

Andean Report by José Restrepo

Communist senator is assassinated

In Colombia, only narco-terrorists and narco-Presidents have their human and civil rights defended.

In Colombia's irregular war, it appears that there are two kinds of murder victims: the top-ranking victims among the narco-terrorists, and the bottom-ranking victims—the military and defenseless, law-abiding citizens.

The Aug. 9 assassination of the only senator who is a member of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC), Manuel Cepeda Vargas, has unleashed a witchhunt on the part of every self-proclaimed human rights organization and the greater part of the political elite of Colombia, against the Armed Forces, which has been accused, without a shred of evidence, of committing the crime.

Cepeda was a member of the PCC national leadership, and was its only senatorial candidate to be elected, by scarcely 50,000 votes that came from the party's own membership. But despite its meager electoral support, the party runs a small army of 10-15,000 armed men who have sown the countryside with terror, who blackmail mayors and governors, who collect—by means of kidnappings and forced contributions—a degree of taxation parallel to that of the state, and who impose recruitment for life to their ranks in the zones of the country they dominate. This group, known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), also takes in enormous sums through their production of and trafficking in cocaine, opium poppy, and other drugs.

The leaders of the Communist Party have always denied that they maintain close relations with, or that they control, the FARC. But at the

same time they constantly praise the FARC's "glorious battles."

Manuel Cepeda himself was jailed in 1959 after having published an interview for the Communist Party's *Voz Proletaria* newspaper with Manuel Marulanda Vélez and Ciro Trujillo Castaño, the FARC's military chieftains, when its forces were surrounded in the region of Marquetalia, Tolima, by the Colombian Army. For crossing Army lines, interviewing the FARC chieftains, and returning through Army lines, the Army accused Cepeda of collaborating with subversion.

At that time, the Communist Party assigned various of its leaders to "politically orient" the FARC, but the only Communist leader who officially remained with the FARC was Jacobo Arenas, who became its "ideological leader." Ever since the death of Arenas from a supposed heart attack, according to an official FARC release, Cepeda has served as "ideological chief" of the FARC, even while maintaining his leadership posts in the Communist Party and retaining his seat in Congress. How many assassinations, kidnappings, and armed assaults were ordered by the "ideological" heads of the FARC?

On July 15, FARC terrorists assassinated Gen. Carlos Julio Gil Colorado, commander of the Army's Fourth Division based in Villavicencio, Meta. General Gil Colorado was one of the few top officers who had continued to combat terrorism effectively, despite the intense pressures of the so-called human rights lobby and the judicial persecution aimed at intimidating officers so that

they would acquiesce to a "negotiated peace." A few days after the Gil assassination, Cepeda wrote a July 21 column for the PCC newspaper *Voz*, which asked, "When will the generals learn that armed confrontation can only be resolved by a negotiated bilateral accord?" The commentary didn't mention Gil Colorado by name, but it was clearly a taunting reference to his murder.

The assassination of Gil Colorado drew no statements of denunciation from the Unified Workers Confederation (CUT), nor from the government, nor from the Congress. Nor did it produce cries of outrage from the political parties, the "human rights" organizations, or the international non-governmental organizations; yet all of these waxed indignant over the death of Cepeda.

Newly inaugurated President Ernesto Samper Pizano announced "a major investigation" of the murder, and condemned Cepeda's assassins, neither of which did he do when General Gil Colorado was assassinated. Amnesty International, an organization created by the British intelligence service, pulled its hair out and demanded that "the impunity with which the military has been permitted to act be eradicated." The fact is that in Colombia, there is impunity for drug traffickers, narco-Presidents, narco-senators, narco-guerrillas, money launderers, genocidalists, terrorists, narco-journalists, and for those who daily steal from the national budget. The only ones in jail are those who cannot afford to pay for a defense lawyer, and a handful of terrorists who await their imminent release, because no judge will schedule a trial against those who have been captured.

The only truly appropriate epitaph for Sen. Manuel Cepeda is the biblical injunction that he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword.