

PAX ROMANA

I basically drew these data from statements made by William Brownfield, US ambassador to Colombia, from that country's press and television, from the international press, and other sources. It's impressive the show of technology and economic resources at play.

While in Colombia the senior military officers went to great pains to explain that Ingrid Betancourt's rescue had been an entirely Colombian operation, the US authorities were saying that "it was the result of years of intense military cooperation of the Colombian and United States' armies."

"The truth is that we have been able to get along as we seldom have in the United States, except with our oldest allies, mostly in NATO," said Brownfield, referring to his country's relationships with the Colombian security forces, which have received over 4 billion USD in military assistance since the year 2000."

"...on various occasions it became necessary for the US Administration to make decisions at the top levels concerning this operation.

"The US spy satellites helped in locating the hostages during a month period starting on May 31st until the rescue action on Wednesday."

"The Colombians installed video surveillance equipment, supplied by the United States. Operated by remote control, these can take close-ups and pan along the rivers which are the only transportation routes through thick forests, said the Colombian and US authorities."

"US surveillance aircraft intercepted the rebels' radio and satellite phone talks and used imaging equipment that can break through the forest foliage."

"The defector will receive a considerable sum of the close to one- hundred-million-dollars reward offered by the government", stated the Commander General of the Colombian Army."

On Wednesday, July 1st, the London BBC reported that Cesar Mauricio Velasquez, press secretary at Casa de Nariño (Colombian Government House) had informed that delegates from France and Switzerland had met with Alfonso Cano, chief of the FARC.

According to the BBC, that would be the first contact with international delegates accepted by the new chief after the death of Manuel Marulanda. The false information of the meeting of two European envoys with Cano had been released in Bogota.

The deceased leader of the FARC had been born on May 12, 1932, according to his father's testimony. Marulanda, a poor peasant with a liberal thinking and a Gaitan follower, had started his armed resistance 60 years back. He was a guerrilla before us; he had reacted to the carnage of peasants carried out by the oligarchy.

The Communist Party he later joined, the same as every other in Latin America, was under the influence of the Communist Party of the USSR and not of Cuba. They were in solidarity with our Revolution but they were not subordinated to it.

It was the drug-traffickers and not the FARC that unleashed terror in that sister nation as part of their feuds over the United States market. They caused powerful bomb blasts and even blew up trucks loaded

with plastic explosives destroying facilities and injuring or killing countless people.

The Colombian Communist Party never contemplated the idea of conquering power through the armed struggle. The guerrilla was a resistance front and not the basic instrument to conquer revolutionary power, as it had been the case in Cuba. In 1993, at the 8th FARC Conference, they decided to break ranks with the Communist Party. Its leader, Manuel Marulanda, took over the leadership of that Party's guerrillas which had always excelled in their narrow sectarianism when admitting combatants as well as in their strong and compartmented commanding methods.

Marulanda, a man with a remarkable natural talent and a leader's gift, did not have the opportunity to study when he was young. It is said that he had only completed the 5th grade of grammar school. He conceived a long and extended struggle; I disagreed with this point of view. But, I never had the chance to talk with him.

The FARC became considerable strong with over 10 thousand combatants. Many had been born during the war and had known nothing else. Other leftist organizations rivaled the FARC in the struggle. By then the Colombian territory had become the largest source of cocaine production in the world. Then, extreme violence, kidnappings, taxes and demands from the drug producers became widespread.

The paramilitary forces, armed by the oligarchy, drew basically from the great amount of men enlisted in the country's armed forces who were discharged from duty every year without a secure job. These created in Colombia a very complex situation with only one way out: real peace, albeit remote and difficult as many other goals Humanity have set itself. This is the option that, for three decades, Cuba has advocated for that nation.

While our journalists meeting in their 8th Congress debated on the new technologies of information, the principles and ethic of social communicators, I meditated on the abovementioned developments.

I have expressed, very clearly, our position in favor of peace in Colombia; but, we are neither in favor of foreign military intervention nor of the policy of force that the United States intends to impose at all costs on that long-suffering and industrious people.

I have honestly and strongly criticized the objectively cruel methods of kidnapping and retaining prisoners under the conditions of the jungle. But I am not suggesting that anyone laid down their arms, when everyone who did so in the last 50 years did not survive to see peace. If I dared suggest anything to the FARC guerrillas that would simply be that they declare, by any means possible to the International Red Cross, their willingness to release the hostages and prisoners they are still holding, without any precondition. I do not intend to be heard; it is simply my duty to say what I think. Anything else would only serve to reward disloyalty and treason.

I will never support the pax romana that the empire tries to impose on Latin America.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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