

Action on Colombia

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Wisconsin Delegation Visits Apartadó

A "Week of Peace" in Violence-torn Apartadó

by Father Bill McBride

"If you don't go, you don't know", missionary priest Bill Donnelly had said, stressing the importance of going on human rights delegations. I went to Apartadó, with Cecilia Zarate-Laun on a Colombia Support Network delegation last September. We were invited by Dane County's sister community to help celebrate the "Week of Peace" in Colombia. This week had been called for by many groups and individuals, led by the Jesuit Programa Por La Paz.

During our visit, we witnessed scenes of hilarity and horror, violence and love, despair and hope, side by side with shocking regularity. "It's like a Fellini film," Cecilia commented one day. Finding coherent threads and a consistent point of view to describe our trip seems impossible -- but I'll try.

One day, observing a circus truck provided by the Colombian military and strategically placed in front of Apartadó city hall as a sign of civic stability, Cecilia suggested a title of our trip could be "Circus of the Generals". [The Colombian military continues to be steeped in the Cold War; the circus is classical 'civic action' that goes hand in hand with counter-insurgency.]

A thread I'd like to explore is the ingenious experimentation in making peace with justice possible in Colombia today -- which might be called "Campus of the Geniuses". The trip was like a walk through a university for peace in which human rights is a central focus of its mission. For the sake of unity and memory, I have categorized my stories into an acronym for PEACE: Politics, Economy, Amnesty, Culture and Education.

The political experiments for peace in Apartadó during the visit might creatively be described by a symbolic "body politic". The eyes of Apartadó's leaders, Mayor Gloria Cuartas and Bishop Isaias Duarte, symbolize the political vision for peace. I remember the eyes of Gloria on her visit to Madison (4/95) as she discussed a sister school program between Apartadó and Dane County. Those eyes of hope met us in Apartadó and helped focus our gaze on "drops of hope in a sea of impunity". When we arrived at the cathedral, the

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Father Bill McBride met with banana workers in Apartadó, Dane County (Wisconsin)'s sister community. Most of the bananas we eat come from there, and the workers have been the focus of many brutal massacres.

Campaign Begins for Justice for Apartadó Political Prisoners

Action is needed to force the Colombian government to give Due Process for imprisoned Apartadó political (Patriotic Union -UP) leaders, Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo. These former Mayors of Apartadó, in the Urabá region in northwest Colombia, have been imprisoned for two years as instigators of the La Chinita massacre, based upon coerced and bought testimony.

In that Apartadó massacre (1/23/94) 34 people died. In the 2 months prior to the killings, there had been several smaller massacres of banana workers associated with either the UP or another alternative party, the Esperanza Paz y Libertad ("Hope, Peace and Liberty") Movement. In previous years, military and paramilitary death squads had collaborated with drug traffickers and massacred banana workers and other civilians. Some massacres were apparently carried out by one guerrilla group vs another's supporters--some undoubtedly instigated as Army 'dirty tricks'. Prior to the massacre, Bula and Campo had urged the military to increase its vigilance and patrols -- hardly the requests of men about to order a massacre! Although thousands of soldiers are in the area, nothing was done to prevent the massacre. Right after the massacre, Lopez Bula (Continued on Page 3)

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eyes of Bishop Duarte met ours and he voiced the vision, "Let me be very clear. We begin all our efforts with a belief in the dignity of each human person." His eyes widened as he described this vision's dividend in the words of St. Iraneus, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." Gloria and Bishop Duarte using their eyes to communicate with each other while working out plans with the Dutch Ambassador for economic assistance is one of my best memories of the week.

The shoulders of this body might be those of the group called "Sueños de Las Mujeres" (Dreams of the Women). We met this group of women at City Hall and listened to their stories of co-op enterprises, self-esteem workshops and non-violence strategy sessions. Their shoulders raised up while sharing well-pondered dreams. When Cecilia suggested a letter exchange with women in the U.S., Las Mujeres responded with urgent efficiency and the next day a pack of letters was ready to be delivered. The hands might be those of Maria, a woman who served us at our residence in Apartadó. I'll never forget seeing Maria washing feet and hearing Cecilia observed. "They're killing people like this." The hearts and voices of this body politic experimenting for peace might be symbolized by the scene of the whole town serenading Bishop Duarte just before he left to become the Archbishop of Cali.

Cold War Remnants

Political experiments for peace can be sabotaged by remnants of a class system and Cold War, which label anyone working with the poor as subversive. Our conversation with Army General Alvarez was filled with Cold War rhetoric and a display of letters (from Amnesty and others) concerned with human rights violations, which the general categorized as from "communists all over the world".

A different perspective was shared by Jesuit priest Javier Giraldo: "Colombia is a

Samper Nixes Peacekeepers

Bogota 2/20/95 — Colombian President Samper rejected calls for an int'l peacekeeping force for Urabá, where hundreds were killed last year. Calls for a UN-style peacekeeping force were made last week after the massacre of 11 banana workers in the region. A senior Catholic official and Antioquia governor, called for the peacekeeping force, given the inability of the Army and Police to protect civilians.

genocidal democracy". His upcoming book, published by Common Courage Press, analyzes this. Economic experiments for peace with justice threaten status quo arrangements. We met with Francisco de Roux who spoke in Madison last April. His ideas for a "inclusive" economy and symbolic public place for discourse were being put into action -- he is beginning a project to get oil companies to trust the people of the regions, rather than mercenaries, with protection of the pipelines located in their backyards.

Political Prisoners

Visiting former Apartadó Mayors Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo in Modelo Prison helped me learn about an important experiment in Amnesty. (See adjacent page.) Jose Antonio's major question to us was, "How are the people in Apartadó?"

While the U.S. mass media eyes Colombian Prisons, wondering how to keep drug lords in, the question of CSN is how can we get political prisoners out. A few important ways are to study the strategy of defense in a case like Jose Antonio's. It is essential to send letters and faxes, to show the Colombian legal system that these prisoners must be given due process, not "faceless justice".

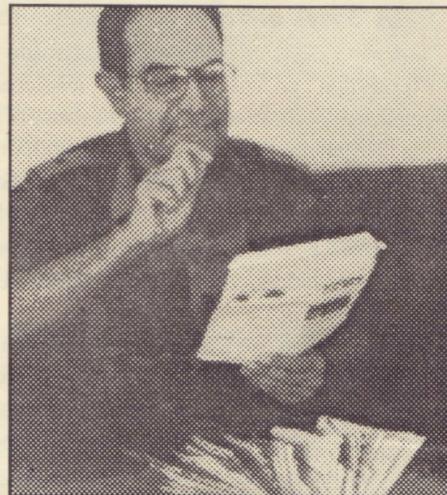
Grassroots Solutions to Violence

In traveling to Colombia, I witnessed a culture much broader than the drug culture portrayed by the media. One experiment in culture (with implications for here) is occurring with the leadership of Father Hector Fabio in Medellin. Several years ago in trying to understand gangs and gang violence, Hector Fabio asked himself, "What can I do to get to know the gangs?" He took a soccer ball and started to play in the heart of gang territory. Eventually, he earned the trust of many leaders and discovered that the end of gang violence meant more than just saying "no to violence". "They think what they are doing is right," said Fabio. He found the gangs needed jobs to reach self-esteem and vocational goals in a non-violent manner.

Experiments in cultural grass roots solutions to violence take more time than top-down ones, and in the long run, provide the most reliable results. The people-to-people approach of CSN aided my understanding of cultural experiments for peace.

Finally, educational experiments for peace during our visit are symbolized for me

by two contrasting teaching props. The first is a stethoscope used by Dr. Roger Fisher (Harvard professor and mediator) during a week-long seminar sponsored by the Governor of Antioquia in Apartadó. Fisher held aloft a stethoscope and reminded us of the need for instruments to help us get a better understanding of the patient's disease. The instrument for diagnosing the ills of the human rights violations and oppressive violence in Apartadó was Fisher's own multi-step process designed to reach the "best alternative" in a conflict. One problem, though, was that the key military officials in the region were absent from the class.



General Victor Alvarez pulled out a stack of letters sent him regarding human rights violations in Urabá--"just letters from communists around the world" he categorized them.

Colombia as a Guacamaya

The other teaching prop in the "Semana de Paz" was a Guacamaya, or Amazon parrot, which appeared on posters all over Colombia. It represented a symbolic way of teaching the ways of peace. A loose translation of a text accompanying the image of Guacamaya is:

Happy and multi-colored
Like our Colombia people
The guacamaya expresses
What it means
To be in diversity
To grow in liberty
And to receive the word
As a condition with respect
To our living together.

During my short visit, I learned that Colombia is a wonderly diverse nation with great people. Unfortunately, the level of social injustice is extreme, which is the reason CSN focuses on exposure and opposition to the human rights violations and developing international solidarity with the people of that great but sad land.

Due Process — Not Faceless In-Justice— For Apartadó Political Prisoners!

joined Apartadó Mayor Campo in publicly condemning the killings. They also met the afternoon after the massacre with the local army commander.

In spite of the inconsistency of charging Lopez Bula and Campo with planning the La Chinita massacre given their commitment to peace, their call for protection for the civilian population, and their commitment to search out the responsible parties, the case against them has proceeded through the so-called "faceless justice" system to a point where a judge is to decide their guilt or innocence of the charge of being the planners and organizers of La Chinita Massacre.

Faceless Justice

The "Faceless Justice" system, which the Colombian government created with U.S. government assistance in order to combat drug trafficking and terrorism, but which is used primarily against political dissidents, employs anonymous ('faceless') judges, prosecutors, and witnesses. Under "faceless justice" there are no court appearances nor a jury, nor does the accused get to face her/his accusers or even, in most cases, to learn their identities to permit action to obtain evidence which may impeach their testimony. All evidence is submitted in written form, in briefs, affidavits, and depositions taken by the Office of the Prosecutor, or Fiscalia. Legal proceedings begin with the supposedly objective investigation by the Fiscalia. If the official of the prosecutor's office in charge of the case finds sufficient evidence to warrant a trial, he submits the case to the judge and only then does he convert from a supposedly "objective" investigator into an adversarial prosecutor.

Campeños as Paid Witnesses

In the case of Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo, their experienced defense

The Patriotic Union (UP) was formed in 1985 as an alternative to armed struggle, by groups and individuals opposed to the Colombian status quo. It quickly gained much support, winning numerous elections. In response, the traditional political parties, the military and their paramilitary auxiliaries actively opposed them. By 1995 over 2500 Patriotic Union members and elected officials had been assassinated, with countless others imprisoned on trumped up charges. Violence against the UP has been especially severe in areas where its success had been greatest -- e.g. Urabá. UP politicians by their commitment to a peaceful political process, clearly distinguished themselves from the FARC guerrillas -- which drives the Colombian establishment looney -- to oppose the status quo "is to be a guerrilla, ipso facto" they say.

attorney, Eduardo Umana Mendoza, has emphasized the unreliable nature of the witnesses that have been presented by the prosecutor's office. He notes primary witnesses were humble country people who had been detained as guerrillas or who had deserted from FARC guerrilla forces. These witnesses had been living on a military base near Apartadó, where they had been instructed to testify against the defendants and had received payment for their accusations. One witness, Hiller de Jesus Guisao, stated in a sworn affidavit that deserters were paid 50,000 to 200,000 pesos (US \$100-400) to testify against Lopez Bula, Campo and other UP activists. This affidavit -that testimony against Lopez Bula and Campo was obtained with threats and bribes--has been refused admission into the case!

CSN delegations have been impressed by the extraordinary accomplishments of Mayors Lopez Bula and Campos and their administrations. The city has a new school, public market, bus station, and atmosphere of progress that the people indicate is due to the extraordinary leadership of Jose Antonio Lopez Bula, which Nelson Campo carried forward. Clearly these leaders were seen as too capable by their political opponents. With the assistance of the army (supported by U.S. taxpayer dollars) and utilizing "faceless justice" (partially designed by and heavily supported by U.S. government), they constructed a scheme to convict Lopez Bula and Campo on bogus charges and thus remove them as political opponents in a peaceful electoral process.

Call to Action

Without an international outcry to this outrage, Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo will be convicted and sentenced to 30-40 years in jail, when their only real "crime" has been

Sign on to Ad for Publication in Colombia: "Due Process for Apartadó's Political Prisoners"

CSN is circulating an ad to be placed in one of Colombia's major newspapers. We need to raise \$2000 to run the ad. We are asking individuals to chip in \$1 each, local groups \$25 and larger groups \$50. The ad will be a summary of the adjacent article, calling for Due Process for the Apartadó defendants and opposition to the draconian "Faceless Justice" proceedings.

Yes! I will be a co-signer of the ad.

Name _____
Address _____
_____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Enclosed is a donation for the ad ____

Conference on Faceless Justice in Colombia
and Peru—Planned for Spring 1997
Madison Wisconsin - Contact CSN for details

dedication to improving the lot of the common person. Faxes/letters are needed! Please request the following for this case, #20397-2635 of the Regional Judge of Medellin:

- That the Fiscal change the position he has taken of giving no weight to the evidence presented by Attorney Umana Mendoza. The documentation presented by Umana Mendoza not only refutes the charges against Lopez Bula and Campo, it proves their innocence.
- That the Regional Judge take into account and consider the analysis and evidence presented by the attorneys defending these persons at the time of formulating this decision.
- That the Fiscal's office consider the sworn statement of Hiller de Jesus Guisao. The Bishop of Apartado, Isaias Duarte, now the Archbishop of Cali, has stated he is convinced of the innocence of Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and has urged serious consideration be given to the declarations of Guisao.
- That the widespread political repression against Third Parties like the UP, against union activists, and against human rights and community leaders in Colombia must stop.

Please send letters and faxes requesting due process for Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo, case #20397-2635 of the Regional Judge of Medellin, to:

- Dr. Wilson Antonio Monoya Jaramillo, Secretario, Juzgados Regionales de Medellin Centro Admin. La Aldujarra - Piso 22 Medellin, Colombia Fax: 011-57-4-262-5618
- Dr. Marina Pulido de Baron Presidente del Tribunal Nacional Calle 31 #6-24 Bogota, Colombia Fax: 011-57-1-288-8976
- Dr. Carlos Esteban Jaramillo Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia Carrera 7 #27-18 Bogota, Colombia Fax: 011-57-1-334-8745
- Dr. Orlando Vasquez Velasquez Procurador General de la Nacion Carrera 5 #15-80 Bogota, Colombia Fax: 011-57-1-283-8809
- Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe Ministro del Interior Carrera 8 #8-09 Bogota, Colombia Fax: 011-57-1-281-5884
(Please send copies to CSN. Thank you.)

Campaign for UN Special Rapporteur for Colombia Gains Support

The horrendous level of human rights abuses over the past few years have led human rights groups in Colombia to push for increased international pressure, as the Colombian government and military have shown themselves to be oblivious to internal pressure. One specific request by Colombian human rights groups is for the UN to issue a "Special Rapporteur for Human Rights to Colombia". There are specific Special Rapporteurs (e.g., for torture, for extrajudicial execution, etc) -- which are short term investigators, and have been issued for Colombia before -- and there is a general one, which is being called for now. The Special Rapporteur for Human Rights would set up a quasi-permanent presence in Colombia and would require the right to visit massacre sites, collect evidence, to interview victims and accused perpetrators, etc. It is a UN sanction which has been used in Chile, Uganda, Burma (Myanmar) and Cuba--and which is vehemently opposed by the Colombian government, not to mention the US establishment which holds to the myth of "Colombia as a model democracy".

Coronel Plazas Vega, Once Again....to South Africa?

The Bogota daily *El Espectador* reported on 1/4/96 that "controversial" retired Army Colonel Alfonso Plazas Vega, "has returned to appear in the diplomatic register, as 'minister plenipotentiary' of the Colombian Embassy in South Africa." President Samper granted this 'provisional' title to Plazas (decree 2242 of 12/95).

"After his retirement from the Armed Forces, and after a disastrous candidacy for the Senate, Plazas Vega... has had all sorts of misfortunes in his attempts to join the diplomatic service."

"Originally, Plazas Vega was named Colombian Consul in Hamburg, but the diplomatic authorities there expressed their disagreement, arguing that the ex-officer did not have a good reputation in regards to the defense and protection of human rights. Notwithstanding this, the frustrated consul insisted in pushing for his posting.... in the end the Chancellery revoked the assignment, and he was named Consul in San Francisco."

"At that time, the Association of Families of the Disappeared of the Palace of Justice sent a letter to the U.S. ambassador, requesting that the U.S. government

34 Representatives and 3 Senators Call for a Special Rapporteur

On Feb 9, Senators Feingold, Simon and Harkin, and on Feb 12, Representatives McDermott, Lantos and Porter plus 31 co-signers wrote Secretary of State Warren Christopher, urging him to have the U.S. representative to the UN Human Rights Commission (meeting in Geneva in March) support the issuance of a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights for Colombia.

Excerpts from the Senators' letter: "... we continue to receive reports of atrocities perpetrated by the military or by paramilitary groups with ties to the Colombian armed forces. Furthermore, we are troubled by the apparent impunity for these acts, and are concerned that it reflects complicity by the government. For example, the reputable Andean Commission of Jurists has documented that 75% of abuses in 1995 were conducted by the paramilitaries, the armed forces or state security organs. Moreover, in those cases where a state perpetrator has been identified, they calculated that a punishment follows only

not accept Plazas Vega for the reasons argued in Germany." At the same time, CSN and other activists (particularly in San Francisco) mobilized opposition, with letters to the State Department. As a result, Plazas did not come; apparently he was not granted a visa.

Plazas Vega is responsible for two gross human rights violations: the military's mass murder of the Colombian Supreme Court justices in November 1985 at the Palace of Justice (following the guerrilla takeover of the building--which the Army apparently knew about and let occur), and the formation of the death squad "M.A.S." in 1980 in league with the Rodriguez Gacha, the military head of the Medellin Cartel.

South African human rights activists, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela, were alerted by CSN in early January to Plazas Vega's effort to become Colombia's 'plenipotentiary' minister to Pretoria. On 6 Feb, CSN received word: "We trust that the matter will be dealt with as needed. Thank you for bringing it to the Archbishop's attention."

in 3% of the cases."

Excerpts from the House Members' letter: "... the human rights situation in Colombia continues to be of serious concern. Since 1988, an average of ten people per day have been victims of human rights abuse in Colombia, one of the worst human rights records in our hemisphere.... We therefore urge you to include Colombia on the agenda under item 12 'Questions of Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Any Part of the World' during the upcoming meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva. We request the naming of a Special Rapporteur for Colombia who would closely monitor the human rights situation."

[For full copies of the letters and names of the 31 co-signers, contact CSN or check it all out on CSN's Web page.]

Write a Letter Right Now

The U.S. is a key opponent to the issuance of a Special Rapporteur. Please write a letter to Sec of State Christopher, stating your desire for his representative in Geneva to SUPPORT a Special Rapporteur.

Send letters and faxes to:
U.S. Sec'y of State Warren Christopher
2201 C. St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520;
Fax: 202 647-7120

Please send copies to your Senators and Representative, asking for them to join you, and to request Congressional hearings into use of US "War on Drug" money to fund human rights violations in Colombia.

(Please send copies to CSN)

CSN Office Wish List

- computer (Mac preferably)
- printer (laser or inkjet)
- 9600 or 14.4 bps modem
- answering machine
- fax machine
- file cabinet
- file folders

Volunteers Need for

- Filing documents
 - Translating articles
 - Corresponding with legislators
 - Sitting at CSN's Farmers' Market table come Spring!
- Call 255-6554 if you can help

**Memorial Service for
Silvio Salazar
April 19, 1996 7 PM
at St. Joseph's Chapel,
Edgewood College
A Reception will
Follow the Service.**

New Book on Colombia!

**Colombia: The Genocidal
Democracy**

by Javier Giraldo, S.J.

Introduction by Noam Chomsky

Common Courage Press

Paper: \$10.00 Cloth: \$29.95

(Publication date: June)

From Noam Chomsky's introduction:

"Throughout these grim years, nothing has been more inspiring than the courage and dedication of those who have sought to expose and overcome the culture of fear in their suffering countries. They have left many martyrs, whose voices have been silenced by the powerful--yet another crime. But they continue to struggle on. Father Giraldo's remarkable work and eloquent words should not only inspire us, but also impel us to act to bring these terrors to an end, as we can. His testimony here ends with an urgent appeal. It should be answered, but it does not go far enough. Our responsibilities extend well beyond. The fate of Colombians and many others hinges on our willingness and ability to recognize and meet them."

BOOK AVAILABLE FROM CSN
at special pre-release paperback
price of \$7.50+ \$1 Shipping

**Upcoming
Delegation
to Colombia:**

CSN will be organizing
a delegation to
Colombia in August
1996. If you are inter-
ested, please contact
CSN immediately.

My Friend Silvio

By Cecilia Zarate-Laun

On January 13 at 3:40 PM in front of the offices of Convivir, Silvio Salazar was assassinated, for unknown reasons. Once again, one of Colombia's most dedicated and beloved grassroots leaders was eliminated by the insane violence that plagues the country.

I met Silvio initially when he came to Madison in the Spring of 1992. He immediately struck me by the generosity of his spirit and a kindness that reflected the beauty of his soul. He spoke to me at length about his peasant roots, his inner desire for peace and the absolute need to fight for it continuously. Silvio told me how he started to care about his community when as a child he was prepared for his First Communion by a liberation theology priest. Then as an adult he drove a taxi in Medellin and was shocked one day, when starting his daily rounds around 4 AM, he found 30 bodies of young teenagers, who had just been killed. The



Photo by Brent Nicastro

bodies were still warm. One of them apparently was carried to his execution place with his fingers smashed by the car's door. Silvio's horror found no limits and he started to cry. His crying reflected desperation, sadness, horror, anguish and pain. Starting at that moment, Silvio dedicated all of the beautiful qualities that he possessed to the struggle for peace, love and reconciliation.

Along with other communal leaders of the popular neighborhoods of Medellin he founded Convivir, trying to generate processes of integration and development in the community, always looking for practical and civil solutions to the problems. His killing was received with indignation and profound sadness.

Silvio was a friend of the Colombia Support Network, and he welcomed several of us at the Medellin airport when we went to Apartadó. He was interviewed by George Vukelich for his *Isthmus* column 'Listening In' in June 1992. George entitled the story "Bang Bang Bang", expressing the violence that a few years later would kill Silvio also. Personally I feel very sad and enraged at the killing of such a beautiful human being. The Colombia Support Network invites everyone to a memorial service for Silvio on April 19 at Edgewood College. He leaves a wife and two little girls.

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:

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 Other \$

I would like to get involved. Please contact me.

Name

Address

City State ZIP

Phone Fax/email

Mail to: Colombia Support Network, P.O. Box 1505, Madison WI 53701

Checks made out to WICOLA-Colombia Support are tax-deductible.

*Please consider adding \$1 to your contribution for the Col. newspaper ad - p. 3

Letters to Box 1505
Email to csn@igc.org

8/95

Enclosed check is my contribution. Will be 93 year old in September. With limited funds this is the maximum I can afford with cancer expense problem. It's a good cause. -- Albert DeForest, WI

8/ 21/95

I was greatly disturbed by a recent report in *The Progressive* regarding the "faceless justice" system of secret prosecution in Colombia and U.S. government involvement in its establishment. Please send me information about your organization, which was cited by *The Progressive* as a contact group for opposition to this outrage.

Sincerely, Mark Vancouver, WA

8/27/95

Blessings on the work you are doing for your sister city, Apartado, in Colombia! My small donation comes at the request from Jim Barrett, Milwaukee Pledge of Resistance. I pray for success in your endeavors. --Romana Milwaukee, WI

9/6/95

I appreciated reading the *Action on Colombia*, tho I can't say any of your charges and analysis surprise me. I appreciate the work you are doing and am sending the enclosed small check to help you in it. However, please do not enter a subscription for me. And I would be very appreciative if you would remove my name from your mailing list.

The reason is that I simply can't keep up with all the important causes that my comrades are engaged in. For practical reasons, I currently engage in Bosnian - solidarity work, and that alone takes all of my time and disposable income.

Again, let me reassure you that this decision arises as a matter of practicality. It is made easier for me, when I see how completely and vigorously you're acting. Best regards, Ed Boston, MA

10/1/95

Thank you for promptly sending me your latest newsletter. Enclosed is a check for a subscription to it. Thank you for all the suggestions on whom and what to write to protest US militarization of

Colombia. I will follow through and contact all of those you suggest. It would be helpful for my letters to US Congressmen to know exact amounts of US spending in Colombia in recent FYs so I can cite this. I'm very grateful that your group has devoted so much energy to Colombia.

My husband (from Colombia) and I are members of a Colombian Club in Carson City, NV -- unfortunately the club recently disbanded, but the mailing list still exists. If I were to find a relatively short piece about US-Colombian situation in your newsletter, I would mail it to them or help you get access to their names. I will contact other Colombian solidarity groups to see if they have relevant materials.

Would you mind a minor criticism of your newsletter? It's dense, somewhat disorganized and may be overly detailed to some, especially those who want overall picture of US intervention in Colombia. I was very appreciative of book reviews, book list and lists of other relevant organizations. You may want to structure your newsletter to help ease the reader into it, e.g. go from the general to the particular and have a certain page of "Things you can do" and other categories because it would help the flow.

In Solidarity, Lisa Zephyr Cove, NV

10/29/95

Por favor me envia informacion sobre CSN, Paz y Justicia Para Colombia. Soy Colombiana viviendo en Colorado por muchos años. Siempre he estado interesado en temas de paz y justicia. Gracias.

-- Dores Alamosa, CO

11/5/95

Our group - Alaska Survival - is a small group that focuses on environmental issues. It was started initially in 1981 to stop herbicide use on the railroad. My activism has branched out into different issues. I feel it's important to try and stop the bummers in Latin America because I know if I lived there, I would be targeted. Because of being a bush rat and a misanthrope, my activism is mostly letter writing, phone calls, letters to the editor. Take care. Keep up the work. I look forward to being a participant in the network. --

-- Becky Talkeetna, AK

PS The corporate assholes want global economy. Well guess what, they'll get global activism and networking.

11/9/95

I have a deep personal interest in the work you do because my parents are both from Colombia, as are the majority of my extended family. I was born in Gringolandia, but I have been to Colombia several times.

Could you PLEASE send me any info you may have on mailing lists regarding news from Colombia. I am on a great list re: Chiapas and I get tons of stuff everyday. If your org runs a list, count me in! Also, could you please send me a little more info on your organization? I started to read about it on the Web. It sounds like you are doing very important work. -- Thanks, David

11/15/95

I sent a small donation to CSN this fall. You wrote me a very thoughtful letter in response. I regret that I have not had time to reply. I have since relocated to Sao Paulo, Brazil. I was in Colombia for two years teaching English at the Centro Colombo-Americano in downtown Bogota. Despite all the problems and the violence, I fell in love with the country and the people. I think the work you are doing is desperately needed to educate the US populace as to the reality of everyday life in Colombia and the gross human rights abuses committed by the government under the auspices of combatting drug traffickers. I am currently in a training course in journalism with Brazil's largest paper, A Folha de Sao Paulo.

I would very much like to receive news on Colombia here in Brazil. Believe it or not, the coverage of other Latin American countries (save Argentina) is much worse here than in the US. Does the Support Network have an electronic newsletter that I could receive? Best of luck with your work.

Sincerely, Chris

12/20/95

You guys are doing great work. I don't have steady access to the net right now, but I'm happy you all are on here. I hope to be better able to support you in the near future. Today a friend just let me surf on her connection, so mainly this is a thank you to you all, con deseos que les vaya muy bien.

- Alexandra Silver Spring, MD



Colombia Solidarity T-Shirts (yellow, blue and red on white) are available in S, M, L and XL sizes. \$12 each plus \$1.50 postage each. XXL +\$2. Bulk quantities available. Contact CSN

Colombia Welcomes Haitian Dictator

Haitian General and coup leader Prosper Avril took refuge in the Colombian consulate in Puerto Principe October 8, following attempts to arrest him in the aftermath of an attack on two legislators associated with president Aristide. (An arsenal was found in Avril's home.) On November 17, the Colombian government stated that it would grant him political exile. Avril had been found guilty in a U.S. court of torture inflicted on 6 Haitian pro-democracy activists, who had filed a \$120 million suit against him. ... It is not surprising that the Colombian government supports Avril, given its current inability to stand up to its own military and to some officials' ties with paramilitary squads. ... Maybe they think some day they'll need exile for themselves.

A Big Thank You! To the Following:

- The 152 CSN members and supporters who responded to our fall Phone-a-thon with \$3125 in donations;
- All the volunteers assisting our Phone-a-thon, and in Madison The Sierra Club and Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, for use of their phone banks, and El Charro, Pasqual's and Coquitos for food. In Milwaukee, the Pledge of Resistance for volunteers and phones at the Peace Action Center (Progressive Milwaukee, Rethinking Schools, and the Mobilization for Survival);
- The Mifflin Street Co-op for a \$100 contribution from their "banana tax";
- The Programa Por La Paz (Bogota), for a major grant to assist CSN in hiring a full time organizer/ coordinator;
- Sue and Art Lloyd, Max Sampson, Dorothy Gosting and the Sinsinawan Sisters who offered support to assist an investigative journalist's visit to Colombia to report on the current crisis there.

CSN Plans To Hire Coordinator-- Receives \$10,000 Grant, \$12,000 Remains to Be Raised

CSN has set a goal of raising \$22,000, to hire a fulltime coordinator to provide the necessary day to day coordination, communication and outreach so urgently needed. **In December, CSN was notified that we have received the first major grant for this: \$10,000 from the Colombian Jesuit Programa Por La Paz, to assist North American outreach and education about peace and human rights in Colombia.**

CSN is currently attempting to raise the additional \$12,000 for the staff position, as well as several thousand dollars to pay for the very large phone, fax and internet (web page) bills we have. Your assistance is appreciated!

Visit CSN at Our New Office!

On February 1, CSN joined the GreenLife Society (an international environmental and human rights group) in moving into an office at 29 E. Wilson St in downtown Madison. We are looking for volunteers to help staff the office and do a variety of important jobs-- filing, translating, doing mailings, making phone calls, etc. We need office equipment and supplies. Call 255-6554 if you can help.

Surf the Web with CSN -- Visit CSN's home page:

<http://www.igc.apc.org/csn/csn.html>

Read the latest reports on Colombia, find links to Peace Brigades International's Colombia project, to the daily review of the Colombian press (Noticol, en español), etc.

From page 8 - Samper's Mess

will get them nowhere, and so they continue their hopeless war of which most Colombians have grown weary.

One could be cynical and say that the release of the drug tapes smells like a conspiracy by the right wing and the military, to control Samper. No longer does he talk about human rights -- as shown by his objection to the bill against forced disappearances and the promulgation of rural 'guards' whereby peasants are conscripted into paramilitary 'self-defense' bands. This later initiative was pushed by former Defense Minister Botero, Samper's campaign manager currently under arrest, but 'singing' nicely (his prize will probably be a visa to the US and he'll end up lecturing in some Ivy League college).

Samper is in no position to say "No" to the military, resulting in a skyrocketing military budget, reaching now over \$1.3 billion (US) --including expensive high tech gadgetry. Don't forget the big salaries for the officers, who would create guerrillas if none existed -- one year in a 'red zone' equals 3 years for advancement and benefits.

Some observers have suggested that Samper's quasi-nationalist economic stance and talk of 'neoliberalism with a human face' may have alienated moneyed interests in El Norte. Two recent economic decisions may have upset some powerful forces: the granting of the huge Cusiana oil field concession to a non-US based oil company (British Petroleum), and the breaking of the domination of US control of the banana trade, with Colombia and Costa Rica marketing bananas now with Europe, bypassing US middlemen.

Will Samper stand or fall? If he falls, the successor will most likely be for the worse. At one point in January, retired military officers demonstrated in the streets of Bogota, calling for the military to take over. An unlikely scenario, particularly as it would strip the cover off what the US government calls Latin America's "model democracy". The need is more urgent than ever for peace and justice loving peoples of the world to stand alongside the Colombian people in their difficult search for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

Commentary

Samper's Mess — Colombia's Unending Tragedy

When he took office in August 1994, President Ernesto Samper looked good -- he would make human rights key, negotiate peace with the guerrillas, give a human face to economic reconstruction. But from the very first day, he was resisted by forces in the military and oligarchy, from the assassination of leftist Senator Manuel Cepeda, to Army boss Harold Bedoya's insubordination and declaration that the Army stands above the elected government 'if need be, to save the nation'.

But this is not what makes it into the mass media. "Colombia's Chief Is Charged But a Tangled Inquiry Looms" says the Feb 16 *New York Times* headline, focusing on the 14-month investigation of the ties between Colombian politicians and drug traffickers. Most Colombians believe that Samper knew quite well that the drug mafia was putting money into his election, just as they put it in most candidate's pockets to cover their bets. There are few politicians untainted by drug money in Colombia. (Not much different than the drug and tobacco companies funding both Democrats and Republicans in the U.S.) So what else is new?

What is new is that Samper's 'dirty little secret' was used against him, eroding his integrity, political legitimacy and popular support. This led him to backtrack on his human rights and progressive social agenda, and to acquiesce to the military and right wing political forces. Instead of peace negotiations, the nation got Decree #1370 on August 16, a "State of Exception" whereby the President could assume extraordinary powers for situations which "imminently threaten the stability of the institutions, the security of the state or the coexistence of citizens and which cannot be solved by the ordinary powers given to the police." Has this "State of Exception" brought about a crackdown upon the paramilitary bands that roam several regions of Colombia? Hardly. Rather it has strengthened them. And Samper's weakened position has been viewed by the guerrillas as a sign that negotiations

Continued on Page 7



In January, CSN shipped 104 boxes to Apartadó. The boxes were filled with clothes for women and children (there are a multitude of widows and orphans, whose men have been murdered). Some sports equipment and toys were also shipped. Thanks to Dane County for helping pay the shipping.

Upcoming CSN Meetings and Events:

- March 4 7PM: Monthly CSN meeting (29 E. Wilson)
- April 1 7 PM: Monthly CSN meeting (29 E. Wilson)
- April 19 7 PM Silvio Salazar Memorial
(St. Joseph Chapel, Regina Hall, Edgewood College)
- April Fundraiser for La Chinita (Apartadó)
at the Cardinal Bar (date to be determined)
- May 6 7 PM: Monthly CSN meeting (29 E. Wilson)

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