

The face of 'peace' in Colombia

by Valerie Rush

Colombia has served as a laboratory for Dope, Inc. since the 1970s, when, first, marijuana, and then cocaine (and now heroin), were promoted as “alternative crops” for the region’s economies. This new Opium War by the international financial elites against the producer nations of Ibero-America and the consumer nations of the United States and Europe alike, has a multiple purpose: to re-colonize the region, to enslave people to mind-deadening drugs, and to generate billions in drug revenues to prop up a dying world financial order.

As the first stage in this process, Wall Street and London bankers, and the drug legalizers pulling the strings of the international “human rights” lobby, are moving to hand the government of Colombia over to Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) narco-terrorists, who are more than willing to oversee the “plantation,” while annihilating all opposition. The first phase of this scenario was last summer’s U.S. State Department-blessed visit to Colombia’s southern jungle region—currently under total narco-terrorist control—by New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso (the infamous “Grasso *abrazo*,” or “Grasso embrace”). As a prominent spokesman for Wall Street financial interests, Grasso discussed mutual “investment opportunities” with the FARC, and invited the terrorist leaders he met with to come walk the floors of the New York Stock Exchange with him, to “see how it’s done.”

In mid-January of this year, Grasso returned to Colombia, with the so-called “Millennium Club” in tow—14 of the world’s leading financial “heavyweights,” as the Colombian press called them. They met with President Andrés Pastrana and Finance Minister Juan Camilo Restrepo, the latter having just returned from a visit to the FARC’s southern territory (another “*abrazo*”), where they discussed the virtues of investing in Pastrana’s so-called “peace process.” One of the “heavyweights” was America Online founder James (“Rambo”) Kimsey, who would return to Colombia on March 4 for a visit to FARC country, where he would be photographed embracing FARC leader Manuel “Sureshot” Marulanda.

Then, in February, came the government-sponsored public relations tour of Europe by six of Colombia’s top FARC narco-terrorists. For 23 days, the world was treated to joint FARC-government press releases and photos of smiling European diplomats arm-in-arm with the world’s bloodiest narco-terrorists. With the “good housekeeping seal” thus af-

fixed, the FARC stronghold in southern Colombia has become the mecca for an unending pilgrimage of so-called “peace-seekers.” Not just American Congressmen, Italian legislators, and Wall Street financiers, but a former Colombian President, government ministers, top trade unionists, political party hacks, and a gaggle of the country’s most prominent business leaders, all left their bodyguards at the airport, and trekked by jeep into the FARC’s cocaine-financed jungle lair, to consult with “Sureshot” on how best to deliver him the reins of power.

Just who are these “guerrillas,” so zealously courted by some of the world’s most prominent political and financial figures? The FARC came into being 40 years ago as a handful of bandits, dispossessed peasants, and Moscow-trained Communist intellectuals turned “guerrilla leaders.” Under the wing of the Colombian Communist Party, the FARC operated for years as little more than a bandit operation plaguing the countryside, haranguing villagers, robbing rural banks, and engaging the occasional squad of police or soldiers.

Faced with the encroachment of the drug cartels in the 1970s, the FARC turned to kidnapping to get funds for weapons with which to expand operations and compete seriously with the cartels. As the narcotics trade began to make major inroads into the Colombian economy, the FARC underwent a metamorphosis. At first, it collaborated with the marijuana and cocaine cartels, providing security in exchange for weapons. Convinced that the big bucks were in drugs, the FARC was no longer content to sell its protection services to the cartels. It itself became the Third Cartel, as Colombia’s military forces dubbed it. Well-financed and well-armed, the FARC rapidly expanded its terrorist ranks, recruiting both rural and urban cast-offs en masse. It began to force peasants to cultivate coca (and later poppy) in areas where government presence was minimal, offering the persuasive choice of money—or bullets. They collected a “tax” for every hectare of coca leaf sowed, for every ton of coca leaf sold, for every shipment of coca paste or processed cocaine leaving the clandestine labs, for every airstrip carved out of FARC-controlled territory.

The bigger and richer the FARC grew, the more territory it pulled under its control. Elected officials, clerics, teachers—anyone who posed the slightest resistance—was either forced to flee, or killed outright. Repeated murderous assaults on police across the country have stripped a vast number of the country’s 1,200 municipalities of official protection. In 1999 alone, police protection literally disappeared from 177 towns. Those towns which refused to accept FARC dominance were razed, their populations forced to flee across borders into Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, and Panama, or into Colombia’s crowded cities, to join the ranks of the displaced. Colombia’s “internal refugee problem,” as it is now called, is estimated at 1.9 million persons, out of a total population of 40 million. Military estimates are that eight towns a month are literally disappearing from Colombia.



Above: New York Stock Exchange President Richard Grasso (left) with FARC negotiator Raúl Reyes.



Above: FARC chief Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda Velez (left) with Colombian Finance Minister Juan Camilo Restrepo.



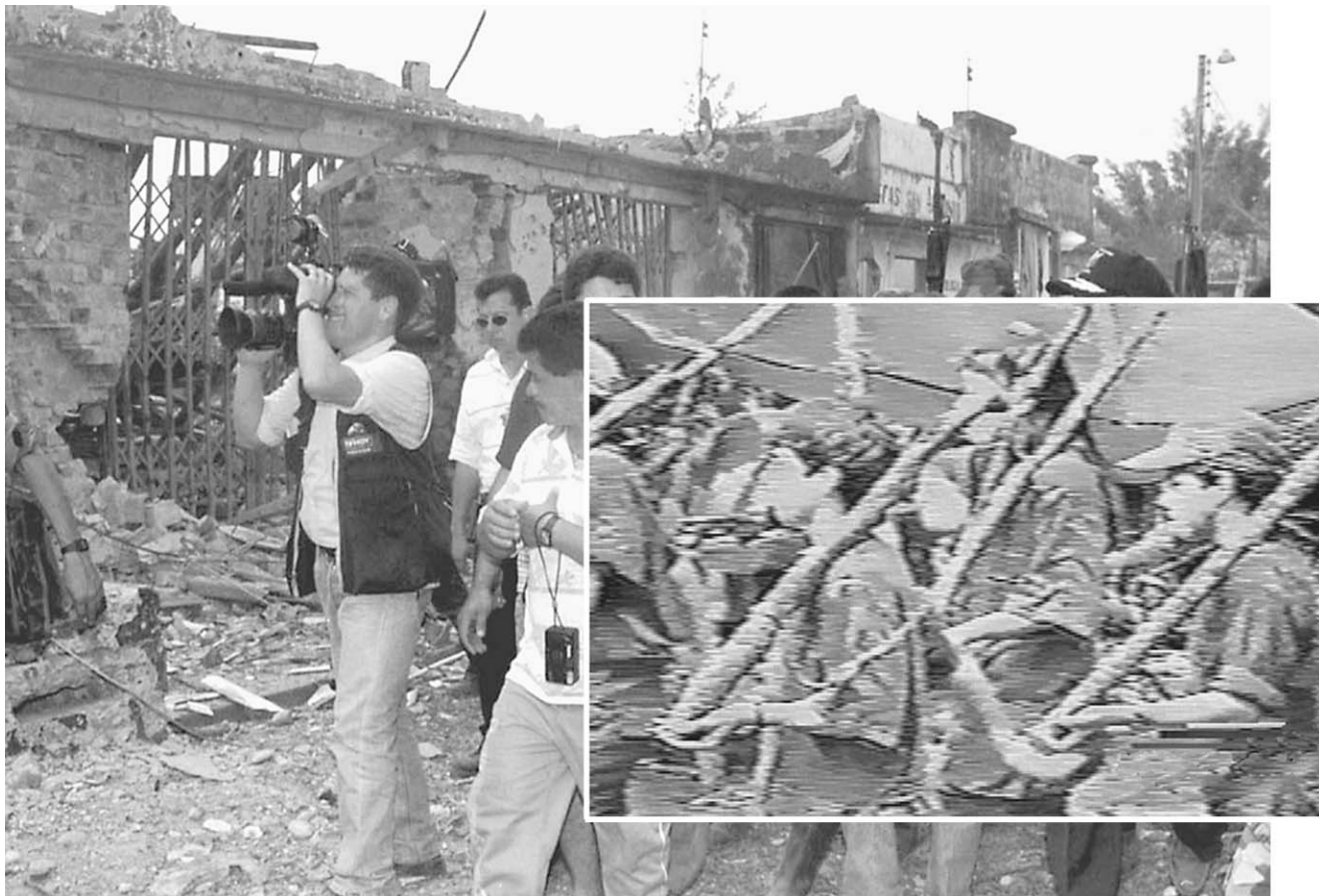
The FARC's Manuel Marulanda (left) with Jim Kimsey, founder of America Online.



Above: The president of the Italian Parliament, Luciano Violante (in suit), with the FARC's Raúl Reyes (right).



Left: Colombian Peace Commissioner Victor Ricardo (left) with the FARC's Manuel Marulanda.



An area of Colombia devastated by FARC rebel attacks. Inset: Children in combat drill, forced to become soldiers of the FARC, as shown on Peruvian television.

The FARC's most tragic victims are Colombia's children, who are being seized as young as age nine or ten, to become FARC "recruits," serving as sexual objects in the camps and as cannon fodder in battle. According to many of these children captured in battle, they spend their mornings with the FARC in ideological indoctrination sessions, and the rest of their day receiving "military training," i.e., learning how to kill. When these children attempt to escape their enslavement, they are killed. Mass graves filled with the bodies of these children, many showing signs of torture, have borne silent witness to these barbaric practices.

At the same time, businessmen and landowners throughout the country are targetted for "vaccination"—that is, forced to pay monthly protection money to the FARC, in exchange for their lives and those of their families. All too frequently, the FARC kidnap their targets anyway, raking in vast ransoms and just as often killing their captives as releasing them.

While the FARC terrorizes the population, its narco-terrorist cousins in the ELN are targetting the country's economic infrastructure. The ELN has focussed its attacks on Colombia's electricity grid, downing 200 transmission towers in 1999 alone, and repeatedly plunging entire sections

of the country into darkness. Both the ELN and FARC regularly blockade major inter-city highways, in what have been dubbed "fishing expeditions." Traffic is held up, and the terrorists pick and choose their kidnap victims at leisure from among the drivers and passengers—making use of laptop computers to determine the identities and resources of their potential victims. Colombians rarely travel outside their own towns and cities anymore, as a result.

The ELN has also dynamited the country's oil and gas pipelines more than 700 times in the past decade and a half. A special target has been the Caño Limón-Covenas pipeline, which was attacked 79 times in 1999 alone. Not only has the country lost untold millions of barrels of spilled crude, and suffered millions in repair costs, but it has been forced to deploy its military forces in an attempt to protect the pipelines, thereby shrinking their offensive capabilities.

The FARC today has an estimated 15-17,000 armed terrorists at its command; the ELN has 5-8,000. With the human rights mafia, both at home and abroad, dedicating their energies to emasculating Colombia's military forces, Colombia will soon be utterly defenseless against a narco-terrorist army that is comparable to the bloody Cambodian Khmer Rouge.