
Interview: Augusto Ramírez Ocampo

With UN backing, Colombia's President Samper seeks a deal with the FARC

EIR's correspondent in Colombia, Javier Almario, interviewed Augusto Ramírez Ocampo, the former Minister of Foreign Relations of Colombia, at the end of August, which is excerpted below. Ramírez Ocampo has also served as mayor of Bogotá, a member of the 1991 Constituent Assembly, chief of mission for the Organization of American States to Haiti, and of the United Nations to El Salvador (Onusal), and is currently a member of the National Reconciliation Commission, convened by the Bishops Conference of Colombia.

Ramírez Ocampo participated in the Assembly for Peace in Colombia, inaugurated on Aug. 27 by Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe, and sponsored by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of the Presidency, the state oil company, Ecopetrol, and the terrorist-dominated trade union of Ecopetrol workers, the Unión Sindical Obrera. Among those invited to send representatives to the Assembly were: Mexico's Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador, and the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala (URNG)—all members of the São Paulo Forum, the terrorist umbrella group headquartered in Cuba—and United Nations "conflict management" experts. Two Colombian terrorist groups, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL), sent messages, which were distributed as press releases by the Office of the Presidency of Colombia.

In his intervention at the Assembly, Ramírez Ocampo proposed that the Colombian government commit itself to "a permanent peace policy," which would not be altered with any change in government; that peace negotiations be initiated immediately between the government and the three Colombian guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the EPL, and the ELN, which, according to Ramírez Ocampo, should negotiate jointly; that both parties (government and guerrilla) be prohibited from unilaterally leaving the negotiating table; that the military participate in the negotiations; that a group of countries be formed as "friends" of the peace, to sponsor the negotiations; that negotiations proceed in the midst of the clamor of war; and that

"international oversight" be established to supervise the application of international humanitarian law in the Colombian conflict.

Ramírez Ocampo is one of the highest-level operatives of the United Nations in Colombia, and what he proposes for the country is basically the same strategy that he carried out as chief of the UN mission to El Salvador, which, with the support of the United States, imposed through supranational power an artificial "peace" upon El Salvador, which turned that nation into a type of UN colony or protectorate—and did not secure any long-term peace. The "peace accord" also served as the excuse to reduce El Salvador's Armed Forces, from 64,000 men to 24,000, and is being used to apply the policy of the United Nations and such powerbrokers as the Inter-American Dialogue, to eliminate the Ibero-American armed forces, so that these nations yield their sovereignty to a world government under the United Nations.

In the interview with *EIR*, Ramírez Ocampo acknowledged that the peace accords, should they come about, would mean the reduction in size of the Colombian Armed Forces. He specified three requisites for the accords to succeed. There must be: 1) an "independent" mediator (that is, Ramírez himself); 2) guarantees, backed by international "assistance," to secure meetings to initiate the negotiations; and 3) recognition that the negotiating parties are "suitable," that is, that the "guerrilla" leaders not be accused of being what they are: narco-terrorists, or narco-criminals.

EIR: You were in El Salvador as the head of Onusal?

Ramírez Ocampo: Yes, I was the head of Onusal in El Salvador, that is, the representative of the United Nations for peace in El Salvador.

EIR: But whom do you represent now? If you were head of Onusal, do you represent the UN, or whom do you really represent?

Ramírez Ocampo: I am a member of the National Reconciliation Commission, which was convened by the Colombian Bishops Conference as a commission independent of the parties, to, strictly speaking, make it possible for the parties to

sit at the negotiating table at a given moment. It is in this capacity that I have been working for peace in Colombia.

EIR: In the case of Colombia, what form would the UN intervention take? It has been proposed that the UN intervene in Urabá, and in some hypothetical peace process. Will such an intervention occur?

Ramírez Ocampo: No, I believe that until now, this has not been necessary. First of all, because of the excellent work which is being done by the President of Costa Rica, José María Figueres. His good offices have been very helpful to us, and I also believe that one could think of a group of friends, of friendly countries, which could help with whatever came up, as Colombia did both in the process in El Salvador, and in Guatemala.

EIR: [U.S. Ambassador to Colombia] Myles Frechette said on one occasion that the United States does not have evidence that the FARC and other guerrilla groups have ties with drug-trafficking. Is that a help to the negotiations with these guerrilla groups? Do you think the United States is going to back negotiations with these groups?

Ramírez Ocampo: It seems to me to be a good starting point.

EIR: The Inter-American Dialogue and other policymakers in the United States propose that the time has come to end, reduce, or eliminate the armed forces of Ibero-America, and some academics are already speaking of how the official policy of the United States is to finish off the armies so that there cannot be any defense of national sovereignty. Would not the United States be using these negotiations to reach that objective?

Ramírez Ocampo: I think that there is a confusion in that statement. One thing is the natural reduction of armies which results from the elimination of internal war, and another thing is what the size of the armed forces should be according to a balance of forces. In El Salvador, the Armed Forces went from 64,000 men to 24,000 men, after the peace process. . . . In the case of Nicaragua, the Army went from 150,000 men to 15,000 men, which brought its Armed Forces into a situation more in accord with the size of the country. In the case of Colombia, for example, while there exist border problems between Colombia and Nicaragua, and Colombia and Venezuela, one cannot reduce the Armed Forces. This is the other point in which, to the extent that the external conflicts are reduced, then the armies can also be reduced. . . .

The other problem is, that we must now change the military doctrine of national security which the United States introduced into the armed forces of Latin America—according to which there is a foreign enemy which is the Soviet empire, and that this empire wants to take over the country with domestic allies which must be fought—and change it for the concept of citizen security. I have spoken several times at

the Inter-American Defense Board on this subject of the new mission which the armed forces should have.

EIR: Do you know the book which Gen. Harold Bedoya sponsored about the FARC cartel?

Ramírez Ocampo: No, I don't know it yet.

EIR: The book is called *The FARC Cartel*, and identifies the FARC as a drug cartel, and puts the government in the bind that to initiate an accord with the FARC is equivalent to negotiating with drug traffickers.

Ramírez Ocampo: Well, this is one of the problems which Manuel Marulanda Vélez [head of the FARC] addresses in the letter which he sent me. That is, if one is going to negotiate with a person, one cannot say that that person is a gangster, a drug trafficker, an outlaw, or a bandit. If you are going to negotiate with the FARC and the ELN, then you have to begin by respecting your interlocutor. Here, there have been negotiations with many people. In the negotiations which were carried out with Pablo Escobar, the same thing had to be done. Remember that the negotiations with Escobar brought about the plea-bargaining law.

EIR: But surely this negotiation would mean some military changes, just as it was necessary to remove Gen. Armando Arias Cabrales from the Army in order to negotiate with the M-19, because he was the one who recaptured the Justice Palace [which had been seized by the M-19].

Ramírez Ocampo: What I have proposed is that the Armed Forces participate in the negotiations. . . . The military have to participate in the peace process because the peace process cannot be done behind the backs of the military. . . . Military matters will have to be taken up, and the military have to be there, because they are the ones who know about this subject. And the military should be represented by those who really represent the feelings and thinking of the Armed Forces.

EIR: This new peace accord implies a new Constituent Assembly, given that neither the ELN nor the FARC participated in 1991 [in drafting the current Constitution], and they now would want to write the Constitution.

Ramírez Ocampo: That proposal was made by [former President] Misael Pastrana and me in the Constituent Assembly in 1991. We proposed that two representatives of the FARC come, so that they could participate in the writing of the Constitution. But our proposal was blocked by the government.

EIR: In any case, whoever advised Manuel Marulanda Vélez to write a letter offering an agreement to a government weakened by the drug-trafficking scandal, was very intelligent.

Ramírez Ocampo: That is what we are here for, to take advantage of opportunities.