

sought Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's help to open the "heavenly gates" in Beijing.

Today, more than ever, Pakistan is a key link for Beijing—to Washington, and to the Islamic world. In the wake of the Tiananmen bloodbath, Beijing used Pakistan, which did not criticize the Deng leadership, to help maintain the economic relationship with the United States. And Pakistan continues to act as China's link to the Islamic world, most recently in helping to strengthen China's relationship with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. China's interest in the competing camps of Iran and Saudi Arabia is presently centered around sales of military hardware, which China wants to push to \$500 million this year. With the INF Treaty between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., China has emerged as the only supplier of IRBMs capable of carrying nuclear warheads and with a strike range of 2000 miles.

Nepal and Bangladesh

Of more immediate concern to India is the growing military relationship between China and Pakistan, and China's aggressive efforts to corral Bangladesh and Nepal into the arms nexus. Though Nepal's monarchy has long been a Chinese camp follower, as late as 1975 Bangladesh ignored the China card. The murder that year of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who with India's help, won Bangladesh's independence in 1971, opened the door for China.

Chinese Premier Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen chose a high-profile tour of Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh—circling around India—as their first foray after the June uprising in China in October 1989. Li Peng kept up the rhetoric on China's desire for improved relations with India throughout, but at the same time found no contradiction in backing the Nepali King's proposal to make his country a "zone of peace"—a proposal which, in effect, nullifies the 1950 treaty governing relations between India and Nepal.

Though no military sales took place when Li Peng was in Dhaka, according to the Pakistan daily, *The Dawn*, Chinese arms assistance to Bangladesh was the top item of talks between President Ershad and Premier Li Peng. In an interview with the *Gulf News* of Dubai, Ershad later acknowledged that though Bangladesh had close defense collaboration with Pakistan, most of its arms come from China. Bangladeshi military officers are regularly trained in China, and Bangladesh's light arms are either supplied by China or manufactured at the Chinese-built Ghazipur Ordnance Factory. Frequent visits by both Pakistani and Bangladeshi military delegations to Beijing were capped recently with a visit by no less than Chinese Defense Minister Qin Jiwei to both countries.

India may not begrudge China's desire to earn foreign exchange by selling weapons. But, exhortations by Premier Li Peng, while visiting Nepal and Bangladesh, that China will always stand by these nations in their struggle to protect national sovereignty, does ring alarm bells. Who does he believe is threatening these countries?

Setback in Colombia

Anti-drug fighter ousted from cabinet

by Andrea Olivieri

"Dope, Inc.," the international narcotics cartel, has knocked out the most prominent anti-drug fighter in the government of Colombian President Virgilio Barco, and inserted one of its own in his place. Interior Minister Carlos Lemos Simmonds was forced to resign March 23, after President Barco refused to take his side in what the minister termed a "moral ambush" by the drug traffickers and their political front-men. Immediately named as his replacement was former Attorney General Horacio Serpa Uribe, a mouthpiece for pro-drug legalization circles centered around former President Alfonso López Michelsen.

"In certain areas of the government," wrote Lemos in his letter of resignation, "the attitude toward the drug trade has been changing almost imperceptibly and it is no longer as decisive, intransigent, and firm as it was last December, when it fell to me to do battle against the attempt to create a constitutional law that would fully and irreversibly favor the drug traffickers. . . . I fear that with my departure from the ministry, the drug traffickers and those who aid them, speak for them, and protect them, have won the victory that I snatched from their hands three months ago."

In a front-page commentary March 27, the anti-drug daily *El Espectador* sardonically observed that there has been a "notable silence" regarding Lemos's charges against such prominent individuals as ex-Presidents López Michelsen and Turbay Ayala and Cardinal Mario Revollo Bravo, all members of the self-styled "Notables" who have attempted to pressure the Barco government into abandoning its war on drugs for a "negotiated settlement" with the cocaine cartels. On March 30, the daily devoted its lead editorial to accusing those same individuals of "dishonoring the country." Wrote *El Espectador*, "It is the least one can say, upon learning that the front-men for criminals entered the presidential palace itself, to detail—insult of insults—their conditions for the State's surrender."

The 'moral ambush'

On March 20, Lemos Simmonds denounced a bloody attack on a military patrol by the Moscow-linked FARC narco-terrorists, the same ones who have insistently sued for

peace with the government through the mediation efforts of the “Notables.” Lemos congratulated the Colombian electorate for voting against violence in the March 11 congressional elections by defeating “the political arm of that armed group, which is the Patriotic Union” (UP) party. The mafia assassination 24 hours later of UP presidential candidate Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa triggered a cry among the left for Lemos’s scalp, which President Barco promptly delivered.

Lemos’s charges (see *Documentation*) prompted a letter of rebuttal the next day, allegedly over the signatures of the cabinet—plus general secretary of the presidency German Montoya, who has often been described as President Barco’s “Rasputin.” However, Justice Minister Roberto Salazar admitted in a March 28 statement that the government had in fact authorized two Medellín “businessmen,” López intimate Santiago Londoño White and J. Mario Aristizabal, to negotiate the release of mafia hostage Alvaro Diego Montoya, the son of Barco’s secretary—for “humanitarian reasons.”

One day later, a communiqué was released under the Medellín Cartel’s alias—the “Extraditables”—claiming that those “businessmen” had represented themselves as official government emissaries in negotiations with the cartel, and had agreed to a deal whereby Alvaro Montoya and other kidnap victims would be released *in exchange for a suspension of extraditions*. The two emissaries had reportedly drawn their authority from meetings with the Colombian National Security Council, members of the cabinet, and with President Barco himself. Extraditions have in fact been on hold for several months.

Despite denials by the presidency of the Extraditables’ charges, Colombians were stunned by the possibility that the Barco government might have been conducting clandestine negotiations with the cocaine mafia even while claiming to pursue a war on those same criminals. Lemos Simmonds released a public letter as the former government minister, denying any personal knowledge of the arrangement described by the cartel, but concluded suggestively that they could well have been held behind his back: “Either the Extraditables are lying to the country, or . . . it was the interior minister [himself] who was lied to.”

Surrounding the presidency

While the veracity of the Extraditables’ claims remains unconfirmed, it is clear that pro-drug legalization forces in Colombia and in Washington have mounted an offensive intended to halt the Barco government’s anti-drug war and impose a conciliatory policy which would give Dope, Inc. a free hand inside the country. The design is to make such a policy official *before* Liberal Party presidential candidate César Gaviria Trujillo—overwhelmingly nominated by voters, for his hard-line anti-drug stance—wins the presidency and takes office.

The Colombian side of the offensive has been run through the López Michelsen political machine. López is the ac-

knowledged *éminence grise* behind the “Notables.” His machine has succeeded in imposing drug legalization advocate, and defeated presidential candidate, Ernesto Samper Pizano as one of Gaviria’s two campaign managers.

The appointment of Horacio Serpa Uribe as Lemos Simmonds’s replacement is another López coup. Serpa Uribe was the campaign manager of Samper Pizano’s failed candidacy and has reportedly been a devoted follower of López Michelsen from his youth. President Barco had named Serpa Uribe attorney general after the mafia assassination of his anti-drug predecessor Carlos Mauro Hoyos in January 1988. Serpa Uribe refused to pursue the drug mafia, and instead dedicated his stint as attorney general to pursuing communist charges that the Armed Forces was running a “dirty war” against them.

López’s treasonous “dialogue” proposal—proffered repeatedly to successive governments ever since the mafia assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in 1984—finally won a “foot in the door” when President Barco yielded to pressures from the “Notables” and offered a political/legal amnesty to the M-19 narco-terrorists earlier this year, under the convention that they had reformed and eschewed the path of violence. Barco’s argument that a distinction could somehow be drawn between “guerrilla” terrorism and narco-terrorism, has led to the disastrous result of the cocaine cartel assassins now demanding the same “benevolent” treatment their M-19 foot-soldiers received.

U.S. pressures

The pro-drug legalization newspaper the *Washington Times* has been aiding the orchestrated demand for negotiations with the traffickers. A March 28 article presents Medellín Cartel czar Pablo Escobar as the sensible fellow who genuinely wants to negotiate an end to the drug war through a deal with the government. He is played up against supposed hard-liner Fidel Castaño, the “right-wing,” “anti-communist” successor to cartel military czar Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, killed in a shoot-out with police last December. Castaño, according to the *Times*, will do everything in his power to sabotage a deal with the Barco government.

On March 29, another *Washington Times* article inadvertently revealed why a war on drugs under U.S. government tutelage is doomed to fail. David Wilson, the head of financial investigations for the Drug Enforcement Administration, explained to the *Times* that U.S. policy is to urge Colombia’s Barco *not* to concentrate on closing money-laundering operations, for fear it would detract from efforts to capture drug traffickers and destroy their infrastructure.

Anyone familiar with the drug-trafficking “industry” knows that it is the laundering of “hot money,” and not easily replaceable laboratories, airplanes, chemicals, and criminal enforcers, which make “Dope, Inc.” the \$500 billion-a-year cartel it has become. Thus, the “logic” of the U.S. position stems not out of a concern with shutting down trafficking,

but rather with perpetuating the flow of capital—any capital—into Third World countries otherwise incapable of paying off their foreign debts.

The DEA official's comment coincides with a report that the drug lords, confident of a more amenable environment, are bringing their "flight capital" back into Colombia. This is, not accidentally, a central goal of the debt plan of U.S. Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady.

Documentation

The Lemos Simmonds resignation letter

Translated excerpts of the March 23 letter of resignation by Colombian Interior Minister Carlos Lemos Simmonds to President Virgilio Barco, which was widely printed in the Colombian press:

It has not been easy for me to interpret what you and your advisers truly believe regarding my continued presence at the head of the *Interior* Ministry. Their and your thoughts on the matter have been so many and so contradictory that it is only natural that my first reaction has been one of perplexity. Now, I am fully convinced that I must resign. But not for reasons of political convenience, nor because in the matter of the links between the Patriotic Union and the opposing factions of the FARC—of which you and the entire country know—there emerged some disagreement between President and Minister, especially in light of *El Tiempo's* report last Friday of your denial to journalists that your letter to [UP president] Dr. Montana Cuellar contained any disauthorization of me. Rather, I resigned out of indignation over the fact that, in the face of ill-intentioned and clearly absurd charges of my supposed connection to the assassination of Dr. Jaramillo Ossa, that neither you nor the government made your voices heard to reject such imputations, to repudiate them and to defend a man of good will.

In truth, when something like this occurs, it is clear that moral timidity has already reached the heart of government. If there is no other means of placating those angry individuals who mount such a fraud than the frankly inappropriate one of delivering the head of an honorable man who has only told the truth, there can no longer be any doubt that the only appropriate thing to do is to withdraw from the government.

I don't know, Mr. President, whether you and your col-

laborators have finally realized that a moral ambush was mounted against me. The villains whom I have denounced, criticized, and openly combatted—nearly always alone—in Congress, before the media, in my public interventions and from the government, wanted to assault my personal and political honor with the same perverse intention with which they assaulted Dr. Jaramillo Ossa. They sought to produce a dual effect: eliminate a citizen who had been sentenced a long time ago, as proven by the fact that he [Jaramillo] had to appeal to Pablo Escobar Gaviria for Rodríguez Gacha to respect his life, and to cause the removal of an official whose strong efforts have blocked the formalization of treaties and pacts through which they sought a more "flexible" and "less rigorous" treatment of their crimes from the authorities. Naturally, I could not also ask for special consideration, firstly for elementary ethical reasons and secondly, because I have never been Pablo Escobar's friend. We have never held two ideas or criteria in common, and do not feel any mutual admiration for each other.

But there can remain no doubt that I had become a bothersome official some time ago. In certain areas of the government itself, the attitude toward the drug trade has been changing almost imperceptibly and it is no longer the same decisive, intransigent, and firm attitude of last December, when it fell to me to do battle against the attempt to create a constitutional law that would fully and irreversibly favor the drug traffickers. It proved a victorious battle for the government, which was what led the traffickers to seek by means of skillful proposals formulated by the Notables what could not be achieved by intimidation, by force, or by other well-known means.

At the same time, Mr. President, I should say without ambiguity that the fact that it is I who must resign the Interior Ministry in the aftermath of these last few days' events, demonstrates that those who, the day after the elections, rushed to declare happily that all was changed in Colombia and that the country had undergone a healthy revolution, sinned in their flippancy. Because the truth is that, in light of what has occurred, one must conclude that the Nation is submerged, today more than ever, in the tremendous moral depression that I described in my Cali speech. . . . Further, I fear that with my departure from the Ministry, the drug traffickers and those who aid them, speak for them, and protect them, have won the victory that I snatched from them three months ago. I pray that I am wrong, but I believe that they have finally achieved a situation in which no one will hinder them in their intention of winning the benevolent and compliant treatment they have sought for so long.

All that remains is for me to thank you, Mr. President, for having given me the opportunity to serve the country at the head of the Communications and Interior Ministries, in a moment of grave danger and profound crisis, as acting Justice Minister. I hope I have fulfilled my duty and wish you the best success for the future.