

saved Malaysia from the worst effects of the crisis. However, she has been unable or unwilling to take similar kinds of emergency, sovereign measures for the Philippines. The subsequent, continuing economic decay, intensified by falling U.S. and Japanese importing capacity as the world economy careens into depression, left her vulnerable to a (now almost traditional) Philippine-style coup d'état. And Fidel Ramos was soon up to his old tricks.

Coup rumors are nothing new in the Philippines, but the current round became more serious in December, when a suspicious former junior officer, claiming to represent military organizations which had been involved in previous failed coup attempts, turned over "evidence" of a new coup to government-linked NGOs, and promptly got a bullet through his head on the streets of Manila. Meanwhile, the People's Consultative Assembly (PCA), the primary non-governmental organization (NGO) in the overthrow of President Estrada, broke from the Macapagal-Arroyo government, and called for a new "people's power" movement if she refused to resign. The head of the PCA is one Salvador Enriquez, a Ramos man who ran the budget during his Presidency!

Then, in rapid (and predictable) order, Cardinal Sin threw in his hat, on Jan. 9, saying that "the people are tired," while Gen. Fortunato Abat, the head of a retired military association connected to Ramos, and the first military man to publicly call for the military to withdraw support from Estrada last year, piped in on Jan. 10, that the President was not interested in the people, and that "the people are wiser now."

Later that day, Macapagal-Arroyo blinked, announcing the formation of the Ramos "Council of State," and praising his knowledge and experience.

Ramos' attempt at Round Three was part-bluff, since it is unlikely that the "warm bodies" would have been available for the media-show required to justify a "people's power" coup. The population is sorely disappointed that the economy continues to decay under Macapagal-Arroyo's leadership, but few would rally to a Ramos standard any longer.

However, Macapagal-Arroyo is now essentially wedded to Ramos' policies, including IMF-dictated austerity, the sell-off of the nation's industries and banks to foreign speculators, and the introduction of the U.S. military. She will thus find it extremely difficult to reverse the damage. Ramos and his U.S. backers are unlikely to be satisfied with the position of "adviser" for long.

Ramos is clearly behind the decision to deploy U.S. troops. Is he also ready to consider the return of U.S. bases, or allow a new base to be set up elsewhere, such as General Santos City in Mindanao, where the United States recently built a \$2 billion state-of-the-art airport and port facility? Many in the American war faction have called for exactly that.

As with the demise of the state of Argentina, and others now on the chopping block, national leaders must act to assert sovereignty in the onrushing global economic breakdown, or face their nations' downfall.

Colombia: 'Peace' With Terrorists Disintegrates

by Gretchen Small

When President Andrés Pastrana went on national radio and television Jan. 9 to announce to the Colombian nation that peace negotiations with the largest narco-terrorist force in the Western Hemisphere, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), had failed, a new political-military geometry opened in the Western Hemisphere. The President gave the FARC 48 hours to pull its forces out of the vast, Switzerland-sized demilitarized enclave which, with U.S. State Department encouragement, his government had handed over to FARC control over three years before.

It was a shift in U.S. policy which tipped the scales in Colombia, U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche wrote on Jan. 12. "The significance of the virtual break between President Pastrana and the FARC, is that this represents a dramatic shift in U.S. policy, away from the pro-drug-legalization policy, toward a traditional anti-drug policy. It is, otherwise, a crucial step toward implementing a combat against the spread of international terrorism, whose funding relies chiefly on proceeds of drug and weapons trafficking. The point has been reached, that either those two logistical features of terrorist forms of irregular warfare are virtually ended, or there is no chance of civilized life continuing on this planet for the foreseeable future."

The Grasso Factor

As indicated by LaRouche, the ramifications of the collapse of the peace with narco-terrorism in Colombia extend far beyond even the Andean region, where the legalization policy had become the dominant reality. Immediately affected, too, are the City of London and Wall Street, whose New York Stock Exchange chairman Richard Grasso has staked part of *his* political capital on his chummy relationship with the FARC's *Comandante* Raúl Reyes.

The response within Colombia was electric. The government would finally reassert its authority over the entirety of the national territory, and end the nightmare of a surreal "peace process" under which an unending stream of foreign dignitaries and top Wall Street financial honchos had flown in to negotiate with FARC commanders in their enclave, even as the FARC kidnapped children and adults across the country, wiped out whole towns in their assaults, shut down highways, blew up electricity installations and oil pipelines—and of course, ran massive amounts of drugs into the U.S., at will.

Even when the Colombian military captured, and then turned over to the U.S. government in 2001, court-useable evidence that the FARC had become the largest drug cartel in South America, the game still continued. The FARC, confident in its political protection, allowed Colombian media into their enclave to film shots of the Nazi-like concentration camps where emaciated hostages were held captive—and yet the FARC were still portrayed as peace-seeking rebels in the world's media.

The decision of the government to *act*, produced an explosion of hope. In town after town, people came out to the highway to cheer troop convoys on, as the Army began moving thousands of reinforcements south towards the FARC DMZ following Pastrana's announcement. Polls found an 85% support for Pastrana's decision; no Presidential candidate dared oppose his announcement.

Reviving a Corpse

Had Pastrana kept to his deadline, Colombia's Armed Forces would have moved into the DMZ, and had the FARC on the defensive. That opportunity to deliver a rapid, decisive blow to the drug trade and international terrorism, however, was lost. Richard Grasso's Wall Street allies, the United Nations, the drug legalization lobby, the "human rights" lobby, the One Worldists and terrorist sympathizers, all went into action to save their policy of peace with narco-terrorism, and they once again, temporarily, succeeded.

The ostensible issue blocking a return to the negotiating table, had been the government's refusal to lift the military controls around, and over, the FARC's enclave which it had imposed in the wake of Sept. 11. The FARC had said they would not return to the table until the government revoked its order that any foreign visitors who wished to enter the enclave had to receive government permission, first, and lifted the army troops now closely patrolling the roads entering the area. What provoked the FARC's particular fury, were military surveillance overflights of the area, which made operations by FARC drug planes more difficult.

The United Nations envoy to the Colombian peace talks, former *New York Times* reporter James LeMoyne, with backing from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, took the point in arranging the government's backdown on its 48-hour ultimatum. LeMoyne, who spent many hours "sipping whiskey with the rebel commanders," worked closely with Cuban leader Fidel Castro, who sent in his own, undisclosed, proposal for how to break the impasse. The governments of France, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Mexico, Italy, Switzerland, and Venezuela also threw their force behind the narco-terrorists, with the French Ambassador to Colombia, Daniel Parfait, serving as the spokesman for the governments involved. The Ambassadors of those ten nations pounded Pastrana for nearly five hours on Jan. 13, and then flew down to the FARC enclave to accompany LeMoyne in the final push to revive the talks.

Parfait told the press, "We are not going in empty-handed," but what they promised the FARC has not been disclosed.

The forces of sanity in Colombia and in the United States, once again, failed to stand firm, and in the evening of Jan. 14, shortly before the troops were to move into the DMZ, President Pastrana went back on national television, this time to announce that yet another 11th-hour pact had been reached. The FARC accepted the status quo, and negotiations with the FARC would be resumed. The President tried to put a tough face on his capitulation, by giving the FARC until Jan. 20, to make a hard commitment to *discussing* a cease-fire in the next round of negotiations!

Winning the Peace

The FARC took back political control of the situation through the UN-Cuban-French-et.al. initiative, but there is no returning to the *status quo ante*. Colombian military forces remain in place along the borders of the narco-terrorists' enclave, and the government's ability to capitulate is constrained both by the domestic hatred of its peace policy, and the shift within Bush Administration against terrorism globally. What additional military capabilities the FARC may have acquired and stored in their zone, and what strategy they may adopt as Colombia heads into congressional elections in March and presidential elections in May, remain to be seen.

A determined commitment from Washington to take on the Grasso-UN-legalization forces is required. Discussions are underway in Washington, over how to expand U.S. military aid for Colombia, and reduce the restrictions on its use. Currently, U.S. law only permits Colombia's military to use U.S. aid for fighting drugs, and not for any counterinsurgency operations, an absurdity given that there is no distinction between terrorism and narcotics at all on the ground. The restrictions are strongly defended in Congress; as one official told the *Washington Post* Jan. 15, only after Sept. 11 has lifting these restrictions even become debatable.

One immediate step, would be the reactivation of the U.S. drug surveillance and tracking flights over the Andes, which have been shut down since the Spring of 2001, when a plane carrying American missionaries was shot down in Peru.

A second idea under discussion is for the U.S. to train and equip another rapid-reaction force battalion (RDF), this one to protect infrastructure, including pipelines owned by U.S. oil companies. While equipment is sorely needed, the ongoing U.S. effort to restructure the Colombian Army into multiple RDF battalions is a sure-loser, following a line of utopian madness. To win the peace, as Lyndon LaRouche has insisted, Colombia's military must be built up around a strengthened military engineering corps, ready to help restore the country economically, as well as militarily, from the ravages of the narco-guerrillas.