

Bedoya takes on Colombia's narcos

by Javier Almarino

“Until today, we could say that we were a people betrayed, that Ernesto Samper took the Presidency with drug money, and that we didn’t know. But if we now repeat the same story [by letting former Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe become Colombia’s next President—ed.], we will become accomplices in crime.” These fighting words were spoken by Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) on Jan. 15, before a crowd of 2,500 people gathered at a Bogotá hotel to officially proclaim him the Presidential candidate of the Fuerza Colombia Movement. Elections will be held on May 24.

General Bedoya said that “we cannot say now that we didn’t know that Serpa was the continuation of the drug cartels’ political project. Samper was the political project of the Rodríguez Orejuela” brothers (of the Cali Cartel), and now he is using the power of the state to impose Horacio Serpa as Colombia’s next President. If the country doesn’t reject Serpa, he warned, “we can expect all manner of reprisals from the international community, for being a criminal, and pariah nation.” The respected retired general underscored that he entered politics because he has not abdicated his responsibility for the country, which, he said, must undergo a moral, political, and economic recovery.

Last July 25, President Samper removed General Bedoya from his position as head of the Armed Forces, because he considered the outspoken general an obstacle to his plan for handing over portions of the country to the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists, as part of a so-called peace plan. In his speech, Bedoya harshly attacked the “almost 20 years of peace talks with the narco-terrorists, which have only served as propaganda for narco-subversion, while giving them political influence and permitting greater recruitment.”

London is the most active proponent of this strategy of negotiating with narco-terrorists, in explicit opposition to pressures against Samper by U.S. President Bill Clinton.

As a result of his firing, General Bedoya has become one of the front-running Presidential candidates, in some polls coming in second after Samper’s candidate, Serpa Uribe. With some irony, Bedoya has said that his removal as head of the Armed Forces “was the best move by the Samper government because, inadvertently, it pushed me toward the Presidency.”

A Marshall Plan against economic liberalism

Bedoya recognized that it will take international cooperation, especially with the United States, if the drug trade and narco-terrorism are to be eradicated. During a recent tour of the United States, he called for close cooperation between the two countries to stop the drug trade, of which both are victims.

In officially announcing his candidacy, Bedoya explained that “when I was in the United States, I proposed that [the government] allocate \$5 billion of the \$60 billion spent on fighting drugs, to invest in Colombian agriculture.” Colombian farmers need this type of “Marshall Plan,” he said, instead of the current neo-liberal economic policies imposed by the Samper government. General Bedoya charged that “the economic opening has destroyed Colombian agriculture. It has just been announced that Colombia will import beans from—It doesn’t matter from where. What matters is that beans can be produced by our farmers who, because of the opening, are unemployed, to the benefit of food producers elsewhere in the world. Corn and beans, those legendary products consumed by our ancestors before the arrival of Columbus, are now going to be imported.” In a Bedoya government, the general said, agriculture would be protected by import tariffs. The only way to eradicate drugs, he added, is to ensure the profitability of Colombian agriculture.

Samper, Serpa dismantle Colombia

While General Bedoya is attempting to convince the Colombian people and their U.S. allies to combat the country’s disintegration, the Samper-Serpa duo and their British masters are doing everything possible to advance the dismemberment process. On Dec. 22, 1997, the FARC took over an Army communications base, killing 10 and kidnapping 16 soldiers. Samper now says he’s willing to do anything to obtain the hostages’ freedom, including kicking the military out of large portions of the country, as he did last year in the Caguán Valley in Caquetá, to obtain the release of 63 marines also held hostage by narco-terrorists. The operation this time would be even bigger, bringing in the United Nations, the International Red Cross, and other supranational organizations.

Samper has also authorized “regional peace talks,” presumably to achieve peace in separate parts of the country, through political agreements between governors and local authorities, and the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists. The narco-President has also ordered the military to clean up its vocabulary, prohibiting the use of the words “narco-terrorist,” “narco-subversive,” “the FARC cartel,” or “the ELN cartel,” because use of such terms purportedly will hurt the possibility of “peace talks.” At the same time, Samper has determined that military personnel will be promoted by decree. This means that whether officers get promoted will depend, not on their intelligence, merits, or combat preparation, but solely on the degree of servility they show to Samper.