

could, to further their drive for legalization. They came back frustrated about what they had failed to accomplish there, and about how little headway they are making generally in their drive for world drug legalization.

WOLA's Coletta Youngers denounced the UNGA session as "the world's biggest pep rally for the war on drugs." Our only success there, she said, was the advertisement placed in the *New York Times* for the opening day, June 8, by Soros's Lindesmith Center, with a list of prominent world figures attacking the war on drugs. Martin Jelsma, coordinator of the Transnational Institute's "Drugs and Democracy" project, urged that an international mobilization be launched to defeat a proposed UN Strategy for Coca and Opium Poppy Elimination, which he fears would give legitimacy to eradication programs.

Originally, the seminar had been planned for just before the UN session, at which the final report of an international taskforce, set up six months earlier under the direction of Jelsma with the mission of developing arguments to discredit "Airbridge Interdiction in the Andes," a joint U.S.-Peruvian program, would be released. The "Airbridge" program has largely shut down the drug cartels' ability to use airplanes for trafficking between the Andean nations; it drives the legalizers mad, because it demonstrates that appropriate U.S. coordination with the national militaries and law enforcement agencies in the Andean countries, *can* inflict grave damage on global drug-trafficking, thus destroying the "war-always-fails" axiom upon which legalization is premised.

After six months, the taskforce has yet to come up with a strategy with which to defend the drug-carrying planes flying over the Andes. Instead of releasing a report, as they had planned, they issued an executive summary of the taskforce's conclusions, because the country studies submitted are "still in process."

The executive summary admits: "The strategy of air bridge denial was, and is hailed by U.S. officials as a resounding success, and is touted as justification for further spending on such multinational source country and interdiction programs. Official U.S. government sources acknowledge that traffickers have adapted to air bridge denial by using other land, sea, river and air routes. However, they also insist that such adaptations require that 'denial' programs be reinforced, invigorated and extended on land and water routes. While we recognize the efficacy of closing, in some measure, the air bridge between Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, the evidence suggests such optimism is unfounded."

The "evidence" was nonexistent, and the attempts to pretend otherwise, were outright laughable, as typified in the remarks of Peruvian CAPHC adviser and economist Hugo Cabieses. Proudly announcing that he had studied under Trotskyist economist Joan Robinson, Cabieses claimed that the reason the price of coca in Peru has dropped precipitously—a drop which all acknowledge has encouraged many coca-growers to return to growing food—has nothing to do

with traffickers' increased difficulty in getting coca paste out of Peru. It is simply that Peruvian traffickers are "inefficient," he said, because, "as economics teaches us, the market" drives the inefficient out of business.

Human rights fraud

Several speakers pointed out that, where the legalization movement has delivered significant blows to anti-drug efforts, it has succeeded in transforming the drug issue into a matter of "democracy" and "human rights," and this, therefore, is where efforts should be concentrated.

This was the principal argument of WOLA's Youngers, who pointed to the use that has been made of human rights conditionalities (principally, the so-called Leahy Amendment), which require that U.S. security assistance programs meet human rights criteria. The Leahy Amendment, she said, has prevented the Clinton administration from delivering aid to the Colombian Army, even though that aid was announced at the beginning of 1997.

Joy Olson of the Latin American Working Group (LAWG), a coalition of non-governmental organizations affiliated with the National Council of Churches, pressed for others to join LAWG in investigating U.S. military cooperation programs, as the most efficient means to identify pressure points for attack. Outlining some of those investigations (she focussed on U.S.-Mexican relations), Olson urged that the seminar participants mobilize to identify, and close loopholes which they allege make the Pentagon budget less restricted by human rights clauses than aid channeled through the State Department.

Younger, who attacked the U.S. Army Southern Command, charging that it carries out its "own parallel foreign policy" in Colombia, endorsed Olson's strategy, praising a study being prepared by LAWG as exemplary of the work required to stop "militarization" being carried out "under the cover" of anti-drug efforts.

'Collective kidnapping'

During the second panel, the insurrection strategy was outlined by the six speakers associated with CAPHC: Omayra Morales and Ricardo Vargas of the Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), from Colombia; Cabieses and CAPHC vice president Carlos Francisco Barrantes, from Peru; Theo Roncken from Holland; and Gregorio Lanza, from Bolivia. Each argued that the *cocaleros* movement has decided upon three non-negotiable demands:

- To stop all "forcible" eradication, whether by fumigation or law enforcement;
- To permit no drug eradication policy or operation in any area under their control, which is not negotiated through them, in the name of "local control" and "democracy";
- To resist any attempt to "impose" any other policy, along the lines of the FARC-led 1996 Guaviare uprising in Colombia.

The CAPHC people made clear that this is not an issue of development; it is an issue of *power*. They demand that all development aid go to them, or to groups which they designate; *they* demand to run any programs in their areas; *they* will negotiate directly for foreign aid. They, in other words, seek to replace the state, to *become* the state in “their” areas. If governments do not go along, they will face war. Lanza spelled out that, in the case of Bolivia, this is a “geopolitical” issue, which threatens the existence of the nation. Drug production is centered in the Chapare region, which is at the heart of Bolivia, unlike the Alto Huallaga in Peru, or the southern regions of Colombia, which are more peripheral geographically, he said. If conflict were to break out in the Chapare, Bolivia’s existence would be called into question.

Omayra Morales, the would-be “Rigoberta Menchú” of the *cocaleros* movement (she speaks regularly at UN meetings in Europe and the United States), identified the Guaviare strategy. Holding various municipal posts in Miraflores, Guaviare, Omayra Morales presented herself as just another peasant “growing coca for our sustenance.” We poor peasants formed self-defense squads, because the world was against us (the guerrillas, the Army, the paramilitaries). We have a right to defend our coca, and this is what happened in 1996, “a big mobilization run by us,” she said.

The “mobilization,” which spread across four depart-

ments in the south of Colombia (Guaviare, Caquetá, Putumayo, and Meta) in July-August 1996, was an armed uprising which attempted to drive the military out, and take control of the region. It was organized as “a concerted action of the drug traffickers and the guerrillas,” Colombia’s anti-drug Prosecutor General, Alfonso Valdivieso, documented in a report issued at the time. Then-Army Commander Gen. Harold Bédoya detailed how the uprising was a life-and-death issue for the cartels and the FARC, because the Army operations started that spring in the area, had begun to roll back their control.

Just how “democratic” Morales’s people are, was described in an interview with *EIR* on Oct. 31, 1996, by Héctor Orozco Orozco, Mayor of Florencia, Caquetá, which FARC forces had tried to overrun: “The marches were under the control of the guerrillas and of the coca-growers. . . . The guerrillas organized those marches six months earlier. For six months, they went throughout Caquetá, house to house, farm to farm, threatening people, collecting money, food, everything.” When the uprising began, the guerrillas forced people into their marches; “women who wanted to leave, who cried, and were not allowed to leave; peasants who had been taken on the march for 8, 10, 15 days, . . . forced to abandon their farms. These were not marches, but the collective kidnapping of more than 25,000 people.”

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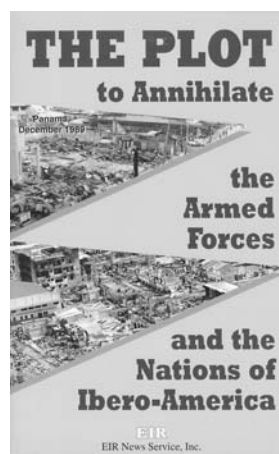
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