

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

'Peace': new Soviet weapon of war

The Barco government has taken new steps along the treacherous road of conciliation with the narco-terrorists.

The government of Colombian President Virgilio Barco emerged from two days of "peace talks" with representatives of the terrorist M-19 guerrillas in Mexico City, announcing the establishment of a joint working commission intended to incorporate that narco-terrorist organization into Colombian civilian and political life. The government will also supposedly seek M-19 "assistance" in solving the growing number of political murders in the country, which the Communists are largely blaming on the military.

At the same time, a second commission—including two former Colombian Presidents, a Catholic cardinal, and the country's leading industrialist—has been set up *on the demand* of the Communist Party-linked FARC guerrillas, to "unofficially" negotiate conditions for peace.

With these initiatives, the Barco administration has fully embraced the arguments of former President Alfonso López Michelsen—one of the FARC's most enthusiastic commission choices and a long-standing advocate of amnesty for the drug traffickers—for "humanizing" the war against these narco-terrorist butchers, instead of winning it. Along with the erosion of the Colombian Armed Forces' capacity to defeat subversion under the "human rights" assaults of López and his international allies (see article, p. 42), Colombia's political class—with few exceptions—is also apparently turning belly up.

The FARC's dog-and-pony show is especially transparent. FARC chief Jacobo Arenas issued his call for the negotiating commission to be formed

during a Feb. 28 interview with the daily *El Siglo*, during which he pledged that upon its creation his movement would call an immediate and unilateral ceasefire. Should his proposal not be adopted, however, Arenas warned, "We have but to move a few microphones and call for total war, for it to begin." Arenas claimed that the FARC has 70 war fronts inside Colombia, made up of "a huge number of armed people who feel all truce initiatives are being exhausted. . . . One has only to watch what 70 foci of revolutionary war, shooting from all sides, can do, to see if the morale of the Armed Forces is capable of sustaining itself."

In that same interview, Arenas reversed his own previous admission that the FARC financially supported itself through the drug trade. To *El Siglo*, he said, "I wish it were true. . . . Unfortunately, we are more moralist than the Conservatives and Liberals." Arenas was responding to the charge earlier that week from Defense Minister Gen. Jaime Guerrero Paz, that "guerrilla groups, and especially the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), use the drug trade as a truly valuable source which provides them the financial resources they need to pursue their intentions of seizing power." Only one day before Arenas's interview, units of the XIV Army Brigade in Antioquia had dismantled a cocaine-refining center, complete with landing strip, a large weapons cache, and military training gear, run by the FARC's fourth front.

Obligated to clean up the FARC's public image now that it has joined the "peace process," the Barco adminis-

tration released a statement—in the name of peace adviser Rafael Pardo Rueda—saying that the government possessed sufficient evidence to confirm that the FARC "is a guerrilla group and *not* a cocaine cartel." Really forced to eat crow was Army Commander Nelson Mejía Henao, who told reporters on March 1 that his earlier assertion that Jacobo Arenas was "an old lunatic" was ill-advised, and that Arenas actually "is a mature man, important in his field, who is making very serious proposals."

While the Colombian media and political class wax ecstatic over these "advances toward peace," a few sane voices can still be heard. Former Defense Minister Fernando Landazábal Reyes gave a March 1 address to Bogotá's Industrialists' Club, charging that the peace negotiations "have established equality of conditions between the guerrilla and the government . . . [and] are going to lead to continued and complete domination by the guerrilla of the zones they now run, with national sovereignty curtailed as a result."

El Tiempo columnist Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza charged Feb. 27 that Barco's sellout was taking place in the context of the Reagan-Gorbachov New Yalta accords. Who are we to push for a military answer to subversion, when the world is advancing toward peace? Apuleyo Mendoza asked sardonically. He warned, "Today's guerrilla is not a product of social problems . . . [but] a military-political project for the seizure of power by arms, and the imposition of a Cuban or Nicaraguan-style regime. Our naive leaders don't realize this is an old method, patented by Lenin in 1922 . . . a lesson well learned by the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front in El Salvador, [which] speaks of 'dialogue as a conspiratorial weapon.' "