

Bangladeshi nationalism, which is associated with the BNP, cannot accept that concept of culture in totality. Although many of Bengali culture's customs and traditions have been accepted without a hitch, proponents of Bangladeshi nationalism view Bengali culture as merely the Hindu-dominated culture of Bengal, and hence, pro-India. In addition, Sheikh Hasina's long stay in India following her father's assassination has provided her opponents an opportunity to claim that the Awami League is somehow a creature of India.

Rejecting Bengali culture as such, the proponents of Bangladeshi nationalism have moved towards combining parts of Bengali culture with Islam to give a definable identity to Bangladesh's culture. The ad-mix is not only liked by BNP supporters, but it provides a platform for pro-Islam religious parties to interact with the BNP. Besides, those in Bangladesh who fear Indian hegemonism in the region, not an insignificant number, find the platform more likeable.

Both these factors have helped Begum Zia win a large number of seats in urban areas. The urban elite, still afraid that the military will move in if an "anti-military" government comes to power, likes Begum Zia's rapport with the military. At the same time, the strongest anti-India voices within the Bangladeshi elite can be found in large numbers in the urban centers. Many of these urbanites have benefited from the vast sums of money that come in as aid from western countries, as well as from both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. While the beneficiaries of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are trained to be anti-India, the beneficiaries of West Asian funds are both anti-India as well as pro-Islam.

What free trade?

In addition, Begum Khaleda Zia, whose exposure to foreign affairs is less than adequate, has campaigned for "free trade." In Bangladesh's economic context, this can only mean looting of the country's raw materials and its cheap labor by other nations, under the auspices of the World Bank/IMF austerity dictates. Since Bangladesh has an extremely weak industrial infrastructure, and an almost self-sufficient agriculture, promotion of a free trade regime will bankrupt the country further. With Bangladesh about 85% dependent on foreign grants for developmental work of any kind, it is unclear what kind of leverage Begum Zia has to protect her nation's interests if Bangladesh is forced to practice free trade.

Nonetheless, Begum Zia's utterances have pleased the United States. The U.S. ambassador to Dhaka, William B. Milam, told the acting Bangladesh President that "as a gesture of goodwill," the United States had decided to waive a \$300 million loan. Again, if Begum Zia can accommodate the Jamaat, which in its manifesto has called for establishment of a "true Islamic state," in her Cabinet, it is likely that some financial help would also come in from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Gaviria, Bush side with narco-terrorism

by Andrea Olivieri

The latest estimate of damage caused so far this year to Colombia's transportation, communications, and power grids, and to the mining, oil, agriculture, industry, and trade sectors by the rampaging FARC and ELN "narco-guerrillas," stands at \$400 million and climbing, according to a Feb. 26 report issued by the Development Ministry. That same day, a combined FARC-ELN commando squad dynamited an electrical tower in the Pacific port city of Buenaventura, knocking out all electricity for 280,000 people, and hit a petroleum storage facility in Santander department. Elsewhere that week, a cement factory was assaulted, the country's major oil pipeline dynamited yet again, and dozens of farm tractors, passenger buses, cargo boats, and tractor-trailer trucks blown up or burned in lightning assaults across the country.

And yet, on Feb. 25, President César Gaviria's "peace adviser" Jesús Antonio Bejarano told the media that his government had agreed to hold "informal" talks with those very narco-terrorist groups, in order to bring them into the "political process" in the same way the M-19 and EPL terrorists were amnestied before them. Gaviria's highly touted "peace initiative" includes not only full legal pardon for both the FARC-ELN's previous *and ongoing* acts of subversion—including sabotage, kidnaping, and murder—but would also grant them government protection, political party status, financial rewards, and as many as a dozen seats among the 70 delegates in the Constituent Assembly now engaged in writing a new national constitution.

Washington gives its imprimatur

The Colombian government's official submission to dual-power rule with Moscow's narco-terrorists has already received the seal of approval from the Bush administration. During a five-day visit to the United States Feb. 23-27, Gaviria expounded at great length on his "peace" initiatives, both toward the cocaine cartels and their narco-terrorist guerrilla associates. Despite certain skepticism among U.S. law enforcement layers regarding Gaviria's decision to abandon repression in favor of U.S.-modeled plea-bargaining, President Bush called Gaviria's initiatives "courageous" and "heroic," and promised full cooperation—including signing a treaty with Gaviria pledging to supply Colombia's notori-

ously corrupt judiciary with years' worth of evidence against the drug cartels gathered by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and other security and intelligence services. That evidence, once used *or abused*, becomes worthless in any future trials under the double jeopardy clause.

The *Christian Science Monitor* of Feb. 26 noted that "Mr. Gaviria's U.S. trip takes place against a paradoxical backdrop that includes cocaine traffickers' surrendering to police amid an overall increase in drug violence. . . . From Gaviria's perspective, and from that of some Colombians, the end of cartel terrorist violence, if not the cartel itself, is in sight." The daily adds that "The positive view of [Gaviria's] policy is best expressed by Jaime Castro, a Liberal Party delegate in the National Assembly"; Castro, a former government minister, called for the "progressive decriminalization" of the production, marketing, and consumption of drugs.

While Gaviria's peace tenders to the rampaging FARC and ELN terrorists were significantly downplayed in U.S. media coverage of the Colombian President's trip, it is a known fact that the Bush administration is privately backing U.N.-sponsored initiatives to create a similar dual-power arrangement in El Salvador between the government and FMLN rebels in that country. Colombia's terrorists have explicitly modeled their own negotiating demands on those of their Salvadoran counterparts.

'Negotiating' at the point of a gun

The economic blackmail wreaked by the FARC-ELN's 10-15,000 guerrillas has already forced the weak-kneed Gaviria government to backtrack on a number of the conditions it had successfully imposed on the M-19 and EPL, including the demand for cease-fire and disarmament *before* dialogue. The government is also apparently yielding on the crucial issue of military jurisdiction: A preliminary "consultation" between FARC-ELN representatives and the government's negotiators is scheduled to be held "somewhere" in the region of La Uribe, the FARC's former stronghold in the department of Meta, during which the area is supposed to be *off limits* to the Colombian Armed Forces. In response to complaints that the military was not withdrawing, the Defense Ministry assured the terrorists that any continuing confrontations between its troops and FARC commandos were solely in "restricted" areas, and should have no serious consequences for future government-guerrilla dialogues.

The terrorists are nonetheless using the incident to insist that the appropriate location for such peace talks should be the Constituent Assembly, which was first formed—in explicit violation of Colombia's standing Constitution—as a concession to the M-19 and pro-terrorist left on the one hand, and to the drug cartels and their political protectors on the other. Of course, at the top of the Assembly's agenda are the narco-terrorists' longstanding demands: civilian control over the military, an end to "human rights abuses," and prohib-

iting extradition.

On Feb. 26, the widely read *Semana* magazine noted that if the FARC-ELN are granted the 11 seats on the Assembly they are seeking, they and their allied "former" narco-terrorists will control 33 out of the 70 delegates charged with establishing Colombia's new constitutional foundations! In alliance with the narco-politicians of the Liberal and Conservative parties who bought their way onto the Assembly, the narco-terrorists should have little trouble forcing through their own agenda.

The FARC and ELN have other unqualified demands, including local political control for their amnestied forces, and participation of the "former" terrorists in a civilian police corps. *Semana* notes that President Gaviria and his advisers "have come to the conclusion that in some parts of the country today controlled by the guerrilla, pacification has to be linked to the legitimization of power that the guerrilla already possesses. . . . If today, guerrillas govern outside the law, the idea is to design mechanisms so that they may continue to do so under duly constituted authority."

Semana adds that, "since in not all cases does the presence of the guerrilla coincide with a municipal jurisdiction, the creation of new municipalities in order to provide an institutional base, is not ruled out." The magazine further notes that if the guerrillas' other demand is granted, the FARC-ELN will surrender their weapons amid great pomp and international fanfare, only to be "legally rearmed and absorbed institutionally as civilian police."

Stipend, medical benefits, and a credit line

Finally, based on an evaluation of the government's standing agreement with the amnestied M-19 (only some aspects of which have been publicly revealed), *Semana* reports that each "demobilized" guerrilla is being offered a monthly stipend of \$134 (above the minimum wage), as compared to the \$18 a month earned by the average Colombian soldier. The "ex"-guerrilla is also provided free hospital care, social security benefits, university credit, 14-year agricultural loans, and a hefty credit line. The average Colombian soldier earns no university credit, must pay a percentage of his wages for medical care at a military hospital, and must qualify for bank credit like any other Colombian citizen.

Not all of Colombia's media have such a detached evaluation of the Colombian government's criminal capitulation. The opposition daily *El Espectador* denounced the Gaviria administration in a Feb. 18 editorial: "Under pressure of blackmail and crime, the state refrains from exercising its fundamental responsibility to protect human life, and instead agrees to negotiate away, one by one, the juridical principles that underlie the very existence of the state . . . all in its zeal to find peace. . . . A strange complicity among many of our leaders with common crime is delivering Colombia to its worst enemies."