

Andean Report by Javier Almarino

Back to the drawing boards

The Communist insurgents have to refine their labor tactics in their march to power, after the Oct. 27 strike flopped.

When acting Colombian President César Gaviria put forward tough emergency measures to prevent the Oct. 27 general strike called by the Unified Workers Confederation (CUT), from turning into a day of national subversion, the Communist drive for power was hard hit. The majority of Colombians responded with great relief that the government had finally "put their pants on" and stopped terrorist blackmail. Since then, President Barco returned from Punta del Este, Uruguay and halted the military's counteroffensive against subversion.

While Barco's insistence on "dialogue" in the face of the Communist offensive has gone a long way to repave the Communists' road to power, the splitting of the CUT after the strike has partially wrecked the Communists' labor tactic. The CUT, which included both Communist dominated unions and a large contingent of democratic unions, split when CUT president and leader of the democratic contingent Jorge Carrillo blasted the Communists' efforts to use the unions as a tool of subversion. This rupture in the CUT could force the pro-Soviet Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the Colombian Communist Party back to the drawing boards to refine their labor tactics within their strategy for taking power.

By 1992, at the latest, according to this strategy, Colombia would fall into the hands of a Stalinist military dictatorship controlled by the Soviet Union. The plan for taking over Colombia was designed almost in tandem with Soviet Marshal Ogarkov's plan for restructuring the Soviet economy

for a large-scale military buildup.

In October 1983, at the so-called FARC Expanded Plenum, attended by 48 guerrilla chieftains, the FARC discussed the "general outlines of an eight-year military plan," by which this Stalinist group would take control of the entire national territory as the culminating step.

Earlier, in June 1982, the FARC's Seventh Conference had decided that it would no longer conduct guerrilla warfare but would attack as a regular army, seeking to gain and hold positions. Starting with this conference, the FARC added EP, *Ejército del Pueblo* or "People's Army" to their name.

The eight-year plan is divided into two parts, both militarily and chronologically. It foresaw that in 1991, the FARC would take control of the national government. To get there, the FARC would launch a first offensive, with 30,000 men, "to take part of the national territory and to form a provisional government."

"When we launch this offensive there will be parts of the territory which the government will not be able to hold or control, and that is when we are going to end up with these zones," stated Pedro Antonio Marín, alias Manuel Marulanda Vélez or "Sureshot," the main military chief of FARC, three years ago.

Once they have a provisional government, there would be an international diplomatic drive to get it recognized, along with the FARC, as a "belligerent force." One of the two places where this provisional government could be is the Eastern Plains, which would allow them to use the

Eastern Mountain Chain as the site from which they would launch their final offensive against Bogotá.

The holding of part of the territory, and the provisional government, would make the FARC strong enough to recruit 100,000 soldiers for the second offensive.

The FARC thinks that for the success of this plan, they need to split the Army, taking military hostages and treating them "well" with the aim of "brainwashing" them; unify the guerrilla groups; unite the trade unions under a Communist leadership; create a bigger political movement than the present Patriotic Union, the electoral entity which backs armed action, for which new ceasefire negotiations would be necessary; convince the congressmen in this movement to defend the armed actions of the FARC; build up an urban guerrilla force which would run street battles; and obtain broad financial resources. (In 1985 the FARC calculated the cost of taking power at 32,000 million pesos, without considering devaluation and inflation.)

"We cannot state how and in what manner we are going to arrive at the principal seats of the government, because that depends on how the situation unfolds. But we think that there are many ways of getting to the capital. We could arrive with the support of the working class, through a huge national strike or work stoppage," stated Pedro Antonio Marín in a 1984 report.

While the failure of the Oct. 27 national strike demonstrated the very thin support the Communists have among workers, the Barco government's move to give the terrorists the status of "rebels," the first step in their drive to take territory, could be the greatest threat yet to the national security of Colombia.