Hemisphere

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Colombia's Children

The Urban and Pacific Fronts

The Left in Colombian Politics

Images of a Way of Life Under Siege

IV Curso de Capacitación en Negociaciones de Comercio Internacional

14-22 DE NOVIEMBRE, 2002 • MIAMI, FLORIDA

organizado por el **SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS CENTER**
Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University

en asociación con el **Centro de Estudios de Integración Económica y Comercio Internacional**

El IV Curso de Capacitación en Negociaciones de Comercio Internacional, organizado por el Summit of the Americas Center en asociación con el Centro de Estudios de Integración Económica y Comercio Internacional de Buenos Aires, Argentina, se realizará en la ciudad de Miami, Florida, USA, del 14 al 22 de noviembre de 2002.

El programa del curso está dividido en dos partes. Durante la primera parte se desarrollarán los aspectos teóricos y prácticos de las negociaciones comerciales internacionales multilaterales, con especial énfasis en el proceso de integración hemisférica (Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas - ALCA). Durante la segunda parte, los cursantes participarán en un ejercicio práctico de negociación (role playing), basado en un caso real de negociación multilateral en el hemisferio.

El curso ha sido concebido especialmente para responder a las nuevas necesidades de capacitación en los procesos de integración regional y está dirigido a negociadores oficiales de los gobiernos de los países del ALCA, a empresarios y funcionarios de entidades empresariales del hemisferio, y a académicos e investigadores de temas de integración regional y negociaciones internacionales.

El curso cobra aún más vigencia teniendo en cuenta el desarrollo de diferentes eventos políticos y económicos cruciales para la región. Las elecciones en Brasil, Ecuador y Bolivia, así como el inicio del nuevo gobierno en Colombia, serán momentos decisivos en la medida en que las negociaciones continúan y el plazo del 2005 para iniciar formalmente el ALCA se aproxima.

El desarrollo de otras negociaciones hemisféricas tales como el acuerdo de libre comercio entre Chile y Estados Unidos, la Unión Europea y Mercosur, y el reciente acuerdo propuesto entre América Central y Estados Unidos comprueba que la integración comercial es inminente. El progreso de estas negociaciones será analizado cuidadosamente en este curso.

El cuerpo de profesores está integrado por destacados especialistas del continente americano, con vasta experiencia práctica en los procesos de negociación comercial y reconocidos antecedentes en la enseñanza universitaria. El curso será dictado en español. Los cupos son limitados y serán asignados por estricto orden de inscripción. Para mayor información e inscripciones dirigirse a:

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IN THIS ISSUE

COVER PHOTO: Colombia's cut flower industry has brought a positive symbol of the country to consumers abroad.

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Florida International University, a public institution of higher education in South Florida, created the Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) in 1979. As a federally supported National Resource Center for Language and Area Studies, LACC has a mandate to promote graduate and undergraduate education, faculty research and public education on Latin American and Caribbean affairs. LACC faculty span a broad range of academic disciplines, including the social and natural sciences, humanities and business.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A focus on terrorism and hostilities with Iraq have derailed the Bush administration's early plans to center its foreign policy on Latin America. In light of other priorities, only real crises in the region seem likely to recapture US attention—and maybe not even then, as the financial collapse of Argentina shows. The link between Colombia's civil conflict and US concerns over terrorism—both the leading guerrilla and paramilitary groups have been added to the State Department's list of terrorist organizations—has managed to keep it on the Bush administration's radar. Dismissing lingering concerns about the Colombian armed forces' human rights record, US officials have cleared the way for the release of an additional $62 million in military aid to Colombia. The election of Alvaro Uribe Vélez as president makes it likely that this aid will be put to use in an escalation of state efforts to crush the guerrillas.

This issue of *Hemisphere* is dedicated entirely to Colombia. As is only to be expected, the majority of the contributors focus on one aspect or another of the armed conflict in that country. Other authors, however, have chosen to address elements of daily life and positive attempts at reform, in an attempt to highlight other features of Colombian reality besides the current crisis.

Two of our contributors write about some of the most vulnerable victims of Colombia's conflict, the nation's children. Journalist Adriana Herrera Téllez tells of the many ways children are caught up in the fighting and its effects on their lives. Her colleague María Alejandra Chaparro tackles this issue from a different angle, collecting the points of view of young people whose families have moved to the United States to escape the crisis.

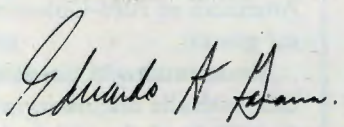
Another pair of articles look at the way the conflict is playing itself out in different areas of the country. Retired army colonel and professor John Marulanda Marín focuses on the nation's cities, while University of Glasgow researcher Ulrich Oslender writes about the Afro-Colombian communities on the Pacific Coast, where some of the worst clashes between paramilitaries and guerrillas have taken place in recent months.

A growing number of books are attempting to make sense of the dynamics of the fighting in Colombia. Journalist and FIU graduate Nathalia Franco reviews one of them, Bert Ruiz's *The Colombian Civil War*, which provides a summary of the evolution of the conflict. For those interested in delving deeper into the topic, FIU librarian Marian Goslinga provides a listing of recent publications as well as audiovisual and Internet sources.

Politics are an integral part of understanding the way events have developed in Colombia. Marcela Ceballos Medina, a political scientist, addresses one of the most important political reforms in recent Colombian history, the process of state decentralization. Sergio Otálora, a journalist now living in South Florida, summarizes the history of the Colombian left as background to the emergence of the Polo Democrático political movement and its leader, Luis Eduardo Garzón, in the 2002 elections.

Our reports section shifts the focus to other issues integral to Colombian identity: music and sports. Ethnomusicologist Martha Ellen Davis describes the recreation of Colombian musical culture in South Florida as an important tie to home for the flood of immigrants to this area. And Universidad de Antioquia sociologist Beatriz Vélez takes on that important national symbol, soccer, in a way that might surprise fans of the sport.

We always take pride in our photo essays at *Hemisphere*, and in this issue we are especially pleased to offer a selection of works by Cecilia Arboleda, a talented artist and photographer from Colombia who now lives in Miami. Her pictures speak volumes about the preservation of human dignity and cultural identity in her homeland in spite of the forces vying to pull the nation apart.



An Antidote to Crisis

by Martha Ellen Davis

Colombia is in crisis. These are the opening words of a report published by FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Center, "The Colombian Diaspora in South Florida," in May 2001. A year and a half later, the nation's crisis is more acute than ever. As an ethnomusicologist, I am interested in how people respond to such difficult times through the arts, which serve both as antidote and response to crisis. This is true not only in Colombia itself, but also within the expatriate community in South Florida, where Colombians, some displaced by the crisis, are now the second largest group of Latin American immigrants.

In recognition of the growing presence of South Americans in Miami, the Historical Museum of Southern Florida launched the South American Traditions Project in 2001 to document and present the traditions of selected South American communities "making history" today in Miami-Dade. The project is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts' Folk and Traditional Arts Program. The goal is to develop an archive of data and audiovisual materials for public access, programming and exhibits. The first phase of the project entailed field research to identify and document key traditions symbolic of identity among immigrants: music, festivals and "foodways." In late August 2002, an on-line exhibit was opened on the Historical Museum's website: www.historical-museum.org. A second phase, if funded, will apply this research to public programming.

My assignment included much of the Colombian fieldwork, as well as all the field research on Peru. Although I have extensive anthropological and ethnomusicological experience in Latin America, I had never lived in Miami. Yet in 28 days of research, my task was to identify and document as completely as possible the musical, festive and culinary traditions of two South American communities.

Musical Symbols of Identity

During the brief period of my research, I encountered musical representations of the four major Colombian regions: the Andes, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the plains region known as Los Llanos. My sources turned out to be mainly urban Colombians of the middle and upper classes, mostly white. Some were long-time residents of Miami, but others were recent arrivals. Many were trained in music, so their musical culture represented the literate tradition, although often inspired by or based on folk and popular rhythms and genres. Their musical culture could be termed "urbanlore" and its subset, "elitelore." Another researcher, Nathalia Franco of FIU, interviewed vallenato and folklórico ensemble musicians, the former of a largely lower social sector, the latter higher-class revivalists. The question remains whether more in-depth research in Miami might lead to folk (i.e., peasant), Native American or Afro-Colombian musical genres.

My research was timed to coincide with the celebration of Colombian independence on July 20, 2001. With few leads, I began

Exploring the Colombian musical diaspora in Miami

by collecting free newspapers, flyers and publications from Colombian restaurants and other businesses. One of the main events of independence week was the "Serenata a Colombia" on July 19, a four-hour musical variety show attended by several hundred compatriots in the patio of the consulate in Coral Gables. Many of the locally based artists I met there I was to encounter again: the contemporary llanera singer Astrid Bulla, the popular/folk artist Luz Marina Salazar, the clever trovadores Acelere y Tachuela, and others.

The event demonstrated the vision of the Consul General of Colombia, Dr. Carmenza Jaramillo, who understands the symbolic role of music and the arts for the Colombian diaspora in Miami. The Serenata became a forum for the expatriates' anguish over the crisis in their country, collectively expressed through spontaneous prayers and calls for peace, as well as music. The audience members sang along with compositions celebrating national or regional identity and danced in the aisles, waving Colombian flags. The high point was the duo Lara y Acosta singing Rafael Godoy's bambuco, "Soy colombiano." Hundreds joined in the chorus, *"¡Qué orgulloso me siento de ser un buen colombiano!"* (How proud I feel to be a good Colombian!)

Home Ties

Colombians in Miami, especially recent immigrants, are closely linked with their homeland. These connections are fortified daily by the mass media, most notably commercial radio station WSUA, "Radio Caracol," 1260 AM. Secondary links are Radio Cadena Nacional (RCN)—the Colombian national radio and television network, available only on satellite dish—and the weekly local show "Magazín colombiano," produced by Carlos Walles Television for public-access Cable-TAP channel 36, WLRN.

Radio Caracol is the lifeline binding Miami to Colombia. It is a multinationally owned, Bogotá-based 24-hour station, with several international correspondents. The station provides news, sports and cultural programming, some of it produced in Miami. The latter includes "Cita con Caracol," hosted by Enrique Córdoba, aired live on weeknights. More popular genres are represented by the satirical improvised lyrics of Eduardo y Gabriel, the "Trovadores de Radio Caracol," interspersed amidst the weekday late afternoon programming, and "Sábado vallenato," produced and announced by Caracol sound engineer Luis Enrique "Coco" Cárdenas.

Vallenato is a trendy, hybrid genre of música tropical, or African-influenced dance music of the northern coast. A tremendous proliferation of vallenato ensembles has found an enthusiastic market in greater Miami, where the groups perform mainly in restaurants and clubs. Cárdenas has made it his mission in life to promote vallenato music. In his view, it and other traditional and popular genres express *"todo lo que traemos dentro"*—everything Colombians carry within (as a nation).

The nickname "Coco" was bestowed on Cárdenas by surly sportscasters following his first solo broadcast as engineer, when he managed the complicated satellite feeds with perfection. Coco, or coconut, is a slang term for head; in this case, it translates as "The Brain." The name is well-deserved. As a recent immigrant with no English or resources, Coco, aka "Coco Cárdenas Productions," single-handedly produced the first vallenato festival/competition in Miami, the Festival Coco Vallenato, on July 1, 2001. Coco's purpose in organizing the festival was to project a positive image to counter stereotypes of violence and drug-trafficking often associated with Colombia. Los Príncipes Vallenatos won first prize and the festival was a great success. But ironically, as the set was being struck and the ticket sales counted, the lights went out and Coco was assaulted, presumably by Colombians, although the crime was not solved. All of the money brought in was stolen. Undaunted, working at extra jobs to pay creditors, Coco began planning a second festival for June 2002.

Music, Class and Economics

The genres of música tropical popular prior to vallenato—the porro and the cumbia—also continue to be performed as symbolic of regional and national identity. A midnight show by the ensemble Armonía Colombiana—part of an independence celebration at a rent-

ed dance hall in Hallandale—featured pieces by both older and contemporary composers, including José Barros, Lucho Bermúdez, Mario Gareña, Jorge Villamil, Efraín Orosco, Anulfe Briseño, Gustavo Adolfo and others. The musical program was interspersed with folklórico dance demonstrations by Angélica Hernández and Fabio Correa. The dancers, who are actually urban professionals, donned peasant costumes and performed to recordings of a sanjuanero, a joropo and a cumbia. In Colombia, as elsewhere in the Americas and Europe, it is not uncommon for urban-dwellers to tap into folk music and dance for symbols of identity.

Armonía Colombiana illustrates the importance of music as a primary or secondary source of income for the performers in their new circumstances. For some, their music-making for supplemental funds in Colombia has continued in Miami. For others, an activity done for pleasure or extra money at home may become the main source of income. Armonía Colombiana's lead singer and director, tenor Rubén Darío Usma, was an insurance salesman in Cali and is a prepaid telephone card representative in Miami. In Cali, he directed an ensemble also called Armonía Colombia, reconstituted in Miami, performing lyrical and folk-based popular song. He also composes and performs sacred Protestant vocal music, and entered the US as a missionary. Guitarist and backup vocalist César Montoya, a conservatory-trained singer, worked as a medical electrician at a Cali hospital and secondarily as a serenade-singer. In Miami, he is an assistant electrician on weekdays and performs in a vocal/guitar duo on weekends at three Colombian restaurants. Olga Arango, from Armenia, supervises wholesale Colombian cheese distribution and also plays *tiple* and *cuatro* with Armonía Colombiana and other ensembles. On the other hand, keyboardist Carlos Alberto Pardo was a public-health physician in Cali, with music a secondary pursuit. In Miami, music has become his primary occupation. He is in increasing demand as an accompanist and has a fixed restaurant engagement as the Dúo Claro de Luna with violinist and singer Martha Elena Sánchez.

Other Regional Sounds

Although vallenato and other genres of música tropical may be best known commercially abroad, other regional genres have large followings both at home and in the expatriate community. One of these is música llanera, a harp-accompanied genre of improvised song from Los Llanos, the southern plains region shared between Colombia and Venezuela. Música llanera is widely popular in both countries and performed both by traditional musicians and others who may never have been to Los Llanos. The Miami epicenter of this music is the Venezuelan restaurant Alma Llanera, located just east of Florida International University. Here Peter Rima, director of Grupo Moriche, apprentices to Venezuelan master harpists periodically hired at the restaurant. Peter is from Bogotá and learned to play música llanera from recordings, a form of oral transmission also common among jazz musicians in the United States.

Community Performance Venues

Much Colombian music takes place in restaurants, major venues for song and dance performers of various genres. For immigrants, the restaurant is a cultural embassy where three symbols of identity intersect: food, music and often dance. Most Colombian restaurants in Miami are owned by *paisas*, the industrious natives of Antioquia and its capital, Medellín, and feature the signature dish, the *bandeja paisa*. But the musical offerings at Colombian restaurants in greater Miami are regionally broader than the cuisine. During the period of my research, Rancho Café in Hialeah was the fixed venue for a Colombian voice/guitar duo, a vallenato band and a salsa ensemble, and also hosted an occasional special event, such as a *noche bohemia*, an informal participatory show of lyrical and popular song. Restaurants are unreliable sources of income, however; employment there is generally low-paying, fluctuating, or tip-based. Performers may change venue or even travel between Miami and Colombia, depending upon economic circumstances.

Rubén Darío Usma invited me into the world of religious music through his work as a Protestant musical missionary. His church, the remarkable Casa de Alabanza/House of Praise at 3501 West Flagler Street, uses salsa cristiana in its services and is fully bilingual, as are many other Protestant missionary churches. Such houses of worship are important multinational crossroads: pan-Latin American, Latin American/Latino and Hispanic/Anglophone. Salsa music itself is a ubiquitous idiom of Caribbean communities, emanating not only from New York, Puerto Rico and Cuba, but in recent years also from Cali, a major focus of salsa production and activity.

Musical Networks

Through Rubén Darío, I met Eugenio Arellano, a composer and

performer from a renowned musical family, whose surname, says Rubén Darío, "is synonymous with music in Colombia." Eugenio granted me an appointment at midnight—his time for music. In our session, he shared some of his songs promoting human rights and political justice. The political content of his lyrics, he claims, was one of the motives that impelled him to emigrate to the US under refugee status. His bambuco, "Hay que sacar el diablo" (We must throw out the devil!), affirms, *"¡Hay que parar la guerra con la canción!"* (We must stop the war with song!).

Eugenio in turn referred me to master luthier (instrument-maker) and composer Lucho Vergara, who constructs prize-winning *tiples*, the musical instrument of the Andean region traditionally taken as symbolic of Colombian identity, as is the bambuco rhythm played on it. Don Lucho's dream is to make a set of some 18 tiples exclusively with woods native to Colombia, such as the purplish *nazareno*, and to perform an entire concert on these instruments. He has also invented a *tiplegui*, a composite of tiple and a guitar with one enlarged body and two necks, so he can both introduce and accompany his performances without changing instruments.

Eugenio and Nancy Pulecio, who publishes an annual directory of Colombian businesses in the US and a guide for Hispanic immigrants, invited me to the launching of a CD, "...de mis amigos," produced by and for music-loving friends who gather monthly to serenade each other in a *tertulia* or noche bohemia. The organizer is Alfredo Quintero, president of BanCafé and a baritone. The "friends" are mainly Bogotá-derived members of the Miami business elite, who represent earlier phases of Colombian immigration. They are joined by newer arrivals and other members of the Colombian musical world in Miami, among them the renowned bolero musicologist, Jaime Rico Salazar. The *Miami Herald* (Sunday, August 26, 2001) reported on these tertulias in the context of developing Colombian unity in the US for political empowerment.

Festival and Carnival

A key expression of national unity is the annual Festival of Independence, organized every July by Congo de Oro Productions and Radio Caracol, which broadcasts live from the main stage at Tamiami Park. For the research project, the event facilitated access to a more populist musical culture of the north coast. Under a tree I encountered a *papayera*, a municipal brass band, enhanced with drums (*bombo*, *llamador* and *congas*) and the *guache* (tube rattle, aka *guacho*), typical of the northern coastal towns. La Gran Banda: Orquesta y Papayera was founded and directed by Henry March of Barranquilla. A saxophonist, composer and arranger, he came to Miami as a professional musician. He developed the papayera because he viewed this genre as an unoccupied niche in Miami, in contrast to the abundance of vallenato ensembles. In my interview with him, the maestro exhibited his collection of coastal indigenous folk instruments still used in popular music, such as the *gaita* (a long vertical flute played in male/female pairs, with a black beeswax/charcoal bulb to hold a quill mouthpiece) and the *flauta* or *caña de millo* (a short transverse bamboo flute blown over a slit for an engaging buzzy sound).

At the festival I also literally ran into Marina Lanao, a dancer with a folk and carnival ensemble, or *comparsa*, who was fleeing the rainstorm that cancelled her group's performance. Later, at her home, she and Reylbeck "Rey" Mercado, who was a physician in Colombia and works as a bilingual and science teacher in the US, introduced me to the Barranquilla carnival. In February 2000, the group returned home to participate in the festivities. Currently, they are forming a new ensemble to be called Cumbiamberos de Colombia.

The Power of Colombian Music

Music and the arts—in live performance, both intimate and public, as well as through the mass media—are fundamental to the transnational identity of Colombians in Miami. In Colombia, music can be a tool of resistance. In Miami, for persons displaced by violence or its economic consequences, music is self-validating, even therapeutic. For long-term residents who have carved out a comfortable niche in a new country but must balance dual identities in their lives and their hearts, music helps keep the equilibrium.

Martha Ellen Davis (Ph.D., Illinois) is an affiliate associate professor of music and anthropology at the University of Florida and a research associate for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida's South American Traditions Project. *Her study and research have been supported by Fulbright fellowships, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the Organization of American States and other organizations. Awards for her writing and photography include the National Nonfiction Award of the Dominican Republic, where she is a permanent resident.*

"Little Colombia"

by María Alejandra Chaparro

No one knows exactly how many families have fled the violence and deteriorating economic situation in Colombia. According to the 2000 census, the number of Colombian immigrants in Florida is as high as 190,000, but it may in reality be much higher due to undercounting of the most recent wave of arrivals. Many families bring with them teenage children, who ultimately have little voice in the decision whether to stay or to go.

Teenagers represent roughly 30% of the Colombian population. In the current circumstances in their country, they have few opportunities for education, work or personal development. Like the adults who have fled the country, Colombia's adolescents see little hope of building a future for themselves at home, or of witnessing the emergence of a more democratic and inclusive Colombian society.

Those young people who have made the transition from Colombia to life in the United States also face more than the average share of adolescent pressures. Many arrive with hopes of finding "a better place" and a chance to realize their dreams and ambitions. Others are unwilling migrants forced to travel to the United States by their parents.

In an attempt to gain insight into the ways that adolescent immigrants' lives have changed in the United States, interviews were conducted with 20 young Colombians, ranging in age from 16 to 21, under the auspices of LACC's Colombian Migration project. The participants were from a variety of Colombian cities, among them Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Pereira, Bucaramanga, Ibagué and Armenia, and had been in the United States for an average of two years. They were asked to discuss the problems they faced in Colombia, their families and friends, school, the future, their dreams and the current political situation in both countries. The results summarized below should not be generalized beyond this sample. Nevertheless, the experience of these young Colombians illustrates what we consider to be a broader pattern.

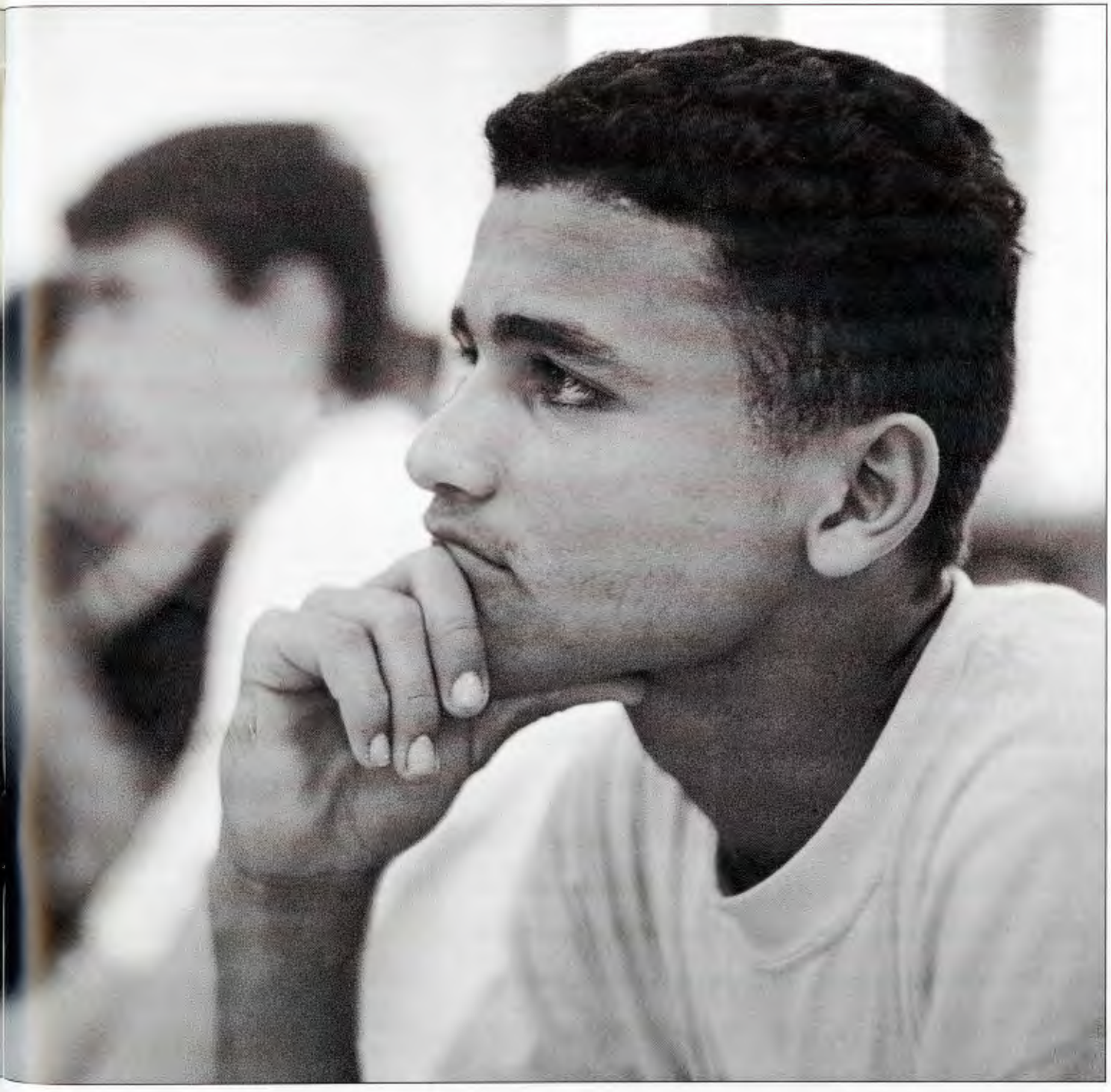
"I'm Surrounded by People, but in the End I'm Alone"

At first, it was difficult to get the subjects to open up about topics that even under normal circumstances pose a barrier between adults and adolescents. But once it became clear to them that their opinions were being taken seriously, many of the teens were enthusiastic about the chance to express their opinions.

One of the major themes that emerged during the interviews was the way family life has changed in the United States. Most of the teens said that, in contrast to the way they lived in Colombia, both parents have had to find jobs to cover living expenses in the United States. The majority of the respondents said they missed spending more time with their parents.

"In Colombia, you were used to only your father working. Here they both have to work, so you are

Teen immigrants make new lives in the US



alone in the house a lot," said Johana.* "In Colombia families spend a lot of time together. That's something we miss here."

"I never see my Dad," puts in Santiago. "I have a job in the afternoons, and he works in the mornings. By the time he gets home, I'm already gone."

For some of the respondents, however, family life had not changed much. According to Felipe, "things here are the same as they were in Colombia. My Dad lived outside of Medellín and my mother was already here. I lived with my cousin. For three years now, my life has been the same: I eat alone and go to sleep alone at night."

Not unlike their US counterparts, many of the teenagers interviewed felt alienated from their parents and complained of a lack of communication. Most of them said that when they had a problem they preferred to talk to their friends, who, as Lina said, "are always there when you need them." The immigration experience, however, appears to have contributed to the communication gap with their parents.

One big difference in their social lives is that, unlike Colombia, the US restricts teenagers' access to alcohol and nightclubs where alcoholic drinks are served. "In Colombia you could buy liquor or cigarettes and nobody would say anything," Alex commented.

Colombia does have laws regulating alcohol consumption among minors, but the teenagers in the study claimed that they were not used to having to show ID to enter clubs. "Here the places you most want to go are where you have the least chance of getting in," complained Gina. "In Medellín there were discos for minors."

"I used to bribe the bouncer to let me in. The situation is so bad in Colombia that they're glad to get anything. Or they might say, 'take a walk and come back in half an hour.' You can't do that here," Felipe lamented.

Not all of the teenagers said their families had left Colombia because of the war, but most cited reasons linked to the armed conflict.

Some of the teenagers admitted to finding ways around the rules here, as well. Pablo confessed that his friends "use my ID to get into the disco."

All of the teenagers interviewed attended private schools in Colombia but have enrolled in the public education system in the United States, due to financial considerations. In this context, they all agreed that education in Colombia is better and more rigorous than it is here. Once they have mastered English, most have found school work to be relatively simple in contrast to their own schools in Colombia.

These differences play a role in the way the teens visualize their futures and their choice of careers. Although many of the respondents, like Sara, characterized US schools as "boring," others recognized the benefits of the American educational system.

"Here you're allowed to choose the classes you want to take. That's an advantage because it lets you pick the ones that can help you in college," pointed out Santiago.

But the teens felt that the way the educational system is structured in the US makes it difficult for them to form groups of friends with whom to study and share their experiences, as they did in Colombia.

"When you get here you have to meet new people, but it's hard because you realize that you can't trust anyone. I'm surrounded by people, but in the end I'm alone," Laura commented.

"If I Go Back, It Will Be Just to Visit"

The adolescents were asked to discuss why their families had left Colombia. Not all of them said that it was because of the war, but most cited reasons linked to the armed conflict. The most common motivations were the search for a "peaceful" place to live with job opportunities for family members.

"We left so that we could have more opportunities and live better," explained Lina. "We love our country, but we've made a life for ourselves here. If I go back, it will be just to visit."

"Me too," said Rodolfo. "We had problems with the guerrillas. I had to come here because they threatened me. People tell me that I'm lucky, and I think so, too. But in this country [the United States], it's not enough to want to succeed; you have to work at it."

Erika added: "Those of us who are here are very sad about leaving Colombia. I didn't want to do it, but we had to."

As part of the process of adapting to a new culture, the teenagers said, they had learned to see the world in different ways. They had also become more conscious of the importance of taking on responsibilities and working for their ideals.

"We had probems with the guerrillas. I had to come here because they threatened me. People tell me that I'm lucky, and I think so too. But in this country, it is not enough to want to succeed."

According to Laura, "in Colombia you think more about what you want to do, but here you concentrate on what will mean more money." Liliana had a slightly different view, saying that in the US "you learn to be more centered, spending less time with your head in the clouds."

Most of the respondents said they did not feel part of a community or a group identity. Juan commented that no US Colombian organization is solid enough to speak for all Colombians or represent their interests before the US government. "In Miami people are united, but we [Colombians] haven't learned how to be this way," Paula explained.

All said they were proud to be Colombian but were painfully aware of stereotypes, which sometimes came up at school. "People associate you with cocaine or marijuana. It can be really hard," Gina admitted.

Andrés believes that part of the problem is the image of Colombia portrayed in the media. "If they said good things about Colombia on TV and on the news, then everyone would associate us with that instead," he said.

One of the questions that provoked the most anxious response among the adolescents was about the future; specifically, where they saw themselves in the next five years. Their worries about adulthood seemed in most cases to be linked to their parents' experiences. Perhaps more than any other question, this one made them think long and hard.

Almost none of the teens imagined themselves living or working in Colombia. They all felt that the US offered them "a better future" and the security to carry out their plans, including the opportunity to develop a career and make a good living.

"Right now, we depend on this country. But in five years, this country will be the one depending on us," asserted Santiago.

"That's the good thing about the US: There [in Colombia] you study without knowing if you'll find a job when you finish school, but here you know you'll have a future," Lina stressed.

"In five years, I see myself working, living on my own and studying," John said.

"I'd like to live up north," Yenny interjected. "Florida is very Latino, very rich, but I think there's not much culture here."

Getting "Used" to Violence

When asked about the current political climate in the United States, the teens claimed with some bravado to be "used" to violence. Opinions were divided about the Bush administration's war against terrorism, but all of the interviewees expressed loyalty to this country.

"At first I didn't agree with the war, but the US has to maintain its position of strength," Sara said.

"Things here aren't like they are in Colombia, where the president embraces the guerrillas and it's considered so significant that they show it on the news," noted Laura.

Like most other young people, the ones in our study felt powerless to influence or play an active role in world events. Sara argued that "our opinion doesn't count; whatever we say, no one will listen to us until we're older."

"We are the future, but they're not listening to what the future has to say," Laura continued. "We're limited because we're still considered minors."

Ultimately, the teens described their new lives in the United States as a type of "little Colombia," and acknowledged trying to reproduce their old lifestyles as much as possible in their changed environment. When they failed, they admitted, many of them felt depressed and, above all, alone.

"If I could go back and do it all over again," Clara concluded, "I would appreciate what I had there much more. I wouldn't waste so much time."

** All of the names of the respondents have been changed to protect their privacy.*

Maria Alejandra Chaparro is a Colombian journalist who has written for El Espectador de Bogotá and, more recently, for Poder.

Where Are the Women?

by Beatriz Vélez

The few sociological studies that look at soccer have found that sports play an important role in the creation of culture. Sports set in motion the forms of behavior of human actors and the historical authenticity of a society. A study carried out by the Universidad de Antioquia in 1999-2001, "The Staging of Gender in Soccer: Hermeneutics of Masculinity and Femininity in Colombia," concluded that the staging of physical potencies and other basic elements of the human condition in soccer is a source of the revitalization of social life and urban culture.

Soccer actualizes sociocultural processes that, when put into practice, become part of daily life and accepted thinking. It contributes to an idea of masculinity based on in-corporated powers—fluids (sweat, blood and testosterone) and potencies (strength, speed, weightlessness, etc.)—perpetuating the illusion of belonging to a community (the team), and, by extension, the nation and the sense of being a "real man," a Colombian. This thinking leads to a defense of the gendered body, which, using a model of usurp-accumulate to-be, disempowers other verbs that represent human capacities—to love, to give, to realize oneself in others—traditionally associated with feminine qualities. It legitimizes ideas about and actions toward men who don't like soccer and women who participate in the sport.

The familiarity of these hypotheses obscures the gender symbolism inherent in soccer but allows social scientists to uncover its social and anthropological significance. In soccer, we can discern a modus operandi of gender via representations and uses of the body that distribute social opportunities and the rights associated with the expression of sexual identity among women and men, including participation in public life and personal autonomy.

For its importance as a multimillion dollar business, leisure activity, component of TV and radio programming, and object of devotion of the politically vital urban masses, soccer deserves attention in academic circles. Soccer is a stage on which a quintessentially human mixture of desire for autonomy and sadomasochist impulses is played out, calling up the specter of mutilation and the rites of passage of sexual identity, such as circumcision and clitorectomy.

Note the pathos that characterizes sports commentary about soccer heroes, the rush to offer medical attention on the field, the emphasis on resisting pain and fatigue, and the pomp and solemnity that surround broken bones and bruises. Soccer acts out a model of humanity centered on the exhibition of physical potency: mastering the ball, comparable to an act of will that expands the arena of human action; implementing a strategic plan and team tactics, representing the triumph of human intelligence; and the exuberant expression of emotion under the gaze of the spectator, equivalent to social and economic recognition.

In our consumer society, the anthropological significance of soccer has changed as the structure of the game obeys the demands of the market. Players, coaches and trainers are reduced to cogs in the economic wheel that yields profits for soccer clubs and makes customers out of fans.

A wealth of sociological information can be found in such varied aspects of the sport as players' strikes and the enthusiasm of Colombians who root for foreign teams, as well as the fans who imitate the songs, emblems and behaviors of their Argentine and Spanish counterparts. Exploring the symbolic universe contained in the gender dynamics of soccer provides a glimpse into a type of "in-corporated empowerment."

Soccer, Gender and Society

The attempt to control the speed, force and direction of a spherical object (the ball) without recourse to our bodies' most effective tools—our hands—appeals to a model of human perfection based on a fundamental mismatch between the ends and the means. The transformation of clumsy feet into finely tuned receptors and delivery systems expresses a key aspect of human nature: the expansion of our vital space.

The predominant emotion on the field, where flesh is set against flesh and the limits of the individual are blurred in the common flow of life, resembles the collective rituals of Carnival. The tremor that washes over players and spectators, somewhere between tears and laughter,

The gendered body in Colombian soccer

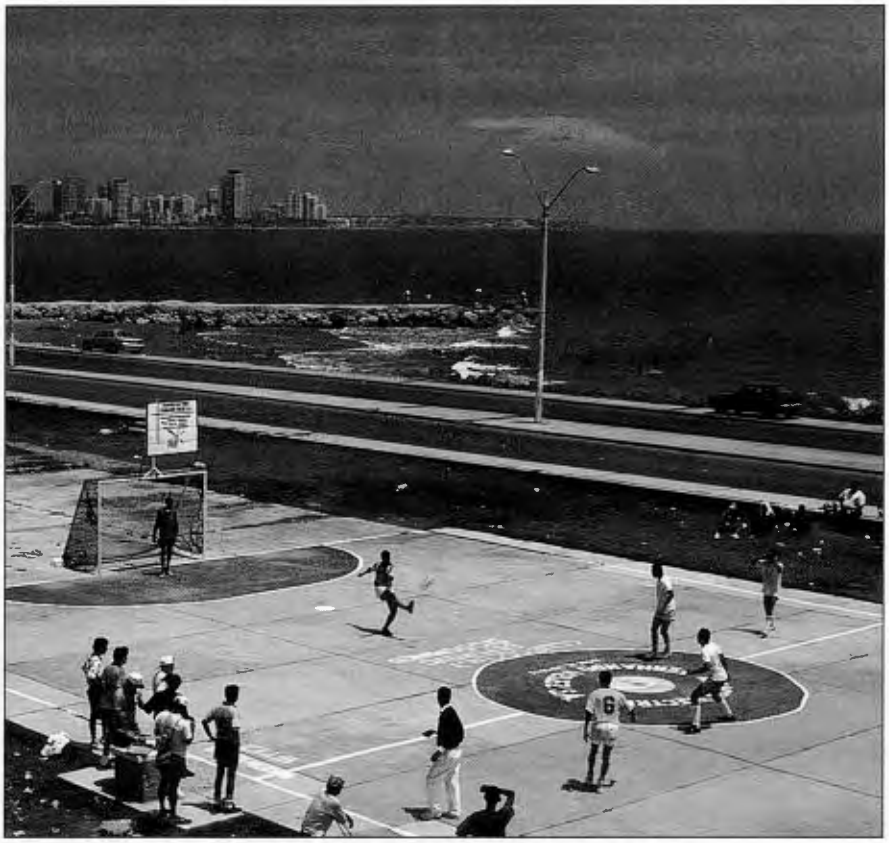
taps into the same source of the sacred and the religious that motivates humans to seek communication with the supernatural—the sense of "regressive progression" proposed by Andrés Ortiz-Osés.

The stadium, an urban stage under the open sky where body-to-body competition is carried out, offers players a chance to overcome gravity. Maneuvers that stretch the limits of possibility feed the desire for transcendence through other means: flying, dancing, levitating, trembling with pain or pleasure.

The model of human perfection embodied in soccer, manifested as rational action, physical skill and the expression of emotion (without in any way undermining the masculinity of the players), brings several questions to mind: Why is half of humanity—women—excluded from participation in the staging of a game that is emblematic of the fullness of the human condition? How can we explain the secret stubbornness that defends masculine hegemony and encourages homophobia in an activity that hides its sexism beneath pretensions to be the crowning joy of all Colombians? How should we interpret the scorn and mockery of women soccer players, who are viewed with suspicion as being somehow "unnatural?" Does ignoring the issue of gender in soccer legitimize the universalist pretensions of a gendered activity, in contrast to critical social theories (such as feminism) that promote equality in difference?

These questions invite a study of the gender relations that sustain

communal representations that associate soccer with masculinity, disqualifying women from playing or talking knowledgably about the sport. The same suspicion extends to female referees and coaches and reinforces the "naturalization" of gender-derived social prohibitions that govern discourse and interaction on the soccer field. Women who simply attend games are tolerated more readily than those who have the audacity to be sportswriters or commentators, while those who actually play are subject to the most severe attacks on their image and sexual identity.



The Human Condition: Unnatural by Nature

The hierarchies, powers, values and symbols that govern soccer, its language and its role in the formation of sexual identity are so embedded in daily life that they seem "natural." The Catholic Church's festive calendar has been replaced by the secular cult of soccer, and improvised stadiums in public spaces reinforce cultural presuppositions through the game itself. In this world, men are supposed to choose a team and passionately support it, while women must resist the desire to participate.

The dichotomy between what is "natural" and "unnatural" results in stereotypes that lead to models, counter-models and anti-models of social behavior: "real men" are soccer players, while "fake men" lack the strength or character to compete. Women who play soccer are *marimachos*, or "dykes."

Although these stereotypes have slowly begun to erode, contemporary society generally rejects women's sports. In the late nineteenth century, the author of the Olympic Charter, Pierre de Coubertin, exalted the cult of gendered corporeal potencies when he dismissed women's sports as wrong, unaesthetic, impractical and boring. His insistence that they be held out of sight of men contrasts markedly with the voyeurism of today's men's sports (37 billion viewers watched the France 1998 World Cup).

It also becomes "natural" for men to have the "right" to intimidate and marginalize women from public sports by organizing impromptu games at all hours of the day or night and dominating the important sports venues. It is considered "natural" to bar girls from playing soccer (some schools prohibit them from engaging in the sport for fear they might get scars or other marks on their bodies—the same marks that for boys are a sign of virility), and laughing at and mistreating those who do. At the institutional level, obstacles are put in the way of girls who try to take soccer lessons.

The sexual division of society, understood as a "natural" fact of biological life apart from the social order, has made war, science, politics and sports—all fields associated with virility—the opposite of feminine nature, which is relegated to functions relating to reproduction and caring for others. This model of humanity, reinforced by the values of usurpation, revenge, aggression, risk and humiliation, is played out on the soccer field in a symbolic representation of battle.

The questioning of these values has helped change gender definitions and raised doubts about the qualities the sex-gender system regards as appropriate for men and women. Some social scientists even view the maternal instinct, a sacred precept of theories of the family, as a cultural value rather than a biological imperative. In the process,

traditional masculine hegemony in public life has lost its justification.

When social scientists call into question "natural" facts, drawing attention to the principles that underpin social values, knowledge and commonly accepted ways of looking at the world, they invite critical reflection. This encourages the formation of new referents of behavior and social interaction more in tune with changing interpretations of relations between men and women.

The analysis of soccer and Colombia's so-called passion for the sport from the point of view of social and cultural conceptions of gender identity calls into doubt the validity of dominant "macho" and violent referents, under which to be a man means rejecting all forms of femininity.

So, Where Are the Women?

Sociological indicators reveal how deeply soccer is rooted in daily life in Colombia. Soccer is a ubiquitous pastime on weekends, after work and during other leisure time. The streets are transformed into improvised stadiums, where men of all ages vent their aggressive impulses and psychic eroticism. These stages serve as spaces for socialization, inciting competition, cooperation and interaction in a context of friendship and extreme emotion. They are also a training ground for learning physical skills, social norms and aspects of gender identity.

The insignificant participation of women on these sports stages is reinforced by the pejorative language used to refer to female players, referees, sportscasters, commentators or coaches. Some women have reacted by starting training programs for girls, as well as the Colombian Women's Soccer Association. But in general, women play a public role in soccer only in peripheral areas: in cheering on their teams, in the company of male fans; or as vendors outside of the stadiums.

The business of soccer in Colombia turns stadiums into important features of the urban landscape, TVs and radios into objects of great power, and public spaces into improvised arenas. The saturation of soccer programming in the media, which endlessly analyze results, replay goals and broadcast foreign matches, has brought this business into the nation's homes.

Colombian soccer players generally come from the poorest sectors of the population. They learn to play on the streets, where, by dodging every sort of obstacle—vehicles included—they develop complex physical skills. On the field, these abilities produce the rhythm and grace that characterize Latin American soccer.

Colombians' passion for soccer, a key element of their national identity, leads us again to the question: Where are the women?

Stereotypes translate into actions that have harmful effects on women. In Medellín, a big soccer town, female physical education students were barred from taking soccer classes until 1986. In 1998, a group of young women who wanted to participate in a community program centered around soccer reported being harassed by their fathers or other male relatives. Field research in Medellín in 1999 turned up other girls who were beaten, mocked or insulted just for playing soccer. Women who have the talent and desire to become professional players must carefully consider their options or give up their dreams for fear of projecting a counter image of femininity.

But it is rare for men or women to question why so few women are active in soccer, whether at the amateur or professional level. Only now are academics beginning to examine the foundations of a sport that exalts the masculine values of usurp-accumulate to-be, embodying potencies and fluids of the gendered body in opposition to feminine symbols.

By perpetuating gender inequalities, these values conceal human suffering. What are we to think of a society that celebrates a vision of humanity based on the "humiliation" of the other through the demonstration of physical prowess before a crowd of spectators? In addition, the propositional aspect of soccer raises other questions: Is there an equivalent social venue for women to serve as models of human perfection through the mastery of physical skills? Are beauty pageants adequate forums for women to exercise sovereignty over their bodies, or do they seal the triumph of nature over the power for transcendence of the female subject, trapping her in her flesh?

Soccer and its cultural referents of masculinity and femininity offer insights into the gender inequality that underpins behaviors that reflect the level of sovereignty attained by human subjects. Clearly, when it comes to soccer, not all is fun and games.

Beatriz Vélez is a professor of sociology at the Universidad de Antioquia. *The ideas in this article were first expressed in another article by the author, "El fútbol en Colombia: ¿un escenario para el juego de género?" Revista Nova&Vetera (Instituto de Derechos Humanos, ESAP), no 36, August-September 1999.*

Children of War

by Adriana Herrera Téllez

More children than soldiers have been affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. As the violence has intensified, children have gone from being indirect victims to virtual prisoners of war. UNICEF estimates that 6,000 boys and girls have been recruited into the ranks of one or another side in the fighting.

"When children reach the age of four they start being trained as couriers to carry messages between the members of armed groups," says Julián Aguirre, director of a social reinsertion program for minors at the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF). "At the age of seven they are taught minor logistical tasks, and by 13 they are ready to become combatants."

These are Colombia's children of war.

"In a context of continuing violence, the situation becomes normal," Aguirre adds. "Some of these children come from families caught up in the dynamics of the conflict in such regions as Magdalena Medio, Casanare and Arauca."

According to the ICBF's director, Juan Manuel Urrutia, 70% of the children his institute works with have links to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which considers anyone above the age of 15 an adult. Many children claim to have joined the guerrillas voluntarily, but later found it almost impossible to leave.

The guerrillas also engage in forced recruitment. For example, it is common for them to demand that families have one of their children report for training or temporary service every two weeks. This obligation not only uproots young people from their communities—in general, they are sent on duty far away from their homes—but also from their personal development, and childhood itself.

The practice of using minor-age combatants is not limited to the guerrillas. Colombia's Ombudsman reports that up to half of some units of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) are minors. According to Urrutia, the paramilitaries have a more mercenary focus and recruit adults with a $250 monthly salary, far above the earnings of many Colombians. Apparently, the organization does not find it worth its while to waste its resources on minors, who are less effective militarily. In a 1999 interview with the television network Caracol, however, the founder of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, stated that in the Department of Córdoba his forces kept order with the help of the sons of local ranchers, who "volunteered" their services.

All around Colombia, boys and girls kill and die in a conflict they do not understand, but which they cannot escape. According to the ICBF and other groups, a fourth of minors fighting with the guerrillas and paramilitaries die in combat. Another fourth switch their affiliation between armed groups, and many of the remainder either escape, are captured or turn themselves in to the authorities. Although the recruitment figures are basically even for both sexes, most of those captured in battle are boys, who are more likely to be on the front lines. Girls are given more logistical tasks or domestic duties in the fighters' camps.

Children of both sexes make desirable recruits because they are more impressionable than adults, arouse less suspicion, cost less to maintain and are easily replaced. But terror is not the most common recruitment tactic. Instead, youngsters are lured with false promises of training and told that they can leave whenever they want. Families also come under pressure to prove their loyalty by turning over their children. To avoid this form of tribute, even some guerrilla and paramilitary collaborators send their sons and daughters to boarding schools far from home.

One thing is clear: The war tax is paid in kind, with forced or voluntary child recruits. For those children who find themselves in the midst of an adult war, the only agenda becomes survival.

A Child's View

The Geneva-based Terre des Hommes has compiled the testimony of 12 children who spent time at Benposta, an organization that aids minors in the capital and areas under guerrilla or paramilitary control. Their stories give insight into the wartime experiences of children who have tried to flee the circle of violence.

One of these is Bryan, the son of a peasant family in the conflict zone. At 13, Bryan began attending secondary school in a neighboring town. There, he became friends

with a group of boys who served as informants for the paramilitaries. When the guerrillas began assassinating them, the boys warned Bryan to run away. The mere fact that he had been seen associating with them was enough to condemn him. Breaking off his schooling, Bryan went home. A few months later he was captured by the Army and tortured, because one of his brothers had gone off to the mountains with the FARC. His mother was able to get the International Red Cross to intervene for his release, but Bryan resented his treatment at the hands of the Army and joined the FARC himself. He thought he would be safer with the guerrillas, but he soon witnessed the punishment they meted out to others who tried to escape.

"After two years, I couldn't take it anymore," he recounts. "It's not a real life, being deprived of your freedom every day, afraid that they're going to kill you. You can't just say 'I'm bored' or 'I'm leaving,' because then they'll really screw you. I started to think about my future, and that's what led me to the decision to 'desert.' The day I did it I gambled everything to live without fear."

Bryan's odyssey didn't end there: The police arrested him on charges of sedition. A medical examination certified him as an adult, and he was sentenced to five years in

prison. After his family produced his birth certificate, he was transferred to a youth correctional facility and released on good behavior a few months later. He did what any boy his age would do in a country that wasn't at war: He went back to school.

Another boy relates his experiences when the guerrillas began moving into the department of Santander. "You couldn't do anything; you had to give them what they asked," he explains. Local residents were caught between the warring sides. The Army pursued peasants accused of being guerrilla collaborators, and then the paramilitaries came.

"They began to torture us to get information. They caught boys who were out alone and held their heads underwater to get them to tell where the weapons were hidden. But they couldn't tell them anything, they were only peasants. Then a sergeant showed up, but he wasn't really a sergeant; he was with the paramilitaries, only we didn't know it. He called everyone together and said that the paramilitaries were coming and he needed our help against them. When the older boys went with him it turned out to be a trick to force them to collaborate. They had to help the paramilitaries clear the zone, patrol, stand guard and everything else. They took one of my brothers this way."

When the brother got permission to come home for a visit, he immediately packed his bags and fled to Bogotá. Two weeks later, the paramilitaries came looking for him. "Where's your S.O.B. brother?" they asked the boy. When he said he had gone to Bogotá, they retorted that he had probably run away because he was with the guerrillas. "No sir," the boy responded. "He just didn't like killing people." The paramilitaries then asked the boy how old he was. When he said he would turn 13 in three months, they told him that they would come back for him then. The threat was enough to make the whole family flee, abandoning their homestead. The boy ended up at Benposta.

Why They Join

When the governor of Cali promised small business training to every young person who turned in a gun, a funny thing began to happen: Many adolescents tried to pass themselves off as guerrillas to gain access to the program and the opportunity it offered for self-improvement.

A lack of educational opportunities is one reason why children in Colombia join armed groups. Studies of child combatants in social reinsertion programs have found that the average 16-year-old has the equivalent of a fifth-grade education. Official figures on education show that more than two million school-age children in Colombia have never set foot inside a classroom.

Family dynamics are another factor. For children from poor households where domestic violence is common, adult life does not offer many options.

"The girls can be prostitutes or maids," Julián Aguirre says. "Or they can join the guerrillas. The boys too have three possibilities: become rural workers mired in poverty, common criminals or guerrillas." Some try to join the Army, and if it won't take them they give up and join the guerrillas instead. The main priority is survival.

Caught up in the conflict, young people choose the faction that offers them the best chance of protection. The choice varies according to the dominant force in a particular zone. In some cases, the motive is revenge. In others, it is a girlfriend or boyfriend who has already gone over to a particular side.

Whatever the reasons, the decision can have deadly consequences. After a guerrilla leader was assassinated in the town of Saravena in Cauca, dozens of young women were charged with being informants and "fraternizing" with soldiers. Under the slogan "One commander is worth more than 40 girls," the guerrillas rounded up the teenagers and killed them.

Witnesses, Informants and Other Victims

One of the most serious aspects of the violence in Colombia is the effect on children who witness atrocities.

A 13-year-old girl who survived a paramilitary massacre in Mapiripán told Benposta how the killers murdered her friend's father and kicked his head around like a soccer ball. "Afterwards, I remembered it all. I couldn't stop thinking about it," she confessed.

In the first 10 months of 2001, the Office of the Ombudsman recorded 92 massacres in Colombia. Most were attributed to paramilitary groups. On January 17, 2001, children in Chenge, Sucre saw paramilitaries kill 24 men in their town. The victims were murdered one by one, the *Washington Post* reported, "their heads crushed with heavy stones and sledgehammers." An Army brigade was later found to be complicit in the massacre.

Children also are not exempt from Colombia's epidemic of kidnapping. Last December, 75 children missed spending Christmas with their families because they were being held hostage by kidnappers. Human Rights Watch has denounced the FARC's policy of

abducting children as a political pressure tactic. In a letter to FARC commander Manuel Marulanda, the organization protested the kidnapping of victims as young as five years old. Marulanda dismissed the complaint as "Yankee interventionism."

The conflict takes its toll on children in many ways. In the first nine months of 2001, according to Colombia's Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), 55,585 families—eight every hour—were forced to abandon their homes because of guerrilla or paramilitary incursions. Almost half of the displaced population, or 1.2 million people, were children. Also last year, 40 children had limbs amputated after stepping on land mines. One of them was Carlos, 5, who lost a hand.

The war affects entire communities, but has an added dimension for women and girls.

"In the conflict zones," Aguirre says, "girls offer sexual favors to the armed groups to protect their families. It's a survival strategy."

While the Colombian Army does not recruit minors officially, it makes use of adolescents—girls, especially—as informants. There is no way of knowing how widespread the practice is, but staff at the Victims of Violence Protection Program report many cases in which young girls who acted as military informants found themselves on the run. They fled not only the guerrillas but the Army itself, for fear the information they carried would make them targets for reprisals.

Violence and Its Effects

The long-term consequences of violence on children can only begin to be understood by those who see the problem up close, says Francisco de Roux, director of the Program for Development and Peace in Magdalena Medio. "For young people in the midst of confusion and conflict," explains de Roux, who was awarded Colombia's National Peace Prize in 2001, "there is no difference between the various actors in the war. They are afraid of the army, the paramilitaries and the guerrillas. These children grow up in an atmosphere of silence and terror, and the pain and confusion they carry inside affect the way their consciences develop. Human life loses its value, giving way to a sense of the precarious nature of existence. Anything could happen....In this environment, many children slip into silence and isolation. Their priority is forgetting. Others react by taking up arms. Some simply take their places among the masses of displaced persons who anxiously watch events unfold around them, fearing that the worst is still to come."

Those who try to help such children regain normal lives must grapple with the absence of special provisions for former child combatants in Colombian law. Legislation protects vulnerable, abandoned or delinquent children, but not those who have become soldiers in a war. Little is known about the conditions young people face in the battle zones or the nature and effects of their experiences with illegal organizations. Even less is understood about patterns of violent behavior that emerge later in their lives.

Those children who manage to break away from armed groups live with fear of denunciation by the military and retaliation from the groups they left. Trapped between forces of hatred, they face enormous legal and economic problems and the terror that their families will become targets for revenge.

With proper attention, however, they can make progress toward leading normal lives. Carlos Eduardo Martínez, a political scientist and leading proponent of nonviolence in Colombia who has worked with Benposta for three decades, argues that "the capacity for recovery is astonishing when children are removed from the context of war. Through programs to improve their self-esteem, the discovery of their artistic potential and their own capacity for leadership, they can be taught a sense of belonging to the community." Many of the children of war who came through Benposta are today young adults who are working to help others in similar situations.

This precedent holds out some hope for the efforts of civil organizations against the war in Colombia. A young participant in the Children's Peace Movement, whose parents were killed by the guerrillas, sums up her experiences this way: "If I have the choice of taking up arms, I will always say, 'never again.'"

Adriana Herrera Téllez is a Colombian journalist with a background in literature. Her work combines journalism with social research methodology. She is the author of the book The American Dream: Colombians Who Triumphed in the United States, and she writes for the arts and letters section of the Nuevo Herald.


Centro

The Urban Battlefield

by John Marulanda Marín

Will Colombia's armed conflict spread to the cities?

Since the events of September 11, international observers have taken a new interest in Colombia. The conflict there has begun to be viewed as a logical next step in the Bush administration's self-declared war on terrorism.

The campaign led by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has consequences beyond Colombia's borders. The guerrillas control large expanses of territory, command extensive economic resources from their involvement in drug trafficking, and have built up formidable military capabilities. They have been shown to have ties to international criminal organizations, including the Russian, Ukrainian and Croatian mafias, as well as Pakistani, Irish, Cambodian, Cuban and Venezuelan elements. The fighting in Colombia entered a new, critical stage in February 2002, when then President Andrés Pastrana revoked the demilitarized *zona de despeje* he had granted the FARC earlier in his administration. Many Colombians and foreign observers fear that, as the FARC loses its rural stronghold, it will begin to stage more attacks in cities. The country's leading paramilitary organization, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), has also stated its intention to take the battle to the streets. Will Colombia's cities become the next theater of operations in the nation's decades-long civil war?

Demographic and Tactical Shifts

Colombia's population is approximately 70% urban and 30% rural. Displaced persons fleeing the fighting in the countryside have swelled the urban population by more than one million people, according to UN estimates. This phenomenon has led to a sharp increase in urban poverty. The government is more limited each day in its ability to meet basic needs for housing, utilities, transportation, health, education and security. Urban slums where young people have no hope for the future have become a fertile recruitment ground for violent movements of all types. According to national police statistics, more than 70% of crimes reported in Colombia in 2000 took place in urban areas. (The figures do not distinguish between common crime and political violence).

Violence has been a constant in Colombia's political history, from the civil wars of the nineteenth century to the period known as *La Violencia* in the twentieth. The current conflict emerged in the 1960s, in a Colombia where the majority of the population was still rural. Guerrilla organizations such as the FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) had their roots in the countryside. From early on, the tacit understanding was that the countryside was the place for fighting and the city the place for politics. As the process of rural-urban migration intensified, however, the cities became important venues for strikes, protests and popular mobilizations.

The ELN was the first to bring its guerrilla tactics to the cities, in 1973-1974. The group built a network of urban sympathizers, especially on the university campuses of Bogotá, until the armed forces succeeded in rooting it out. Two years later, the EPL organized what was perhaps the first urban subversive unit in Colombia's recent history, the Pedro León Arboleda group. The Bogotá-based PLA carried out some low-grade attacks, but by 1980 most of its members had been arrested or faded away. The EPL itself stayed put in its mountain strongholds.

The most radical and urbanized armed group to date appeared in 1978-1979. The Worker's Self-Defense Movement (MAO), later known simply as Worker's Self-Defense (ADO), was formed by students at the Universidad Santiago de Cali, who took their inspiration from the IV Trotskyite International. This group's vision of urban revolution verged on a nihilistic form of anarchy, with the writings of Carlos Marighella and Mikhail Bakunin as its bible. The murder of a former government minister, the establishment of a guerrilla training school in northern Bogotá and attacks on policemen brought down the wrath of the mil-

itary on the ADO. Except for an unsuccessful attempt to regroup during the Betancourt presidency in the 1980s, the group to all intents and purposes was disbanded.

The appearance of the M-19 in 1975 marked another milestone in the history of urban political violence in Colombia. The M-19 gained international attention for Colombia's guerrilla movements by transferring the battle from the remote mountains and countryside to the city streets. After failing to consolidate a "southern front" in the jungles of Caquetá, the M-19 shifted its attention to Bogotá and other major cities, such as Cali and Medellín. The M-19 was also good at seizing the media spotlight. Dramatic actions such as the assault on the Dominican Republic's embassy in Bogotá, large-scale arms thefts and the Palace of Justice massacre made headlines around the world.

After the M-19 was incorporated into the political arena in 1991, the FARC, ELN and a faction of the EPL—under the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Committee—made a greater effort to establish an urban presence. The Bolivarian and Popular Militias organized by the FARC and ELN in the Ciudad Bolívar neighborhood of Bogotá, Aguablanca in Cali and areas of Medellín are another attempt by these groups to extend their reach to the setting that is most representative of Colombia today: the city.

Containment Factors

Colombia's guerrilla groups have attempted to resolve the contradiction between their primary rural war and an increasingly urban nation by systematically transferring the armed conflict to the marginalized and impoverished urban masses. In doing so, they look to the

Many Colombians and foreign observers fear that, as the FARC loses its rural stronghold, it will begin to stage more attacks in cities. The country's leading paramilitary organization has also stated its intention to take the battle to the streets.

examples of Marighella in Brazil (1969), the Tupamaros in Uruguay (1972), the MIR in Chile (1973) and Argentina's Montoneros (1974), as well as the homegrown M-19. At the same time, the paramilitaries of the AUC have stepped up their campaign in the cities, raising the specter of generalized urban violence.

Several factors work against this trend. The first is the news media. After years of broken promises, Colombia's terrorist groups have worn out their credibility among the viewing public. Media professionals have also become more aware of their role and responsibility in reporting terrorist attacks.

Second, it can be difficult for urban residents to distinguish between political violence and common criminal activity. Bank robberies, bombs that kill innocent civilians, random kidnappings, auto theft and other guerrilla tactics designed to raise funds or put pressure on government negotiators look a lot like ordinary crimes to most people. Such acts quickly lose their political significance and their power to forge ideological sympathies. The PLA and ADO encountered this problem in the 1970s and could not overcome it. Today's guerrilla groups have taken an additional step toward criminal activity at the international level through their involvement in drug trafficking.

Third, Colombia's armed forces, national police and specialized counterterrorism units have grown in numbers, capabilities and expertise. State security forces are not only better equipped but also better trained than ever to deal with the threat to urban areas. For example, the Bogotá-based Urban Antiterrorist Special Forces Unit (AFEAU) receives training from US, Israeli and British experts. Colombia itself has offered urban counterterrorism training and technical advice to the armed forces of other countries, including Costa Rica.

Fourth, many forces combine to make urban residents less likely to support terrorist groups of any ideological stripe. Modernization of the state, a neoliberal economic model, the influence of consumer advertising and the media, and, arguably, the real conditions of underdevelopment all play a role in discouraging political radicalism. Ordinary street crime devoid of a coherent political agenda is more of a problem in this environment.

Finally, the US-backed Plan Colombia could soon extend its focus to the three groups classified as terrorists by the US State Department: the FARC, ELN and AUC.

The Terrorist Threat

What do these factors mean for our initial question: Will we see an urbanization of the conflict in Colombia?

The country's guerrilla groups certainly think so and are working hard to bring about this state. The national security forces have foreseen the direction of the conflict and are—one trusts—preparing to face the challenge. Unless a wide range of social, economic, political and psychological conditions come together in a unique momentum, Colombia's cities could mark the end of the road for the FARC, ELN and similar groups. Potentially, these ahistorical and ideologically backwards groups from the hinterlands may be thwarted by the cement jungles and their urban residents, with their many and diverse interests, fragmented identity, exaggerated individualism, skepticism and hedonism.

This is not a prediction of an end to urban violence in Colombia. Instead, the nature of the violence may change. Demonstrations, strikes and terrorist attacks will most likely continue on a sporadic basis, but instead of being part of an organized political agenda may reflect specific circumstances, as did the so-called Bogotazo of 1948 or outbreaks of urban unrest in more recent years Los Angeles, Miami and Caracas.

In any case, terrorism, antiterrorism and counterterrorism will be the concepts that dominate the discourse of political violence in Colombia in the near future. Bakunin and Marighella will gain new relevance and Mao and Ché will be pulled off the reference shelf, reminders that Colombia is a nation in crisis. In the wake of the international terrorist plots discovered after September 11, Colombia also fears the possibility of unconventional attacks. Crude but effective chemical and biological weapons and the threat of "dirty bombs" that spread radiation over a large area could paralyze major cities. These dangers must be added to the more commonplace car bombs all too familiar to Colombia's urban population, as well as the plastic explosives that international intelligence tracked on their journey from Czechoslovakia, Libya, Ireland and Iran to the so-called demilitarized zone until recently under FARC control. Armed with an aerial map of Bogotá and lots of patience and planning, any one of the nation's armed groups could turn the city into Colombia's, and the world's, worst nightmare.

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Communities in the Crossfire

by Ulrich Oslender

Colombia must be the only country in Latin America where one feels safer in the cities than in the countryside. Paramilitary massacres, guerrilla attacks and kidnappings are the order of the day in rural areas. Powerful guerrilla movements and right-wing paramilitary groups fight a dirty war over territorial control, but only rarely do they engage each other in direct military confrontation. Local peasants, accused by each side of supporting the other, are caught up in the conflict and bear the brunt of it. Massacres, intimidation and terror are the main strategies used by paramilitary groups to "dissuade" local peasants from supporting the guerrillas. As a result, the countryside is slowly being evacuated as unprecedented levels of forcefully displaced persons migrate to the cities—as many as two million, according to Colombia's Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES).

The paramilitaries' self-proclaimed aim is the destruction of the guerrillas, and in the perverse logic of Colombia's dirty war, this means killing anyone who is remotely suspected of being a guerrilla sympathizer. This category can include intellectuals, left-of-center politicians, union workers, university professors, students, NGO workers, social movement leaders, peasants and even comedians, among them much-loved comic Jaime Garzón, who was killed by suspected paramilitary assassins in August 1999.

Until recently, Afro-Colombian communities on the Pacific coast remained at the margins of most of the violence. Ironically, progressive legislation stemming from the 1991 constitution, designed to protect collective territorial rights, has been accompanied by an escalation of the conflict in this region. Subject to the threats and terror spread by paramilitaries linked to multinational capitalist interests, black communities find it increasingly difficult to exercise their legitimate territorial rights.

The Law Backfires

Colombia's 1991 constitution declared the nation to be multicultural and pluriethnic. For the first time, the nation's charter recognized Afro-Colombian communities as an ethnic group with rights to cultural difference. Follow-up legislation (Law 70, 1993) granted collective territorial rights to the rural black communities that have traditionally inhabited the lands along the rivers in the tropical Pacific region. Community councils were designated as the territorial authority responsible for the sustainable exploitation of the area's natural resources.

By empowering the rural Afro-Colombian population, however, the legislation also threatened multinational capitalist interests. These companies are involved, for example, in agro industries such as African palm exploitation and commercial shrimp farming. A systematic campaign of intimidation against black communities and their leaders to dissuade them from

Afro-Colombians defend their territorial rights on the Pacific Coast

exercising their territorial rights has taken hold of the region, and violent conflicts have erupted in areas that were regarded as "peace niches" only 10 years ago.

In practice, the state has been unable or unwilling to guarantee the application of local territorial rights or to protect the civilian population in the Pacific region. The legal representative of the first community council to be granted collective territorial rights in the Department of Chocó was assassinated by killers rumored to be paramilitaries. And in February 1998, a black community leader in the Department of Nariño was murdered while carrying out the population census in one of the territories eligible for collective title. The assassins were apparently known to him and to the community, and they left a note with the body: "For hassling us with Law 70." The people responsible for the killing were not found, although local consensus implicated the companies that produce palm oil in the region. These companies had suffered a setback after a court case that invoked Law 70 to accuse them of illegally felling 800 hectares of forest to plant African palm trees. Locals interpreted the murder as revenge and a form of intimidation directed at other community leaders in the area.

On May 10, 2000, right-wing paramilitaries of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) entered the community of Zabaletas on the Anchicayá river near Buenaventura. The attackers killed 12 people, kidnapped four others and set fire to homes. Two days later, the Process of Black Communities (PCN), a grass-roots organization that works to coordinate the struggle of Afro-Colombians at the national level, denounced the massacre via e-mail. "The collective appropriation by the black communities of the Colombian Pacific is seen as a threat by those who maintain an interest in capitalizing on the enormous natural wealth of the area, which includes: valuable and highly commercial tropical timber, gold, and the potential to establish intensive commercial cropping," the group maintained. "The ancestral rights of the black and Indian communities, reflected in the constitution, are seen as an obstacle to this exploitation and development. Under the false pretext that these communities are collaborating with the guerrillas, violence and intimidation are used to displace them forcefully and debilitate their grass-roots organizations," it charged.

The intimidation campaigns have spread and taken on ever more cruel and shocking forms. In April 2001, an estimated 100 peasants were massacred in one night by paramilitary forces along the banks of the river Naya, south of Buenaventura, in spite of the fact that the local communities had repeatedly asked the Colombian Armed Forces for protection. The Colombian military is alleged to have close links to illegal paramilitary organizations, connections that are denounced by national and international NGOs and independent research organizations. Terrorized by the massacre and fearful of further paramilitary assaults, more than 400 peasants fled the area around the Naya river, most of them heading to Buenaventura.

The percentage of Afro-Colombians among the national displaced population is rising. The Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES) estimates the number at more than one million. According to this group's sources, some 20,000 people alone were forcefully displaced from the town of Riosucio and its surroundings on the river Atrato in Chocó between late 1996 and early 1997, when the army and paramilitaries battled FARC guerrillas in the area. The real number of displaced Afro-Colombians within the national territory is likely to be much higher than official figures indicate, since many of those who have lost their homes move in with relatives in the cities without registering as displaced persons.

Resistance Strategies

In this context, what are the chances of success for nonviolent resistance by black communities in defense of their legally guaranteed territories? What strategies should these organizations adopt to confront violent actors, both paramilitaries and guerrillas? These issues are acquiring new urgency for the Afro-Colombian communities of the Pacific coast. As one PCN activist asked after the Anchicayá massacre: "We cannot simply run away, can we?"

One strategy has been to denounce the massacres and intimidation to the international community and to ask for support and solidarity. International letter-writing campaigns to the Colombian government and Internet news forums have brought increased world attention to the struggle of these communities. They are calling for the Colombian government to take a firmer stance against paramilitary organizations and sever existing links between the army and these illegal groups.

In the early months of 2001, six members of the PCN traveled around Europe with the People's Global Action network to raise awareness of the problem in meetings with grass-roots movements, union members, city councils, aca-

demics and the European Union. During a series of meetings in Scotland in April 2001, Naka Mandinga, the legal representative of the community council of the river Yurumanguí, recalled his narrow escape from paramilitaries after witnessing the murder of three of his relatives. He also denounced the killing of seven members of his community council who were hacked to death with axes and machetes during a paramilitary incursion into the village of El Firme, just days after the river Naya massacre nearby. In an e-mail message sent from Yurumanguí in December 2001, Mandinga declared: "We want to inform the whole world that just as our ancestors resisted slavery in an organized manner through their *palenques*, so will we resist politically and organize through our Community Council. [...] As a political organization we are prepared NOT to abandon our river, for which we are ready to die with dignity within the ancestral territory that our forefathers left us."

His message was clear: The communities of the Yurumanguí river are no longer prepared to abandon their homes and join the ranks of the displaced in the cities, where their predecessors beg at traffic lights and look painfully out-of-place in the unknown urban context. Instead, they have decided to stay on in an act of civil resistance against armed actors. Exactly how they intend to do this is another question. Certainly, international support and solidarity are crucial. In March 2002, the PCN acknowledged that letter-writing campaigns and pressure on the Colombian government were partly responsible for averting yet another announced massacre by paramilitaries in the river Naya region.

But news soon arrived of another massacre, this time in the village of Bojayá on the banks of the river Atrato, an area that has suffered since 1998 from the territorial power struggle between paramilitaries and the FARC guerrillas. On May 2, 2002, during an armed confrontation between these groups, a gas cylinder, apparently launched by the guerrillas, crashed into a Catholic church where more than 300 locals had sought refuge from the fighting. One hundred and nineteen people were reported to have been killed in the explosion, including 45 children, with many more injured. Even in a country like Colombia, which has become used to daily reports of massacres, the horror of this one caused an unprecedented outcry. Questions are being asked once again why the Colombian armed forces had no presence in the area to protect the civilian population. On April 24, the People's Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) used a specially designed early alert system to advise the government of the presence of paramilitaries in the area. But when fighting began on May 1, there was still no military presence. Official explanations frequently blame the country's 'difficult geography'—the remoteness of some regions, tropical rainforests, mountain ranges, etc.—for the difficulty of staging a rapid deployment of the armed forces. Ironically, for Afro-Colombians on the Pacific coast, the same geographies that once provided a refuge for their ancestors who fled slavery have turned into geographies of terror and fear.

Geographies of Terror

Colombia's landscapes are changing. Places acquire new meanings associated with the changing geographies of Colombia's internal conflict. The Pacific coast must now be regarded, sadly, as fully integrated into the dirty war. Local experiences of terror and fear have radically altered the sense of place of residents of the region. Don Agapito, a local peasant and *decimero* (practitioner of oral poetry) used to recite a poem invoking the magic of the town of Buenaventura and the beautiful girls of the surrounding rivers:

El puerto de Buenaventura,
un puerto bien venturoso,
donde apegan los navíos
y los hombres de reposo.

El puerto de Buenaventura,
¿cuándo estaremos allá?
viendo muchachas bonitas
que bajan del Anchicayá.

[The port of Buenaventura,
a very fortunate port,
where vessels land
and men relax.

The port of Buenaventura,
when will we be there?
to see the beautiful girls
who descend from the Anchicayá.]

The news of the massacre at the river Anchicayá tells a different story; one of murder, houses destroyed by fire, and disappeared and displaced people. These are the new geographies of terror being produced in Colombia, where rural black communities are engaged in a legitimate struggle for cultural and territorial recognition.

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Colombia's Left

by Sergio Otálora

As the final votes were tallied in Colombia's 2002 presidential elections, the real surprise was not the winner—Alvaro Uribe Vélez, the clear frontrunner during the final months of the campaign—but the emergence of Luis Eduardo Garzón as the leader of a new political trend in Colombia.

Garzón represents a combination of new leftist proposals that break with the history of the last 25 years of independent political movements and a system of unfair and narrow democracy, tarnished by fraud scandals, violence and armed pressure from right- and left-wing militias.

It doesn't matter that "Lucho" Garzón's campaign lacked enough money to pay for ads and TV commercials; it doesn't matter that the media and polling companies banded together to mishandle surveys and manipulate audiences through supposedly scientific research and balanced analysis. The election showed that there is a new way of being independent, and the path chosen by Garzón and his partners could turn into a strong opposition movement against Uribe Vélez's rightist administration.

Could there be a second chance for Colombia's independents?

The review that follows represents a glance at leftist and independent movements in Colombian history and explores the reasons why Colombian democracy has not allowed for new parties and trends.

A Violent Beginning

Colombia's leftist movement was strongly determined by the Bananera massacre of 1928, when the army slaughtered workers striking against the United Fruit Company. This incident became a symbol of the struggle against "imperialism," a word that has been the battle cry of revolution around the world for almost a century.

But the Bananera massacre also marked the beginning of the collapse of the country's "Conservative hegemony"—30 years of consecutive Conservative Party presidents, from 1886 to 1930. A new Liberal president, Enrique Olaya Herrera, ushered in a time of change for a country that was still an overwhelmingly rural and stratified society.

Many politicians, union activists and students aligned themselves with socialism, inspired by the revolutionary events in Russia. By the third decade of the twentieth century, Colombia was witnessing the beginnings of the violence that lies at the root of its current situation. Landowners invaded peasant lands and Conservatives were murdered, allegedly by the liberal government, to name just a few of the violent methods that sparked the bipartisan struggle for power. The bloodshed echoed the nineteenth-century civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives.

The Liberal party imposed its hegemony, blocking anyone from the opposition from appointment to the new administration. Agrarian leaders organized political movements to reclaim their properties and, in many cases, clashed with the official army. It was at this time that Colombia's Communist Party was born and the land conflicts turned into a political challenge.

In 1934, Liberal President Alfonso López Pumarejo launched his *Revolución en Marcha*, a New Deal-type reformist platform aimed at overcoming the legacy of the nineteenth century—in other words, to dismantle the colonial system of land tenure, modernize the relationship between the Catholic church and the state, and promote labor unions. He proposed an open-minded, modern capitalism within a rural and old-fashioned way of life.

The right wing reacted bitterly to the Liberal reforms. Outraged Conservatives complained about the so-called "spoiled alliance" between communism and liberalism. López Pumarejo invited communist leaders to join him on the balcony of the presidential palace, where he delivered his first speech commemorating Labor Day in 1934. The end result was to politicize the population, a trend encouraged by a president who courted protesters, unionists and communists to legitimate his reforms.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, an attorney and populist leader from the left wing of the Liberal Party, posed the most important challenge. He did not believe in the Revolución en Marcha and began building a strong opposition movement, not only against López Pumarejo but also against the entire "oligarchy," a category that included bankers, entrepreneurs, landlords and politicians.

A big—but hazardous—hope

A new generation of leftist and independent leaders is willing to risk a political climate that lacks guarantees, against both electoral fraud and assassination by any one of the country's warring parties.

Gaitán was assassinated on April 9, 1948. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets ready to avenge the death of a leader who struck at the roots of bipartisan democracy, giving a new twist to grass-roots strategies. Gaitán turned people's overwhelming feelings of exploitation into a mighty will for power.

Gaitán's murder destroyed the political axis, the citizen-state relations that had been nurtured for almost 20 years. Olaya Herrera's administration in the early thirties laid the groundwork for the contract between government and the people, and López Pumarejo built on it.

A new axis was born amid the persecution of *gaitanistas*, a slaughter that traced back to 1946, when Mariano Ospina Pérez took office on behalf of the minority party. The war axis emerged from Colombian history as a weapon to destroy a movement perceived as a threat to Western, Catholic and democratic values.

By 1949, leftist organizations—the Communist Party, agrarian movements, labor unions and *gaitanismo*—were declared illegal and dangerous. Whoever belonged to them, even Liberals, was obliged to flee or be killed. In response, self-defense groups formed against conservative aggression. These groups were the precursors of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The bipartisan confrontation became worse than ever. Liberals and Conservatives turned enemies as never before.

Sorry, the Doors Are Closed

Most histories of Colombia cite Gaitán's assassination as a turning point. The nation is still living through the aftermath of that event. Each and every one of its presidents has tried and failed to handle the violence that has continued to characterize the country since then.

In 1958, after a period of rage so intense it was known as *La Violencia*, Liberal and Conservative leaders came to an arrangement known as the National Front. Under its terms, the parties ceased their hostilities against each other and concentrated on singling out "Colombia's real enemy"—communism. Depending on the interpretation, this could include guerrillas, community leaders, human rights advocates, students and trade unionists.

For the next 15 years, Liberals and Conservatives alternated in power, marginalizing other movements and parties. But at the beginning of the 1960s, Alfonso López Michelsen—the son of López Pumarejo, and who would go on to become president himself in the 1970s—objected to the National Front and its stranglehold on power. Although he belonged to the Liberal Party, López Michelsen formed the Revolutionary Liberal Movement (MRL) to protest the way the Liberal-Conservative agreement had deprived independent forces of democratic access to politics. Despite his rebel profile, in 1967 López Michelsen was appointed minister of foreign affairs by Lleras Restrepo's liberal government. Nevertheless, many disappointed and frustrated young MRL activists ended up joining the Popular Liberation Army (ELN), a militia inspired by Castro's revolution. Others of its leaders accused López Michelsen of having betrayed their ideals and goals.

In the meantime, another dissident movement, the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO), which modeled itself on populist Peronism, was created by former general and dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who himself belonged to Conservative Party.

With no room for political expression within the law, critics of the National Front turned to armed rebellion. A new generation was condemned either to political dis-

appointment or opposition through violent means. Colombia's leftists were behind bars—either the National Front's polished and seemingly democratic cage, or in prison. But a rebellious spirit was spreading throughout Colombia, from students to *campesinos*. One of its most fertile grounds was the country's universities, where leftist student movements studied the examples of socialist "workers' dictatorships"—China, the USSR, Cuba, Albania—and read the works of Mao, Trotsky, Lenin, Stalin, Engels and Tito.

By this time, the old self-defense groups of the 1930s and 40s had given way to the FARC. In its first action, in 1964, a poorly armed bunch of peasants faced off against the army in defense of the so-called "independent republics," territories where they were waging the old fight against landowners and *pájaros*, the first incarnation of paramilitary squads supported by regional bipartisan politicians and wealthy farmers.

The pressure for change culminated in the 1970 elections, in which Rojas Pinilla ran with wide support from the urban and impoverished masses. By most accounts, he won the elections, but the National Front had its own handpicked candidate, Misael Pastrana Borrero, and through (widely documented) electoral fraud, succeeded in placing him in office instead.

The 1970 elections caused many Colombians to lose faith in democracy and their ability to influence political change through voting. One concrete result of this disappointment was the emergence four years later of M-19, a populist guerrilla movement with its roots in ANAPO.

Thus began a process of fragmentation that further hindered the effectiveness of the left. Besides having to contend with narrow room for political maneuver, fraud, persecution and murder, Colombia's leftist movement became the hostage of divisions (encouraged by international communist countries and trends) and internal conflicts, at least until the Berlin Wall's collapse in 1989.

Unforgettable Peace

The next real opportunity for change came in 1982, when President Belisario Betancur began a new search for a way out of the nation's conflict. For the first time since 1948, Betancur articulated the conflict in political terms.

For good or for ill, a peace deal with the guerrillas has been the overriding issue facing the government for the last 20 years. Betancur's administration posed a new challenge for both the establishment and the guerrillas. After 30 years of violence, leftist organizations—both legal and illegal—were asked to learn a new language, one of negotiation. In hindsight, Betancur's peace-and-war strategy seems to have been effective in destroying the guerrillas' legitimacy and condemning armed fighting as a means to seize power. At the end of his administration, the war went on, but Colombia also had a new, legal leftist movement: the Patriotic Union. It too, however, met with age-old methods of intimidation through massacres and selective murders, and could not overcome the lack of space for alternative movements beyond the Liberal and Conservative parties.

By the end of the 1980s, drug trafficking had infused new strength into the paramilitary and guerrilla forces, precipitating an all-out humanitarian crisis. The escalation and degradation of war jeopardized the very continuity of the democratic system.

In the intervening years, efforts to overcome the inner mechanisms of exclusion underlying Colombian democracy have been unsuccessful. The real miracle is that anyone still has faith in democracy. The newest organization to take up the challenge is Polo Democrático, made up of leftist and independent leaders willing to risk a political climate that lacks guarantees, against both electoral fraud and assassination by any one of the country's warring parties.

The current generation of independents is trying out new methods of getting its message across. Luis Eduardo Garzón, Polo Democrático's leader, visits Washington and exchanges ideas with congressmen and high-ranking State Department officials on such issues as the counterinsurgency war, drug interdiction and illegal narcotics eradication.

This is an amazing shift from traditional leftist politics. But how long will it survive in the context of Colombia's narrow-minded democracy?

Only the warlords on the right and left, and the enemies of peace, whether inside or outside the government, know the answer to that question.

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Local Autonomy, Social Control

by Marcela Ceballos Medina

Decentralization as a strategy for government legitimacy in Colombia

Decentralization in Colombia has not followed a steady path, but has instead been marked by significant breaks and interruptions. This article analyzes the principal steps in the process from 1968 to date. It focuses on the objectives of reform, the resources or functions transferred, and the administrative levels empowered as a result. Finally, it suggests a typology for evaluating reforms according to their degree and emphasis, whether administrative, political or fiscal.

Why Decentralize?

Decentralization can be defined as the process by which the central government transfers powers, functions and resources to departments and municipalities. Its goal is to increase the autonomy of the subnational levels of government and encourage more direct citizen participation in local public affairs.

This trend emerged in Colombia in the 1970s as part of a double strategy to boost government legitimacy through modernization of the state and the opening or democratization of politics. Its initial emphasis was fiscal, with control over public spending the main target. The process continued in the 1980s with a series of political reforms oriented toward democratization and the creation of avenues for citizen participation. This trend culminated in passage of a new constitution in 1991 that redefined the administrative structure of the government, granting greater autonomy to municipalities and seeking to modernize institutions at that level.

The decentralization process, therefore, has followed three major tracks: reorganization of fiscal responsibilities among the different levels of government in an attempt to rationalize public spending; municipal reforms aimed at improving public administration; and the creation of new channels for political participation and the institutionalization of social movements as a strategy to increase government legitimacy.

Levels of Decentralization

Colombia's main decentralizing reforms have focused on public administration and the structure of public services. They can be grouped according to the areas or functions they address as well as the administrative levels affected. These variables are closely related to two theoretical dimensions of decentralization: the degree of autonomy and participation of the different levels of administration and the community in government decisions, and the geographical proximity of decision-making administrative bodies to citizens.

The administrative areas or functions transferred from the central government to the departmental or local level fall into 12 different types, each of which represents a different degree of decentralization. Reform becomes more profound as the subnational levels of government and citizens go from being passive receivers of resources to active participants in public administration, all the way up to policy making.

The 12 areas of decentralization, in ascending order, are: 1) expansion of the fiscal system; 2) delivery of services or increased responsibility for a given sector; 3) financing of services through conditional transfers; 4) financing of services by other means; 5) financing of services with autonomous resources; 6) creation of new administrative levels of government; 7) control over the government agencies or companies that provide public services; 8) popular election of government authorities; 9) definition of the administrative functions of different levels or sectors (regulation and evaluation); 10) participation in budget design; 11) development planning; 12) constitutional reform/lawmaking.

The administrative levels affected also can be divided into categories according to their proximity to the community and local control: 1) the nation and Congress; 2) decentralized agencies at the local level; 3) region; 4) department and departmental assembly; 5) special districts and municipalities; and 6) the community. Congress and decentralized

agencies are included in this list because Colombia's reform process follows a principal-agent model, in which the functions of territorial entities are determined by the central government.

The highest degree of decentralization is in the intersection between development planning and community (points 11 and 6, respectively, on the lists above). Transfer of development planning to the local level represents the highest degree of autonomy available to civil society within the Colombian model. Constitutional reform/lawmaking has a higher value in terms of decentralization, but in practice these functions are rarely divorced from the central government.

The least degree of decentralization is in the overlap between the national level and the most important autonomous function: development planning and policy design. This should be understood in relative terms, as reforms may concentrate planning at the central level but also imply important transformations through the dispersion of functions in other areas (popular election of authorities, control over the government offices or companies that provide public services, budget design and, starting with the 1991 constitution, community participation in the design of local development policies). In general, however, the subnational levels of government and the community experience greater effects from decentralization insofar as they gain autonomy over development planning.

The following analysis of the history of decentralization in Colombia focuses on reforms related to the provision of public services. It distinguishes between purely public goods, preferential and redistributive goods, and so-called externalities (development or services that generate positive benefits for neighboring jurisdictions). Preferential goods in the area of public services include primary and secondary education (including preschool) and health. Potable water, basic sanitation, energy and tertiary roads are considered externalities.

Three Decades of Reform

In the 1970s, the tendency was for many central government functions to be delegated to the departmental level. The efficient use of public resources became a government priority and led to reform of the system of political organization. The López Michelsen administration (1974-1978) worked to make departments responsible for conceptualizing and programming public services and lending technical assistance to the municipalities, which would assume responsibility for local service provision.

López Michelsen was responding to critics who protested the central government's inability to meet the population's basic needs. His plan was presented as a way to address geographic inequalities in the distribution of resources and promote regional cooperation through the creation of so-called regional corporations.

A precedent was the 1968 constitutional reform, although it favored giving municipal councils the initiative for expediting local budgets in accordance with plans developed by the mayors. This reform established the fiscal status of the departments and the Special District of Bogotá in the areas of health and education. It showed the beginning of a tendency toward transferring functions, but it did not address mechanisms for the distribution of resources or community participation.

The constituent assembly convened under President Turbay in 1980 had a pronounced centrist character in comparison with previous reforms. Turbay revoked the previous administration's reforms, assigning control over spending to the National Planning Department. In the political arena, he enacted repressive measures to break up strikes and protests, declaring a state of siege and invoking emergency presidential powers.

As the Southern Cone countries began a transition away from dictatorship, however, a general consensus on liberal democracy emerged in the region, bringing with it a renewed emphasis on decentralization. In 1986, Law 11 and the provision for popular election of mayors expressed the Colombian government's commitment to encourage citizen participation in the solution of local problems. Reforms during this period were aimed at restoring the legitimacy of the central government and undoing the excessive centralization of public resources and services by strengthening municipal government. The 1986 legislation gave citizens shared responsibility for municipal administration, not only in executing public works but in the evaluation and design of budgets and participation in the board of directors of local administrative bodies.

Fiscal matters were also a paramount concern. Law 14 (1983) addressed the unequal balance of tax income between the municipalities and the central government. In 1950, the central government concentrated 58.4% of tax revenue. By 1981, this percentage had increased to 80.4%. Law 12 (1986) increased the transfer of tax resources from the departmental to the local level.

Education was also a major target of reform, although significant decentralization of this area would have to wait until the 1990s. Law 24 (1988) created Regional Educational Funds charged with planning and managing national spending in the educational sector,

but the reorganization took place at the national level and maintained the centrist slant characteristic of the 1970s, with the Ministry of Education in charge of setting policy.

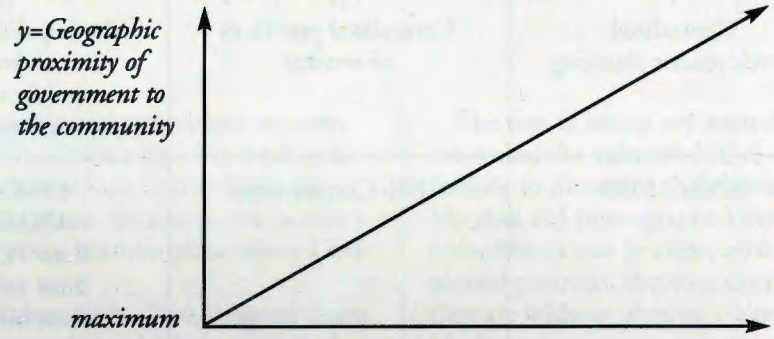
Law 29 (1989) gave mayors the power to name, transfer, remove and supervise teaching and school administrative staff, increasing local control over public jobs. The law also included the mayor of Bogotá and one other mayor in the administration of the Regional Educational Funds, giving the municipal level of government more say in planning.

The 1980s reforms tended to favor local interests over the departmental level. Key measures were oriented toward modernization of the structure of municipal administration and its links with the community. In the 1990s, momentum shifted toward restructuring specific sectors, in particular health and education. Reforms in this period, as in the 1970s, emphasized efficiency. The objective was to free the central government of the costs and responsibilities of providing public services. State intervention came in the form of promoting community organizations to oversee service quality and coverage.

The 1990s witnessed a steady trend toward institutionalizing local participation in the administration of public services. Membership in state-created committees and organizations was extended to the local level. But the central government was instrumental in creating the conditions for and directing community organization and participation, relegating citizens to the status of consumers of public services.

The 1991 constitution represents the high point of the decentralization process. It gave a needed boost to state legitimacy by promoting citizen political participation. Mechanisms for popular consultation, plebiscites, referendums, open town meetings and the ability to impeach mayors and governors were introduced in 1994. Popular election of governors followed, along with steps to strengthen the functions and responsibilities of the legislative and judicial branches and balance power within the Colombian government, traditionally weighted toward the executive branch.

Figure 1: Two Theoretical Dimensions of Decentralization



x=Autonomy or participation of administrative levels and the community in public decision making

New measures aimed to stimulate tax collection at the municipal level and focus on health and education. Territorial planning councils brought a greater voice in development planning to the community level and municipalities gained new responsibility for public services and financing. As in the 1970s, departmental officials were put in charge of regulating the administrative functions of the lower levels of government.

Further legislation in the 1990s—Law 100 (1993), Law 115 (1994)—worked to reduce fiscal discrepancies between regions and increase consumer participation in the design, execution and control of health and educational services. District and departmental-level health and education offices were created under the direction of the mayor or governor to improve communications between the central government and municipalities. These offices were intended to be more responsive to citizens and included planning functions.

The Scorecard

In general, decentralization in Colombia has emphasized the municipal level and the definition of community participation under state tutelage. Figure 1 shows the degree of decentralization of reforms according to their effect on autonomy (horizontal axis) and the geographical proximity of administrative functions (vertical axis).

The graph considers four areas. Reforms that score high on both geographic proximity and autonomy promote the development of participatory planning. This category represents the reforms with the highest degree of decentralization. They create conditions that favor citizen participation and assume the institutional capacity of government to respond to citizens' demands. An

Table 1: Categories of Decentralizing Reforms

I Centralized development planning	II Centralized provision of services	III Municipal decentralization of provision of public services; principal-agent model	IV Municipal decentralization favoring participatory planning
ANAC 1980	1886 Constitution	1968 reform ANAC 1976 Law 12 (1986) Law 14 (1983) Law 60 (1993) Law 100 (1993) Law 115 (1994)	ANAC 1991 Legislative Act 1 (1986) Law 11 (1986) Law 24 (1988) Law 10 (1990) Law 29 (1989)

example is the 1991 constitution, which proposed mechanisms for including the community in health and education planning.

Reforms that score high on autonomy but low on geographic proximity are characterized by executive control and centralizing tendencies. They concentrate almost all aspects of planning at the central level, leaving subnational government and the community responsible for execution. This category includes the principal-agent model, in which government policy and budget planning are characterized by inflexibility and low sensitivity to local demands. It marks the lowest level of decentralization, reflecting a top-down bureaucratic structure.

The third category includes reforms that score high on geographic proximity but low on autonomy. The community (or municipality) is limited to executing public services, based on budgets and programming guidelines handed down from the central government. Participation is reduced to contracting and local offices function only as representatives of the central authorities. The municipal government may be more responsive to local needs, but budgetary and fiscal resources remain centralized. Reforms in this category include Law 60 (1993) and Law 12 (1986).

The last category includes reforms that reflect a high degree of centralization in the administration of public services. It characterizes governments that follow a centrist model in the production of basic goods and services and is common to benefactor states. Planning may be highly decentralized, but responsibility for meeting the basic needs of the population rests with the central government.

Table 1 ranks these categories from lowest to highest degree of decentralization. Some reforms may display several tendencies at once, but are listed here according to their main emphasis.

As the table shows, decentralization of fiscal and administrative capacities in Colombia has emphasized the third category of reforms, transferring powers from the departmental to the municipal level. In addition, political decentralization has tended to institutionalize the avenues for participation under national supervision, the fourth category. Community structure and organization have been reformed with the objective of reinforcing a culture of social control in the political sense.

The principal-agent model of decentralization of the 1970s gave way to greater subnational autonomy in the 1980s, as the national government sought legitimacy through democratic participation. In the 1990s, reforms became more sector-oriented, increasing local autonomy over financing and economic development while reserving the central government's hold over policy making and programming, with an emphasis on health and education. The process culminated in the constitution of 1991 which, with all its limitations, represented a milestone in the effort to decentralize government planning in Colombia with its new emphasis on participatory planning.

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Life Manifesto

by Cecilia Arboleda

After a personal tragedy, I left Colombia and came to Miami. Soon, however, tragedy struck again in our family. I quit painting, went back to college and became a photographer. At that moment I could not deal with color. My life was monochromatic: gray. I needed to get out of my studio and into the world. I felt I needed to be visually alert to get out of my limbo.

Ironically, living abroad created in me a need to photograph Colombia. The United States, with its very different culture, helped me see more clearly the ways life differs in our two countries. The great Colombian artist Fernando Botero once said that if he had not left Colombia he wouldn't have been able to do the type of work he does. His subject matter would have been too close to him, part of the daily fabric of his life, he explained. My experience has been the same.

As a native of Colombia, my indigenous viewpoint allows insights into my subjects that often elude photographers from abroad. In Colombia, the world is more of a plaza than a mall. The plaza is a space to get together, to see and be seen, to exchange gestures and words. Privacy is largely a luxury of the well-to-do; the poor live much of their domestic lives in public places. In Colombia, I let myself be seen, accepted as part of the group. I don't feel like a foreigner there.

The realization that a part of myself was clinging to my heritage prompted me to go back and photograph Colombia. A "personal documentary" began to emerge as I returned to the country over and over again. After these visits, I felt compelled to understand my own cultural influences. My work is a result of where I came from, my educational influences, the person I am today and the place where I am living now.

Colombia is a raw, stripped-down country that is highly physical. Its people live close to their bodies and their emotions, but their eyes are often turned inward. In spite of the fact that I set out to photograph without any preconceived direction, when I edited the work I began to see in the images forces in which life manifests itself, often producing a reality more surreal than fiction. It is no coincidence that Nobel Prize laureate Gabriel García Márquez was born in Colombia. "I use the imagination as an instrument to create reality," was his comment on his own work.

In my case, photography opened the door to new perceptions. I became aware of the different forces embedded in my native culture, where Spanish, Aftican and indigenous influences are interwoven. This new culture of *mestizaje* blended subtle undertones of religious, family, political, sexual and ritual forces.

As I photographed my fellow citizens, their human qualities began to emerge in a mixture of elegance, poverty, dreams and pain. Also evident were the dualities present in our mestizo culture: child/adult, happiness/sadness, violence/tenderness and Catholicism/paganism, with the cult of death common to both. For mestizos, life seems to consist only of work, faith and death.

The fear of losing my roots made me realize the vulnerability of nations to threats to their heritage. My goal as I photographed my countrymen was to create environmental portraits, showing people as they are without altering reality. My hope is to create a photographic documentary of the present time in Colombia's history. My work also fulfills an existential need, standing as my life manifesto. Through this project I came to realize that Colombia's idiosyncrasy is my own, and that its picture is my own portrait.

My work isn't intended to emulate images of other places or times. The subjects' references are to themselves. These photographs are meant to be intimate, frank, privately motivated statements. They come from my own strong cultural traditions. My photographs are thus both objective records and subjective expression: They are specific to me, but they represent elements of universal experience.

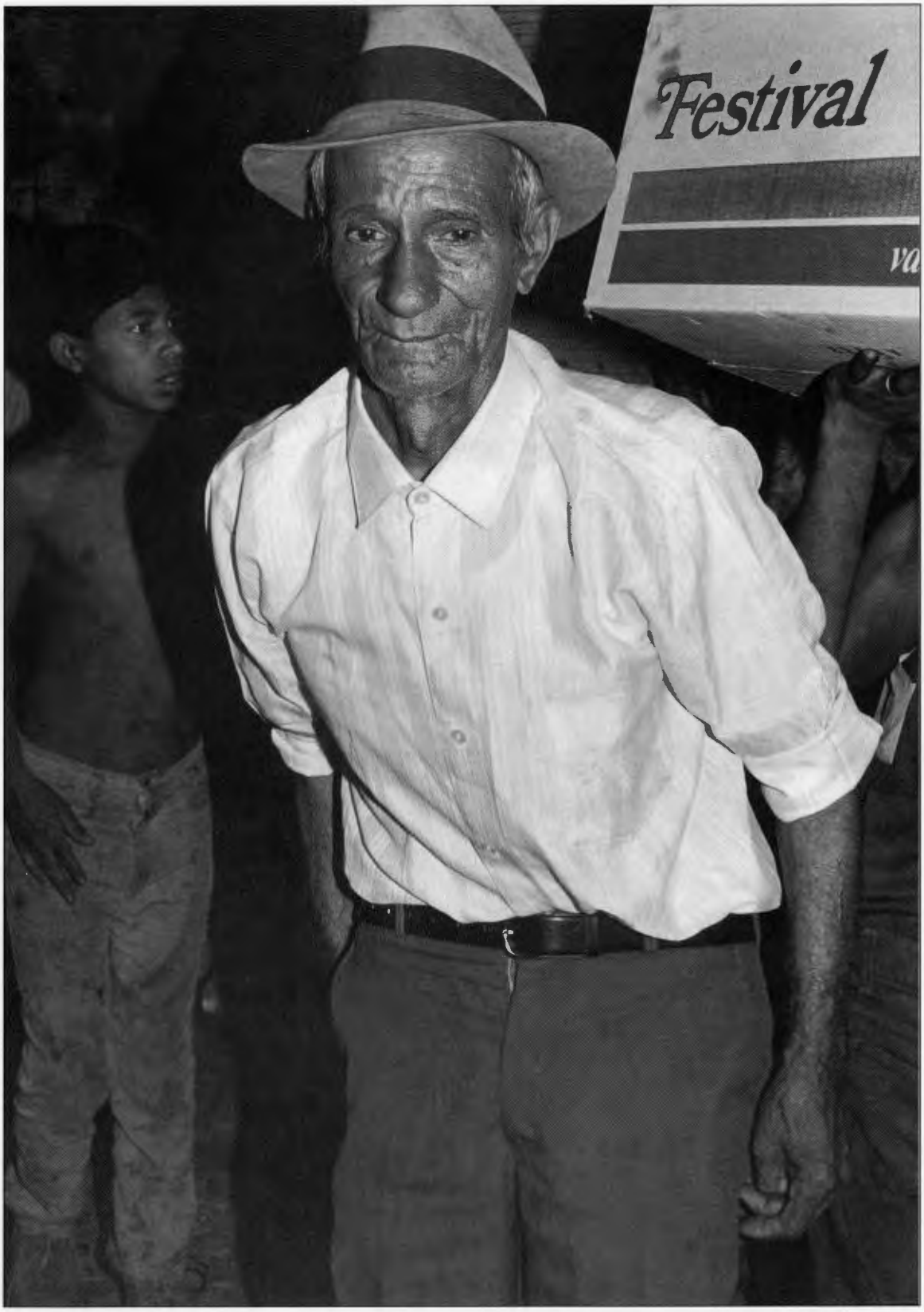
Cecilia Arboleda is a photographer living in Miami. She holds a bachelor's of fine arts from Florida International University and an associate degree in graphic design from the International Fine Arts College in Miami. Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions and private collections in the US, Spain and Latin America. She has received numerous awards from such organizations as the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, the Southern Arts Federation and the Florida Arts Council.

Subachoque, 1987

Rionegro, 1987

La Ceja, 1988

La Ceja, 1989



Medellín, 1989

Marinilla, 1992

La Unión, 1992

Barbosa, 1996

Jericó, 1997

La Pintada, 1997

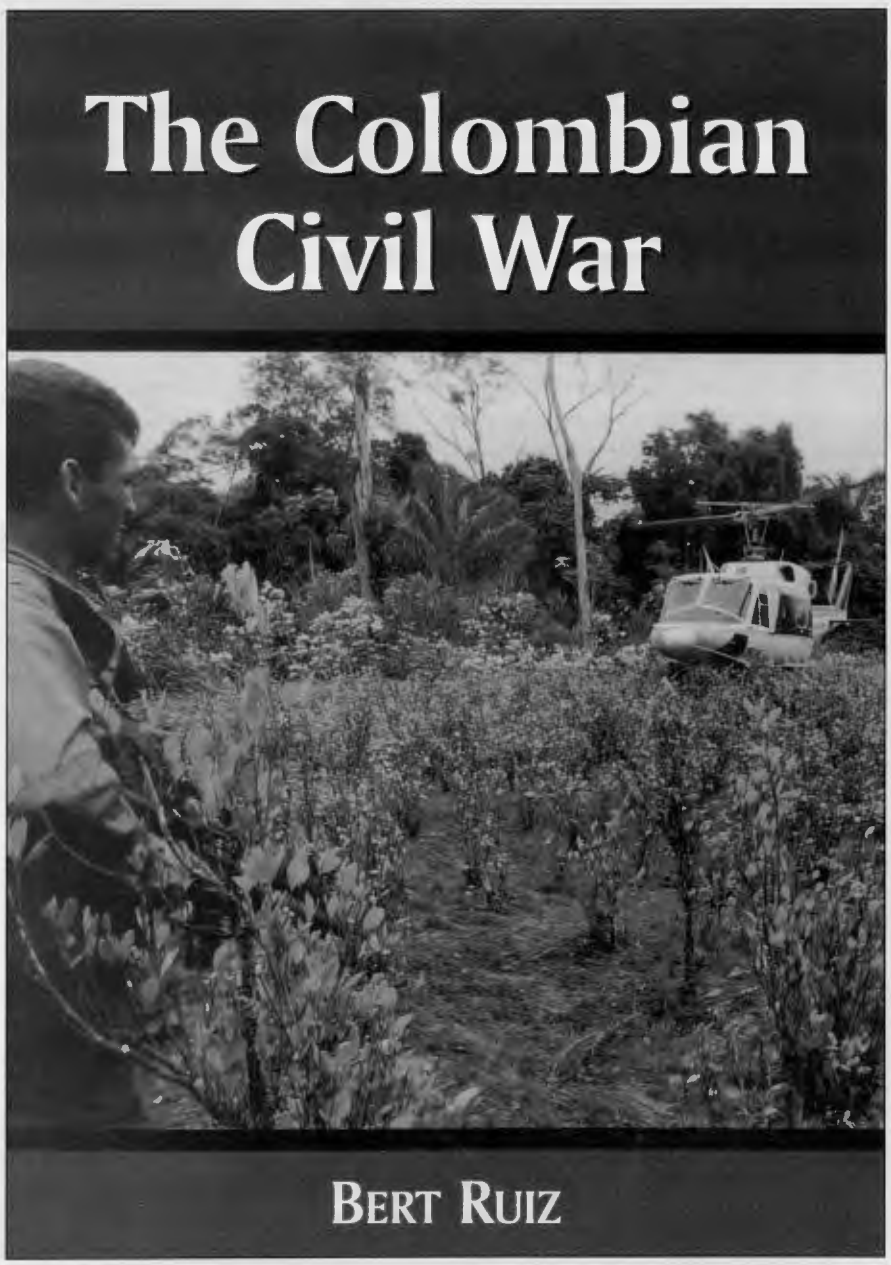
Copacabana, 1999

The Roots of the Conflict

by Nathalia Franco

***The Colombian Civil War*, by Bert Ruiz. Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001.**

Examining the events that have brought Colombia to the edge.



Bert Ruiz, director of the Colombian American Association in New York, has set himself the difficult task of reviewing Colombia's twentieth-century political and social history in a single volume. *The Colombian Civil War* is the product of four years of research by the author in Washington, D.C., Bogotá and Spain. In this his first book, Ruiz takes an unconventional approach, choosing not to organize the narrative chronologically or by topic. Instead, he combines different moments in history which, in his view, are linked in significant ways. For readers unfamiliar with the events he cites, this strategy can be confusing. The end result is a detailed recounting of important historical events, but without a central organizing thesis.

The Colombian Civil War begins with the state visit of former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana to the United States shortly after taking office in 1998. Ruiz calls Pastrana "the peacemaker," offering a wealth of detail about the joint press conference he held with then-President Bill Clinton, his credibility in the White House, and this country's high expectations of the new administration in Colombia. He then jumps suddenly to a discussion of Manuel Marulanda Vélez, aka "Sureshot," and the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This type of

abrupt shift tends to lose the reader on the way. It would have made more sense to continue the description of the state visit with an analysis of US-Colombian relations and—why not—a hypothesis about the reasons for Pastrana's popularity with the US government. In this sense, Pastrana was an unprecedented success. Probably no other Colombian president has ever received such a warm welcome in Washington, as evidenced by the $1.3 billion in US aid under Plan Colombia and US logistical support for transforming the Colombian armed forces and police during Pastrana's term.

In the book's second chapter, Ruiz changes his focus to events in Colombia, beginning with an account of the FARC's attacks on the military in Caquetá and Mitú in 1998. For this episode, as well as others having to do with recent events in Colombia, Ruiz draws mainly on press reports and personal interviews. These sources are valuable, but in relying on the media and first-hand reports he risks losing sight of the larger context. When studying recent events, of course, authors may not have other bibliographic sources to consult besides the press. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain an analytical framework to allow for a critical interpretation of the facts. Ruiz does at least cite a wide variety of Colombian and international publications, and so can relay the views of both internal and outside observers.

Ruiz goes back in time in Chapter Three, and this allows him to adopt a more analytical perspective. He traces the history of Colombia's bipartisan political system, a phenomenon that is essential to understanding the country's political and social dynamics. But he makes some unfounded statements; for example, "Colombia's two-party system bears much of the responsibility for the poverty in the country" (p. 39). No sources are offered to substantiate this sweeping allegation. In fact, Colombia's poverty is not generated by the Liberal and Conservative parties per se. Instead, its roots lie in an entrenched system of privilege that dates back to the nineteenth century and which enabled the Conservatives, in particular, to oppose agrarian reform, workers' rights and a more just distribution of wealth.

Ruiz is more successful in his discussion of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the Liberal leader whose assassination in 1948 was a turning point in Colombian history. His description of Gaitán's political ideas, his rise to power and the mass popular enthusiasm he awakened opens a window onto the political climate of the time. Colombian politics then were polarized between Conservative leaders, who felt threatened by the upstart populist, and Gaitán's supporters, who included the working class, minorities and Colombians who believed he represented a more egalitarian future for the country. Here Ruiz cites such well-regarded historians as David Bushnell and John D. Martz, whose insights lend a welcome depth to his account. Period photographs add a sense of authenticity and enliven the text.

In the following pages, the author turns back to more current events, beginning with what he calls "the Mistake from Hell"—the 1999 kidnapping and murder of three North American activists for indigenous rights by the FARC, which caused a major setback in US-Colombian relations. A subsequent chapter, "The Next Vietnam," emphasizes the involvement of drug traffickers, the FARC and paramilitary groups in Colombia's illegal narcotics trade. The choice of title is perplexing, since until this point Ruiz rejects the notion of direct US intervention in the Colombian conflict. He goes on to provide a detailed discussion of the insurgent groups, paramilitary organizations, the Colombian armed forces and the evolution of the attempted peace process. His focus throughout is on the military aspects of the conflict and making the reader understand that Colombia is on the verge of an all-out war.

The Colombian Civil War is useful reading for those who are interested in a precise account of the facts that have shaped the course of twentieth-century Colombian history. But readers who are unfamiliar with this history and developments in the armed conflict may be overwhelmed by the wealth of detail the book offers. This confusion is augmented by the absence of a central thesis or objective. The author's purpose does not seem to be to analyze a particular problem in Colombian history, or to explain a specific political or sociological phenomenon. Ruiz's extensive research—including six months he spent perusing materials stored in the Library of Congress—and his interviews with first-hand sources lend the book investigative value, but a little more analysis and a narrative framework would have increased its usefulness immeasurably. Despite its flaws, however, this book is a welcome addition to the growing body of works that attempt to make sense of the conflict in Colombia.

Nathalia Franco holds an M.A. in Latin American and Caribbean studies from Florida International University and a degree in journalism from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana in Medellín, Colombia.

Colombia: Recent Works

by Marian Goslinga

Colombia is a land of unparalleled physical beauty and unrelenting violence. From the War of One Thousand Days beginning in the late nineteenth century through *La Violencia* in 1948-1953, violence has been the dominant theme of modern Colombian history. The current conflict took root in the 1960s, when several major insurgent groups began their war against the state, and soon afterwards narcotics trafficking dragged the country ever more rapidly into lawlessness and violence.

Besieged on all sides, the Colombian government appealed to the international community for help with its controversial Plan Colombia. In July 2001, the United States came out publicly in support of this plan with a $1.3 billion aid package. US assistance was intended to help Colombia in its efforts to fight the illicit drug trade, increase the rule of law, protect human rights, expand economic development, institute judicial reform and foster peace. Recently, the US government approved the release of military aid to assist President Alvaro Uribe in defeating the forces arrayed against the Colombian state.

The growing body of published works on Colombia reflects the urgency of the search for ways to raise the country out of its spiral of bloodshed and civil war and bring a long-deserved peace to the land Bolívar so loved.

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Web Sites

While there are many web sites on Colombia, the following selections feature current, relevant and frequently updated materials.

Amnesty International On-Line
Site of the human rights organization searchable by country and/or area. Click on the "Document Library" and select the country or region. Currently features numerous documents on Colombia as well as human rights annual reports for 1997-2002. http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/countries/colombia/

US Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.
Lists "Support for Plan Colombia" with a fact sheet and press releases. http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/plncol/

Audiovisual Materials

Ariza, Héctor Raúl. **Prodigio del requiento colombiano** [sound recording]. Bogotá: Sonohit, 2002. 1 sound disc.

Vallejo, Fernando. **La virgen de los sicarios/Our Lady of the Assassins** [video recording]. Hollywood, Calif.: Paramount Home Video, 2002. 1 videodisc. (Based on the novel).

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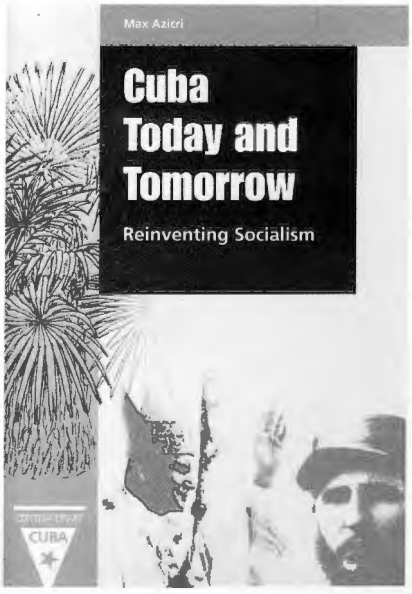

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