

## Andean Report by Valerie Rush

### Weapons for drugs . . . again

*Interception of two vast weapons shipments to Colombia's guerrillas bares once again the narco-Soviet link.*

**T**wo large clandestine shipments of weapons from Europe to Ibero-America have been intercepted since the beginning of 1989. The shipments were paid for with illegal narcotics profits and were destined for Colombia's guerrilla movement. The size of the shipments, one of them alone worth \$8 million, suggests that Soviet irregular warfare against the geostrategic Andean Spine may be slated for a final showdown this year.

The first shipment, including 1,000 long-range attack rifles, 250 machine guns, 10 grenade launchers, 600 grenades, and an undetermined number of pistols, was bought from the Hecker und Koch company of West Germany, shipped by boat from Portugal to Jamaica, and was to be flown from there to the Colombian region of Uraba, which is dominated by the Moscow-linked FARC guerrillas.

Alerted by Colombian military intelligence which had been following the deal since its planning phase in January 1988, the Jamaican authorities seized the shipment and the smugglers. The shipment was transported to Colombia by Colombian Air Force jet. The arrested smugglers, both Jamaican and Colombian authorities say, worked for the cocaine-running Medellín Cartel, and had reportedly paid cash for the weapons in Portugal in exchange for a shipment of cocaine from the FARC.

While FARC chief Jacobo Arenas issued a communiqué denying the weapons were his and charging a military conspiracy to discredit the guerrilla group's peaceful vocation, Colombian Defense Minister Gen. Man-

uel Jaime Guerrero Paz charged in a Jan. 10 press conference that the FARC's unilateral declaration of a Christmas truce was clearly a cover for smuggling the weapons in.

A second shipment of weapons was purchased, also from Hecker und Koch, by a German arms dealer based in Belgium. The payment was made through a letter of credit drawn on an East German bank, and the crates of guns embarked from the East German port of Rostock. The scheme was thwarted by the British government.

Drawing the obvious conclusions, the Bogotá daily *El Espectador* editorialized Jan. 10, "Once again the alliance between that irregular militia and the drug trade comes into the public light. And not just in any old way [but] to warn us, among other things, of the sinister presage of its eventual domination. . . . One last question: Where does this leave the much-crowded-about peace talks?"

*El Espectador's* final point goes to the heart of the tragedy playing itself out in Colombia. Even as the defense minister identified the FARC's pretended truce and professions of peacefulness as a smokescreen for escalating its war, the Barco government was pushing ahead with its fantasy of "dialogue" with the M-19 guerrilla group. On Jan. 11, the government co-signed its first peace treaty with M-19 chief-tain Carlos Pizarro León-Gómez, which pledged "democratic reforms" in exchange for "demobilization" of the rebels.

Although the Barco government made much of the fact that the M-19 had been singled out for special treat-

ment because it had proven its peaceful vocation "by word and deed," every Colombian knows that the M-19 operates within the same umbrella organization, the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Council, with the FARC and its equally bloody EPL and ELN terrorist partners.

In fact, during the M-19's three hours of talks with presidential peace adviser Rafael Pardo Rueda, a document written by Pizarro León-Gómez was read, demanding that the government's willingness to hold a dialogue be extended to the entire Coordinating Council since it is "absolutely united." FARC chief Arenas told the daily *La Prensa* that same day, "The government and its advisers think that it is better to speak to us individually and I say they are wrong. [The Coordinating Council] has accepted the foundations of a political philosophy based on unity . . . [and] I could not subscribe to any agreement without approval by the entire Coordinating Council."

Demonstrating its credentials for inclusion in the government/M-19 dialogue, the FARC began the new year by invading a cement factory in Antioquia department, and stoning to death six plant directors who were allegedly working with the Armed Forces in the area. And, lest the M-19 convince the naive that it is the "good boy on the block," the reader is reminded that it was the M-19 which, in 1986, stormed the Colombian Justice Palace, slaughtered half the Supreme Court, and gutted the national legal archives—all on orders of the drug mafia. It was also the M-19 which only last year kidnaped ex-presidential candidate Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, murdered his bodyguard, and blackmailed the government into initiating a "peace dialogue" as Gómez's ransom price.