

by the Anglo-American Establishment for creating a global crisis that would, inclusively, rein in the increasingly ambitious continental Europeans.

### 'More damage than the Luftwaffe'

The outcry against Ridley, in Britain, in West Germany, at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, and elsewhere, was so vociferous, that it overrode the xenophobic "Falklands" effect that Thatcher and her friends were counting on. Indicative of the failure of the operation, is the reaction of residents of Coventry, the English town which was massively bombed by the Germans during World War II and which solemnly commemorates each year the bombing of its cathedral. Interviewed by the London *Independent* July 14, Coventry residents, reflecting on the city's collapsed economy and infrastructure, offered such comments as "Maggie Thatcher has caused more damage here than the Luftwaffe," "If the Germans want to take over here, mate, they're bloody welcome," and "Ridley is a bigger threat than the Germans." One person commented: "Both of my parents were in Coventry during the war. That was all about the Nazis. Is Ridley saying the Germans are Nazis again? If you ask around this place, you'll find a lot of people who think Thatcher's more of a danger than the Germans."

Under such pressures, Ridley had to resign, although the fact was not lost on observers that Thatcher refused to fire him. Meanwhile, the "Germany crisis" deepened over the July 14-15 weekend, when the July 15 *Independent on Sunday* and Hamburg's *Der Spiegel* magazine leaked the minutes of a meeting that had occurred in March at Thatcher's Chequers country residence, involving the prime minister, members of her cabinet, and six experts on Germany, four of whom were British. The minutes, compiled by Thatcher's personal secretary Charles Powell, warned darkly of the potential reemergence of an expansionist-chauvinist Germany, and spoke of the ostensible characteristic negative traits of Germans, including, in alphabetical order, "Angst, aggressiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex, and sentimentality."

One Briton quipped on hearing this, "They must have been talking about Margaret Thatcher." Commentator Geoffrey Wheatcroft, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* July 17, wondered who the British were to talk about negative character traits, since they had, at one point or another, attempted to exterminate the Irish, hunted down American Indians and Australian Aborigines, and run a substantial part of the slave trade. "Hypocrisy is certainly one of our national traits," he commented.

This second crude verbal bombardment produced another wave of protests within Britain. By July 17-18, there was speculation in the British press that Thatcher would either face a new challenge to her leadership of the Tory Party in the autumn of this year, or would use the occasion of her 65th birthday in October to resign as prime minister.

## Bush cripples Colombia's drug war

by Andrea Olivieri

The governments of Colombia and the United States have locked horns over the question of whether the war on drugs will be waged with the deadly intent a real war effort entails, or whether it will remain forever crippled, a hostage to the free-market obsessions of the Bush administration. As Colombia prepares to inaugurate its new President on Aug. 7, the resolution of that question could well determine whether that country survives as a sovereign nation, or falls into the hands of Dope, Inc.

In the past weeks and months, both outgoing President Virgilio Barco and President-elect César Gaviria Trujillo have admonished the Bush administration that the war against the drug trade can never be won unless the industrialized nations—led by the United States—agree to shoulder the economic and financial burden of such a war. And yet, in the ten months since Colombia has declared all-out war against the cocaine cartels, the Bush government has virtually thumbed its nose at that nation. Instead of economic assistance, the U.S. has slapped discriminatory trade restraints on Colombia's legitimate export products. It has refused Colombia the kind of military technology which could seriously compete with that of the drug cartels, and at least twice during those ten months, Washington has unilaterally plotted an "anti-drug" invasion of Colombia, which would violate every precept of international law and justice.

### Cost-effectiveness vs. a war on drugs

On June 9, the London *Financial Times* identified the dilemma facing Colombia's President-elect: "Mr. Gaviria is being driven to shift his thinking away from a military solution to the drug problem by the sheer cost of the current conflict and the limited nature of international financial backing." That is also the position of the drug legalization advocates, whose "cost-effectiveness" arguments were engendered by such free-trade apostles as Milton Friedman.

It is that "limited nature of international financial backing" which Colombia has been desperately trying to reverse. President Barco spent two days in Washington June 4-5, trying to convince the Bush administration to cough up some serious economic concessions. Not only was he sent home

empty-handed, but special trade negotiator Carla Hills reportedly spent that time lobbying to get Colombia placed on a “watch list” of unfair trading partners. The day following Barco’s departure, the United States formally vetoed Colombian efforts to win approval for a special exception on export subsidy prohibitions in the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Responding to these insults, Colombian Foreign Minister Julio Londoño Paredes angrily addressed the Organization of American States on June 5 concerning the criminal vacillation of the advanced sector: “We cannot accept that this dramatic fight in the fields of Colombia should be treated like a game of soccer, in which only one team plays but millions watch.” Special economic assistance must be given to the front-line countries, said Londoño, or the battle will be lost: “It is simply a question of rapidly granting favorable foreign trade conditions which would permit . . . our people to cultivate our fields and work our lands in preference to the lure of easy money.”

In early July, Londoño sent a message to the Houston meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, in which he spoke in the name of all of the Andean countries to urge more concrete collaboration in the anti-drug effort. Londoño summarized his message in a later interview: “Our countries—Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru—agreed that economic and trade cooperation with industrialized nations is key for the solution to the drug problem.” Londoño underlined that they are not asking for handouts, but rather for conditions that would favor legitimate exports from the three Andean nations. Both President Barco and his successor Gaviria sent similar messages reminding President Bush, in particular, of his nice-sounding pledges of assistance at last February’s presidential drug summit in Cartagena, Colombia.

## Appeal to Europe

On July 16, Gaviria told journalists upon his return from a three-week tour of Europe and the United States that he had chosen to go to Europe first, because he was not hopeful of serious anti-drug collaboration from the United States. He reviewed the immense sacrifices Colombia has made, including the fact that, despite its minimal resources, it has invested nearly \$1 billion in the war on drugs.

Said Gaviria: “Colombia has incurred an enormous economic cost, and is awaiting the collaboration of the international community which, until now, has been solely rhetorical. We are awaiting real aid. We are not expecting direct economic aid but, fundamentally, favorable trade conditions which do not discriminate against our products entering the international markets.”

On July 19, there was much media fanfare over a trade pact signed between the U.S. and Colombian governments. The pact, described as “opening a free-trade zone between the two countries in the medium term,” prominently included

the lifting of the U.S. veto against Colombian access to the GATT “subsidy code.” Foreign Minister Londoño commented that “the United States has gone from rhetoric to action,” and hailed “the beginning of a new attitude” on the part of the United States. Yet, according to an unnamed but high-level official inside the Barco government, there was no “new attitude” at all—just the same old blackmail. The official told the daily *El Espectador* that Bush’s veto was lifted solely on the condition that “Colombia commit itself to make its economic opening more rapidly and more effective, and to dismantle protectionist barriers still in effect.”

Colombia’s leading export associations were less dazzled than Londoño by the Bush administration’s fancy footwork. The president of the flower-exporting association, Asocolflores, warned that Colombia had lost much more than it had won in its pact with the United States, and asked, “What purpose will the [Subsidy] Code serve? . . . Our problem is not with subsidies, but with the anti-dumping rates they are imposing on us.” The head of the Colombian Exporters Association Ricardo Sala Gaitán pointed to new U.S. Senate proposals for a freeze on Colombian imports of shoes and a first-time quota on imports of Colombian textiles, and questioned the sudden U.S. beneficence. The head of the shoe manufacturers’ association summed it up: “When Colombia proposes an economic opening, the industrialized countries mount protectionist barriers. Isn’t it paradoxical?”

## In defense of soybeans?

Colombia isn’t the only country being strangled both by the drug trade and by Bush administration hypocrisy. Even where an attempt *was* made to implement Washington’s limited crop-substitution strategy for reducing coca production—namely in Bolivia—ideological stupidity sabotaged that effort as well. After offering such “lucrative” yuppie crops as mulberry bushes and silkworms to Bolivian farmers as an alternative to coca growing, someone in Washington finally got serious enough to offer assistance in soybean cultivation. Two such attempts, in 1988 and again in 1989, collapsed, however, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture canceled the aid programs under the pretext of defending American soybean growers from unfair competition.

While the Bolivian aid proposals were technologically and financially limited, perhaps even seriously flawed, there are few who believed they could adversely affect U.S. production. And the U.S. Department of Agriculture has not been exactly enthusiastic about defending the interests of U.S. farmers recently.

Meanwhile, dedicated people inside the Colombian military and police forces have mounted a formidable war effort, and have produced significant results. What Colombia needs now is the concrete international support to drive that war to victory. What Colombians don’t need—the intervention of foreign troops—has been the only consistent offer from the Bush administration.