

Human Rights Violations In Colombia Require Investigation

COLOMBIA

For two years the Colombian population has lived under a military state of seige. Entire sections of the country are militarized "war zones," and their inhabitants are subject to arbitrary military "justice." The repression leveled against peasants in these zones now rivals that carried out under the dictatorships of Argentina and Chile.

The Colombian army, historically trained and equipped by the United States, and its counterinsurgency units like the Lancers, have arrested, tortured and murdered top leaders of the PCC, its electoral coalition, the National Union of Opposition (UNO), and allied organizations. In rural areas, UNO's peasant supporters are herded into camps and physically and psychologically tortured for "aiding guerrillas."

Despite the fact that the Communist Party, political leaders from other parties, and the victims of military repression themselves have presented thorough documentation of violation of human rights to the Colombian Congress, to the Interior Ministry, and to President Lopez Michelsen, there has been no halt to the military terror. On the contrary, the military repression has been accompanied by the imposition of a "war economy" which has lowered living standards and made more repression necessary.

It may be wondered then, why U.S. President Jimmy Carter has not mentioned Colombia in his international human rights campaign. Close associates of the Carter Administration have even gone so far as to call Colombia a "model Latin American democracy."

Evidence produced by the Colombian Communist Party indicates that the U.S. President would, in fact, find an investigation of human rights violation in Colombia extremely embarrassing. The systematic death squad deployment against its leadership and the torture of its peasant supporters, the PCC has charged, is an Operation Phoenix of the type carried out by the CIA in Vietnam. This is no mere comparison. As the U.S. Labor Party will document in a forthcoming report to the U.S. Congress, the U.S. embassy in Bogota and allied U.S. agencies in Colombia are the on-the-scene directors, advisors, financial supporters of the operation.

The attached "grid" of human rights violation in Colombia is based on material published in the weekly newspaper of the PCC, *Voz Proletaria*, cross-checked against foreign wire services, local Colombian press, and eyewitness reports.

In accordance with the Carter Administration's stated concern for "respect for human rights" as a keystone element of its foreign policy, it is incumbent upon the U.S. Congress and its appropriate subcommittees to investigate the violations outlined herein; and U.S. agencies' financing and training of the military-police apparatus responsible for these violations.

The Violation Of Human Rights In Colombia

- 9-75 *Yacopi*, department of Cundinamarca. UNO councilman, Nicolás Mahecha, and PCC President of the Yacopi Agrarian Union and Javier Baquero are arrested by the Army and assassinated.
- 10-9-75 *Uraba*, department of Antioquia. UNO councilman and PCC leader Jesús Antonio Jiménez is assassinated by the Army.
- 12-15-75 *Cimitarra*, department of Santander. Vice President of the municipal council, José Romana Mena, is assassinated by the Army. (By January, 1976, generalized repression against the population of Cimitarra intensifies not only against Communists, but members of other political parties.)
- 3-24-76 *Cimitarra*, department of Santander. Military units capture and torture UNO sympathizers Adolfo and Moises Guzman. Adolfo is machine-gunned to death in front of his brother.

- 5-76 *Cimitarra*. The Fifth Brigade of the Army begins its "counterguerrilla" offensive against the population following a UNO victory in municipal elections in April. A concentration camp is set up at a nearby airfield and as many as 400 persons are arrested and tortured allegedly for their connections to guerrilla groups. In the first week of May, Col. Nestor Espitia, commander of the Cimitarra military base, calls a town meeting to say that the Army will eliminate the Communists by force and that the legitimately elected municipal council will not be permitted to meet. As of May 4, peasant men, women and children are brought into the airfield from outlying areas and told by Espitia: "We'll show you that war is war." Although writs of habeas corpus are presented to the proper authorities in Bogotá on behalf of the detained Cimitarra residents, the Army refuses to release

prisoners. A statement published by a group of professionals in the Bogotá daily, *El Espectador*, denounces the Army action, saying that prisoners are subjected to "prolonged (forced) fasts, cruel and degrading treatment in the midst of provocations and unending interrogations without the benefit of legal assistance." Tortures include forcing individuals to lie face down on the ground; if they move, they are beaten. They are also ordered to lie on their backs while soldiers jump on their stomachs; prisoners are deprived of food and water for entire days.

UNO councilmen are among Cimitarra citizens brought before military tribunals; they and other Communists are illegally jailed. (A Supreme Court investigation later finds all councilmen innocent of the charges that they have aided guerrillas and frees them, but two of these councilmen, Luis Giraldo and Elias Pérez, are re-arrested in Barrancabermeja and beaten.)

The military confiscates all political propaganda and raids the UNO headquarters. Any individual travelling in the area requires permission from the military to carry food, drugs or other indispensable items. Virtually all agricultural and other economic activity is halted in this area.

- 7-11-76 *Cimitarra*. Misael Rodríguez, UNO sympathizer is assassinated by the military in the region known as "Pizzaral." His mutilated body is shown to peasants as a warning.
- 9-11-76 *Cimitarra*. Isaac Gomez and Antonio Galvis Rodríguez are assassinated by the Army. Both were UNO sympathizers.
- 10-76 *Yacopi*, Cundinamarca. The military adopts a strategy of deploying small "hit squads," dressed as civilians, to assassinate targeted victims. Peasants "disappear" periodically in the area, as in the case of Leonel Ulloa.
- 11-20-76 *Yacopi*. Isauro Bustos is kidnapped by counter-guerrilla unit. His remains are later discovered in the department of Boyaca. Witnesses report having seen him thrown from a helicopter in mid-flight.
- 11-15-76 *Yacopi*. Military units raid the town corral and rob fowl.
- 12-14-76 *Cimitarra*. Tobias Lamus, UNO lawyer is assassinated by Army units.
- 12-18-76 *Yacopi*. The military mayor announces that the "thieves" who robbed the town corral (above), will be sentenced to death if caught. He proceeds to name the town's UNC councilmen, Campo Elias Palacio, Nancianceno and Carlos Herrera, as the "thieves." (The Army has prevented Yacopi's town council, in which the UNO is a majority, from meeting.)
- 1-7-77 William Manjarrés, student at the Universidad Industrial de Santander and leader of the Communist Youth (Juco), is jailed and tortured for five days by the Army. He is held at the Paraver military base and interrogated on his alleged connections to guerrilla groups. He is physically beaten and told to run away, so he can be shot "trying to escape." Troops from the Popa Battalion led by Sgt. Saul Lopera, raid Manjarrés' home while he is detained.
- 1-7-77 *Quibdo*, department of Choco. Damián Herazo and Adalberto Hinestroza are jailed for 15 days for partic-

ipating in a demonstration protesting police and military repression.

- 1-9-77 *Cimitarra*. President of the municipal council and PCC leader Josue Cavanzo is assassinated by an "unknown" assailant. He had previously been arrested and jailed, then freed by civilian courts. He had been threatened with death in the presence of high-ranking military officers of the Fifth Brigade. *El Espectador* of Jan. 11, 1977, quotes PCC Secretary General in Santander, Juan Campos who attributes Cavanzo's death to a military death squad. "The Army has taken on the mission of liquidating the most prominent figures of the PCC...Cavanzo's murder has no other origin (than this)." Campos reported that he and other top PCC leaders have received death threats; "we're sure the death squads won't leave this just at words..."

The Fifth Brigade military officer leading the occupation troops (five battalions) in Cimitarra, Captain Hernando Martínez, publicly flaunts a list of PCC members and other individuals to be assassinated. On Jan. 9 he threatens to kill UNO councilman Octavio Ramírez, and Jesús Triana. On Feb. 16, 1977 Martínez is quoted as saying, "if the Communists want blood...then we'll give it to them...that's why there are so many of us."

- 1-9-10-77 *Cimitarra*. Camilo Moreno, an elderly peasant, is dragged by the Army from his home and taken to a nearby military base Camposeco. An eyewitness reports seeing him beaten over a four-day period and overheard officers say that he had died after the fourth day. On the same day, Miguel Cruz is arrested in Camposeco for carrying bottles of serum to a sick family. Captain Martínez personally oversees his interrogation, tying him with a rope and beating him until his right arm is broken. Martínez claimed the serum was for guerrillas. (Cruz escaped from the La Corcovada base where he believes he was to be assassinated. His family was subsequently threatened by the Army.)
- 1-22-77 *Puerto Tajada*, department of Cauca. The Army arrests UNO members, among them alternate councilman Olmedo Rios, for pasting up wall posters. On the same day in Yumbo, department of Valle, PCC organizers are arrested for selling copies of the party newspaper, *Voz Proletaria*.
- 1-28-77 *Yacopi*. UNO councilman Nibardo Hernández is arrested and taken to the Bogotá headquarters of the Military Institutions Brigades (BIM), charged with "being a communist" and tortured. Arrested along with him are PCC members Tulio Hernández and Eudoro Avila. (Local Army officers and landlords had previously threatened Nibardo Hernández with death.)
- 1-24-77 *Armero*, department of Tolima. Army and secret police units arrest UNO councilman Alfonso Nuñez. Although a popular mobilization forced police to release him, he is immediately re-arrested. PCC member Jaime Sedano is also arrested at the same time. Military officers in the area announced that more arrests will follow.
- 2-4-77 *Yacopi*. Military units raid the home of the Bustos family "looking for guerrillas." Gilberto and Alcides

Bustos are taken from their home and dragged into the nearby mountainous area. The next day witnesses report seeing their machine-gunned bodies. (Upon hearing the news their mother died instantaneously of a stroke.)

2-5-77 *Yacopi*. A BIM unit ambushes Gilberto and Alcideo Vanegas, (father and son) , robs them of 2600 pesos and kills them with automatic weapons. Officers tell peasants to call local inspector to pick up the bodies, but a military helicopter retrieves them before authorities arrived on the scene. (The Defense Ministry recently announced the whereabouts of the bodies.)

2-11-77 *Yacopi*. Peasants forced to serve as "guides" for counter guerrilla units, Sigifredo Machecha and Manuel Tejedor, both disappear. Other peasants are

told they must pay a 500 peso fine if they refuse to serve as guides.

NOTE: PCC members of the Colombian Congress, Gilberto Vieira (Secretary General of the PCC), José Cardona Hoyos, Manuel Bayona Carrascal as well as independent journalists have made public the evidence regarding these atrocities and violations of human rights. A special investigative commission which travelled to Cimitarra presented its report to the Colombian Congress in May of 1976, and to then Interior Minister Cornelio Reyes. On May 11, Manuel Bayona Carrascal presented the same evidence to Defense Minister Varon Valencia. In addition, peasants from Cimitarra have sent petitions directly to President Lopez Michelsen and other government authorities. No action on any of the documentation presented has yet been taken.

Carter Human Rights Crusade Produces Fascist Counter-Crusade In Southern Cone

BRAZIL

The Carter Administration human rights crusade for Latin America has, in fact, dealt a hard blow to freedom in Latin America, and has sown the seeds for potential full-scale continental war. Events over the past week are leading some observers to wonder whether the Carter team's "new moralism" was even intended to do anything but strengthen the most repressive "Pinochetists" forces in the southern cone nations. For these avid militarists, defense of death squad activities and police-state repression has now become a matter of "national honor" and "national sovereignty" against "U.S. interference."

Beyond purely internal repercussions, the Carter human rights campaign is propelling, along the lines of a "breakaway ally" scenario, the formation of a presumably "anti-U.S." fascist bloc within the southern cone. It is but a small step from the creation of such a continentally-oriented "SATO," hinged on Brazil, to its deployment as a fascist shockforce against those Latin American nations which are still resisting Wall Street economic policies.

Carter's human rights crusade has run into trouble in Brazil, where it is viewed as another U.S. effort to force Brazil to break its nuclear energy development treaty with West Germany, and compromise future Brazilian economic development plans. Brazilian monetarist Finance Minister Mario Henrique Simonsen took great care March 12 to emphasize that the cancellation of a 1952 military pact with the U.S. on March 5 in no way endangered the 1965 agreement regarding North American investment in Brazil. "We never consider

mixing one thing and another," Simonsen stated, adding that Brazil has received U.S. pledges that Washington will not seek economic reprisals in response to the treaty break.

The cancellation of the 1952 treaty is in itself inconsequential in military or economic terms, since Brazil now produces up to 75 percent of the equipment used by the armed forces. French defense officials have publicly expressed eagerness to replace the U.S. as a source of advanced military technology with no strings attached. With its \$30 billion foreign debt, the economic question remains primary in terms of Brazil's next step.

In the wake of the cancellation of the 1952 treaty, the Atlanticist press in Europe and the U.S. were quick to predict a Brazilian "break" with the U.S. Syndicated columnists Evans and Novak March 16 declared that Brazil, refusing to "play the human rights game," will become the head of a "right of center bloc" of countries against the U.S. The Christian Science Monitor proclaimed that Brazil wants to "flex its muscles elsewhere and exercise a degree of hemispheric hegemony" both in Latin America and, possibly, in Southern Africa.

The potential for igniting the long-standing geopolitical tensions was sparked in the diplomatic "incident" provoked this week by Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez' public support for the Carter Administration's campaign on human rights and against nuclear "proliferation." The Brazilian press quickly labeled CAP's statements an attack on Brazil's right to nuclear energy development, reporting "unofficial" rumors of a possible break in Venezuelan-Brazilian relations. CAP may have blundered his way into a dangerous potential military confrontation between the two nations, along the lines of the scenario prescribed by *Washington Star* journalist Elliot Janeway in January