

Colombia: NGOs mediate kidnappings to finance terrorism

Recent evidence has come to light proving that various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) affiliated with the United Nations have not only served as mediators for hundreds of kidnappings carried out by narco-terrorist groups in Colombia, but have also directly participated in these crimes. This casts a new light on the role of these NGOs in attacking the Colombian military for purported human rights violations, given that it is the military which has primary responsibility for combatting narco-terrorist groups that engage in kidnapping, such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). It would seem that for such NGOs, the kidnapping business does not qualify as a violation of human rights.

The most outrageous case so far is that of Idelfonso Abirama Abirama, one of the most rabid defenders of the "human rights" of the Cauca Department Indigenous Committee, an NGO related to a network of continental "indigenist" organizations coordinated by Guatemalan terrorist Rigoberta Menchú, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Abirama was captured by police on July 15, when he received a letter from the relatives of Luis Eduardo Villegas, an engineer who had been kidnapped. Abirama admitted his complicity in the kidnapping and exposed his cohorts, leading the police to where Villegas was being held captive. When the kidnapers realized they had been discovered, they killed Villegas, for whom they had been asking a ransom of \$350,000.

One of Abirama's cohorts was Ceferino Tamayo, president of the National Association of Tenant Farmers in the region, another NGO which "reports" on presumed violations of human rights.

Another case: On June 21, Teddy Tourman, a spokesman in eastern Colombia for the International Red Cross, another NGO, stated that the IRC had already negotiated the freeing of two Protestant missionaries of U.S. origin who had been in the hands of the FARC for 29 months, but that the presence of the Colombian Army in the region messed up the deal, and the FARC decided to kill the two Americans instead. Later, it was found out that the FARC had killed the missionaries on June 19 point-blank, and left the corpses at the scene of a skirmish with the Army so that it would appear that they had died in the clash. The authorities are almost certain that the ransom demanded by the terrorists had already been paid and that the IRC had turned over a large part of the money to

the terrorists, money which had been gathered from family members of the victims and from religious organizations in the United States tied to the Summer Linguistics Institute.

Currently, there are some 50 foreigners kidnapped in Colombia. The FARC and ELN, to negotiate their ransom, have agents, "ambassadors," expert in negotiating kidnappings, who, in coordination with numerous NGOs, are negotiating directly with the main foreign companies which have contracted these foreigners.

Kidnappers violating 'ethical rules'

Another case is that of two Swedish engineers, kidnapped by the FARC, half of whose \$6 million ransom was paid by the Skansa company and half by the Council of Swedish Industrialists. Luiduine Zumpolle, a director of Pax Christi, an NGO which is part of the Liberation Theology wing of the Catholic Church, came from Europe to receive the ransomed engineers. The Pax Christi delegation left with empty hands. Zumpolle stated upon leaving Colombia that the FARC's excuse for not handing over the Swedes in Montería in March 1995, as had been agreed, was the presence of military and paramilitary forces in the region. "If they were capable of capturing these Swedes within this military and paramilitary situation, they would have to be capable of handing them over in the same situation," Zumpolle complained.

Out of fear of the reaction of the NGO supranational "human rights" organizations, none of the NGO representatives have been arrested, even though under Colombian law mediation in a kidnapping is a crime.

Pax Christi has sponsored various books against the Colombian military, including *State Terrorism in Colombia* and *On the Trail of the Dirty War*, in which virtually the entire Colombian officer corps is accused of committing human rights violations, on the basis of accusations spread by the FARC and ELN. These books finger Colombian military men for potential terrorist attacks, and have already served as an excuse for various European governments to deny officers visas to enter their countries—entirely on the basis of the NGO accusations. FARC and ELN kidnapping negotiators, on the other hand, are free to run off to Europe whenever they please.

This is not the first time that Pax Christi has helped the FARC in concluding a kidnapping with a juicy ransom. What is unusual is that Pax Christi would attack the FARC for not keeping its promises. The reason is that now the terrorists are even violating the "ethical rules" for kidnapping negotiations. According to intelligence evaluations, in 1994 the terrorists got 163,000 million pesos (\$200 million) in the kidnapping business. Their total revenues, including drug trafficking, blackmail, bank robberies, and livestock theft, was around \$600 million. On many occasions, the FARC and ELN received the money but never released their hostages. On other occasions, they demanded additional sums from the families of the victims to get the corpses back.