half of the country that drains into the Amazon river basin. No roads reach the area: transportation is confined to boat or plane. Up until recently, the FARC has been the *de facto* government there. The presence of this guerrilla organization has restricted the growth of paramilitary death squads, often allied with the military, that have increasingly gained control in other parts of the country. At present the situation is potentially quite explosive as the paramilitaries are gaining in strength.

But struggles for health, and freedom from violence aren't unique to the Guaviere depart-

by Robin Lloyd

ment. Our delegation interviewed women displaced from various regions (see our video, *Courageous Women of Colombia* on page 46), and visited the besieged mayor of Apartado in northern Colombia. There, drug lord Carlos Castaño has launched a campaign of terror in the surrounding rural zones, forcing thousands to leave their homes and crowd into refugee camps. (See related stories on pages 6 and 7.) No coca or poppies are grown in this area, but it is a strategic and agriculturally rich piece of turf. Bordering both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it provides important transshipment connections for drugs and guns through the Gulf of Urabá, and the Pan-American highway.

The tidal wave of narcodollars in the last decade has exacerbated an already skewed system of land ownership. Colombia has never implemented a meaningful system of agrarian reform, and the vaulted 'democracy' has actually been a sharing of power among various elites. Druglords

join landowners in funding paramilitary groups that run the peasants off the land. It's an epic struggle between corruption and justice.

Although women generally aren't directly involved in the hostilities, they are the most affected by the trauma of displacement. According to an Amnesty International report, they are "forced to flee their rural homes with their children, abandon their livestock and possessions, and take precarious refuge in shanty towns surrounding towns and cities. There, they, but particularly their children, may be preyed upon by urban 'death squads' or forced into a life of crime or prostitution in order to survive."

In Bogotá, a displaced woman recounted how the war culture has become embedded in the youth. "A young paramilitary told me 'in this country we don't have work; they pay us a salary to kill each other.' " She continued in anguish, "What can I say to them? What are our options? Our boys are being turned into salaried killers..."

Her cry is echoed by mothers in inner cities throughout America—the 'demand' side of this war. Lacking employment, the only option their male children see is to join a gang and/or become a dealer. Indeed, this is what struck us most profoundly: the common suffering at both ends of the so-called "drug war," and the similar themes of violence, family breakup, and hopelessness.

Without an international approach, the struggle for a more compassionate drug policy isn't likely to succeed. At the moment, the Clinton administration's military policy in this hemisphere is driven by the imperatives of this "war". In Colombia, however, it is actually smokescreen for support of a reactionary and vicious military. Unless bridges are built between reformers north and south, and unless the use of words like 'narcoguerillas' and 'crackheads' are exposed as tools to demonize the victims, we won't build the solidarity needed to bring this war to an end.

With this in mind, WILPF is planning a US tour of women from both Colombia and the U.S. Appearing together, they will talk about the effects of the 'drug war' in their communities, highlighting harm reduction alternatives in the US, and alternatives to military support and fumigation for Colombia. The goal will be to bring women's voices into the drug policy debate, adding a sorely needed perspective to the struggle to end prohibition. ■

Robin Lloyd is chair of the Drug Policy Committee of WILPF, and publisher of *Toward Freedom* magazine.

Councilwoman Assassinated, National Women Leaders Threatened

Paramilitaries entered the home of Glen Gonzalez in Apartado, in the Uraba region of Antioquia department, in an November 25 attempt to kill her. Ms. Gonzalez is the president of the local Dreams of Women Association and was not at home at the time, having traveled to Bogota for a meeting of the National Council of Women for Peace. The paramilitary groups also searched the homes of Gonzalez' relatives stating that they had "express orders from their superiors" to kill Gonzalez because she had gone to Bogota with photos to condemn the human rights situation in the Uraba region. Two members of the National Council have been killed and several members of the Dreams of Women Association have been forced to leave the area.

On the night of Jan. 20, an armed commando abducted and murdered 36-year old Gloria Helena Cardona Clavijo, a leftist council member in the municipality of Apartado in the violence-plagued agro-industrial region of Uraba. Cardona was elected to the council in October on the ticket of the leftist "Action and Life" movement, and began serving her term on January 1. Action and Life condemned the murder and blamed it on rightwing paramilitary groups. Witnesses said the assailants who dragged Cardona from her home left a note attributing the murder to leftist guerrilla groups. Authorities are investigating the note.

[Notimex 1/21/98] —WNU #411 & 417

WHAT YOU CAN DO ✉ Send letters demanding protection for Gonzalez and other activists, and an end to paramilitary activity, to President Ernesto Samper Pizano (fax #(571) 284- 2186, E-mail <esamper@ presidencia. gov.co>



EDUARDO UMANA ASSASSINATED

Prominent Colombian human rights activist and lawyer Jose Eduardo Umaña Mendoza was murdered on April 18 at his office in a residential neighborhood of Bogotá. Early reports indicated he was killed by three assailants who entered the office posed as journalists. The attackers bound and gagged Umaña before shooting him six times in the head. Despite constant threats, Umaña had always refused to have bodyguards or any other type of security. "That isn't living," he had said.

Umaña was working on two major cases at the time of his death: an ongoing investigation into the November 1985 events at the Palace of Justice, where over 100 people were killed and 11 disappeared in an army assault following the takeover of the building by leftist rebels from the M-19; and the reopening of 50-year-old case of the murder of Liberal politician Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, whose killing sparked years of partisan massacres, a period referred to by Colombians as "La Violencia." Umaña had recently told his colleagues that there was evidence of complicity by some "very important" and still living figures in the Gaitan murder. Gaitan's family believes Umaña's murder is linked to the reopening of the case.

The Workers Trade Union (USO), which represents employees of Colombia's state oil company, Ecopetrol, staged a 24-hour strike to condemn Umaña's murder. Umaña was the defense lawyer for USO leaders who were arrested in December 1996 and charged with "terrorism" for allegedly conspiring with leftist rebels to blow up oil pipelines. Umaña was defending 18 of the union's leaders; three of them are jailed and the rest released pending trial. In early February Umaña had received a telephoned death threat; he said the caller warned him he would be killed because of his defense of the USO leaders. In a 21-page document written after receiving the death threat, Umaña said the caller "stated that the authors of the plan believe I am a danger because of the charges I have made against state security forces and against Ecopetrol officials for their undue interference in the criminal trial." Umaña gave a copy of the document to his closest friends, telling them to make it public if he were killed.

Umaña was the main lawyer defending leaders of the union of workers of the Colombian national telephone company, TELECOM, who

were charged with terrorism for having staged a strike against the company's privatization. He also successfully defended Patriotic Union (UP) party leader and former Apartado mayor Jose Antonio López Bula, falsely charged with planning a massacre in the town of Apartado in the region of Urabá, in Antioquia department.

Some 200 people gathered on Apr. 23 in Brussels, in front of the Council of Ministers of the European Union (UE), to protest Umaña's murder and to demand that the UE change its policy toward Colombia. In Spain, a number of nongovernmental organizations rallied in front of the Colombian embassy in Madrid to protest the attacks on human rights defenders.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
☞ See next page

Amnesty International Office Shut Down

Amnesty International announced that threats against its personnel had forced it to shut down its office in Colombia in February — two months after the killing of two human rights workers in the capital. The London-based human rights group did not reveal the origin of the "series of threats" it said its workers had received.

Because none of its local personnel was actively involved in investigating human rights abuse in Colombia — which has one of the most dismal rights records in the hemisphere — Amnesty said the work it does in the country through international monitors would continue unabated.

"Amnesty International has not diminished or suspended its work in favor of human rights in Colombia," said the statement, which was written in Spanish.

"On the contrary, the human rights crisis in the country continues to be a very high priority for Amnesty International." —Reuters

Mourners for Umaña gathered together on Apr. 23 to found the "Broad Social Front," which seeks to protect the lives of community and human rights activists, intellectuals, and opposition leaders. A national day of protest against impunity has been scheduled for May 19, one year after the murders of prominent human rights activists Mario Calderon and Elsa Alvarado. The USO has scheduled another 24-hour strike for that day in which oil, telecommunications and electricity workers will participate. ■

Sources: Colombia Support Network, *El Colombiano*, *El Tiempo*, AP

Human Rights Activist Murdered

Jesús María Valle Jaramillo, a lawyer, former municipal official and president of the “Héctor Abad Gómez” Permanent Committee for Human Rights was shot to death in his office in Medellín, Colombia, on February 27.

In recent months, Mr. Valle Jaramillo documented human rights Antioquia, particularly in the municipality of Ituango in the northwestern part of the state. In June 1997, Mr. Jaramillo came into conflict with authorities after alleging that paramilitaries were conducting joint patrols with the armed forces. Then-Governor Alvaro Uribe Vélez publicly characterized Mr. Valle Jaramillo as an “enemy” of the armed forces of Colombia.

Alarmed by the governor’s comments, the Colectivo de Derechos Humanos Semillas de Libertad issued a statement that Mr. Uribe Vélez had endangered Mr. Valle Jaramillo in singling him out as an enemy of the armed forces. Statements similar to Uribe’s had been made by the military itself. Human rights groups say that a 1985 War College training manual for military officers entitled “Get to Know Our Enemy” listed the Permanent Committee as an enemy of the armed forces. Two years later, Héctor Abad Gómez, then-president of the Permanent Committee, was assassinated with a colleague as they mourned a third human rights activist murdered the same day.

Mr. Valle Jaramillo was active in denouncing violations by paramilitary forces in Antioquia in 1997. In October, in the towns of El Aro and Santa Rita, paramilitary forces perpetrated, allegedly with local military, a series of massacres which provoked a massive exodus of residents. The armed forces said the incidents were skirmishes between the military and guerrillas, but Mr. Valle Jaramillo alleged that the dead were innocent peasants, not combatants. The army filed a formal complaint of criminal defamation and conspiracy against him. Mr. Valle Jaramillo received a series of death threats, and human rights groups say that he was placed on a paramilitary list of assassination targets, causing him to resign his official municipal position.

In February, Mr. Valle Jaramillo was summoned to give a statement in the criminal defamation and conspiracy case against him. In a press interview he stated that he had evidence to back up his allegations of numerous paramilitary-armed forces links. Colombian NGOs and the UN’s human rights office in Colombia have also received voluminous evidence of such links.

The next day the army and police conducted an operation in downtown Medellín from 2:00 to

4:00 p.m. Human rights workers from nearby offices said security forces blanketed the area, stopping pedestrians to demand identification and search them for weapons. At 2:30, according to eyewitnesses, 16 gunmen in civilian clothes approached the Com- mittee’s offices. Several—two men and a woman —went inside. There were three people in the office: Mr. Valle Jaramillo, his sister and a Committee staff member. The gunmen bound and gagged Mr. Valle Jaramillo’s sister and colleague and then executed Mr. Valle Jaramillo with a gunshot to the head. (See “No end in Sight”, page 4.) ■

Governor Vélez had publicly labeled Jaramillo as an “enemy” of the armed forces.

WHAT YOU CAN DO Write to Colombia’s Attorney General urging an investigation into these killings. You may choose to indicate your concern that the circumstances warrant particular attention to whether members of the security forces acquiesced in or were otherwise involved in the attack. Dr. Alfonso Gomez Mendez, Fiscal General de la Nación, Calle 35, No. 4-31, Apartado, Aereo 29855, Bogotá, Colombia; Fax: +571 288 2828

WHAT YOU CAN DO Write to Secretary of State Albright requesting the U.S. government to determine if there was official involvement in Mr. Jaramillo’s death, and to take appropriate action as required under Section 570 of the 1998 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (the Leahy Amendment). The Leahy amendment requires that the Secretary of State withhold funds from security force units regarding which the Secretary has credible evidence of involvement in gross violations of human rights, unless the Secretary determines that the Colombian government is taking “effective measures” to bring those responsible to justice. Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State, Department of State, 2201 C Street, NW, Room 7226, Washington, DC 20520, Fax: (202) 647-1533



Teacher, Activist Murdered

On March 23rd paramilitaries abducted Rosmira Gallego and four peasant farmers. Their bodies were discovered the following day. Ms. Gallego was one of a number of San Carlos teachers who had received death threats from paramilitary groups in the area. She was among a group of 16 teachers that went to the Ministry of Education seeking protection last September. Their request was rejected on the grounds that they were not at serious risk. The teachers and other members of the community continued to inform authorities of repeated death threats to no avail. The Antioquia Teachers Association has repeatedly denounced the death threats: Over the last year 40 teachers affiliated with the group have fled their homes due to death threats.

On April 17, human rights activist and former Communist Party leader Maria Arango Fonnegra was shot to death at the door of her home in Bogotá. At the time of her death, Arango was working as a peace and human rights adviser to the campaign of Liberal Party presidential candidate Horacio Serpa.

300 Paramilitaries on the Move

Two Dead, Five Abducted:
Hundreds Flee the Area

A group of approximately 300 heavily-armed men, identifying themselves as members of a paramilitary group, entered the community of Pueblito Mejia (Bolívar) on March 2. Two men were seized and killed. The decapitation of one of the men was witnessed by the community which had been forced to assemble. An eight-year-old boy was reportedly wounded in the shooting of the other man. Five people were also taken away by the gunmen.

Some 100 families have fled their homes following the incursion. The attack heightens concerns for the safety of the inhabitants of the municipality of Barranco de Loba—where the refugees have sought shelter—and the neighboring municipalities of Tiquisio, Morales and Rio Viejo. The armed group reportedly told witnesses that their next targets were Buena Sena and Buena Vista in the municipalities of Rio Viejo and Morales respectively. On March 3 the armed group was reported to be heading towards the community of Sudan in the municipality of Tiquisio.

Over the last year there have been a number of attacks on municipalities in southern Bolívar in which inhabitants considered to be guerrilla collaborators fell victim to paramilitary groups operating in unison with the Colombian armed forces. Witnesses say the group consists of a large number of armed men wearing Colombian army uniforms with the insignia of the Nariño Battalion attached to the Second Brigade. ■

WHAT YOU CAN DO ✉ Send faxes/letters: expressing concern for the safety of the people of Barranco de Loba, for the five abducted residents, and for the neighboring municipalities of Tiquisio, Morales and Rio Viejo, urging that measures deemed appropriate by the people of these municipalities are undertaken to guarantee their safety; that investigations into the executions and abductions are undertaken; and calling for immediate dismantling of paramilitary groups and urging that those responsible be brought to justice. Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la Republica, fax #(571) 284-2186, E-mail <esamper@presidencia.gov.co>; and Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejia, Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia



Soldiers Attack Refugee Communities

On March 26, Colombian army soldiers opened fire on a house in the hamlet of Bellavista injuring a couple and their three children. This has heightened concern for the safety of the community, which is under the jurisdiction of San Jose de Apartado, municipality of Apartado, in the Urabá region of Antioquia. When local witnesses reportedly demanded an explanation from army personnel as to the reasons for the attack they replied: “They deserved it because they were guerrilla collaborators”.

The attack follows an incident on March 19 where San Jose de Apartado inhabitants were harassed by Colombian army soldiers. The inhabitants of Bellavista and nearby La Cristalina and La Linda abandoned their homes in fear.

In March 1997, San Jose de Apartado declared itself to be a Community of Peace. Since the declaration, over 30 inhabitants have been killed and two ‘disappeared’, the majority by paramilitary groups but several others by FARC. San Jose de Apartado is made up of around 1,000 people forcibly displaced from their homes in the Urabá region in 1996 and 1997 in the wake of

paramilitary massacres and arbitrary killings and threats by guerrilla groups.

Inhabitants have demanded that the government secure conditions for their safe return home. Some displaced communities living in San Jose de Apartado have started to return. On March 23, 300 people returned to the nearby hamlet of La Union from which they fled a year ago. The recent attack on the hamlet of Bellavista has been seen as a threat to the process of return to abandoned lands. ■

Since becoming a Community of Peace last year, over 30 inhabitants of San Jose de Apartado have been killed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ✉ Send faxes/letters to Colombia’s Attorney General calling for investigations into Army attacks on the civilian population in Bellavista, asking that those responsible to be brought to justice; expressing concern for the safety of San Jose de Apartado and for the community returning to their lands in La Union; calling for a full investigation into links between security forces and paramilitary groups and for those responsible to be brought to justice; and urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups: Dr. Alfonso Gomez Mendez, Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación, Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aereo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia



100 Puerto Asis-area Residents Killed Since January

The residents of Puerto Asis in Putumayo continues to suffer attacks by paramilitary groups. Recent reports indicate that as many as 100 people have been killed in the area since the end of January 1998, following the arrival of up to 300 paramilitary gunmen. Using a 'black list' of 250 intended victims, the gunmen began to selectively kill members of the community. Many of the victims are believed to have been tortured before being killed.

In February, local Mayor Nestor Hector Hernandez Iglesias went to Bogotá, where he publicly denounced the killings to the authorities. He said the paramilitary forces arrived in the town in Colombian Army helicopters. The Ministry of Defense has denied any complicity

on the part of the armed forces in the attacks.

Those denouncing links between paramilitary groups and the armed forces have in the past often been subjected to intimidation, attack or extrajudicial execution. On returning to Puerto Asis, the Colombian authorities provided Nestor Hector Hernandez Iglesias with 22 bodyguards. On 18 February he narrowly escaped a bomb attack on his home.

Official investigators sent by to the Puerto Asis area to investigate the violence were forced to flee the town on March 3 after receiving death threats from a paramilitary group called Southern Self-defense Forces. The continued killings and general climate of fear have forced many inhabitants of the town and surrounding area to flee in search of safety.

Reports also indicate that FARC members have arbitrarily killed at least 10 residents of Valle del Guamuez (also known as La Hormiga), a municipality neighboring that of Puerto Asis. The victims were apparently accused of collaborating with paramilitary groups. The FARC has long had a strong presence in Putumayo. In 1996 paramilitary leaders stated their intention of attacking the FARC stronghold of Putumayo. Residents reported the arrival of paramilitary gunmen in 1997. Security force officials have repeatedly denied that there has been any increase in paramilitary violence in the area, declaring that such claims are guerrilla propaganda. Since December 1997 the area has been heavily militarized by the Colombian army, after 18 soldiers were taken hostage by the FARC. ■

Many of the victims are believed to have been tortured before being killed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ✉ Send faxes/letters expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population of Puerto Asis and surrounding area; calling on authorities to take all measures to ensure the safety of those at risk; calling for an impartial investigation into all killings of inhabitants of the region by paramilitary gunmen and for those responsible be brought to justice; calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups and urging that any members of the security forces found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice; and urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups: Senor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la Republica, fax #(571) 284- 2186, E-mail <esamper@presidencia. gov.co>; and Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejia, Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia



Bogota Families Told to Leave Colombia or Die

Death threats have been made against members of three Bogotá families who have been told that they will die unless they leave Colombia.

The threats are linked to the 'disappearance' of Alfonso Suarez Galvis. Suarez who has not been seen since he left his house in Bogotá on Aug. 15. At the time of his 'disappearance' he was reportedly under investigation by the security forces. On August 20, Suarez's sister received an anonymous phone call stating that her husband was being held by the Colombian Army.

Another relative received a death threat at his workplace on Jan. 5 stating that family members "should leave the country urgently since the Office of the Attorney General, the Army and the Police know that you are relatives of members of a guerrilla movement. We wish to warn you so that you do not suffer the same fate as your brother-in-law...". A further threat against

Suarez's relatives was received on Jan. 7. The written death threats warned relatives to leave Colombia within 20 days, or they would be killed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ✉ Send faxes/airmail letters expressing concern for the safety of members of the family of Alfonso Suarez Galvis and urging that all measures deemed appropriate by the relatives themselves are taken to guarantee their safety; urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into the disappearance of Alfonso Suarez on August 15 1997, and that those responsible be brought to justice; and urging that full and impartial investigations into death threats against all relatives of Alfonso Suarez be undertaken, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice: Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la Republica, Palacio de Narino, fax #(571) 284-2186, E-mail <esamper@ presidencia. gov.co>■

In Commemoration of Our Year of Displacement

We have suffered from hunger, lack of clothing, fear, overcrowding, shame, boredom, poverty, disagreement, distrust, and rejection; we have also lived in the hope of a justified return.

A year ago we left our homeland, we were forced out by the defense forces of the State. So many hours and minutes have been very few in which to understand what it was that happened. We still have not recovered from this wound to our soul. Today, the government's silence does us even more harm. Today our strength is being tested by the military. They want to seem like our angels and defenders, but they were the ones who forced us out.

Today, as before, we want to feel your embrace, your solidarity, your gaze, your spirit, so we can stand up, so we can resist, so we can sing and shout to the world that we are human beings, that we want a justified return.

Although it is possible you won't come, we are awaiting your letters. They are a very important moral support.

Our ethnic group, our embracing of other ethnic groups may be destroyed. Silence, hunger, deceit, want to ruin us.

We want the government to respect our silent procession of light and not interfere with any armed forces.

We want our day of hope to be respected. We want to be able to enter into a dialog without pressure, with conditions of protection for our representatives.

We do not want the government to use mass communications to spread what has not been agreed upon, nor even begun to be discussed.

We want the President to grant us an audience so we can propose our return, and a month after the proposal is received

we want him to give us a written response. We want dialog with the civil powers of the government without the intervention of the armed forces.

We want a just return, in three agreements: unarmed protection from the State, entitlement from Law 70, community development and moral reparations.

With our dream of a justified return, and awaiting your letters of support.

Signed

Displaced communities of Cuenca del Cacarica, Families of Curvarado, Vigia de Curvarado and Domingodo,



WHAT YOU CAN DO ☞ Some displaced communities from the Afro-Colombian region of northwestern Colombia are attempting to return home from refugee centers. They are in need of your continued vigilance and support as they go through this process. They ask that the outside world write to them, lending your words of encouragement and letting them know that others have heard of their plight and struggle—that they are not alone and isolated in this world. **Fax to: Displaced communities of Cuenca del Cacarica, Families of Curvarado, Vigia de Curvarado and Domingodo, temporarily based in Turbo and Bocas del Atrato. FAX (94) 8274396; (91) 3381511**

Struggling for the Right Not to Be Sold

by Javier Giraldo

DIGITAL V. ICONIC

The U'Wa are an indigenous tribe that has received international recognition for their opposition to plans by Occidental and Shell to conduct oil exploration on the ancestral lands of the U'Wa people. The U'Wa have threatened to commit mass suicide if the oil companies go ahead with their plans.

THE LANGUAGE with which the U'was defend their rights and confront the corporation and the State is far from being a "modern," "scientific," or "persuasive" language, not just to their opponents but also to large sections of our society. Its categories, its argumentative nodes, and its view of the world all reveal a mythic thinking which our dominant culture discarded long ago as "invalid," "non-functional" or "historically antiquated."

And indeed, the language of the groups in power, the language for making an appeal to capital, the language of the mass media, the prevailing language in all spheres of influence is quite distanced from that of the U'was. In the language of the U'was' traditional leaders, the land, the rivers, the dwellings, the forests, and even the oil, buried thousands of meters underground, have souls and communicate with humans through friendly, indifferent, or punitive actions.

The most primitive period of language was iconic, in which the distance between signifier and meaning was minimal, at times nonexistent, as for example in mime.

As language "progressed," it became separated from the image (icon) and the relationship between signifier and meaning came to be ruled by arbitrary conventions. Language was also becoming digital, that is, conventional and written, manageable by fingers and keys.

But even digitalization has "progressed" further, separating even more radically from the spoken language. This can be seen in the ever more complex codification of computer programming, where information is reduced to a set of quantifications in which the most basic element becomes the presence or absence of a signal, its digital/numeric representation transmitted by a code processed in integrated electronic circuits. Thus, reality tends to evaporate in ever more elevated levels of abstraction, and the distance between the signifier and the reality it represents (the lived reality) is ever greater.

This doesn't mean that iconic language has disappeared. The theatre stage, psychological studies of nonverbal language, etc., all reveal its importance and the refinements achieved in that area. But digital language dominates in the world of economic-political business decisions. And it is becoming more and more elitist, not only in that

the great masses are marginalized from an education that is heavily digitalized, but also in that it is a small group of technocrats who controls this virtual, abstract world - supported by myriad digitators who depend on their (the technocrats') programming, as users/consumers of programs whose inner structure they don't understand. This is where the big decisions are made.

Even without going to the extremes of computerized digitality (the level at which surely the multinational companies' capital is managed), digital language has a dominant status in our societies. And to them its elitist character seems perfectly acceptable, tied as it is to the growing complexity of multiplying arbitrary conventions accessible to ever more restricted circles. This makes it a language with enormous potential for manipulation and domination.

Digital language is the most appropriate one for the "modern" world, given that its concentration in restricted circuits to achieve short term goals requires that it marginalize the other circuits. And what more appropriate language for this marginalization than one which progressively excludes those not able to memorize ever more complex codes which bear no resemblance to the images in their lives?

The U'was have their own, unwritten, language. Grammars have been written by strangers which the U'was do not consider valid. It is an oral tradition. Thus, they possess a language that is enormously distant from everything digital. It conforms to their closeness to nature and the immediacy of their communication. Is this an anti-value? It certainly does not adjust to the communicative parameters of our dominant and dominated society, but perhaps it plays the role of a more authentic model of communication, where the dynamics of marginalization and manipulation can only enter with violence.

LOGIC V. ANALOGY

When oil is equated with the blood of the earth and catastrophic reactions from the other parts of nature are threatened if the oil is extracted, it is evident that anthropomorphic language is being used. Technicians and academics, politicians and journalists fall silent with sincere inhibition, afraid their eventual derogatory expressions toward this language will offend certain sensibilities, mainly those of groups

U'Wa chief Roberto Afandor Cobarria.

Javier Giraldo S.J. is the Executive Secretary of the Bogotá-based Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace. The first article in the series appeared in the Winter 1997-98 issue of *Colombia Bulletin*. Part three will conclude the series in the next *Colombia Bulletin*.

which have, according to them, idealized ethnic minorities and their cultures, principally since the commemoration of the 500th anniversary [of Columbus' 1492 landfall] or since the proliferation of ecological groups. But the very silence itself reveals a radical difference in language.

It is no longer only a problem of distance between signifier and meaning, but rather an apparent confusion of fields of analysis and the logic applicable in each field. The problem of oil, say the technicians, should be handled according to the open laws, verified and verifiable,

which regulate the extraction, refining, transportation, and consumption of oil; according to the international market's norms for energy resources; according to the legal systems of ownership of the subsoil and claims of privilege. But trying to apply to these laws the physiology which governs the functioning of the blood and its relationship to the epidermis would be carrying oneself over onto a completely alien field, and this could be revealing ignorance, lack of culture, outdatedness, or dementia.

This seeming caricature, which it isn't, re-

Nonviolent Action in Colombia

by *Tricia Smith*

The term nonviolence is an ambiguous one for many in Colombia, particularly for those who are victims of the political violence. During my three-month investigation in Bogotá on non-violent action, I met activists who were committed to nonviolence and able to achieve change through their actions. They understood the practicality of non-violence. Some had discovered that non-violent action is, as scholar Gene Sharp describes it "a means of wielding power" through their protests, non-cooperation and direct action.

Some of the most creative and daring acts in defiance to Colombian violence can be found in the unarmed, often unpublicized nonviolent actions.

One example is that of the women and children of Punta de Piedra, a hamlet of Necoclí in the region of Urabá. During Holy Week of 1996, a group of paramilitary assassins stormed the village in broad daylight and demanded two men they claimed were guerrilla member. They found the men, tied them up and were ready to publicly execute them.

According to a *Justicia y Paz* human rights worker who investigated the case, a lone woman stepped forward and insisted that the men were not guerrillas but honorable men and community leaders. Then the women and children present physically intervened, arguing for the release of the accused men and urging the gunmen to give them time to prove the men's innocence. Soon after, several men of the village stepped forward, followed by members of the Red Cross stationed nearby who had come

to investigate the commotion. The paramilitaries retreated and left the two men alive.

A second example is the Community Association of Peasant Workers (ATCC) of the village of La India in Santander. In the early 1980s, the people of La India were caught in the middle of the conflict between the guerrilla, the army and the paramilitaries. The people were subjected to arbitrary interrogations and threats. They were forced to pay bribes. Many innocent people were tortured, disappeared and publicly executed. The civilians were given three options: Unite with one group to fight the other, flee the region, or resign to an imminent death.

In 1987, a group of about ten peasants met together in private to begin planning a strategy to nonviolently confront both groups and declare their village a neutral zone. They called their plan "el Cuarto Camino," or fourth path, since it offered an alternative to the three options given by the armed groups. It was a plan to declare their neutrality and refusal to cooperate with any armed group.

Twenty unarmed men who comprised the newly formed ATCC group confronted the commander of the guerrilla and his troops in a public meeting and declared their refusal to cooperate with guerrilla demands. According to testimonies by Carlos Eduardo Correa Jaramillo, S.J., the guerrilla commander received them saying, "Here, we are the ones who give the orders and you are the ones who obey." The spokesman for the group boldly replied, "No, we have come with demands of our own... If what

you want is to kill us, kill us all here at once. It is the people and not I who speak." ¹ A four-hour discussion ensued. In the end, the commander agreed to respect the neutrality of La India's civilians under the condition that they confront the army and similarly declare their neutrality.

Two weeks later, the now-larger ATCC held a meeting with three top Colombian military generals. They declared that they would no longer cooperate with any group in the conflict, and they asked the army to remove the MAS paramilitaries from the region. The generals said they had nothing to do with MAS, to which the peasants replied, "You can say that to the press, to the radio, to the television, but not to us. You brought MAS here to La India, you took us out of our houses so that we would go to their meetings." ² Though they did not accept responsibility for the ATCC's allegations, the army officials did agree to respect the neutrality of the civilians.

The successful confrontations with both groups led to a long process of building awareness for peace and developing alternative solutions to conflict. They began to develop their own system of nonviolent law-enforcement. Once a loaded truck attempted to drive across the only bridge leading to the village. Knowing that the bridge would collapse under the weight of the truck, the townspeople surrounded the truck until the driver agreed to unload his cargo. On another occasion, gunshots were heard at a nearby farm. Immediately the townspeople came together and, with white flag in hand, proceeded to the farm to

veals another one of the traps of the dominant language: it is a language that has expelled analogy and has advanced too far along the path of specializations, making these into yet another mechanism of domination.

The fragmentation of reality into disconnected compartments, each with its own and independent norms, seems inspired by the conquistadors' motto: "divide and conquer." When it is a question of manipulating and dominating with a view to the consolidation of a power, compartmentalization is the most effective method.

Analogy is at the root of poetry itself and of the infinite stories that make up folk wisdom. But precisely this has perhaps placed it in counterpoint to science, attributing it to a "poetic vision of reality," understanding it as "useless." However, both evolutionary science and ecology have called into question the "scientificity" of the compartmentalized worldviews and their instruments of analysis.

Many scientists have discovered, for example, a similarity of structure between anatomy and grammar, based on their relational systems,

investigate. As it turned out, it was just a false alarm and the townspeople found the family alive and safe. The ATCC of La India was internationally recognized and awarded the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize for their commitment to non-violence in this very violent country.

However, the story does not end with "...and they all lived happily ever after". Nonviolent action in Colombia is nothing less than a continuous struggle and reactionary violence often follows. Nearly five years after their declaration of neutrality, paramilitary assassins shot and killed three leaders of the ATCC organization, a mayor and a journalist. The massacre did not destroy the solidarity and commitment to nonviolence that the people of La India had worked so hard to build. Conversely, the massacre may have had an adverse effect on the paramilitary. By this time, the village had already received national and international recognition for their success. Public outcry in response to the massacre was overwhelming. Though in the end, the alleged assassins were tried but not convicted for the crime, the ATCC lives on in La India and no other reported attacks have occurred there since.

A third notable example of nonviolent action is that of a young conscientious objector, Luis Gabriel Caldas. In 1993, Luis Gabriel, a recent high school graduate, was drafted to serve a year in the Colombian army. On the day of his appointment with the army recruiter, he arrived at the battalion with a letter in which he declared himself a conscientious objector and stated why he refused to serve in the Colombian army —that he was not a subversive, but a loyal citizen who "is hurt by the evils produced by injustice and violence" and is com-

mitted to serving his country within an institution that does not rely upon violence to achieve its ends. He requested permission to give his year of public service by working in an environmental program.

Caldas' conscientious objection, a right guaranteed in the 1991 Constitution, was denied and the Office of Recruitment enlisted him as a police auxiliary. When he failed to appear in August for basic training, he was charged with desertion and sentenced to seven months in prison. The day before his sentence was up, he was notified that he would have to serve in the army for one year or return to prison for another seven months. His imprisonment would continue either until he agreed to serve his time in the military or until he was turned fifty years old and was no longer eligible for active duty. Faced with this threat, he fled Bogotá and now lives in anonymity.

Though Caldas' conflict is far from resolved, his struggle has set a precedent and led to significant changes in the Colombian military. In the past four years roughly a dozen young men have declared their refusal to serve in the military, according to Ricardo Pinzón, director of the Collective for Conscientious Objectors, COC. Recruitment officers have told the boys that their service is not needed. Since the Caldas case, the Colombian army appears to have unofficially recognized the right to conscientious objection.

The nonviolent actions of Caldas and the ATCC are bold acts by Colombians who insist that the armed groups in their country humanize the conflict and that the army work to protect its people —not destroy them. Like the towns-

people of Punta de Piedra and the ATCC, successful nonviolent groups have stood together and refused to let their members be isolated and targeted by those who seek to break their solidarity.

These activists know that nonviolence does not equal passivity but instead offers an alternative to the "fight or flight" mentality. Nonviolent action in Colombia is a weapon, not as a shield. It is not about saying to violent groups, "We're nonviolent, so please don't hurt us," and then resigning to imminent martyrdom. Rather, it is about saying, "We're nonviolent and we will not allow you to do this."

Many nonviolent activists in Colombia accept the risk of repression. But they also utilize effective defense mechanisms to counter the threat against them: constant media attention, international support, decentralized leadership (making it difficult for opponents to target a leader and thereby destroy the movement), and strong, public displays of community solidarity.

Dynamic nonviolent action offers promise to those struggling to defend the basic rights of civilians caught in the bloody war. Nonviolent action seeks to rise above the terror and intimidation and challenges the state to do the same. Through further experimentation, nonviolent action offers Colombians a potential solution for breaking the nation's cycle of bloodshed. ■

¹ Correa Jaramillo, Carlos Eduardo S.J. *Y Dios se hizo paz en la vida de su pueblo.* (Bogotá: Ediciones Antropos LTDA, 1991) 134.

² Medina Gallego, Carlos. *Autodefensas, Paramilitares, y Narcotráfico en Colombia.* (Bogotá: Editorial Documentos Periodistas, 1990) 398.

their methods of communication and their end purposes. Max Weber discovered profound relationships between “the Protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism,” despite their belonging to such different fields. The German historian Erwin Panofsky discovered unexpected similarities between Gothic architecture and scholastic thought.

Evolutionary/ecological epistemology has revealed that all science begins by detecting codifiable constants, and that among these codes, many reveal formal similarities which are applied - analogically - to sequential constants of different orders of beings or different processes. This new science has revealed that there is a fundamental analogy between the mechanisms operating in any of the fields of nature. And the basic hypotheses of evolutionary epistemology are tied to a projection, onto all planes of the universe, of the mechanisms that occur in the human body.

Nor do the U’was have the “scientific” sophistication to show the technicians at OXY the formal, codifiable correspondence between the role played by the oil inside the earth and that played by blood inside the human body. But where the ancestral wisdom of the U’was does coincide with modern ecological epistemology is in understanding nature as an anthropomorphic organism, wherein are projected in a primordial state the same formal codes which in the human body regulate and protect life, feeling, thought, and love.

SCIENCE V. WISDOM

The conflict between OXY and the U’was is seen by large segments of public opinion as a conflict of knowledge over issues of “development.” Facing off on the one side we would find an advanced technology, and on the other an ancestral tradition of a mythic and superstitious nature. Only the first could claim for itself the status of “science” or of “valid knowledge.”

The concept of science encompassed much more in antiquity, and through the Renaissance. The different kinds of knowledge—concrete and abstract; humanistic, physical and transcendent—shared the same scientific status and always sought their coordination, at least through certain philosophical tracts which had this task, they being cosmology, ontology and epistemology. But as knowledge became more self serving and came to confuse verifiability with effectiveness-in-the-manipulation-of-reality at the service of the “knower,” the very notion of science began to be restricted and all knowledge that was non-effective, non-quantifiable, and non-manipulable came to be excluded from its field. “Science” thus

came to be reserved for fields of knowledge which attracted the interest of those who wished to manipulate reality effectively in the service of some end result. Science became, then, quantitative, lucrative, costly, elitist, and compartmentalized.

Even sciences which had been humanist, such as sociology, in order to keep their scientific status began pursuing quantifiable and pragmatic knowledge. They abandoned the analysis of the structures and systems where previously had converged all things human, from economics to theology, in an impassioned search for harmony or contradiction.

But not only was the work of coordinating different kinds of knowledge abandoned as a field of science, but science also separated itself completely from any relation with the world of values: ethics, religion, ideologies, utopias. “Science” boasted more and more about its valorative asepsia. Moreover, its modern identity card envisages a pristine freedom of contamination from the world of values, as if unaware that this aseptic state precisely makes it more vulnerable to ideology, in the most pejorative sense of the word: as covert service, “tricky” and not transparent, to the dominant interests or anti-values.

Jean Francois Lyotard, on analyzing the decomposition of modernity, refers to “knowledge in computerized societies” in the following way:

The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissoluble from the shaping of the spirit and even of the person is falling, and will fall even further, into disuse. This relationship between knowledge and the purveyors and users of it is tending, and will tend even more, to take on the form that the producers and consumers of merchandise maintain with it (the merchandise) which is to say, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced to be sold, and is and will be consumed in order to be valued in a new production: in both situations, to be exchanged. It ceases being an end in itself, loses its intrinsic “usefulness.”¹

It cannot be denied that specialization in the sciences has made them more effective in handling the world. But equally clear is that the “scientific” handling of the world has dehumanized it. It has brought the planet to an ecological catastrophe and humanity to a summit of injustice. The genius of a Jean Piaget, when trying to redefine the epistemological regime of philosophy, led him to identify its two greatest tasks as the very ones that “science” had eliminated from its domain: a reasoned synthesis of knowledge and a coordination between the world of knowledge and the world of values. This had always been the field of traditional wisdom. And is why Piaget restores philosophy to the status of Wisdom.² ■

¹ Lyotard, Jean Francois, *La condicion postmoderna*, Rei, Mexico, 1990, p.16

² Piaget, Jean, *Sabiduría e ilusiones de la Filosofía*, Península, Barcelona, 1970, p.115 When there is a clash between wisdom and science, as in the conflict between OXY and the U’was, the very least to be demanded is a respect for other knowledges and a sacred respect for the world of values.

Next Issue:
LAW AND JUSTICE

June Delegation to Visit Indigenous, Afro-Colombian Communities

We hope to bring together people who, upon returning from the trip, will share their experiences with their local communities and media to call attention to the situation in Colombia.

THE COLOMBIA MEDIA PROJECT, NY and the Colombia Human Rights Committee, Washington, DC, invite you to participate in a special people to people encounter in Colombia scheduled for June 21 to July 4, 1998. The two-week delegation is part of an ongoing solidarity campaign with the people of Colombia in a period of intense internal conflict and a rapidly expanding U.S. military presence. It is intended to continue building links with some of the people most affected by the civil war: Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

As in our previous delegation in 1997, we will be hosted by two prominent Indigenous organizations: The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, and the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, CRIC. We will be visiting Indigenous communities in Southwest Colombia, as well as the Afro-Colombian communities in the department of Choco, which has recently become a center of paramilitary activity.

ONIC and CRIC, two of the largest Indigenous organizations in Latin America, have been at the forefront of the struggles for the rights of Indigenous, peasant and working people of Colombia. They have been organizing a number of major projects aimed at improving the conditions of the many communities of the region, including education, culture, environmental protection, women's leadership, human rights, traditional medicine, and economic development. In the department of Cauca, as in other parts of the country, these programs have been threatened by the damaging effects of the U.S. sponsored drug war, continuous government persecution, and outright neglect.

The northern department of Choco is located in a rain forest that contains one of the richest ecosystems in the world and is currently endangered by multinational mega-projects, as well as escalating paramilitary activity. We will visit some of the leading organizations, both African-Colombian as well as Indigenous, who are working for the defense of the natural resources, as well as for the titling of their collective lands.

The delegation includes four days in Bogotá, where participants will meet with non-

governmental human rights organizations, elected officials, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian lawmakers, and the ONIC leadership. This series of meetings is designed to get the delegates up to date with the ongoing sociopolitical crisis unfolding in Colombia, and the state of human rights, especially for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

Delegates will also participate in the 5th Indigenous national congress of ONIC where over 2,000 Indigenous leaders from throughout the country meet every four years to discuss the direction of the Colombian Indigenous Movement, as well as national and local programs.

It will then be followed by a 4-day visit to the southern province of Cauca, where delegates will meet with CRIC leaders, visit Indigenous families, Indian schools, and industrial and agricultural cooperatives. Participants in the delegation will also visit some of the areas which have been targeted by the U.S.-backed illicit crop eradication campaign and see first hand how Indigenous communities have been affected by this policy. We will also take boxes of donated school supplies to the communities as gifts in a symbolic gesture to counterpoint the increasing amounts of U.S. military aid currently given to the country.

We are hoping to bring together activists, journalists, students, academics, church and community leaders who upon returning from the trip will share their experiences with their local communities and media to call attention to the situation in Colombia.

The cost is \$1,550 and includes r/t airfare to Colombia, on-the-ground transportation in the country, lodging, two meals a day, Spanish/English interpretation and information materials.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ☎ For application materials and for more information you can contact the Colombia Media Project at PO Box 1091, New York, NY 10116, Tel. (212) 802-7209, Fax. (718) 369-4182, E-mail: mmcompa@igc.apc.org or the Colombia Human Rights Committee of Washington, DC at PO Box 3130, Washington DC 20010, Tel. (212) 232-8148, Fax. (202) 462-4724; E-mail: colhrc@igc.apc.org ■

Delegates Will Lobby Authorities for Human Rights, Establish Sister Communities

THE COLOMBIA SUPPORT NETWORK will be joined by Detroit's Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, a representative from the International Committee for the Peace Council and other dignitaries as part of May delegations to Colombia to visit the nation's capital as well as communities that have been plagued by human rights violations. In addition to the usual efforts to acquaint North American delegates with the problems of human rights in Colombia, and to lobby against government complicity in human rights violations, the visit will also facilitate several new sister-city/community relationships between the U.S. and Colombia.

Part of the delegation will go to Apartado—CSN-Madison's sister city — where they will meet with Monsignor Tullio Duque to learn how the conflict has impacted the community and to get an update on the current situation.

The other part of the delegation will travel to Barrancabermeja where they will be briefed on the background and the grassroots concerns of people in the region by Monsignor Jaime Prieto.

Both groups plan to meet with representatives from refugees, women's groups, human rights organization and regional military commanders. Delegates from various U.S. locations will also be able to travel to their proposed sister communities in Colombia.

The delegation will be reunited in Bogotá. There they will dialogue with a wide variety of nongovernmental organizations like the Colombia Commission of Jurists (which engages in international litigation against human rights violations by the government); Justice and Peace (a group that documents human rights violations in Colombia, provides educational resources about the human rights situation, and accompanies community leaders who have been threatened); Program for Peace (a group that finances community projects and educational programs, as well as organizing the national Peace Week campaign); CINEP (the largest think tank in Latin America, CINEP does broad research and trains health workers and teachers to provide services to community in need); ASCODAS, ANDAS,



A previous delegation visited Comunidad de Paz de San Josw de Apartado, sister-community to Madison, Wisc.

MINGA (groups working with refugees); and ASFADDES (an organization that works with the families of disappeared persons).

The delegates also plan to dialogue with the government officials including the Minister of the Interior, the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, the Minister of Defense, the Colombia Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights. Other meetings will be held with political organizations like the Patriotic Union Party (an organization which, after gaining significant grassroots victories in local electoral campaigns across the country, was virtually wiped out in a furious wave of assassinations) as well as any number of elected officials. ■

We will dialogue with government officials, political organizations, community leaders and human rights activists.

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE SUMMER. FALL

WHAT YOU CAN DO ☞ Help spread the word about Colombia by attending a Report-Back from this delegation. Chicago, Madison, Boston, Seattle and Champaign-Urbana are already planning Report-Back updates.

☞ Host a member of the delegation in your town at an event to bring back the latest report on what's happening in Colombia. You can contact the Colombia Support Network for the availability of a speaker near your town at P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI 53701, (608) 257-8753, csn@igc.apc.org

Urgent Action Service

In partnership with the St. Louis Human Rights Action Service (SLHRAS) we have established an Urgent Action Service to provide busy people with a way to respond to human rights abuses in Colombia.

A monthly personalized letter or fax is sent for you to government/military officials in response to human rights abuses in Colombia. The service costs \$50/year, provides 11 communications/year and gives you an opportunity to amend response before they are sent, if so desired.

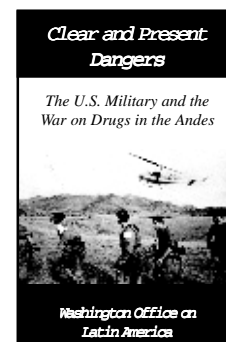
SLHRAS is run by Bill Ramsey, a human rights activist with 20 years experience in media and urgent action campaigns for the AFSC.

CSN Urgent Action Service
c/o Human Rights Action Service · 438 N. Skinker · St. Louis, MO 63130



WOLA Publications on Colombia

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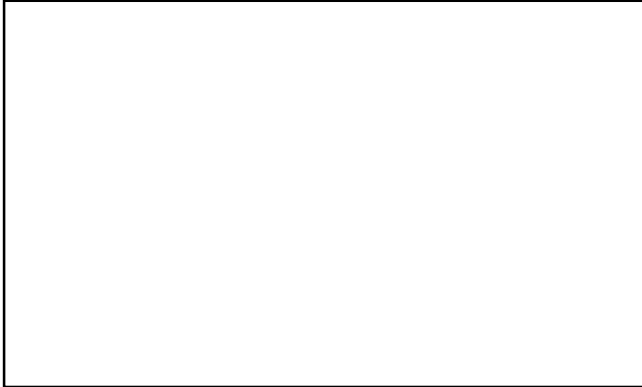
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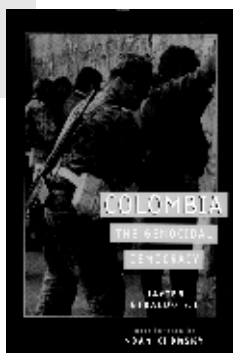
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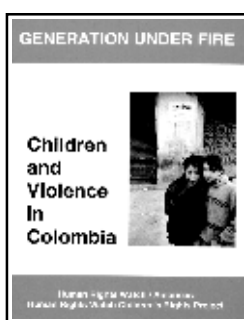
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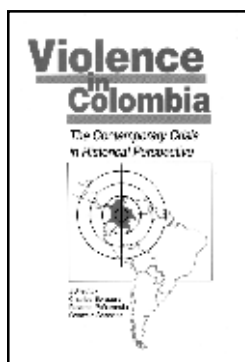
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