

Colombian government offers bounty for capture of drug lords

by José Restrepo

Days after the Colombian government began to circulate leaflets offering a \$250,000 reward for information leading to the capture of cocaine cartel chieftains Pablo Escobar Gaviria and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, the cartel retaliated by issuing its own leaflets pledging \$255,000 for the capture—presumably dead or alive—of one of Colombia's most successful anti-drug combatants, former commander of the Medellín-based IV Army Brigade Gen. Jaime Ruiz Barrera. Ruiz Barrera is currently on assignment to the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington, D.C.

The Colombian Army has continued to seize properties of the cocaine traffickers, as investigators untangle the web of mafia financial and real estate fronts revealed by documents seized in earlier raids. The latest to fall was a 22,000-acre ranch with 5,000 head of cattle and hundreds of purebred race horses. The ranch was the tenth belonging to Rodríguez Gacha to be seized.

On Sept. 18, a rocket was launched against the U.S. embassy in Bogotá, but failed to explode. Two days later, 10 bombs exploded almost simultaneously at 3 a.m. in Bogotá. The targets were the offices of Colombia's leading political parties. The bombings were the latest in a series of near-daily dynamite assaults on targets ranging from banks to supermarkets to street corners, in major cities.

Shipments of military equipment from the United States—in varying degrees of usefulness—continue to arrive in Colombia to augment that country's battle capacity. Popular backing for Colombia's Armed Forces, on the front lines of the war against the cocaine cartels, remains high.

As the drug cartels inside Colombia escalate their offensive, so too, does the drug legalization lobby, both internationally and domestically. And what should now be clear to all—governments and private citizens alike—is that the legalization drive is not parallel to, but in fact an integral part of the narco-terrorist strategy to subjugate Colombia and the entire continent.

This point is forcefully driven home by a leading mouthpiece of the pro-legalization forces inside Colombia, the weekly *Semana* magazine, belonging to former President and mafia ally Alfonso López Michelsen. An article in the Sept. 19 issue, "Where Is This War Going?" shamelessly argues

that the government's current anti-drug offensive will prove to be nothing more than a prolonged war of attrition, which will grind down the population long before it wears out the cartels, and ultimately lead to the legalization of drugs. "In order for the debate about drug legalization to be serious and carry moral authority before the world, the effort to combat drug trafficking cannot be let up on. The only way to arrive at the decision to eliminate the prohibition of drugs is the acknowledgment that everything else has been tried, and nothing else works."

Semana continues: "Even if the war against drug terrorism may be thought winnable, the war against drug trafficking is not." This in fact non-existent distinction between "drug terrorism" and "drug trafficking" is now being used by the enemy to further the myth that there are good mafiosi and bad (violent) mafiosi. The good ones—such as the Ochoa brothers and Cali Cartel boss Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela—can be negotiated with, unlike the "unpolished" Medellín Cartel bosses Pablo Escobar and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha.

War of perceptions

Despite polls published in Colombia's daily newspapers showing continued widespread popular support for the government's anti-drug decrees and for the military offensive behind them, *Semana's* pro-legalization allies in the United States insist that the government is increasingly isolated in its anti-drug efforts. Exemplary is a *Washington Post* article on Sept. 21, which says that "Colombians are divided" over President Barco's war on drugs. But the only Colombian quoted is Medellín Mayor Juan Gómez Martínez, an ardent defender of the "option" of dialogue with the mafia and of drug legalization.

Drug lobby propaganda notwithstanding, Colombia continues to wage its war of liberation, even as the countries of Ibero-America, Europe, and the United States are still essentially watching from the sidelines. Working with sorely inadequate resources, the Barco government and its Armed Forces are dismantling the mafia's infrastructural and logistical networks inside the country. What so far remains intact—the cocaine mafia's multi-billion dollar capacity to relocate and revive its operations—sits in bank accounts around

the world. The Colombian government has demanded the cooperation of authorities in the advanced sector in freezing those accounts—many of them already located and identified—but has yet to see action on its requests.

Communists defend drug mafia

One of the most insidious allies of the Colombian drug mafia is the Moscow-allied Colombian Communist Party. If the Barco government's strategy to halt the war on drugs falters, the Communist Party is poised to deploy its substantial military forces alongside the drug traffickers, in a civil war against the government under the guise of fighting "imperialism."

The Communists' line of attack is that the problem in Colombia is not the drug trade, but something called "narcoterrorism," a term they themselves have invented to substitute for the concept of "narco-terrorism," popularized by U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche. The Communists threaten that until all "fascists"—their term for "anti-Communists"—are purged from the Colombian Armed Forces, there can be no peace in Colombia.

The immediate objective of the Communists is to assure, at all costs, that the government continues its policy of "dialogue" and concessions to the country's narco-terrorist forces. Increasingly, political candidates and several of the country's major daily newspapers are demanding that the government deploy the Armed Forces against the traffickers' terrorist allies. "We are truly in a war. A joint war in which armed subversion and the drug trade are always allied, and both have crime as their supply source and their method of battle," wrote *El Espectador's* editors on Aug. 29.

The Communists have not only their own military capacities to rely on within Colombia, but also are applying international pressure on the Barco government to try to force the war against the drug mafia into a war against the Armed Forces. And they have, indeed, received that international support—and not only from Moscow. From the very day when President Barco declared war on the drug mafia, many elements of the Establishment in the United States—including such ostensibly conservative networks as those linked to the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who has recently settled his "differences" with Moscow—leaped to the aid of the Communists.

The Communists opened fire against the government's anti-drug war in its weekly *Voz* on Aug. 24. The decree establishing extradition of the cocaine chieftains is nothing but "palpable recognition by the government of its own incapacity," wrote *Voz*, attacking the executive decree ordering detention of individuals suspected of acting against the public interest, and claiming that the decree will be used by the military—"enemies of dialogue and of the left"—against leftist sectors of the country.

Voz adopted the drug mafia's line that it was not the mafia who ordered the murder of Liberal presidential candidate

Luis Carlos Galán on Aug. 18. Rather, claimed *Voz*, he was murdered by "the fascist militarist phenomena" on orders of "privileged sectors of society and of the economy who are resistant to change." *Voz* challenged any attempt to reinforce the Armed Forces in this crisis, arguing, "It is not true that [Army] manpower needs to be increased; rather, what exists needs to be purified."

The same issue of *Voz* carried a special report on the infamous November 1985 occupation of the Colombian Justice Palace by the M-19 terrorists, who were and are under contract with the drug mafia. *Voz* argued that the M-19 was not guilty of the 100 deaths that took place during that bloody siege, but rather it was all the fault of rash actions by the Armed Forces, and especially General Arias Cabrales, currently Army Commander, who commanded the troops which stormed and recaptured the palace.

The Communists are also helping to build the drug mafia's "anti-imperialist" image. On Sept. 1, Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa, the secretary general of the Patriotic Union which was founded as a Communist Party electoral front, charged that the Barco government had "handed over national sovereignty" to the "Yankees," by accepting U.S. aid in the war on drugs, and by pledging to extradite the mafia.

Help from the U.S. drug lobby

The major U.S. dailies have served Moscow's interests well by intensifying their own campaigns against the Colombian Armed Forces, accusing them of promoting "narcoterrorism" and of being incapable of waging—much less winning—a prolonged war against the mafia due to corruption within their midst. First came the *Washington Post* on Aug. 28, which cited none other than Communist Party central committee member and "labor leader" Gustavo Osorio, claiming that the Galán murder was "politically motivated": "The Galán assassination is part of a plan by the extreme right to spread violence, terror and murders . . . to prevent the democratic changes the country so urgently needs," said Gustavo Osorio, vice president of the Unified Labor Confederation.

On Aug. 29, the *Washington Times*, owned by associates of Reverend Moon and controlled by pro-drug Project Democracy networks, gave prominent coverage in an interview to Antonio Suárez, president of the national association of judicial employees, in which he attacked the government's anti-drug decrees to "intensifying the climate of insecurity" in the country. Like the *Post*, the *Washington Times* fails to inform its readership that it is quoting from a prominent member of the Colombian Communist Party. The *Washington Times* went on to attack the Colombian military as corrupt and linked to "narco-paramilitary" forces, choosing as its special target General Frank Yanine Díaz, the current inspector general of the Armed Forces and recognized as one of the toughest combatants against both organized crime and narco-terrorism.