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CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON
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VIOLENCE AND PEACE-BUILDING IN COLOMBIA

Conference held at York University
May 24-25, 2001

Report prepared by Sabine Neidhardt and Sheila Simpkins

CERLAC Colloquia Paper

January, 2002

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Report prepared by Sabine Neidhardt and Sheila Simpkins

Abstract

Organized by the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean at York University (CERLAC) and the Nathanson Center for the Study of Organized Crime and Corruption, the conference on "Violence and Peace-building in Colombia" convened social and human rights activists, academics, and policy-makers at York University on May 24 and 25, 2001, for the purpose of encouraging dialogue on the crisis facing Colombia. The aim was not only to dissect the structural causes of violence and conflict in this country, but also to explore policy options.

The conference panelists and participants, while offering their own analytical perspectives on the conflict and on the US-inspired Plan Colombia, agreed unanimously that to view the crisis in Colombia through the lens of the drug trade tells us very little about the complexities of the on-going struggle. Only an analysis that takes into account the economic, social, political, geographical, and cultural dynamics at play within Colombian society will allow policy-makers and activists to push for just and lasting solutions.

Summary

The conference "Violence and Peace-building in Colombia" united social and human rights activists, academics and policy makers for the purposes of exploring the long-standing civil conflict in Colombia, and developing policy alternatives in support of peace-building in this country, taking into particular consideration the hemispheric implications of "Plan Colombia".

The conference was organized into five panels, which addressed the historical roots and evolution of the contemporary conflict, the current conjuncture of Colombia, and policy options in the peace-building process. Critical attention was paid to the nature of the Colombian state, the role of American foreign policy in the region and particularly its support for "Plan Colombia", the implications of organized crime in Colombia, the national crisis of internal displacement, the use of memory in the peace-building process, and Canadian foreign policy options in the region. It was broadly agreed that Canada must take a more active role in multilateral forums to support the peace-building process and to promote alternatives to "Plan Colombia".

The conference panelists and participants, while offering their own analytical perspectives on the conflict and on the US-inspired Plan Colombia, agreed unanimously that to view the crisis in Colombia through the lens of the drug trade tells us very little about the complexities of the on-going struggle. Only an analysis that takes into account the economic, social, political, geographical, and cultural dynamics at play within Colombian society will allow policy-makers and activists to promote just and lasting solutions.

Panelist Catherine LeGrand summed up some of the core sentiments presented during the two-day conference when she stated: "Colombians have asked for international involvement, but a simple reading of the Colombian crisis that focuses on drugs at the expense of everything else does not feed understanding or generate solutions. It is important to attend to the valiant efforts of Colombians of all walks of life to re-contextualize community, region, state, nation and development in ways that will overcome exclusion and bring peace and prosperity in a period where neo-liberalism limits the parameters of what is possible." Sensitivity to the multi-dimensional nature of struggles over resources, territories, and political power in Colombia is essential to generating policies that represent viable alternatives to violence and to Plan Colombia, which at present only promises to militarize Colombia and the Andean region as a whole.

Various immediate-term priorities for Canadian policy were also identified. Among them: the promotion of humanitarian agreements to provide a means to contain the conflict while a longer-term solution is sought; the need for caution in Canadian attempts to strengthen the rule of law in Colombia, especially if this is interpreted to mean strengthening the state's powers of coercion; and redress of the humanitarian crisis being caused by the widespread phenomenon of internal displacement. For a more complete list of policy recommendations arising from the conference, please refer to Appendix I, *Compilation of recommendations for Canadian policy makers*.

Acknowledgments

CERLAC extends its sincere thanks to the following co-sponsors of this event, for their generous financial support: The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development; Department of Political Science, York University; Division of Social Science, York University; Osgoode Hall Law School, York University; Faculty of Arts, York University; Founders College, York University; Nathanson Centre for the Study of Organized Crime and Corruption, York University; and Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, York University.

Thanks to Sabine and Shiela for their excellent work on this report, and to Aileen McCowan for her editing efforts.

Thanks to Paul Knox of the Globe and Mail for highlighting this event in his column (see Appendix II).

Special thanks to all the conference participants for their excellent contributions.

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Session I:
The Historical Roots and Evolution of the Contemporary Conflict

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Moderator: Albert Berry (Professor of Economics, University of Toronto, CERLAC Associate Fellow)

Panelists:

- Catherine LeGrand (Professor of History, University of McGill): "Agrarian and Regional Dimensions"

- Francisco Thoumi (Senior Visiting Scholar at the Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University; formerly with the UN Drug Control Programme): "The Evolution of Drug-Trade related Violence"

- Lilia Solano (Professor/Researcher Javeriana University and National University of Colombia, Bogotá): "Colombian Violence: Structural Causes"

Agrarian and Regional Dimensions

Catherine LeGrand opened the session by providing an historical and geographical context for understanding the conflict and violence in Colombia today. LeGrand suggested that the present conflict can not be characterized as "civil war" as in previous historical conflicts between 1899-1903 and 1946-1965 (La Violencia). Particularly during La Violencia, the conflict was very political in nature, and it was the result of fighting between Liberals and Conservatives, mainly in rural areas and among poor peasants who identified with one or the other of these two parties.

In contrast, today's extraordinary violence is not only political in nature, but encompasses a "multiplicity of forms of violence" and human rights abuses which are much more difficult to negotiate than the previous political conflicts, and which affect every Colombian regardless of class, gender, cultural, sexual, ethnic, or political identity. Whereas past violence was primarily the result of partisan political divisions, today it mainly derives from "war over territories and the people in these territories." LeGrand emphasized that, unlike in the past, most Colombians today do not take sides. To this extent, therefore, the current conflict cannot be accurately characterized as a civil war: most Colombians do not align themselves with either the paramilitaries or the guerillas, and most victims of the conflict are civilians.

While acknowledging the many other dynamics at play, LeGrand nonetheless chose to speak on only three inter-related dimensions of the current violence: the struggle over land, frontier territory, and resources; the power of paramilitaries in the 1990s; and a weak and decentralized government and state that lack the institutional and political capacity necessary to end the crisis.

According to LeGrand, to understand the agrarian dimension it is necessary to understand that Colombia is a country of "frontiers" where historically and at present peasants survive by moving to new frontiers and establishing small farms on public lands. The staking-out of property around the Magdalena River valley, the central and eastern mountain ranges, the eastern plains, and the Amazon areas by peasants who fled the independent peasant republics in the 1960s after bombings by the National Front government, has been violently disputed by land-sharks and the paramilitaries. Land-sharks make claims on the lands for speculation and in the interest of drug-traffickers who launder money through, and invest in, cattle ranching. The support base of the FARC and the ELN comes largely from peasants in these regions who are forced to take up arms to protect their lands.

As the concentration of land in the hands of drug traffickers and elites has increased, the struggle over land has become more and more acute, a fact that both LeGrand and Solano acknowledged. This situation is complicated further, both agreed, by the seemingly weak Colombian state which has only limited reach and control outside of Bogotá, and by the fact that political and economic decision-making power in much of the country lies with autonomous regional and local business and landowning elites and not with a coherent national government. As a consequence, the government is unable to take decisive action to negotiate peace and exercise political control in contested territories.

The paramilitary organizations were created by drug traffickers in the early 1980s to protect themselves from kidnappings and to fight the guerillas (FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia], and ELN: Ejercito de Liberación Nacional [Army of National Liberation]) and peasants in the struggle over land. The paramilitaries became more powerful in the 1990s after they began to collaborate in earnest with the Colombian army. The paramilitaries were hired to protect lands already used for cattle ranching and to capture new lands—mostly occupied peasant lands—for drug traffickers and elites.

It was in the late 1980s that the Colombian military began to collaborate with the paramilitaries. They did so in response to the government's attempt to begin peace negotiations with the guerillas by encouraging them to enter civil life and by implementing institutional political reforms. Yet, despite attempts by the government to negotiate peace and reform, the conflict worsened. To support itself economically and politically, the FARC stepped-up kidnapping-for-ransom and began taxing production of crops such as coca in the territories under its control (over 70% of the national territory at present). The paramilitaries, supported financially by coca production and refining, cocaine trafficking, and by the army, contest the guerillas by attacking peasants in FARC-controlled territories, causing much of the massive internal displacement and carrying out most of the massacres in the countryside.

According to LeGrande, Colombians today face: a weak government unable to deal with the paramilitaries who use violent means for accumulating economic resources (money, land, and natural resources such as timber and minerals) and who seek political control over entire regions; guerillas who have very little support outside of their base territories but with whom the government is trying to negotiate peace; and a de-legitimized and fragmented elite that is beyond the control of a weak state.

LeGrand warned that without paying attention to the internal problems and conflicts, as interpreted by Colombians themselves, and without paying attention to the evolving complexities of

these conflicts—including the multiplicity of types of violent acts —international organizations, human rights and social activists, and policy-makers can act neither ethically or usefully in contributing to long-term solutions.

The Evolution of Drug-Trade Related Violence

Francisco Thoumi located the roots of the conflict within the structure of Colombian society, arguing that it is this structure that makes Colombia more vulnerable than other Latin American countries to the drug trade and the violence it creates. Thoumi added a sociological dimension to the debate on the causes of violence by arguing, for instance, that the influence that the Medellín and Cali drug cartels were able to have on the Colombian political system, military, and police forces was due to certain conditions unique to Colombia. He pointed out that drug trafficking can only be successful if it is able to establish the necessary social networks to operate clandestinely, launder money, and influence the political and social structures of society. The Medellín cartel was able to operate in collusion with the Colombian military and the Cali cartel operated with the collaboration of the police because these institutions were susceptible to this type of corruption. The economic geography of the drug trade, then, needs to be explained through sociological and not economic investigation.

The key question for Thoumi was not if the drug industry is the catalyst for violence—he believes it is. Rather, why is the drug industry in Colombia and not elsewhere? Here, explanations of comparative advantage are not useful, since the drug trade would then be just as prevalent in many other Latin American economies. Therefore, factors other than money or profit must contribute to explaining a country's vulnerability to the drug industry.

Thoumi argued that the Colombian state has historically been unable to solve conflicts peacefully due to two main reasons pertaining to the structure of Colombian society. The state has historically been weak due to its dependence on foreign trade until the 1950s and the fact that it was one of the poorest states in the region at the time. Hence, there was little national surplus for the state to create the infrastructure necessary to unify and gain control over the country's elites. The result has been the regionalized and fragmented, fairly autonomous elite we see today. In other words, Thoumi argued that the existence of a fragmented and incoherent bourgeoisie, lacking a specifically national interest, renders society more susceptible to clandestine activity because the state does not have the economic, political, and coercive resources necessary to control and gain support from elites. The second factor identified by Thoumi as integral to the country's vulnerability to the drug trade is the fact that Colombia lacks a strong indigenous community. He did not elaborate on the importance of this factor.

Colombian Violence: Structural Causes

From a political economy perspective, **Lilia Solano** presented on the structural causes of violence in Colombia, paying attention to both internal and external factors. She pointed out that the conditions for peace—social and economic justice—do not exist in Colombia at present and thus illegal activities and their associated violence have become a survival strategy for many Colombians.

Echoing the sentiments of LeGrand and Thoumi, Solano identified a weak Colombian state as part of the problem. However, for Solano its weakness lies not only in its incapacity to extend itself beyond Bogotá, but also in its structural inability to provide an efficient administration of justice and protection for dissenting citizens. Moreover, Solano pointed out that the uneven distribution of wealth within the country, exacerbated by the repositioning of the Colombian economy into the global economy by way of structural adjustment policies, has contributed to mass unemployment in both rural and urban areas. As a result, in excess of 20 million Colombians do not produce but only consume through charity and aid. Neoliberal policies are eroding many social safety nets, forcing people to survive without dignity or security and often through criminal activity. While the armed conflict need be considered a significant factor when analyzing violence in Colombia, other factors related to the lack of social and economic justice must be taken seriously since 80% of all murders in Colombia are, in fact, *not* tied to the armed struggle.

Solano introduced another issue: the external factor of US political and economic interests in the region and in Colombia proper. The much-trumpeted "war on drugs" and related US policy can only be understood in the context of that country's global strategy and rhetoric in the post-Cold War era. Like Noam Chomsky and James Petras, Solano emphasized that the fight against drugs has, in the last decade, been a useful pretext for what is actually a battle against guerilla movements as well as activists struggling for social justice and human rights. Plan Colombia seeks to militarize the country so that its repressive apparatuses can crush the struggle for human rights, justice, and democracy, insofar as these objectives conflict with US interests. Solano asserted that any "aid" plan that contributes 85% of its budget to militarization cannot have been authored by parties interested in putting an end to violence since historically, militarization has not solved conflict but has only heightened crises.

Discussion

Some participants noted the need for a more detailed account of the geopolitical/economic interests of the US in the region, since the growing discontent and leftist oppositional mobilization within northern South America, together with the threat that this poses for US hegemony in the region, are issues that need to be addressed further. More analysis must also be dedicated to the struggle among national governments, foreign corporations and governments, and guerilla groups over oil resources in the region.

Participant Manuel Rozental underlined the point that no national reality exists in isolation from the global context and hence, as Solano suggested, Colombia's particular relationship to the global economic system must be accounted for when explaining the non-realization of the ideals of nationhood held by many Colombians. Rozental argued that it must not be forgotten that Plan Colombia is an extension of the dynamic of global capitalism.

Much of the discussion following the presentations focused on the nature of the Colombian state and whether or not it is accurate to define the Colombian state as "weak," as all three panelists suggested. LeGrand posed the question herself briefly by asking if perhaps the state is not just weak, but a "failed state" or a "repressive state." Liisa North pointed out that the Colombian state has previously had substantial economic planning capacities, particularly during its industrialization

process - unlike many other Latin American nations.

In response, Thoumi stated that Colombia has only experienced a veneer of modernization and economic stability, and that in fact the National Front government treated state resources as bounty to be redistributed within a clientelistic system. At the same time, the justice system was also inoperative, government spending was wasted, and the economy benefited only economic elites. Thoumi believes that even during its phase of economic modernization the Colombian state was "pre-modern."

Session II:
The Current Conjuncture

Moderator: Liisa North (Professor of Political Science, York University, CERLAC Fellow)

Panelists:

- George Vickers (Executive Director, Washington Office on Latin America): "US Foreign Policy Toward Colombia"

- Hal Klepak (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada: CERLAC Fellow): "Regional Military and Diplomatic Implications of Plan Colombia"

- Martin Javier Movilla Durango (Colombian journalist): "The War in Colombia, Its Actors, and the Possibilities for Peace"

US Foreign Policy Toward Colombia

For **GeorgeVickers,** the recently-announced Andean Regional Initiative (ARI), represents an acknowledgment by the US government that the problems facing Colombia and the Andean region are complex and interrelated. The framing of policy in these terms represents an evolution, on the rhetorical level at least, of US understanding.

Vickers summed up the US government perspective on the Andean situation, as expressed in the ARI, as follows: important US national interests are at stake in the region; democracy is under pressure in all of the countries of the Andes; the US doubts the ability of the democratic governments to provide services and economic growth; economic development is slow; progress toward liberalization is inconsistent; and the Andes provides virtually all of the world's cocaine and an increasing amount of heroin. All of this is interpreted by the US government as a direct threat to Americans' health and to international security.

The US contends that the problems are interrelated, as sluggish economies produce instability and political unrest that threaten democracy and provide ready manpower for narcotics production, trafficking, and illegal armed groups. Weak democratic institutions, corruption, and political instability are seen to discourage investment, contribute to slow economic growth, and provide an atmosphere for drug traffickers and other outlawed groups to flourish.

From the perspective of the American government, the interconnectedness of the problems requires a comprehensive policy in order to advance US goals in the region. US policy towards Colombia, as expressed in the ARI, includes three specific strategies:

1) Promoting and supporting democratic institutions through effective judicial reform (training judges, prosecutors, and public defenders) and by fostering anti-corruption

measures. Human rights abuses must be prosecuted, the military must break its ties with paramilitaries, security forces must be sensitized to issues of human rights, and human rights activists must be protected. Peace negotiations must be supported.

2) Fostering sustainable development and trade liberalization by advocating alternative development (i.e., based on something other than the production of illicit crops), giving development assistance, protecting natural resources and ecological diversity, promoting environmental rehabilitation, extending the Andean Trade Preference Act, and by establishing the FTAA.

3) Significantly reducing the supply of drugs into the US at the source by continuing support for Plan Colombia (while simultaneously reducing US demand), supporting regional efforts to complement Plan Colombia, providing funding and equipment to the counter-drug program, and increasing contact between US and Colombian militaries and those of the other countries of the region.

Vickers asserted that while any one of the policy objectives contained with Plan Columbia might make sense on its own, when put together they are mutually undermining rather than mutually reinforcing. He also feels that the initiative is not likely to work due to the inadequacy of its proposed instrumentation. Although promotion of democracy, sustainable development, and countering narcotics are rhetorically equal components of the Plan, most of the money is allocated to military use and almost all of the social and economic money in the package is to be provided through the International Narcotics Control accounts; i.e., it is to be distributed by those who are responsible for counter-drug policy and who may be unwilling to spend the money on anything but the drug problem. Moreover, the very people responsible for allocating funds for sustainable development are those responsible for aerial fumigation.

There are other contradictions in the initiative that suggest the stated policy goals will not be realized. The new policy assumes the existence of a strong state and national army able to carry out policy initiatives. As discussed above, these conditions arguably do not obtain in Colombia. Klepak indicated that the army is much too small to be effective. Movilla Durango and Vickers agreed that the elites of the country benefit from the conflict and work against initiatives for peace and promotion of democracy. They do this by supporting the paramilitary groups that, in turn, weaken the state and lessen its ability to implement policy. Moreover, US policy is not concerned with creating a strong state and army. Instead, it seeks to create three narcotics battalions separate from the national army. There are also contradictions between components of the drug eradication part of the ARI**.** For example, the new policy calls simultaneously for alternative development crops and for aerial fumigation – two fundamentally opposed approaches, considering the disastrous environmental and health consequences of fumigation.

Vickers attributed these contradictions to the current tug-of-war between different policy-makers. The military and intelligence communities firmly believe that the only significant means by which the supply of drugs can be reduced is for the Colombian government to control its national territory. Congress is not interested in funding this kind of objective; it is only concerned about, and willing to fund, activities that would directly reduce the supply of drugs into the US from Colombia. Others believe that only through a negotiated peace settlement will it be possible to resolve the problems of political violence and drug production. The result is a compromise: a military strategy for strengthening the armed forces. For some this means enabling the government to have a

stronger position at the negotiating table with the FARC. For others it means enabling the Colombian government to gain control of its territory and to eliminate the insurgent groups. For yet others, it means the facilitation of coca eradication and the decrease of the drug supply into the US. For Vickers, the strategies and tactics employed by Plan Colombia are not the ones that would be needed to achieve the stated objectives, even if these objectives were coherent.

Regional Military and Diplomatic Implications of Plan Colombia

The military support being provided to Colombia has consequences for its neighbors as drug production and violence spill over borders. The Andean Regional Initiative represents an effort to deal with those problems. **Hal Klepak** addressed the effects of Plan Colombia and the Colombian conflict on neighboring countries, and how they have responded.

He explained that there has been "a conspiracy of silence" on the part of neighbouring countries regarding Plan Colombia so as to avoid embarrassing Bogotá. This is a period of great economic and political collaboration in the area and therefore not a good moment to speak out against the Plan or Colombia. Nevertheless, there is also great annoyance with both the US and Colombia regarding the lack of consultation about the Plan. Neighbors who will be affected directly had not heard of the Plan before it was officially announced. This has left a "poisoned atmosphere about the seriousness of political collaboration" and has raised suspicions about whether or not the Plan was conceived by Colombia and not the US.

Neighboring countries are very much affected by the violence and the conflict. Human rights violations and murders in Colombia cause a flow of refugees into their territories, and cross-border acts of violence are perpetrated by both insurgents and paramilitaries. The reaction has overwhelmingly been militarization in the area.

Venezuela considers itself remarkably generous for allowing Colombia to break the traditional balance in military force to deal with its problems seemingly repents its generosity since it recently deployed tens of thousands of troops to their common border. Panama, which disbanded its army in 1989, is now rearming. Brazil has strengthened its border in the last ten years; there are 23,000 troops currently stationed in Amazonia. Ecuador and Peru have responded militarily as well.

The militarization of the area and the growing support among Colombians for rightist and authoritarian solutions are very real concerns. The implication of a military approach would be massively destructive in terms of loss of life - and also in terms of the transformation of Colombian society. Also implied is the likelihood of an eventual US military intervention.

The War in Colombia, Its Actors, and the Possibilities for Peace

Martin Javier Movilla Durango argued that there are two main factors contributing to Colombia's problems. First, Colombia has a history of internal war, due to causes ranging from the conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives to social repression and struggle for land. Second, at least since 1948, other external factors have exacerbated the conflict: the Cold War struggle against "communism"; foreign-sponsored low-intensity conflict; and the interests of multinational

corporations.

While Movilla recognized the difficulty of trying to pinpoint when the current phase of armed conflict began, he asserted that currently-active armed movements arose from social and political exclusion and the struggle for land - out of which, in the first half of the 20th century, a peasant movement evolved with communist or socialist leanings.

He echoed previous panelists in identifying the guerillas and the paramilitaries as the main perpetrators of violence, while underscoring the differences between them: Although the issues and demands of the FARC may have changed over the years, and while this organization has participated in human rights abuses and excesses, its political agenda continues to involve demands for greater economic and political empowerment of the marginalized majorities of the country; in contrast, for Movilla, the paramilitaries do not have their own political agenda but instead serve the interests of the elites which are, in turn, largely linked to the interests of multinational corporations.

Movilla stressed that the Colombian war is a business that benefits many different countries and business sectors, including those who sell weapons to Colombia or who benefit from what he referred to as the "human rights business." He further affirmed that within Colombia the only groups "winning" the war, at the expense of most Colombians, are the narco-traffickers – a category that includes many paramilitary organizations - as well as some national elites and the multinational corporations with whom they are allied.

Discussion

Klepak pointed out that paramilitaries are part and parcel of *latifundismo* all over Latin America and have to be taken very seriously since they claim to be fighting to re-establish order.

A comment was made from the floor that multi-national corporations are directly involved in prolonging the armed conflict since they establish financial arrangements with paramilitary groups to terrorize and displace communities and "pay off" guerillas to prevent acts of sabotage (e.g., the destruction of oil pipelines).

Session III:
Current Conjuncture 2

Moderator: Peter Penz (Professor, Faculty of Environmental Studies and Director, Center for Refugee Studies, York University)

Panelists:

- Juan Gabriel Ronderos (Research Assistant, Nathanson Center for Organized Crime and Corruption, York University): "Tendencies in Organized Crime"

- Amanda Romero-Medina (Quaker International Affairs Representative for the Andean Region, American Friends Service Committee, Bogotá): "Internal Displacement"

- Pilar Riaño (Visiting Researcher, Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, Bogotá): "Constructing and Sustaining Peace: Community and the Politics of Memory and Reconciliation"

This session centered on topics to which there were allusions, but about which there was not much in-depth discussion, in the previous two sessions: the internal social problems facing Colombia today and how these might be overcome. Juan Gabriel Ronderos focused on the implications of organized crime in Colombia for the rule of law and for long-term strategies of peace. Amanda Romero-Medina brought to light the severe crisis of internal displacement; Colombia now has the second largest number of displaced peoples within its borders in the world, having recently overtaken Angola in that ranking. Pilar Riaño spoke of the need to incorporate into the peace-building effort all social and cultural actors within Colombian society, particularly those at the grassroots level. She advocated the use of memory as an instrument with which to combat violence and build peace.

Tendencies in Organized Crime

Ronderos made the point that organized crime in Colombia pre-dates and currently extends well beyond the drug trade. For instance, organized contraband smuggling in the country's north and marijuana smuggling preceded the so-called drug cartels and continue today. He argued that, although they were supposedly dismantled by the Colombian authorities, the Medellín and Cali drug cartels (not genuine cartels, as they operated as a collection of independent groups and did not have control over the market, a point Francisco Thoumi made earlier) are still effectively in operation since the constituent groups of organized criminals that made up the "cartels" are still active.

For Ronderos, what is referred to within the academic and judicial world as "common delinquency" must also be seen as part of this organized criminal activity. "Breaking and entering,"

private kidnappings, robberies, and so on, are activities not presently recognized at the national or international level as organized criminal activity and as such cannot be appropriately addressed within the parameters of Colombian legal and justice systems, even if the rule of law were to be strengthened. Thirty-two percent (1184) of reported kidnappings in 2000 had nothing to do with the armed conflict and have been attributed to "common delinquents." The numbers are too high, suggested Ronderos, to be seen outside of an organized crime framework. Moreover, the international dimensions of some of these activities - including human trafficking for the international sex trade, which is spilling over from Colombia into the Andean region, Asia, and Europe – render the issue all the more pressing. According to Ronderos, Colombian society is characterized by a certain acceptance of criminality as a way of life, rather than as a severe social issue requiring redress.

One significant social and economic spin-off has been the privatization of security and justice that can only serve, argued Ronderos, to distort the significance of law in Colombia. Approximately 4000 private security companies are now operating in Colombia. Insurance policies are also available for kidnappings through some of the most prestigious insurance companies in the world, creating a situation where kidnapping becomes almost institutionalized as kidnappers know the money is guaranteed, the kidnapped feel secure that the money will be there, and the insurance companies are banking on the fears of the wealthy. The implication of all this is that a sense of justice is obstructed within society as the commodification of fear and criminality becomes accepted as a way of life. Ronderos asserted that, before the rule of law can be strengthened in Colombia, a legal ethic must first exist at the level of the state and the judiciary and within Colombian popular perception.

Internal Displacement

Romero-Medina identified two main causes for the massive internal displacement in Colombia that currently effects nearly two million people: manifestations of the armed conflict in rural areas, forcing people to flee to urban areas; and people leaving towns and cities because of the severe violations of human rights perpetrated by those in power against peasant leaders, union activists, social and human rights activists, indigenous leaders, intellectuals, journalists, and other dissenting voices.

Romero-Medina focused her discussion on the latter cause, arguing with others at the conference that the armed conflict, although a central factor, is not the only cause of internal displacement. Much of the violence in rural and urban areas derives from everyday circumstances in Colombia: from a lack of individual opportunities to struggles over territory and scarce resources.

Paramilitary groups – not all of which are directly implicated in the principal armed conflict between the state and the insurrectionary movements - threaten the physical safety of people, recruit by force, or appropriate property. Romero-Medina placed special emphasis on the perverse effects this violence is having on the young as many get involved in armed combat either through forced recruitment by paramilitaries and gangs or simply as a survival strategy.

Displacement is often a result, as has been the case in the Putumayo region, of families leaving their communities to avoid the recruitment of their youngsters into armed conflict. Displacement severely aggravates rates of unemployment as people stream into cities lacking the

economic or physical infrastructure to accommodate the influx. Rates of unemployment, according to official statistics, remain around 20%, a high figure even by Latin American standards. (Solano pointed out that unofficial statistics placed the unemployment numbers even higher.) The only option for many is to sell whatever possessions they may have in the informal sector, or eventually to beg for charity.

Romero-Medina acknowledged the importance organized actions by displaced people seeking to claim their rights as citizens and to bring legislation about that will protect those rights. In 1997, their demands led the government to design a policy to cope with the issue of displacement. Law 337 included, upon the recommendations made by organizations representing displaced peoples, a commitment by the state to provide housing, education, healthcare, and lasting solutions for the displaced. However, the mechanisms and institutional capacity to implement the law were not in place. There was no coordinating committee set up to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the law. Hence, while the law lists sixteen different government institutions and ministries as responsible for implementation, none were ever held accountable.

Romero-Medina concluded with a set of policy recommendations that she believes necessary for a viable and humane solution to the crisis of internal displacement. The recommendations were as follows:

1) Implementation of a prevention and early-warning system through the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Office in Colombia. Massacres can be prevented if meaningful attention is paid to threats made by the paramilitaries. An efficient system must be put in place that forces public servants to investigate and report threats and information regarding possible massacres. At present, only an inadequate system is in place, and it is not enforced.

2) The implementation of a system of registration and humanitarian assistance for displaced peoples, to keep track not only of who is displaced, but also where, geographically, humanitarian assistance is needed. At present, most humanitarian assistance goes to the north-eastern region of the country, but there are many riskier, more conflict-ridden areas, as well as less well-known areas of conflict, that also urgently need relief.

3) A timetable of return and relocation for displaced peoples must be set up. None currently exists.

4) Sustainable relocations along with social assistance and security. Most families that are relocated face a lack of sustainable income, and at present only 100 families (out of nearly 2 million displaced persons) have been successfully relocated in sustainable circumstances near Bogotá.

5) Displaced peoples, both within Colombia and internationally, along with the victims of fumigation, must be recognized as refugees and asylum seekers and be treated according to international standards towards refugees. At present, countries such as Venezuela are using euphemisms such as "transients" to refer to displaced peoples from Colombia who should by all rights by classified as refugees and asylum seekers. These people are being forcibly returned to Colombia without any regard for their personal security. The Ecuadorean government is the only government granting legal refugee and asylum status to displaced

Colombians; however, even in Ecuador this status is not applied to victims of fumigation because they are not recognized under the international law on refugees. This issue must be addressed at the level of both national and international law.

6) International human rights organizations and domestic NGOs must respect the dignity and lives of the displaced and offer humanitarian assistance to respond to the particular needs of displaced peoples as they themselves define those needs.

Constructing and Sustaining Peace: Community and the Politics of Memory and Reconciliation

Pilar Riaño's presentation on the importance of memory and mourning in the peace-building process picked up on the theme of Romero-Medina's last recommendation. Memory is indispensable to social and cultural survival because it is an important mechanism for maintaining and instilling dignity in the face of brutal atrocities. This is illustrated by the ways that many Columbian social movements have made of memory a powerful tool against forced forgetting, disappearance, and loss of humanity. It is at the intersection of memory and history that talk of sustainable peace processes can take place between people and communities. Peace building at the grassroots and community level needs to address memory and remembering - the only way a discourse of reconciliation can develop in the face of inhumane violence.

Memory is particularly useful, explained Riaño, because war in Colombia has changed the geographic areas of community and the way people move in their daily lives, within cities and areas of armed conflict. As such, memory can help strengthen communities and remind people of shared social relations, shared histories, and shared communities. The significance of these remembering processes is in the capacity of memory to bridge the past, present and future; the capacity of memory to trigger associations between a past of pains, sorrows, revenge and violence with a present of peace seeking and building, and with a future of pacific coexistence. Remembering past experiences can bring a different perspective to people who, through war-induced displacement, find themselves on opposite sides of an armed conflict. Memory may reveal that the origins of the current conflict are not as potent and contentious as believed at present by those who are fighting each other. Memory is also an important tool in dealing with disappearances and with the pain inflicted by violence as it makes visible the shared experience.

Riaño referred to her action research project in Medellín as an illustration: it involved a travelling museum—essentially a bus filled with objects invested with people's memories of specific losses and loved ones. The museum traveled from community to community, opened avenues for individual and collective mourning and helped reconcile hostile neighbourhoods by reminding community members of a shared past and a common experience of loss. She pointed out that all forms of violence are mixed and inter-related in the everyday lives of people. However, Riaño left the audience with a cautionary note: "memory is a contested and disputed terrain:" it is used by ruling elites, institutions and groups to legitimize violence, to silence history and to enact myths such as that of Colombians' fate to be violent.

Discussion

The session's wider discussion focused largely on the use of memory in conjunction with other strategies of peace-building and resistance. Manuel Rozental suggested that, indeed, the fundamental roots of the conflict in Colombia pits "modernizing", accumulating elites and their foreign allies – who promote a destructive and dehumanizing form of development and associated lifestyles – against traditional, autochthonous values and cultural ways (i.e., memory). For Manuel, a rich mine of alternative development paths and potential solutions to the present conflict exists in the largely-ignored resources of cultural memory that many grassroots organizations are promoting.

An audience member questioned Riaño's optimism regarding the potential of 'memory', suggesting that memory for most Colombians is predominantly of conflict and pain, and that issues of justice are a more important consideration than memory in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation. Riaño responded that, parallel to memories of violence and loss, Colombians also have recourse to empowering memories of resistance, perseverance, and community-building even amidst chaos and violence.

Session IV—Part 1
Policy Alternatives

Moderator: Craig Scott (Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, Osgoode Law School, York University)

Panelists:

- Ron Davidson (Director, South America Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): "Canadian Policy Toward Colombia"
- Katherine Trueman (Policy Advisor, Peace-building Unit, Canadian International Development Agency): "Colombia: A Donor Perspective"
- Hal Klepak (as above): "Policy Options to Responding to the Wars in Colombia"
- Bill Fairbairn (South America Program Coordinator, Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America): "Canadian Solidarity with Colombia"

Canadian Policy Toward Colombia

In outlining the framework of Canadian policy toward Colombia, **Ron Davidson** emphasized the country's importance to Canada. Canada has had diplomatic relations with Colombia for almost fifty years and considers Colombia key member of the hemispheric community. The two countries are partners, said Davidson, in a substantive number of international fora in which they share common approaches to international issues. Canada has significant trade and investment in the area. Colombia is important to Canada in a number of ways: it is a hemispheric security concern; it is a source country of drugs that enter Canada; and its human rights situation is a priority in Canada's overall human security agenda. Canadian policy towards Colombia has four major objectives:

1) Strengthening democracy:

a) Canada supports the Democracy Charter that was formulated at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and that will be refined at an OAS meeting in June. The Charter sets the hemispheric framework for identifying a democratic approach and stipulates the implications for countries that do not conform.

b) Canada must help to ensure strong democratic institutions in Colombia, where police and other governing institutions are not present in many towns and rural areas. CIDA funding for the Governance and Human Security program is an example of Canadian support for this objective. While Canada considers Colombia an institutional democracy because it holds fair elections and people are able to

express their views, it is concerned about the security of electoral candidates.

2) Promoting economic and social development through trade and investment activity:

Canada is considering a request by the Colombian government and the Andean region as a whole to promote jobs in Colombia and provide alternatives to illegal drug production by increasing access to the Canadian market for Colombian products.

3) Promoting human security by:

a) Objecting to all violations of human rights and international law in Colombia, regardless of the perpetrator.

b) Maintaining a policy of deliberate activism to ensure, through the embassy, protection for those who receive threats. This activity also makes it known that there is an international entity that is active and is monitoring the situation.

c) Providing, through the Government Sponsored Refugee Program, a way for those under severe threat to leave the country. In response to the deteriorating human security situation in Colombia, the number of refugees accepted has increased from 90 in 1999 to 450 in 2000 and an expected 700 in 2001.

d) Continuing to work with the Colombian government to provide distance education training to its military on human rights and international humanitarian law.

e) Giving institutional support through CIDA to UNHRC and other UN initiatives.

f) Providing a balanced approach to drug control in which demand and supply are addressed. Canada believes that drug control is a shared problem, international in nature, and can best be addressed through multilateral initiatives such as the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism in the OAS.

4) Support for the peace process:

Canada is a facilitator in the process of peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC. Canada is considering being a verifier in the peace negotiations with the ELN but has yet to commit itself.

Colombia: A Donor Perspective

Katherine Trueman indicated that, because the conflict has intensified, CIDA's current plan for the country-programming framework in Colombia has shifted its focus from traditional economic development assistance to peace-building initiatives. CIDA is using a peace-building and human security lens through which to view Colombia's development challenges and to address the affects of violence and the root causes of conflict. There is a need for flexibility in the program and

therefore the program is guided by the following principles: Programming decisions are to be based on a continually-updated understanding of the situation. Programming should be able to respond to changes on the ground. Using responsive mechanisms to support initiatives proposed by Canadians, Colombians, and multilateral organizations will facilitate this flexibility. While the use of Canadian expertise and approaches will be encouraged, Canadian presence will not be imposed where local capacity is strong. This new programming framework that CIDA is presently working on reflects the shift to peace-building and has involved consultations within CIDA, with the Colombian government, and with Colombian civil society stakeholders. It involves approximately sixty million dollars over five years and has three main objectives:

1) To increase Colombian capacity to meet basic human needs and protect the human rights of people affected by the conflict.

2) To support equitable participation in establishing foundations for peace by increasing the ability of stakeholders to participate meaningfully and effectively in the peace process and peace-building.

3) To improve Colombian capacity to address key causes of violence.

CIDA continues to support activities that improve human rights monitoring, combat impunity, and promote human rights awareness.

Policy Options to Responding to the Wars in Colombia

Hal Klepak commented that Canadian policy should continue with essentially the same objectives articulated by both DFAIT and CIDA, adding that these goals should be pursued more vigorously than in the past. He proposed a number of markers for use in formulating policy options and enumerated a series of factors that should be kept in mind when discussing Canadian policy towards Colombia and Latin America in general.

On the latter point, he noted that Canada is a relative newcomer to the region; only in the last 12 years, since the late 1980s, has Canada undertaken policy development in Latin America. Moreover, most Canadians are only beginning to familiarize themselves with the region and have been exposed mainly to its negative qualities, especially since the 'three pillars' on which Canada built its involvement in the area in the 1980s, have not proven stable (i.e., Latin America was considered a peaceful region in which Canada could find its place and be happy, a democratic place in which Canada could co-operate and collaborate, and a prosperous place in which to do business). So, while the Canadian public has not been presented with a particularly positive picture of Latin America, wide public support is needed for Canadian policy goals in the region to be sustainable.

Klepak stressed that Canadian policy should be characterized by a long-term, sustained approach, tempered by realistic rules about policy options. Canada should be modest in what it thinks it can deliver and then take steps to deliver what it promises. He indicated that in Latin America, Canada is beginning to have a reputation of "talking and not delivering", behaviour that must be avoided in a context as serious as Colombia's. Policy should also take into account that collaboration is not only valuable but necessary.

Coordination with Europe and possibly Japan will be vital to effective policy. At present the ambassadors meet on a monthly basis, in Bogota, to plan how best they can be of help; perhaps this kind of collaboration could start happening at higher levels of government. Canada should also be selective about the organizations with which it chooses to collaborate. For example, NGOs have multiplied and while some are well established and effective, others have a more questionable performance record.

Klepak further echoed sentiments expressed in previous panels, regarding the need for Canada to work closely with Colombian organizations. He underlined the importance of cultivating a mix of micro and macro approaches along with a mix of national and regional initiatives within Colombia, noting critically the tendency to spend money in Bogota while neglecting the rest of the country. Policy should reflect Canadian comparative advantage in peace-building and human rights training as a means to support the structures of civil society. In keeping with the idea of long-lasting initiatives, Canada should support elements of the peace process that are not specific to the current Colombian administration and that will remain in place regardless of changes in government.

Canadian Solidarity with Colombia

Bill Fairbairn indicated that although there is a growing concern in Canada about Colombia and the conflict, progress is still slow in getting Canadians and Canadian institutions more involved in Colombian humanitarian and human rights issues. He noted that a multiplicity of strategies and initiatives are important for supporting Colombians but stressed that right now, more than ever, Colombians need accompaniment by the international community. There are reports that Colombian organizations pushing for change and alternative policies are being seriously threatened. Canadians need to be physically present for their protection. He firmly believes that respect for human rights is the pre-condition for peace-building and, with this in mind, made a number of recommendations as to what the Canadian government could do at this juncture to support human rights:

1) The policy of deliberate activism, previously described by Davidson, wherein the Canadian embassy provides important accompaniment to and intervention on behalf of persons and communities at risk is very important, and must be enhanced.

2) Canada has declared itself a country that will provide asylum to those Colombians whose lives are at risk and who must leave the county. It is of utmost importance that this process be quick and efficient. At the moment it is too slow; people have been murdered while their application were still in process. The embassy needs more resources and staff to handle the demands. The present quota of 700 government-sponsored refugees is insufficient and should be increased to reflect the increasing human rights emergency. More private sponsorships in Canada are also needed, involving groups willing to work with Colombians when they arrive. Canadians must be educated on how to provide moral support for people who flee traumatic experiences.

3) Canadian parliamentarians must be better educated about what is going on in Colombia. Toward that end, there should be a parliamentary visit to Colombia as soon as possible and

the agenda should be developed in conjunction with NGOs. Fairbairn noted an encouraging sign in recent visits to Colombia by MPs such as Svend Robinson, who visited Barrancabermeja at a time of increasing paramilitary incursion - a visit which signified a great deal to that community. The Chairs of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade will be making a visit at the end of May. There need to be more frequent parliamentary hearings about Plan Colombia, and more funding is required to bring witnesses to testify at the hearings.

4) Canada should take advantage of its position in multilateral organizations and be more outspoken about human rights abuses in Colombia. Fairbairn took exception to Davidson's previous comment that Colombia is a democracy where people are able to express their political views. One need only look at the experience of the Patriotic Union party that had approximately three thousand of its members, including its Presidential candidate, murdered. Colombia may have formal democracy but many Colombians are being assassinated for expressing their views. Canada needs to pressure the Colombian government to put an end to human rights violations and to fully implement the clear and precise recommendations made to it for over a decade by key UN and OAS human rights monitoring agencies, in particular, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. As a member of the WB and IMF, Canada should also address the related issue of growing inequality and exclusion in Colombia.

5) There is a concern that Canadian rhetoric and actions in support of the peace process are being undermined in a number of ways. For example, Canada maintains that it will not provide military aid to Colombia, as this would violate its status of non-involvement. However, of the 40 helicopters that Canada sold to the US from September 1998 to February 2000, 33 were provided to the Colombian armed forces. The loophole in Canadian legislation that allows this to happen, by placing no conditions on the use or re-sale of hardware with potential military applications sold to the US, must be addressed. Another significant contradiction on Canada's support for the peace process is the government's decision to take a neutral position on Plan Colombia. The Plan has been described by a broad range of Colombian social organizations and churches as a disastrous "message of death and destruction." It is agreed by many civil society organizations that the Plan will escalate violence, worsen human rights abuses, and fail to provide real solutions to drug production. In the light of this analysis, Canada must speak out against the increasing military intervention in the region and support alternatives being proposed by Colombian civil society and others in the region who are presently being ignored. Fairbairn underlined that the argument that there are no alternatives to Plan Colombia is simply incorrect.

6) Canada needs to support more informed public debate on drug policies.

7) Canadian trade and investment in the area should benefit all Colombians and not just a small elite. There should be increased monitoring of trade and investment with Colombia to ensure that the presence of Canadian corporations does not in any way exacerbate human rights abuses or the armed conflict.

Discussion

In the discussion period that followed, Canadian policy was questioned in a number of key areas.

Davidson stressed that Canadian foreign policy will not be moving away from the human rights and human security agenda, despite the recent change of Minister and associated rumours.

Liisa North noted that while much of the drug production in Colombia takes place in the north and areas which are under control of the paramilitaries, Plan Colombia focuses its efforts mainly in the south; indirectly, at least, Plan Colombia seems to bolster the relative strength of the paramilitaries and their influence over drug-trafficking – a trend with very negative regional implications as paramilitary networks have begun to extend beyond Colombian borders.

Klepak agreed that the plan favors the paramilitaries and stated that Canada needs to be forward-looking, particularly when considering the trend toward the "Andeanization" of the conflict and the consequences of this on the region. He suggested that Canada look into the possibilities of multilateralism in dealing with the problem.

Davidson noted that the Canadian government does not support the paramilitaries. Canada condemns human rights abuses in international fora. It has pressured the Colombian government, both publicly and in internal discussions, to break its ties with the paramilitaries. He stated that Canadian policy does not consider whether the Plan strengthens the paramilitaries, but rather it looks to counteract the activities of all the armed parties. Canada does not agree with all parts of Plan Colombia, but there are elements within the Plan such as its social and economic objectives that Canada is willing to support, as it does through its allocation of CIDA funding.

In response, Fairbairn indicated that Canada is effectively being asked to provide funding and support "to mop up the consequences of Plan Colombia." What is needed, according Fairbairn, is for Canada to distance itself from Plan Colombia and to openly denounce the militarization of Colombia, particularly at this important point in the peace process. Fairbairn also insisted that the paramilitary groups should be dismantled and that those members of the state security forces who provide them with support should be immediately removed from active duty and brought to trial in civilian courts.

Regarding trade and investment, it was suggested that the Canadian government needs to implement rules and guidelines on how Canadian corporations should behave when doing business in Colombia. Fairbairn countered Davidson's assertion regarding a lack of any linkage between Canadian investment and human rights conditions in Colombia by listing a number of concrete examples, including the devastating impact that the Urra Dam (a multinational hydroelectric mega-project) had on the Embera Katio nation in northern Colombia.

He explained that the Canadian Export Development Corporation had given 18.2 US$ to the project. Since the Dam was built, fish in the river and its tributaries have virtually disappeared, robbing the Embera Katio river communities of the mainstay of their diet. The dam also flooded land in which the Embera Katio cultivated their crops and found their traditional medicines. The Embera are now suffering and dying from diseases brought on by malnutrition and malaria, the

latter a consequence of standing water from the dam.

He also stated that there has been an influx of mining and petroleum projects in Colombia, an influx that has coincided with the arrival of paramilitaries into these regions where the projects are located; these paramilitaries are apparently forcibly displacing people on behalf of the corporations. He stated that it is evident that Canadian financing and corporate involvement have exacerbated some of these situations of conflict and social exclusion, circumstances warranting further investigation.

Klepak added that Canadian governmental guidelines for doing business in Colombia are adequate, but that Canadian enterprises are paying "taxes" to armed groups in order to do business and are turning a blind eye to the human rights abuses.

There was a general consensus that a humanitarian agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC would be both beneficial and desirable. Such an agreement is achievable and would break the present impasse in the negotiations. Klepak made an important cautionary statement about the perception in Latin America that Canadian foreign policy is becoming an agent of US interests. If Canada is to have credibility, it must pursue its own agenda and goals.

Session IV—Part 2
Policy Alternatives

Moderator: Craig Scott (Associate Dean-Research and Graduate Studies, Osgoode Law School, York University)

Panelists:

- Manuel Rozental (Visiting Fellow, CERLAC; Coordinator, 2001 Canada-Colombia Solidarity Campaign): "Popular Struggles, Resistance, Knowledge and Social Transformation"

- Fransico Thoumi (as above): "Multilateral Approaches to Peace-building"

- Amanda Romero-Medina (as above): "Concluding Remarks"

Popular Struggles, Resistance, Knowledge and Social Transformation

Manuel Rozental began by acknowledging that he shares the same goals and viewpoints as those presented by Bill Fairbairn in the previous session, goals for which he and other Colombians have long been fighting. He argued against any "charitable" approach to solidarity with Colombians since, although Colombia is in a situation of crisis, Canada arguably needs Colombia as much as Colombia needs Canada, and relations of solidarity should be based upon the "principal of reciprocity."

Colombians have much to offer Canadians, including knowledge gained through experience regarding how to negotiate US power, and lessons learned by civil society groups who are creating new development alternatives and strategies of autonomy. Rozental outlined how local struggles fit into the overall conflict by reference to the example of the NASA (meaning "our land" in the Paez language) project. NASA is a local project in northern Cauca considered to represent the most successful agrarian reform project in Latin America. The project entailed the successful recovery of ancestral lands and, in spite of the conflict, the effective implementation of an economic project that fosters local autonomy; it even led to the election of an indigenous leader to the position of Governor of Cauca.

Rozental explained that the root cause of the Colombian problem is the clash of two differing sets of values or worldviews and associated economic models. The prevailing model sees the accumulation of wealth as an end, while local populations and indigenous peoples see accumulation as a means toward well-being as well as cultural satisfaction and realization. These groups do not deny the importance of economic productivity, but they view its function differently. They want to challenge the prevailing system while constructing autonomous alternatives. Their holistic approach to development is based on three key elements: the importance of culture; social and community organization; and territory. Territory is defined not only as land but also the

territory of imagination and beliefs that is being contested by different forces seeking to impose a different way of thinking. Rozental feels that the Colombian conflict and Plan Colombia are best understood within this context.

He pointed out that the area targeted by Plan Colombia coincides with the oil rich area of the Putumayo region and suggested that Plan Colombia is only the most current strategy of a long-standing US government and corporate project to establish US hegemony in the Andean region. He characterized Plan Colombia as a comprehensive intervention to advance US economic and geo-strategic interests in alliance with trans-national corporations under the guise of a "war on drugs." The strategy involves: war, dirty and otherwise; widely imposed structural adjustment policies; the consolidation of a regional economic block under the auspices of the Andean Initiative; and finally, the militarization of the area under the pretext of combating narco-trafficking – all of which is a strategic preamble to the implementation of the FTAA. Within the context of this US continental strategy, Colombia and the Andean region represent the frontline of a comprehensive plan for exploitative aggression. Under these conditions, Colombia is not only the site of the worst aggression and crime, it is also the principal site of resistance and consolidation of alternative models. The outcome of solidarity with Colombians and their struggle will determine the fate of the lives of the people of all the Americas.

Popular movements and organizations within Colombia are resisting and generating diverse, feasible alternatives to the US-led globalized, neoliberal, corporate economic model. However, these processes of resistance and the production of feasible alternatives are at risk of extinction. Solidarity movements within Colombia are effectively rendered invisible by the aggression taking place and the overwhelming attention granted to armed actors. Rozental argued that inequality and exclusion in Colombia force many Colombians to choose between two options in order to satisfy their basic human needs: either join an insurgency group, or engage in illegal activities. Colombians have learned that "if you follow the law you starve." Rather than blaming common Colombians for their lack of a legal ethic, Rozental identifies the moral corruption and illegitimacy of the social order (dominated by "illegal capital"), under the protection of the state, as the root cause of widespread "criminality" in Colombia. Rozental outlined five points for Canadian solidarity with Colombia:

1) Canadians should present a clear, open critique and opposition to Plan Colombia while simultaneously advocating alternatives that are proposed by Colombians but rendered invisible by the conflict.

2) Canada should support a negotiated solution to the conflict with the direct participation of Colombia's popular movements.

3) There should be a critical evaluation of Canadian policy towards Colombia. Canadian investment in Colombia, especially in the oil sector, and its ties to violence and displacement make Canada an accomplice to the most negative aspects of Plan Colombia.

4) Canada must help to make visible the popular struggles and alternatives that have been rendered invisible.

5) Academics have a responsibility to support the people of Colombia. While it is essential for academics to expose and denounce abuses, it is important that they also recognize that the people who need protection are not just victims but subjects of history with their own

proposals that must be heard. Academics must work with Colombian social organizations that have lived through and experienced displacement and abuses and "know" about the situation. That knowledge must be a guide.

Multilateral Approaches to Peace-building

Fransisco Thoumi echoed Rozental's belief that the solution to Colombia's problems will come from Colombians. Colombia's basic problems are institutional in the sense that the rules of society are not clear. Colombians are left to decide on their own what their ethics or rules are. The solution for these kinds of problems must come from within. The external world can take advantage of Colombia's problems and can benefit from the situation but it cannot provide a solution. Solutions cannot be imposed from abroad and are not determined by money.

Thoumi asserted that the drug problem is rooted in the lack of solidarity within Colombian society. The challenge is to build trust and social capital by establishing, developing, and nurturing community organizations. He stated that in order to foster community building, civil society must be promoted and encouraged.

Thoumi also stressed that Colombia is unique among Latin American countries, and that what worked in peace processes in other countries may not work in Colombia. Canada must look at what is unique about Colombia and must take into account the specific conditions within which Colombia has to achieve peace. He indicated that Canada must avoid policies that are marginal in what they can achieve, such as alternative development policies, trade preference policies, and drug eradication programs. These policies have been ineffective in the past. An option would be to investigate ways of creating alternative employment.

Thoumi concluded with the observation that, while recently overall violent deaths in Colombia have decreased, there has been an increase in deaths specifically attributable to the conflict. With this in mind, the need for innovative solutions becomes continuously more urgent. As an example of a potentially innovative solution, Thoumi suggested that - to demobilize or contain the different armed parties of the conflict in a post-peace accord situation - a professional law enforcement organization for peace-keeping could be established with participation of both former paramilitaries and former guerrillas. While the suggestion may sound farfetched, he believes that in Colombia any new idea must be explored.

Concluding Remarks

In summarizing the debates of the conference, Amanda Romero-Medina affirmed the need to take into account a number of significant issues when seeking to address violence and conflict in Colombia.

First and foremost, the conflict and its analysis must be "de-narcotized". This will create a space where new ideas and alternatives can be generated and considered.

Second, it is important not to be daunted by the complexities of the situation when

considering Colombia; instead, one should realize that Colombia represents an important case not only due to its geo-strategic position, but also because of the wealth of experience Colombians have in opposing and overcoming adversity.

Third, it is vital that, in the immediate term, humanitarian agreements provide a means to contain the conflict while a longer-term solution is sought. Certain geographical areas should be declared as non-conflictive zones. These "corridors of peace" would be areas of safety available to decrease the direct impact of the conflict on the majority of Colombian society. Indigenous groups are demanding that all the armed parties respect their sacred lands; respect for this demand would be a good starting point for establishing peace zones and a positive step towards peace.

Canada must understand that there is a common fund to Plan Colombia through which the Colombian government receives and controls international donations. Hence, Canadian contributions to the Plan could be used for military purposes. Canada must take this into consideration when providing funding. Canada should not support the present UNDCP aerial fumigation program; instead, it should encourage Colombians' willingness to accept manual eradication initiatives. Canada must also be aware of the possible negative consequences in Colombia of Canadian attempts to strengthen the rule of law, especially if this is interpreted to mean strengthening the state's powers of coercion as embodied by the military and security forces. With this in mind, Canada should coordinate its policies with the UNCHR.

Romero-Medina further made specific recommendations in three key areas:

1) Efforts for peace on the part of civil society organizations and grassroots popular organizations should be given greater attention and support. The fact that Colombians have survived years of war is a testament to their resiliency and to their capacity to generate alternatives to conflict. Public education on providing support to Colombian refugees in Canada must be strengthened. Independent NGOs and church groups should be given support as well.

2) Academia should treat Colombians as the subjects and not the objects of research. Research exchange programs would help to redress stereotyping. Research projects within a regional framework and from an interdisciplinary approach are required to understand the situation as a whole. Academics need to support Colombian scholars, journalists, and other professionals who are being targeted for speaking out and who are forced to leave the country. Symposia should be held as one way of highlighting the plight of these professionals and bringing the problem to public attention.

3) Canadian policy should maintain its human rights approach. An accurate definition of the terminology of human security should be elaborated in Canadian foreign policy. For Romero-Medina, this term is troubling because it seems to exclude civil and political rights. Canada must reaffirm its commitment to the Vienna Plus 5 review (the five-year review of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, held in Ottawa, Canada in 1998) in which it was recognized that human rights are indivisible, universal, and interdependent. Canada should encourage a form of judicial reform in Colombia that will meet the needs of the majority of the people, as opposed to the reform proposed by the US that caters to the narrow interests of the financial and technological sectors. Impunity is another important issue that must be addressed.

Reciprocity and solidarity are elements that have long typified Colombian society. Yet hardship and conflict have been undermining these values. Colombians must work to rebuild reciprocity and a renewed sense of community. They must work together on a daily basis to construct and implement new alternatives.

Appendix I

Compilation of Recommendations for Canadian Policy-makers

COMPILATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADIAN POLICY-MAKERS

- Canada must speak out against the increasing military intervention in the region through Plan Colombia, and it must support alternatives being proposed by those working within Colombian civil society and the region, but that are presently rendered invisible.

- Canada should support a negotiated solution to the conflict with the direct participation of Colombia's popular movements and organizations.

- There should be a parliamentary visit to Colombia as soon as possible and the agenda should be worked out with NGO involvement. There need to be more frequent parliamentary hearings about Plan Colombia and funding needs to be made available in order to bring witnesses to testify at these hearings.

- Canada should actively seek to "de-narcotize" discussion and policy directions with regard to the conflict in Colombia. The multifold social, political, and economic causes of the conflict must not be simplistically reduced to concern over the drug trade, which is more a symptom than a cause of Colombia's malaise.

- The loopholes in legislation that allow Canadian military components to be used in the Colombian conflict, thereby contradicting Canadian rhetorical and practical support of the peace process, must be closed. Especially of concern is absence of conditions on the use or re-sale of hardware with potential military applications sold to the US.

- The policy of deliberate activism whereby the Canadian embassy in Bogotá intervenes on behalf of persons and communities at risk must be enhanced and made more rigorous.

- Canada must promote, in the immediate term, humanitarian agreements to contain the conflict while a longer-term solution is sought.

- The process of accepting asylum seekers from Colombia must be more quick and efficient. The embassy requires more resources and staff. More private sponsors in Canada, willing to work with Colombians when they arrive, are needed. Canadians must be educated on how to provide moral support to people fleeing traumatic experiences.

- Public education on providing support to Colombian refugees in Canada must be strengthened. Independent NGOs and church groups helping refugees should be given support as well.

- Canada must promote a viable and humane solution to the urgent crisis of internal displacement in Colombia. Recommendations it could advance include: a) The implementation of a prevention and early-warning system through the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Office in Colombia. An efficient system must be put in place that forces public servants to investigate and report threats and information regarding possible massacres; b) The implementation of a system of registration and humanitarian assistance for displaced peoples, to

keep track not only of who is displaced, but also where, geographically, humanitarian assistance is needed; c) A timetable of return and relocation for displaced peoples must be set up; d) Sustainable relocations must be realized, with social assistance and security provisions.

- Displaced peoples, both within Colombia and internationally, along with the victims of fumigation, must be recognized as refugees and asylum seekers and treated according to international standards towards refugees.

- Canadian policy should maintain its human rights approach, while working toward an accurate definition of "human security" in its foreign policy. Canada must reaffirm its commitment to the Vienna +5 review where it is agreed that human rights are indivisible, universal, and interdependent.

- Canada should take advantage of its position in multilateral organizations and be more outspoken about human rights abuses in Colombia. Canada needs to pressure the Colombian government to put an end to human rights violations by cooperating with the UNHRC.

- As a member of the WB and IMF, Canada should address the issue of growing inequality and exclusion in Colombia.

- Canada needs to support more informed public debate on drug policies.

- Canada should not support the present UNDCP aerial fumigation program; instead, it should encourage Colombians' willingness to accept manual eradication initiatives.

- Canadian trade and investment in the area should benefit all Colombians and not just a small elite.

- Trade and investment should not exacerbate human rights abuses or worsen the armed conflict. There must be a critical evaluation of Canadian policy and investment in Colombia, with particular attention to the oil sector and its ties to conflict, displacement, and human rights abuses. The Canadian government needs to clearly articulate and implement rules and guidelines on how Canadian corporations should behave when doing business in Colombia.

- Canada should encourage a form of judicial reform in Colombia that will meet the needs of the majority of the people, rather than the reform that is proposed by the US. Impunity is another important issue that must be addressed.

- Canada must be aware of the possible negative consequences in Colombia of Canadian attempts to strengthen "the rule of law", especially if this is interpreted to mean strengthening the state's power of coercion as embodied by the military and security forces.

- Canadian policy should be characterized by a long-term, sustained approach, tempered by realistic rules about policy options. Canada should be modest in what it thinks it can deliver and then take steps to deliver what it promises. In keeping with the idea of long-lasting initiatives, Canada should support elements of the peace process that are not specific to the current

Colombian administration and that will remain in place regardless of changes in government.

- Canada must pursue a mix of micro and macro approaches to the issue of conflict in Colombia, along with a mix of national and regional initiatives within Colombia.

- Policy should also take into account that multilateral collaboration is not only valuable but necessary. Coordination with Europe and possibly Japan will be vital to effective policy. At present the ambassadors meet on a monthly basis, in Bogotá, to plan how best they can be of help; perhaps this kind of collaboration could start happening at higher levels of government.

- Policy should reflect Canadian comparative advantage in peace-building and human rights training as a means to support the structures of civil society.

Appendix II

Article from the Globe and Mail
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International News

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New approach to Colombia urged

Ottawa should distance itself from U.S. militaristic strategy, conference told

BY PAUL KNOX

If only they sentenced wayward comedians to antistereotype school. Then you might have seen David Letterman at Toronto's York University last week.

The late-night television host apologized recently after joking that a Colombian beauty queen's talent act involved swallowing 50 balloons full of heroin. He wasn't the first North American to imply that Colombia begins and ends with drug trafficking, and he is unlikely to be the last.

But the message from a two-day conference on violence and peacebuilding in Colombia, sponsored by two York research centres, was that the violence ravaging Colombia goes far beyond drugs, and that drug-centred efforts to stop it will have little effect.

Professors, social activists and exiled Colombians living in Canada warned that U.S. military aid and forced eradication of drug crops are hurting the average Colombian. Canada, they said, should put more distance between its Colombia policy and that of Washington.

"There are alternatives, and Canada needs to speak out about increased military intervention in the region," said Bill Fairbairn, South American program co-ordinator with the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America.

Two million of Colombia's 40 million people have been uprooted from their homes in the past 10 years as fighting intensifies among government troops, leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary forces, rights groups say.

Yesterday, two small bombs exploded in the southern city of Cali, the latest in a string of attacks feeding fears that the largely rural conflict could be spreading to the cities. Last Friday, two explosions killed four people and injured 21 in the capital, Bogota.

The guerrillas, fighting since the 1960s, support themselves by kidnapping the rich for ransom and by taxing drug traffic in areas they control. Paramilitary groups profit in the same ways, and have carried out large-scale massacres of civilians.

JUAN BAUTISTA/REUTERS

An officer walks in front of the remains of the police headquarters destroyed by a bomb blast that injured one person in Cali yesterday.

Helped by $1.3-billion (U.S.) in aid from Washington over two years, the government of President Andres Pastrana has stepped up the spraying of herbicide on plantations of coca, the raw material for cocaine.

Meanwhile, two years of peace talks between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the strongest guerrilla force, have produced almost nothing of substance.

Mr. Pastrana has just one year left in his four-year term.

Delegates at the York conference said the chances of him reaching a deal with the FARC or the National Liberation Army are extremely low.

"This peace process has no possibility of producing results; none," said Martin Movilla, a Colombian television journalist who covered political violence but fled to Canada last year after receiving death threats.

Assassinations and bomb attacks related to the illegal drug trade won global notoriety in the late 1980s, but the conflict over land and resources is nothing new. Before coca and the opium poppy, violence was associated with commodity booms involving coffee, cattle and oil.

Control over timber and mineral resources is also fuelling conflict, said history professor Catherine Legrand of McGill University in Montreal.

Paramilitary groups terrorize settlers into vacating land coveted by the rich, several speakers said at the conference.

"The struggle for land has become more and more acute," said Lilia Solano, a professor at the Javeriana University in Bogota.

"The traffickers bought large quantities of land, and there is a greater concentration than ever."

Prof. Solano said that although Mr. Pastrana promised a broad social-development scheme in his 1998 election campaign, his Plan Colombia — which includes the U.S. military aid — focuses mainly on fighting the drug trade.

"To rebuild the country, we don't need more weapons," she said.

Most experts say it will be next to impossible to shut down the illegal drug trade while demand remains strong in North America and Europe.

Ron Davidson, director of South America relations at Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, rejected calls to take a clear stand against forced eradication and the militarization of antidrug efforts.

"We would like to see drug production reduced, and we don't have a good alternative to propose" as an alternative to herbicide-spraying, he said, cautioning that Canada has not taken a position for or against Plan Colombia.

Ottawa is one of several governments offering to act as facilitators in the peace dialogue.

Mr. Davidson said Canadian diplomats actively support Colombian peace groups and let authorities know they are concerned about rights violations.