

IMF Agenda Costs Uribe The Colombia Elections

by Maximiliano Londoño Penilla

We may soon see unleashed in Colombia a social explosion of the same proportions, or worse, than that experienced in Argentina and Bolivia, because of the stubborn insistence of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez on sticking with the miserable recipes of austerity and economic depression decreed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Fund's sole concern is that Colombia faithfully pay its foreign debt service on time. That debt, which currently stands at \$40 billion, and represents 53% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, is consuming nearly half of the national budget. Now the economic disaffection-driven victory of Luis Eduardo Garzón as the new mayor-elect of Bogota, could mean the rise of the left in Colombia as an effective political front for the narco-terrorists of the FARC and ELN.

The Colombian people have already expressed their rejection of these IMF policies during the recent Oct. 25-26 elections, during which the Uribe government's proposals to reform the Constitution were put to the vote, as were scores of posts for governor, mayor, municipal and city councilmen. The result: Uribe's referendum did not even garner the requisite minimum 6.3 million votes necessary for approval of any of its proposals; and the candidate of the leftist Independent Democratic Pole, "Lucho" Garzón, who is favorable to the FARC narcoterrorists, won the powerful post of mayor of Bogotá. The left also won the governorships of two important provinces, Valle del Cauca and Nariño, and the mayoral offices in the cities of Pasto and Barrancabermeja. The traditional Liberal and Conservative Parties suffered significant electoral defeats, and acknowledged that they are going through their worst crisis in decades.

'We Pay Our Bills'

"Here, we don't ignore our bills, and we are going to pay them all. But we have millions of poor who are demanding investment. It is as serious for a democracy when a State does not pay its debts, as it is for its citizens to suffer hunger because of paying them," Uribe said in a national broadcast following the elections. But the measures of brutal austerity, including new and higher taxes, spending and public investment cutbacks—all of which Uribe presented to the nation as his "Plan B" alternative to the failed referendum—were intended solely to guarantee payment on the debt, reducing

even further the precarious living standards and employment levels of the population. Despite the President's expressed concern for Colombia's "millions of hungry poor," the fact is that his message was primarily directed toward calming the "international markets," which are demanding more blood, sweat and tears.

Uribe won the Presidency back in 2000 because he promised Colombians he would reverse the concessions his predecessor Andrés Pastrana had given to the narcoterrorist FARC. Uribe and his program for confronting the terrorists, despite his brutal economic measures at the close of 2002, still won a significant level of support. That is, until now.

Garzón, who took the post of Bogota's mayor by presenting himself as Robin Hood defending the poor, has made it abundantly clear that his priority is to stop Uribe's mobilization against the FARC and ELN narcoterrorists, on the pretext of mediating a new "peace process." Thus, the only viable option for preventing a "left"/"right" narcoterrorist insurgency from blowing up Colombia—as the coca-growers of Evo Morales have already done in Bolivia with the overthrow of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada—is if Uribe definitively breaks with the IMF and its genocidal policies, and launches a genuine peace process founded on a vigorous program of economic recovery. The centerpiece of such a program must be the creation of stable and well-paid jobs dedicated to the construction of great infrastructure works, such as those undertaken by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

If they don't want to go down in history as the authors of Colombia's greatest tragedy, both President Uribe and Mayor-elect Garzón must adopt the New Bretton Woods and Eurasian Land-Bridge proposals of American Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche. Colombia must abandon the IMF-dictated policies of "debt sustainability" at the cost of production and jobs, and replace these with "job and production sustainability," at the expense of the unpayable foreign debt.

Otherwise, it is highly possible that Uribe will not be able to finish his mandate; or if he does so, it will only be to deliver it over to the new left of Garzón and his allies. In reality, that "new left" could end up becoming the political front for the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists.

Despite the failed peace talks held in the Caguán during the Pastrana Presidency, the FARC has demanded of the Uribe government that three of Colombia's provinces be "demilitarized," supposedly to be able to re-start the "negotiating process." Is the plan to turn the capital city under Lucho Garzón into the next Caguán? The FARC and ELN must be profoundly grateful to the IMF, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and to the World Trade Organization; because, thanks to the ravages wrought by their austerity programs, the narcoterrorists now have the perfect pretext for presenting themselves to the Colombian people as the champions of social justice.