

Terrorist M-19 ceded a piece of Colombia

by Javier Almarío

“The April 19 Movement has pledged to keep its leadership confined to a location whose limits have been determined in tandem with the national government; in said area, the Armed Forces will not conduct operations.” Thus states the latest of a series of communiqués signed by Colombian President Virgilio Barco and the M-19 narco-terrorist guerrillas.

The pact followed closely after indictments had been handed down against the leadership of M-19 for rebellion, homicide, attempted homicide, kidnaping, and fraud, the daily *El Espectador* pointed out in an editorial criticizing Barco’s action on March 18.

In addition to ceding a chunk of Colombia’s national territory to the terrorists, the Barco government has also conducted a series of negotiations—and signed several pacts—with the terrorists designed to allow the M-19 to form a legal political party *without* abandoning its drug-financed terrorist operations. The path for such an arrangement had already been cleared when the Colombian government looked the other way while the Moscow-sponsored Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—allies of the M-19 through the umbrella “Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Group”—created its “legal” Patriotic Union (UP) electoral front, while simultaneously amassing one of the largest and most efficient terrorist armies in all of South America.

The delivery of national territory into the hands of the narco-terrorists sets a deadly precedent for all of Ibero-America. As Conservative Senator Hugo Escobar Sierra noted: “The neutral zones created by the government and the M-19 could become independent republics, outside of national sovereignty and strict compliance with the laws and the Constitution. This should be avoided, because instead of strengthening the peace process, it weakens it.” That, in fact, is precisely one of the strategic goals of the FARC: to create some “free territory” to serve them in internationalizing the conflict and gaining support abroad.

M-19 free zone

The government handed over a village called Santo Domingo, in the rich agricultural Department of Cauca, to the M-19. There, the M-19 will impose their own mayor on the villagers, while M-19 members will run the health center

and, of course, patrol the streets with their own guerrillas, armed with weapons established by law for the exclusive use of the Armed Forces! At the same time, the guerrillas conduct searches of all individuals wishing to enter their “city of peace”—as even the government has now come to call Santo Domingo—to verify that they are not bearing weapons.

The town has been provided with all public services, and especially with telephone service to permit “permanent contact” between the government and the M-19. At the same time, the government has committed itself to maintaining a permanent office in the town, a kind of “embassy” on foreign soil. The government has defined the 100 square kilometers granted the M-19 a “neutral zone.” Ironically, not a single anthropologist has come to the defense of the Indians in the region, who have protested what they call an illegal donation of their lands to the drug-pushing terrorists.

The Barco government shows no indication of halting its plans to hand Colombian territory piecemeal over to the narco-terrorists. On March 17, Interior Minister Raúl Orejuela Bueno visited the M-19’s town, and all the national and regional newspapers published a pathetic photograph showing Minister Orejuela being helped by M-19 chieftain Carlos Pizarro Leóngómez to cross an improvised bridge.

Humiliating the Army

President Barco has given the Armed Forces the demoralizing and humiliating task of protecting these terrorists, to assure that nothing happens to them. “When the guerrilla groups fulfill the conditions of the peace plan, the defense agencies must not only not battle them, but also should give them protection,” said Barco in an impromptu press conference.

Barco also asserted that the government is awaiting similar “good behavior” from Moscow’s FARC, to sign a similar pact with them. Barco’s memory of the M-19’s “good behavior” apparently does not extend back to November 1985, when an M-19 commando unit (contracted and financed by the cocaine-trafficking Medellín Cartel) stormed the Justice Palace in Bogotá, executing half the Supreme Court magistrates, gutting the national legal archives by fire, and triggering a conflagration that left nearly 100 dead. Nor, apparently, does his memory even go back to last year, when Conservative Party leader Alvaro Gómez Hurtado was kidnaped by the M-19 and his bodyguard murdered in cold blood.

In fact, it was just a few months ago and following a series of major military blows by the Army against both the M-19 and FARC—which was discovered operating numerous cocaine refining laboratories—that both narco-terrorist gangs asked for a truce designed to immobilize the military and give the guerrillas some breathing space. The government took the offer—hook, line and sinker—and began a “dialogue” with the terrorists while permitting a political-judicial offensive cloaked in “human rights” trappings to paralyze the Armed Forces.