

'The dirty war': a Washington-Moscow weapon against the military

by Maximiliano Londoño Penilla

The author is the Secretary General of the Andean Labor Party of Colombia, where widespread violence by drug-runners and guerrilla terrorists has been accompanied by a systematic campaign to discredit the armed forces.

When Colombian President Virgilio Barco recently issued his three state-of-siege decrees for putting an end to the bands of assassins that have laid waste to the country, the central executive committee of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) released a statement which said, among other things, "The first step toward the restructuring of the Armed Forces has been made. That step should be followed by others."

Are the Armed Forces responsible for the creation and operations of these bands of assassins, as the Communists claim? President Barco has not made such an assertion. However, his April 19 speech did end with the following: "It cannot be denied that a few individuals belonging to the public force are, in one way or another, collaborating with these terrorist groups. Said individuals are betraying the armed institutions. They are being investigated and will be punished by law as an example to all." At almost the same time, it was announced that two battalion commanders were being relieved of their duties and retired for collaborating with the assassins, according to the press.

By following this simple logic, peace will presumably return to Colombia as soon as the military and police forces, allegedly responsible for violations of human rights, tortures, disappearances, etc., are "restructured." Communist violence, say these epigones of terrorism, is but a response to "state violence." Suppress the latter and all will return to normal.

Is Barco violating the Constitution?

The truth is that if the government continues to accept the Communists' methodology for "solving" the nation's problems, total chaos instead of longed-for peace will be the result. One of the key elements threatening the ruin of Colombia is the overturning of the principle of authority, undermined by the government itself which refuses to exercise power according to constitutional guidelines.

In this regard, it is worth noting Article 16 of the Colombian Constitution: "The authorities of the republic are empowered to protect all the persons resident in Colombia, their lives, their honor and their goods, and to assure compliance with the social duties of the State and of private citizens." Title XVI, which encompasses articles 165 through 170, regulates matters concerning the public forces. In particular, Article 166 says that "the nation will have a permanent army for its defense." Article 169 asserts that "Military personnel cannot be deprived of their grades, honors, and pensions except in those cases and in such a fashion as determined by law." And finally, Article 170 establishes that "Crimes committed by servicemen on active duty and related to that service will be heard by martial or military courts, according to the prescriptions of the Military Penal Code."

It is currently the media—enormously influenced by Communist propaganda—which tries and convicts military and police personnel. The government, rather than using its power to remedy this situation, is instead legitimizing the campaign to discredit the Armed Forces. The military and police thus appear before the public as being responsible for all the evils that afflict the nation. The government, like Pontius Pilate, washes its hands.

Target: 'the sword and the cross'

It appears that Moscow's efforts to undermine the armed institutions of the continent with its "dirty war" slanders are fully shared by Washington. Until a few years ago, Ibero-America was considered a strategic ally of the United States against a common enemy: Communism. Now the United States views the Communists as a partner, as a political ally with whom to share control over the world in a "New Yalta" deal.

To this can be added the fact that official Washington, under the influence of the Project Democracy secret government and in the face of imminent explosion of the world economy under the likely trigger of a new debt crisis, now views the "sword and the cross"—that is, the armies of the continent and the Catholic Church—as its new strategic enemy.

The usurious circles that control United States policy today fear the possible emergence of nationalist sectors among the continent's armed forces which—in the context of an economic crisis—could move with other sectors to transform Ibero-America's impoverished nations into veritable industrial powers. It is no accident, therefore, that the campaigns about “violations of human rights” by the military, and the promotion of so-called “peace dialogues” with narco-terrorists, stem as much from Washington as from Moscow. Henry Kissinger's buddies entrenched in the Bush administration would prefer to deliver Ibero-America over to narco-terrorism rather than cooperate with its former allies in their battle to achieve true economic independence.

The ‘restructuring’ of the armed forces

In the 1988 annual report of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Trilateral Commission creation to smash any opposition to the Establishment's “New Yalta” plans, Chapter 5 recommends the following under the title “Defense of Democracy: The Military Challenge”:

An effort must be undertaken to change military thinking about internal security and subversion. The military cannot consider itself the ultimate guardian of national values, or insist that national security embraces all aspects of policy. Military education must be reformed. . . .

Despite the transition to civilian rule, the political content of military education has remained virtually unchanged. Military curricula mostly continue to emphasize the hard-line anti-Communist worldview of the 1960s, stressing internal subversion as the principal threat to national security. In countries not faced with active insurgencies civilian Presidents rarely share the military's preoccupation with internal security. . . .

The executive committee of the Inter-American Dialogue includes such celebrities as: Sol Linowitz, co-president; Rodrigo Botero Montoya, vice president, former Colombian finance minister, and member of the Brandt Commission; McGeorge Bundy, informally considered the head of the Eastern Establishment, that is, the “president” of the oligarchic families which control the United States; Robert S. McNamara, who was president of the World Bank for 10 years, and former U.S. defense secretary.

These and other equally sinister luminaries do not hide their rage when they write in their report, that in Ibero-America,

Traditional views of the military's role in politics still prevail. Most officers see the armed forces as the ultimate guardians of national interests and guarantors of national security. . . .

Military schools still define national security to

include a wide range of political, socio-economic, and international factors. Policy decisions which normally are reserved to civilian authority in the United States or Europe are viewed in Latin America as having military implications. Accordingly, officers feel their views should count heavily.

Narco-terrorism captures the nation

Instead of strengthening Colombia's military and police forces by expanding troop strength and providing appropriate weapons and equipment so that they can fulfill their function of guaranteeing the security of the citizenry, the government has abandoned entire vast regions of the country to the bloody reign of the narco-terrorists. Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that the idea of “taking justice into one's own hands” has begun to crystallize. The mentality is now one of *sauve qui peut*.

In some regions of the country where there is no effective military presence, and especially where the drug traffickers conduct their sinister activities, many of the mafiosi have decided to deploy their hired thugs to carry out “anti-Communist” operations. The narcos recognize that the majority of Colombians are anti-Communist and therefore hope to take advantage of the sense of helplessness in the face of growing terrorism to garner popular sympathies. In the beginning, the narcos—with their strutting self-confidence and their well-equipped armies—did win some support for their “anti-Communist” public relations efforts. But within a short time, the people discovered that the narcos were in fact using their bands of assassins to consolidate political, economic, and armed control over important regions of the country.

This battle for total hegemony over certain portions of Colombia has not, however, affected the narco-terrorist alliance which continues to exist in specific zones. For the traffickers, the “guerrillas” are temporary partners in the weapons trade, in providing security protection for their drug crops, and similar business arrangements. But the narcos have no loyalty toward their partners, and annihilate them whenever they perceive additional benefit to be gained in that direction. For the terrorists, the relationship with the narcos is more complex. On the one hand, the narcos are business partners from whom logistical and financial profits can be had. Even more importantly, the narcos are *political* allies serving to undermine existing culture and contributing to the defeat of “the system.”

This latter goal was the strategy defined by former KGB chief Yuri Andropov when, during the sixties, the Warsaw Pact security services under his direction established a policy of alliance with the drug trade, not for economic reasons but out of strategic concern to sink the West by fomenting the drug counterculture.

An end to military jurisdiction?

The terrorists are not stupid and have espied in the prolifer-

eration of the bands of narco-assassins a great opportunity to carry out their own plans for the "restructuring" of the armed forces, plans which in reality mean the demoralization and ultimate dismantling of the one force capable of halting their bid for power on the field of battle.

The intention of the Communist Party and its armed force, FARC, has been to use the members of the Communist electoral front, the Patriotic Union (UP), as cannon fodder, to be regularly "massacred" by the narco bands. With terrorists now appearing as "political martyrs," the FARC and the Communist Party have been demanding the dismantling of these assassins bands as the precondition for entering into Barco's "peace initiative" dialogue. The Communists then accused the Army and police of being the sponsors and defenders of the assassins by deliberately confusing the narcos' creations with authentic anti-terrorist self-defense groups.

Rather than confront this insidious campaign by reestablishing the principle of authority, the Barco administration has helped the Communists' efforts along. Alvaro Tirado Mejía, the presidential adviser on human rights, has dedicated himself to legitimizing any group which claims to oppose "torture," "military excesses," and "human rights violations." Under his watch, the Communists' have succeeded in transforming the image of the Colombian Armed Forces from defenders of the nation to a band of mercenaries and cut-throats.

A civil prosecutor has been given judicial oversight over the Armed Forces, because putting a military man in that post was not considered "trustworthy." The former Attorney General of the Republic, the pro-drug Horacio Uribe Serpa, was instrumental in the campaign against the military and police, using certain legal precedents to dismantle the tradition of military jurisdiction by imposing civil judges to hear military legal cases. His successor, former legislator Alfonso Gómez Méndez, is as notorious for his "former" electoral association with the Communists as he is for his recent marriage to "journalist" Patricia Lara, who was denied entrance to the United States not long ago because of her known ties to Cuban intelligence and publicly professed sympathies for the narco-terrorist M-19.

It was Alfonso Gómez Méndez who ordered the chief of the Colombian Army to retire two battalion commanders upon whose heads had fallen the Communist accusation of being "narco-collaborators."

It is as dangerous to allow the narco-assassins to wear the mantle of anti-Communism as it is to permit the guerrillas to don the mantle of fighting against drugs and violence. If the government truly wants to eliminate the bands of assassins, it must declare a war to the death against Soviet-backed narco-terrorism, in all its disguises. Instead, it offers "dialogue" to the Communists and permits the Armed Forces to be slandered as "narco-collaborators." The extradition treaty with the United States—the most effective weapon Colombia had against the drug-traffickers—is currently a dead letter,

and the government has done nothing effective to revive it. Despite all the talk about expropriation, the properties and stocks of the narcos remain sacrosanct. Mafia public relations men continue to push the legalization of drugs, and the press, radio and television give their propaganda free coverage.

At the same time, guerrilla bands continue to lay siege to entire cities, kidnaping and murdering political and business targets, destroying the economic infrastructure of the nation, assassinating the police and military.

The Communist Party used the members of its electoral front to be regularly "massacred" by the narco bands and then accused the Army and police of protecting the assassins by deliberately confusing the narcos' creations with authentic anti-terrorist self-defense groups.

The lesson the Colombian people must draw from the current situation is that the legitimate exercise of authority to maintain order and the security of the nation cannot lie with either the well-armed narcos nor with the Communists. Neither do the military and police forces constitute the armed wing of the current ruling party. Rather, the Armed Forces are the army of the Republic, with the task of defending national sovereignty.

In anticipation of the 1990 presidential elections in Colombia, the terrorists will unleash a new wave of violence and destabilization, as FARC chief Jacobo Arenas has already threatened. The terrorists will argue that President Barco did not meet their demands, and thereby betrayed the peace dialogue. Under these circumstances, the Communists hope to have already succeeded in fracturing the unity of the Armed Forces with its "dirty war" slanders. Barco's much-publicized "peace process" will then have served to provide the terrorists with political breathing space, while further undermining the remaining national institutions.

By compromising with the narco-terrorists, Barco's government will have dug not only its own grave, but also that of millions of Colombians.

Peace is not won with good intentions and ceding to blackmail. What is required is a firm hand and a national project for converting Colombia into an industrial power. Neither of these two elements are on the Barco government's agenda.