

Andean Report by Valerie Rush

'Tet Offensive' threatens Colombia

Moscow's irregular forces are gearing for a seizure of power, while the Barco government cowers.

A Sept. 25 ambush of a military patrol in the southern jungle region of Caquetá, by 200 guerrillas of the Moscow-directed Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) occurred while the Virgilio Barco government twiddled its thumbs awaiting a FARC response on the latest draft of its "peace proposal." Twelve soldiers and two civilians were killed, and another 14 wounded in the grenade attack.

Meanwhile, FARC leader Manuel Marulanda Velez—best known as *Tirofijo* ("Sureshot")—went on national television to announce the formation of a "joint general staff" among Colombia's terrorist forces, to pursue their military strategy for seizure of power.

On Oct. 5, the heavily Communist infiltrated CUT labor federation held nationwide marches to demand changes in government economic policies, and an end to the "dirty war" against the left. Numerous terrorist plots to create major disturbances that day were aborted by an alerted military, but even so, some 400 guerrillas raided three central towns, assaulting police stations and military bases. The toll was at least 10 dead, and another dozen wounded. The CUT has set a national general strike for November.

At least three important regions are under military siege after civil insurgencies manipulated by the terrorists. The cities of Tumaco and Pasto, in southern Nariño province, suffering severe economic hardship and administrative neglect, have been hit by riots, strikes, bombings, looting, even separatist movements. A similar crisis has broken out in Riohacha, the capital of La Guajira peninsula in the Caribbe-

an. In the central Urabá region of terrorist-infested Antioquia province, strikes are paralyzing all economic activity as a confrontation builds between the guerrilla-dominated banana worker unions and the military governorship.

On Sept. 26, the Colombian army announced it had raided a huge cocaine processing complex in Colombia's eastern jungle province of Vichada, including 40 refining laboratories capable of producing more than three tons of pure cocaine a month. Evidence was discovered that the FARC lent its security services to the drug traffickers running the complex, for an estimated \$250,000 a month. Multiply that by the 10-20 such complexes the FARC protects around the country, and you get a tidy sum flowing into the coffers of Moscow's narco-terrorists.

Over the past year or so, the irregular warfare troops inside Colombia have shown a frightening capacity for sabotage and insurgency; they have kidnaped the son of a former President, a former presidential candidate, and dozens of mayors; they have murdered an attorney general, bombed the Army's Second Division headquarters, and threatened the Catholic Cardinal and foreign executives with death. They have driven the oil industry into crisis through incessant bombings of critical pipelines, occupied entire cities, triggered riots in Bogotá, and led peasant marches in the tens of thousands.

Now, on orders from the State Department-funded American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD)

and the Interamerican Regional Labor Organization (ORIT), the "democratic section" of the CUT labor federation, under the presidency of former Labor Minister Jorge Carrillo, has abandoned any attempt to challenge Communist domination of the labor movement. This has turned the CUT into an instrument of chaos.

Ruling political circles have thrown up their hands. Justice Minister Guillermo Plazas Alcid declared Oct. 1 that Colombians "have lost our moral values, we are unhinged. We are like shipwreck victims, each seeking to save only himself." Interior Minister Gaviria Trujillo tried to clarify the government's peace policy by telling a national business conference Oct. 1 that the government did not seek the "unconditional surrender" of the guerrillas.

Senate president Ancizar López stated Oct. 2 that guerrilla spokesmen would be permitted to take part in congressional hearings on reform of the national constitution. The next day, Attorney General Horacio Serpa Uribe admitted that the legal system was incapable of trying and convicting drug traffickers.

While the guerrillas—now unified and with an agenda for taking power—have not yet achieved the kind of in-depth infrastructure and mass support which can guarantee them the seat of power, they are within one to two years' striking-distance of such a goal. Observers warn that a Colombian "Tet Offensive" is in the making. According to the editors of the daily *El Espectador* Sept. 27: "The national strike is not an isolated act, but collaboration with internal and external destabilization. . . . [It] represents a show of force, intended to demonstrate the logistical support subversion has within the civilian population and labor movement."