

# Barco government joins narco-terrorists

by Valerie Rush

The Barco government in Colombia has entered into a deadly alliance with Soviet-backed narco-terrorism, a precedent which could consign the continent to a fate of perpetual warfare, El Salvador-style. The peace pact signed last month with the Satanic M-19 guerrilla movement explicitly includes the presidential pardon of the entire M-19 leadership, currently facing arrest warrants for their role in directing the November 1985 seizure of the Colombian Justice Palace, which resulted in the slaughter of 100 individuals, including half of the Supreme Court Justices, and the gutting of the national legal archives. That "guerrilla" action, it has since been acknowledged, was contracted and financed by the Medellín cocaine cartel.

Even more appalling is that President Barco's pact with the narco-terrorists contains his unwritten promise to castrate his own armed forces, through elimination of the universally recognized practice of military justice. The chipping away at military jurisdiction began with the 1988 appointment of Attorney General Horacio Serpa Uribe, an open communist sympathizer, following the narco-terrorist assassination of his predecessor, Carlos Mauro Hoyos. Communist appeals to the Attorney General's office for investigation of alleged military involvement in anti-guerrilla vigilante actions have been taken up with zeal, while the increasingly well armed guerrilla forces continue their butchery of soldiers and civilians alike with impunity.

Since the appointment, the government has jointly participated in a number of public forums and "peace dialogues" with guerrilla representatives around the country. At each of these, the Communists have demanded a cessation of all military activity nationwide as a condition for further peace advances, while government spokesmen have issued mealy-mouthed appeals for a generalized end to violence.

On Jan. 25, President Barco sent a letter to Attorney General Serpa Uribe, granting his office oversight over armed forces' activity. On Feb. 7, the Communist Party electoral front Patriotic Union (UP)—made up of "former" guerrillas—sent a letter to Barco explicitly demanding the "purification" of the armed forces. The President sent the letter on to Defense Minister Gen. Jaime Guerrero Paz, with an appended note urging a ministry investigation of the UP's charges against the military. The general, in turn, forwarded the petition to the Attorney General's office, declaring that his position as an active military officer prevented his partic-

ipation in such an investigation. Serpa Uribe wasted no time in appointing a special investigatory commission. One week later, the Colombian Supreme Court issued an unprecedented decision that civilian justice can now try military personnel accused of "common crimes."

The Barco government's open complicity with the Communists' anti-military offensive was denounced by one bold newspaper journalist, who commented on the nation's disquieting response to the January seizure in Jamaica of ten tons of weapons purchased by the Soviet-backed FARC guerrillas of Colombia. Wrote *El Tiempo* journalist Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, FARC chief "Jacobó Arenas is believed. The Defense Minister not. The words of the former have the unmistakable brilliance of a cheap trinket. The evidence provided by the latter has the weight of arms. Ten tons worth, destined to kill soldiers, policemen, officials, peasants. But the first has weight and the second not."

In any other threatened democracy, continued Apuleyo Mendoza, seizure of the weapons would have produced jubilation, but in Colombia "it caused doubts, suspicion, gratuitous accusations, as if the whole operation were a trick mounted by General Guerrero Paz and by the military command to sabotage dialogue with the guerrillas." The journalist concludes with a warning to Justice Minister Plazas Alcid, who regularly speaks of "seeking the peace." Writes Apuleyo Mendoza, "Peace with whom, Mr. Minister? With assassins? Criminals of the left and right have declared war on justice, and you have no choice but to win the peace by making the weight of the law felt. . . . The assassins, rest assured, are not going to be sensitive to your sermons. They will only cede to force."

The Barco government is apparently not accepting such sane advice. In fact, its treasonous behavior appears to be worsening. An interception by Italian authorities of a 170-ton illegal weapons shipment destined for the Colombian port of Cartagena has been totally ignored by Colombian authorities, despite Italian press reports that it was purchased with narco-dollars to outfit an army of 5,000 guerrillas! Both the Colombian defense and foreign ministries have repeatedly claimed total ignorance of the Italian affair, while the Colombian ambassador to Italy has responded to inquiries with a curt, "The case is closed." The Italian press has conjectured that the weapons shipment was linked to a Colombian cocaine ring operating in Savona, which was reportedly collaborating with the M-19 guerrillas.

On the surface, the Armed Forces' response to Barco's betrayal has been low-key, but observers say the military is nonetheless at the boiling point. The defense minister called a special closed-door luncheon Feb. 22 for 200 retired Colombian generals, including three former defense ministers, plus the current heads of the combined military forces and the army, which, while billed as a "social affair," was widely viewed as a strategy session on the government efforts "to eliminate military justice."