
Interview: Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.)



‘I Had Hoped LaRouche Would Be the U.S. President’

On Oct. 27, Colombia’s Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.) gave the following telephone interview to EIR’s Ibero-American Editor Dennis Small. Formerly Commander of the Colombian Army, General Bedoya formed his own political movement, and ran for President, on a program of fighting the narco-guerrillas and developing the country, after narco-owned President Ernesto Samper Pizano forced him to retire in 1997. In September 1999, General Bedoya came to Washington for a week of meetings with Congress, diplomats, press, and military and intelligence officials, organized by EIR, in which he laid out the needed change in U.S. policy toward the Americas, to save Colombia from disintegration at the hands of the narco-terrorists. In February 2000, he returned to Washington, to hold a joint seminar with then-Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche on how to secure the sovereignty of the Americas. This interview was translated from Spanish.

EIR: General Bedoya, you visited the United States several times, for example, in September of 1999, and then, a few months later in February of 2000, where you participated together with Lyndon LaRouche—then a presidential candidate—in a public seminar in Washington, D.C. During your visits, you held meetings with a score or more of Congressmen, Senators, State Department and Pentagon officials, etc. What was your message at the time, and how has the situation in Colombia, and with regard to its relations with the United States, changed?

Bedoya: Well, it is always a pleasure to be able to talk with you people, who have stayed on top of the situation in Colombia and remain so correct in your analyses. And I hope we can continue with these same relations and that, hopefully, the United States and the rest of the world will come to understand that truth must be sought everywhere. You know a great deal of the truth.

What I spoke about with LaRouche when I was there on his invitation and later—and, something you didn’t mention just now, but I was in the United States in 2001, on the day of the terrorist events in New York. I was in Miami, and watched the tragedy that occurred on Sept. 11, from Miami. But what we said to the whole world from Washington, was that the United States was threatened, just like Colombia, by terrorist groups, criminals, drug traffickers, who have a machinery of

terrorism and violence that was destroying Colombia, but which would also surely attack the United States. Because terrorists are not Colombian, but are international mafiosi, and among them, they have their alliances and their support networks.

Unfortunately, all those forecasts were borne out on Sept. 11. You can look at the tapes: It was stated with great clarity that, if the United States doesn’t look to Colombia, doesn’t look to the Americas, at any moment it was going to face a tragedy, because terrorism doesn’t remain quiet.

Colombia, from that moment to the present time, has been a country devastated by crime and violence. At that time, the great protest that was made and which I made publicly, was that the Colombian government, with the blessing of the U.S. government, had handed over half the country to the FARC drug traffickers in the Caguan region, and that from there, they were conspiring against the entire world.

The great protest that I also made was against the Plan Colombia—surely designed by the FARC, and badly done in every way—which brought with it the consequence that, after the Andrés Pastrana government, Colombia continued to stagger along on economic issues, on security, on drug trafficking, and, in general, on terrorism. By virtue of not understanding this problem, [terrorist] satellites have also been created, as in the Venezuela case, which today constitutes a serious threat not only to Colombia, but to the rest of America and, I believe, to the North Americans themselves. . . .

We also addressed the economic viewpoint in Washington. Colombia cannot continue as it has: a country devastated by war, trying to make treaties and international trade as if it were a country at peace, as if it were a European country, when the reality is that Colombia is waging a world war, alone, against terrorism and drug traffic. Its economy is practically destroyed, the countryside has been abandoned by the peasantry, and we no longer even produce the food we produced before. Today, we are filled with starvation and human displacement to the major cities, which are filled with the pain and misery of all Colombians.

Today, we find ourselves—in the final days of the Bush government—trying to sign a trade agreement, the so-called Free-Trade Agreement, as if we were in the best situation to sign a treaty, while ignoring the fact that Colombia is in the middle of a world war, in a great alliance with the United



New York Stock Exchange president Richard Grasso embraces Raúl Reyes, the head of finances of the narco-terrorist FARC, in the jungles of Columbia, June 26, 1999. "When Mr. Richard Grasso comes to interview the FARC, to discuss what they are going to do with their drug money, this simply creates confusion, not only in Colombia but throughout the world."

States against terrorism and drug trafficking, against common enemies who are the drug traffickers and terrorists represented by the FARC, by the ELN, and by the "self-defense" groups. Together with my organization Fuerza Colombia, I sense a total unfamiliarity with Colombian reality. What this country needs are true allies, and perhaps the only true ally we have is the United States, and the U.S. should look at us that way, when we are negotiating commercial accords.

Similarly, the agreements struck with the International Monetary Fund cannot be as if with a country at peace, but rather with a country at war, which needs to build big infrastructure works, a Marshall Plan, so that Colombia can deal competitively. . . .

EIR: . . .The free-trade treaties always remind me of the joke: " 'We have free trade,' said the elephant to the mouse." The powerful financial interests use free trade simply to impose their will on countries.

Bedoya: Exactly. It's like demanding a free-trade treaty with Europe after World War II, in the midst of the ruins; it's like telling those European countries that they have to have a free-trade agreement with the United States, under such conditions, while not making a Marshall Plan, which was the logical thing to do. Here in Colombia and in America, there must be a Marshall Plan.

EIR: You mentioned that much of what you and LaRouche said here in Washington fell on deaf ears. But, what can you

tell me of those interests, perhaps represented most graphically by the former president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Grasso, who, more than a question of deaf ears, had interests linked to Colombia's enemies? What of the International Monetary Fund and its policy of including the drug trade in its calculations of national GNP?

Bedoya: Richard Grasso came to Colombia twice—once deploying into the jungles of the Caguan to speak with the FARC's chief of finances, who is the chief of the cocaine laboratories. And there, they made deals which, even to this day, we don't know the details of, but which one could surmise simply had to do with managing the drug dollars of FARC chieftain Tirofijo, or of his FARC, there on Wall Street, in New York. Because there is no other explanation.

Later, Mr. Grasso returned, to Cartagena, with other sinister figures who also went to the Caguán, from Cartagena, to interview Tirofijo and the other terrorists there. Finally, today, the United States characterizes the FARC as drug traffickers and as terrorists.

What this makes clear for us is that the international market, Wall Street, must have billions of drug dollars, that have surely created problems for the international financial economy, as it is doing currently in Colombia. But nobody has ever said how much FARC money there is in the United States.

The reality is that, regarding this matter of drug dollars, the United States has been very lazy. Its policy toward the FARC has not been very clear. And the Plan Colombia today

continues to be a palliative presented to the Americans as if there were a real fight ongoing against the drug trade, when the reality is that the funds of the Plan Colombia are neither well managed, nor well deployed. And the weapons that have been bought in the United States in the fight against the drug trade are not being used as they should against the narco-terrorists, especially the FARC.

EIR: General Bedoya, you are personally familiar with the entire geography and national territory of Colombia. Could you please explain to our readers what the current situation in Colombia is, with regard to the narco-terrorists? And further, what should the relationship be between Colombia and the United States? If the Plan Colombia is not the solution, how should things work?

Bedoya: Colombia is the only country in the Americas which is allied with the United States against the international terrorists and drug traffickers. Ever since the events of Sept. 11, Colombia has allied itself with the United States. And the United States has viewed Colombia as its main ally in this fight, and is currently helping Colombia through the Plan Colombia.

What is not comprehensible, and is not clear, is that the military equipment—planes or helicopters—that the United States has here in Colombia as part of Plan Colombia (but which, basically, belong to the United States), are not used here by the Colombian military forces except when the U.S. ambassador gives the green light, and only in special situations of battle against the drug trade.

The truth is that we have a paralyzed aerial flotilla of U.S. helicopters, because they are not allowed to be used. And I say, fine, if the United States believes that it is fighting against the drug trade, but aerial support is paralyzed, where is the help? This is something that is incomprehensible.

In the same way, when the U.S. government supports dialogue with drug traffickers and terrorists, as occurred throughout the Pastrana government, while it was known that the terrorists and drug traffickers were using half the country to run their laboratories and their [drug] plantations, and to manage the money and exporting of drugs. When Mr. Richard Grasso comes to interview the FARC, to discuss what they are going to do with their drug money, this simply creates confusion, not only in Colombia but throughout the world.

If we are going to wage war, we have to do it with everything we've got, and with all the resources and support for the Colombian military forces in their fight. And not create division, as exists today, between supposed "human rights violators" who are fighting against terrorism and the "non-violators" who are fighting against the drug traffickers. We aren't going to win any war that way.

EIR: In other words, the drug traffic and terrorism are in reality the same thing.

Bedoya: Yes, that is what we believe. But here, they don't allow the U.S. equipment to be used against "terrorists," but only against "drug traffickers." Except the drug traffickers *are* the terrorists! So, the equipment, the means, cannot be used, because the United States has not wanted to define this situation well, thereby sowing confusion among the authorities, especially within the military forces and especially inside the Army.

The United States must be a true ally, helping Colombia and giving it sufficient resources to win this war. And not just on the military front, but also economically.

On top of the world war against narco-terrorism, which we should be waging, there is now this other world war, that is the world war of the free-trade treaty. That, as we know, makes no sense. And there, as the saying goes, it's a fight between a mouse and an elephant.

Colombia should not have a free-trade treaty; better that we continue with preferential tariffs, which are few enough but which function, rather than try to negotiate as equals against the most important economic power in the world, with a war-ravaged country like Colombia.

Absolutely no one understands this. Hopefully, the next U.S. government will understand that Colombia is the only country in the Americas which is suffering thousands of dead, wounded, and disappeared, in a war jointly waged with the United States. Because here in the Americas, there is not a single country (not Ecuador, not Peru, not Brazil, not Venezuela, not Argentina, not Chile, none) which is fighting the way Colombia is fighting in this war against terrorism. And the Americans themselves, when I was there at the U.S. Congress, recognized that our fallen Colombians are heroes because they are dying in a war for the good of the Americans.

When this is not understood, then we are prolonging a war without end, bleeding ourselves endlessly, and giving the terrorists and the drug traffickers time and space to continue preparing their attacks against other U.S. twin towers. Because you can find terrorists not only in Iraq, but here in Colombia, and surely from countries like Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, or Panama, where vacuums of power were created, as currently exists in Panama, where the U.S. power in the Canal Zone was practically handed over in December 2000.

EIR: When you talk about rejecting the free-trade treaty, and propose a Marshall Plan, what kind of construction, or reconstruction, of infrastructure and of the economy is needed today in Colombia?

Bedoya: It is said that Colombia is going to have 800 U.S. military advisors and companies here, in this fight against terrorism in Colombia. But the reality is that the country is bankrupt; the country is bankrupt. The budgets, the state resources, are going in their majority to pay interest on the debt and to pay the debt to the International Monetary Fund. That is, every day we are getting ourselves deeper in debt, and



General Bedoya with Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., Feb. 23, 2000, at a conference in Washington sponsored by LaRouche's Committee for a New Bretton Woods.

increasingly impoverishing the people with higher taxes. The United States knows this perfectly, because Wall Street and the U.S. Federal Reserve have to know exactly what is going on in Colombia from the economic point of view.

If this war is going to be won, it is not going to be won with a moribund, impoverished and miserable ally, which is where Colombia is today. If the United States wants to win the war, it must have a strong ally.

What is needed? We need to create major infrastructure in Colombia. The first thing is to buy the little that Colombia produces, which are some manufactures and a little oil, which is very scarce, and to begin to mount a trade industry here in Colombia. Remember that Colombia is in the northwestern corner of South America; that it has two seas, the two oceans; and that it is near the Panama Canal and near Chávez in Venezuela. Chávez is a threat to the United States and to the entire world. We need highways; we need health; we need bridges; we need trade; we need education. The United States must open the U.S. schools and universities so that Colombians can come and be trained.

If we make a four- or five-year Marshall Plan under those conditions, I am sure that we will be able to have a promising future. And the whole world will realize that it is worthwhile to be an ally of the United States. And if not, they will discover that it is not worthwhile to be an ally, because on top of all the misery, the U.S. then piles on more, to further sink those who are miserable, who are the ones trying to give the U.S. a hand. I hope that this is a lie, and that it will be demonstrated that Colombia, as a friend and as an ally, must receive the benefits of war, and of the struggle and victory over the common enemy, which is called international terrorism and drug trafficking.

EIR: And so, the change that is required within the United States, would need to go in the direction indicated by Lyndon LaRouche, when he spoke of a return to Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, and of a Marshall Plan, and that the policies of the International Monetary Fund must be changed, and a New Bretton Woods, a new international financial system, must be established?

Bedoya: In effect, yes. Colombia needs this; it needs it urgently. Because Colombia is immersed in a war, in which the primary victim is we Colombians, but the other main victim is the American people. Because it is from here that the drug bombs, the cocaine, the heroin, the terrorism are launched.

I want to repeat that I said this very thing in the United States three years ago when I was there, and I saw those towers fall, from Miami. On that very day, I was on my way to Washington, D.C. in fact to meet with you all; that was the day that the bombing occurred in Washington as well. . . .

And if it wasn't done, we shouldn't be surprised if terrorist attacks against the United States occur, from here, from Colombia. Because it is here that the international mafias are; here we have terrorists from Europe, from Asia, from Africa. . . . How much I would have liked for President Clinton, when we were in Washington, to have summoned me to meet. In the State Department, I was there speaking with Mr. Peter Romero, explaining all this that was going to happen in Washington. But there has been no human power capable of making the United States understand that it has to sit down and talk with people who know this problem.

EIR: Soon we are going to have Presidential elections in the United States, and we will come out with a new President.

But we will also have elections to the Congress, the Senate, and so forth. Do you have a final message to them, and to our readers, regarding the situation in the United States and in Colombia?

Bedoya: Yes, the message is for the American people, the U.S. Congress, and the U.S. government, to finally understand that we are waging a war against world drug trafficking and world terrorism, in which we all must be united, because divisions among countries, among peoples, among states, is what has prolonged these wars. And if you want to know what is happening with the drug trade, come to Colombia: We know it here, and it is here that you will find out what is going on and what must be done with the drug trade.

If you want military allies in the war against terror and against the drug trade, the best ally is Colombia. And if you want to show a developing country how it can become a South Korea today, or how it can become the countries of post-war Europe, well, this has to be done in Colombia. When the United States shows that it is a good ally, that it is a good friend, that is when we will begin to win; not only the Americans, but the Colombians and, in general, the whole world.

EIR: For my part, I would say that if we here, inside the United States, were to rid ourselves of those interests exemplified by Richard Grasso and his embrace of the drug trade, then we would have a United States that is returning to the

orientation of its own Founding Fathers, such as Washington, and Lincoln and the others, an orientation like that indicated by LaRouche. Then we would be a good ally of all the countries of the world, including Colombia, to help in its reconstruction and put an end to narco-terrorism.

Thank you, General Bedoya, for having shared your ideas with us. And I hope that in the near future, you will be able to come and visit us again, and help us in this process of discussion and education of Americans on these matters.

Bedoya: Yes sir. Well, thank you very much and Mr. LaRouche, who I had hoped would be President of the United States this Nov. 2. But we all know the difficulty of these battles for truth and justice. Some day we are going to have an America freed of these plagues, and we are going to have a United States, hopefully in this next government, that understands that there must be a great political, economic, social, and military reform to free us of this whole plague.

The United States and the Americas are a single entity; all of our countries are the same. The United States is in Colombia; Colombia is in the United States. Between us all, we are going to wage this fight and we are going to win. I hope to return to the United States, and hopefully to meet with you, with LaRouche, with the U.S. President, and to return to the U.S. Congress to speak on these matters. And hopefully, in the end, they will understand before it is too late, what has happened to us.

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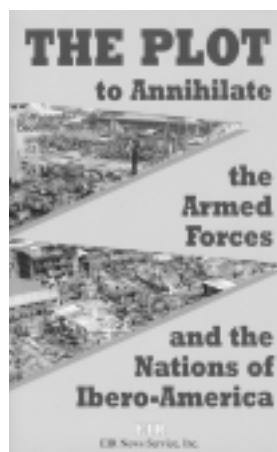
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