

LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIO DE COLOMBIA ó EJERCITO DEL PUEBLO

A BRIEF HISTORY

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The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC) is an organization rooted deep in the history of Colombia. Due to its long history, the FARC has played different roles in different time periods, and consequently is viewed by different people in vastly different ways. To some, the FARC is the hero of the commoner, to others a terrorist organization, and to others still, a narco1 0 0 1-5(sFfrg)14(i)-(rc)-k7(i)-4ong d3(e)-2rr, tund(he)-5(rs)tbian[w]h1(a)-5(t)-nd theFARC

The Founding of the FARC

The FARC was born out of the violence during and after La Violencia and the corresponding loss of faith in government. Referring to La Violencia, Pedro Marín, founder of the FARC, wrote, “The police and armed Conservatives would destroy the villages, kill inhabitants, burn their houses, take people prisoner and disappear them, steal livestock and rape the women. The goal of the Conservative groups was to inflict terror on the population”.⁹ In response to the violence at the hand of the military and paramilitaries, a teenager named Pedro Marín fled the Amazon and went into hiding in the Cordillera Central. There he began to form a guerrilla army

supported by the military, had an even more brutal reputation. Children and teenagers in the countryside matured in an environment where the military was to be feared for their brutality and

overthrew the established government of Gomez and placed General Rojas in power. Since this point, traditional government has been slowly wrenching power from the military, but frequently the two have not been operating as one force. The paramilitary groups further complicate the relationship between military and government. In the late 1960s, the Colombian army established the paramilitary groups as legitimate special operations groups. Violence was encouraged in these groups and oversight was minimal at best. The government turned a blind eye to the methods of torture and murder used by these groups, hoping they would succeed in obliterating the guerrilla organizations and establishing peace. Eventually the government saw that these groups were doing more harm than good and that the tactics used by them were not only unsuccessful, but provided the FARC with angry recrui-5(t)-4(is)6(be)-5(nt)-4(on r)16(e)-5(v)17(e)-5(ng)17(e).

Paramilitaries would not only attack the guerrillas, but would protect themselves, attacking any police found investigating them, journalists reporting on them, or lawyers trying to prosecute them. In addition, paramilitary groups turned to the same sources of funding as the FARC; kidnapping, extortion, and drug trafficking. By encouraging the formation of paramilitary units in the 1960s, the Colombian government opened the door to the formation of armed groups outside their direct control. These morphed into organizations that are arguably doing more harm to Colombia than the very organization they were formed to fight.

In conclusion, the government condoned, but frequently did not control the army, and the army tacitly condoned, but ultimately did not control the paramilitary groups. The result of this complex situation was that the government was typically not in a position to successfully negotiate for peace. Any agreement for amnesty to which they came meant very little in reality, as the paramilitary, and to a limited extent the military, could not be forced to respect it.

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