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Editorial: the State's Transport Policy

The €1 billion being poured into upgrades on the M50 will have no impact whatever on congestion; this is conceded by the Environmental Impact Statement itself. The projections of up to 200,000 vehicles per day, by the time the upgrades are completed in 2008, *takes no account* of increased traffic from motorways such as the M2 and M3 through Meath, and also assumes that other transport projects, such as the Dublin Metro, will help to alleviate congestion. In other words, the M50 is a prime example of a scheme that has been designed to fail. It serves the single, short term objective of creating mass suburbanization and sprawl around Dublin. The proposed “M50 relief road” that will cut deep into Meath also serves the same purpose, the needless expansion outward of Dublin.

It is clear that the last item on the list of priorities is those taxpayers who have to foot the €38 billion price tag. Statements by Government that the roads programme will promote balanced regional development are thoroughly disingenuous, as it has been devised almost single-mindedly to do the opposite, and thus far it has enjoyed great success. In other words, it is not an economic project at all, but a political one. To be certain of this point, one only need look at the NRA's 1998 *National Road Needs Study*. Compiled with the aid of a French toll consulting company, it found that the numbers travelling by car between the main cities were low. It recommended that existing roads were to be upgraded to motorways, dual carriageways or high-quality single-lane routes, with bypasses to relieve congestion in towns. The total cost of this scheme was budgeted at €5.6 billion. Shortly after Noel Dempsey launched the report, he came up with the idea that five motorways should be built, radiating outward from Dublin to all the other regions in the country. This idea, with no research to support it, was then packaged as the National Development Plan, even though neither the Government nor the NRA had any idea what the actual cost would be.

In addition to this, the NRA adopted a scheme that involved building motorways alongside the existing roads for which they are supposed to provide relief, a scheme which no other country with experience in motorway planning has seen fit to adopt, and for good reason. It makes little sense from an economic point of view: because these motorways are built alongside the existing routes, they are inevitably built over greenfield, at far greater expense than the cost of upgrades. Also, a motorway is only justified by traffic flows of in excess of 50,000 vehicles per day. Given that a decision was adopted at the political level to build motorways even though the traffic volumes do not justify it, the roads programme is a transparent and blatant waste of money. While the Private Finance Initiative scheme under which "major infrastructure" is being provided allows, on the face of it, for less expenditure by the taxpayer in the short term, the contractors are in reality being handed a blank cheque. Even though the State shares in a percentage of the tolls, the contractor can invoke the slightest pretext to raise tolls over the duration of the toll allocation (often 30 years), effectively double taxation. Also, because the State, outside of its public relations statements, acknowledges that the roads programme is expensive in inverse proportion to any advantage gained from it, it allows multiple taxation on the same stretch of road. For example, the M3 motorway, under construction beside the N3 in Meath, will be tolled twice, and a Government-commissioned consultant's report recommends multiple tolling of the M50. The inevitable result of the policy of building "relief motorways" alongside existing roads will be drivers using the existing roads to avoid paying tolls.

In short, the largely fictional National Development Plan has turned out to amount to pouring huge amounts of public money into motorways that are essentially privately run, redundant, and aimed likewise to encourage dependence on cars and rezoning of agricultural land for low-density, ill-considered development in the middle of nowhere. The upside is that the State can state in public relations releases how much money has gone into "transport", while being relieved of the burdensome responsibility of providing a well-planned and -run public transport system focused on railways.

The Ceannt Station Redevelopment

Ceannt Station is located on the south-western corner of Eyre Square. At 5.97 hectares (14.8 acres), it would seem to be the ideal location for an integrated central bus and rail station for Galway city.

Accordingly, the Department of Transport recently announced a redevelopment of Ceannt Station. This is to consist of a transport interchange, with three full-length platforms (allowing for intercity and commuter service expansion), 25 dedicated bus bays, and enhanced car parking facilities (for public transport users). But this is not all. A major part of the plan provides for eight hundred residential units, including a “social and affordable housing” component. Cultural and community facilities also form part of the scheme. In speaking about the plan for the new “station quarter”, Minister for Transport Martin Cullen stated, “The new, expanded and integrated transport facilities envisaged in the CIE plan will support much improved public services in terms of capacity and ease of use. Good quality facilities of the type proposed are essential to attract more users to public transport.” The Minister also said: “It will be important in developing and taking forward the planning proposals outlined here today, that CIE consult widely with local and regional authorities and development interests to ensure that the proposed redevelopment of the station integrates well with local and regional development plans.”

As far as the expansion of bus and rail facilities at the station are concerned, the proposals seem remarkably modest: three full-length platforms (for both intercity and commuter service use), and 25 dedicated bus bays. There is also a car parking provision, with the assurance that this will be only used by “park and ride” commuters, not the tenants of the housing development. According to Irish Rail, passenger numbers on the busy Galway to Dublin route have expanded to 1.5 million in 2006. It seems strange then that the purported redevelopment is on such a modest scale; in fact, it appears that by far the most ambitious aspect of the plan is the handover of much of the land at Ceannt Station for residential development.

The figure of €1 billion, quoted in CIE's press releases, refers to the value of the Ceannt Station site, not to the level of investment required to turn Ceannt Station into a hub for regional public transport. It is apparent, from the scant details provided, that the plans are inadequate for providing the transport needs of Galway City itself, with its population of 70,000 people, whatever about satisfying the demands of the Western Seaboard.

CIE's “proposal” for Ceannt Station is devoid of specific information. No plans for the proposed development have been presented. There is no indication of how much of the site will be given over to private ownership, and how much will be retained for public transport facilities. CIE has provided no analysis of public transport needs to justify its plan. This approach is suspiciously similar to the Government's adoption of Private Finance Initiatives for large infrastructure projects in general, and a massive motorway

building scheme in particular, without bothering even to carry out feasibility studies to back up their policy decisions.

Criticizing the proposal, Michael D. Higgins TD stated that it resembled the project of a property developer more than that of a body which bears primary responsibility for the provision of public transport. Indeed, the suspicion that the needs being served here are those of property developers than of the public has some basis in fact. Though the site is publicly owned, and it is CIE's responsibility to use this land for the continued development and improvement of public transport, it appears that the meagre public transport facilities on offer in CIE's proposal are not being funded through the Public Capital Programme. Instead, funding will be provided through the use of a large part of the site for private development. It seems that there has been no attempt to provide for any potential future expansion of the facilities to meet growing transport requirements. This begs the question as to whether the talk of "redevelopment" is simply public relations, meant to disguise the intention to give the entire site over to residential and commercial development.

Statements of interest for the commercial component of the proposal are to be heard immediately, whereas the initial application for *planning permission* will not take place until the Autumn. This suggests that the Government is waiting until the election is out of the way, before announcing news that may be less than palatable to those expecting the improvement of Galway's public transport facilities: a radical reduction, if not removal, of those facilities, in favour of handing over yet more public land for private development.

What the public might want from the redevelopment of Ceannt Station is not even a consideration: no public consultation has taken place concerning the scheme. The public which funds the Government's unresearched and profligate "development" proposals are expected simply to accept without demur what is done in their name.

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The Dublin Metro

The Government's "Transport 21" scheme, announced with great fanfare in 2006, purported to be a scheme which would rejuvenate road and rail transport in Ireland. However, aside from consisting mainly of previously announced allocations, by far the greatest share of spending was on roads, that is, motorways. Because the roads programme is by design centred on Dublin, Transport 21 plays the role, on one level, of a public relations exercise, broadcasting the illusion that large sums are being spent on public transport. The Luas light rail system is held up as an example, even though it consists of only two lines which do not join, and various extra lines have been proposed for years to come. The two existing lines link up industrial estates and land marked for rezoning, and yet cost close to €800 million, plus the millions spent over the years they spent in the planning stage. At a deeper level, however, Transport 21 is designed to permanently sink the idea of rail transport. While undoubtedly excessive, the sums spent on prestige projects such as Luas, and the proposed Dublin Metro, are in reality insignificant beside the billions sunk with great alacrity into building a motorway network radiating from Dublin.

The Dublin Metro plan involves a line running from Stephen's Green to Dublin Airport and Swords, with a fork to Blanchardstown, Liffey Valley and Clondalkin, before joining the Luas Red Line and continuing to Tallaght. The cost of the metro system in Madrid was €50 million per kilometre (in 2002 figures), whereas the cost of the Dublin Metro is to be €100 to €150 million and upwards. Admittedly, Madrid used suburban extensions to an existing metro, which ruled out the need for expensive tunneling, and the Dublin Metro is to incorporate a total of 8.5 km of deep bore tunnel. But this solution was chosen in favour of Iarnród Éireann's proposal to run a spur to the airport from the existing DART line, which would have achieved integration at much less expense. Indeed, if the Metro should ever proceed, Dublin alone will have four different rail services, none of which integrate in any systematic way. The rest of the country is expected to be content with the expenditure of €7.2 billion on the Metro (according to an answer by the Transport Minister to a parliamentary question in 2002), in addition to the billions being spent on roads designed to facilitate access to and from Dublin to "the regions".

But there are other problems. A major issue is why a metro link to the airport is being proposed at all. The idea of a metro is to transport commuters to and from different parts of the city and its associated suburbs, and in other cities with established metro systems, for example Brussels and Vienna, this is how they operate. In these cities there are no clumsy attempts to justify the existence of on-street rail systems that fail to serve established destinations, as with the proposed Metro link to the Luas Red Line. To build a link from the city to the airport is self-defeating, as most air passengers prefer to travel directly to and from their homes and the airport. The proposed airport Metro station is to be almost a kilometre from the terminal proper, meaning that even this aspect of the "airport link" is self-defeating. So the question, as with the motorway scheme, is what purpose the Metro scheme serves.

Unlike the motorway network, which is designed and executed to create dependence on cars and thus exacerbate urban sprawl and insensitive rural development, the Metro is not intended to go ahead. Even though Transport 21 has been prepared in the same manner as the National Development Plan (the motorway scheme), i.e., primarily as public relations and with no serious attention to cost, the difference is that such schemes as Luas and the Metro, with their unnecessarily high costs, disruption and lack of integration with other schemes, are intended to discredit rail as a transport option, and thus clear the way for the elimination of any public transport not road-dependent. Thus both the Dublin-centred motorway scheme and prestige projects such as Luas and the Metro serve the same political purpose. Luas and the Metro are not meant to go anywhere, just as the DART plan was not completed. No objection is to be allowed to the pouring of huge sums into greenfield motorways.

Total War in Burma – Part 4

Burma is the latest phase of the major counter-insurgency wars fought in South-East Asia since World War II.

Burma is a land with extensive natural resources including *minerals* (lead, zinc, copper, tin), *precious stones* (pearls, rubies), timber (predominantly teak: Burma once produced 75% of the world's teak), and *oil and natural gas*. Burma also had a wealth of labor resources, with a highly literate population.

Burma is one of the world's oldest oil producers, exporting its first barrel in 1853. Oil has been extracted manually at Yenangyaung on the Irrawaddy River since ancient times, and the first exports of crude oil were shipped to Britain as early as 1853.

The first foreign oil company to operate in Burma was the ***Rangoon Oil Company***, * set up in 1871 by a group of Scottish businessmen. Oil, timber and gems were the natural resources that drew British interests to Burma, annexed as a province of British India in 1886.

Between 1886 and 1963, the country's oil industry was dominated by the ***Burmah Oil Company (BOC)***, * which discovered the Ychaugyaung field in 1887 and the Chauk field in 1902. Both are still in production. During the British colonial administration, Burma supplied oil to India through the ***Burmah Oil Company***.*

George Orwell (who served as a civil servant in Burma between 1922 and 1927), once predicted that of all the countries of the British Empire, none was more likely to prosper on achieving independence than Burma. When

independence from Britain was finally granted in 1948, Burma was still known as the “rice bowl of Asia”, that is, ***the largest exporter of rice in the world***, despite suffering the devastating effects of the Second World War.

By 1987, however, Burma was one of the United Nations’ Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and at the start of the 21st century, Burma is among the world’s lowest-income countries. This dramatic change in Burma’s economic fortunes over the last 50 years has largely been the result of the rule of the military dictatorship that has been in power since 1962. While the 1950’s saw a parliamentary democracy encouraging economic development, a military coup d’etat engineered by General Ne Win in 1962 has brought about an autocratic police state. Stagnation and decline in the Burmese economy, combined with various social crises, resulted from the imposition of a brutal command economy (the “Burmese Way to Socialism”) enforced by the military during the 1962-1988 period. Subsequent moves by the military government (from 1988-1993) to introduce wholesale neo-liberal economic policies, and eliminate obstacles to foreign investment and trade, led to a brief growth boom (official figures since 1991/1992 record economic growth of more than 5%, on average, every year, with peak growth rates of 10% in 1992/1993). Economic growth since 1993 has however, slowed considerably. Substantial evidence suggests that the government of Burma (known as the SPDC or State Peace and Development Council), through various policies aimed at maintaining its military rule, has consistently ***“put military interests above food security.”***

By 1995, in fact, ***“the overall human rights situation [was] worsening... As the SLORC... moved to attract international investment at least 2 million people [were] been forced to work for no pay under brutal conditions to rebuild Burma's long-neglected infrastructure.”***

In a country with one of the largest armies in Asia (despite having no external enemies), civilian communities are primarily obliged to satisfy demands for goods and services from the military. A recent survey has indicated that 23% of the population lives below the poverty line, and in addition, that Burma has one of the worst human development records in Asia. Infant mortality is 79 per thousand births, compared with the East Asia average of 34; 45% of children under 5 in Burma suffer stunted growth; and life expectancy at birth is 60 years compared with an average in East Asia of 68.

The military junta has also been responsible for widespread and systematic human rights abuses. In 1998, it was estimated that approximately 8 million Burmese men, women and children had been forced into compulsory, uncompensated labour, often with the threat of physical abuse, torture, rape and murder. Large parts of the country have been “ethnically cleansed” as hundreds of thousands of people from minority groups have been forcibly relocated from their homes to areas where they are unable to farm and provide for their families.

In 2007, the leader of the democratic opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, began her twelfth year under house arrest. She is allowed no visitors, her phone line has been cut and her post is intercepted. There is currently no prospect of her being released and fear is growing for her safety. Aung San Suu Kyi is often referred to as "Asia's Nelson Mandela" for her work to peacefully bring democracy and human rights to Burma.

Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize after leading her political party, the National League for Democracy, to a landslide 82% victory in Burma's last democratic election in 1988. The regime has consistently refused to recognize the results, and has kept her imprisoned for eleven of the past eighteen years. [1]

Meanwhile the Burmese State has steadily intensified its atrocities against the population. Rape is regularly used as a weapon against indigenous women and children. Forced labour is widespread, described by the UN's International Labour Organisation as a "**crime against humanity**". A report by Danish Doctors for Human Rights noted that "**sixty-six percent of the over 120,000 refugees from Burma now living in Thailand have been tortured**" and subjected to "**forced labor, deportation, pillaging, destruction of villages, and various forms of torture and rape.**" The doctors reported that refugees witnessed the junta's military forces murder members of their families. [2]

The junta currently holds more than 1,200 political prisoners, many of whom are routinely tortured. Throughout Burma, up to three million people have been forcibly displaced to so-called ‘satellite zones,’ where under the direct control of the military, they construct bridges, military camps, irrigation systems and oil and gas pipelines.

In these camps, *'portage,'* * a British colonial euphemism signifying forced menial labour, is enforced by the Burmese army upon the displaced population. Under this system, men, women and children, primarily of ethnic nationalities in Burma, are forced to labour on roads, railroads, and other construction projects as well as to carry military materiel and other goods essential to the armed forces of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). People are made to carry the very arms that the regime subsequently uses against them in battle.

The SPDC regime has also recruited more child soldiers than any other country in the world. According to the United Nations, there are more than half a million internally displaced persons inside Burma in addition to over two million refugees and illegal immigrants outside the country. Half the national budget is spent on the military whose primary enemy is the population, while next to nothing is spent on health; *one in ten Burmese babies dies in infancy.*

The International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency, has called on countries around the world to impose sanctions on Burma for its use of modern-day slave labour. Many people continue to die and flee as a result of the regime's policies, and the Associated Press in reporting on the slaughter, calling Burma "*Southeast Asia's Darfur.*"

[3]

"Suu Kyi and the people of Burma," writes Archbishop Desmond Tutu, like Aung San Suu Kyi a Nobel peace laureate, "have not called for a military coalition to invade their country. They have simply asked for the maximum diplomatic and economic pressure against Burma's brutal dictators."

The U.S. Congress first authorized the president to impose sanctions against Burma in September 1996, during the administration of former President Bill Clinton, when Senator Dianne Feinstein (Democrat of California) and former Senator William Cohen (Republican of Maine) successfully introduced an amendment to an appropriations bill for the 1997 fiscal year. President Clinton then issued Executive Order 13047 on May 20, 1997, certifying, under the authority of the 1997 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Act (Public Law 104-208) and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701-1706), that the government of Burma had engaged in repression of and violence against the country's democratic opposition.

The executive order established a state of national emergency and prohibited "U.S. persons" from making new investments in Burma or facilitating new investment in Burma by foreign persons.

Those restrictions were expanded under the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, which was passed by Congress following a May 30, 2003 attack Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters. Evidence showed that Burma's ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), supported the attack. [4]

On May 18, 2006, President Bush signed a one-year extension of a declaration of national emergency sustaining the imposition of economic sanctions against Burma, according to a notice released by the White House.

The policy of the European Union, meanwhile, with an eye to the vast Asian market, appears to be that of active appeasement of the Burmese junta. Limited sanctions are in place, but they are being easily circumvented by third-party states.

In fact, the EU is sustaining the regime by increasing imports, worth roughly \$4 billion between 1998 and 2002. On October 8th 2004, the fifth summit of the 38-state Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was held in Hanoi and attended by representatives of the junta for the first time. Instead of announcing a boycott, various European Governments and the EU Commission turned up and said nothing. Instead, France's former president, Jacques Chirac, stated he hoped stronger sanctions would not be necessary because they **"will hurt the poorest people"**.

The "poorest people," however, means France's Total Oil Company, ***the largest foreign investor in Burma***, where the company's infrastructure of roads and railway access has largely facilitated the military take-over of Burma's natural resources. Total's money has also allowed the junta to expand its military and overall repression apparatus. John Jackson of Burma Campaign UK pointed to the farcical nature of present EU sanctions. After as many as 100 of Suu Kyi's supporters were publicly beaten to death by soldiers in 2003, the EU extended its visa ban to the junta and Germany froze no less than €86 (\$112) of German-based Burmese assets. ***"None of the EU officials... denies that foreign investment and military spending in Burma are closely linked. In the week the regime received its first payment for gas due to be piped to Thailand from a gas field operated by Total Oil, it made a \$130m down payment on ten MiG-29 jet fighters."*** [5]

The current campaign against TOTAL has dwarfed the scale of previous campaigns against transnational corporations in Burma. PepsiCo, Heineken, British American Tobacco, Triumph International & Premier Oil have all been forced to pull out of Burma following intensive and sustained campaigns against them. [6]

Through direct action, the international campaign has secured major disinvestments, such as Premier Oil, Heineken, PepsiCo and British Home Stores. The current "dirty list" of investors includes the oil companies *Total and Unocal, Rolls-Royce, Lloyd's of London and so-called prestige travel companies such as Bales, Road to Mandalay and Orient Express*. The bestselling *Lonely Planet* guidebook is a fixture on the list. Lonely Planet has stated, in the words of one of its writers, that Burma is "*better off*" today, and that although the junta is "*abominable*", "*political imprisonment, torture*" and "*involuntary civilian service to the state*" are not new and "*have been around for centuries*". [7]

On the issue of sanctions, Archbishop Tutu further stated that:

"International pressure can change the situation in Burma. Tough sanctions, not 'constructive engagement,' finally brought about a new South Africa. This is the language that must be spoken with tyrants, for it is the only language they understand."

What is hopeful is that there is the promise of sanctions, coming not from governments, but from a remarkable grassroots disinvestment movement in the United States. Modeled on the campaign to boycott apartheid South Africa, selective purchasing laws have been enacted by six American cities, including San Francisco and Oakland.

These laws prevent public funds from going to companies that trade with or invest in Burma. At the time of writing, New York State is considering similar legislation. Byron Rushing, who has written a selective purchasing law for the state of Massachusetts, stated: "In the case of South Africa, we were able to put pressure on a whole range of companies like General Motors, Coca-Cola, and Pepsi-Cola, and eventually most withdrew. And that really added to the pressure on the white South African government. That was a victory. As for Burma, it's not going to happen overnight, but we have started. The civilized world should follow." [8]

EU sanctions are slow in coming into place because European governments have yet to reach any lasting agreement on this issue. EU members are committed to a common foreign policy on Burma. As all 25

EU members have to agree on any issue such as sanctions, it takes only one country to refuse to take action, and nothing further happens.

Current EU measures against Burma include:

- ' An arms embargo: however, there is ***no worldwide arms embargo*** and the regime buys most of its arms from China and Russia.
- ' A ban on non-humanitarian aid: this is not a measure that has a serious impact on the regime.
- ' A visa ban for senior regime officials and their families: otherwise known as the shopping ban, as exemptions in the visa ban allow ***regime officials to attend many international meetings in Europe.***
- ' A freeze of assets held in Europe by people on the visa ban list: ***less than £4,000 has been frozen in all 25 EU member states.***
- ' A limited investment ban: this measure was introduced in 2004. European companies are banned from investing in a small number of named state-owned enterprises. These state-owned companies are largely insignificant. None of the companies listed are ***involved in the areas that earn the regime any significant revenue. The timber, mining, oil and gas sectors are not included.*** However, European companies are banned from investing in a pineapple juice factory and a tailor shop. To cap it all, it is ***already illegal to invest in state-owned enterprises under Burmese law, so the EU banned something that couldn't happen anyway.***

Although the UK does not officially encourage trade, investment or tourism with Burma, ***Britain ranks as the second largest source of approved investment in Burma. China, in fact, ranks 16th overall.*** The reason for this is not just the massive investment in Burma by British companies. It is that ***companies all over the world use Britain to invest in Burma via the dependent territories. Tax benefits and the lack of transparency make the British Virgin Islands and Bermuda the perfect place for investors wanting to do business with the regime.*** The British government has done nothing to stop it.

Between 1990 and 2000, Western countries disbursed 65% of total foreign direct investment to Burma. Some of the regime's most significant business

partners have been Western multinationals, including **TOTAL** Oil (France) and **Chevron** (US). [9]

Having successfully liberalized the Burmese economy by 1993, the SPDC bargained that the "Asian Tiger" states of Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia as well as the Western Powers would respond with the required inward investment. The SPDC was not disappointed. The U.S. government, in spite of a certain sound and fury by its representatives at the U.N., said it would continue **"neither to encourage nor to discourage"** trade and investment into Burma. This new policy was marketed in public relations terms as **"constructive engagement,"** a euphemism borrowed from the Reagan administration's support for the apartheid regime in South Africa. The prize is not merely Burma's vast resources, but also a pool of forced labor that will undercut the cheapest in Asia. This will attract further international capital, and, it is projected, loans from the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund).

That this expectation on the part of the SPDC would be eventually rewarded in the long-term was indicated by a London trade conference, **"Burma: The Next Tiger?"** organized by the British Government on 5th December 1995, and funded by the then Department of Trade. The attendees were told about the **"visionaries"** in the Burmese military. Immediately upon Aung San Suu Kyi's temporary release in 1995, the Japanese government restored some \$50 million in aid. The new Australian Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, who had previously announced "democracy is coming to Burma," said that Australia could now adopt a "flexible" approach to a country that offered "great economic opportunities." By far the biggest investment, however, is by now well in place: a billion-dollar pipeline built by the French state oil company Total, and its U.S. partner Unocal. This pipeline carries Burma's natural gas into Thailand and gives the generals an estimated \$200 million to \$400 million every year for 30 years. At present, more than **two-thirds of the SPDC's foreign underwriting now comes from foreign oil companies.**

[10]

On January 12th, 2007 the governments of China, Russia, and South Africa effectively blocked action against Burma at the UN Security Council. The Security Council was presented with a draft resolution on Burma by the United States.

In fact, for all the sound and fury over the Burmese dictatorship, ***this was the first time that a resolution on Burma was presented to the UN Security Council.*** It was officially stated that the draft resolution was designed to encourage national reconciliation and democratization in Burma, the release of all political prisoners (including Aung San Suu Kyi), an end to human-rights abuses in the country, and inclusion of the opposition and ethnic minorities in a dialogue leading to a process of democratic transition. The resolution also prescribed active involvement by the good offices of the Secretary-General, but ***did not include punitive measures such as sanctions.*** While the majority of the Council, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Italy, Slovak, Peru, Panama and Ghana supported the resolution, China and Russia exercised their veto powers to block it. South Africa also opposed the resolution, while Qatar, Indonesia, and Congo abstained. [11]

"I am very disappointed by the actions of these governments. By rejecting the proposed resolution, they effectively signal to the Burmese military junta to continue its crimes against humanity and its war on its own citizens," said Aung Din, a former political prisoner and Policy Director of the US Campaign for Burma. In response to active opposition by China, Russia, Indonesia, and South Africa to the recent UN General Assembly resolution on Burma, Aung Din continued, ***"They say that the Security Council is not the proper venue for discussing Burma, but they voted against Burma resolution at the UN General Assembly as well. Their actions indicate they don't want to give us any possible venue to highlight the Burmese regime's atrocious abuses and seek an end to these attacks and abuses. They are giving the regime a license to kill."***

[12]

Part V of Total War in Burma appears in the May edition.

Notes and References:

[1]

http://burma.total.com/en/news/p_5_3.htm

* [The extraction of oil in Burma was monopolized by the Britain through the ***Burmah Oil Company***, which was set up in continuation of the Rangoon Oil Company in 1886 and subsequently dominated the Burmese oil industry until 1962. Immediately after

Burma's annexation, the Burmah Oil Company took over the Yenangyaung oil field from its indigenous owners. In 1897, another major oil field was discovered at Singu in the Irrawaddy basin: the Chauk-Lanywa field.

By 1906, Burmah Oil delivered nearly half of all kerosene supplies to India and was a contracted provider of fuel oil to the British Navy. Oil refineries were built at Syriam, a river port opposite Yangon (Rangoon). Later, crude oil from Chauk was sent by a 563 km pipeline to Syriam for refining. A profitable oil industry was established, with production reaching **6.56 million barrels in 1939 and oil exports amounting to US\$35 million in 1940.**]

<http://www.nautilus.org/~rmit/forum-reports/0630a-kolas-tonnesson.html>

* [The Burmah Oil Company was founded in 1896 by David Sime Cargill in Glasgow, Scotland, with the aim of developing oil interests on the Indian subcontinent. It became an early and major shareholder in British Petroleum, and therefore restricted its interests to the Indian subcontinent, where BP had no business. It played a major role in the oil industry in South Asia for about a century through its subsidiaries, and in the discovery of oil in the Middle East through its significant interest in British Petroleum. It marketed under the BOC brand in Burma, Pakistan and Assam (in India) and through a joint venture with Shell (Burmah-Shell) in the rest of India.

Burmah Oil Company introduced mechanised drilling in Magwe Division's oil fields (Yenangyaung, Chauk, and Minbu). Until 1901, when Standard Oil Company began operating in Burma (now also known as Myanmar), Burmah Oil Company was the sole oil company to operate in Burma. The company operated in Burma until 1963, when Ne Win nationalised all industries in the country.

The company was involved in a landmark legal case, *Burmah Oil Co. v Lord Advocate*.

In 1966 Castrol was acquired by Burmah, and renamed Burmah-Castrol.

The Bank of England came to the rescue of Burmah Oil after the company lost its tanker fleets in 1974. The core of the rescue operation was the provision of a year's grace so that the company could become smaller and more viable.

In 2000, Burmah-Castrol was acquired by BP Amoco plc (now BP plc). The former British Petroleum purchased Amoco in December 1998, then bought Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) in April 2000. ARCO's offshore oil operations in Burma provided over \$55 million to the dictatorship from ARCO's entry into Burma in 1995 to its withdrawal in 1998.]

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* [Porterage was also a system practiced by the Peruvian Amazon Company (PAC) in the Putumayo region of Columbia/Peru in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, before Roger Casement's 1912 Putumayo Report succeeded in exposing these atrocities. Some slave porters in Burma today receive some minimal food; most of them receive less than subsistence. The SPDC either runs them until they drop dead or lets them go when they are nearly dead so that they can regain sufficient strength for another term as porter. Many porters are permanently disabled due to dislocated shoulders from the heavy loads, severe lacerations from straps and whips, hip-displacements and other indices of prolonged physical toil with grossly inadequate diets.

In particular, the SPDC have targeted Karen and Karenni peoples for porterage work. In testimony taken on 6 June 1995, a Karen victim said:

"Now the Burmese are demanding porters. One person from each house must go... otherwise they would burn down our village... I don't remember how many times they beat me, but until I was blue in many places. They used a heavy length of bamboo... We had to carry the soldiers' rucksacks but we hadn't eaten any food, so we were very tired because they were very heavy... I was so tired, and I decided, "No, I don't want to go. If I die now, it its alright."

The only way to avoid porter duty is to pay porter fees - usually 2500 kyat - a huge sum for village peasants.]

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Plan Columbia – the New Monroe Doctrine Part 2: Analysis of Plan Columbia

The ten Elements of the Plan provide an outline of the proposed strategies for implementing the various components of Plan Colombia. They are as follows:

1. Economic Strategy
2. Fiscal Strategy
3. Military Strategy
4. Judicial and Human Rights Strategy
5. Counter-narcotics Strategy
6. Alternative Development Strategy
7. Social Participation Strategy
8. Human Development Strategy

9. Peace Strategy
10. International Strategy

We intend to focus on four elements of the plan: the Economic Strategy, the Military Strategy, the Counter-narcotics Strategy, and the Peace Strategy.

The Economic Strategy:

The economic component of the Plan consists of *neo-liberal economic policies, that open up Columbia's market's and resources to foreign investors while cutting government spending upon essential services*. The Colombian Government was forced to agree to the implementation of such policies--which primarily benefit the Colombian economic elite and multinational corporations--by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for a \$2.7 billion loan in December 1999. A closer examination of Plan Colombia reveals its true objective to be the preservation of the political, social and economic status quo through the implementation of a "carrot and stick" strategy. As is evident in the initial installment of overseas aid--the \$1.3 billion U.S. aid package--the Plan intends to utilize a huge stick while offering a tiny carrot. The stick, approximately eighty percent of the U.S. aid, is for the Colombian military and police. The remainder constitutes the carrot: eight percent is going to alternative development; six percent to human rights programs; four percent to the displaced; two percent to judicial reform; and less than one percent to support the ongoing peace process.

Under "*Stabilization Measures*" in the section titled, "*Approach to Colombian Economy*," the Plan states that public companies and banks are to be privatized, including the utility companies and the state's coal mining company. Columbia now has the world's record in privatization, This privatization of state-owned companies will inevitably lead to massive layoffs, further increasing unemployment at a time when cutbacks in government spending will remove any vestiges of a social safety net for those affected. Also, with the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies, in conjunction with the military component of the Plan, multinational corporations stand to profit from increased access to Colombia's extensive natural and human resources such as oil, natural gas, minerals and a relatively industrialized workforce.

In the "Promotion of Trade and Investment" section, the Plan notes that Colombia systematically opened its economy to foreign investments and trade during the 1990s. It also points out that, "*The result was the loss of*

700,000 hectares (1.75 million acres) of agricultural production to imports during the decade, which in turn proved to be a critical blow to employment in the rural areas where Colombia's conflict is mainly staged."

William Brownfield, former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for western hemispheric affairs (WHA), described the Andean Initiative's three elements of "democracy, development, and drugs" as "a coherent approach that covers all elements of the problems and threats affecting the Andean region and, indirectly, the United States of America today." High on the State Department's list of the Andean Initiative's elements are "trade issues such as the Andean Trade Preference Act which the president has announced he hopes will be extended at the end of this year, and the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas."

In order to enhance the government's "ability to confront drug trafficking and the violence it generates," the Plan claims that the ***"expansion of international commerce, accompanied by enhanced access to foreign markets and free trade agreements that attract foreign and domestic investment, are key to the modernization of our economic base and job creation."***

It is difficult to foresee how this will reduce violence when the same neo-liberal policies have had a destabilizing effect on other Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic.

Also, the austerity and adjustment measures will inevitably increase unemployment and result in more people working in the informal sector, which has been the case in all Latin American countries that have implemented such policies. Furthermore, the Human Development Strategy intends to "promote efforts to guarantee, within the next few years, adequate education and health." The Plan fails to explain how this can be achieved when the imposition of structural adjustment and associated austerity measures will undoubtedly force drastic cuts in health and education spending. [1]

The Military Strategy:

President Pastrana was elected in 1998 on a peace platform, vowing to end a half-century of violence and war. He spoke boldly of a sort of Colombian Marshall Plan that would seek foreign assistance to fight corruption, give some depth to Latin America's oldest formal democracy,

reform the justice system, negotiate a settlement with the leftist guerrillas and, yes, fight the drug trade. He asked for \$3.5 billion in foreign support which he said he would match with \$4 billion in Colombian government funding. [2]

In 1998 Pastrana sought help from the Clinton administration to seek aid in reducing drug trafficking, negotiating peace with the guerrillas, and investing in development programs to wean peasants away from growing coca and heroin poppy.

[3]

What was born in 2000, however, bore little resemblance to what Pastrana had originally proposed as Plan Colombia. The Clinton administration gave this plan a very different face that involved a military component of nearly \$800 million dollars, 80% of the total 1.3 billion dollars being offered. This military aid, however, may offer little chance of reducing the production of cocaine and heroin and is “likely to make things worse – to widen the war, handicap the peace talks between the government and the rebel groups, embolden the hard-liners and cause more civilian death.”

It appears that the Plan is intended to target the drug producers and traffickers but is being used against the farmers, indigenous people and rebel groups that are opposed to foreign exploitation of Columbia's natural resources.

The central part of the financial aid in Plan Colombia is the supply of a variety of helicopters to combat the rebel groups and destroy coca plantations. There are indications however that the spraying of herbicides to destroy the coca plants seems to be doing more damage to the population than the crop itself. The drug war is showing signs of escalating into Ecuador, where there have been clashes between the Columbian-based left wing guerrillas and right wing paramilitary groups. [4] The plan states that: ***"There are three main protagonists of the conflict."*** It then names the two guerrilla factions--the FARC and the Army of National Liberation (ELN)--and the illegal "self-defense" groups. It completely ignores the role of the Colombian Armed Forces and the violence perpetrated by them against Liberal and Communist peasants in the 1950s under the Conservative regime of President Laureano Gómez and the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. Militarization and U.S. foreign policy have served to accelerate this process in Central America.

Counterinsurgency campaigns in Guatemala and El Salvador, the “Contra” war in Nicaragua, the conversion of Honduras into an armed camp to support military operations in neighboring countries, and the bombing and invasion of Panama with 26,000 U.S. troops were all wars promoted by the U.S. in the 1980s under the Reagan/Bush administration. Involvement in the wars was based on the fact that these countries threatened U.S. access to cheap labor, natural resources, and markets in Third World countries. As a result of U.S. military aid in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and a counterrevolutionary force aimed against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua devastating amounts of environmental damage occurred in those regions.

For example, scorched earth tactics that involved the burning and bombing of forests where guerrillas might be hiding took place in El Salvador. According to U.S. military sources 2,829,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on the El Salvadorian countryside between 1984 and 1985. Plan Colombia is simply the latest version of this war. [5]

The Colombian Minister of Defense stated that the official apparatus of repression inside Colombia is designed for *"total war in the political, economic, and social arenas."* Officially the targets are guerrilla organizations. But as a high-ranking military official explained in 1987, these are of minor importance: "the real danger" is "what the insurgents have called the political and psychological war," the war "to control the popular elements" and "to manipulate the masses." The "subversives" hope to influence unions, universities, media, and so on. Therefore, *"every individual who in one or another manner supports the goals of the enemy must be considered a traitor and treated in that manner."* This last is a quote from a 1963 military manual provided by the US to the Colombian army. [6]

The 1980's saw *"the consolidation of state terror in Colombia,"* a European - Latin American inquiry into State Terror concluded. Training of Colombian officers increased along with terror. In the 1980s Colombia benefited from the largest U.S. training program, with three times as many officers trained as in El Salvador. They have also had Israeli, German, and British instructors, who train not only the army but also assassins and paramilitary forces linked to the drug cartels. Colombian intelligence (DAS) reported that "North American instructors" - meaning U.S. instructors - have been "detected" at these training camps. The pretext for U.S. support for these atrocities is the drug war, which became a national concern when it

was launched by George Bush Senior in September 1989; re-launched, it might be said, since this is a regular event.

A month before, the largest shipment of arms ever authorized under the emergency provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act was sent to the Colombian army, setting the stage, William Hartung reported, ***"for sending more U.S. weaponry to Colombia than it had received in the entire decade of the 1980s."*** They were sent to the army - helicopters, planes, and so on, ineffective for counter-narcotic operations, as was pointed out at the time: 90-95% of counter-narcotics operations are conducted by the National Police, but not with bombers and helicopters. These are reserved for other targets. Human rights groups soon reported sustained bombings of villages, massacres, and other atrocities. The effects of the U.S. arms shipments might well have been to ***strengthen the links between the security forces and narcotraffickers, and the land owning classes associated with them.*** In the 1990's Columbia had by far the worst human rights record in the hemisphere, and in consequence, received more U.S. aid, including military aid, than the rest of the hemisphere combined. By 1999, Columbia had replaced Turkey as the largest recipient of U.S. armaments.

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The atrocities carried out by the Colombian military are extensive. According to Amnesty International, Columbia now has the worst record in the world for the killing of trade unionists and journalists. [7] The report of a commission set up by the Colombian Government to investigate the Trujillo massacre of March 1990, gives a graphic account of this "Colombian Doctrine." This 186-page report documents one atrocity which largely by accident, was investigated. The commission included members of the Colombian government, army, and police. It was established under pressure from the OAS (Organization of American States) and others. The account is very similar to the regular reports of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Americas, and other inquiries.

According to eye-witness accounts, after entering the region where the village was located, the Armed Forces and National Police compelled one individual to state under torture that he had been associated with the guerrillas and to provide names. Then, the report says, "the horror began." People were "dragged out of their homes, tied up and taken to the luxurious hacienda" of a "well-known drug trafficker" and "shut into a fertilizer shed." Just after 7am, the officer in charge, Major Urueña, arrived with an associate. "First, they had breakfast. Then, the Major and several members

of the armed group went into the shed and demanded each person's identification papers and belongings." The people were then taken blindfolded, one by one, for interrogation, beginning with a 59-year-old woman. "A coffee sack was tied over the head of each victim and he was thrown onto the ground. Then Major Urueña took a water hose, turned it full force on the face of each victim - the mouth and nose - and began to interrogate them. When he finished, the victims were piled one on top of the other, and someone called for the blowtorch and the chain saw. Each victim was decapitated, cut into pieces with the chain saw and left to bleed. The heads and torsos were put into different sacks, and, later that night, loaded into a blue 1956 Ford truck, driven down to the Cauca river, and dumped into the water."

One month later, the headless body of Trujillo's parish priest was "fished out of the river." He was the 27th victim. By then, one of the participants, a civilian auxiliary to Major Urueña, had fled and reported what had happened to the Colombian judicial authorities. He was later "disappeared," and has not been heard from since. The authorities dismissed his allegations, acquitting everyone implicated. The incident was reported by the Jesuit-based human rights group Justice and Peace (Justicia y Paz). Its director, Father Javier Giraldo, was able to interest the Human Rights Commission of the OAS, leading finally to this report. It concludes that the ***Colombian Army and police officers were directly responsible for the massacre and that the government and justice system were to blame for covering it up***, specifically implicating Major Urueña.

The Commission recommended criminal investigations, but expressed its "pessimism" that the pattern of impunity can be breached, and records the strong opposition of the Colombian government members to the "exploration" of international legal mechanisms, consistent with the norms of the "democratorship" that is successfully "building democratic institutions in a country where it was sometimes dangerous to do so."

Justice and Peace reports over 350 other massacres since Trujillo, none of them investigated. This one exception, they pointed out, "gives insight into the moral fiber of former Colombian President Cesar Gaviria (Secretary General of the O.A.S. from 1994-2004), who for four years turned a deaf ear" to requests for investigation of the massacre, carried out a couple of months before his election in May 1990. It is also an example of "the values and principles" of the Columbian army.

To his credit, the new President, Ernesto Samper on receiving the report accepted the Colombian government's responsibility for the massacre. Urueña, who had been rewarded by a promotion to Colonel, was formally removed from active service. The army "rallied around the Colonel," Justice and Peace reports, and its commander dismissed the Commission's findings as "a farce." The report was presented to the OAS on February 7th with an agreement that in six months, Colombia must respond. The Justice and Peace report ends by saying: "The country is waiting." [8]

Political murders now average ten to twenty a day, with ten thousand displaced people every month. These people are systematically driven into city slums with non-existent facilities. Around eighty percent of these atrocities are attributed to the military, or to the paramilitaries, who are closely connected to the military.

Over the last fifteen years, within this 75-80%, the atrocity percentage attributed to the military has been declining, and the percentage attributed to the paramilitaries has been rising. The principle reason is public relations.

The Colombian Army is accelerating terrorism by privatizing it, while promoting its own image as a neutral actor between the warring factions. [9]

In contrast, Human Rights Watch refers to the paramilitaries as the sixth division of the Colombian Army. The United States is also actively involved in this process. U.S. military officers operate in Columbia largely through private companies like DynCorp and MRPI. This means that military assistance and military operations are freed from U.S. congressional supervision. There is some legislation that imposes limited human rights conditions before aid is granted. [10] President Clinton initially attempted to disregard this, but Congress added stronger conditions, eliminating the option of a waiver for a U.S. President. In May 2002, however, former US Secretary of State Colin Powell formally determined that Columbia met Washington's human rights standards. [11]

The Counter-narcotics Strategy:

Under the heading, "Colombian Counter-drug Strategy," the illegal *"self-defense" groups--or paramilitaries--*and the guerrillas are both mentioned. The explanation for the guerrillas' connection to the drug trade is FARC's taxation of coca growers, and the claim that 30 percent of the guerrillas' income comes from the drug trade. This raises questions about the effectiveness of a strategy that intends to defeat the guerrillas by eliminating their income from drugs through a massive eradication campaign. If the

guerrillas only derive 30 percent of their income from the drug trade, their strength may be diminished by its elimination, however, the 70 % of their income that comes from other sources will still fund a formidable military force. As a result, such a strategy is unlikely to bring an end to the war and peace to the country. The Plan's "Mission Statement" however, makes clear its intention: ***"Establish military control of the south for eradication."*** This is the region of the country where the 17,000 member FARC are the strongest. By focusing on the south, the Colombian and U.S. governments can conveniently combine the civil war and the drug war by portraying the FARC as the primary military threat to Colombian "democracy" and as "narco-guerrillas" responsible for the U.S. drug problem. Both governments virtually ignore the fact that ***many paramilitary leaders are narco-traffickers and, according to Human Rights Watch, were responsible for 78% of the human rights violations in Colombia in 1999.***

If the FARC derives 70% of its income from non-drug sources, it is doubtful that eradicating its drug income will eliminate its influence. As for coca production, history has shown that the ***"balloon effect"*** (when drugs are eradicated in one area, production simply moves to another) is inevitable. Furthermore, Plan Colombia ***targets the peasant coca growers in the south while virtually ignoring the narco-traffickers and their paramilitary allies located primarily in northern Colombia.***

As Latin American countries gained their independence, the U.S. was quick to form relationships with these newly-independent states of the region and offer them aid and assistance in a manner that has been characterized as neocolonialism.

The U.S. helped Central America develop an agro-industry model to serve the interests of U.S. corporations, agrarian bourgeoisie, and the Central American oligarchies. Central American countries began producing only one or two major cash crops, which forced them to intensify their economic dependency on the U.S. [12] The expansion of this intensive export agriculture gave the U.S. virtually unlimited and unrestricted access to the region's rich natural resources [13]

This process has led to mass deforestation in Central America, as land is systematically cleared for cash crops. According to Daniel Faber, ***"the roots of deforestation can be traced back to decades of development policies that have favored the expanded production of traditional and nontraditional capitalist agricultural exports over the sustainable use of natural resources for meeting the needs of Central American people"*** [14] [15]

Colombia became a major producer of cocaine in the late 1970s. The reasons are rooted in the social and economic policies that have been imposed on the Third World for decades. The rules dictate that farmers have to stop producing for their own needs, and turn instead to the export of cash crops. In addition, they have to open their own markets to subsidized U.S. agricultural exports, which systematically undermine domestic agricultural production. The local farmers then became "*rational producers*" in accord with the precepts of modern economics, producing crops for export. As such, they turned to the crops that give the greatest financial return. Accordingly, coca production in Latin America has greatly accelerated, helping to support the "economic miracles." Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard, influential in the "shock therapy" economic policies of both Poland and Russia in the 1990s, won his fame by creating a growth boom in Bolivia in 1985, with good macro-economic statistics. There were also some side effects. One was that this "miracle" was relying very heavily on coca exports. Much the same is true in Peru.

Similar reasons lie behind Colombia's turn towards narco-trafficking. In 1988, the U.S. compelled coffee producers to break an agreement that had kept prices at some reasonable level. The price of coffee, Colombia's *main export crop*, fell by 40 %. When coffee prices collapse and half the children are already starving, farmers turn to where there are available opportunities, namely, the North American drug market. [16]

A recent study by the OECD estimates profits from the international drugs trade at almost half a trillion dollars a year, *of which over half circulates through the U.S. financial system*. What about Colombia? According to the OECD report, *it receives about six billion dollars, which is 2 to 3% of what remains in the United States*. "The big business is therefore in that country," the United States, according to a review of the study by a member of the Andean Commission of Jurists and the Latin American Association of Human Rights.

Also involved are the *banks that are handling over 56% of the immense profits generated by narco-trafficking*, according to the OECD. This is supposed to be an illegal activity. In 1979 the U.S. government launched Operation Greenback, targeting banks that were handling drug money, which is apparently not impossible to monitor. Huge sums of money were suddenly coming into Miami banks just as these cocaine operations were accelerating, so the Justice Department went into action. But not for long.

The “drug czar” of the Reagan Administration, vice-President George Bush, aborted the operation in 1982. At present there is no further information about the estimated \$260 billion a year of drug money that flows through the U.S. financial system.

One part of the drug cartel is banking; another is the chemical industry. In 1989, in the six months preceding the announcement of the drug war, the Colombian police found 1.5 million gallons of chemicals used for cocaine production, many of them with U.S. corporate logos on them. The CIA has reported that U.S. exports of such chemicals to Latin America *far exceed any legal uses, while the US Congressional Research Service concluded that more than 90% of the chemicals used for drug production come from the United States.* [17]

Drugs, mostly in the form of cocaine, now make up nearly 30% of the Columbian economy. This drug trade is not just used by the guerrillas to provide finance by taxing the revenues generated from it in regions that they control, but also by military, paramilitary and other business interests. An example of this is a report that the ACCU (the largest paramilitary grouping), receives about *80% of its income* from activities in the drug trade. [18]

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The Peace Strategy:

In the section titled, "Policy for the Prevention and Care of the Internally Displaced," the Colombian Government virtually abdicates all responsibility regarding the 1.9 million Colombians that have already been forced from their homes by the violence--*the third largest displaced population in the world behind Angola and the Sudan.*

In its discussion of the ongoing peace process, the Plan claims, "*The peace process is one of the country's top priorities.*" If this is true, then it is difficult to understand why less than one percent of the U.S. aid package is going to support this process.

"Strangely, we have a deep democratic institutionalality that coexists with the most barbaric violence, and the state has a foot in both," according to Columbian analyst Carlos de Roux. [19]

This process of institutionalized warfare in Colombia became a permanent fixture back in 1948 when a popular presidential candidate was murdered. Mass rioting turned into an era known as *La Violencia*, which stretched into the 1960s. At this time, some of the peasant groups that had armed

themselves as self-defense militias became politicized and, under the leadership of Manuel Marulanda, transformed themselves into the leftist guerrilla group known as the FARC--today a well-armed force of 18,000 fighters. Other smaller Marxist insurgencies also flourished.

The Colombian political stage has been monopolized by two major parties, the so-called Conservatives and Liberals, from the mid-1950s until the 1970s. Both effectively governed together with no real opposition. This concentration of economic and political power in the hands of these two parties left no space for expression of any opposition within the system. This gave rise to many guerrilla groups, the biggest two being Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN). Later in the 1980s a few of the groups decided to try their hand at mainstream politics and in the process gave up their arms.

Determined to retain power, the ruling politicians of the Conservative and Liberal parties created paramilitary groups to offset this political threat. The paramilitaries were given the job of seeing that no one outside the two party system would win any election and the means they used for this was to kill the candidates and terrorize their supporters. Efforts to enhance the concentration of land and resources in the hands of the traditional elite saw the Colombian army launch an "anti-terrorist" campaign that led to the increased expropriation of small farmers, and this time drug dealers swallowed most of the land.

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This gradually led to the “*war on drugs*” by the US and the various anti-drug agencies. The large-scale fumigation of crops is justified as part of this “war.” The FARC and to a lesser degree the 3,000 member ELN have through the decades extended their reach over sizable chunks of sparsely populated Colombian countryside but have failed to gain much support elsewhere. “*Be clear on the FARC,*” says Mauricio Vargas, an editor and columnist at Gabriel García Márquez's weekly, Cambio. “*They are not your Che Guevara...sort of romantic guerrilla force.*” [20]

This is perhaps an understatement. While originally rooted in Marxism, the FARC has moved into criminal activity. Its base of operations in southern Colombia overlaps some of the richest coca-growing regions in the world. For some time now, the FARC has harvested rich revenues by levying a “tax” on the coca-growers, in return for which the FARC protects the growers from attack. Recently, there is growing evidence that the guerrillas have gone deeper into the coca trade, expanding into processing and edging into trafficking and sales.

This is a clear indication that it is not just politics or any other objective that keeps the guerrillas fighting with the paramilitaries and military, but rather the attempt to carve out a larger slice of the ever-growing and already huge revenue from the trade in drugs. The right-wing paramilitaries give the ruling regime in Colombia the pretext necessary for the brutal actions of the regime, while still gaining benefits from such actions. The human rights clauses which Congress attached to Plan Columbia and which President Clinton waived were intended to force the Colombian government to disown these paramilitaries. [21]

It is obvious that only a comprehensive and negotiated settlement can stop the cycle of violence in Colombia. Such a settlement would include a program of manual eradication bolstered by deep reform that would incorporate and demilitarize the armed actors. The peace process undertaken by Pastrana and the FARC--and recently joined by the ELN--is the first step in that process. [22]

However, the fact that 80% of the U.S. aid package is going to the Colombian military and police make it clear that Plan Columbia is a *program of war, not of peace*. The 20% of the aid that is being directed to socio-economic problems is simply public relations and does not propose any systematic changes that will address seriously Colombia's socio-

economic problems or threaten the status of the country's political and economic elite. [23]

Part III of *Plan Columbia: The New Monroe Doctrine* will appear in the May Edition.

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