
Book Reviews

Diatribes against the Armed Forces whitewashes Colombia's narco-terrorism

by Valerie Rush

The Palace of Justice: A Colombian Tragedy

by Ana Carrigan

Four Walls, Eight Windows, New York, 1993

303 pages, hardbound, \$22.95

Rarely has a book so crudely propagandistic received such favorable press in such a short span of time as Ana Carrigan's diatribe against the Ibero-American military. This apology for narco-terrorism is aimed against the armed forces of the entire continent, which remain among the few surviving institutions still capable of defeating the spreading narco-terrorist insurgency in whose service Carrigan has hired out her pen.

Barely was her book published when the premier mouthpieces of Anglo-American policy, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, came out with reviews on Nov. 28, 1993 that wept crocodile tears over Carrigan's "revelations" of Army brutality in Colombia and over the poor Indians and peasants who, in Carrigan's words, are the "politically invisible casualties" of the power-mad Armed Forces. Where were these "journals of record" in 1989, when the U.S. military bombed thousands of black Panamanians—the "politically invisible casualties" of George Bush's "Operation Just Cause"?

The destruction of first the Panamanian and then the Salvadoran militaries under "anti-drug" and "human rights" auspices was only the beginning. The Haitian Armed Forces have since become the international human rights lobby's favorite whipping boys; the Peruvian military is threatened with the so-called Cantuta University scandal, and the Mexican Armed Forces are an intended victim of the Zapatistas' "indigenous revolution."

Colombia's Armed Forces have repeatedly tangled with the self-proclaimed human rights lobbies over the years, but the latter are apparently gearing for a major new assault, as Carrigan's book would suggest. For example, the foreword to her book is written by Conor Cruise O'Brien, former U.N. official and a leading Anglophile geopolitician, who de-

nounces Colombia's "pseudo-democracy" for allowing the military to supposedly rampage without restraints, and yet who has not a word to say about that pseudo-democracy's U.S.-endorsed deals today with the same narco-terrorists who are the idealized heroes of Carrigan's book.

State terrorism, or terrorism against the state?

Carrigan's fairy tale of a power-crazed military run amok is the latest in a series of attacks on the Colombian Armed Forces which have come out recently. In late 1992, a 580-page Spanish-language book, *El Terrorismo de Estado en Colombia (State Terrorism in Colombia)*, was published by a handful of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). That book contains a virtual "hit-list" of 500 of the country's most effective counterinsurgency officers, including photographs, military background and training, even personal data.

One source of information for *El Terrorismo de Estado* was reportedly former Colombian Attorney General Alfonso Gómez Méndez, whose wife, Patricia Lara, is a left-wing journalist and M-19 propagandist. In fact, Colombia's Attorney General's office has consistently functioned as a branch of the pro-terrorist British intelligence asset Amnesty International since January 1988, when the last attorney general with integrity, Carlos Mauro Hoyos, was gunned down by the cocaine cartels.

It came as no surprise, therefore, that another former Colombian attorney general was an important source for Carrigan's book. In fact, Carlos Jiménez Gómez—who receives honorable mention in Carrigan's acknowledgements—is not merely the attorney general who *on his own authority* met with the heads of the Medellín Cartel in 1984 (just a few weeks after they had assassinated anti-drug Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla), and tried to broker an amnesty deal for those butchers.

Jiménez went on to greater infamy by publicly demanding a reversal of the government's policy of extraditing drug traffickers, by filing charges against the National Police for using herbicides to eradicate marijuana crops, by slandering and persecuting Lara Bonilla's successor, Justice Minis-

ter Enrique Parejo González, and, in 1991, by hiring himself out as the lawyer for the Medellín Cartel's number-two, Jorge Luis Ochoa Vásquez.

Another source for Carrigan's book, we are told, is the son of former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen, Juan Manuel López Caballero. López Michelsen, known alternately in Colombia as "The Chicken" and "The Godfather," is the country's leading political broker for the cocaine cartels. As President, López facilitated the growth of Colombia's drug trade by forging the tax breaks and banking mechanisms, such as the so-called *ventanilla siniestra* (sinister window), that gave the cartels their eventual stranglehold on the nation's political and economic sectors.

López Michelsen, who has been a long-standing opponent of extradition, is the mentor of drug legalization lobbyist and presidential candidate Ernesto Samper Pizano, and is known to have accepted generous cartel contributions to his (failed) 1982 re-election bid. In April 1984, López outdid Jiménez Gómez, by waiting barely one week after Lara Bonilla's assassination before holding secret meetings with his killers to try to mediate a government amnesty for them. He issued a public appeal on their behalf in July 1984, and has repeatedly acted as the cartels' go-between with the Colombian government ever since.

Lies and anonymous testimony

It is precisely in these mob connections of Carrigan's sources that the real story of what happened during the M-19 guerrillas' November 1985 siege of the Colombian Justice Palace lies, since—as Carrigan states from the outset—her intention is to "discredit" the official conclusion that it was the drug cartels, using the M-19 as their footsoldiers, which ordered the siege that destroyed the nation's legal archives and left half of the Supreme Court dead.

Carrigan's so-called investigative journalism, based largely on *anonymous* testimonies as well as on the "confessions" of the M-19 itself, has served up a soap opera about idealistic M-19 youth who had the misfortune to believe that, with the help of the Supreme Court, they could symbolically put the Colombian government on trial for violating a peace treaty with the M-19.

Through a combination of faulty planning and plain bad luck, Carrigan claims, the M-19's plans went awry. Instead of negotiating with the M-19, the "cowardly" Belisario Betancur government handed full authority over to the military to retake the Justice Palace. A full-scale assault was launched, despite the pitiable pleas of the M-19's hostages—who included nearly a dozen Supreme Court magistrates—and within 24 hours the entire building was reduced to rubble and everyone left inside to ashes. Carrigan concludes that the military's rampage had "killed two birds with one stone," by eliminating both the pesky M-19 and an "overly independent" Supreme Court that was allegedly prying too closely into military corruption and dirty war tactics.

Carrigan's tale is constructed from a tissue of lies. Not only is her book a coverup of who and what the M-19 is, and what the nature of the judiciary's war with the drug interests was, but she also distorts the fundamental issue of what the role of the state must be in protecting the national interest.

Carrigan is obsessed with the fact that, throughout the siege, President Betancur refused to accept a phone call from the president of the Supreme Court, an intimate friend of his and the M-19's most prominent hostage. The M-19 nonetheless succeeded in broadcasting over national radio the judge's pitiful appeal for a cease-fire and negotiations. And yet Betancur knew only too well that there was nothing he could say to his friend, because there was nothing to negotiate—an M-19 surrender and release of the hostages were the only course that could leave the national institutions intact and credible. The terrorists had already rejected those terms.

Meet the M-19

Although Carrigan describes the M-19 as a group of disenchanted political activists whose worst fault is their ineptness, she chooses to leave out a few relevant details about them, such as: their kidnap/murder of labor leader Raquel

The red dye

Conor Cruise O'Brien's authorship of the foreword to this book is a red dye identifying it as part of the British oligarchy's plans to murder national sovereignty and political freedom everywhere—including allying with the drug mafias to achieve this. The former Irish cabinet minister and high-level U.N. official in the Congo, born in Dublin in 1917, most recently disgraced himself as the mouthpiece of Margaret Thatcher's efforts to shore up the communist dictatorship in East Germany.

In October 1989, while the brave citizens of Leipzig were marching nightly demanding freedom from their Soviet oppressors, O'Brien denounced the specter of a reunified, free Germany in the *London Times*, under the headline: "Beware a Reich Resurgent." O'Brien's Oct. 31 piece fretted that the Soviets were too preoccupied with internal problems to militarily put down the East German resistance: "If this view of the Soviet Union is correct, then German reunification is now inevitable. We are on the road to the Fourth Reich: a pan-German entity, commanding the full allegiance of German nationalists and constituting a focus for national pride." Not long before this fulmination, O'Brien had called for legalizing drugs and dismantling the war on drugs.—*Katherine Notley*

Mercado in 1976; their documented involvement in drug- and arms-smuggling as early as 1981 (the Jaime Guillot Lara case); their mutual admiration society in the mid-'80s with Nazi-Communist narco-terrorist Carlos Lehder, whose terrorist forces in the Quintín Lamé Brigade sometimes jointly deployed with the M-19; their assassination attempt against Interior Minister Jaime Castro; their kidnapping of Colombian politician Alvaro Gómez Hurtado in 1988, killing his bodyguard during the assault; to name but a few.

Despite the eyewitness report of one magistrate's driver that the terrorists shot most of the judges through the head execution-style, Carrigan would convince the reader otherwise by endlessly filling her pages with alleged transcripts of chummy conversation between the judges and their captors—all based on the recollections of her "anonymous" survivor. She also relies heavily on a clandestine ballistics report purporting to prove that the bullets which killed the judges did not come from M-19 weapons! This, despite the fact that—as Carrigan herself admits—the fires raging throughout the building had reduced corpses and weapons alike to unidentifiable ash.

Most outrageous is Carrigan's insistence that the drug mafias had nothing to do with ordering the assault, despite the fact that:

- The Supreme Court justices had been receiving daily death threats from the cocaine cartels throughout the month preceding the siege, which took place on *precisely* the days that the Court was considering granting constitutional approval to extradition of drug traffickers.

- The M-19 had a long history of collaboration with and financial dependence on the drug traffickers (see *EIR* Special Report, "Bush Surrenders to Dope, Inc.").

- The U.S. State Department's report on the incident concluded that "very solid evidence" had been found that the M-19 "had been paid \$5 million by one of the chief narcotics groups down there for the precise purpose of destroying the legal records and intimidating the judges so that there wouldn't be any more extraditions."

- Then-Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González publicly accused the M-19 of working on behalf of the drug traffickers.

The story of Enrique Parejo is particularly poignant, because Carrigan exploits him as a source to claim that the Betancur government was paralyzed by cowardice and incapable of standing up to the military. Parejo, intimate friend of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, stood up to the mob and courageously pursued the anti-drug agenda of his martyred friend, whom he succeeded. Refusing to sell out to the mob as many of Colombia's leading figures have done, he was abandoned by the Colombian political establishment. He barely survived a mafia assassination attempt in Budapest in 1987 and has been condemned to live as a virtual recluse in his own country ever since. Today he is a broken man, who has been politically captured by the anti-military left.

I prefer to remember Enrique Parejo as he was in 1985, who understood only too well the nature of the M-19. Only days after the siege, Parejo held an angry exchange with foreign journalists: "I want you to keep in mind a fact which is of utmost importance. The guerrillas did not arrive at the Palace of Justice with the purpose of talking. . . . They entered killing. They sought out as their immediate targets of action the four judges of the Constitutional Hall and the judges of the criminal court, the same judges whose lives had been threatened previously for giving favorable opinions on extraditions. . . . One cannot have many illusions about the fate the judges were to suffer. . . ."

"So President Betancur gave the order to burn and shell the Justice Palace?" a reporter asked, to which Parejo replied: "My God, why are you asking me these kinds of questions? Those who began the action were not the government, nor the Army; they were guerrillas. They came in killing. Do you believe that, while armed guerrillas were arriving—just look at the arsenal which they brought with them—the response of the government should have been, 'Gentlemen, keep calm, let's talk'?"

Parejo was asked if the military might have carried out the massacre, given the fact that the Council of State had only recently made a "far-reaching and historic judgement condemning the Army for tortures"—an argument Carrigan revives in her book. Parejo responded with the obvious answer that every Council of State judge emerged from the conflagration alive, unlike those of the Supreme Court. He accused the journalists of sounding like attorneys for the cocaine cartels, concluding: "By God, let us not distort the truth. Let it not be thought that the criminal assault here was by the government, that it was the government which seized the Justice Palace, that it was the government which went in there shooting, that it was the government which murdered the judges of the court, when there is testimony of those same judges who say the guerrillas murdered the judges in cold blood—in cold blood. And this doesn't seem to worry you, eh? You are not grieved and disturbed by these crimes?"

Although a core group of leaders of the M-19 perished in the Justice Palace conflagration along with their hostages, it was the Colombian Armed Forces and *not* the M-19 which ultimately suffered the biggest blow from that incident. Thanks to the mobilization of narco-terrorist forces in and around the international human rights lobbies, and to such international media as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the defenders of national sovereignty in Colombia got smeared as the bad guys while the M-19 within a few short years were granted a full political amnesty, brought into the Colombian government, given a major hand in writing the new national Constitution, and given a boost in their drive for the presidency.

The cocaine cartels have not accidentally followed in M-19's footsteps every step of the way. And that is what Ana Carrigan's book is really all about.