



**Arauca:
‘..human
rights
disaster.’**

Mexico through Frida's eyes

**‘...a contribution to the struggle of the
people for peace and liberty.’**



FRONTLINE LATIN AMERICA

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‘Standard Response’: Killer-Cola Vs The Truth

IN RESPONSE to the hundreds of messages sent to Coca-Cola Great Britain on 22 July 2005 to protest their company's murderous labour policies in Colombia, the multinational formulated a statement in an attempt to defend its activities.

The statement, entitled “Standard Response,” is highly misleading, and seeks to undermine support for the International Campaign against Coca-Cola and for SINALTRAINAL (the Colombian trade union that launched the campaign as a response to the murder of 8 of their leaders and the kidnap, false imprisonment and displacement of 100s of others) by employing misinformation, false logic and untruths to cloud the issues surrounding Coca-Cola's human and labour rights violations.

The Campaign's response to Coca-Cola's misrepresentations and untruths is available at www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk.



Sinaltrainal leader assassinated

IT IS with deep pain that we inform you of the death of comrade Luciano Enrique Romero Molina, a leader of food and drinks workers union SINALTRAINAL, assassinated in the city of Valledupar. Luciano was seen alive at approximately 9pm on 10 September, then on the morning of 11 September his tied up corpse bearing over forty knife wounds was found. It has been established that he was stabbed for the first time around 10.30pm, but his death did not occur until around 6.30am the following day, suggesting a night of torture. - page 3



Terror on the streets:

in London

Lucho Gómez

THE DEATH of innocent worker Jean Charles Menezes assassinated on his way to work by the British police on 22 July has brought a mood of reflection over the Latin American community. We've heard witnesses to the event, and we've held a minute silence by holding up white sheets of paper as a sign of peace and protest against the negligence of the police. There have been vigils, marches from the spot where the victim was slain, our voices trying to reach the ears of those who at all costs must ignore the facts of what truly happened.

This almost shell-shocked multitude sees its future in this country as uncertain. The majority of the people are anxious anyway because of their legal residence status, making them a perfect target for the excesses of the British police.

The truth is that we are in a blocked street, we too are afraid to go on the underground and on the buses where we can be hit by an invisible terrorism, but we also feel fearful that because of our looks we might end up with seven bullets to the head and another to the body, as they did to our comrade Jean Charles. That is to say we are caught in a crossfire, the perfect target because we are immigrants.

We live in a country where we can be arrested at any moment, without the right to any public legal defence, much less even a telephone call, held in detention for up to three months, and all we have left is to trust in the infamous ‘efficiency’ of the police intelligence service.

It also hurts us to know that the Metropolitan Police, instead of protecting the lives of citizens, should act with such negligence and irresponsibility. And to cover its aggression the police force has lied and hid information. The police have even tried to assuage Jean Charles parents' yearning for justice with money, making fun of their precarious economic situation and their lack of English.

The police force that has delivered this message of fear with its violent taking of a life clearly knows that it has the power to rule over weakly organised ethnic minorities. It is also very clear that these state forces have been trained to kill.

This is the brute reality, we are in the middle of a crossfire, and if this were not enough we suffer persecution from the immigration police. At any moment they might come and raid our homes, violate our fundamental rights, including those of our young children, subjecting us to the most humiliating degradations and carting us off to family detention centres. - page 2



Parents of State-Murdered Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes in their home in Brazil Alves Washington/Reuters

...and Colombia

Dave Younger

PEOPLE IN Colombia jokingly refer to President Uribe's ‘Justice and Peace’ law as the ‘golden chainsaw’, a reward that refers to the paramilitaries' weapon of choice in their bloodthirsty massacres. Only they have not gone into retirement.

In the Colombian context ‘paramilitaries’ refers to ultra-right death squads usually linked with the military, hence the term para-military.

Following Congress' rubber-stamping of the government's legal framework that governs the paramilitary demobilisations, the international press and human rights organisations have been unanimous in their criticism of the new legislation. In their 3 July editorial entitled ‘Colombian Capitulation’ the New York Times described the Justice and Peace Law as “a law of

impunity for mass murderers, terrorists and drug traffickers.”

The ‘peace process’ with the paramilitary AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – literally United Self-defence Groups of Colombia) has so far seen some 8,600 fighters demobilise, with the rest due to lay down their weapons by the end of the year. National and international human rights organisations are increasingly worried that while the government has bent over backwards to accommodate all the demands of the AUC, the paramilitaries have given nothing in return. In a very critical report, Human Rights Watch points to an almost complete lack of investigation into crimes committed by the paramilitaries; failure to dismantle paramilitary structures; the de facto legitimisation of the AUC's

enormous wealth; failure to monitor violations of the ceasefire and post-demobilisation abuses and action; and an absolute failure to pay reparations to the victims of human rights abuses.

Middle ranking paras, the equivalent of NCOs in a regular army, have on average killed twenty people. Their commanders' responsibility for atrocities is appalling. Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano (alias ‘Don Berna’) was a key figure in the paramilitary takeover of Medellín. A close associate of AUC commander Carlos Castaño, he took over Pablo Escobar's drug-trafficking business, played a prominent role in the PEPES, was linked to La Terraza gang, is a commander of five paramilitary fronts and is suspected of involvement in numerous kidnappings. It is estimated that - page 5

Why 'Frontline Latin America'?

FRONTLINE LATIN AMERICA is the new publication of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign. We aim to produce four newspaper format issues, plus a special themed edition in magazine format each year. Why such a big name for a modest publication?

Because Colombia's conflict is in the context of a growing, generalised confrontation between the peoples of Latin America and imperialism. In Colombia, globalisation is not a benign process, it is very violent - the neo-liberal programme is being enforced through force of arms. The country suffers the worst human rights violations in the Western hemisphere because its people are on the frontline of resistance to the multinationals and United States domination of the Americas. The conflict imposed on them is today second only to the devastating confrontations of the Middle East. And their struggle is similarly distorted by the propaganda machines of the corporate media that frame the world through the lens of the 'war against terror'.

The infamous Bush Doctrine was formulated post 9/11, supposedly to guide US overseas operations. It provides three justifications for the use of force: those who are not with me are against me, pre-emptive strike is necessary, and the US can take unilateral action whenever its interests require. In fact even before 9/11 each of these elements was already present in the US military intervention in Colombia, where since 1999 under the guise of 'Plan Colombia' it has been directly engaged in an aggressive counterinsurgency. Authoritarian president Uribe Vélez has reinforced these tendencies and is implementing a neo-conservative regime of militarised social control. Uribe has taken on the Bush Doctrine and made it his own, targeting majority sections of his own people as enemies of the state. Those not with

me are against me: employers treat movements fighting for social justice as criminals. The preemptive strike: the army saturates regions, carries out house-to-house searches and mass detentions. Unilateral action: the government is concentrating executive power, and is all the time pushing across its borders.

We are now into Plan Colombia phase 2 - the Andean Regional Initiative. Colombia is the major entry point for US forces - on the border with Venezuela certainly, but also Ecuador, Peru and even Brazil - that threatens progress across the region. That is why we believe that successful resistance against the Bush/Uribe programme is important for all of Latin America. Equally, the upsurge of popular struggles in Bolivia and neighbouring countries brings hope to the beleaguered Colombian social movements. There is currently a special Andean wide resurgence of indigenous-led resistance to US economic expansionism, packaged as Free Trade Agreements. This battle will come to a head in the coming months - international solidarity will be vital.

We do not put all of Colombia's and Latin America's ills at the door of the US power play. Even while their governments take a lower profile, European multinationals are also major actors pushing for the neo-liberal regime. British oil and mining corporations, French services companies, Spanish banks and telecoms giants, German manufacturers, Swiss and Italian food conglomerates are all making huge profits from the exploitation of Latin America's human and natural resources. It is up to us to monitor, expose and mobilise against the plunder of 'our' multinationals. The policy of our governments and the EU is little more than an apology for corporate rule. We have to create an alternative and independent approach. We need to participate in a broad project of interchange between social movements. Our networks need to respect

the plurality of opposition movements in Colombia and Latin America, and we too need pluralism and debate to be effective.

There is another frontline, one that stretches from the romantic peaks of the Andes to prosaic Stockwell tube station. If the shock of 9/11 united people in the US against an external threat, then the awful response to Hurricane Katrina has revealed just how divided North American society really is. It has shown what human value the authorities place on little life when it is black or working class, that the warfare state has taken absolute priority over the welfare state. The fall out has reinforced the moral bankruptcy of the Bush administration. A similar process is occurring in Britain, as demonstrated over the summer. The tenuous unity of multinational London after the 7 July bombs evaporated rapidly as the Blairs of Downing Street and Scotland Yard combined to defend 'shoot to kill' as a policy, so long as it is directed against immigrants. Latin Americans are not the only ones on this domestic frontline of state repression, they join the Muslim and African-descendant communities and asylum seekers already targeted for special measures. Solidarity with them against state violence is the only route to protecting the liberties of us all.

Many people enjoy Latin American culture, especially as celebrated in its dance and modern fiction. We hope to broaden this interest to introduce lesser-known music, and access the visual art forms too. We want to open debate on how the cultural and political engage with each other. Popular culture is part of the life of the people, part of our resistance. The people on frontline Latin America are making music as they make history. Let us support them, join them and learn from them.

Frontline Latin America -
Long live international solidarity!

Shoot to kill

cont. from page 1

- This country, which declares itself to the world as the epitome of the rule of law, is a nightmare for those of us suffering such attacks.

The government is pushing for new laws against "those who foment terrorism", they even have a list of characteristics. But you do not have to be a legal expert to realise that this is a pretext to restrict our right to organisation and free expression. We the immigrants are being blamed for all social

and political ills, but it is they with their 'preventative wars' that are the true cause of the current problem.

Many voices will be silenced by the fear that these laws are intended to sow; but we also ask, where will they send those British people who confront this undeclared state of emergency because they realise that these policies assault democratic liberties and respect for human rights?

We Latin Americans have a duty and obligation to organise ourselves, to leave aside the regional sectarianism that characterises us. Our slogan

should be Let's Unite and Strengthen Ourselves so that we can confront this difficult moment and the dangers advancing upon us. We know how to resist and overcome, we have been trained in this school of struggle, we know about 'States of Emergency' from our home countries, and that is what now exists in camouflaged form in Britain.

At the side of British workers and people, with all the races that are in the UK, we can construct the welfare of society. ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE!



Police call for back-up as angry protestors head for New Scotland Yard GP

Thousands march in Ciudad Bolivar

'March For Life' sees 25,000 demonstrate against paramilitary violence. Caleb Harris reports from Bogotá.

AT LEAST 25,000 people have thronged the steep streets of one of the poorest areas of Bogotá, Ciudad Bolivar, to demand an end to a spate of murders of young people by paramilitary and state forces.

The "March For Life" on Thursday, September 1, was organised by local organisations including the Franciscan Family, the Organizacion Feminina Popular and community development body CORPEDEC to protest against state and paramilitary violence in Ciudad Bolivar. Almost 170 young people have been murdered in the area so far this year by the police, army or paramilitary. None of the killings have been ascribed to guerrilla, who are not active in the area.

Ciudad Bolivar and Bogotá civic authorities supported the march but organisers have been disappointed that their participation seemed somewhat tokenistic. Nothing concrete was proposed by authorities during the rally that followed the march, and nothing has been done in the week following the event to address the concerns and criticisms raised.

Activists at the event said that there were many agendas operating during it but they were determined to make their point as strongly as possible, that the violence in the area should not be blamed on gangs, drug dealers or poverty, but on deliberate oppression by the state and its paramilitary allies.

A representative of the Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyer's Collective, Dora Lucy Arias, read out a statement condemning the oppression, because the activists who drafted the statement were afraid of reprisals if they were publicly associated with it. Some of the local young people who marched wore masks to protect their identities, which was necessary as the police intrusively filmed the marchers' faces. During the weekend following the event, 3 and 4 September, seven young people were assassinated in Ciudad Bolivar by paramilitaries.

The Restrepo collective is afforded a certain degree of protection by its high profile. The statement demanded that police vehicles which are used for regular, arbitrary mass round-ups and detentions of young people in the community should be removed, and said that social problems in the area

would not be solved by the building of the large new military base and the new police station, which were calculated to intimidate rather than to serve the community. The police have been implicated in some of the killings.

The statement also demanded the cessation of the police practice of chaining detained youths to flagpoles in a position which amounts to torture. The youths are left with their arms chained to the poles, behind their backs at shoulder level, which is an excruciating position.

The statement also noted that there are parts of the area, such as Cazuca, where paramilitaries openly patrol the streets at night, impose a curfew on young people, and even persecute young men for having long hair or earrings. Paramilitaries also engage in the forced recruitment of boys when they reach the age of 13.

The area is a rich source of a valuable type of sand and the state has been engaged in trying to force people to leave their occupied land so it can extend its valuable quarries. The mayor of Bogotá, Lucho Garzón, a former president of the CUT union federation, has authorised the eviction by armed police of a number of families from the area at the end of September to make way for quarry expansion.

Marchers chanted, "The streets are ours, and the night also." Some carried banners with the faces and names of their assassinated loved ones and others with messages of solidarity from human rights organisations across the country. Many primary and secondary schools in the area closed for the afternoon so their pupils could march, and thousands did so.

At the end of the speeches following the event, children released doves to symbolise the call for peace.

But a week later the killings have continued, and the police mass round-up vehicles are still intimidating the community.

The Humanitarian Network of Colombia, of which Colombia Solidarity Campaign is a member, accompanied the march and rally, as did Peace Brigades International. Two Bogotá-based members of CSC attended the event.



Young Colombian protestors mark the occasion by releasing doves Caleb Harris

Armed forces storm indigenous communities

ON 9 SEPTEMBER the armed forces stormed indigenous Nasa communities at 'La Emperatriz' farm in Northern Cauca, Colombia, who had attempted to recover their ancestral land a week before, through peaceful direct action.

The armed forces attacked the unarmed civilians with guns, grenades, tear gas and clubs. So far more than 100 people, including women and children, have been wounded. The Indigenous Governor of the reservation of Huellas, Caloto was captured by policemen, taken into an armoured vehicle and then left by the police at the Caloto local hospital, after he had been brutally beaten, suffering severe head injuries.

Exercising their legitimate right, the native population started a process of peaceful occupation of the land that had been expropriated from them, following the Colombian State's continuous failure to comply with their obligations acquired 14 years ago. In December 1991 the Government was found responsible by the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights of the OAS for the paramilitary massacre of 20 indigenous men, women and children at the 'El Nilo' farm. As a measure of reparation the State committed to return 15660 hectares of land including 'La Emperatriz' to the communities within a maximum of 4 years from the date of the massacre.

So far only 9,000 hectares have been returned, most of which is unproductive land.

Neither the current nor the previous governments have met their obligations towards the native population of Caloto and have refused to negotiate with the indigenous authorities. The policy towards the Nasa indigenous people that the current uribista Governor of the Cauca department, Juan José Chaux is conducting, has been one of discrimination and Human Rights violations. Mr. Chaux proposed a legislative project aimed at dismantling of indigenous reservations and destroying what they have gained after centuries of resistance.

Flower workers regain union registration

THE COLOMBIAN Flower workers trade union, Sintrasplendor, has celebrated a major victory for workers rights as the Colombian Minister for Social

Protection bowed to international pressure and reinstated the union's registration.

On June 30, the Colombian Minister of Social Protection revoked the legal registration of Sintrasplendor, a trade union in Colombia's rapidly expanding flower industry.

The union has 500 members who labour in sweatshop-style conditions with virtually no health and safety standards. For instance, workers have been calling for better transport to bring them to the factory, but recently two people have been killed, and two seriously injured in a bus accident caused by overcrowding. In addition, workers complain of arbitrary dismissal, irregular pay, termination of contracts if workers are not well, and absence of sick pay.

The workers are employed by Splendor Flowers, a company producing flowers for Dole, the largest fresh fruit company in the world, which

controls one quarter of the global banana market. While Dole claims that it "respects the freedom of the individual worker to join the union of his or her choice" eighty workers at Splendor Flower were sacked for supporting the independent union. Later workers were told they could end up in jail for joining the union and that they would be sacked after the union was de-recognised again.

Sintrasplendor was formed last November, as a reaction to the company-sponsored "yellow" union which failed to protect and improve working standards. After Sintrasplendor won legal recognition last March, Splendor's lawyer presented an appeal against the decision to the Colombian government, claiming that the union had been intimidating management.

A spokesperson for flower workers in Colombia said of the minister's decision "this is a triumph for the workers in the industry that is owed in no large part to the international organisations, like War on Want, who have supported us"

More information: <http://www.waronwant.org/>

Che returns



WHEN STUDENTS returned from their break in July they were surprised to see that the authorities at the National University in Bogotá had removed painted images of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres during the vacation. The official name of the central square on campus is 'Plaza Santander', but for the last 20 years it has been universally known as "Plaza Che" after the iconic mural first appeared. The Administrative Tribunal of Cundimarca ordered Che's removal but, as our picture shows, students have already taken action to ensure his return.

Source: [Indymedia Colombia http://indymedia.org/features/jovenes/#687](http://indymedia.org/features/jovenes/#687)

Sinaltrainal leader assassinated

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Luciano was 47 years old. He leaves 4 children and his partner Ledys Mendoza. He had worked for 20 years at the Nestlé - Cicolac plant in Valledupar. He was sacked on 22 October 2002, for a work stoppage that was declared illegal by the Ministry of Social Protection. The legal process for his reinstatement continues.

Luciano was an outstanding leader, and was our representative on the Foundation Committee of Solidarity Political Prisoners. Due to death threats he had to leave Valledupar on different occasions. At the end of 2004 he stayed several months in Gijón, Spain in a protection and solidarity programme; he had returned to the country at the beginning of this year. He was living under the Inter-American Human Rights Commission of the Organisation of American States.

Luciano was one of the possible witnesses for the Public Tribunal on the multinational's activities that will take place in Switzerland 29-30 October.

We repudiate thus horrendous murder that joins the interminable list of assassinated union leaders

in Colombia, within the strategy of State Terrorism and through the persecution unleashed by the corporations to exterminate the trade union movement. We condemn once again the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez and his deceitful "peace process" with the paramilitary groups, which as we see continue massacring the unarmed population, with their crimes protected by total impunity thanks to the "Justice and Peace Law".

The previous day, on 9 September 2005 Javier Correa the president of SINALTRAINAL had to present himself to the Fiscalía [State Attorney] office. Correa and three other union leaders are defending themselves against accusations of 'injury' and 'calumny', criminal offences under Colombian law. The accusations are made by the multinational Coca-Cola against identified leaders of a workers protest in front of the Bogotá bottling plant on 5 December 2002.

Edgar Paez
International Secretary,
SINALTRAINAL

Human Rights

Paramilitaries massacre Putumayo Communities

ACCORDING TO information provided by inhabitants of San Miguel, on 29 July at least 29 peasants from the rural area of the municipality, incorporating the districts of San Carlos, La Balasterra, El Sábalo, La Cristalina and Puerto Colón, have been murdered. Likewise, the disappearance of 13 families from neighbouring districts La Cabaña and Tres Islas has been denounced. However, because of the difficulties of communication and access to the area due to the critical public order situation, so far it is only known for certain that two bodies were removed from a ditch in the district of La Cristalina.

Source: Minga

Critical situation for Indigenous People

SINCE THE beginning of 2005, 9,250 comrades have been threatened, 16 have disappeared, 124 arbitrarily detained, 111 wounded, 66 killed, 14 kidnapped, 18,602 members of our communities (Nasa, Inga, Awa, Embera, Katio, Chami, Eperara, Siapidara, Pasto, Betoye, Cofan) have been displaced and we have been stigmatised 10,025 times.

The fields that feed at least ten villages have been fumigated with glyphosate, causing the death of two Eperara Siapidara children.

We have been the victims of all parties to the conflicts; the paramilitaries (37.9%), the Public Forces (24%) and the guerrillas (15.2%). Other unidentified criminal groups account for 22.7% of the violations.

Source: Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia- ONIC

Conscientious Objector Forced to Carry Arms

GUSTAVO MONROY is 20 years old and belongs to the Regional Association of Youth and Students of Arauca. He resides in Saravena, a municipality which, within the democratic security policy, has been considered a rehabilitation zone. Military and police presence is therefore very high as is the level of intimidation and control. Gustavo was recruited to do his compulsory military service as he was leaving Saravena. He had expressed from the beginning that he did not want to take up arms, nor be in the army.

Source: Red Juvenil de Medellín.

Young Indigenous Woman Abused

THE INDIGENOUS student Emerita Guana, 19 years old, was sexually abused by a soldier of the José Hilario Lopez battalion, stationed in another regular unit. This serious assault occurred in the Conuco jurisdiction, municipality of Puracé on 9 August.

The soldiers told the 19 year old that they were doing it because she was part of the guerrilla movement.

After a few days, one of the military commanders quartered in the area, called Velez, told the community that it was not possible to apologise, as such things often happen and that the soldier involved had escaped. The commander did not mention the accomplice to this serious Human Rights violation, nor did he recognise his responsibilities.

Source: Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz.

Five fallacies about the negotiations with the paramilitaries in Colombia

This important contribution by Father Javier Giraldo SJ has been translated and abridged.

SINCE THE beginning of President Uribe's regime, the government has conducted dialogues with paramilitary groups, and this process has been presented to the nation and to the world in clothing that does not correspond to its true nature, based in various linguistic fallacies that it is necessary to expose.

1. These dialogues are presented as a POLITICAL NEGOTIATION, but they are not.

All political negotiation demands as a basic requirement, the existence of two antagonistic positions, or at least two differentiable positions. If we are dealing with groups or sections of the population that demand negotiations with the government or the State, we can presuppose that that between these groups and the government or State in question, there exist fundamental differences in principle or in political practice. If there are no differences, logic dictates that the process ceases to be a negotiation.

If we examine the historical thinking, direction and action of the Colombian security forces and of the paramilitaries, we can find no discernible difference. They perceive a common enemy; defend the same social model and doctrine of "democratic security"; use the same repressive measures; enjoy a solidarity between their two forces; use the same discourse to legitimise the current system; the same mechanisms of impunity; the same reliance on armed action and the role of the civil population within this violence; the same stigmatisation of the social movement; and a co-ordination, combination and distribution of legal and illegal activity which seek to serve the same cause.

It is interesting that the Uribe government denies the existence of an armed conflict in Colombia, a strategy that seeks to rule out a political negotiated solution with truly insurgent sectors that have principles and politics opposed to their own. They prefer to promote a discourse where the only political forces with which it is acceptable to negotiate, are those forces who defend the same social model, while those that do not are excluded from any possibility of dialogue or negotiation.

2. These dialogues are presented as a PEACE NEGOTIATION, but they are not.

The logical root of peace negotiations is the recognition of a state of conflict between two opposing forces who are both struggling to defend their own cause. This is why it is said that peace can only be made between enemies and never between friends.

During the 40 years history of paramilitarism in Colombia, there has been no real opposition between the paramilitaries and the State. It is therefore illogical to speak of a "peace process" between paramilitaries and government, when there has never been war between these two forces.

3. These dialogues are presented as a PROCESS OF DEMOBILISATION, but they are not.

The numerous "paramilitary demobilisation" ceremonies that have taken place since November 2003, have had no effect on paramilitary structures, nor in their control of land and territory, nor on their obedient relations with their bosses, nor on their defence of the "autodefensas", nor on paramilitary proselytising nor on the campaigns to promote paramilitary policy in the run up to their election campaign.

Today, paramilitarism is a growing economic force, behind numerous highly profitable businesses. It controls exorbitant sums of money, much "illegally earned" but now in the process of legalisation in order to shape debate in the upcoming elections. All opposition will be eliminated through diverse forms of intimidation.

In the published documents that gave birth to the "dialogue" with the government (November 2002), the paramilitaries never talked of demobilisation, but rather expressed their support for President Uribe and their stated intention to give up the role of the state that they had exercised in many parts of the country,



Father Javier Giraldo Jorge Mata/Surimages

not however so as to disappear as a force, but to integrate into State projects and to participate in the control of territory under their dominion.

4. These dialogues are presented as a process of DISMANTLING OF PARAMILITARISM, but they are not.

The paramilitaries have a guiding principle which is to blur the boundaries between the civilian and the military. Since its origin, paramilitarism has sought to involve the civilian population in the war, either employed to do the dirty work of the State, or as targets for military action for a State that does not seek to combat armed insurgents, but instead political dissidents and social leaders.

Instead of closing this grey area, President Uribe has extended it by creating new fields where the civilian population become involved in the war, whether as informers, co-operators or peasant soldiers, breaking with all traditions of impartiality and independence. At the same time, the change to the legal statutes of the ever increasing number of private security companies, converting them into appendages of State security (Decree 3222/02) has increased even more

this grey area where the civil and the military have become confused to such an extent that one civic-military extreme has monopolised legitimacy and authority with the aim of demonising an adversary, also conceived as civic-military, violating its rights and justifying all forms of its extermination.

After rigorous observation of this process with the paramilitaries, now that more and more "legal" spaces have been opened for civilians to become involved in the war and to strengthen the bellicose extreme of the State, it is better referred to as a legalisation of paramilitarism.

5. These dialogues are presented as a process that OVERCOMES IMPUNITY, but they are not.

President Uribe, Vice-President Santos, the High Commissioner for Peace and other officials of State have defended publicly the need to sacrifice the demands of justice for paramilitary crimes, in order to achieve peace. As we have already seen, this is a sophism- the process does not lead to peace, seeing as those negotiating are not enemies but friends.

The sacrifice of justice which they demand is manifested through many different proposals which include amnesties and pardons, reduction of sentences, the elimination of prison sentences or the serving of symbolic sentences on the lands that they control, the establishment of bland political sanctions, or contributions to modes of reparation as a substitute to the sentences dictated by law. This has ignited a profound national and international debate, since the crimes destined to be omitted from justice, are crimes so serious and horrendous, and of the character of crimes that have injured humanity as a whole. Furthermore, one of the guiding principles of the Constitution, that of equality before the law, will be abandoned. We will witness a situation where a poor person who robs to survive, will be far more seriously punished than a paramilitary who has participated in genocide, disappearances, executions, displacement and torture.

International Law dictates that crimes against humanity are absolute; that they are neither pardonable nor amnestiable; that if they remain unpunished in the country where they took place, universal jurisdiction must be applied, and that any country can seek the extradition of those responsible. Neither "following orders" nor status of a government official can serve as a defence.

Confronting the problem of impunity has some basic requisites. The absence of any of these indicates that any proposal to overcome impunity is nothing but a trick.

These requisites are:

- That the nation and the international community can perceive a principled and credible position from agents of the State, evidenced by their distance from and repudiation of the criminal practices of the paramilitaries.
- A trustworthy judicial system that demonstrates independence, impartiality, obedience to the law, and mechanisms of control.
- That the voices of the victims must first be revealed and heard.
- The existence of a free and honest press, in the service of the truth.
- A focus on the factors that have made such crimes possible, so that they are never repeated.

Bogota, 2005.

Justice and peace

cont. from page 1

- Don Berna has ordered the killing of two thousand people.

According to the Colombian Commission of Jurists, 12,999 people have been killed by the paramilitaries-

since 1996, yet only 25 of the 8,600 paras who have demobilised have been investigated or charged with any crime. This is unsurprising considering the extent of investigations into their past activities. Following demobilisation, paramilitaries must make a 'spontaneous confession'. Prosecutors then have only 36 hours in which to decide to press charges, and only 60 days in which to investigate any such charges. With hundreds of paramilitaries demobilising at the same time, it is almost impossible to investigate atrocities in any depth. The investigation process is made more difficult by the fact that paramilitaries are not required to reveal their aliases (generally the only names that are recorded as being involved in atrocities).

Impunity is further strengthened by the complete absence from the process of any voice of the victims. No one has yet been convicted, and anyone who is, is likely to be sentenced to spend a maximum of 2 or 3 years on an 'agricultural colony'. Time spent in negotiations with the government will count towards any sentence.

Further criticism has arisen of the authorities' failure to tackle either existing paramilitary structures or the enormous wealth that they control. Matters of finance, military structures, political support or support from the state and armed forces are not included in the spontaneous confession and are so not investigated at all. Supporters of paramilitarism, both financial and political have so far escaped all investigation and sanction. Of the 13 blocks that have demobilised so far, only the Catatumbo block has handed over any of their assets (a small amount of land, 44 mules, 10 motor boats and 11 cars). The hundreds of millions of pounds, earned through drug cultivation and trafficking, extortion, providing security and myriad legal and illegal businesses is essentially laundered by the process. Assets that before remained hidden, are now openly used to finance paramilitary political projects.

Ivan Roberto Duque, alias Ernesto Baez, one of the national commanders, recently announced that the AUC would not disappear, but that the process with the government would "legalise AUC power, and build it into a big political movement." Paramilitary leaders have claimed

that 35% of Congress is made up of their candidates, and this is likely to increase at the next elections, where paramilitary wealth will be used to shape debate and launch campaigns. Already in Medellín the powerful Corporación Democrática, an organisation set up to support demobilising paramilitaries, has announced its intention to put forward paramilitary commander Giovanni Marin as a candidate for Congress.

In another scathing report released on 1 September 2005, Amnesty International have focussed on paramilitary 'demobilisations' in Uribe's home city Medellín, as proof that the current process is merely legalising paramilitary control in that city and across the country. The report states that demobilised paramilitaries are being 'recycled' into private security companies and even state security institutions such as the recently established guardia civica; positions that allow them continuity of control over the civilian population. Despite the ceasefire, Amnesty reports that paramilitaries have killed or disappeared 2,300 people in the last two years. Neither the paramilitaries nor the state security forces guilty of collaboration with them are being investigated, and are enjoying total

impunity for their crimes against Colombian civilians.

Supporters of the 'peace process' have defended these sacrifices as necessary to achieve peace, however, there is no evidence that this is the case. New paramilitary blocks are already being set up to replace those that have demobilised, and many demobilised fighters turned out not to be paramilitaries at all, but young people paid to attend demobilisation ceremonies.

Paramilitary activity, and collaboration with the State security forces is still as widespread as ever, as evidenced by the 10 April murder of Congressman Orlando Benitez, his sister and driver, who were murdered on the orders of paramilitary chief and negotiator Don Berna because of the Congressman's refusal to withdraw from next years elections. Don Berna was eventually arrested for this crime, but then released and allowed to demobilise and continue in his position negotiating the 'peace process' with central government.

For an in-depth analysis of the paramilitary 'peace process' see:

HRW Smoke and Mirrors: Colombia's demobilization of paramilitary groups

<http://hrw.org/reports/2005/colom->

Uribe bolsters Government support

IMPUNITY HAS an international dimension. Despite universal criticism of his "Justice and Peace" law from human rights bodies, President Álvaro Uribe Vélez has, over the summer succeeded in cementing support from western governments for his authoritarian neo-liberal project.

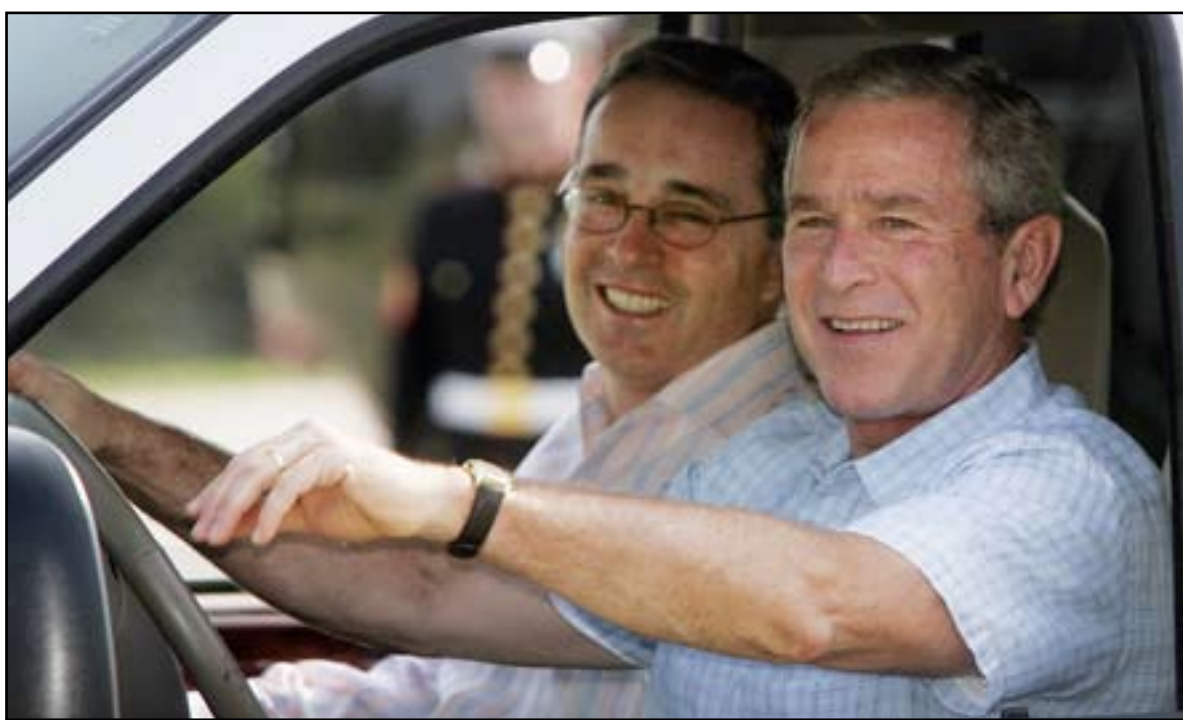
Most disappointingly the government in Spain has reversed the apparently principled position it assumed when Socialist Party Prime Minister Zapatero first came into office in 2004. Despite a protest of several hundred and the spirited questioning of Esteban Beltrán, director of Amnesty International, Uribe's visit in July was heralded as a great success by the uribistas because he won over the Spanish government's backing for his 'Justice and Peace' initiative.

After Madrid came London, where Uribe met with business leaders, urging them to invest more, a handful of parliamentarians and the directors of Oxfam and Amnesty International, as well as Tony Blair. Journalist Isabel Inghelton warned ('Colombia's drug untouchables' *Guardian*, 13 July 2005) that giving Uribe the red

carpet would help the paramilitaries and worsen human rights. But Blair paid no heed to such concerns. "What else can we do for you?" he asked Uribe. The Colombian president told the press that "the support of Blair's government has been fundamental" in his fight against terrorism and drugs, and in gaining support for his hardline policies within the European Union.

In August Uribe visited George Bush at his Texas ranch, where he was greeted effusively. The two leaders agreed on pushing ahead with Plan Colombia and the free trade agreement negotiations. Uribe was accompanied by former president Andres Pastrana, whom he has appointed new ambassador to Washington.

The net result is that Uribe's domestic position is strengthened, his proposed change to the constitution to allow a second four year term has been passed though Congress and now awaits confirmation from the Constitutional Court. With powerful allies abroad, all significant sections of the Colombian rich are united around the Uribe, for the time being at least.



Colombian president Alvaro Uribe lets the world see who is in the driving seat *Larry Downing/Reuters*

The two faces of neo-liberalism in Colombia

Public debt, financial boom..

Colombia's main financial daily *El Portafolio* reported on 1 September that the country's foreign debt has been cut by US\$1.7 billion, decreased from 40.5% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product - a measure of the country's annual wealth production) in 2004 to 31.5% of GDP in May 2005. The external debt is subdivided between public debt - 20.1% of GDP - and private debt - 11.4% of GDP.

Cutting foreign indebtedness

has been paraded as a success for government policy, but this masks an important change in the source of financing. What the newspaper does not comment on is the sharp increase in internal public debt - that is money owed by the state to domestic financiers - which has doubled from 17% of GDP in 1998 to over 34% in 2005.

The combined (i.e. internal plus external) public debt is still high at 55% of GDP.

Since Uribe took office in September 2002 external public debt has held steady, while internal public debt has shot up by 50% in just three years. New state bor-

rowing is concentrated on domestic financiers, commercial banks and pension funds, who under Uribe are making spectacular profits, and have a decisive influence over government policy.

While the state continues to cut back expenditure, financial sector profits have boomed. The principal source has been the treasury bonds issued by state bodies as a way of raising loans; they have brought investors' profit rates of around 12%. As a result, the share prices of banks have rocketed. The share price of Banco de Bogotá has risen 70% during 2005. Most recent top performer is Spanish owned Banco

Santander, whose shares increased by 129% in August alone. This in turn has fuelled a mini-boom on the stock market.

Unemployment and Informality

At the same time mainstream news media continue parroting the government's claims to success in tackling unemployment. According to official figures the unemployment rate has fallen in the last year from 15.3% to 13.4%, that is 2.7 million Colombians out of work.

But this statistic is completely misleading, and when put into context hides the real extent of human wastage. Officially, there are only 11.5 million full time employed out of the working age population of 33.9 million. We could thus highlight the statistics differently, that the full time employment rate is only 34%.

Something does not add up here, if the unemployment rate is 13%, and 34% are employed full time, where are the rest? The biggest section unaccounted for so far is those considered to be economically 'inactive', which in the three years that Uribe has been president have increased by over a million people, from 12.6 million to 13.7 million. This is over 40% of the entire population, with a clear

gender difference - over half of Colombian women are considered to be economically 'inactive', i.e. not actively seeking wage labour.

Another section is those six million Colombians that are underemployed, obliged to take up less than full time jobs, who constitute nearly 18% of the population. The reality confronting jobseekers, especially young people, is that only 8% of all new posts are for full time work.

One way to understand the effects of neoliberalism is to look at the difference between formal and informal work, officially defined as units with less than 10 employees, domestic and family working. 60% of all urban jobs are in the informal sector, which means the majority of workers have no employment rights or even nominal social service protection, and it is much harder for them to unionise.

Once the manipulative headlines are discounted, even official figures reflect the part of the shocking reality of social apartheid that Colombians experience. Wealth is becoming concentrated in the hands of the few, particularly those with money capital, while an ever expanding majority are obliged to survive by rebusque, literally rummaging around.

How long will this intolerable situation last? **AH**

Santo Domingo's Global Apartheid Connection

IN ONE of the largest ever business deals in Latin America, Anglo-US-South African giant SABMiller has paid around \$4bn to the Santo Domingo family with a further \$2bn to minority shareholders to buy out the Colombian brewery Bavaria. SABMiller has taken on \$2bn debt, bringing the total cost of the takeover to \$7.8bn.

Bavaria has a monopoly in the home market, where its brands take 99% of beersales, and in recent years has expanded into neighbouring countries such that it dominates in Peru (99% market share), Ecuador (93%) and Panama (79%). Principal owner Julio Mario Santo Domingo was already one of South America's richest men, and more so now as Bavaria share prices doubled in the last year. The Santo Domingos have exchanged these for a 15% share in the much bigger SABMiller group.

SABMiller plc was formed in 2002 when South African Breweries (SAB) took over Miller Brewing Co.

of Winsconsin, USA. SAB traces its history back to 1895 and has been long been a controlled associate of the Anglo-American mining group. The *Guardian* newspaper says that in South Africa SAB "has a status similar to Marks & Spencer in Britain", although that has not stopped the company slashing its workforce there from 12,000 to 5,000 since 1990.

Bavaria's new board will be headed by Barry Smith (formerly of De Beers diamonds before assuming various SAB management posts during the apartheid era). Alejandro Santo Domingo will be one of two Colombian vice-presidents.

The *Financial Times* notes "the deal was given political backing ... after a meeting between Meyer Khan, chairman of SABMiller, and Colombian president Alvaro Uribe."

Although it has no breweries in Britain, the company moved its official headquarters from Johannesburg to London in 1999. The move was to improve access to finance and get

a higher international profile, and has been successful in those terms. SABMiller is the world's second or third biggest brewery multinational.

SABMiller extends its holdings in Central America to a major opening into South America markets, competing with Inbev which has just bought into Brazil. SABMiller's other target areas are India and China. The corporation is a major bottler of Coca Cola products around the world.

Backdoor Telecoms Privatisation

Mexican corporation Telmex is poised to acquire Colombia Telecomunicaciones (formerly state corporation until that was liquidated by Uribe and still universally known as Telecom). It is possible that Telmex will pay as little as \$350 million for Telecom, an enterprise valued up to six times more than that. Mexican tycoon Carlos Slim, the fourth richest man in the world, is the owner of Telmex and a past master at

such operations. One of the tricks is to inflate the value of Telmex shares and offer a share swap.

Official advisers, from US bankers Merrill Lynch to *El Tiempo* newspaper, are saying that Telecom has to have a private partner to survive; if not Telmex then Spanish multinational Telefónica. But who has asked the workers and communities? Through Decree 2926 the government has ordered that from 2006 operators will not need to take into account previous commitments to provide social telephone services used by poorer sections of the population.

The two biggest municipal corporations from Bogotá (ETB) and Medellín (EPM) would like to bid for Telecom and thus keep it in the state sector, but it is unsure whether they will be allowed to do so. The signal that the private Mexican deal is likely go ahead was Slim's visit on 26 August - a morning meeting with Uribe, then lunch with the mayors of Bogotá and Medellín before returning in his private jet.



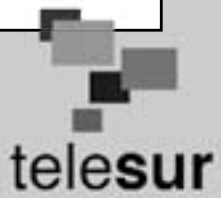
Telesur: an Initiative against Cultural Imperialism

ON 24 JULY the satellite TV station Telesur began broadcasting with its first 4 hour transmission, although the aim is to extend it to 24 hours within two months.

The "television of the south", whose slogan says "our North is the South" is a collective media effort fostered primarily by Venezuela, which holds 51% of its shares, while Argentina, Cuba and Uruguay own 20, 19 and 10% respectively, and Brazil is providing technical support.

Through a variety of programs, the new station wants to be an alternative source of information to the -mainly North American- channels that broadcast to the continent, and to portray the true vision of the social and cultural diversity of Latin America from an independent perspective.

To measure the importance of such an initiative it is sufficient to look at the response of the United States: on 20 July the lower chamber of the US congress approved the project presented by republican Commie Mack (Florida), to create radio and television transmissions aimed at providing the Venezuelan people "precise and objective" information in order to counter the anti-Americanism of the yet-to-be-born Telesur.



Chile: Repressive Policy against the Mapuche People

APPLYING ANTITERRORIST legislation within the framework of the Mapuche conflict could be interpreted as "an act of persecution" of the Mapuche social movement. This was the message that the special Reporter of the UN Human Rights Committee on indigenous issues, Mr. Stavenhagen, communicated to the Chilean government. Mr. Stavenhagen expressed his concerns regarding the disproportionate charges against the Mapuche leaders Lonko Pascual Pichun and Aniceto Norin, which do not correspond to the facts.

Other community leaders have been persecuted by the police as happened to Lonko Juana Calfunao, or have been victims of judicial farces as in the cases of José and Lorenzo Nahuelpi. These events question the impartiality and independence of courts and judges.

Chile does not recognise the Mapuche people's right to self determination, or its existence in the Constitution, nor has it ratified the Convention 169 of the ILO on indigenous people.

Bolivarian Parliamentary Network

INVITED BY the Farabundo Marti Front for the National Liberation (FMLN) of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador, members of parliaments of Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay, Venezuela, El Salvador, members of the Andean, Latin American and Central American Parliament and of the Indigenous Parliament of America gathered in El Salvador City on 23 and 24 August to constitute the Parliamentary Network for the Bolivarian Alternative of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Complying with one of the resolutions of the second Bolivarian Congress of the People (Congreso Bolivariano de los Pueblos), the new network's purpose is to promote unity, solidarity, cooperation and the integration of the Latin American peoples in order to defend their sovereignty and independence.

In the constitutional manifesto the members, through dialogue at the legislative level, intend to stimulate policies and strategies aimed at eradicating poverty, intensifying the fight against the neoliberal model and guaranteeing social justice.

'OUR AMERICA'



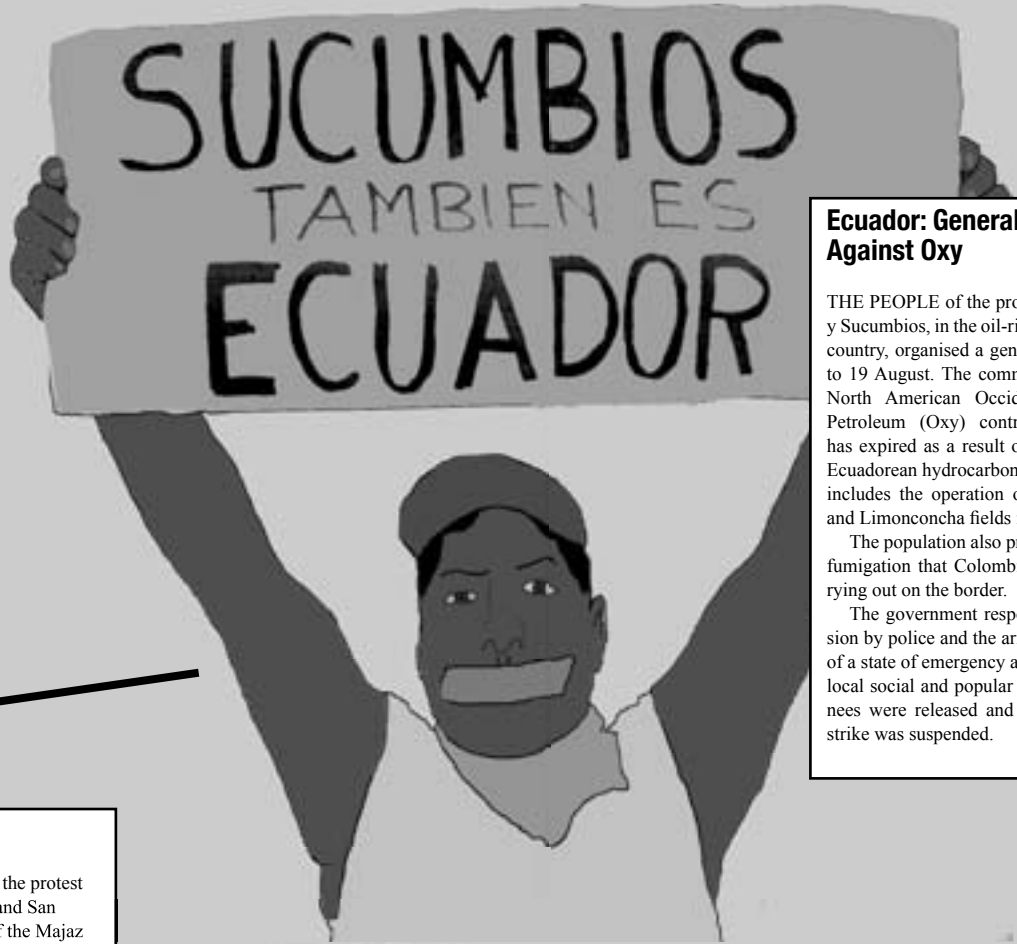
CAFTA approved by United States

On 28 July the US House of Representatives ratified the Central American Free Trade Agreement by a narrow margin of 217 votes against 215. The approval required the direct intervention of President Bush and Vice-President Cheney who personally lobbied some Republicans intent on opposing the treaty. Some Republicans presented a motion that limited the debate on CAFTA to only 2 hours and conducted the debate on the argument that should the treaty be rejected, violence, communism, demagoguery and dictatorship will spread through Central America. CAFTA is a "free" trade agreement that will lower trade barriers between the United States and six Central American countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. While the White House kept its dumping mechanisms and agrarian subsidies, it established new restrictions to two of the most competitive Central-American industries: sugar and the textiles. The agreement will not bring more protection to the Central American workers, but will give more power to corporations and as result will increase inequality.

Cuba: 'The Miami Five'

ON 9 AUGUST the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit Appellate Court annulled the trial Court's ruling against the Miami Five, who were charged with conspiracy by attempting to infiltrate Miami-based anti-Castro groups. Under international pressure and recognizing the impossibility of a fair and impartial trial in the Miami-Dade County venue, home of the extremist Cuban exile community, the Appellate Court has ordered a new trial that will take place in a different venue.

The Miami Five infiltrated the radical anti-Castro groups in order to curb terrorist attacks on their home country in the 1990s. Both the charges and the sentences against them were blatantly overblown; a circumstance that illustrates how the US manipulate their anti-terrorist laws according to their interests and ideology. A further corroboration of this is the treatment the United States reserve for Luis Posada Carriles, the anti-Cuban terrorist who in 1976 killed 76 people and is now sheltered by Washington, who has refused his extradition to Cuba.



Ecuador: General Strike Against Oxy

THE PEOPLE of the provinces of Orellana y Sucumbios, in the oil-rich north east of the country, organised a general strike from 15 to 19 August. The communities claim that North American Occidental Exploration Petroleum (Oxy) contract in Block 15 has expired as a result of violations of the Ecuadorean hydrocarbons law. The contract includes the operation of the Edén-Yuturi and Limonconcha fields in the Amazon.

The population also protested against the fumigation that Colombia and US are carrying out on the border.

The government responded with repression by police and the army, the declaration of a state of emergency and the detention of local social and popular leaders. The detainees were released and on 19 August the strike was suspended.

Peru: Violent Repression of Peasants Protest

ON 1 AUGUST at least one person died as a result of the armed police repression of the protest of the rural communities of Ayacababa and Huancabamba (Piura) and Paicapampa and San Ignacio (Jaén, Cajamarca) against the occupation of the Henry Hills encampment of the Majaz mine. Around 3000 campesinos demonstrated to stop the North-American company's mining activity that contaminates the soil and water of the region.

The bishop of Chulucanas, Daniel Turley, stated that unofficially 7 people lost their lives, 40 were wounded and 6 have disappeared. The prefect of Piura confirmed that 32 protesters were detained.

While the protesters have now been released no state official has been charged with the murder of the campesinos.



US Bases in Paraguay

THE UNITED States are about to establish a military base with a force of 16,000 soldiers on the Triple Frontera, the border that Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina share.

According to the bilateral agreement between La Asunción and Washington from 1 June 2005 to December 2006 the US will provide military training to Paraguay.

The US forces will be able to access the Triple Frontier, and to control the natural resources of the region, such as the world's biggest water reservoir. The base is established in Mariscal Estigarriba, a small village 250 km from the Bolivian border, not too far from Bolivian gas and oil reserves.

Another worrying aspect of the agreement is the unnecessary privileges and diplomatic status the US soldiers are granted, whereby they cannot be investigated or judged under the country's jurisdiction. Nor will Paraguay be able to petition the International Criminal Court, violating its own legislation as it is a member State.

'We can no longer be a people of leaves, living in the air, our foliage heavy with blooms and crackling or humming at the whim of the sun's caress, or buffeted and tossed by the storms. The trees must form ranks to keep the giant with seven-league boots from passing! It is the time of mobilization, of marching together, and we must go forward in close ranks, like silver in the veins of the Andes.'

From Our America by José Martí.

Coke News

US Campaign on Television

ON 11 JULY 2005, WB11, one of New York City area's major television stations aired a special "Fact Finders Report" called "Coca-Cola Faces Human Rights Violations." The story was produced by news anchor Peter Thorne for the evening news. Interviewed are New York City Council Member Hiram Monserrate, New York City Comptroller William Thompson, American Postal Workers Union and Hofstra University activists, and Campaign Director Ray Rogers. This excellent feature was watched by millions on WB11 by others around the world on satellite television.

Campaign to Stop Killer Coke
www.KillerCoke.org

Plachimada – Pollution, Corruption and Arrests

THE KERALA State Pollution Control Board has ordered the company's bottling plant in south India to "stop production of all kinds of products with immediate effect." Coca-Cola, in direct contravention of Indian laws, had resumed "trial" operations at its Plachimada bottling facility in southern India on 8 August 2005. The bottling plant, one of Coca-Cola's largest, has been shut down since March 2004 because of opposition from the community experiencing severe water shortages and the groundwater and soil have been polluted.

Meanwhile the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau raided the residences of K.V. Indulal in three cities in Kerala on 11 August. As a member of the Pollution Control Board Mr. Indulal visited Plachimada to investigate groundwater pollution. After "investigations", he issued a clean chit to the Coca-Cola company, stating that the pollution was not "beyond tolerable limits." The Bureau is investigating Mr. Indulal for accepting bribes.

And on 15 August, India's 58th anniversary of independence from British rule, close to a hundred activists from Yuvajana Vedi, youth wing of the CPI(ML), and their allies marched in Plachimada, demanding that the bottling plant shut down permanently. The protesters were stopped about 100 meters from the factory gates by the police who resorted to a violent baton charge, injuring four activists who had to be hospitalized with severe head injuries. Another 43 activists were held in custody, including a 16 year old girl who has been transferred to juvenile home.

India Resource Center
www.IndiaResource.org

7 July..

In the television evening news sequence that reported the 7 July bombings, two of the first seven shots carried Coca-Cola adverts. The first was the 'Love' image of a Coke bottle on the side of the London bus, the second a Coke machine at the entrance to the hospital where victims had been taken. One more example of the how comprehensive Coke's product placement is, and how accustomed we have become to its presence.

East Kilbride Killer-Cola Protest

EARLIER THIS year, I attended a lecture at university where the Coca-Cola speakers tour explained how the Coca-Cola Company have threatened, tortured, murdered, and poisoned people in Colombia and India. I was struck by the enormity of the company's crimes and felt that I had to join the campaign to help bring justice to those affected so we decided to start a local campaign as East Kilbride is the home of the only manufacturing and distribution plant in Scotland. I found that the local Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Scottish Socialist Party were both interested in taking part in the campaign and, with their much-needed help, we were able to organise a protest. I was amazed by the response of the local residents and it looked like the campaign would be a success.

On Saturday 25th June, a group of

demonstrators gathered outside the Coke factory calling for an end to the corporation's blatant disregard for human rights. Over thirty people marched to the factory chanting 'Murder in Colombia, Boycott Coke'. The front of the factory was then decorated with colourful leaflets asking Coca-Cola to stop the violence in Colombia before the speakers addressed the crowd. Speakers included Andy Higginbottom (Colombia Solidarity), Carolyn Leckie (SSP MSP), Angela McCormick (Globalise Resistance), and Douglas Edwards (Election Candidate for SNP). Andy spoke of the assassinations of 8 SINALTRAINAL union members in Colombia. In turn, each of the speakers spoke of the social and environmental devastation caused by the world's largest soft drink manufacturer and the need for solidarity to hold Coke account-

table for their actions. The local press have printed positive articles about the campaign and the people of East Kilbride have been very responsive.

Unfortunately, the local Coke trade union is of the opinion that we intend to close the factory. The shop steward appeared at the East Kilbride News to voice his concerns over the campaign, stressing that it will inevitably have an impact on jobs. We responded by stating that we are simply challenging the face of the corporation and are willing to work with the union to encourage change.

To follow up the protest, we had two days leafleting at the local town centre around the anniversary of the boycott. On the Friday, we leafleted local residents and found that many people were already aware of Coke's crimes against humanity. Of those that were not, the

majority stopped to talk about the campaign and were appalled by the company's conduct. On the Saturday, we shared a stall with the local CND branch and were able to sell magazines and to increase our list of names. All in all, the East Kilbride campaign seems to be a success and there is plenty of scope for increasing the numbers. As this is the only manufacturing and distribution plant in Scotland, we have a good chance of making our voices heard. The local Scottish Nationalist Party and Green Party have also expressed an interest in the campaign and we hope to work with them in the future. We feel it is vital that local groups and individuals act together to apply pressure for change and we will ensure that the presence of this campaign remains strong.

Louise Taylor

Anti-Coke Manifesto



THE 'ANTI-COKE MANIFESTO' provides a clear argument of why you should support the boycott campaign against Coke products. It starts with an overview of the corporation's activities in Colombia and the charges against it. The pamphlet summarizes the assassinations and other human rights violations against SINALTRAINAL members, and the trade union's international campaign to stop the abuses. Critical sections explain how Coke denies responsibility and stigmatizes its critics, and what the author calls the 'contra boycott' campaign. A must read.

Available for £1 plus 30p post and packing, or post free for orders of two or more, from 'Colombia Solidarity Campaign', PO Box 8446, London N17 6NZ

Student campaign

IN MARCH 2006 an extraordinary meeting will take place at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool: all three contracts with Coca Cola on behalf of UK students are up for renewal and we, UK Students Against Coke (UKSAC), are demanding that our student unions no longer do business with a company that has such blatant disregard for lives, livelihoods and communities. Student reps from all over the UK will vote on whether our unions should be lending their names and credibility to Coke, and be serving as a marketplace for its sales and advertising. In making this decision, they will choose between apathy for the current globalisation of tyranny and poverty, or for what might be termed the 'globalisation of solidarity'.

The grassroots campaign against Coca Cola has grown so strong that it is now challenging this elite, corporate version of globalisation.

At the NUSSL AGM student campaigners will give a voice to the communities in India, the trade unionists in Colombia and others suffering from and struggling against the company. UKSAC will challenge the status quo which presents western corporations as benign forces offering the best route for social and economic development. In place of the presently accepted views, UKSAC advocates a path to sustainable development and social and economic justice that lies in alternative models for people-centred and self-reliant progress.

We are an amorphous collective of students who anyone may become involved with. Different groups have evolved in different universities across

the country and now share information and ideas. During the next six months UKSAC will be everywhere. For those who have been involved in the campaign it has been a busy summer preparing the groundwork. Flyers have been printed, dates for a tour are taking shape, a web page is in the making and, most importantly, the G8 presented a great opportunity to make contact with hundreds of interested people. Students are excited by this campaign as we can actually do something positive now. Through a combination of education and action, campaigners hope to pass policy within their student unions condemning Coke's behaviour and terminating the company's contracts by March 2006.

The potential of this campaign is enormous. Aside from the possible non-renewal of the contracts, Coke will be in the spotlight, giving a degree of protection to SINALTRAINAL as well as putting intense pressure on the company to respond appropriately to the demands of the communities in India and Colombia. In the long term the campaign will serve as an example of what can be achieved by students, empowering them to take a stand against injustice.

Many students have been inspired by the bravery of SINALTRAINAL and the resistance of the Indian communities and this has given many of us involved in UKSAC the energy with which to campaign. I hope that in turn the campaign within our universities will inspire people to just "say no" to the abuses caused by Coca Cola and other unethical companies.

Claire Hall
e-mail: claireshall@gmail.com

Rock against Coca Cola and war in Turkey

BARISAROCK FESTIVAL (Rock for peace) in Istanbul ended in great success last weekend. More than 60 organizations have been involved in the activities. 30 rock bands, over 20 meetings and work-shops on war, anti-capitalism, women's rights, nuclear energy, GM Foods and more than 40 films with over 30,000 participants against Coca-Cola, against capitalist globalisation, against occupation and war... First year it was only 3,000, last year 7,000. The Festival was started three years ago by individual activists and musicians, protesting against Coke sponsoring rock concerts. This year hundreds of activists have been involved in the preparations. It is not simply a music festival of two days, but a campaign, which runs all-year long on the streets. Activists are already planning simultaneous BarisaRock festivals in many places in Turkey for next year.

This year among the participating organizations and campaigns were Global Peace and Justice Coalition, Social Forum of Turkey, Anti-Nuclear Platform, No to GMs Platform,

Greenpeace, Amnesty International (Turkey), Association of Turkish Disabled People and many more.

The high light was the participation of the 110 Coke workers, who have been fired simply for joining the Trade Union of Transportation Workers (DISK - Nakliyat-Is). The pick of the whole festival was the moment when the workers were invited to the stage. The crowd showed their solidarity, shouting slogans against Coca Cola, US imperialism and war. It was very exciting to see, how young participants and the workers have seen the connection between war, anti-union attitudes of a multi-national company and the global struggle against capital. There were two major demonstrations with the Coke workers during the festival.

Most of the BarisaRock organisers are also part of the social forum process in Turkey. Some of the rock bands will be involved in the mobilisations to the European Social Forum in Athens next year. We expect to have a very big delegation to the next ESF.

F. Levent Sensever

Coca-Cola accused at the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal during the World Festival of Youth and Students.

THE DELEGATION from Colombia Solidarity Campaign and SINALTRAINAL had been working in a stall at Parque Central, selling bulletins and t-shirts, giving out stickers, leafleting conferences and workshops and generally, spreading the word of the crimes Coca-Cola is responsible for in Colombia and India. The response from the Venezuelan public – who were largely unaware of the situation of Coca-Cola workers in Colombia – and other international delegates was excellent, and we gathered an impressive mailing list of contacts throughout Latin America and the rest of the world.

Momentum gathered on 10 August, during the Summit of Latin American Hip-Hop, when the Colombian group Zona Marginal, during their performance, called for the boycott. Rico, one of the members of the group, chanted slogans against Coke and wore a Killer-Coke t-shirt. It was amazing to see hundreds of young people in Plaza Venezuela, singing with Zona Marginal against Coca-Cola, while a huge neon Coke advert overlooked the scene.

During that morning we had also attended the presentation of Aleida Guevara's latest book "Chávez, un hombre que anda por ahí", an interview by Che's daughter of the Venezuelan President. As she said: "It is fascinating to learn a bit more about a human being that decides to transform society, especially when that transformation aims to improve the life of his people, challenging the great economic interests that are in place in our world."



Delegates from the Colombia Solidarity Campaign in Venezuela CH

On 13 August, the sixth day of the World Festival, the crowds of youth representing 147 different nations filled the Poliedro auditorium in Caracas to attend the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal. The word was that Hugo Chávez would attend, as a witness, and absolutely everyone wanted to hear what he had to say.

Witnesses from Puerto Rico, Brazil, USA, North Korea, Greece, Cyprus, ex-Yugoslavia, Curacao, Haiti and Colombia presented their cases during the first day of this testimonial event. The crowning glory was Gerardo Cajamarca, SINALTRAINAL member in exile, a witness on Colombia during the first day of the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal. His speech was introduced to cheers from the Colombian delegates, joined by almost everyone in the completely packed auditorium, as they shouted at the top of their voices: "Uribe fascista, usted es el terrorista! [Uribe, fascist, you are the terrorist!]" and "Uribe, paraco, el pueblo está berraco! [Uribe, paramilitary, the people are angry!]", among many other.

Cajamarca introduced his presentation mentioning the Kogi people in Colombia as legacy and pride for the whole of Latin America. He then moved on to talk about Plan Colombia and the contradiction that while the USA claims to want to destroy the coca plantations, Coca-Cola buys tons of coca leaves for the production of their soft drinks. He talked about the link between transnational corporations and food dependency in Colombia, as another

form of imperialism.

Cajamarca also complained that apples of the multinational Dole were distributed at the festival, as we had done on our very first day at the festival when we rejected Nestlé chocolate bars in our lunch boxes and made a formal protest by handling the bars with explanatory leaflets back to the organizers. Finally, after expanding on the boycotts of Coca-Cola, Nestlé and Oxy, he criticized the too complaisant church in Colombia and the deep "economic and terrorist war" that Plan Colombia signifies for the people in that country.

At some moment during his speech, a scream from a delegate in the audience glorifying the FARC met with Cajamarca's energetic and clear response: "I refuse to continue identifying our dead with the armed struggle when that is not true!". His admirable remark was received in a very solemn way by the keen listeners, who kept silent for the rest of his intervention and applauded very loudly when he finished.

To conclude, regarding the Boycott Coca-Cola Campaign undertaken by our delegates during the WFYS, the outcome has been a complete success. A group is being formed in Caracas by David Pérez, a student from the Bolivarian University, and other groups could be soon appearing in Uruguay and Panamá. Our goal now is to attend the World Social Forum taking place in Caracas next January and consolidate the work that has been started against Coca-Cola in Venezuela.

Olaya García

Report on Visit of Juan Carlos Galvis, Colombian Coca-Cola Worker and Trade Unionist

JUAN CARLOS GALVIS is Secretary of Organisation for SINALTRAINAL and also President of the CUT in Barrancabermeja. He came to the United Kingdom in June to promote the union's campaign against Coca-Cola and to campaign for solidarity with the Colombian people in general.

Packed Agenda

Juan Carlos' visit lasted just over a month and there were only two days on which he had no engagements. He spoke in meetings which varied in size from 15 to 400, 22 meetings attended by approximately 1500 people in total. They were held all over the country, from Plymouth to Glasgow, from London to Belfast. The meetings at the UNISON fringe in Glasgow where he spoke were very successful. The room was packed to the brim with 75 people and lasted for over 2 hours with a standing ovation and a great deal of questions and debate. Many of those present at the meetings were moved by the bravery and firmness of Juan Carlos which was combined with his great dignity and modesty. Juan Carlos also spoke to UNISON branches in Greenwich, Northern Ireland, Plymouth and Leeds. Other union organisations who hosted Juan Carlos included PCS, TGWU, GMB, Birmingham Trades Union Council and NIPSA.

His biggest meeting was in Edinburgh, part of The Alternative G8 summit, 400 people were present and there were press reports in The Morning Star and the Yahoo News Internet site. Interviews with Juan Carlos also appeared in The Morning Star, Scottish



Juan Carlos Galvis speaking in London during his recent tour Andy Dockett

Socialist Voice, Planetary Voices and Noticias Latin America.

Juan Carlos also visited many trade unions and non-governmental organisations to talk to people on a more one-to-one basis including War on Want, Amnesty International, National Union of Students Services and to MSP's at the Scottish Parliament. He also spoke to people who do not support the Boycott Campaign in an effort to at least establish some channels of communication. For example, Juan Carlos spoke to Brian Revell of the TGWU who is also Vice-President of the IUF (International Union of Foodworkers). Brian promised to go away and look into the issues in more detail.

Lawsuit and Boycott

At most meetings, Juan Carlos spoke about the lawsuit against Coca-Cola in Florida and about the international campaign to boycott Coke. In the Florida lawsuit there are 4 cases that highlight specific examples of the repression against SINALTRAINAL:

1. The murder of union activist, Isidro Segundo Gil in Carepa on December 2nd, 1996.
 2. The imprisonment of 5 union activists in Bucaramanga in March, 1996 who were wrongly accused by Coke of terrorism and planting bomb in a factory.
 3. The kidnapping of Jorge Humberto Leal in Cucuta in 1999 by paramilitaries.
 4. The numerous death threats made by paramilitaries against Juan Carlos Galvis himself.
- Following, a long process of con-

sultation with other unions and social organisation, SINALTRAINAL called for a world-wide boycott of Coca-Cola products in July 2003.

SINALTRAINAL are looking for Truth, Justice and Reparation.

Truth – they want to know who are the material and intellectual authors of the crimes against Coca-Cola workers.

Justice – those responsible for the deaths and the threats should be punished with just sentences.

Reparation – The victims, their families and SINALTRAINAL should be compensated for the harm and damage caused.

Juan Carlos has pointed out that the campaign has had some success in that at least no Coca-Cola workers have been murdered recently. However, Coca-Cola is still trying to break the union. An example of this is the current attempt by Coca-Cola to go to the Ministry of Social Protection to revoke SINALTRAINAL's legal rights to recruit temporary workers.

Support from UNISON

Finally, Colombia Solidarity Campaign would like to put on record its thanks to UNISON and its International Committee for the financial support they have given to enable this tour to take place.

For more information about the visit contact Matthew Stiles at: mattystiles@yahoo.co.uk

Matthew Stiles
Trade Union Liaison Officer
Colombia Solidarity campaign

From Colombia to Venezuela

Caleb Harris reports from the XVI Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas.

AS THE bus carrying the Colombia Solidarity Campaign delegation entered the World Festival of Youth and Students delegate's village, a burly soldier in a scarlet beret blew us a smiling, two-handed kiss of welcome.

It was emblematic of the vivid contrast between our travels in Colombia and in Venezuela, which were both rich and intense experiences, but in very different ways.

When we crossed over the Río Arauca and entered Venezuela, the change in atmosphere had been palpable.

On our journey to the border and at the Colombian border checkpoint itself we had experienced the oppressive reality of life in Colombia's most heavily militarised department, Arauca.

We saw first-hand how Colombian state security puts itself at the service of corporate interests while travelling through the Caño Limón oil field, when heavily-armed soldiers searched our bus and all our belongings, took our details and questioned us about our trip.

Then at the border one of our Colombian delegation members was taken away by armed DAS officials for questioning, and although he was later released and allowed to continue his journey, we had to carry on without him. Another shock followed this, when another Colombian delegation member, who had paused in Arauca city to sort out her visa, was hit by shrapnel from a guerrilla bicycle bomb. She wasn't seriously hurt, but the incident highlighted the stark contrast between the political cultures of the neighbouring countries.

At the Venezuelan checkpoint, on the other hand, the officials were relaxed, the soldiers smiled and chatted, and we soon found ourselves enjoying a barbeque, beers and salsa at Guasdalito in Apure province. We were finally in Venezuela, where the cars are big and thirsty, the people are passionate in their political engagement, and where, we were pleased to learn, the president himself had laid on a bus to Caracas for us.

On our long journey through the night the convoy of buses we were part of had a police and army escort, as well as an ambulance. At our meal stops the ambulance siren would cheerfully blare to hurry us back to the buses when it was time to go. We were struck by how in Colombia the soldiers make international solidarity groups feel watched and intimidated, while in Venezuela they just make you feel welcome.

We stayed in Ciudad Miranda just outside Caracas, where along with thousands of political travellers from dozens of countries we enjoyed the immense-scale fiestas which rocked the newly-laid

foundations of the delegate's village each night.

On the first day, somewhat bleary-eyed, we found ourselves strolling between two rows of statues of Venezuelan revolutionary heroes on the Avenida de los Próceres towards the square where President Hugo Chávez would address the opening ceremony that evening. In the ceremony, which was like a highly-politicised Olympic Games opener, we marched with the British delegation among 17,000 delegates from 144 countries. Then Chávez launched into one of his legendary orations. After sketching the development of the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist movement over the last century, he announced to huge cheers: "The owners of the world are the people of the world." He went on: "I'm deeply convinced that even though recent decades have been demanding and difficult, full of great frustrations, it is the case this festival is a developing of a new hope. In the middle of the first decade of the third millennium we gather here, thousands upon thousands from all over the world, to debate and search for a better path to a new world."

Over the next few days our delegation took part in workshops, seminars and conferences on themes ranging from the role of Latin American youth in finding a solution to the social and military conflict in Colombia to the criminal role of NATO in the Balkans, from access to new information technology to the potential of alternative media as a weapon against media monopolies, from the function of the army in the Bolivarian Revolution to multinational profiteering in the fight against AIDS, from oil and geopolitics to US nuclear policy and the invasion of Iraq, from the "axis of evil" to the free software movement, from Plan Colombia to international trade unionism, from British neo-colonialism to the relationship between gender and power.

A personal highlight was "The Hip-Hop Summit: Social Characteristics and Political Intervention". Hip-hop musicians from all over North, Central and South America gathered to declare that as their music originated as an expression of social protest, they were determined that it continue to be the soundtrack to revolution. One interesting question, from a British audience member, was how radical, political hip-hop could reach the poor and the disenfranchised, instead of only reaching middle-class university students with i-pods? A panellist observed that the reason the powers-that-be allowed this revolutionary music to reach the intelligentsia but not the working class was that there was less of a chance that middle-class students would actually do anything



revolutionary in response.

Another major feature of the week for our delegation was visits to barrios, where we were shown around some of the Chávez government's projects and initiatives for the poor. We went to the barrios Ribas, 23 de Enero, La Vega, Serria and Simón Rodríguez Manicomio, where we visited the Juan Bautista Alberdi school.

The projects included the Barrio Adentros, which are free health clinics, mostly currently staffed by Cuban doctors but to be run by Venezuelans eventually; food programmes for those who can't afford to feed their families and for the homeless; educational and internet facilities; and supermarkets supplying cheap, Venezuelan-made products. The atmosphere in the barrios was of hope and enthusiasm, and of passionate support for the way the Chávez government is taking up the cause of the poor in a way these people have never experienced before. At one meeting, in a food centre which feeds 150 children nightly who would otherwise go hungry, the members of the cooperative who run the centre clamoured for the attention of our poor translator in their eagerness to explain the extent of the transformation they had witnessed in their community. "We've never seen anything like this in Venezuela," explained Janeth Amaya, one of the collective members. "Chávez's ideas have awakened the people. The previous governments left a shameful legacy of neglect and corruption which Chávez has had to work miracles to solve. They destroyed hospitals and schools: a whole generation of youth lost its opportunity in life. But now we have never seen people participate so much in government. Everything was hidden from the people before, but not now."

The collective receives all the food for the centre for free from the government, but none of them are paid. From next year, workers like these will be paid as the government gradually extends and strengthens the programme. We asked: why do they undertake such demanding work for no financial reward? Janeth replied: "Because I saw the transformations in this barrio, and this was my opportunity to be part of it." Another member of the collective said: "It's because we believe in what Chávez is doing. You'll get this answer from every ordinary person in Venezuela."

The closing ceremony saw a huge party erupt in the massive Poliedro stadium after the final festival declaration had been read. Thousands of delegates danced into the small hours to celebrate a week of solidarity with the citizens of a country who are building what the people of Colombia are struggling and hoping for: sovereignty, freedom, dignity and justice.

In Solidarity with the Heroic People of Arauca

Olaya Garcia reports from the embattled Colombian region of Arauca.

IN FEBRUARY this year, the European Network of Solidarity with Colombia, of which Colombia Solidarity Campaign is part, received an invitation by the Social Organizations of Arauca to attend a Humanitarian Social Forum in the town of Saravena between 3 and 5 August 2005. The event would conclude with the commemoration of the first anniversary of the assassination by the National Army of three Araucan social leaders: Alirio Martínez, Leonel Goyeneche and Jorge Eduardo Prieto. It was then that the idea of a delegation to Arauca, to continue later to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas (Venezuela), took form and the preparations began.

After months of communication with our partners in Colombia and coordination from London, we secured a list of thirteen delegates from the UK with very different backgrounds: human rights students, trade unionists, journalists, researchers and photographers, who were already involved with the Colombia Solidarity Campaign and other Latin America solidarity groups.

We arrived in Bogotá late on 31 July and we had already arranged with the Committee of Political Prisoners to visit the women and men the following morning. By then, Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro had already been transferred to a jail in Saravena and they were awaiting the opening of their public hearing. Samuel and Raquel are political prisoners from Arauca arrested in August last year, following the assassination of their colleagues in Caño Seco.

Three of our delegates visited the Women's Penitentiary Del Buen Pastor and two of us went to visit La Modelo Prison. Unfortunately, a police search took place in La Modelo on that day and they prohibited even the lawyers' visits until later that afternoon. Nonetheless, we had the chance to talk for three hours with the representative of the Committee of Political Prisoners that had accompanied us and her report provided us with a real insight into what Uribe's policies have meant in Colombia and the human rights violations that take place in the accusing and imprisonment of the political prisoners. Our impression was that of a fascist regime in which those who dare to talk against the State and the paramilitaries and for justice are made to disappear or are made silent.

That afternoon -while Colombians from all over the country began to

arrive to join the caravan to Arauca- all the international delegates who were going to the forum and another group that was heading to Sierra Nevada met with the coordinators of the European Network in Colombia and with members of the Colombian Solidarity Network, to expand on the workings of both networks and prepare for the work in our destinations. Speakers from the INS (National Trade Unions' Institute) and SINALTRAINAL welcomed all of us: "We appreciate greatly your solidarity with our country. Your efforts in making our organizations known abroad and denouncing the situations we face have helped to save the lives of many."

At around 11pm everyone had arrived - Colombian social organizations, students, artists and trade unions - and the three buses were set to leave accompanied by 30 international delegates from the UK, Spain, Ireland, Switzerland, Greece, the USA, New Zealand and Austria and two members of Peace Brigades International.

A group of young musicians from Bogotá called 'Pájaros del Monte' (Mountain's Birds) really produced the soundtrack of our trip. They say to produce a music that unites the three races in Colombia: the Spanish, African and indigenous ancestors, "with a message to recover what is ours and preserve it." In fact, their folk music with sounds from the Pacific made all the people we met on our way to join in dancing and clapping and their gaitas and drums, which were the last thing we heard every night and woke us up very early every morning, was a great contribution to the atmosphere of celebration and a gift that we will not forget.

In the town of Saravena there is a curfew that starts at 6pm and lasts 12 hours. That was why on the 2nd, after having three wheels punctured, we knew we were running late. At 5.30pm we reached the north outskirts of Tame, a known paramilitary area. In our third checkpoint of the day, we were informed that that afternoon the FARC had crossed two vehicles in the road and thus the road had been closed for security reasons. The army asked everyone to register in a list, with full names, passport or Colombian ID numbers in order to, initially, proceed at our own risk. What followed were tense talks between the coordinators of the caravan, PBI brigaders and the soldiers and continued phone calls to contact our headquarters in Bogotá, the Ombudsman's Office and the Human

Rights section of the National Police.

We did not know whether the story was true or simply a strategy to sabotage our attendance of the forum the following morning, but the drivers finally said that they would not continue that night and anyways, we were told to go back to the town of Tame. At that point, we decided to leave the third bus, whose wheels had punched several times and somehow fitted all the delegates, luggage and instruments in the other two.

The night ahead presented itself as a challenging one because we did not have a place to stay and restaurants were no longer open. Therefore, international and national representatives asked to see the mayor of Tame and army colonels, in an attempt to secure food, water and a place to sleep for all the delegates that night, about 120 people. All they provided, though, was the local sports centre, whose toilets were not working and ceiling did not protect us against the rainwater that poured during the entire night. We formed a small group to go and buy chicken, rice and potatoes, the only thing a local cooperative could cook at that time of the night.

While some of us had been waiting to hear about the provisions for the night, earlier that evening, a suspicious jeep had approached us and four men had come out asking what we were doing there, after replying that we would not talk they told us not to be afraid because they were just researchers from the university doing a study on rural tourism in Arauca. Did they really think we would buy into that? As incredibly beautiful as the region is, no person would feel safe doing tourism on their own in one of the most militarized areas of Colombia.

'Pájaros del Monte' tried to change the uneasy atmosphere that evening while we waited for dinner and drums and gaitas sounded very loud to show the local authorities and the army that we were there and would not go in silence. Later that night, most delegates slept directly on the concrete because we had not been given blankets and turns of vigilance were in place until we left Tame at 5am.

The torrential rain that had not stopped during the night, became our 'guardian angel' throughout the rest of the way to Saravena and so we were allowed to pass in the remaining two checkpoints without anyone having their documents checked or having to get down. Initially we were to cross the river but then decided to take an

alternative route because the current was too strong. We arrived in Saravena at 9am and had breakfast at the CUT headquarters, where most of us stayed the following nights.

The Forum on 'The Effects of Plan Colombia and Democratic Security in the Region of Sarare, Department of Arauca' began that same morning with welcoming speeches by the organizers: Departmental Association of Campesinos (ADUC), Association of Traditional Indigenous Authorities (ASCATIDAR), Regional Association of Young Students (ASOJER), Arauca branch of Workers' Central Union (CUT), Communal and Civic Associations and the Committee Human Rights Fund 'Joel Sierra'. Among the participants, internationally known organizations such as OFF, ASFADES, Lawyers Collective Restrepo, Humanidad Vigente, Nunca Más Project and SINALTRAINAL and delegates such as Father Javier Giraldo, joined in with regional organizations of women such as the Women's Committee 'Amanecer por Arauca' and other indigenous and black communities' groups.

The location, an outdoors basketball court, was decorated with all the banners from the groups attending, whose messages settled the mood for the event: "Para que pueda surgir lo posible, es preciso intentar una y otra vez lo imposible" ("For the possible to emerge, the impossible has to be tried time and again") or "If we unite our ideas, we build bonds of justice and equality".

The two-day forum was an absolute success of constant exchange among the attendants, where there were especially emotive moments such as those of campesino leaders from Catatumbo (North Santander) remembering their fellow José Trinidad Torres killed only three days before by the FARC and who was expected to attend the forum.

Leonel, Alirio and Jorge, really loved social leaders of the Sarare region of Arauca assassinated by the National Army the previous year, were of course in everybody's minds: "People who always gave their human and social warmth... until the assassin bullets that could have silenced them cross their lives", as one of the local delegates presented them.

The workshops on the health, educational, economic, environmental and political effects of Plan Colombia and Democratic Security in the region provided all the delegates with a rich understanding of the ultimately deva-

stating human costs that these policies have brought to Arauca. In addition, the National and International Campaign on the Effects of Oil Exploitation in Arauca was presented, requesting the oil companies Occidental de Colombia Inc. (American Occidental Petroleum) and Repsol (Spanish) to respect and compensate the indigenous cultures of the Guahibas and the Uwas.

On 5 August, commemoration of the first anniversary of the assassination of Leonel, Jorge and Alirio, the three martyrs of Caño Seco, five delegates from Colombia Solidarity Campaign were in a town called Pueblo Nuevo. We had spent the previous day and night accompanying the local community in La Vereda de Arabia and were ready to accompany the caravan of vehicles being formed to attend the mass service and commemorations in Caño Seco. While we waited for all the people to arrive, we had the chance to visit the local school, which hosts 1050 students. We were told by a member of staff how the children have built their own classrooms because there is not enough budget and salaries have already been halved by the government: "This is a savage government, isn't it?... Here is where the rights of children are violated...there are scarce resources... so many diseases..." He also explained how the fumigations as part of Plan Colombia, or its follow up programmes, have continued in the area - at least two in recent months -, polluting the water, causing skin diseases in children, producing abortions in the cattle, destroying entire foodstuffs plantations and creating displacement: "The farmers put white flags in the banana plantations to warn the planes that those are not coca-leave plantations... but the army fumigates anyway. The compensation money due to us for the fumigations of Plan Colombia has never arrived here and people have to leave."

Early on 6 August, already in our way to Venezuela, we left Arauca with the determination of returning soon and continue denouncing, in the UK and to the international community, the human rights violations that take place there every day. The vivid and inspirational example of the courage and struggle for justice of the humble but willing people of Arauca stays with us forever. We definitely join in that applause for life that opened the Forum in Saravena and let's not let the loud voice of the heroic people of Arauca ever be silenced.

A year after the Caño Seco massacre, Caleb Harris witnesses a region in mourning.

WHEN TRADE unionist Jorge Eduardo Prieto was dragged from his bed and murdered by soldiers from the Colombian army in the town of Caño Seco just over a year ago, he left behind a wife, three children and four grandchildren.

In an interview on the first anniversary of his father's death on August 5, Jorge's son Nelson, 27, said his father's killers would be held to account: "So far the authorities have detained four soldiers and a civilian, who was an informant. They are being charged with homicide. They are the material authors but we are asking for the help of the international community in catching the intellectual authors of the crime." Nelson then named a colonel in the Colombian army and high-ranking government officials, including ministers, saying: "There was a great slander committed against the names of my father and the other men, when they were declared to be terrorists, and one year later we're still looking for justice."

Jorge and his colleagues Leonel Goyeneche and Alirio Martínez were shot dead by soldiers from the army's 18th Brigade in the town in Colombia's oil-rich and heavily militarised Arauca department. The three men were trade unionists and community leaders, and all were married with children and grandchildren.

Jorge Eduardo Prieto's widow, Rosanna Ramírez Gómez, said at the ceremony: "Thank God that my husband was someone who not only fought for the people of this community but who also had contacts internationally, and thanks to them

we've been able to shed some light on what happened."

Nelson Prieto said the murder of his father had strengthened his resolve to work for justice in his community: "Throughout this past year and through the whole of the Uribe administration the oppression has become much worse; for example, I myself, in 2002, was the victim of one of the arbitrary mass detentions that have been taking place; and five months after I got out of prison, the army murdered my father. I feel the oppression has become much more intense and acute, for me and my family as well as for the families of my father's two assassinated colleagues. But this has just given me more desire to keep moving forward and keep fighting, because this was my father. I admired and loved him, and I miss him a lot."

During the two days before the ceremony, a forum of local grassroots social organisations in the nearby town of Saravena called for the soldiers involved, who are currently under investigation for homicide, to be found guilty of murdering the three men. It also denounced human rights abuses stemming from the Uribe government's democratic security law and the exploitative operations of multinational corporations in Arauca. The forum ended with the commemorative mass and the unveiling of a memorial stone. The emotional ceremony, attended by over 3,500 people from all over the region, was held outside the house where the killings took place.

A caravan of over 50 lorries carrying over 900 people from the

area around Caño Seco drove for several hours to attend the ceremony. A local community leader, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals from the army or paramilitaries, said that many local people would have been too afraid to attend if international observers, including members of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign, had not spent the previous night in the village of Pueblo Seco or otherwise known as La Vereda de Arabia at the villagers' request.

The observers were asked to make the three-hour journey to La Vereda de Arabia by community leaders after the fifth brigade of the army's 47th battalion occupied the town, following an alleged grenade attack on soldiers from the brigade by guerrilla sympathisers in the area.

Villagers denied the attack to us and said the grenade incident was an accident among the soldiers for which a local man was being blamed, and that it was an excuse to intimidate the area's villagers into not attending the commemoration ceremony. We were shown a large banner advertising the ceremony, which had been pulled down from its place over the main street and then torn up.

A soldier from the brigade who admitted to us that he tore down the banner said he did it because it accused the army of killing the three trade unionists. We were informed later by the community leader that this soldier was a known and feared paramilitary.

The soldiers said they were protecting the villagers from guerrillas and securing after the grenade incident what their commander,

Lieutenant García, described as a "known corridor for guerrilla mobility". But villagers told us they felt intimidated by the soldiers, who occupied their homes and warned them against attending the commemorative ceremony.

Lieutenant García said he had given no order for the banner to be taken down. He said he was aware of the ceremony commemorating the executed men, but added: "We are in a time of confrontation and attacks and so I'm not prepared to comment about who has reason to kill and who doesn't." In a remark which contradicted President Uribe's recent edict that there is "no armed conflict" in Colombia, Lieutenant García added: "Right now, the situation is that Colombia is at war."

The brigade pulled out of the town during the night and villagers thronged the main street, climbing into the banner-clad lorries and dusty cars for the journey to Caño Seco. Many were wearing white T-shirts printed with the three men's faces and the message: "In your example of courage, humility and leadership, you remain with us always."

The mood in the caravan was of relief at being able to attend the event mingled with quiet grief for the dead men. The first anniversary of a death is traditionally marked as a significant occasion in Colombia.

Notably though, in an area of Colombia notorious for intense and often brutal conflict between the government and right-wing paramilitary groups, on one side, and leftist guerrilla groups on the other, there was no atmosphere of violence or call for revenge at the forum, which was attended by over 500 delegates

from around Colombia and abroad, or at the commemoration.

Instead, the mood of the forum, on August 3 and 4, was one of defiant celebration. The event was convened to coincide with the first anniversary of the deaths, and the master of ceremonies opened proceedings with a call for the delegates to observe one minute, not of silence, but of applause "for life". He declared: "With this applause we stand for life and against death."

The forum also coincided with the trial on charges of rebellion, in the same town, of teachers and trade unionists Samuel Morales (39) and Raquel Castro (43). The state alleges they were sympathisers with armed guerrillas, which they deny. A group of Colombia Solidarity Campaign members visited Samuel and Raquel on the morning of the second day of their three-day court appearance.

The Arauca department supplies 30 per cent of Colombia's oil and contains Occidental Petroleum's massive Caño Limón oil pipeline, which is heavily defended by the military and often attacked by guerrillas.

Our guide on the trip through the oilfields was Oscar Cañas, a consultant with the Unión Sindical Obrera trade union in Arauca. He explained the relevance of the oil to the status of Arauca as a "laboratory of war" for the Colombian government, as it has been labelled by Amnesty International.

Oscar said Oxy was responsible for an unprecedented militarization of the entire area. He said there are 5,000 soldiers in the oil region – more than the number of civilians.

There are 286 oil wells in the region, he said, which extract



Caño Seco... Everyone's effort

between 90 and 100,000 barrels of oil daily. In order to do this the wells also have to extract 2.8m barrels of water. The disposal of this water has severe effects on the local ground water and leads to serious pollution of the water supply. Concrete used in the wells has contributed to the drying up of the entire, previously lush, area.

The countryside is dotted with artificial ponds where soil has been removed to build up the road for use by the oil company. This was an area noted for its rich biodiversity, which has greatly diminished due to this kind of disturbance.

The area is also home to the Guahibo indigenous people. Oscar said: "Today, the Guahibos are displaced from their lands because of the oil, and they have to live like beggars. The company doesn't want to have anything to do with them and it doesn't care what is happening to them."

The same applies to the campesinos who have been displaced from Arauca. They are offered two "choices", Oscar said: "to sell their land, or to sell their land. The prices offered are very low and don't reflect those offered to the land."

Oscar said that people from the department are not allowed to work at Caño Limón, because Oxy has said that it believes that 95 per cent of those born in the region are guerrilla, and the other five per cent are guerrilla collaborators and sympathisers. He said that included all of us on the delegation and all those who attended the social forum in Saravena, and that was why there was such strong repression of social organisations in Arauca.

Caño Limón has operated since 1983, with reserves of over a billion barrels. Oscar said: "With Caño Limón, Oxy won the lottery." Since then the company has progressively built up its presence and tightened security around the area.

Oscar related one recent incident which illustrates the extent to which Oxy has ignored basic principles of justice and human rights in imposing itself on the local people.

A couple of years ago, some children were chasing a capybara, the large rodent considered a delicacy in the area. They made the lethal mistake of pursuing it into the Caño Limón high security area. The company knew they were just children, but it called in the army, saying there were guerrilla forces on their territory. The soldiers shot at the children and one of them was killed. The army justified the death by saying people were forbidden to enter the area without permission. They claimed the children were involved in guerrilla activity and had shot at the soldiers, but this has since been proved to be completely false.

"This is the harsh reality of life for the people living here in 'The Independent Republic of Caño Limón'," said Oscar.

Near Arauca is the headquarters of the army's 18th Mobile Brigade. Oscar said the brigade had barricaded the entrance to the city of Arauca. The military sometimes takes over public areas in Colombia in this way and designates them as military areas. It uses constitutional law to support this by saying the seized areas were in guerrilla hands and have been "liberated" by the army. Consequently, people entering

Arauca municipality have their names taken and are fingerprinted and photographed, and their destination is noted. In addition, when locals have visitors to stay in their home they have to tell the military who they are, why they have come and for how long.

The army began a program of "voluntary" house checks. To avoid people accusing them of invading homes, Oscar said, soldiers would appear with the DAS and an attorney and "request" to check the home. "Of course," he said, "when people saw all these people arrive with their weapons, uniforms and wearing mirror sunglasses, they were very intimidated and afraid and would allow them to search their house, even though this was unconstitutional."

Oscar said these searches and other intimidatory tactics had stopped due to pressure from international delegations such as those of Colombia Solidarity Campaign, and due to rulings in the constitutional court. But, as we experienced, all vehicles passing Caño Limón are still stopped, the occupants and their vehicles and luggage searched, and their names and details recorded.

Oscar and researchers like him aim to keep the international community informed of the increasing amount of military apparatus and technology being moved into the area. He said the build up was not in order to combat the guerrilla or to defend the oil wells, but to take an intimidating posture towards the Chávez government in Venezuela. He said Venezuelans had observed extensive military training exercises along the Venezuelan border,

which included the participation of US Marines and paramilitaries. He said another worry was that corrupt Venezuelan civil servants were allowing the Colombian military to buy up Venezuelan land in the border area, which they were also doing in Colombian territory.

Oscar added: "It would be interesting if the Government was to allow the United Nations and the Organisation of American States to inspect what is going on in the border area and to look into why the Government is militarising the border."

The Arauca department, which borders Venezuela, has the country's highest ratio of military personnel (15,000) to civilian population (250,000). There are also 90 US military special advisers in the department helping the Colombian military. The military and paramilitary forces are in ongoing, intense conflict with the FARC and ELN in the department.

A representative from the Colombian government attended the forum to respond to the delegates' criticisms of the Government's role in human rights abuses in the region. Angela Campos, a lawyer in the Arauca procurator's department, fielded heated questions and challenges from the floor of the forum about inefficiency and non-compliance with the law in her department, which exists to deal with complaints against state employees, including the military and police. She said in an interview that complaints had increased over recent years, with the procurator's department now receiving up to 10 a day.

I asked Ms Campos if there was

an anomaly in the three soldiers and one civilian involved in the killing of Leonel Goyeneche, Alirio Martínez and Jorge Eduardo Prieto being under investigation for homicide, while Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro, who were detained over a year ago in the same operation, were still on trial for rebellion.

Ms Campos said that because of the grave nature of the accusations against the three soldiers, the investigation was being handled at a national level by the judicial procurator, and so she was unable to comment. She said that complaints of complicity between the military and paramilitary would also be handled at this level.

An incident involving Ms Campos' bodyguard at the forum added to the sceptical reaction she received. The supposed guard began filming delegates to the forum with a video recorder, and it emerged that he was a member of the Colombian intelligence service. After an angry crowd surrounded the man and demanded he leave the building, Ms Campos said she did not know how he came to be assigned to her as a bodyguard.

The incident illustrated the intimidating and oppressive atmosphere in which the people of Arauca live. But a dedication to Alirio Martínez painted on the wall at the social centre where the delegates stayed showed the dignity and resolve with which they meet this repression: "Con toda la ira de tu muerte, con toda el amor de tu lucha, con el barro de tu tierra ... haremos nuestro mundo." "With all the rage of your death, with all the love of your struggle, with the mud of your land ... we will make our world."



from left to right:
 Family of murdered campesino leader Alirio Martínez
 Soldiers in Arauca
 International delegates show their support for the people of Arauca
 All images Jorge Mata/Surimages

Amnesty International Greetings Card Campaign

ON 5 AUGUST 2004 Samuel Morales was arrested by the Colombian Army. Samuel is the president of the Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT - Colombia Trade Union Confederation) in Arauca department. In the same military operation, three other trade unionists were killed. They were Héctor Alirio Martínez, 44, leader of the Departmental Association of Peasant Consumers (ADUC), Leonel Goyeneche, 43, of the CUT, and Jorge Prieto, 45, of the health workers' union ANTHOC and the CUT. The three were forced out of Jorge Prieto's house in the hamlet of Caño Seco and shot in the back. A woman, Raquel Castro of ASEDAR, was arrested after the shooting. The commander of the Second Army Division, General Luis Pablo García, said that all four were members of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN - National Liberation Army) armed group who had opened fire on the soldiers when they approached the house. According to the armed forces, the soldiers returned fire and the three trade unionists were killed in combat. Samuel Morales was arrested in a school about six hours later.

Hopes of a full and independent investigation into the killings were undercut when senior officials, including Defence Minister Jorge Uribe, Vice-President Francisco Santos and General Luis Pablo García, labelled the victims as 'subversives' or stated that they had opened fire. Following an international outcry, the Vice-President retracted his statements and the Office of the Attorney General arrested three soldiers for the killings.

Amnesty International is concerned that criminal investigations may be moved to military courts, which have regularly guaranteed the impunity of members of the armed forces implicated in human rights violations. The Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies have repeatedly stigmatised trade unionists, human rights defenders and other rights campaigners as subversive or linked to guerrilla activity. Repeated death threats, human rights violations and the mass detention of trade unionists have routinely followed such accusations. After five months in detention, on 3 January 2005, charges of rebellion were brought against Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro. They remain in prison awaiting trial. Amnesty International fears that Samuel and Raquel's arrest and the killing of the three trade unionists are part of a strategy by the security forces to undermine the invaluable work carried out by trade unionists, human rights defenders and other social activists in Arauca.

Take action!

President send your appeals to:
President of the Republic
Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No.7-26
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 342 0592 / 337 5890

Appeal asks:

Call for an impartial and exhaustive investigation by the civilian justice system into the killings of the three trade unionists, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice; expressing concern that the due process rights of Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro be guaranteed. Underline your concern that these recent arrests may correspond to the ongoing joint military-paramilitary strategy to undermine human rights work in Arauca and are not based on independent judicial investigations. Expressing concern that State, government and military officials have labelled the trade unionists killed as subversive and to recognize the legitimacy of human rights work in the department.

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/gcc/2004/americas/index1.shtml#morales>

A close talk with Raquel Castro, an Araucan political prisoner



left: Raquel Castro awaiting trial in jail
above: Samuel Morales during visit to the UK
Marie-Anne Ventura

ON THE morning of 4 August, the second day of the public hearing of the Colombian State vs. Samuel Morales and Raquel Castro was taking place in Saravena. It had been set as an objective of our delegation to visit them in the prisons in Bogotá to convey to them the solidarity towards their cause here in the UK and to reaffirm our commitment not to forget their struggle. However, on the 1 August they had already been transferred, in preparation for the trial, and our delegates had the chance to interview other political prisoners, most of whom are also from Arauca.

The hearing was going to last only three days, exactly the same as the Humanitarian Social Forum and Samuel could not believe his luck since, in a way, all of us there were accompanying the process. He felt encouraged by listening to the radio covering of the Forum and the speeches of support from local to international delegates, which was allowed at the local jail.

He looked in good spirits, optimistic (or so it seemed) and cheerful but Raquel was another story. The last year in prison has clearly affected her health, which was always a bit weak. She looked incredibly tired and especially sad because she could not stop thinking about her friends Leonel Goyeneche, Jorge Prieto and Alirio Martínez, who had been killed the previous year, tragic event that led to her arrest because she was one of the witnesses in the house that night of 5 August 2004 in Caño Seco.

We were four international delegates and had the chance to talk with her for about 40 minutes, before the judge arrived and once the guards had removed their handcuffs. The interview took place in a tiny room, half of which was full of files, probably the town's archives. Somehow, about 12 people fitted in that narrow hearing room of the local court and of course, Samuel's lawyer was also there.

Raquel felt especially hurt because the previous day, opening of the hearing, the accusation against her had been entirely based in the fact that she was an independent, professional and intelligent woman and all those facts together created for the prosecutor the profile of a terrorist: "the judge and the prosecutor had a very harsh intervention yesterday. Very heavy stuff was said and as a

woman, I felt insulted. I was accused only for being an intelligent woman, for being a pedagogue...They said I give conferences to the guerrilla, that I organize political-military training...They try to stigmatize the social expression of a people with the armed expression".

On the day of our visit she had really prepared herself against such sexist accusations and as she explained to us, she would base her entire defense on the roles and position of women in Colombia and the fact that her entire professional life, she has been committed to educating in the rural areas for the people to learn their rights, because she herself was the daughter of Araucan campesinos:

"I have dedicated my life to giving young people in this area the life skills they need so that they don't need or want to join armed groups. Yet I am being charged with helping these groups."

Between 1995 and 2002, Raquel Castro was the Principal of the school 'Instituto Agropecuario Carmelo Barillo' in Puerto Nidia, but during that time, in a school of almost 450 students, she also took the roles of teacher of languages, secretary, librarian, administrator of the farm and cleaning person. All that hard work affected her health and in 2002 she had to drop out. Nevertheless, she has continued to work with the rural communities and in 2004 came to the UK in a tour with Samuel Morales to campaign for the rights of the people in Arauca and against the militarization of the region and the impunity of the paramilitaries.

Today, she continues to demand justice: "what we need to ask for is a transparent trial, without pressure and where the truth will be heard".

The persecution of the social expression in the department of Arauca is a daily reality, those who have not been displaced are in prison or have been killed. Like in the case of the assassination of Alirio Martínez, Jorge Prieto and Leonel Goyeneche and their own arrest:

"They [the State] make things up, like when they murdered our colleagues... I was in the same house. They tried to make everyone believe that it had been a combat between the guerrilla and the army... three subversives killed and other two arrested. But of course, that wasn't the truth:

I had arrived at Jorge Prieto's at around 4 or 4.30pm and at 5pm

arrived Alirio and Leonel. They asked Jorge if they could stay overnight and they did.

They were meeting to talk about the massacres that had taken place in Tame, Mayo Flore, Amarillo, Crabocheso. The paramilitary incursion that had left 24 people killed, had created a situation of fear among the campesinos and in the rest of the population in the rural sector, and entire families were moving to other places with their children, who were the students in our schools. We were worried that there would be no students or teachers left, because if the schools were to close, the teachers would be moved to other locations. We were worried about the closing down of the educational institutions in the rural area. We wanted to talk, as well, about the threats against the leadership of the social movement in the department.

Leonel was a primary school teacher in the same centre where I was working before, since April 2004. His four children were students there, too.

Jorge was a trade unionist in the health sector.

We had met frequently in different places. Before the massacres in the communities of Tame, Flor Amarillo or Crabo Charo, meetings took place in the trade unions' offices but afterwards meetings became more clandestine, although sometimes we meet in the CUT's headquarters. We usually discussed education and health problems...with the Uribe's Government's declaration of Zones of Rehabilitation and Consolidation in the main municipalities of Saravena, Araucita and Arauca, the persecution of social organizations there had increased noticeably. For instance, eighteen teachers in our school had been spying on the others...

That night, they [the army] entered the house, took Alirio, Leonel and Jorge outside, calling them by their full names, and killed them on the spot. They didn't go into the room where I was staying...I was paralyzed in my bed...

After the shooting, the voice of a man asked [to the wife of one of the victims] if there was someone in the house. They answered that a woman was sleeping in another room. The soldiers then entered the room and directing some flash-lights towards my face, asked me what I was doing there. I tried to keep calm and

answered politely that I was sleeping and that I didn't know what was happening.

They asked for my documents and left the room."

Raquel then described how some soldiers tried to take her outside to kill her: "The soldiers came in with their guns ready to shoot. They made me leave, and I went to the door. I said: 'Please don't kill me.' I felt all their gun barrels in my back." On the street were some other soldiers, who ordered her back inside, to try to protect her. "At that moment," Raquel said, "I understood that I would survive this situation to denounce it and to tell everyone about what had just happened, and about all the persecutions and pressures against the social expression of the trade unions and the poor communities in this department and country..."

The moral strength in Raquel's words - a brave Araucan woman committed to her rural people and determined to bring justice for the assassination of her colleagues and the arbitrary arrest of Samuel Morales and herself - left us without the words to comfort her as we would have wished, but nonetheless, highly inspired to let the world know what is happening in Arauca and committed to keep working, in the ways the Social Organizations of Arauca consider appropriate, in solidarity with the people there and in support of the national call for Truth, Justice and Integrated Compensations. For the Defense of Life, Human Rights and the Permanence in the Territory.

After saying our goodbyes to both Samuel and Raquel and wishing them all the luck that they will need, we walked back through Saravena to our headquarters, the CUT's main building. On our way, the town seemed empty. I am sure all of us thought and hoped it was a sign that many local people were attending the Forum.

We were very optimistic about the effects the event would have on the outcome of Samuel's and Raquel's trial but our colleague Emilio brought our feet back to earth, in a more realistic note he explained that the judge, under very strong pressures, had between nine months and two years to decide, once the hearing was over, the fate of Samuel and Raquel. The likelihood is that they will be found guilty of the minimum offense, which is rebellion. This would mean a sentence of eight more years.

Dismantling Public Health

GOVERNOR Of Cundinamarca Pablo Ardila has announced the imminent liquidation of the Instituto Materno Infantil (IMI) of Bogotá, the country's biggest neo-natal intensive care unit and the only intermediate maternal care unit in the capital.

Born as a charity institution, it was administered by the Cundinamarca state from 1966 to 1979, when, together with the Hospital San Juan de Dios, became a non-profit private institution belonging to the San Juan de Dios Foundation. On 22 March 2005 the Council of the State annulled the decrees that allowed the creation of the Foundation, returning the hospitals' administration to the hands of the Cundinamarca state. The Governor decided to liquidate the IMI, as he is not prepared to meet the expenses of a public hospital. (The workers of the institute have not received their salary for seven months.) On 8 August the General Attorney Edgardo Maya demanded the IMI not be liquidated. Although the controversy is now settled, the problem of funding the IMI and the public health structures persists.

Since the Law 100/1993 entered into force, some public services were excluded from state funding and, aiming at the decentralization of the health system, the national government gave administrative and financial autonomy to local and states governments. The hospitals became *Empresas Sociales del Estado* (Social Enterprises of the State). The purpose of this measure is not to give more autonomy to the regions, but to transfer the public expense and reduce the commitment of the State.

The Law 100 also incorporated the private insurance sector in the health system. Through the creation of a Health Compulsory Plan (Plan Obligatorio de Salud), every citizen has to be affiliated to the EPS or ARS in order to receive medical attention. The EPS (Service Provider Companies) and the ARS (Subsidised Regime Administrators) are financial intermediaries that contract medical services. The most vulnerable people, who cannot afford to join EPS nor ARS, can receive medical attention from the State funded SISBEN, although there are not enough places for all the patients that need them and the service provided is notoriously poor.

Thanks to the decentralisation and privatisation of the health sector medical decision in Colombia are oriented towards the EPS and ARS stock holders' search for profitability. Health has become a commodity. As a result of this measure inspired by competition and the laws of the market, about 52% of the population does not have any kind of insurance. The quality of services provided by the ISS (Institute for Social Security) is declining as the private sector boycotted affiliation to it.

In 2004 the budget to the local system was further reduced. Some of the most important public hospitals, such as the Cartagena and Caldas University Hospitals were closed down. The San Juan de Dios of Bogotá, that used to offer medical attention to the most disadvantaged (and it is now occupied by some of the workers), was closed in 1999. Other institutes are in deficit and threaten to be shut down: the hospital Rosario Pumarejo de Valledupar, the Erasmo Meoz de Cúcuta, the San Diego de Cereté hospital, the hospital of Corozal, the Ramón Valencia de Bucaramanga University Hospital, the Popayan, the San Jorge de Pereira and the Regional hospital of Sincelejo are only some of them.

These neoliberal measures are simply one more example of the government determination to dismantle the welfare state in favour of market forces and private profit.

Health Crisis in Arauca

ON 4 AUGUST, second day of the Forum, I attended the Health workers group as it would be interesting for my union, UNISON which covers both Health and Local Government workers and I knew there was a serious issue of privatisation in the Araucan Health Sector.

One delegate spoke about how health centres were originally set up by the people before the government took over. Educated people organised the centres. Indigenous people recommended herbal medicine and coca was used for remedies. The first 10 doctors in the whole territory used these preventative methods.

Hospitals opened when the petrochemical plants came. Instead of health promotion came buildings. Back then health promoters had better knowledge than the doctors. Now they have new buildings but no staff to run them. Also if they speak up about new ideas or improvements you are branded a terrorist.

The workers explained that, although the health budget has tripled, it is not used in hospitals but in intermediaries. In small public hospitals the majority is spent on administration. ARS (Las Administradoras del Regimen Subsidiado) were once very important but they are now government tools handed out for political reasons not to people who will run them appropriately. They are there to favour financial interests at the cost of public health.

They all felt that the health system

does not work for the people and that they need to build a new model based on food and work security. They highlighted many problems. It is difficult to get an appointment at a hospital. You can turn up at 7am and be told there are no appointments available. Centres are opening with people who do not have the minimum qualifications. No one explains to the patients why they are ill, they are just told that it's 'external things'. Nurses have to work with patients with TB and then work with babies. There are no specialists for each area.

Sanitary conditions are so bad the patients don't even have bowls to throw up in, they have to use bins.

The Governor wants clinics closed as he says they are involved with guerrillas which is not true. They are closing hospitals, there are mass firings, changes to work schedules, killings and displacement of health workers. In one place 33 people were sacked.

In Colombia if you do not have a permanent contract you are not entitled to free health care. Health workers also need to have permanent contracts. Health workers are hard workers but they feel that are stigmatised.

In Saravena they have not had a manager for some time. The health system was made into a cooperative. The workers kept on working particularly the vaccination process. They were not paid for 5 months and health workers were killed but they



continued to work. There was no official restructuring but it was done unofficially. Some workers were given a minimum guarantee when being transferred over to a cooperative, however these were lost. This is typical of the informal privatisation that is happening all over the country.

One woman told me that health workers have to fight all the time against threats, deaths and displacements. She described the man who was leading the workshop as a fighter as he gets threats just for speaking out about the problems regarding health.

Another topic the group touched upon was fumigation of crops in the area. Fumigations are meant to be carried out over coca land however this is not the case and it's ruining good crops and polluting the land. It's difficult to get good information on the environmental impact. Women are going to hospital after suffering from miscarriages probably caused by the fumigations but there is no research to corroborate this. Patients won't say that they are from an area that is fumigated.

The health workers spoke about the military borrowing doctors who only give about two or three minutes to a patient. They then only prescribe anti parasitic drugs, painkillers and sometimes antibiotics rather than look at the problem properly. The military claim that they are looking after people, which isn't the case.

An ambulance driver spoke about his difficulties getting patients to hospital. They can wait a long time at military checkpoints. He said that in Capo Verde military had shot some children but it took half an hour for help to arrive due to the checkpoints. Once he had a heart attack patient but when the ambulance got to Arauca it was supposed to stop at the checkpoint, but he carried on driving. The police and army then followed to the hospital to take the patient back! The police and army will accuse patients of being guerrillas. The ambulance driver explained that he will take any patient regardless of his background as that is his job. He reported that the road from Saravena to Arauca was used as a runway by Oxy Petroleum, he had to wait for planes to take off and land before taking his patients to hospital. This has now changed and a ring road for cars has been put in.

There is money to spend on more and more soldiers but none on their health care system. Many people in the UK can empathise with this as they feel the same about the war in Iraq and the slow backdoor privatisation of our hospitals.

Throughout my stay I felt that the government feels the Colombian people are a hindrance in its quest to make money out of its land. This workgroup just highlighted this more.

Nikki Russell

The Hospital of Pitalito: Slaughterhouse or Health Care Centre?

FOR ANY government that wants to serve its country, there is no doubt that the public health service has to be one of its main priorities. However, in Colombia this is not the case.

Recently I have visited the Hospital of Pitalito, Huila, when I accompanied my wife who was suffering from severe stomach pain and digestive system haemorrhages.

When we arrived at around 4pm, they took us immediately to the emergency department. My wife, Marta, has the famous SISBEN card, the system that supposedly discounts the prices of public services such as health, education etc. according to the individual's income.

When one arrives at the emergency department and before the visit can take place, the patient has to fill in numerous papers, documents and forms, in order to record his or her "history" and to comply with the regu-

lations. For Marta, this process of waiting to receive the forms, filling them in and waiting again to hand them in, took more than one hour. When they finally called her for the visit, two hours had passed.

The so called "Emergencies" looked more like a prison than a centre dedicated to cure human beings: they did not allow me to accompany my ill wife and, as soon as she passed a iron bars door, (watched by a guard that held the keys), they told her that it was forbidden by law to go out of there before they had finished with her.

When we were in the emergency department, a child with pulmonary problems arrived. His illness was at a dangerous, advance stage, but nevertheless his mother had to fill in all the forms before they could treat the kid. After the papers, they made them wait for a long time while the condition of the child worsened. My wife told me

afterward that every time that a doctor or a nursed passed by the mother of the kid would beg them to do something, saying "Please, my son is going to die".

In spite of the mother's desperation, they were only attended to 4 hours after they got to "Emergencies". But it was already late, and early in the morning the mother was told that her son had died.

While I was in the waiting room, I saw many relatives and friends of the patients who were very worried and cried. From there, you cannot see anything of what goes on inside the department. People were begging the guard saying that someone did something to save their beloved's lives.

These are the results of the government of the President Alvaro Uribe. The government of Colombia has received more than 1 billion US dollars in the last 8 years, but all those who can see

the truth, know that the money does not come to help, but to damage, kill, make the Colombian people suffer in order to serve the mission of hungry gringos and the wealthy on this country. While the army is one of the better equipped of Latin America, the services in Colombia such as health are worsening and they are more and more out of the reach of the majority of the Colombian people.

Few days after our experience in "emergencies", Marta and I watched the inauguration of the municipal park of Pitalito, shining completely renovated. The rich people like to see an elegant park but do not care if children are dying 200 metres away, in the so-called hospitals.

When I told a friend what we had witnessed, she said "SISBEN means that you are poor, and here in Colombia there is no health for the poor."

Peter Woodman

San Joselito – Community in Resistance

THE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSE DE APARTADO, declared themselves a "Peace Community" on 23 March 1997. Under pressure from local government to take sides in the civil war, the community of 300 campesinos, decided to take action to ensure their continued and genuine neutrality in Colombia's internal conflict. All armed actors are prohibited from entering their territory, whether police and army, paramilitary or guerrilla. The reasoning is that the presence of one group attracts the others, and that the civilian population are always caught in the cross fire. Community leaders decided that this neutra-

lity would be the only way to avoid their having to abandon their lands like so many millions of Colombians who live in rural areas.

Their resistance to Colombia's armed actors has come at a high price. Many members of the Peace Community have been killed as a result. On 21 February 2005, 8 members including 3 young children were massacred by the army. The government used this violence as an excuse to militarise the area, forcing the community to up-sticks en masse, and to start again in a new community named San Joselito de la Dignidad.

Anne Barr has recently visited San Joselito, this is her eyewitness account:

'The only protection they have are the voices and actions of support from Europe and the US.'

I have just spent a week in the new settlement of San Joselito, where the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó moved to when the police and army moved into their village 3 months ago. They left their comfortable houses to build a new village from scratch because they refused to accept as their 'protectors' the same armed forces whose most recent crime, in a very long list of crimes, was the massacre 8 members of the Community including a baby and two kids. They also moved out because they knew that the presence of police and army was bound to attract guerrilla attacks. And of course it did.

When I arrived there on Monday morning I just missed the last bursts of machine gun fire of a night-long battle between soldiers and guerrilla that left 3 soldiers injured, and the people of the Peace Community shaken by a sleepless night of 'fireworks'. The new settlement is less than a mile from San José where the army and police are barracked. Selfishly, I thought "thank goodness, I missed it!" and got on with greeting old friends and getting to know the new village that they have managed to create from zero in less than three months. It's built in a bend on the river, surrounded on all sides by forest, idyllic. They've built over 40 wooden houses, each with a space mapped out for a garden, and kept dry by miles of drainage trenches and stone- and gravel-paths. They dismantled the cool, breezy, straw-roofed round-hut that was their community centre in San José and moved it to the new village green. The dozens of pigs, chickens and mules are happy as there's more mud and more grass here and the kids love the river, which has excellent rapids and swimming-holes.

I went there to follow up on the course on gardens and compost-making that we did last August. The people of the Peace community have created 6 gardens in the village of La Union, 2 hours walk from the new settlement but I never got to see them; the constant outbursts of shooting and bomb-dropping, the 100s of new police and army members who were brought into the region and most of all the huge workload at the new settlement, all made travel impractical.

After a day of nosy-ing around I figured the most useful thing I could do was sort out the rubbish problem as they are determined to recycle and make compost and had already dug 2 enormous pits for organic and inorganic rubbish. But many people hadn't understood the concept of separation, so both were filled with smelly mixtures of plastic and rotting vegetable scraps, and one had flooded and turned into a malarial mosquito breeding ground. I don't know who invented this idea of making compost pits, I suppose it would work in

a desert where it never rains but in a normal climate the pits just fill with water and make a horrid smell.

The next day I went to each house to talk to each family about recycling and compost and we had a village meeting about it. The following day I started working with the kids as it was obvious that the adults were all too busy. I was a bit nervous about how they would take to collecting and sorting out the community's rubbish as it's not everyone's cup of tea. But I figured the best way to teach them was to actually DO it so we borrowed 2 wheel barrows, organic and inorganic, and went to each house to collect and sort the rubbish. The kids took about 15 seconds to become enthusiastic recyclers and another 30 seconds to figure out an excellent working system; we tipped out each bag of rubbish in front to the householders and showed them how they should have separated it into categories. After collecting half the village rubbish we began a new above-ground compost pile and collected lots of sawdust, horse-poo and leaves and made a pretty, clean compost heap. I had thought I'd manage to get them to work for an hour or two at most, but they worked me into the ground until I suggested we finish the day with a swim in the river. Over the next days, when the nearby shootings and bombings allowed us out, we repeated the collecting and teaching process with the rest of the village, two young men made a corral around the growing pile to keep the pigs and chickens from dismantling it, a huge group of adults and kids cleaned up the festering pits, keeping one open for plastic and tins, we held a rubbish-tip meeting showing everyone how to manage the compost and the kids decided to organize themselves into a work group and ask each household to pay them a little (about 10 pence) each month for their collecting service and I made a big poster to show simply which rubbish goes where. We also dug and planted a vegetable garden, cooked lots of good vegetarian meals (including some very high class Italian cooking from the one of the International Peace Brigade men) and swam a lot in the river.

Most nights were disturbed by the 'fireworks' (called so because the army bullets are accompanied by a little red light, something to do with differentiating between enemy and 'friendly' fire, I think). For us these lights showed how many bullets 'strayed' into the settlement. We were very lucky that no-one was hit. We sat around talking and drinking tea till the shooting died down. These people keep their sense of humour even in these situations and usually we ended up laughing at rude stories about who threw up/pissed/shat themselves during past bombardments. There is nowhere to run to

in these situations as running into the forest would mean running into even more danger and being shot 'by mistake'. I asked them what plans do they have for a direct hit. "We'll dodge the bullets and catch the bombs and throw them back", said one man laughingly, to show me how there is no solution. The safest place in a direct bombardment would probably be under a bed.

Adults and kids talk openly and naturally about their terrible losses in the past and their fears in the present. In the river one day a beautiful little girl told me that she was 7 when her mother was killed and 8 when her father was killed. I asked her name, she is the daughter of Luis Eduardo Guerra who was killed alongside his eldest son, Deiner, in the February massacre; his wife was killed by a stray grenade last July. The little girl lives with her baby brother, 4 cousins, a few stray babies and her aunt in a one roomed house, they cry when we talk about Luis but the rest of the time the house is filled with love and laughter. In February when we were struggling to get back what little remained of Luis Eduardo's body from the morgue in Apartadó, another aunt appeared and wanted to take this little girl to the city away "from the danger", but she made us all angry as she would not even take the one hour trip up the road to San José to see where the little girl lives as 'they are all guerrillas up there' and wanted the girl ripped away from what was left of her nearest family at this traumatic time and delivered to her. She could never understand the kind of love and real community that this girl is growing up amongst. She could only see the poverty and danger; these are real of course but in the end they are secondary factors.

This aunt's misguided attitude is common amongst people who don't know the community well, as the powers-that-be in Colombia have deeply vested interests in making sure the guerrilla reputation sticks. This is because

1) If it were to become commonly known that a small and utterly defenceless group of dirt-poor campesinos have managed to take an effective stand against the horrors committed on a daily basis by the state forces/paramilitaries (and by the guerrilla groups too, although less so) in spite of suffering terrible cruelties for doing so, well that would be really dangerous. As one man said "President Alvaro Uribe says worse things about

us than he does about the FARC". This is true, because they represent a true ideological opposition to the armed, drug-mongering forces that rule Colombia more each day.

2) Calling them guerrillas ensures less public outrage when there is a massacre as in: "ah well sure who knows what those people were up

to, they probably deserved what they got". (A woman here said this to my face and got rapidly educated for doing so).

3) This name-calling highlights the cowardice of those who misuse the power of the arms they carry, for they cannot believe that real bravery exists and that some people are capable of facing death armed only with what they believe.

In the six days I was there the tension and pressure mounted daily. The 'Peace Process' with paramilitaries is taking place just hours away and the 'reinserted' paras a.k.a. legalised killers, are to be sent to 'help' the police and army in San José. One angry policeman threatened that 3,000 were coming, probably an exaggeration but 30 would be enough to cause real terror and death. Daily I felt terrified for the people I was working with for unless the open paramilitarization of Colombia is stopped they have no

future. They are all deeply committed to staying on their land even if it means death.

The only 'protection' they have are the voices and actions of support from Europe and the US. The men and women of International Peace Brigades and the Fellowship for Reconciliation accompany the community as much as they can but their lack of resources combined with the restricting rules and regulations imposed upon them, don't allow them to do as much as they would like to. So I would like to end this report with a call for help:

Anyone of any age who would like to come out here to help, work with and accompany these brave people would be welcomed. The company of foreigners gives great moral support and is a real buffer between them and the war. But you'd have to be aware of the following factors:

1) that it is a war situation and therefore dangerous.

2) that the climate, being hot and humid, is not easy for people from temperate zones.

3) that the conditions of bed and board are extremely basic and as people are extremely poor you would have to contribute towards your own living costs.

4) that life here is tough and physical and the daily agricultural work is hard but gratifying.

5) that psychologically you'd have to be patient, calm and willing to listen, learn and observe without imposing your own views.

6) that you'd need to have a fair grasp of the Spanish language.

7) the use of alcohol is completely prohibited inside the community, drugs even more so.

On the other hand the gains from working with a brave, pioneering community who are building a eco-campesino village from scratch are enormous. Please contact me if you are interested.

The big picture in Colombia

Mick Hall on case of the 'Irish Three' and the role of the media

THE FURORE which has erupted within the Irish media and amongst the political establishment after the men who have become known in Ireland as the Colombia Three, Niall Connolly, James Monaghan and Martin McCauley arrived home safe and well has in the main neatly side stepped the truth about the current political situation within

Colombia. Partially this has come about due to the type of campaign those who worked tirelessly to bring the men home decided to conduct on their behalf. The campaign was fought along the lines of the men being innocent peace campaigners caught up in

Colombia's less than perfect legal system. In other words, all politics were gutted from the campaign to bring the men home, especially any criticism of the US administration's role within Colombia.

Horses for courses and most would say the proof of the pudding is in the eating, i.e. the three men are now home, having been arrested at Bogotá airport as they prepared to fly home, after having visited areas within Colombia that are under the control of the radical organization FARC. They were originally found not guilty on the serious charge of training the FARC guerrilla army. However, it is difficult not to conclude the men's safe return home came about because the men had decided, after their not guilty verdict was set aside and a retrial called, not to mortgage their freedom to the Colombian legal system. How much of a role, if any, the Colombian Three ("Bring Them Home") campaign played in the men's return home is debatable, but what it did undoubtedly manage to do is keep the men in the public eye; no small thing in itself when they were imprisoned in a custodial system with a justifiably unsavoury reputation.

This being so, I have no wish to denigrate the hard work which was put in by those who campaigned for the three men's freedom, however, things have clearly moved on since they arrived home. Perhaps it is now time to highlight the destructive and opportunist behaviour of the US administration within Colombia, which has made the current Colombian Government of President Alvaro Uribe little more than a servile client of the

US Administration. If any state can be described as a Neo-Democracy, it is Colombia. Indeed some see it as the template for the Neo-Conservatives who dominate Foreign Policy in the George Bush Jnr Presidency.

On the surface it has all the trappings of a normal Democratic State: opposition and governing political parties, regular general and local elections, a legal system that at first glance appears to function in a democratic manner; and an open and free media. If one looks under all this froth, the reality is somewhat different: a brutal state-within-a-state is at work in Colombia which allows the writ of the free market, the multi-nationals and the local big bourgeoisie to run free at the expense of the majority of Colombians.

The oppressive apparatus of the Colombian State is justified as being necessary to fight the narco-traffickers and local 'terrorists'. In reality nothing of the like actually occurs, as Colombia is a society in which money talks, and money is something the narco-traffickers have stacks of to purchase the freedom to go about their business.

In the early part of the decade, the ruling Colombian elite and the Bush administration came up with a plan, known as Plan Colombia, which was supposedly designed to eradicate from Colombia cocaine production, processing and shipping, and the criminality which accompanies it. In reality, Plan Colombia's true purpose was to crush the last of the South and Central American guerrilla armies which sprang up in the wake of the Cuban revolution, and

by so doing making the Americas safe once again for the multi-nationals to exploit at will without fear of opposition from trade unions, uppity peasants or human rights groups. The scale of the US involvement in Colombia can be judged by the fact that to-date almost \$1.5 billion dollars have been channelled into Plan

Colombia since the turn of the century. If anyone doubts that the destruction of the cocaine cartels was nothing but window dressing for a gullible US electorate, then they need to take note of the fact that despite this huge sum, the amount of cocaine coming into the USA from Colombia since the project began, far from being stifled, has increased.

Multi National Corporations have a history in Colombia of using right-wing paramilitaries [AUC], which are controlled and financed by members of the Colombian bourgeoisie, large landowners, a section of the military and the cocaine drug cartels. They use paramilitaries like AUC to terrorize workers into accepting sub-standard working conditions and wages.

BP and Coca-Cola spring to mind. For example, the former is facing a £15m compensation claim from a group of Colombian farmers who say that the British oil company took advantage of a regime of terror by government-backed paramilitaries to profit from the construction of a 450-mile pipeline. Local farmers say that those who tried to stop the development were either forced by the paramilitaries to leave their homes or were murdered. As for Coca-Cola, trade unionists like Juan Carlos Galvis, HumanRights Director of

SINALTRAINAL (Colombian Food and Drinks Workers' Union) is one of the plaintiffs in a court case in the USA, where the multinational stands accused of complicity in the forced displacement, kidnap and assassination of trade unionists in their Colombian bottling plants. Again, it is common practice for the armed forces of

Colombia to turn a blind eye when right wing militias in the pay of the multi-nationals kidnap and murder rank and file TU activists.

To conclude, the failure to paint a broad picture of what is actually happening within Colombia has meant the main source of news and information the Irish people have had about the situation there is that which comes from reactionary politicians like Fine Gael's Enda Kenny, plus the regular press briefing given to pliable journalists and politicians by the Colombian Government and the US Embassy in Dublin. Thus, we should not be surprised that a majority of people believe Colombia is a democratic state, defending itself against narco-terrorists, whose sole purpose is to flood the US and Europe with their poisonous wares. It is vital whenever the opportunity arises that progressive minded people bring to the attention of the Irish people the truth of what is happening within Colombia, and not just the side of the story which places the USA and its Colombian satraps in a favourable light. If this were to happen, no Irish government would even consider sending Irish patriots back to a nation in which the rule of law is the play-thing of the rich and powerful.

Journalism in Colombia:

"i silence my voice before it is silenced for me."

ALTHOUGH THERE are still journalists dying in Colombia, with the most recent cases occurring earlier this year, the main scourge of the profession in the country is now not so much assassination as self-censorship. The Colombian state has been implicated in both of these obstacles in the path of the nation's press freedom.

Despite the killings and the climate of fear, this October will see a hopeful new development with the inauguration of the country's first ever national union for journalists, supported by Britain's National Union of Journalists.

Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a journalist, with, on average, five journalists a year murdered because of their work. Journalist with inclinations toward trade unionism, are taking their lives in their hands. Eduardo Marquez, a journalism professor at Sergio Arboleda University in Colombia noted recently: "Being unionised in Colombia is practically a crime. It is much easier to create an armed group than to set up a union."

After nine journalists were assassinated in 2003, a toll which was second only to Iraq that year, and 15 in 2002, the country's media workers were left reeling (four of the journalists killed that year had exposed irregularities or corruption by the military). Journalists have since backed

away from controversial reporting, just to stay alive. Therefore the death of just one journalist in 2004 is not a victory for media freedom, but an indication that heads have been pulled behind parapets, giving the darker forces in Colombian society a freer reign.

London-based Colombian journalist Carlos Cruz spoke at the Annual Delegate Meeting of the NUJ in April. He said: "The freedom of information in Colombia is under threat under President Uribe, and a crisis of the mass media is allowing a culture of impunity. There is only one national daily newspaper, two big firms control the media, and use it to help their business interests." Cruz said that Uribe has aggravated these problems: "Uribe hasn't imposed censorship as such on the mass media. But the civil war creates a climate of self-censorship so reporters won't report as they should, because of fear. Most of the opinion pieces published in Colombia are written by exiles."

Enrique Santos Calderon, editor-in-chief of Colombian newspaper El Tiempo, echoed this assessment in a recent interview. He said the intimidation and the threats were worse than physical violence: "It is the slow death of imposed silence. This leads to self-censorship. It creates a dictatorship of fear." He said that politicians had recently been using the "crossfire" between left and

right-wing armed groups as a cover to target journalists who had exposed them. Santos Calderon added: "The fact that violence has diminished does not mean that the press is freer. In addition to the threat of violence, there is a scandalous incapacity to punish those who threaten, kidnap or assassinate journalists. This phenomenon of impunity is the major threat to press freedom in Colombia." As Reporters Sans Frontiers points out, "a trial for the August 1999 murder of journalist and satirist Jaime Garzón only served to clear scapegoats in the case."

The International Press Institute has documented the deaths of two journalists so far this year in Colombia, and also noted that Colombia had long been "the most dangerous country for journalists in the Western Hemisphere".

The first of this year's killings occurred on January 11 when Julio Hernando Palacios, host of the programme "El Viento" on Radio Lemas, was shot on his way to work by two gunmen on a motorcycle in the city of Cúcuta. Palacios was known for his exposés on local corruption. The second occurred on February 19 when Hernando Marne Sanchez, a veteran photojournalist for the Cali daily El País, was shot by gunmen near his home in the city of Tulúa.

The IPI listed many other instances throughout 2004 of harassment and

intimidation of journalists, including many committed by the state. One of the most alarming was the case of Alfredo Serrano Zabala in Barrancabermeja, who resigned from a Radio Uno news programme because he was afraid he was going to be assassinated. He announced his resignation by reading on air a letter entitled "I silence my voice before it is silenced for me." Serrano had recently reported collaboration between local government officials and paramilitaries in the region, and that an attempt had been made to shut his programme down, by the state withdrawing its advertising contracts, as a result of his accusations.

RSF reported how the AUC murdered journalist José Emeterio Rivas, of the radio station Calor Estereo in Barrancabermeja, shortly after issuing threats that the AUC was now "looking after the city's good reputation" and that journalists should "speak well of the city and not talk about violence". The RSF mission also found evidence of army officers threatening journalists and the withholding of official advertising to silence criticism.

Semana magazine reported that state security personnel tapped the telephones of its journalists and that they had received threats. Semana's management said the harassment was due to the publication of a conversation between leaders of the AUC and

Journalist flees Colombia

In the second week of August, Daniel Coronell, Director of "Noticias Uno" TV news programme and a columnist at Semana magazine was forced to leave Colombia and go into exile after receiving months of death threats, including a threat to kill his 6 year old daughter. Coronell was known for his opposition to the re-election and to the "peace process" with the paramilitaries.

Before leaving the country, he employed a computer technician to trace threats that he had received over his email. He managed to trace a whole string of such messages (including the threats against his daughter), to the computer of ex-Congressman Carlos Nader Simmons, a rich land owner from Monteria, and it has been revealed, a close personal friend of President Uribe and a major player in his presidential election campaign.

Luis Carlos Restrepo, Colombia's "High Commissioner for Peace."

The Committee to Protect Journalists, meanwhile, reported two other non-fatal attacks so far this year. On February 20, 2005 a car bomb exploded outside the offices of RCN Television and Radio in Cali. A security guard and sound engineer were injured in the blast. And on May 16, three journalists were sent funeral wreaths and received threatening phone calls. All 3 are recognized for their independent and investigative reporting. Two have subsequently reported harassment from state security personnel as recently as August.

Meanwhile, in this country, steps are being taken to support Colombian journalists in their efforts to set up a national union, which would provide a level of protection to their safety and to their professional freedom. At the NUJ AGM in 2005 a motion supporting Colombian journalists and their new trade union was unanimously adopted, and General Secretary, Jeremy Dear will travel to Colombia in October to attend the inauguration of the union, which is being set up with NUJ support through the IFJ.

International solidarity is certainly vital for Colombian journalists if they are ever, as Enrique Santos Calderon says, to stop the "masterminds who order murders" from "silencing the press by the gun".

CH

Mexico through Frida's eyes

'I want my work to be a contribution to the struggle of the people for peace and liberty'

Walking through the rooms of the Frida Kahlo retrospective exhibition currently on show at the Tate Modern, what impressed me the most was how powerfully her political stance emerges from her art and her strong connection to her land, Mexico.

Frida was born in 1907 in a half European-half Indigenous family and grew up during the years of the popular revolution that swept throughout the country between 1910 and 1919. She started painting while convalescing from a near fatal accident in 1924, the painful consequences of which, she would suffer throughout her life. The 1920s were the years of consolidation of the revolutionary process, society was searching for a new identity, re-discovering its pre-cultural roots and Mexican popular culture.

Before the turmoil of the first Zapatista revolution, the dominant bourgeois view was to accept what came from Europe and the US as positive, and to deny the indigenous and Mexican identity. Kahlo was part of a movement of artists that sought to overturn this cultural alienation.

Although Frida mainly painted herself because she felt she was the subject she best knew, aspects of Mexican society and how she perceived the world around her surface from her works. A clear example of this can be seen in 'Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States' (1932). Here she depicts herself at full body length in the middle of the canvas. On her left the landscape is distinctively Mexico, in the distance appear the ruins of temples of pre-Colombian civilizations and objects of the Mexican popular culture. At the bottom of the painting, under the sun and the moon, flowers grow. On the other side, the landscape is lifeless, cold, grey and mechanistic; it consists of smokestacks, pipes, smoke and the cables of electric devices invade the roots of the Mexican plants. The painter's stance is clear: she holds a cigarette and a Mexican flag in her hands, which prove her rebellious attitude and her political commitment to her land and her people against the industrialized

neighbour that intrusively penetrated the Latin American soil.

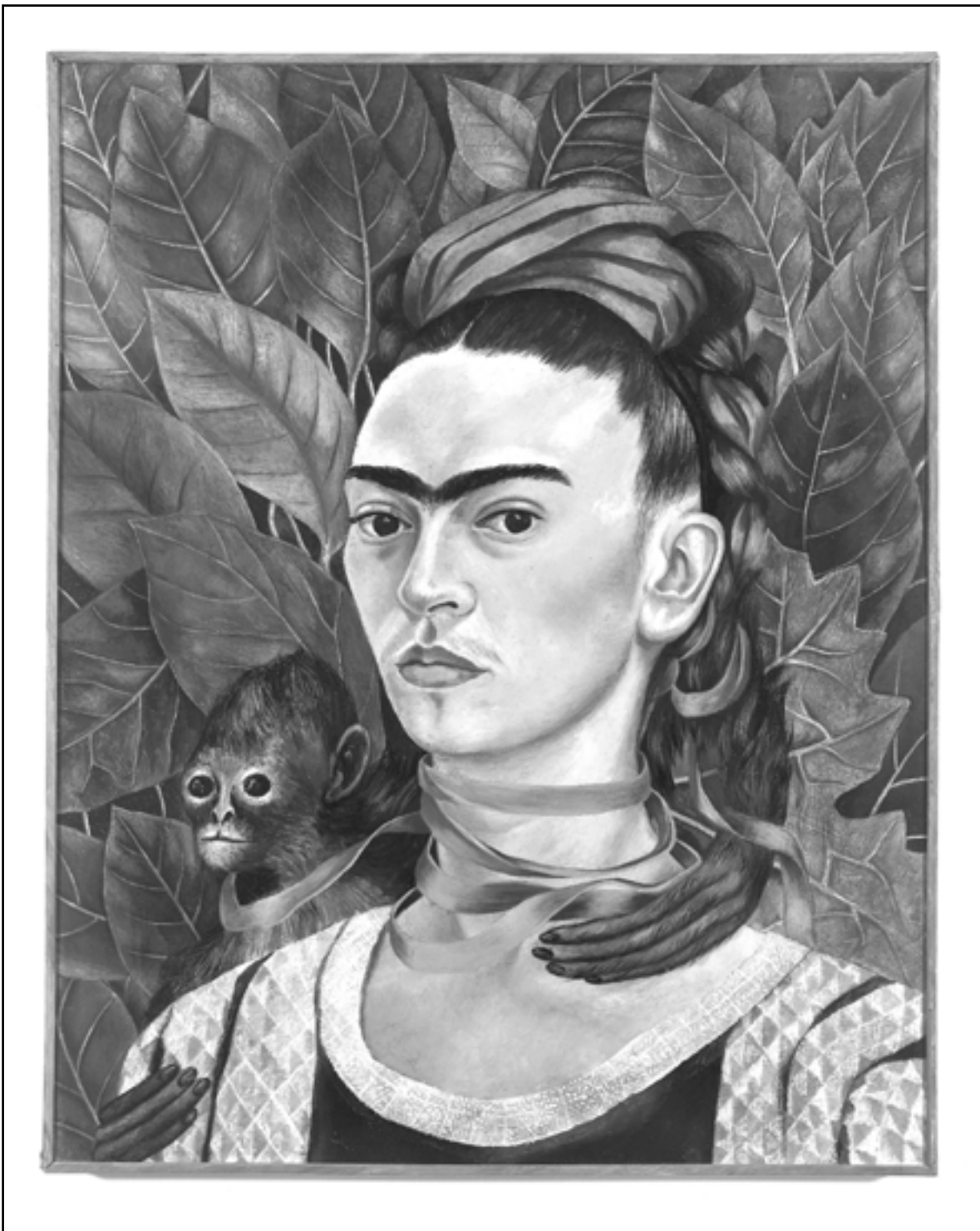
This fascinating artist was conscious of the inequalities of Mexican society, even in her still lifes one perceives her denunciation of this: in 'Fruits of the Earth' (1938) aubergines, chayotes, fungi and nopal fruits, the country's abundant natural, produce lie on a tray. However, corn cobs, the poor and marginalised population's staple diet, lie outside the tray, excluded from the rich cornucopia.

Politically active throughout her life, Frida was a member of the Communist Party, and during the Spanish Civil War she and her husband, the famous muralist Diego Rivera, formed a committee to raise money for a group of Spanish republican militiamen who had come to Mexico for economic aid.

Later, in 1943, together with other prominent Mexican artists of her time, Frida started teaching at the Ministry of Public Education's School of Painting and Sculpture, 'la Esmeralda', an institution that had a distinctive Mexicanist profile. She taught her students (who were known as 'the fridos') to see and understand the beauty of their country and a taste for popular art, taking them out to the streets, to the slums, to the markets, to the ruins of pre-hispanic civilizations to paint images of the real daily Mexican life. She arranged for her students the opportunity to paint murals in public buildings so that they could express their art to the benefit of the less advantaged of society. One of the projects was to paint the walls of public laundresses.

Although she felt that her own paintings did not have a social value, Frida believed in the role art played in society as a means to teach the masses. In a letter to her friend and art historian Antonio Rodríguez in 1952, two years before she died and when she had already reached her artistic maturity, she wrote: "I wish to be worthy, with my painting, of the people to whom I belong and to the ideas that strengthen me... I want my work to be a contribution to the struggle of the people for peace and liberty".

In actual fact, despite her own opi-



nion, through her visual language Kahlo illustrated vividly and truthfully the reality of the Mexican society of her time. Representing female physical experiences, such as birth and miscarriage, she denounced how women were marginalised in a machista society.

Many of her works were inspired by her almost obsessive love for Diego Rivera and the pain he caused her with his

infidelity. In others, through life cycle images, symbols and colours she portrayed her feeling of oneness with the universe, a belief that has its origin in the Aztecs cosmology.

The retrospective, which will be open until 9 October at the Tate Modern, presents the viewers with the majority of her artistic production and one of the highlights is the almost complete

collection of portraits. All the exposed works lead us to this humorous, irreverent, explosive woman and artist who, with an extraordinary sincerity and humanity depicted her inner world and her relationship with the outer one.

Entrance is £10 and £8 concessions. Nearest tubes are London Bridge or South Bank.

Manuela Torres



Julian Rodriguez and the Cali Experimental Theatre

ART, LIKE truth, is always one of the first casualties of war; that is until people are able to turn their artistic expression into a tool of resistance and construction of a better life.

The Colombian elite and media have their own circuses to distract the population; beauty pageants, cyclists, footballers, and lately itinerant ambassadors like Juanes and Shakira, used to show the world that all is well in "wonderland". But the music and theatre scene is increasingly producing new popular art forms that people are using to laugh in the face of their despotic government.

Julian Rodriguez- tall, blonde and charismatic, his voice clear and melodious, has the talent and humour to sell more records than Shakira and Juanes put together. He is known for his protest songs and his leading role in the "Cali Experimental Theatre".

The Colombia Solidarity Campaign caught up with him after his recent London show.

"What is your mission as an artist?"

Julian: I have a lot of missions; art has always been like an X-ray of the present, and my job is to show this reality. But making music or theatre, or writing really just goes hand in hand with pleasure in living in this world.

"Is there still space for humour

within the Colombian people?"

Fortunately yes- its something that's integral to every day life, and very difficult to kill. The Colombian democracy is a murderous democracy, if you look at the statistics, they've killed more people than all of the Latin American dictators put together; when they kill someone like Jaime Garzon [nationally known comedian and satirist, killed by paramilitaries in 1999] they are committing a massacre. It's like an attack on laughter, on the law, on the right to think differently. Even as a child, I was always making people laugh, but as a child you sometimes see this laughter as people making fun of you, but later you realize that laughter, at the right time, can avoid serious conflict, or even a war. So through humour and laughter we can start to think about our reality and about changing it too.

"Is it dangerous to be an 'opposition' artist in Colombia?"

Threats and murder is a national policy. Laughter isn't only about having fun, your putting human essence in another dimension. Through a picture, a film, a song or a poem, we have a different relationship with the world. That's why the Colombian government doesn't permit this. It's their policy-how can we have a diversity of thought when the government has set up a network of almost 2 million informers?

It's shameful for Colombia, especially when we think of the "Reward Mondays" that they've shown on TV, when all these masked informers collect their money for grassing on someone from soldiers sitting at a desk loaded with wads of money. We are always open to threats and murder when you've got 1,800,000 people ready to grass you up for money.

"Tell us a bit about the work you've been doing with the 1000 strong children's choir."

It started off in Spain where I lived for 5 years, but I saw an urgent need to do something similar in Colombia, because the education system in Colombia has completely marginalized cultural activity, and even art schools have become isolated from society. And as the voice is the cheapest musical instrument we decided to set up a choir. We auditioned throughout the marginal sectors of Cali, and within a couple of months put on a Christmas show with 1,119 kids.

We performed a work called "Mahuzay, our Mother Earth". It's a song to the earth, the trees, to nature, to a different society, because any society that revolves around money will always be wrong.

"Can you tell us a bit about your new work, 'Coca con Sal' [Coke with Salt]. What inspired you to do

this?"

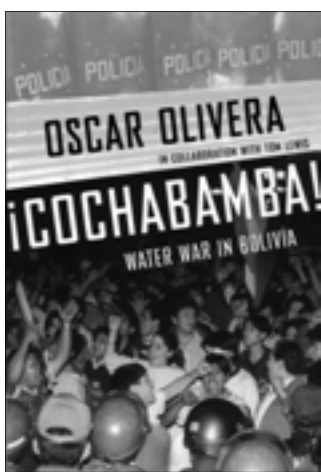
It stands for Food, Housing, Knowledge and Health [COMIDA, CASA, CONOCIMIENTO y SALUD]. Some time ago I was in Holland and saw a documentary about Colombia. They were taking all of these bodies out of a mass grave, so I decided to write a "requiem for a mass grave". I thought of why these people would have been there, what would their lives have been like? The people who die like this in Colombia are those who have nothing, so the work is about these four basic human needs.

COCA, because I also wanted to do a homage to the coca leaf, because the coca leaf is a vital part of our culture, its our history, and also has been used as a pretext to fumigate out lands and national parks with glysofate, and like I say in the song, the glysofate "doesn't kill anything, but farmers, the indigenous, flowers and butterflies."

It's a homage to our bitter people, and tells the story of the last 500 years in Colombia. There's a piece by Galeano that tells of when the Spanish arrived, they had the bible and we had the land. They told us to close our eyes and pray, and when we opened our eyes again, we had the bible and they had our land. That's a quick resume of Latin American history.

Manuela Torres

Books



Cochabamba: Water War in Bolivia
Oscar Olivera
South End Press £10.99

Patterns of Protest: Politics and Social Movements in Bolivia
John Crabtree
Latin America Bureau £8.99

SINCE 1999 Bolivia has witnessed a series of dramatic confrontations between governments determined to push forward the neo-liberal economic model and a population increasingly determined to resist. These have been sometimes local or sectional, or sometimes enormous national mobilisations. Two presidents have been ousted. The entire economic and political life of the country has been brought to a standstill on several occasions. The level of mobilisation has been truly massive.

As well as the exciting and inspiring activity, there have been crucial debates inside the popular movement about how to carry the struggle forward. As in other countries in Latin America, the movement has proved strong enough to depose presidents. At times, particularly in reversing the privatisation of water in Cochabamba, the mobilisations have made highly important gains. Yet the neo-liberal project is not defeated. Outgoing presidents are replaced by others of a similar ilk. The search for a positive political way forward has given rise to debates about the nature of the mass movement, future strategies and appropriate tactics to adopt.

These two books combine to give an excellent introduction to both the general picture in Bolivia and to some of the specific incidents. Oscar Olivera is the leader of the factory workers in Cochabamba. He became the key figure in the Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida, which led the struggle against the Bolivian government and the transnational companies when they tried to privatise the water supply in 1999-2000. His book tells the story of those long months of intense struggle and the eventual victory. The privatisers were thrown out and the water supply is now governed by a locally elected and accountable management board. The Coordinadora was open, democratic and highly participative. It brought together workers, peasants, neighbourhood, youth and women's organisations to fight for their rights. It drew in support from other popular organisations from a wider area. This account, told first hand by a leading participant, is exciting, moving and inspiring.

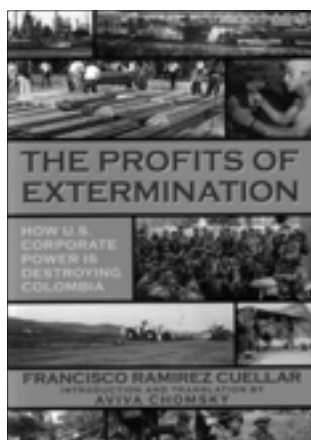
Crabtree's book is much more measured and academic in tone. What it lacks in excitement, however, it makes up for in much wider coverage. Although only just over 100 pages, it has excellent chapters on various episodes in the mobilisation of the last few years. It covers the Water War, the fight of the coca growers, peasants in the East, old people, the Aymara people and finally the confrontations over the sale of natural resources known as the Gas War in 2003. An introduction gives a well-focused and accurate summary of Bolivia's political history in the second half

of the 20th Century. It was published before the ousting of Carlos Mesa in 2005, so needs to be supplemented by a little reading on recent events to bring you right up to date.

Crabtree also introduces themes of debate and analysis, looking for example at popular attitudes to political parties and examining critically the roles of some of the popular leaders. He draws attention to some of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the popular movement. Olivera's book does this too in its second half; he deals with the new political realities of working class life and politics in the last 20 years. The movement has changed radically since the days of a massively powerful Central Obrera Boliviana (trade union confederation) with its backbone in the organised mineworkers. Dispersed geographically and atomised in new workplaces and work practices, the movement has had to learn new ways to organise. The political and organisational focus has shifted. Olivera's discussion of this is interesting and provocative, as is his attitude to political parties and his discussion of a constituent assembly – one of the demands of the current movement.

These books bring to life the excitement of both the mighty popular movement in Bolivia and the debates about the future of the resistance to the neo-liberal project in Latin America. They shed light on other struggles across the continent. Easy to read and packed with information, they are an excellent addition to any activists' library.

Andy Brown



The Profits of Extermination: how U.S. corporate power is destroying Colombia
Francisco Ramirez Cuellar

Introduced and translated by Aviva Chomsky
Common Courage Press

LAST YEAR, Colombian mineworkers' union SINTRAMINERCOL published *La Gran Minería – las ganancias del exterminio*, written by union President Francisco Ramirez. It contained the results of research that the union had carried out into the relationship between multinational mining investment, paramilitary activity, forced displacement and murder in Colombia.

The *Profits of Extermination* is the English edition of that book. Translator Aviva Chomsky, Professor of Latin American History at Salem State College, Massachusetts, has added extra notes to the English edition and a helpful introduction which deals with the impacts of coal mining on Wayuu and Afro-Colombian communities in La Guajira. She also explains the connection with the Salem Power Plant, which imports Colombian coal into the US, the trigger for Aviva's establishment of the North Shore Colombia Solidarity Committee.

Despite the 'U.S.' in the title of the English version (presumably to pique the interest of potential U.S. readers),

Francisco Ramirez notes the involvement of Canadian government agencies and NGOs funded by the Canadian mining industry in preparing the ground for revisions to the Colombian Mining Code from which Canadian as well as US and other multinational mining companies then benefited. He deals in great detail with the way in which members of the Colombian elite sought to profit from working relationships with multinational gold mining corporations with Canadian, US, British and South African connections, namely Conquistador Mines and Anglo Gold. Colombian law was rewritten specifically to benefit these foreign companies and a brutal campaign of paramilitary violence was unleashed on artisanal mining communities in the south of Bolivar to clear the land for potential corporate control of mining in the area, leading to the displacement of 35,000 people and at least 535 murders. Forced displacements in the area grew by 1500% between 1997 and 1998. Between 1996 and 2001, as the new Mining Code was discussed, there was a 1000% increase in homicides, forced disappearances, injuries, torture and arbitrary detentions in Bolivar as a whole.

But Francisco Ramirez points out, and illustrates with graphs, that all mining areas in Colombia have suffered elevated levels of human rights abuse, always associated with the expressed interest of multinationals in investing there. 68% of forced displacements in Colombia occur in mining zones. 42% of human rights violations against trade unionists, in proportion to the number of unionised workers, occur in the mining and energy sectors.

The mining industry presents itself as a benefactor of economies such as Colombia's. It is not. Colombia has lost over \$10.5 billion in the Cerrejón Zona Norte project alone, through provision of infrastructure, cuts in taxes and below-market price of the sale of state-owned Carbocol to multinationals Anglo-American, BHPBilliton and Glencore. The 2001 Mining Code slashed royalty payments from 15% to 0.4% and reduced state control over mining operations, and the environmental damage that they create, to almost nothing. It was a giveaway of national resources to foreign corporate control – British, Australian, South African, Canadian and Swiss as well as US.

London is the most important centre of global mining finance. It is the headquarters of Anglo American plc, of which Anglo Gold is a subsidiary. Melbourne-based BHPBilliton also has important offices here. These are companies profiting from the forced displacement of rural communities in Colombia. And they do know what is going on. Francisco Ramirez points out that when Anglo Gold first learned of the human rights violations in the south of Bolivar, it pulled out. But since the book was written, Anglo Gold has expressed strong interest in returning to the area – to profit from the brutal clearance of the artisanal miners.

The opening sections of this book would benefit from much fuller notation, and the graphics are very poorly reproduced. But it is a helpful introduction to the subject and should motivate those of us who live in Britain, the global centre of mining finance, to campaign more vigorously to persuade mining multinationals on our doorstep not to implicate themselves in human rights abuses.

The book is available from the Colombia Solidarity Campaign for £7.50 (£8 including postage and packing).

For more background on mining in Colombia and the multinationals mentioned above, visit the Campaign's website or www.minesandcompanies.org (click on 'Country' and then 'Colombia'.)

Richard Solly.

Merchandise

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Listings and Campaign Activities

SPEAKING TOURS

16- 29 October: Progressive Women's Organization Speaking Tour

JACKELINE ROJAS, Regional Organizer for the Organización Femenina Popular (OFP), will be visiting the UK from 16-29 October 2005 as a guest of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign. The OFP is Colombia's principle women's rights organization and one of the country's most combative human rights NGOs. Founded 33 years ago, the OFP was set up to provide breakfast and childcare for marginalized women in the conflict riven Magdalena del Medio region, and now include a network of over 5,000 women and their families. The OFP are currently developing projects and campaigning in 9 distinct areas; administration and organization; collective economies; food sovereignty; housing; health; legal advice; youth; human rights investigation and forced displacement.

Through their work, the OFP promote and defend autonomy, non-violent resistance and the rights of women and the civilian population. Their constant campaigning against war and social injustice has made the organization a target of paramilitary and state terror. All of their activists work in the constant shadow of state sponsored violence.

"Las mujeres no parimos ni forjamos hijos y hijas para la guerra"

(We do not give birth and raise our children for war)

For more information about the OFP (in Spanish) visit their website at: www.ofp.org.co

For more information about the tour or to organise a meeting in your area write to colombia_sc@hotmail.com

ACTIONS

10 December- International Human Rights Day

COLOMBIAN UNION SINALTRAINAL has called for a Coke free Christmas and will be organizing a weekend of action to mark International Human Rights Day on 10 December.

The Colombia Solidarity Campaign in conjunction with the Stop the War Coalition will be organizing a solidarity action on 10 December in London. We encourage supporters to organize activities in your area. See next issue for details.

Haremos el llamado para que el 10 de diciembre NO BEBA COCA COLA EN ESTAS NAVIDADES, en Colombia estamos trabajando por la realización de una gran jornada 10 y 11 de diciembre, particularmente en Ciudad Bolívar en Bogotá trabajaremos por la realización de una gran fiesta de música y cultura con grupos de todos los ritmos y bailes, etc.

TALKS AND FORUMS

Saturday 8 October 2005, 10am - 4.30pm: Refugees and the Environment

A FORUM Day to examine and share insights on the global environmental crisis and its role in forcing individuals



Jackeline Rojas from the Organización Femenina Popular (OFP) speaking at a rally in Colombia. She will commence a UK tour in October

to flee their homes

Speakers include: Multinationals, Individuals and Ecological Disaster (Nicholas Hildyard, The Corner House); Witness account (Marta Hinestroza, Colombian refugee in the UK); Challenging corporations (Richard Solly, CCRJ) and many others.

Venue: Church of the Holy Apostles - Church Hall 47 Cumberland Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 4LY

For more information, please contact Uta Sievers at the National Catholic Refugee Forum
9 Henry Road, London N4 2LH - Tel. 07871 646 224

Email: uta@refugee-forum.org.uk
Web: www.refugee-forum.org.uk

Saturday 15th of October: Ecomemoria Fiesta 2005

7.30 PM UNTIL LATE: An evening of Salsa, Samba and Caribbean Sounds!

For the 6th year running we invite you to our infamous annual fund-raising event, with live performances and dancers, drinks and Latin American food!

DJ's Raulin and Arias!
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL
Tube: Holborn Station / Buses: 1, 8, 25, 68, 168, 171, 188, 242 521
Tickets £5 in advance. Call 07956 824 622 / 07956 527 409. £6.50 on the door.

For further information: 07903 498 240 or 07956 527 409

hrrr_project@hotmail.com
ecomemoria@yahoo.com
We hope to see you there!

24-29 January 2006: Policentric World Social Forum and Second Forum of the Americas Caracas, Venezuela

April 2006: European Social Forum, Athens

10-13 May 2006: Europe - Latin America Social Movement Network

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS in Latin America and Europe have initiated a bi-regional network. While government leaders from the two continents will hold a summit the network is planning a participatory counter-event Enlazando Alternativas 2/Linking Alternatives 2 in Vienna, 10-13 May 2006. This will include a tribunal on European multinationals in different sectors in Latin America and a day of protest action. For more information contact Cecilia Olivet e-mail: ceciliaolivet@tni.org

POPULAR TRIBUNALS IN COLOMBIA

THE COLOMBIA chapter of the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples has decided to hold a series of public tribunals on the theme Multinationals And Crimes Against Humanity. These will be organized according to sector, with

the following provisional programme: Food and Agriculture - 25/26 March 2006; Oil - 2/3 June 2006; Gold and Coal Mining - September 2006; Biodiversity - 10 December 2006; Public Services - March 2007; Indigenous Peoples - May 2007; National Tribunal - 22 July 2007.

Anyone interested in working on one of these themes and accompanying the relevant tribunal in Colombia should contact the Colombia Solidarity Campaign.

BP PIPELINE CASE - LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

A TEAM of lawyers from Leigh Day (including Martyn Day and Richard Hermer from Doughty Street Chambers) visited Medellín in June 2005, where they met with 60 farmers affected by the OCENSA pipeline set up by BP, as well as legal and environmental experts.

See 'Farmers terrified off their land to sue BP for £15 million' by Robert Verkaik, The Independent 18 June 2005 and 'Can Oil and Principles Mix?' by Martyn Day The Times on 23 August 2005 (Page 20 Legal Section).

The team are now preparing for a further trip in October 2005 to meet with various groups, including BP and OCENSA before commencing action upon their return to the UK. We will carry a full report in our next edition.

Kostas Pavlou explained how since the invasion of Northern Cyprus July 20th 1974, it has been difficult to ascertain what happened to Greek Cypriots detained by Turkish forces. Not only is northern Cyprus still occupied by Turkish forces, presenting an ongoing struggle for a united Cyprus but this military presence prevents investigating the whereabouts of the 'disappeared'. It is only by struggling for justice for 30 years that some of the mass graves have been identified.

Teresa Pérez made clear that whilst misinformation tries to overshadow the central focus of human rights abuses in Colombia, this should not draw our attention away from the systematic policy of right-wing paramilitary groups to murder and 'disappear' farmers from areas such as San Jose de Apartado.

Many questions remain unanswered about the disappeared, but without organising we are unable to respond to new initiatives such as the Justice and Peace Law in Colombia, that offers im-

PROGRAMA RADIAL

'Todas las voces, todos' se transmite todos los sábados de 12 a 2pm.

Es un programa de la comunidad para la comunidad.

Sintonía en **1503 AM Sound Radio**.
Dirigen Nelly Mosquera y Juan Carlos Piedra.

RADIO PROGRAMME

"All voices for all" is transmitted from 12 to 2pm every Saturday.

It's a programme from the Latin American community for the community.

Tune in to **1503 AM Sound Radion**.
Directed by Nelly Mosquera and Juan Carlos Piedra.

COLOMBIA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

LONDON BRANCH PUBLIC MEETINGS

All at 7pm at the Union Tavern, 52 Llyd Baker Street, London EC1.

Wed 21 September: **Communities in Resistance: Arauca and San José**
Speaker Olaya García

Wed 18 October- **Colombian Women and Human Rights**
Speaker Jackeline Rojas Organización Femenina Popular, (Progressive Women's Organisation)

Wed 16 November- **Coca-Cola worker from SINALTRAINAL**

Wed 13 December- **Let the University Live!**
Speaker from the recently returned higher education delegation

BRISTOL BRANCH MEETINGS

Meetings: Wednesday evenings, alternating admin meetings with reading groups and discussion on Colombia and related issues.

Upcoming Bristol events:

Friday 14th October: **Latin Fiesta Cafe Unlimited, Gloucester Road from 9pm.**

Thurs 27th October: OFP public meeting - email for time and place.

COLOMBIA SOLIDARITY BRANCH CONTACTS:

Bristol Contact: bristolcolombiasolidarity@gmail.com

Plymouth [tbc]

South Wales: Max Fuller
Email: max.fuller@btopenworld.com

Nottingham Gail [tbc]

Liverpool: Paul Grunnill
Email: paul.grunnill@btopenworld.com

Scotland: Barbara Scott
Email: barbara@barbarascott.co.uk

International Day of the 'Disappeared'

On 1st September, the Human Rights International Project (HRIP) hosted the International Day of the 'Disappeared' in London. The aim of the event is to recognise the injustices that continue to undermine the basic right to live without fear of annihilation.

Myriam Bell (HRIP spokesperson) reminded us that in the same year that

Augusto Pinochet created his "impunity constitution", the International Day of the 'Disappeared' was created following the 1st Congress of Latin American

Families of the Disappeared, in Costa Rica in 1981. FEDEFAM was created as a response to the repressive forces in Latin America of the 70s and 80s, but today, Chilean prisons are once again being filled, with community and Mapuche Leaders who fight to defend their land.

punity to paramilitaries in exchange for disarmament. The question remains, is justice being addressed and how can we put an end to human atrocities such as 'disappearance'?

In the words of Chilean poet Christian Rojas "Once I am gone there will be thousands more, you can not make us all disappear. This is not courage. Torturer, your choice has been an easy one, But it is not easy to hide your guilt."

Carla Diego

En Solidaridad con el Heroico Pueblo de Arauca

Olaya Garcia reports from the embattled Colombian region of Arauca.

EL PASADO febrero, la Red Europea de Hermandad y Solidaridad con Colombia y de la que Colombia Solidarity Campaign es miembro, recibió una invitación de las Organizaciones Sociales de Arauca para asistir al Foro Social Humanitario que se celebraría en Saravena del 3 al 5 de agosto.

Los actos concluirían con la conmemoración del primer aniversario del asesinato de Leonel Goyeneche y Jorge Eduardo Prieto. Fue entonces que surgió la idea de organizar una delegación a Arauca, para continuar después al Festival Mundial de la Juventud y los Estudiantes en Caracas, y comenzaron los preparativos.

Tras meses de comunicación casi diaria con nuestros compañeros en Colombia y de coordinación desde Londres, aseguramos una lista de trece delegados que ya habían colaborado con la Colombia Solidarity Campaign y otros grupos de solidaridad con Latinoamérica.

Llegamos a Bogotá el 31 de julio por la noche y a la mañana siguiente nos encaminamos a la prisión de mujeres de El Buen Pastor y a la prisión de hombres La Picota. Para entonces, Samuel Morales y Raquel Castro ya habían sido trasladados a la cárcel de Saravena, en espera del inicio de su audiencia el día 3. Samuel y Raquel son presos políticos de Arauca que fueron detenidos en agosto del año pasado, tras el triple asesinato de sus compañeros Jorge Eduardo Prieto, Leonel Goyeneche y Alirio Martínez en Caño Seco.

Esa noche, hacia las once, ya toda la gente había llegado a Bogotá (representantes de las organizaciones sociales, estudiantes, artistas y sindicatos) y los tres buses iniciaron su marcha acompañados de 30 delegados internacionales de Gran Bretaña, España, Irlanda, Suiza, Grecia, EEUU, Nueva Zelanda y Austria y dos miembros de las Brigadas de Paz Internacionales (PBI).

Un grupo de jóvenes músicos de Bogotá llamados 'Pájaros del Monte' acompañó con sus gaitas y tambores cada minuto de la diversa e ilusionada caravana. Como ellos explicaban: "esta música, une las tres razas: los ancestros españoles, africanos e indígenas... Con ese mensaje de recuperar lo nuestro y conservarlo."

Ya en la tarde del día 2 de agosto, hacia las 17.30h llegamos a Tame, conocida zona paramilitar. Como es sabido, en Saravena hay un toque de queda que comienza a las 6 de la tarde hasta las 6 de la mañana y nosotros ya íbamos tarde porque los cauchos habían pinchado tres veces. En ese

retén, y tras mucha discusión con los soldados, y mediación de los brigadistas de paz, se nos denegó el permiso para seguir.

La noche se presentaba tensa y todo un reto ya que había que asegurarse un lugar para dormir y cena y agua para todos los delegados, unos 120. Así es que una comitiva de representantes nacionales e internacionales se reunió con el alcalde del pueblo y se mandó a llamar a los soldados que ellos costeasen la comida y nos encontrasen un lugar para dormir. Finalmente, lo único que facilitaron fue un coliseo en el que los baños estaban casi destruidos y no funcionaban y el techo estaba tan lleno de goteras que en cuanto comenzó a llover, torrencialmente, todo se llenó de agua. La comida la solucionamos con una cooperativa que había en las cercanías y la pagamos entre todos.

'Pájaros del Monte' amenizaron la velada una vez más y se organizaron turnos de vigilancia por el peligro de ser sorprendidos por los paramilitares durante la noche. Como tampono había mantas, la mayor parte de la gente durmió directamente sobre el cemento.

A las 4 de la mañana del día 3 ya estábamos todos listos para marchar pero nuevamente el ejército puso problemas. Finalmente se nos dejó abandonar el coliseo y creemos que la lluvia se convirtió en aliada, pues se nos autorizó a pasar sin problema por los últimos dos retenes y a pesar de cambiar de ruta, por que cruzar el río que llevaba una corriente muy fuerte hubiera supuesto un riesgo, llegamos a Saravena a las 9 de la mañana.

Durante los siguientes días asistimos al I Foro sobre Efectos del Plan Colombia y la Seguridad Democrática en la Región del Sarare en el Departamento de Arauca, que empezó esa misma mañana con los discursos de bienvenida por parte de los organizadores: Asociación Departamental de Usuarios Campesinos (ADUC), Asociación de Cabildos y Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas de Arauca (ASCATIDAR), Asociación Juvenil Estudiantil Regional (ASOJER), Subdirectiva Arauca de la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), Asociaciones Comunales y Cívicas y la Fundación Comité de Derechos Humanos Joel Sierra.

Entre los participantes había organizaciones internacionalmente conocidas como la OFP, ASFADES, el Colectivo de Abogados José Restrepo, Humanidad Vigente, el Proyecto Nunca Más y SINALTRAINAL y delegados como el Padre Javier Giraldo, además de organizaciones regionales de mujeres, como el Comité de Mujeres 'Amanecer por Arauca' y otras organizaciones de las

comunidades negras e indígenas.

El lugar era una cancha de baloncesto al aire libre, decorada con las pancartas de todos los grupos participantes, cuyos mensajes expresaban el sentimiento compartido: "Para que pueda surgir lo posible, es preciso intentar una y otra vez lo imposible".

El Foro resultó un éxito rotundo por el intercambio constante que se estableció entre todos los delegados y porque logró que los habitantes de Saravena dejasen el miedo atrás y no se sintieran intimidados por el ejército, al menos durante esos días. Hubo momentos muy emotivos, como al recordar a Trini Torres, líder campesino del Catatumbo (Norte de Santander) asesinado por las FARC tres días antes de su esperada intervención en este foro. También al escuchar el testimonio de los participantes, que relataban historias dantescas de sindicatos completamente exterminados por los paramilitares o comunidades desplazadas. Pero en todo momento se hizo consigna que contra la muerte no vale el silencio, que hay que elevar la vida con aplausos para que aquellos que asesinan se den por enterados, para que sepan que la lucha del pueblo por justicia continúa.

En este sentido, se recordó especialmente a Leonel, Alirio y Jorge, los líderes del Sarare asesinados por el Ejército Nacional hacia entonces un año: "Personas que siempre dieron todo su calor humano y social... hasta que se cruzaron en sus vidas las balas asesinas que podrían haberles calado."

Los exhaustivos debates sobre los efectos sanitarios, económicos, educativos, medioambientales y políticos del plan Colombia y la Seguridad Democrática en la región permitieron a todos los participantes entender los devastadores costes humanos que esas políticas han traído a Arauca.

Además, se presentó la Campaña Nacional e Internacional sobre los Efectos de la Explotación Petrolera en Arauca, por la que las culturas indígenas Guahiba y Uwa demandan respeto y reparación de las petroleras Occidental de Colombia Inc. (la estadounidense Occidental Petroleum) y la española Repsol.

El día 4, cinco miembros de la Colombia Solidarity Campaign visitamos a Raquel Castro y Samuel Morales en el juzgado de Saravena donde iba a dar inicio el segundo día de su audiencia. Samuel se mostraba tranquilo, pero Raquel estaba realmente afectada. El día anterior, el fiscal había basado toda su acusación en el hecho de que ella era una mujer independiente e inteligente, profesional y por tanto, según el fiscal, estaba claro que ella había dirigido entrenamiento político-militar a la

guerrilla. Raquel, muy sensible porque en esos días rememoraba especialmente el asesinato de sus compañeros en la casa donde ella también se encontraba aquella fatídica noche, se había sentido muy molesta e insultada por las acusaciones vertidas sobre ella el día anterior: "He dedicado toda mi vida a dar a los jóvenes de esta zona los conocimientos vitales que ellos necesitan para que no necesiten o quieran unirse a los grupos armados. Y sin embargo, ahora me acusan de ayudar a esos grupos."

Samuel, por otro lado, se congratulaba de la suerte de ambos cuando supieron que el foro tendría lugar durante los mismos días que su propia audiencia. Puede que este hecho no les haya ayudado decisivamente (el juez, bajo muchas presiones, tiene ahora entre nueve meses y dos años para decidir la sentencia, que muy probablemente sea de rebelión e imponga una condena de ocho años para cada uno), pero al menos, el foro y las palabras de todos los participantes, que fueron retransmitidas por radio y él pudo escuchar, sirvieron de acompañamiento a estos dos compañeros durante unos días muy difíciles en sus vidas. Samuel alagó especialmente las palabras de la representante española, de COSAL Xixón, por su carácter internacionalista y solidario.

Ese mismo día, una delegación internacional de 14 personas, con tres representantes nacionales, se presentó en Pueblo Seco, también conocido como La Vereda de Arauca, respondiendo a la llamada de los habitantes del lugar quejándose por la ocupación de sus casas por parte del Batallón No 47 'Héroes de Tacines' de la 5a Brigada Móvil del Ejército Nacional. En nuestro camino, en un retén pasado Fortúl, habíamos reconocido al Batallón No45 'Héroes de Majagual', también de la 5a Brigada Móvil, conocidos popularmente como Los Carniceros por su relación con la trágicamente famosa masacre del Sur de Bolívar. Se cree que ésta es la sección más paramilitarizada del ejército colombiano.

Al llegar a La Vereda de Arabia pudimos comprobar como una de las pancartas que llamaban al acto conmemoratorio en Caño Seco al día siguiente, había sido destrozada por hacer alusión al ejército que había asesinado a Alirio, Jorge y Leonel el año anterior. Conversamos durante horas con la población y con los soldados a órdenes del Teniente García y finalmente, 9 delegados decidimos quedarnos a pasar la noche. Así intentábamos asegurarnos de que el batallón 47 no pondría problemas a la caravana de campesinos que irían

a los actos conmemorativos en Caño Seco a la mañana siguiente y animá-bamos a la población a que asistiera, demostrando el acompañamiento internacional.

El día 5, clausura del Foro en Saravena y conmemoración del primer aniversario del asesinato de Leonel Goyeneche, Jorge Prieto y Alirio Martínez, el batallón 47 sí intentó sabotear la caravana y nos retuvo durante casi 2h en un retén con la excusa de una hipotética bicicleta bomba que resultó ser un montaje, cuando un soldado salió montado en ella y riéndose. A pesar de llegar tarde al acto litúrgico celebrado por monseñor Carlos Germán Mesa, la impresionante caravana de más de 900 personas en unos 50 vehículos finalmente llegó a Caño Seco, uniéndose a los familiares de las víctimas y muy especialmente, a sus viudas e hijos. A continuación, se descubrió una losa de piedra tallada conmemorativa, que familiares y campesinos de la zona cubrieron de velas. A la actuación de 'Pájaros del Monte' siguió el emotivo discurso de la hija mayor del fallecido Alirio Martínez y las intervenciones de representantes de diferentes colectivos, organizaciones e instituciones, como el congresista Alexander López, los padres Hermer José Muñoz y Javier Giraldo, comunidades indígenas, estudiantes locales, colectivos de abogados y servidora, en representación de los delegados internacionales.

Temprano en la mañana del día 6, tras las celebraciones de despedida de la noche anterior, nos pusimos en camino hacia Venezuela, en un bus con 9 de los 13 delegados de la Colombia Solidarity Campaign (el resto se quedaban en Colombia), un suizo, dos americanos y otros compañeros colombianos que venían con nosotros al XVI Festival Mundial de la Juventud y los Estudiantes en Caracas.

Dejamos Arauca con la determinación de regresar muy pronto, a ser posible el próximo año para el II Foro Social Humanitario, y con la idea contundente de seguir denunciando, en Gran Bretaña y ante la comunidad internacional, la violación de derechos humanos y del derecho humanitario internacional que tienen lugar en esa región y en Colombia a diario. El ejemplo indeleble e inspirador de la valentía del pueblo araucano, en su lucha por la justicia y la libertad se queda con nosotros para siempre. Definitivamente, nos unimos a ese 'aplauzo por la vida' que abrió el Foro de Saravena y deseamos que la fuerte voz del heroico pueblo de Arauca nunca sea silenciada.

“Una semana en San Josesito de la Dignidad” por Anne Barr

Acabo de pasar una semana en el nuevo poblado de San Josesito de la Dignidad, a donde se trasladó hace tres meses la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apá, cuando la policía y el ejército se ausentaron en la aldea. Abandonaron unos hogares cómodos para crear una nueva aldea desde la nada porque se negaron a aceptar como “protectora” a los dos grupos armados, el ejército y el ejército, en un caso que consistió en la masacre de los miembros de la Comunidad, entre los que se encontraban un bebé y dos niños.

Anne Barr has recently visited San Josecito, this is her eyewitness account

También abandonaron su poblado porque sabían que la presencia de la policía y del ejército provocaría inevitablemente ataques por parte de la guerrilla. Y, como no podía ser de otro modo, así fue. Cuando llegué el lunes por la mañana, acababan de resonar las últimas ráfagas de fuego de ametralladora tras toda una noche de combates entre el ejército y la guerrilla, con el resultado de tres soldados heridos y la angustia de los habitantes de la Comunidad de Paz tras una noche en vela llena de “fuegos artificiales”.

El nuevo poblado se encuentra a aproximadamente a un kilómetro de San José, donde han instalado sus cuarteles la policía y el ejército. De manera un tanto egoísta, mi primer pensamiento fue: “¡qué suerte, me he librado del tiroteo!”, y me dediqué a saludar a los viejos amigos y a familiarizarme con la nueva aldea que en tres meses han sido capaces de crear desde la nada. Está construida en un meandro del río y rodeada de bosque. Resulta idílico. Han construido más de cuarenta casas de madera, cada una de ellas con espacio marcado para un huerto. Hay kilómetros de zanjas para el drenaje, así como senderos de piedra y de gravilla. Han desmontado la fresca y aireada cabaña de techo de paja que les servía de centro comunitario en San José y la han instalado en el parque de la nueva aldea. Los cerdos, pollos y mulas, que hay a docenas, están felices porque ahora tienen más barro y más hierba, mientras que a los críos les encanta el río, con sus rápidos emocionantes y sus pozas para nadar.

Yo había ido para hacer un seguimiento del cursillo de horticultura y fabricación de abono orgánico que ofrecimos el agosto pasado. Los habitantes de la Comunidad de Paz han creado seis huertos en la aldea de La Unión, a dos horas de camino del nuevo poblado, pero no pude verlos. Los continuos tiroteos y explosiones, los centenares de policías y soldados recién llegados a la zona y, sobre todo, la enorme carga de trabajo pendiente en el nuevo poblado se unieron para hacer que el viaje fuera prácticamente imposible.

Tras un día curioseando, pensé que lo más útil que podía hacer era arreglar el problema de la basura, dado que estaban decididos a reciclar y fabricar abono orgánico, y ya habían cavado dos agujeros grandísimos para la basura orgánica y la inorgánica. Sin embargo, muchos no habían entendido el concepto de la separación, de tal modo que ambos pozos estaban llenos de apostas mezclas de plástico y restos de verduras podridas. Para acabar de arreglar las cosas, uno de ellos se había inundado y convertido en un cultivo ideal para el mosquito de la malaria. No sé a quién se le pudo ocurrir esta idea de hacer pozos para el abono orgánico.

Supongo que funcionará en un desierto, donde no llueve nunca, pero en un clima normal los pozos sólo se llenan de agua y apestan. Al día siguiente, fui de casa en casa para hablar con todas las familias sobre el reciclaje y el abono orgánico, y después toda la aldea celebró una reunión sobre el asunto. Al día siguiente, empecé a trabajar con los críos, porque estaba claro que los adultos se hallaban demasiado ocupados. No las tenía todas conmigo en cuanto a cómo se tomarían la idea de recoger y clasificar la basura de toda la Comunidad, ya que no resulta una tarea pre-

cisamente agradable.

Pensé que la mejor manera de enseñarles era precisamente hacerlo, así que cogimos dos carretillas, una para lo orgánico y otra para lo inorgánico, y fuimos casa por casa recogiendo y clasificando la basura.

A los críos les gustan mucho segundos convertirse en recicladores de primera y unos treinta segundos diseñar un sistema de trabajo excelente. Al principio, cada niño de hasta diez años de edad llevaba una carretilla y se encargaba de recoger la basura y separarla en categorías. Tras recoger la mitad de la basura de la aldea, organizamos una fila de abono orgánico y un montón de aserrín, hojas, excrementos de caballo y mula, hasta que tuvimos un montón limpio y aseado. Creía que conseguiría que estuviesen trabajando una hora o dos como máximo, pero fueron ellos los que me dejaron exhausta y tuve que sugerir que acabásemos el día yéndonos a nadar al río. En los días siguientes, cuando los tiroteos y explosiones cercanos nos dejaban, repetimos el proceso de recolección pedagógica con toda la aldea, dos jóvenes hicieron un corral alrededor de la pila, que no para-ba de crecer, para evitar que los cerdos y las gallinas la desmontaran y un gran grupo de adultos y críos limpiaron los pozos insalubres, dejando uno abierto para el plástico y las latas. También celebramos una reunión de reciclaje para enseñarles a todos cómo manejar el abono orgánico y los críos decidieron organizarse en un grupo de trabajo y le pidieron a cada casa que les pagara un poco (unos 15 céntimos de euro al mes) por el servicio de recogida, mientras que yo hice un gran cartel para explicar con la máxima sencillez posible qué basura iba a cada sitio. También cavamos y plantamos un huerto, cocinamos un montón de comida sana y vegetariana (especialmente, comida italiana de gourmet hecha por un miembro de las Brigadas Internacionales de Paz) y nadamos un montón en el río.

La mayoría de las noches había “fuegos artificiales” (los llamaban así porque las balas del ejército van acompañados de una lucecita roja, según parece para diferenciar entre fuego enemigo y “amigo”). A nosotros, esas lucecitas nos servían para saber cuántas balas “se desviaban” hacia nuestro poblado. Tuvimos mucha suerte de no sufrir ninguna baja. Nos quedábamos despiertos charlando y bebiendo té hasta que acababa el tiroteo. Esta gente en medio del sentido del humor incluso de medio de estas situaciones y normalmente acabábamos riéndonos con historias escatológicas de quién había vomitado o se había cagado o meado en medio de algún combate entre ejército y guerrilla. No hay a donde correr en estos casos, ya que meterse entre los árboles significaría pasar de la sartén al fuego y acabar con un tiro “por error”. Les pregunté qué planes tenían para un impacto directo y, entre risas, un hombre me dijo que esquivaría las balas y cogería las granadas y se las devolvería, diciéndome a su manera que no había solución. El sitio más seguro ante un ataque directo sería probablemente debajo de una cama.

Los adultos y los niños hablan abiertamente y con naturalidad sobre las terribles pérdidas sufridas en el pasado y sus temores con respecto al presente. Un día en el río, una niña preciosa me contó que tenía siete años cuando mataron a su madre y ocho cuando mataron a su padre. Cuando le pregunté cómo se llamaba, vi que era la hija de Luis Eduardo Guerra, al que mataron junto a su hijo mayor, Deiner, en la masacre de febrero. A su esposa la mató una granada perdida el mes de julio pasado. La niña vive con un hermano aún bebé, cuatro primos, unos cuantos bebés sin familia y su tía en una casa de una sola habitación. Lloran cuando hablamos de Luis, pero el resto del tiempo la casa rebosa risas y cariño. En febrero, cuando luchábamos por recuperar lo poco que quedaba del cuerpo de Luis

Eduardo en el depósito de cadáveres de Apartadó, apareció otra tía que quería llevarse a la niña a la ciudad, “lejos del peligro”, pero nos enfureció a todos al negarse a recorrer una hora de camino hasta San José para ver dónde vivía la niña. Su argumento consistía en que “ahí arriba son todos guerrilleros”. En aquel momento traumático, quería que le entregaran a la niña para arrancarla de lo que quedaba de familia cercana. Era imposible comprender el tipo de amor y verdadero espíritu comunitario que se estaba creando. Sólo podía ver la pobreza y el peligro, que son ciertamente reales, pero en última instancia fueron secundarios.

La situación de desconfianza que se dio entre las personas que no conocen bien la Comunidad, y los poderes fácticos de Colombia se preocupan mucho de que la reputación de guerrilleros no se diluya. Ello se debe a las razones siguientes:

- 1) Si todos supieran que un grupo pequeño y absolutamente indefenso de polvorientos campesinos se las ha arreglado para enfrentarse con éxito contra los horrores cotidianos cometidos por el estado/los paramilitares (y por la guerrilla también, aunque menos) pese a sufrir actos de terrible crueldad por hacerlo tan bien, la cosa se pondría realmente peligrosa para ellos. Como dijo alguien, “el presidente Álvaro Uribe dice de nosotros cosas peores que de las FARC”. Y es verdad porque ellos representan una auténtica oposición ideológica a las fuerzas armadas y narcotraficantes que son cada día más dueñas de Colombia.
- 2) Llamarlos guerrilleros les garantiza que el escándalo público sea mucho menor cuando se produce una masacre: “Ah, bueno, quién sabe lo que estaban tramando, probablemente se merecen lo que les ha pasado”. (Hubo una mujer que me lo dijo en la cara y se llevó un buen sermón informativo).
- 3) Estas infamias ponen de relieve la cobardía de los que hacen un mal uso del poder de las armas, porque son incapaces de creer que exista el verdadero valor y que haya personas capaces de enfrentarse a la muerte armados sólo con sus creencias.

En los seis días que pasé allí, la tensión y la presión crecían de día en día. El “Proceso de Paz” con los paramilitares tiene lugar a apenas unas pocas horas de distancia y los “paras reinsertados” (también conocidos como asesinos legalizados) van a ser enviados a “ayudar” a la policía y al ejército en San José. Un policía furioso ha amenazado con que vendrían 3.000, lo que probablemente sea una exageración, pero con 30 bastaría para provocar auténtico terror y muertes. Me sentí aterrorizada un día sí y otro también por las personas con las que estaba trabajando, porque a menos que se ponga freno a la descarada paramilitarización de Colombia, su futuro es muy negro. Todos están firmemente dispuestos a quedarse en sus tierras, aunque eso signifique la muerte.

Su única “protección” procede de las voces y acciones de apoyo procedentes de Europa y de Estados Unidos. Los hombres y mujeres de las Brigadas Internacionales de Paz y el grupo de Fellowship for Reconciliation acompañan a la Comunidad todo lo que pueden, pero su falta de recursos combinada con las normas y reglamentos restrictivos que tienen impuestos no les permiten hacer todo lo que querrían. Por eso, querría concluir este informe con un llamamiento a la ayuda. Cualquiera de cualquier edad que quiera venir aquí a ayudar, trabajar y acompañar a estas valientes personas será bien recibido. La compañía de extranjeros les ofrece un gran apoyo moral y constituye una auténtica barrera entre ellos y la guerra. Sin embargo, quien venga debe ser consciente de los siguientes factores:

- 1) Que hay una situación de guerra y que por lo tanto es peligroso.
- 2) Que el clima, al ser caluroso y húmedo, no es fácil

es aun mas profunda por la completa ausencia de las voces de las miles de víctimas de los paramilitares. Hasta el momento nadie ha sido condenado y los que lo van a ser probablemente pasaran 2 o 3 años en una “colonia agricutural”, y el tiempo invertido en las negociaciones cuenta como parte cumplida de la pena.

Esta situación se empeora por la falta de voluntad de las autoridades en enfrentar las estructuras paramilitares y en ponerlas bajo control. Los recursos financieros de las estructuras militares, el apoyo político y de las fuerzas armadas del estado no son incluidos en la “confesión espontánea”, por lo que no son tenidos en cuenta en la investigación. Al igual que los que apoyan el paramilitarismo económicamente o políticamente hasta el momento han escapado a toda la investigación y sanción. Adicionalmente, de los 13 bloques que se han desmovilizado solo el bloque Catatumbo ha entregado parte de sus haberes (algo de tierra, 44 mulas, 10 lanchas y 11 vehículos). Los cientos de millones de dólares obtenidos por el cultivo y tráfico de drogas, extorsión, servicio de seguridad y de gran cantidad de negocios ilegales y legales son esencialmente lavados por el proceso de paz. Los haberes que antes fueron escondidos ahora son usados abiertamente para financiar los proyectos políticos del paramilitarismo.

Ivan Roberto Duque, alias “Ernesto Baez”, uno de los comandantes nacionales de los paramilitares anuncio recientemente que las AUC no desaparecerán sino que el proceso del gobierno “legalizará” el poder de las AUC y lo constituirá en un gran movimiento político”. Los jefes paramilitares siempre han dicho que el 35% de los miembros del congreso son sus candidatos, es probable que este porcentaje se incremente en las próximas elecciones, donde los dineros del paramilitarismo serán utilizados para moldear el debate y para el lanzamiento de campanas. Actualmente en Medellín se lanzo como candidato al congreso Giovanni Marin, apoyado por la poderosa “Corporación Democrática” organización que se fundo para apoyar el proceso de desmovilización paramilitar.

Otro reporte mordaz, publicado por Amnistía Internacional del 1 septiembre 2005 se concentra en las desmovilizaciones paramilitares en Medellín, probando que el proceso actual legaliza el control paramilitar en Medellín, de que la fuerza pública del orden, esta entrenada para disparar a matar. Esta es la cruda realidad, estamos en medio de dos fuegos, y como si esto fuera poco soportamos la persecución de los oficiales de inmigración, que en cualquier momento irrumpen en nuestros hogares, violando nuestros derechos fundamentales, incluso la de nuestros hijos menores, sometiéndonos a las más degradantes humillaciones y recluyéndonos en centros de detención familiar. Este país que ante el mundo es el paradigma del derecho, se derrumba ante quienes soportamos todos estos atropellos.

.Se viene promoviendo leyes para deportar a “quienes fomenten el terrorismo”, se da una lista de parámetros, que no se necesita ser perito en leyes para darnos cuenta, que con este pretexto nos están coartando el derecho de organización y la libre expresión; nos culpan a los inmigrantes de todos sus males sociales y políticos, no quieren ver que sus “GUERRAS PREVENTIVAS” son la causa verdadera del problema actual.

Muchas serán las voces que se callen

lín y en todo el país. El reporte dice que los paramilitares desmovilizados están siendo reciclados y puestos en las empresas de seguridad privadas y también en las instituciones de seguridad del estado, como la recién establecida “Guardia Cívica”; en cargos que les permiten tener una continuidad del control sobre la población civil. De igual manera Amnistía reporta que en los últimos dos años a pesar del cese del fuego los paramilitares han asesinado o desaparecido 2300 personas y ni los paramilitares ni los fuerzas de seguridad del estado culpables de colaborar con la actividad paramilitar están siendo correctamente investigados. Las dos fuerzas disfrutan de una absoluta impunidad por sus crímenes contra la población civil Colombiana.

Los partidarios del “Proceso de Paz” argumentan que estas fallas son necesarias para alcanzar la paz, sin embargo no existe evidencia que esto sea cierto. Hay pruebas concretas que se están montando nuevos bloques paramilitares para reemplazar los ya desmovilizados y es de conocimiento publico que muchos de los desmovilizados no fueron paramilitares sino jóvenes pagados para asistir a las ceremonias de desmovilización. La actividad paramilitar y la colaboración que reciben de las fuerzas de seguridad del estado son mas evidentes que nunca, un ejemplo de esto fue el asesinato del representante a la Cámara Orlando Benítez su hermana y su chofer, quienes fueron asesinados el 10 de Abril del 2005, asesinato ordenado por el jefe paramilitar y negociador “Don Berna” porque el representante se negó a renunciar a las elecciones para el próximo año. Don Berna fue arrestado por este crimen, luego dejado en libertad, se desmovilizo y hoy en día sigue en su cargo como negociador con el gobierno central.

Para ver un análisis profundo del “Proceso de Paz” ir a: Amnistía Internacional. Colombia: Los paramilitares en Medellín: ¿desmovilización o legalización? <http://news.amnesty.org/index/engamr230192005>

Human Rights Watch. Las Apariencias Engañan: la desmovilización de grupos paramilitares en Colombia. www.hrw.org/reports/2005/colombia0805

por el temor que nos infunden con estas leyes; pero también nos preguntamos ¿y a dónde van a enviar a los británicos que enfrenten dentro de un “ESTADO DE SITIO” NO DECLARADO, estas políticas de conculcación de las libertades democráticas y el respeto a los derechos humanos?

Los latinoamericanos tenemos el deber y la obligación de ORGANIZARNOS, dejando de lado los caracterismos regionalistas que nos caracterizan nuestra consigna debe ser UNIRNOS Y FORTALECERNOS, para enfrentar momentos difíciles y muy duros que se nos avecinan; sabremos resistir y vencer, estamos curtidados en estas lides, ya hemos aprendido a soportar en nuestros propios países “ESTADOS DE SITIO” que camufladamente estamos viviendo en este país; al lado del pueblo y los trabajadores británicos, todas las etnias que radicamos en el Reino Unido, construyamos el bienestar de la sociedad. ¡OTRO MUNDO ES POSIBLE!

'Nuestra América'

CHILE: PERSECUCIÓN DE LOS MAPUCHES

APLICAR LA legislación en materia de lucha antiterrorista en el marco del conflicto Mapuche podría interpretarse como un "acto de persecución" del movimiento social Mapuche. Éste es el mensaje que el Relator Especial de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) sobre cuestiones indígenas, Sr. Stavenhangen comunicó al Gobierno chileno. El Sr. Stavenhangen expresó su preocupación ante las acusaciones desproporcionadas hechas contra los líderes Mapuche Lonko Pascual Pichun y Aniceto Norin, que no corresponden a los hechos.

Otros líderes de la comunidad han sido perseguidos por la policía, como le pasó a Lonko Juana Calfunao, o han sido víctimas de farsas judiciales, como en los casos de José y Lorenzo Nahuelpi. Estos eventos nos hacen cuestionar la imparcialidad y la independencia de tribunales y jueces.

Chile no reconoce el derecho de autodeterminación del pueblo Mapuche, no reconoce su existencia en la Constitución y no ha ratificado el Convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) sobre pueblos Indígenas.

CUBA: "LOS CINCO CUBANOS"

EL 9 DE agosto el Tribunal 11 de Apelaciones del 11o Circuito en Atlanta revocó los fallos de culpabilidad en contra de los cinco cubanos que habían sido acusados de conspiración, por haber tratado de infiltrar los grupos anti-castristas con sede en Miami. Bajo la presión internacional y reconociendo la imposibilidad de un proceso justo e imparcial en Miami-Dade County, base de la comunidad exiliada cubana extremista, el tribunal ordenó un nuevo proceso que tendrá lugar en otra localidad.

Los Cinco Cubanos infiltraron los grupos anti-Castro radicales para frenar ataques terroristas a su propio país en los años 90. Tanto las acusaciones como las sentencias fueron ostensiblemente infladas; circunstancia que ilustra como los Estados Unidos manipulan su legislación antiterrorista según sus intereses e ideología. Esto es corroborado por el tratamiento que EEUU reserva a Luis Posada Carriles, el terrorista anti-cubano que en 1976 asesinó a 76 personas en un atentado aéreo y está ahora protegido por Washington, que rehusa su extradición a Cuba.

ECUADOR: PARO GENERAL CONTRA OXY

LA POBLACIÓN de las provincias de Orellana y Sucumbíos, en el noreste del país, zona rica en petróleo, organizó un paro general desde el 15 hasta el 19 de agosto. Las comunidades pidieron la caducidad del contrato del bloque 15 suscrito con la compañía norteamericana Occidental Exploration Company (Oxy), por haber violado la Ley de Hidrocarburos ecuatoriana. El contrato incluye la operación en los campos de Edén-Yutury y Limonconcha, zonas protegidas en la Amazonía.

Los habitantes protestaron también en contra de las fumigaciones que Colombia y Estados Unidos están llevando a cabo en la frontera.

El gobierno respondió con represión

militar, con la declaración de "Estado de Emergencia" y con la detención de líderes sociales y populares.

Los detenidos y populares del 19 de agosto el paro fue suspendido.

PERÚ: VIOLENTA REPRESIÓN DE PROTESTA CAMPESINA

EL 1 DE agosto por lo menos una persona murió a causa de la represión policial de la protesta de las comunidades rurales de Ayacababa y Huancabamba (Piura) y Paicampa y San Ignacio (Jaén, Cajamarca) contra la ocupación del campamento Henry Hill de la mina Majaz. Cerca de 3000 campesinos se manifestaron para que cese la actividad minera de la compañía norteamericana que contamina la tierra y el agua de la región.

El obispo de Chulucanas, Daniel Turley, afirmó que extraoficialmente 7 personas perdieron la vida, 40 fueron heridas y 6 desaparecieron. El Prefecto de Piura confirmó que 32 manifestantes fueron detenidos.

En tanto que los detenidos han sido liberados, nadie ha sido acusado de asesinato.

BASES ESTADOUNIDENSES EN PARAGUAY

LOS ESTADOS Unidos están por establecer una base militar con 16.000 efectivos en la Triple Frontera, que divide Paraguay, Brasil y Argentina.

Según el acuerdo bilateral entre La Asunción y Washington, a partir del 1 de junio 2005 a diciembre 2006 los EEUU brindarán entrenamiento militar a Paraguay. Las fuerzas militares estadounidenses tendrán acceso a la Triple Frontera y podrán fácilmente controlar los recursos naturales de la región, como la reserva de agua más grande del mundo. La base fue establecida en Mariscal Estigarriba, un pequeño pueblo a 250 kms. de la frontera con Bolivia, no lejos de las reservas de gas y petróleo bolivianas.

Otro aspecto preocupante del acuerdo son los privilegios innecesarios y la condición de diplomáticos que fueron garantizados a los soldados norteamericanos, según la cual, no pueden ser investigados o juzgados bajo la jurisdicción del país. Tampoco Paraguay podrá demandar a EEUU ante la Corte Penal Internacional, violando su propia legislación, ya que es uno de sus Estados miembros.

RED PARLAMENTARIA BOLIVARIANA

INVITADOS POR el Frente de Liberación Nacional Farabundo Martí de la Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador, miembros de los parlamentos de Argentina, Brasil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Uruguay, Venezuela, El Salvador, miembros de los Parlamentos Andino, Latinoamericano y Centroamericano y del Parlamento Indígena de América, se reunieron en la Ciudad de El Salvador los días 23 y 24 de agosto para constituir la Red Parlamentaria para la Alternativa Bolivariana de América Latina y del Caribe.

En cumplimiento con una de las resoluciones del Segundo Congreso Bolivariano de los Pueblos, el propósito de esta nueva red es promover la unidad, la solidaridad, la cooperación

y la integración de los pueblos latinoamericanos para defender su soberanía e independencia.

En el momento constitucional, los miembros, a través del diálogo a nivel legislativo, se proponen fomentar políticas y estrategias que apunten a erradicar la pobreza, a intensificar la lucha en contra del modelo neoliberal y a garantizar la justicia social.

TELESUR: UNA INICIATIVA EN CONTRA DEL IMPERIALISMO CULTURAL

EL 24 DE julio el canal satelital de Televisión del Sur (Telesur), inauguró sus emisiones con las primeras cuatro horas de transmisiones, aunque el objetivo es de extenderlas a 24 horas dentro de dos meses.

Telesur, cuyo lema es "Nuestro norte es el sur", es una iniciativa mediática colectiva promovida principalmente por Venezuela, que posee un 51% de las acciones, mientras Argentina, Cuba y Uruguay tienen un 29, 19 y 10% respectivamente, en tanto que Brasil provee el apoyo técnico.

A través de varios programas, la nueva estación se propone ser una fuente alternativa de información a los canales -principalmente norteamericanos- que transmiten a todo el continente, y de representar la verdadera visión de la diversidad social y cultural latinoamericana desde un punto de vista independiente.

Para medir la importancia de tal iniciativa es suficiente mirar la reacción de Estados Unidos: el 20 de julio la Cámara de Representantes de ese país aprobó un proyecto de ley presentado por el republicano Commie Mack (Florida), de crear una emisora de radio y televisión que brinde información "precisa y objetiva" al pueblo venezolano para contrarrestar el anti-americanismo del futuro canal suramericano.

EL CAFTA FUE APROBADO POR ESTADOS UNIDOS

EL 28 DE julio la Cámara de Representantes de Estados Unidos aprobó el Tratado de Libre Comercio de América Central (CAFTA) por sus siglas en inglés con un margen estrecho de 217 votos contra 215.

La aprobación requirió la intervención directa del Presidente Bush y del vice-Presidente Cheney, quienes personalmente ejercieron presiones sobre los republicanos que tenían la intención de oponerse al tratado. Algunos republicanos presentaron una moción que limitó el debate sobre el CAFTA a 2 horas y condujeron la discusión acerca del razonamiento de que si el tratado fuera rechazado, violencia, comunismo, demagogia y dictaduras se propagarían en América Central.

El CAFTA es un acuerdo "libre" que reducirá las barreras comerciales entre Estados Unidos y seis países de Centroamérica: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y República Dominicana. En tanto que la Casa Blanca mantuvo sus mecanismos de dumping (vertedero) y subsidios agrarios, estableció nuevas restricciones a dos de las industrias centroamericanas más competitivas: el azúcar y los textiles. El acuerdo no brindará mayor protección a los trabajadores de América Central, dará más poder a las corporaciones y como resultado incrementará la inequidad social.

Por qué 'Frontline Latin América'?

EDITORIAL

FRONTLINE LATIN AMÉRICA es la nueva publicación de la "Campaña de Solidaridad Por Colombia". Nuestro objetivo es publicar cuatro ediciones del periódico, más un magazine temático especial cada año. ¿Por qué un nombre tan grande para una publicación tan modesta?

Porque el conflicto colombiano está en el contexto de una generalizada y creciente confrontación entre los pueblos de Latinoamérica y el imperialismo. En Colombia, la globalización no es un proceso benigno, este es muy violento - el programa neoliberal esta siendo impuesto por la fuerza de las armas.

Colombia sufre la peor violación de derechos humanos en el hemisferio occidental, porque sus pueblos están en la línea de frente de la resistencia a las multinacionales y la dominación de los Estados Unidos en todo el continente americano. El dominio impuesto en la región es actualmente solo superado por la devastadora confrontación en el Medio Oriente. La lucha de los pueblos de América Latina es igualmente distorsionada por las máquinas de propaganda de los grandes medios de información que enmarcan el mundo a través de la lente de la "guerra anti-terrorista".

La funesta Doctrina de Bush fue formulada después del 9/11, supuestamente para guiar a los Estados Unidos en sus operaciones en el exterior. Esta, provee tres justificaciones para el uso de la fuerza: "quienes no están conmigo, están contra mí", la necesidad de ataques preventivos y la idea de que EEUU puede desarrollar acciones unilaterales en el momento en que sus intereses lo requieran. En realidad, antes del 9/11 cada uno de estos elementos ya estaban presentes en la intervención militar norteamericana en Colombia, donde desde 1999, bajo la fachada de "Plan Colombia" ha estado directamente vinculado en un agresivo plan de contrainsurgencia.

El autoritario presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez ha reforzado estas tendencias y está implementando un régimen neo-conservador con un control social militarizado. Uribe ha tomado la Doctrina Bush par hacer la suya, apuntando con sus principales aspectos a su propio pueblo, declarándolos como enemigos de Estado: "quienes no están conmigo, están contra mí": los empleadores consideran criminales a quienes se alistan en la lucha de los movimientos por la justicia social. Los ataques preventivos: el Ejército militariza las regiones, desarrolla alianzas casa por casa y acude a las detenciones masivas. Acción unilateral: el gobierno está concentrando el poder ejecutivo y siempre está yendo más allá de los límites.

Ahora estamos en la fase 2 del Plan Colombia - la Iniciativa Regional Andina. Colombia es la principal puerta de entrada para las Fuerzas estadounidenses, especialmente en la frontera con Venezuela, pero también Ecuador, Perú e inclusive Brasil - que amenaza con extenderse hacia toda la región. Es por eso que nosotros creemos que el éxito de la resistencia contra el programa Bush/Uribe es importante para toda Latinoamérica. Igualmente, el surgimiento de la lucha popular en Bolivia y países vecinos traen la esperanza para los hostigados movimientos sociales colombianos.

En la actualidad existe un amplio y especial resurgimiento de la resistencia andina, liderado por los indígenas contra el expansionismo económico estadounidense, empaçado en los

acuerdos del Tratado de Libre Comercio (TLC). Esta batalla vendrá en los próximos meses, por lo que la solidaridad internacional será vital.

Sin embargo, nosotros no ponemos todos los problemas de Colombia y latinoamérica en las puertas del poderoso juego norteamericano. Aunque los gobiernos presentan un bajo perfil, las multinacionales europeas también son actores principales que empujan por un régimen neo-liberal. Las corporaciones británicas del petróleo y la minería, las compañías de servicios francesas, los bancos y gigantes de las telecomunicaciones españolas, manufacturas alemanas, conglomerados suizos e italianos de comidas, están todos haciendo inmensas ganancias con la explotación de los recursos naturales y humanos de latinoamérica. Es nuestro deber monitorear, y movilizarnos contra el saqueo de "nuestras" multinacionales. La política de nuestros gobiernos y la Union Europea no es otra cosa que el apoyo a las reglas de juego de las grandes corporaciones económicas. Tenemos que crear una perspectiva alternativa e independiente de la Union Europea. Necesitamos participar en un amplio proyecto de intercambio entre los movimientos sociales. Nuestro trabajo debe respetar la pluralidad de los movimientos de oposición en Colombia y América Latina, así como nosotros también necesitamos del pluralismo y el debate para ser efectivos.

Existe además otra línea de frente, una que se extiende desde los románticos picos de los Andes hasta la prosaica estación del metro de Stockwell. Si el impacto de 9/11 unió al pueblo de los Estados Unidos contra la amenaza externa, después, la negligente respuesta al huracán Katrina ha revelado la magnitud de la división de la sociedad norteamericana. Esta ha mostrado el poco valor que las autoridades conceden a la vida humana cuando esta es negra o de la clase obrera, que el estado de guerra ha tomado absoluta prioridad sobre el bienestar social. Tal caída ha reforzado la bancarrota moral de la administración Bush. Un proceso similar está ocurriendo en la Gran Bretaña, como se ha demostrado durante el verano. La tenaz unidad del Londres multiétnico después de las bombas del 7 de julio, se evaporó rápidamente cuando los Blairs de Downing Street y la Scotland Yard se aliaron para defender la política de "disparar a matar", siempre y cuando esta sea dirigida contra los inmigrantes. Los latinoamericanos no son los únicos en esta doméstica línea de frente de la resistencia del Estado. Ellos están junto a los musulmanes y las comunidades de descendencia africana y solicitantes de asilo que ya están en la mira de las medidas especiales. La solidaridad con ellos contra la violencia de Estado, es la única ruta para proteger las libertades de todo el mundo.

Mucha gente disfruta de la cultura latinoamericana, especialmente aquella que celebra su danza y la ficción moderna. Nosotros aspiramos ampliar este interés, introduciendo música menos conocida y acceder también a formas de arte visual. Queremos abrir un debate de cómo la política y la cultura son elementos inherentes. La cultura es parte de la vida del pueblo, parte de nuestra resistencia. El pueblo latinoamericano en la línea de frente está haciendo música así como hace historia. Apoyémoslos, unámonos a ellos y aprendamos de ellos.

Frontline Latin América: ¡Viva la solidaridad internacional!



**Arauca:
'..human
rights
disaster.'**

Mexico through Frida's eyes

**'...a contribution to the struggle of the
people for peace and liberty.'**



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'Standard Response': Killer-Cola Vs The Truth

IN RESPONSE to the hundreds of messages sent to Coca-Cola Great Britain on 22 July 2005 to protest their company's murderous labour policies in Colombia, the multinational formulated a statement in an attempt to defend its activities.

The statement, entitled "Standard Response," is highly misleading, and seeks to undermine support for the International Campaign against Coca-Cola and for SINALTRAINAL (the Colombian trade union that launched the campaign as a response to the murder of 8 of their leaders and the kidnap, false imprisonment and displacement of 100s of others) by employing misinformation, false logic and untruths to cloud the issues surrounding Coca-Cola's human and labour rights violations.

The Campaign's response to Coca-Cola's misrepresentations and untruths is available at www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk.

¿CUÁNTOS MÁS?

in London

Lucho Gómez

CUÁNTOS MÁS SEÑOR GOBIERNO?

LA MUERTE de un inocente trabajador latinoamericano JEAN CHARLES MENEZES, asesinado por la policía británica el 22 de julio, cuando se dirigía a su trabajo, llama a reflexionar a la comunidad latinoamericana. Se escuchan voces sobre lo acontecido, se guardan minutos de silencio, se levantan hojas blancas en señal de paz y protestas en contra de la negligencia de la policía británica. Se realizan vigiliass simultáneas, marchas que realzan parten desde el lugar que fue testigo de la casería salvaje de un inocente trabajador y que pretenden llegar a los oídos de quienes a toda costa tratan de ignorar los hechos.

En esa muchedumbre sobria taciturna, casi aletargada, la cual mira su permanencia en este país incierta, porque en su mayoría no cuentan con el tan ansiado estatus de RESIDENCIA LEGAL, convirtiéndolos en blanco perfecto de los excesos policíacos británicos. La verdad nos encontramos en un callejón sin salida, porque sentimos temor de entrar al metro y a los buses donde podemos ser alcanzados por un terrorismo invisible hasta cierto punto y también sentimos miedo de ser confundidos por nuestros rasgos y que nos disparen a sangre fría siete balazos en la cabeza y otro en el cuerpo, como lo hicieron con nuestro compañero JEAN CHARLES MENEZES. O sea, que estamos al alcance de dos fuegos, somos el blanco perfecto por ser inmigrantes.

Vivimos en un país donde podemos ser detenidos en cualquier momento, sin derecho a contar con alguna defensa jurídica, ni mucho menos hacer una llamada telefónica, hasta tres meses después de la detención y solo nos queda confiar en la "eficiencia" del "SERVICIO DE INTELIGENCIA POLICIAL"

También nos quita el sueño, el saber que la POLICIA en vez de proteger la vida de los ciudadanos actúe con negligencia e irresponsabilidad y para tapar su agresividad mienta y oculte información, como en el caso de JEAN CHARLES MENEZES tratando de calmar con dinero la sed de justicia de sus padres, burlándose hasta de su precaria economía y su desconocimiento del ingles,

Una POLICIA que directamente ha dado un mensaje de miedo, con su alevosía, dando a entender claramente de que quien tiene el poder manda y somete, así es como se lo utiliza ante etnias minoritarias, débilmente organizadas, dejándonos claramente est



Parents of State-Murdered Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes in their home in Brazil Alves Washington/Reuters

...and Colombia

Dave Younger

Capitulacion Colombiana
La Ley de Justicia y Paz institucionaliza la impunidad para los Paramilitares Después de que el Congreso paso la ley de justicia y paz, la cual enmarca la legalidad de la desmovilización paramilitar, la prensa internacional y las organizaciones de derechos humanos han sido unánimes en criticar esta nueva legislación. En la edición del 3 de julio titulada "Capitulación Colombiana", El New York Times describe la Ley de Justicia y Paz como una ley de impunidad para los múltiples asesinos, terroristas y traficantes de drogas. Hasta el momento 8000 paramilitares han sido desmovilizados, el resto de ellos tienen que desmovilizarse antes que finalice el año. Las organizaciones de derechos humanos están muy preocupadas por el hecho de que mientras

que el gobierno ha hecho todo lo imposible para cumplir las exigencias de las AUC, estos no han dado nada a cambio. Human Rights Watch en un reportaje muy crítico dice que hay una completa falta de investigación en los crímenes cometidos por los paramilitares; hay un incumplimiento en la desmantelacion de la estructura paramilitar; hay una legalización de facto de la enorme riqueza de las AUC; hay una completa falta de monitoreo del cese de fuego y de los abusos y acciones posteriores a la desmovilización; y una absoluta falta de pago a las reparaciones de las victimas por las violaciones de los derechos humanos. Según los datos de la Comisión Colombiana de Juristas 12.999 Colombianos han sido asesinados por los paramilitares desde 1996, pero solamente 25 de

los 8.000 paramilitares desmovilizados han sido investigados o acusados de crímenes. Esto no es sorprendente considerando el límite con que se adelantaban las investigaciones de sus actividades en el pasado. Después de desmovilizarse un paramilitar tiene que hacer una "confesión espontánea". A partir de este momento los fiscales tienen únicamente 36 horas para decidir si ponen cargos o no y solo tienen 60 días para hacer la investigación. Teniendo en cuenta que hay cientos de paramilitares desmovilizándose al mismo tiempo es imposible realizar una investigación mas profunda. El proceso de investigación se pone aun mas difícil porque los paramilitares no tienen que revelar su alias (generalmente el único nombre que esta referido en una atrocidad es el alias) La impunidad