
Colombia

Gov't capitulates to terrorist blackmail

by Valerie Rush

In a startling about-face, the Colombian government has announced not only its willingness to enter into negotiations with the narco-terrorist kidnapers of Conservative Party leader and twice-presidential candidate Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, but that it is ready to make concessions to win Gómez's release. Immediately following the bloody May 29 kidnaping by the M-19 movement, in which Gómez's personal bodyguard was gunned down, the Barco government had stated its *pro forma* opposition to "dialogue" with kidnapers.

On June 24, Interior Minister César Gaviria Trujillo stated that his government was prepared "to make some concessions to the M-19 movement, on the condition that the life of Dr. Alvaro Gómez Hurtado be respected." The M-19 responded with a communiqué praising the government's move: "Finally, there is talk of dialogue, of political solutions . . . other than those of force. This we see as leading toward a solution of the Gómez kidnaping." The communiqué went on, however, to demand: "We want to know just what the minister means by concessions."

Gaviria has been personally invited by the kidnapers to go to Panama, Costa Rica, or Mexico, to enter into direct negotiations with them. His response is expected shortly.

The government's submission to the kidnapers' demands was paralleled by the formation of a Commission of National Dialogue, which will conduct audiences with "all sectors of society" on "winning the peace" in Colombia. Made up of the ruling Liberal, opposition Conservative, and Communist UP parties, the commission is a concession to the M-19's demand for "dialogue, or civil war." Outrageously, representatives of the Simón Bolívar National Guerrilla Council—headed by the M-19—are to be invited, along with the Church, trade unions, and other "social sectors," to address the Council!

Attorney General Horacio Serpa Uribe has also jumped on the bandwagon, insisting that a new dialogue effort with the guerrilla movement be attempted, "despite the bad results of the past." Serpa Uribe promises that the "disappearances" and "tortures" committed under the "dirty war" (the narco-terrorists' standard slanders against the Colombian military)

will be brought to an end.

The capitulation of Colombia's spineless government to the blackmail of Moscow's irregular warfare troops has provoked the disgust and repudiation of numerous "social sectors." The Church, speaking through the voice of Cali Archbishop Pedro Rubiano Saenz, announced that the Catholic Church rejected any possibility of dialogue with the perpetrators of kidnapings, assassinations, economic sabotage, and ambushes of military patrols. Monsignor Rubiano's statement is an important clarification of the Church's offer earlier this year to mediate between the government and the insurgent forces.

Resistance to surrender

The military has been equally explicit. Armed Forces Commander Gen. Jaime Guerrero Paz told reporters on June 23 that the Gómez kidnaping is intended to "blackmail the Colombian nation. . . . The demands they have made of the national government are palpable evidence of the behavior the terrorists intend to use in their drive for power." He added that dialogue with terrorists in the past has proven ineffective.

At least three brigadier generals have recently announced possession of evidence that the guerrilla movements and the drug traffickers are working together in common pursuit of destabilization of Colombia's institutions. Also, the crack counterinsurgent IV Brigade, based in the drug capital of Medellín, succeeded in breaking up an extensive narco-terrorist plot to terrorize that city and, together with police and other law-enforcement troops, arrested 224 suspects in a citywide dragnet.

At the same time, the defense ministers and chiefs of staff of both Colombia and Venezuela held an unprecedented June 22 meeting in the border region of Cucutá to map out a joint strategy for defeating the narco-terrorist scourge, which has begun to spill over into Venezuela. Colombia's Defense Minister Gen. Rafael Samudio stated, "We are going to fight together against the guerrilla." His Venezuelan counterpart, outgoing Defense Minister Guerrero Paz, in turn openly admitted to the tensions that have existed between the two countries, "intensified by the criminal actions of the subversives, terrorists, and drug traffickers." He added, however, "The Colombian situation distresses us, because what is happening there affects us in Venezuela. . . . We must return to the union of the [Simón Bolívar] Liberating Army from the beginning of the past century."

The director of the anti-drug newspaper *El Espectador*, Juan Guillermo Cano, wrote a commentary denouncing the M-19 as assassins, kidnapers, and blackmailers, and indicting them for the "associate authorship" of his father's 1986 murder by the cocaine-trafficking Medellín Cartel. In a follow-up editorial, *El Espectador* congratulates the IV Brigade for its "magnificent" performance, but questions whether the civil authorities have the will, or the courage, to condemn the captured narco-terrorists. "There is no evidence to invite optimism," assert the editors.