

Action on Colombia

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Madison Group Visits Apartadó and Bogota

Note: Four CSN members recently returned from a week-long trip to investigate the jailings of the elected leaders of our sister city, Apartadó. Here is an account of that trip.

June 4, 1994 The four of us left Madison at 5 AM taking a bus to O'Hare. Both our flight to Miami and to Medellin were OK. As we flew to Colombia we passed around an article from the day before's *El Tiempo* about Luis Guillermo Lopez Purta, director of Uraba's Fiscalia office, assassinated the day before in Apartadó. The Fiscal's office (cross between our Attorney General's office and the D.A.'s office) had been investigating La Chinita massacre and the subsequent jailing of 37 people.

In Medellin the airport was quieter than in the past. Our 45 minute drive from the airport to the hotel reminded us of a ride at Great America. I don't think the taxi driver wanted to use his brakes, if he had them.

June 5, 1994 The first plane to Apartadó was full, so we waited for the second flight in the 20-seater. At the Apartadó airport we were met by local officials and sweltering heat. We were taken to meet with about 40 community members who had been waiting for us in the heat for over two hours. They presented us with a document signed by 33 community leaders representing political, social and sports organizations denouncing the arrest of the leaders from Uraba for the La Chinita massacre and the faceless justice system which keeps

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Children in La Chinita watch with concern as the Military Police arrive to "protect" the Dane County delegation.

Will the U.S. Congress Act for Human Rights in Colombia?

This Spring we witnessed a blossoming of opposition to the human rights tragedy in Colombia, specifically with Amnesty International's (AI) report on Colombia and its making Colombia a worldwide campaign.

AI's report *Political Violence in Colombia: Myth and Reality* (available from CSN) came out on March 15 and copies were sent by AI to all members of Congress, with endorsements from Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold, and Congressmen John Porter (IL) and Tom Lantos (CA).

The following day, Russ Feingold delivered a speech to the Senate on Colombia, and AI-USA Director William Schulz wrote Secretary of State Christopher of Amnesty's deep concern about U.S. funding of Colombian security units engaged in abuses. Five questions were asked, including "to what extent has there been a diversion of U.S. funds designated for counternarcotic programs to counterinsurgency?" and "what are the units of the Colombian armed forces that currently receive or have received U.S. security assistance?"

In mid April, having not received written responses, Amnesty issued a call to Congress "to maintain its hold on current, and to suspend future military

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Madison Visit to Apartadó and Bogota - from page 1

them from proving their innocence. The people at the town meeting were mostly peasants who talked of social reform that was occurring under Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo. They talked of the need for ending the violence, of the need for rural roads to bring their products to market, and of the need to end military and paramilitary harassment. They were impassioned and genuine.

At lunch the elected officials talked how the massacre and jailings were used to keep popular candidates like Jose Antonio Lopez (former Mayor) from winning the March Chamber of Deputies election.

After lunch we went to a regional soccer game. Uraba was playing Monteria. Everyone was hopeful about the Colombia soccer team in the World Cup; four of the national team started on Uraba youth teams. We left the game to tour the hospital which serves all of Uraba. The director expressed his concerns to us, including the fact that it has not been possible to have anesthesiologists come to Uraba when they can make more money in Medellin and other parts of Colombia.

June 6, 1994 Our first stop was the Apartadó city hall to pick up acting Mayor Nieves and two trucks of military police. The police captain gave us a simple set of rules. Stick together. If you hear gunfire, don't run -- drop to the ground.

We toured the barrio of La Chinita,

the site of the January massacre. La Chinita is one of 7 land invasion sites, where over 5,500 families (20,000+ people) have squatted on former rice growing land. It was a fiesta day, so everyone was at home instead of working in the banana fields. The poverty was overwhelming. Families crowded into shacks, children playing in sewage, and looks of distrust at us and the soldiers. We met the woman who had planned the fiesta where the massacre took place. The murders happened right outside her house. She denied the government and military's claims that the fiesta was political -- she said she was raising money to send her kids to school. When the shooting stopped, with dozens of people piled on her floor below bullet level, she heard someone outside ask "Should we burn the house down" and someone in apparent authority respond "No".

After leaving La Chinita, we met with the Union Patriótica officials and witnesses of other acts of violence in Uraba. Their hypotheses for the killers' identities are: paramilitary groups, the Colombian army, the land owner, and/or the guerrillas.

Our biggest question after all these meetings was how the federal government could have believed the local officials could have been involved under ANY of these scenarios.

June 7, 1994 We awoke at 6:40 AM to the sound of crop dusters overhead. Before heading for the Apartadó air-

port, we stopped at City Hall to exchange some gifts between the sister communities. They gave us a sample Colombian presidential ballot, which carries the names and photos of the candidates. Some of the candidates besides the ruling Conservative and Liberals were unique, like a "witch" who promised to sweep out corruption. She came in fourth place.

We heard there had been a powerful earthquake in Colombia. When we arrived in Bogota, we had dinner with members of the Permanent Committee on Human Rights and had the honor of meeting Dr. Alfredo Vazquez Carrizosa, a distinguished Colombian statesperson and founder of the Committee who would accompany us to most of our Bogota meetings. It became clear soon that he was well recognized and respected.

June 8, 1994 Our day began at 7 with a breakfast meeting with several attorneys working on the Chinita case. They attempted to acquaint us with the Colombian Constitution, the Faceless Justice System and the due process violation which they allege occurred with the Uraba men. We then went to Modelo Prison to meet with Nelson Campo, the mayor of Apartadó, Jose Antonio Lopez Bula, former mayor and candidate for Congress and three other men accused of "intellectual authorship" of the massacre. At first we were refused admission, but finally had a chance for a long visit with the men. They all denounced the massacre, proclaimed their innocence, outlined the due process violations against them and asked us to help them.

The government's position is that the Apartadó UP leaders knew in advance of the massacre and were thus responsible. They responded that in the weeks before the massacre activists (mainly banana unionists) of all political groups were being killed by unidentified agents, and that the government did nothing. He had asked government for assistance and offered full cooperation in the investigation, something backed up by an NGO investigation.

After leaving the prison we met

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The arrest of Apartadó's leaders will delay the installation of public works to replace the open sewers like this in La Chinita Barrio.

Letter from Apartadó Community to Madison

Apartadó, June 6, 1994

In the name of the citizens and civic organizations of Apartadó and Urabá we wish to give you a warm welcome to this land of hope and promise which several years ago became sister city to Madison. Today your presence here is truly not only comforting but an indication that we continue to count on your undeniable support and solidarity.

However, this time your visit comes at a time when fear and anxiety have again overcome us, as a result of political persecution unleashed against upright and honest public officials. Specifically, on February 14 of this year, the mayor of Apartadó NELSON CAMPO NUÑEZ, congressional candidate JOSE ANTONIO LOPEZ BULA, Apartadó council member ALBEIRO BUSTAMANTE and communal leader NAHUN ORREGO SOSSA were detained by order of the Prosecutor General of the Nation [Fiscalía General]. All were falsely accused of the atrocious mass crime which occurred in the "La Chinita" neighborhood of this municipality on January 25, 1994.

These detentions occurred at a time when the UNION PATRIOTICA (UP), the political party with which these officials are affiliated, was pursuing its electoral campaign for the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate of the Republic. Immediately, civil strikes were organized in protest, demanding the release of these officials and denouncing the use of our judicial system as an instrument of political persecution.

These actions, plus declarations made by the Church, business, teachers, youth, cooperatives, parents of the families and other organizations, were not sufficient. On the contrary, within a few days a "witch hunt" was unleashed against other activists and leaders of the UP, who were also arrested and jailed. They were accused in the same manner of this frightful genocide and of other types of crimes. Among these officials are labor leaders, banana workers,

elderly women and also another popularly elected mayor: EDGAR GENES CAMPILLO, local mayor of nearby Turbo.

Urabá has been shaken mercilessly again and again by the senseless violence which has taken the lives of innocent people, whose only crime was to work tirelessly for progress. Assassination and impunity have been the common

denominator. Violent and unlawful actions have been repeated time and again in the face of inaction by the State, and at times with the complicity of some of its agents. Justice has continually been absent from Urabá, and this has permitted and even encouraged the actions of groups which have sown death and pain in hundreds of homes.

All of us in Urabá have felt and suffered personally the effects of the violence. We have all lost a family member or a friend. We forcefully reject barbaric acts such as the one committed in the "La Chinita" neighborhood, in which 36 people were brutally murdered at the hands of a group which entered under cover of night. We demand that the State investigate who were those truly responsible, and punish the guilty. We reject the attempt to tie such reprehensible acts to people who have demonstrated the moral character and capacity for selflessness to work.

This represents a setup orchestrated by the political enemies of the detained leaders and with the complicit participation of government agents, for whom the presence of alternative political movements and the high degree of organization of the popular sectors in the region is apparently inconvenient. They wish to discredit these people and prevent



Apartadó Community representatives meet with Dane County Delegation

the UP movement, to which the jailed leaders belong, from gaining ground in the political life of the region.

They have resorted to accusations of crimes which the detained leaders did not commit, and to this end they have subverted the role of the Prosecutor General of the Nation and have used "testimonies" given by people who have been previously instructed and who have supported the charges as "Faceless Witnesses." The Office of the Prosecutor does not distinguish political, civic or social organizations from insurgent groups; in its conception it is predetermined that any political, labor, communal or religious leader is an "appendage" of or collaborator with the guerrilla.

We ask you in the name of the civic organizations and the citizens of Urabá to demand the immediate release of these persons by the National Government and the Prosecutor General of the Nation. This is a political trial, and as such must be rejected completely by democratic forces throughout the world. If we do not achieve this, we will feel doubly frustrated seeing innocent people unjustly condemned, and seeing those go free who are truly responsible for the acts of barbarity which have occurred here.

-- Signed by 33 Apartadó community, labor, and political leaders

The Chinita Six Ask For Assistance

July 11, 1994

Dear friends:

First, we send you our eternal thanks for the invaluable solidarity which you brought us in our difficult moments we have been subjected to by our Government's intolerance.

As far as our situation is concerned, it remains the same, since there has been no clarifications [charges; hearings] on the part of the Chief Prose-cutor's office (Fiscalia). The only thing which has happened is that other leaders and activists of the Patriotic Union in Uraba continue to be detained.

How infuriating is the slowness with which the Fiscalia processes our case! They have yet to accept the evidence produced by our lawyers, which would give us our freedom. There is not the slightest doubt that this is a political case and that the Government is going to try to keep us imprisoned while the elections in Uraba for new mayors, deputies and council members are conducted. These elections will take place this coming October 30.

And when the respected voice of Monseñor Isaias Duarte, Bishop of Apartado, declared our total innocence and called for our freedom, what did the Minister of Government do but accuse him of interfering in the Court's business! You can imagine what effects this arrogant attitude of the Government can have on folks.

We believe that this injustice can only be stopped by international exposure and denunciation of our Government's atrocities against us, where our real crime is that of being recognized political leaders of the Opposition in Uraba. For this reason we ask you to make a public statement, such as your Committee publishing an ad, perhaps a whole page, in a national daily newspaper like the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* or another, in which the truth about the actions of the Government of Colombia against us and our indefinite detentions are presented.



(L to R) Nelson Campo Nuñez, Nahum Orrego Sossa, Edgar Genes Campillo, Alfredo Vazquez Carrizosa, Jack Laun, Albeiro Bustamante Sanchez, Jose Antonio Lopez Bula, and Mark Pocan.
(Missing: Gustavo Arcia)

You should know that this Government is especially fearful of international denunciations because the state has always tried more to protect its international image rather than improve the reality of our Country. For this reason, such an ad would be very important and could force the Government to change its behavior.

In the very near future, a group composed of several NGO's will publish a report on the results of their investigation in Apartado of the events in La Chinita Barrio. When we have it, we will send you a copy. This commission, with fully certainty of our innocence, also has committed itself to demand our liberty.

We believe the most important thing is to get publicity in the U.S., while not ignoring the possibility of something similar in other countries. In this you really could help a great deal.

Cordially,

Jose Antonio Lopez Bula
Edgar Genes Campillo
Nahum Orrego Sossa
Nelson Campo Nuñez
Albeiro Bustamante Sanchez
Gustavo Arcia

**We need \$\$ now
to help pay for an
ad for The Chinita
Six in *The Nation*.**

Please send what you can afford to:
CSN, P.O. Box 1505, Madison,

Madison Trip - From Page 2

with U.S. Ambassador Busby and his aide John Feeley. Busby defended the faceless justice system, condemned violence in Colombia and indicated that the US. needed to "professionalize" the Colombian military (School of the Americas). Feeley said that there are many massacres and the only reason they were paying any attention to La Chinita is because of all the fuss we had managed to raise.

Our next meeting was with about 30 representatives of various human rights groups who shared their concerns with us about political repression in Colombia. Fr. Javier Giraldo expressed how tired and exhausted they have become, and the critical nature of international assistance. June 9, 1994 In the morning we met with Gustavo DeGreiff, the Fiscal General of Colombia whose office will determine what charges will be placed against the men. Although apologetic for the faceless justice system, he admitted that there were abuses by the government and the army and he promised to look further into the La Chinita investigation.

At lunch we met with nine members of the media to express our concerns about the faceless justice system and the Chinita case. Afterwards, we met with the Procurator in charge of investigating violations of human rights. His power, however, is limited. His office cannot conduct civil or criminal proceedings. Next we met with Juan Pablo Ordoñez, a human rights worker in the homosexual commu- Continued on Page 6

Dear Friends of Colombia and human rights:

We hope that you find this newsletter to be informative and useful, and to give you hope for a brighter future for the beautiful but anguished land of Colombia.

We are a handful of volunteers doing our best with limited resources in our "spare time" to raise these critical issues here in the U.S.A. and to "speak truth to power", particularly to our elected officials in Washington who always seem to find ways to misuse our hard-earned tax dollars.

We believe that our sister city effort contains great potential for creating a "window of opportunity" for the forces of peace and reconciliation in Colombia. *This is the only project of its kind between Colombia and the U.S.* We have been asked by the Bishop of Apartadó to become involved in a "Mesa de la Vida" peace plan, with someone from Dane County living in Apartadó for a period of time. We would very much like to do this. We would like to assist health, sanitation and education projects. And we urgently need to centralize our activities into an office, with an at least one part-time paid staff, to coordinate and follow up on our projects (we have no office nor staff). We can only do it with your assistance.

We will be conducting a "phone-a-thon" in August to raise funds for these important projects.

We will be calling you in second or third week of August, asking for your support. We hope you will be generous when one of us calls.

If you prefer for no one to call, please fill out and send the form below. Thanks.

Yes! I want to help stop the violence in Colombia.

Here is my contribution to the Colombia Support Network and the Dane County/Apartadó Sister Communities Project:

___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$250 ___ \$500 Other \$_____

Please make checks out to "Colombia Support Network"

___ I would like to join the CSN. Please contact me.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

If you desire your contribution to be tax-deductible, make your check out to "WICOCA - Colombia"



Worldwide Actions for Colombian Human Rights

Canadian Churches Oppose Helicopter Deal

On May 31, the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA) exposed the Canadian government's complicity in the arming of the Colombian security forces. Bell Helicopter Textron of Fort Worth, Texas, the parent company of Bell Helicopter Textron (Canada), was awarded a contract to supply 12 Bell-212 helicopters to the Colombian Air Force and police. According to Project Ploughshares, the Bell-212, manufactured in Mirabel, Quebec since 1988, has a history of being used in counter-insurgency operations, including occasions in which civilian areas have been bombed and strafed.

For 6 years, ICCHRLA has gathered direct testimony about indiscriminate bombing and aerial strafing of civilian villages by the Colombian military, which has led to death, destruction and the internal displacement of thousands of campesinos who have fled their homes in terror. In its May report, *Colombia: A Human Rights Nightmare Amidst a Conspiracy of Silence*, ICCHRLA documents the persistent pattern of gross human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by the Colombian military, and silence on the part of the Canadian government.

ICCHRLA was told by a senior official from the Department of Foreign Affairs that the International Trade Minister did not have time to talk about human rights during his May trade mission to Colombia, which in addition to Bell Helicopter Textron (Canada), included two other death merchants: the Canadian Commercial Corp. and SNC-Lavalin International.

ICCHRLA is an ecumenical organization that represents 20 different Canadian churches and religious communities. Contact: Kathy Price, Media Liaison (416) 921-0801; Fax: (416) 921-3843; icchrla@web.apc.org

Plan Pacifico

The Choco Rainforest in Western Colombia is being targeted by multinationals for exploitation, according to information received from the Canadian group CUSO.

The Choco rainforest is second only to the Amazon in size, 71,000 km²; 80% is untouched forest (6/93); 40% unclassified species of flora and fauna, with 2.5 times the bird species of the whole of North America.

The government of Colombia sees the region as the answer to its \$20+ billion debt, with mass scale gold and platinum mining, forestry of hard woods, oil and gas exploitation, and fishing.

Hydroelectric projects are planned in the Bajo San Juan and Utria. Whole river systems have been destroyed, blasting and clearcutting erodes the soil and clogs rivers with mud.

Plan Pacifico has been compared to the James Bay Hydro Electric Projects in Northeastern Quebec in terms of magnitude, destruction of eco-systems, and disruption to the lives of the Aboriginal (<100,000 Waunan, Embera, Catio, Cuna) people and Black peoples (mostly landless, approx >1,000,000) in the region. Native and Black peoples have come together to fight for responsible consultative and sustainable development.

In 1992, OREWA (Regional Indigenous Organisation Embera-Waunana) successfully forced the government to commit to a socio-environmental impact study team. OREWA and ACADESAN (Asociacion Campesina del Rio San Jaun) have joined forces with partners in Colombia and Canada, the Union of Ontario Indians, Assembly of First Nations and CUSO.

From: Marcia James, CUSO, 461 Princess St, Kingston, ON, Canada, K7L-1C3 phn 613-530-2110, fax 613-530-2111; cusoking@web.apc.org

Hierarchy Criticized

The Australian magazine *Solidaridad* carried an article in May entitled "The Myths of Anarchy-Human Rights in Colombia".

Amnesty International-Australia is asking the Australian Catholic Church to join its campaign. "AI Australia believes that the Colombian Church hierarchy has failed to play any part in condemning these state-sponsored human rights violations. Australian trade unions and business people are being urged to sign a joint statement expressing concern about violence in Colombia."

From ams@hcsaust.com.au

You can reach the Colombia Support Network electronically :
csn@igc.apc.org

Isolated Mountain Hamlet Contacts CSN

On July 25, CSN received a letter dated June 10 from a small settlement named Zungo in the mountains, 8 hours by mule from Apartadó. Forty-eight campesino families live in an isolated area, where the national and departamental governments do nothing for them - they are "absolutely forgotten and not even on the map. Despite the richness of the land, we have no way to market our products, no medical facilities nor school. Malnutrition of our children is significant."

"Despite all that, we are optimistic for the future. We have formed a legally chartered Community Action Board and ask for any possible assistance..."

Trip to Colombia - from p. 4

nity who told us how the "disposables" (poor homosexuals, street kids, peasants, prostitutes and others) are tortured and killed by the government with impunity. Our last official meeting was with officials of the national Union Patriótica Party who told us of the political killings against members of their party.

June 10, 1994 We left our hotel for the airport about 7 AM and landed in Chicago around 11 PM, just in time to miss the last bus to Madison.

Struggle in Congress to Halt Aid to the Colombian Military

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assistance of Colombia until the five questions are adequately addressed". Days prior to that, Senator Leahy (VT), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, issued a mild rebuke to the State Department over Colombia.

On May 10, six members of the Foreign Operations subcommittee of the House Appropriations committee sent a strongly worded letter to the State Department. **Jose Serrano-NY, Esteban Torres-CA, John Olver-IL, Nita Lowey-NY, Nancy Pelosi-CA, and John Porter-IL** deplored the human rights situation in Colombia and stated their support for freezing U.S. military assistance until improvements in the Colombian human rights situation occurred.

They were, unfortunately, not joined in this letter by the ranking member of the subcommittee, David Obey of Wisconsin's 7th District.

During this period in early May, CSN contacted over 100 people in northwest Wisconsin, in Congressman Obey's District. Some communicated their concerns to Obey (see p.9), however Obey never responded to CSN's calls, letters or faxes.

The bill that came out of the House Appropriations Committee on June 7 would put a freeze on military assistance to Colombia (and Bolivia) "until the Secretary of State certifies that this assistance is being used primarily for counternarcotics purposes, and that any use of these funds that is not for counternarcotics purposes would be purely incidental and not pursuant to any policy." The "primarily" was added May 25, by Congressman Gerald Solomon (NY) in a watering down amendment.

Congressman Obey did not put up much of a fight over this weakening of the bill, saying:

"The committee had every right to be concerned about what was happening in Colombia and Bolivia, because a number of allegations of misuse of American-supplied equipment have arisen. ... there can be no question that there have been considerable violations of human rights in [Colombia]. However, we have also been asked to recog-

For Human Rights in Colombia -- Write now to your Senators and Representatives

Urge them to condition all military and police aid to Colombia upon dramatic improvement in the human rights situation, specifically the ending of impunity of military and police agents from prosecution for murders and disappearances. Also, request hearings to investigate the U.S. involvement in the "Dirty War" in Colombia. Key members to contact are those on the Foreign Relations Committees and the Appropriations Committees.

nize that the Colombian military recently reorganized by disbanding military units involved strictly in counternarcotics activities, because the judgement of the Colombian Government was that it was ... actually hurting the counternarcotics effort ... So the Solomon amendment is an effort to try to balance concerns, and I am willing to accept it on a 1-year basis. But ... I am deeply suspicious that a year from now we will still see substantial human rights violations in both countries by the military, and I want to make clear that I think the administration has an obligation to support an effort to totally cut off funds if we do not see substantial improvement in the way the military is used so that we are not continually embarrassed by the use of forces supplied and trained by America in a way which impinges upon human rights which, as a country, we are supposed to value."

In this game of money, talk is talk, and a year from now can be never.

The Senate Foreign Operations subcommittee came out with a version that has little clout to it.

On July 15 a motion by North Carolina's Senator Helms to cut off all money to Colombia pending a "cleaning up of the drug mess and corruption" was unanimously passed in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Efforts are now being made to amend his bill to include improvements in human rights and particularly an end to impunity by soldiers and police.

As we go to press at the end of July, the key vote is scheduled for July 28 where the two houses will compromise to get one foreign operations funding bill. Our Rep. David Obey is forecast to play a deciding role, and we certainly will closely monitor his action.

Regardless of the outcome, we certainly will be much better organized next year!

U.S. Guns for De Greiff

In a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee meeting June 22, Robert Gelbard, Assistant Secretary Of State For International Narcotics, was questioned by Rep. Lantos (CA):

MR. GELBARD: We have had a major problem with their prosecutor-general, Gustavo De Greiff, who is independent from the government, ...

REP. LANTOS: So when you say independent, you mean independent for what period of time, and how can that independence be curtailed?

MR. GELBARD: He has an independent term.

REP. LANTOS: When does that term end?

MR. GELBARD: I believe he has several more years, theoretically, in office.

REP. LANTOS: And under no circumstances can he be removed --

MR. GELBARD: He can be --

REP. LANTOS: -- prior to the termination of his tenure?

MR. GELBARD: As I understand it, he can be removed by the Colombian constitutional or supreme court.

REP. LANTOS: And has that been attempted?

MR. GELBARD: That has not yet been attempted, but has been under discussion within Colombia.

On June 30, the Colombian Supreme Court after heated debate, voted 12-8 to remove DeGreiff, with the reason given that he had just reached the "mandatory retirement age of 65".

Turn the page to read about the real reason DeGreiff was forced out.

My Turn: Opinion Drug Wars...Dirty Wars...Soccer Wars?

The drug wars are going from the sublime to the ridiculous: the June 24 *NY Times* reported concerns by the U.S. Government that Colombian President-elect Samper had received more than \$3 million from the Cali cocaine cartel. Meanwhile, on the same front page, we see a smug Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation executive denying to a U.S. Congressional subcommittee that nicotine is addictive.

I wonder: how many millions have the Nicotine cartels given to U.S. presidential candidates? How many people have died from the side-effects of this drug? Will the Clinton Administration push for criminalization of nicotine? I don't think so.

What is not funny, however, is the near hysteria emanating from the State Department in response to two recent events. The Pentagon on May 1 turned off ground based radar installations operated by U.S. military personnel within Colombia, ostensibly for concerns of liability if civilian airplanes were shot down. The State Dept. eventually said they would "get the necessary laws changed" so the Pentagon wouldn't be liable. Gee, ain't the rule of law swell.

And then there are the drug legalization initiatives from Colombia's Constitutional Court, Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Colombia's Attorney General Gustavo DeGreiff (*The Nation*, June 20). In particular, the courageous stand by DeGreiff (who in the past has been criticized by some NGOs for weak stands on protecting Colombian citizens' human rights) of standing up to the hypocritical Yanquis deserves a round of applause.

Behind this is the justifiable anger by Colombians that they are being forced to bear the brunt of the Drug War. "A whole Country is being held prisoner by a few violent and powerful ones, while the rest of the world continues providing billions of dollars a year to their business...and then criticizes the Colombian people" wrote a Colombian in Texas on the Internet's soc.culture.colombia news-

group.

What the Clinton Administration finds so galling is that DeGreiff's call for drug legalization (and considering addiction a medical, not police, problem) has called into question the billion dollar Drug War. This war has been viewed by the White House and Pentagon as a great way to keep military staffing levels up, develop and test high tech weaponry and gadgets, and be in tiptop fighting shape for the next Evil Empire to spring up. And now comes, gasp, one of the Clinton Administration's supposed allies -- Colombia has received, since 1990, close to one half billion dollars of U.S. military aid -- saying the emperor's clothes are in shreds.

What has been the effect of this largess from the neighbor to the north? Despite "human rights training" at the School of the Americas, the level of political violence remains at an all time high, with an average of 12 political murders a day, according to the Andean Commission of Jurists-Colombian Section (copies of this report available from CSN). Community activists, labor leaders, opposition politicians, human rights activists, as well as "disposables" are the targets. U.S. funded police and military (with their paramilitary auxiliaries) are responsible for seventy percent of these murders.

Amnesty International's recent campaign to focus attention on the human rights abuses in Colombia has been counterattacked vehemently in the Colombia press: "Amnesty gets its money from kidnappers" claimed one leading Bogota daily May 19. It is not just the few score million dollars of military assistance in the 1995 appropriations bill that are being threatened by a few congresspeople questioning human rights abuses in Colombia. Rather Colombia's "modern and democratic" image, essential for its neoliberal agenda of increased international investment, is being questioned.

The real story of the recent Colombian presidential elections was, as usual, not reported, with the

exception of the May 26 *Christian Science Monitor*. For the first time, the major third party, the Union Patriótica (U.P.) did not field a presidential candidate. Why? Simple -- to run as a U.P. presidential candidate is an automatic death sentence. This populist-left political party has had 2341 of its elected mayors, city council members, representatives, candidates and members assassinated since it was formed in 1985.

The Drug War has also taken its toll on the Colombian legal system, with millions of U.S. dollars helping set up "faceless justice" to guarantee arrested drug kingpins wouldn't see the judge, prosecutor, witnesses or evidence against them. In practice, though, it's the union leaders, community organizers and dissidents who get the "faceless justice". Of course, you can't defend yourself against witnesses and evidence you can't see. And where the secret witnesses get paid for their testimony, courtesy of Tio Samuel.

And then just the other day soccer star Andres Escobar gets killed in his hometown of Medellin. And the response of many North Americans will be "it's drug related". Wrong. The violence in Colombia has distinct social, economic and political roots going back decades, based on the wide gap between the poor majority and the wealthy upper class. Over the past 10 years an additional one million people have dropped below the poverty line despite the neoliberal agenda embraced by the wealthy. Sound sort of familiar? You certainly don't have to go to Medellin to get shot in an argument outside a bar.

John Fournelle
Madison, WI

Wanted: Teachers who would be interested in developing sister school relationships with schools in Colombia, particularly Apartadó. A great way to learn about geography, other cultures, languages -- and about the folks who grew that banana you had for breakfast. Call (608) 274-2245

Letters to Box 1505

May 13, 1994

Thank you for sending us information on Colombia. I will call David Obey's and Herb Kohl's offices today and complain about our government's participation in repression and barbarism in Colombia. ...

I have enclosed an article on Colombia from *Z Magazine* - March 1994 - that is quite revealing of the military-industrial-governmental's unethical and immoral activities. How these people, mostly men, who use our tax money (stolen from the wages of working class women and men) for such evil purposes, can sleep at night with all the blood on their hands, and dripping from every thing they touch, is beyond me. Macbeth couldn't and finally went mad. The real criminals of course are those who own the resources, means of production and the distribution and servicing of products produced, who rape and plunder all living beings and the earth for profit. This "ownership" needs to be wrestled from the few for the many to wisely use for the benefit of all. People should receive the full value of their labor value to support a life worthy of a human. The only existence each of us will ever have. I wish you well.

In working class solidarity in our diversity,

Frank Roemhild
Bayfield, Wisconsin

May 19, 1994

I am grateful for your concern for the people of Colombia and have written to Cong. Obey and Sen. Kohl about holding up the funding for FY 1995 — I was hoping Pres. Clinton would come out more forthrightly for the ending of such funding as was under Bush and Reagan, but, thus far, many of us are disappointed in his rather weak stand on these and related issues.

My concerns are also for the victims of the "drug wars" in this United States, where cannabis (marijuana) has been reported by DEA Judge F.L. Young to be "one of the safest therapeutically-active substances known to

man" and that it should be legally prescribed for many illnesses it has been proven effective against. Our sick people are still charged with crimes, prosecuted and jailed for merely using this substance. There are many reported heart-rending instances of people being fined huge amounts, jailed and suffering loss of all their property and families, not for crimes, but for using this substance, because the chemical and drug companies hold such power over the lawmakers and want no freedom for citizens to use what does not bring profits to them....

Best wishes.
Norma Nichols
Chili, Wisconsin

CSN has received many other letters and faxes, such as one from radio station CKCU-FM in Ottawa, Ontario: "several of our programs focus on Central American, labour, and human rights issues. Any background information that your organization sends out would be very useful for the producers of these shows." Thanks for the letters!

Literature on Colombia

Two Reprints (50¢ each):
"Colombia: The Bosnia in Our Own Backyard" by Sheldon Rampton, *Z Magazine*, March 1994, pp. 34-38.

"All we want is Peace" by Tom Boswell, *Christian Social Action*, June 1994, pp 27-33.

Political Violence in Colombia by Amnesty Int'l. (1994) 109 pp. \$8

The Palace of Justice by Ana Carrigan (1993) 303 pp. \$22.95 — This is a "must read" to help understand the situation in Colombia today. Reading like a LeCarre tale, it reconstructs what was effectively a coup d'etat by the Colombian Army against the civilian government, following the Supreme Court building takeover by M19 guerrillas in November 1985.

To order these, or to request a complete literature list, write: CSN, P.O. Box 1505, Madison WI 53701

Shut Down the School of The Americas!

Eleven activists held a 40-day, juice-only fast on the Capitol steps, April 11 to May 20, to draw attention to the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (SOA) at Ft. Benning, GA. The SOA trains nearly 2000 Latin American and Caribbean soldiers every years.

500-700 soldiers each year are from Colombia. They have included Lt. Col. Becerra who was implicated in the 1988 massacre of 21 banana workers in Urabá, and the Oct. 1993 massacre of 13 people at Rio Frio, Valle.

Congressman Joe Kennedy (MA) had introduced an amendment in the House to close the SOA. It lost this year by 42 votes (175 to 217, with 46 abstaining).

In the debate, Wisconsin Rep. Thomas Barrett said "A yes vote today will say loud and clear that the U.S. will no longer permit outrageous abuses of human rights by U.S.-trained foreign militaries."

How Wisconsin Reps Voted:

Peter Barca	Close it
Thomas Barrett	Close it
Steve Gunderson	Keep it
Gerlad Kieczka	Close it
Scott Klug	Close it
David Obey	Close it
Thomas Petri	Keep it
Toby Roth	Keep it
F J Sensenbrenner	Close it

Please write your representatives to thank them if they voted to close, or express your opposition if they voted to keep it open.

One of the Capitol fasters was attorney and vertern Harold Fager of McFarland (near Madison). He had joined the Vets for Peace caravan for the Jan. demonstration at SOA, and then the fast on the Capitol steps.

The fasters were joined by supporters from across the nation.

For more info, contact SOA Watch, PO Box 3330, Columbus GA 31903 (706) 685-0280 or 682-5369.

Read *Colombia Update*, published by the D.C. Colombia Human Rights Committee. Send for a sample copy to: CHRC, Box 3130, Washington, DC 20010 (\$1 donation appreciated)

Gaviria Axes Law Against Disappearances

June 7-8, Colombia's House of Deputies and Senate approved a draft law against disappearances, with important provisions against impunity. It specified that "following orders" cannot be used as a defense — security agents have the right to disobey these orders. Secret prisons would be outlawed.

On July 7, President Cesar Gaviria rejected the draft law, declaring that certain provisions of the law were "inconvenient". He had been under pressure from sectors who believe that disappearances are a necessary part of counter-insurgency strategy.

ASFADDES, the Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared, which had spent two years work-

ing with other NGOs to get the law adopted, wrote to Amnesty Int'l (AI):

"This is extremely painful for us; as if it has not been enough to snuff out the lives of our loved ones, not enough that we live every day without knowing where they are, not enough the suffering we have been through on finding them tortured and killed... There is no limit to the indignity suffered in this country and we are not as strong as we would wish. Only by thinking about the solidarity and moral support of people like yourselves can we find the strength to carry on dreaming inspite of blows like this."

The disappearance law contains key provisions of the Inter-American

Convention on Forced Disappearances of Persons of the Organization of American States (OAS). And who will be the new OAS Secretary General come August 15? Mr. Cesar Gaviria, thanks to the Clinton Administration (see Spring AoC).

The draft law now returns to the Colombian Congress for further debate. AI asks that people immediately (before Aug 10) send appeals for upholding the bill to the following:

President of the Senate:
Dr. Jorge Ramon Elias Nader
Senado de la Republica
Bogota, Colombia

President of the House of Represent.
Dr. Francisco Jose Jattin Safar
Calle 10, Carrera 7 y 8
Bogota, Colombia

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