

Piedad Córdoba and Her Fight for Peace

Three days ago, there was news printed that the Attorney General of Colombia, Alejandro Ordóñez Maldonado had removed the prestigious Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba from her post and disqualified her from carrying out political office for 18 years, because of her alleged promoting and collaborating with the FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Faced with such an unusual and drastic measure taken against an elected post in the highest legislative body of state, Piedad has no alternative other than appealing to the very Attorney General who produced the measures.

It was logical that such arbitrariness would cause a mighty rejection, expressed by a wide range of political personalities, among them former prisoners of the FARC and relatives of those who had been liberated, thanks to the senator, former presidential candidates, persons who had held that high office, others who were or still are senators or members of the legislative power.

Piedad Córdoba is an intelligent and brave person, a brilliant speaker, with well-articulated thoughts. A few weeks ago she visited us in the company of other distinguished personalities, among which was a remarkably honest Jesuit priest. They came spurred on by a profound desire to seek peace for their country and they were requesting Cuba's collaboration, remembering that for years, and at the instance of the government of Colombia itself, we lent our territory and our collaboration for the meetings that took place in our capital between representatives of the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army.

However, I am not surprised by the decision taken by the Attorney General who obeys the official policy of that country which is virtually occupied by Yankee troops.

I don't like hedging my words, and I shall say what I am thinking. Just one week ago, the general debate of the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly was about to begin. For three days they had been discussing the embarrassing Millennium Development Goals and on Thursday September 23rd the General Assembly was commencing with the participation of the heads of State or senior officials of each country. The first to take the podium would be, as is customary, the UN Secretary General and immediately afterwards, the President of the United States, host country of the Organization and the presumed master of the world. The session was beginning at 9 am. Logically, I was interested in hearing what the illustrious Barack Obama, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, would have to say as soon as Ban Ki-moon had concluded. I naively thought that CNN in Spanish or in English would be broadcasting Obama's speech, generally a brief one. It was on that channel that I heard the presidential candidates debating in the city of Las Vegas two years earlier.

The time came, minutes went by and CNN was running the apparently spectacular news about the death of a Colombian guerrilla leader. That was important, but not particularly transcendental. I stayed interested in finding out what Obama would say about the extremely serious problems besetting the world.

Could it be that the state of the planet is such that both of them are fooling around and making the Assembly wait? I asked that the other TV be turned on to CNN in English and there too, not one word about the Assembly. So, what was CNN talking about? It was broadcasting news and I was waiting for the news from Colombia to end. But 10, 20, 30 minutes went by, and there was more of the same. They were talking about incidents in a huge combat that was taking place, or had taken place, in Colombia, that the fate of the continent would depend on that, as the words and broadcasting style of the reporter were having us believe. Photos and full-color film were being shown about the death of Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas, alias Jorge Briceño Suárez or "Mono Jojoy". The reporter was saying that this

was the most severe blow for the FARC, surpassing both the deaths of Manuel Marulanda and Raúl Reyes together. A devastating action, he was affirming. It was presumed to have been a spectacular battle, with 30 bombers, 27 helicopters and complete battalions of elite troops taking part in the fierce fighting.

Really, it was something greater than the battles of Carabobo, Pichincha and Ayacucho all rolled into one. With old experience about these conflicts, I couldn't imagine such a battle in the wooded and remote region of Colombia. The mighty action was spiced up with pictures of all kinds, both old and new, showing the rebel commander. For the CNN news editor, Marulanda's successor Alfonso Cano was a university intellectual who had no backing from his troops; the real chief had died. The FARC would have to surrender.

Let's be frank. The news referring to the famous battle where the FARC commander died (the FARC is a Colombian revolutionary movement that came into being more than 50 years ago, after the death of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán who was assassinated by the oligarchy) and the removal of Piedad Córdoba are very far from bringing peace to Colombia; quite the opposite. They could accelerate the revolutionary changes in that country.

I would think that quite a few Colombian military are embarrassed by the grotesque versions of the supposed battle where Commander Jorge Briceño Suárez died. In the first place, there was no battle at all. It was a gross and embarrassing murder. Perhaps hampered by the part of the war with which the official authorities had released the news and other obscure versions, Admiral Edgar Cely stated that "Jorge Briceño, alias 'Mono Jojoy', died 'squashed' when [...] the building in which he was hiding in the jungle toppled over on him." "'We know that he died crushed, his bunker falling down on top of him', [...] 'it's not true that he had been shot in the head'." So read the statement by Caracol Radio station according to the American AP news agency.

They baptized the operation with the Biblical name of Sodom, one of the cities punished for its sins, victim of a rain of hell-fire and sulphur.

What is more serious is what we haven't said, which by now even the cat knows about, because the Yankees themselves have printed it.

The US government provided its ally with more than 30 smart bombs. There was a GPS installed inside the guerrilla chief's boots. Guided by that device, the programmed bombs blew up in the encampment where Jorge Briceño was located.

Why not tell the world the truth? Why are they alluding to a battle that never took place?

I observed other embarrassing things on TV. The president of the United States warmly received Uribe in Washington and encouraged him to give classes on "democracy" at an American university.

Uribe was one of the principal creators of the paramilitary, whose members are responsible for the boom in drug trafficking and the deaths of tens of thousands of people. It was Barack Obama with whom Uribe signed the handing over of seven military bases and virtually of any part of Colombian territory, for the installation of Yankee armed forces men and equipment. The country is full of clandestine cemeteries. Through Ban Ki-moon, Obama granted Uribe immunity, appointing him, no less, as deputy chairman of the commission investigating the attack of the fleet taking aid to Palestinians besieged in Gaza.

In the final days of his presidency, Uribe had already organized the operation using the GPS in the new boots needed by the Colombian guerrilla leader.

When the new Colombian president traveled to the US to speak at the General Assembly, he knew that the operation was underway, and when Obama learned of the news of the murder of the guerrilla, he

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warmly hugged Santos.

I wonder whether on that occasion they said anything at all about respecting the decision made by the Colombian Senate declaring Uribe's authorization to establish Yankee military bases to be illegal. The crude murder was backed up by these bases.

I have criticized the FARC. In a Reflection I publicly expressed my disagreement with the holding of prisoners of war and the sacrifices meant for them by the tough conditions of life in the jungle. I explained the reasons and the experience we acquired in our struggle.

I was critical of the strategic concepts of the Colombian guerrilla movement. But I never denied the revolutionary nature of the FARC.

I believed, and I believe, that Marulanda was one of the most distinguished of the Colombian and Latin American guerrilla fighters. When many of the names of the mediocre politicians are forgotten, Marulanda will be acknowledged as one of the most honorable and firm fighters for the well-being of peasants, workers and the poor of Latin America.

The prestige and moral authority of Piedad Córdoba has multiplied.

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