

Euro-tour gives co-government status to Colombia's FARC narco-terrorists

by Ulf Sandmark and Valerie Rush

Seven leading narco-terrorists from Colombia were wined and dined across Europe, during a 23-day tour that took them to Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, France, and Spain. Together with Colombian government and business representatives, the delegation from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) met with government ministers, deputies, and leading organizations of European industry, commerce, and labor. Official photographs of the meetings, published around the world, conveyed the message that it is acceptable for anyone to meet—and do business with—the drug-trafficking FARC killers. Prepared to take full advantage of this public-relations coup, the FARC is now planning a comparable tour of Ibero-America. Arrogant in its newfound “acceptability,” the FARC has even stated that it would like to visit the United States, despite being on the State Department’s list of banned international terrorists.

Raúl Reyes, the FARC’s financial chieftain and head of the delegation to Europe, summed up the tour: “The FARC has received de facto recognition of belligerency [status]; that is why, on this tour, we have been seen as a political force to be reckoned with; we have been put on the same level as the government.”

The London and Wall Street financial oligarchy, which is desperately counting on the billions in drug dollars that a “laundered” FARC will bring to the moribund world monetary system, is delighted with the FARC tour. According to the editors of the *Economist*, mouthpiece of the City of London: “The European tour has given new impetus to the peace talks. . . . The immediate benefits went to the FARC: Daily television footage of the rebel leaders in crisp business suits and ties meeting top officials in European capitals, was a propaganda coup.” The State Department’s Madeleine Albright publicly endorsed the tour as “an important contribution to peace efforts” in Colombia, despite widespread outrage among Colombians over this whitewashing of FARC narco-terrorism.

The FARC is not a legitimate liberation movement engaging in a “civil war,” as they and their apologists claim. Nor are they on the side of economic and social justice, as they repeatedly insisted to the Europeans they met with. Rather, the FARC is a 15,000-person scourge of kidnapers, assassins,

and terrorists, which long ago aligned itself with slavery and neo-colonial drug trafficking. They are responsible for kidnapping thousands of children and deploying them as child-soldiers in battle. They have kidnapped an estimated 1,500 Colombian citizens and foreign residents in Colombia, holding them for huge ransoms, just as often killing them as releasing them. They extort “protection money” from farmers, industrialists, merchants, and politicians who live, along with their families, under perpetual threat of kidnapping or death.

But the majority of the money which keeps the FARC *better armed and equipped than Colombia’s national defense forces*, comes from drugs: the cocaine and heroin which daily pours into the streets of the United States and countries around the world. Virtually all of the FARC’s fighting units are involved directly in the drug trade, either protecting the coca and poppy plantations and processing laboratories, taxing the growers and smugglers, or forcing the peasants, in the areas they control, to grow drugs. Last year, an estimated 520 tons of cocaine was produced in Colombia, double the amount from the year before. The dramatic increase is directly linked to the decision by President Andrés Pastrana’s government over a year ago, to give the narco-terrorists absolute control over a Switzerland-sized chunk of land in the south of the country, *in the heart of cocaine territory*.

Useful fools

The first stops on the FARC’s “Euro-tour” were Sweden and Norway, in order to lend the FARC and the Colombian government “peace negotiators” who accompanied them, some of the cachet of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, achieved in Oslo in 1993. Although the FARC’s invitation to Sweden formally came from the Swedish Association of Businessmen, these industrialists proved to be useful fools of their own government. It quickly became public knowledge that the tour had been organized jointly by Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh and former Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Egeland, the latter now a personal envoy to Colombia for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The government-linked Swedish Aid Authority paid the bulk of the cost of that first leg of the tour.



FARC members meet with Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh (third from left). In the center is Raúl Reyes, the FARC's financial expert, who met with New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso; and to his left is Carlos Villegas, from the Colombian industrialists' association, and Colombia's Ambassador to Sweden Teresa Ivars.

Upon arriving in Sweden, all pretenses were dropped. The FARC leaders met first with former Foreign Aid Minister Pierre Schori, then with Lindh. They went on to meet with members of Parliament, government officials, leaders of industry and trade unions. The Colombian guests were brought to a palace in the forests of Sweden and entertained for eight days with seminars about the social “benefits” of the Swedish economic model.

The same pattern was followed in the other countries visited. In Norway, Jan Egeland and the United Nations were the official hosts, while the industrial associations of Norway and Colombia provided the seminars that gave a transparent cover for all the meetings with government officials.

In Spain, on the final leg of the tour, the FARC's Reyes appealed to the European Union to run interference against the United States. “The Colombian peace process is an internal issue which we Colombians have to solve, without outside interference, and I am referring to the U.S. In return, Europe, especially Spain, must become a balancing element to stop the interference of the U.S.” Reyes was referring specifically to individuals like U.S. Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), who is fighting for the bulk of the \$1.6 billion aid package now being debated in Congress, to go to boosting the Colombian military.

The payoff

But the FARC's tour was not designed solely to give the FARC a patina of legitimacy. The tour served to kick off phase two of a process begun in January, with the visit to Colombia of the Millennium Group of 13 international finan-

cial and business leaders. The group, led by New York Stock Exchange President Richard Grasso, went to Colombia to offer political and financial backing to President Pastrana's so-called “peace process,” which is nothing less than the progressive dismembering of Colombia into terrorist-controlled drug plantations, as the first step toward drug legalization. Grasso, point-man for the operation, had gone down to the FARC-run “demilitarized zone” — where government forces are banned from entry — in the jungles of southern Colombia last summer, in a high-profile visit to discuss “investment opportunities,” a discussion captured by photographers in the infamous Grasso/Reyes embrace, since sarcastically dubbed the “*Grasso Abrazo*.” When he returned to Colombia in January 2000, Grasso brought his group of financial “heavy-hitters” with him, to convince the FARC that the international financial oligarchy was ready to play ball.

At the time of Grasso's visit to Colombia last June, the Wall Street executive had described Reyes as “very sophisticated [because] he knew a lot about investment and capital markets.” Reyes, in Europe, was accompanied by, among others, FARC regional commander “Simón Trinidad,” a former banker who turned his international connections over to the FARC when he joined their ranks. And yet, despite this, U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering just returned from Colombia, and praised the FARC Euro-tour as necessary to make the narco-terrorists “acquainted with, and made aware of what's happened in the world in the last 40 years . . . and that they need to begin thinking about Colombia in the modern 21st century, not in the 18th or 19th centuries in what are antiquarian terms.” One is tempted to ask what Pickering has been smoking.

A 'Plan' for disaster

From President Pastrana's standpoint, the FARC tour of Europe was designed to convince the governments there that his so-called "Colombia Plan" is worth the billions he is asking them to commit to it. The plan, which few Colombians have been privy to, is a hodge-podge of proposals for stabilizing the country, anchored around a so-called anti-drug strategy which pledges to slowly reduce the country's vast acreage of drug crops by 50% over the next six years, and completely *over the next 12 years* — as if the country could possibly survive the political, economic, and social mayhem that long. Nowhere does it mention that drug production in Colombia is meanwhile doubling every *four years*.

The Colombia Plan also makes *no* mention of recovering the land currently under FARC domination, revealing that it was, in fact, designed for another purpose entirely. Rather than fighting drugs, Pastrana's Wall Street-endorsed Colombia Plan is a scenario for channeling international investment funds into so-called "alternative development" projects, which, in Colombia, are a euphemism for drug cultivation. A pilot project for the Plan is already under way inside the FARC-controlled territory, under the auspices of the Pastrana government and the United Nations, where millions are being channeled through the "authorities" — that is, the FARC — supposedly for road-building and "crop substitution." As former Armed Forces commander Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) told a Washington, D.C. press conference on Feb. 23, this is like handing Marshall Plan funds directly to Hitler and Mussolini, in the middle of World War II! (See "LaRouche, Bedoya, in Washington, Urge Defense of Nation-State, War on Drugs," *EIR*, March 3.)

Not only will drug cultivation *not* be eliminated this way, but the involvement of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and foreign investors is a guarantee that the FARC will be protected from any attempts by the Colombian military and police to stop the kidnapping, blackmail, and drug trafficking which are the *raison d'être* of the narco-terrorists. This will mean the virtual legalization of the drug trade.

Anticipating such a scenario, President Pastrana has already agreed, under pressure from the international human rights lobby, to eliminate whatever resistance to this plan that might emerge from military ranks. Immediately following last month's release of a document by the non-governmental organization, Human Rights Watch, condemning the Colombian Armed Forces for alleged links to death squads, Pastrana announced that any member of the military against whom evidence — *or even suspicion* — of collaboration with so-called "paramilitaries" is alleged, will be automatically booted from the Armed Forces, without even benefit of an investigation. Analysts consider such a move, taken on the basis of the President's own discretionary powers, to be the death knell of the Colombian military as an institution defending a sovereign nation.

Continental Europe steps into the British trap

by Rainer Apel

Over the last three months, Germany most of all, but also France and Italy have been destabilized by "corruption" charges and other scandals directed against national political institutions. "Revelations" by the German-Canadian arms dealer Karlheinz Schreiber, a fugitive from German and Swiss prosecutors who lives in a comfortable exile in Toronto, played a crucial role in generating the scandals that have primarily paralyzed the Christian Democrats of Germany. But some aspects of Schreiber's insinuations have also re-opened investigations in France, into charges of embezzlement linked to the Elf-Aquitaine oil company, with which Schreiber did business in the 1990s.

In both France and Germany, the destabilization began in the first days of November 1999. On Nov. 2, French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn was forced to resign over a relatively minor affair involving charges of embezzlement, during an earlier affiliation he had had with student insurance funds. And on Nov. 4, the German media reported charges of a conspiratorial transfer of 1 million deutschemarks in 1991, involving Schreiber and Walther Leisler Kiep, then party treasurer of the German Christian Democratic Union. This opened a big can of worms on illegal party-funding methods of the CDU.

What was the political context for these developments? Well, by late October, the governing Socialists of France and Germany were on the brink of breaking not only with the "Third Way" of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, but the Germans and Italians were also about to join with the French in a united thrust for reform of the International Monetary Fund. This is not to say that those reforms would have solved the fundamental problem with the IMF's free-market austerity conditionalities, but what the French, in particular, had to say about the priority of state-run economies over the free market, has been a red flag for the hardcore monetarists of the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) faction. The scandal-mongering campaign which the BAC launched, particularly against Germany, has now alienated the German Social Democrats from the French Socialists, such that the French find it impossible nowadays to discuss economic issues with the Germans, who seem obsessed with their domestic scandals. Phase One of the destabilization of France and Germany, through the paralysis