

## Colombia exposes M-19 pact with drug runners

by Valerie Rush

Colombian President Belisario Betancur's hardline response to the narco-terrorist siege of the Supreme Court Nov. 6 and 7 has prompted the friends and apologists of Dope, Inc. to fall all over themselves in their rush to condemn Betancur for "butchery," "violation of international law," and "capitulation to the reactionary Armed Forces." On Nov. 7, the Colombian military was deployed under the President's constitutional authority to retake the Justice Palace; nearly 100 people died in the course of the siege.

In a flood of commentaries in international news media like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the M-19 narco-terrorists are portrayed as "rebels with a cause," who only sought to "dialogue" with the government about human-rights violations—in contrast to the "inflexible" Betancur administration which allegedly deployed bloodthirsty troops to massacre the guerrilla band, and their pleading hostages along with them.

In an unprecedented confrontation with these international vultures of the press Nov. 10 (excerpts below), Colombian Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González charged his interrogators with "sounding like the attorneys for the drug runners" after they openly accused the government of fabricating M-19 connections to the drug mob to cover up its allegedly incompetent handling of the affair. "Let's get one thing straight," declared the furious justice minister. "The guerrillas did not enter the Justice Palace to talk. They came to kill. . . . They sought out as the immediate target of their action . . . the same judges whose lives had been threatened previously for having given favorable opinions on the extraditions. . . . They murdered them in cold blood."

Colombian Foreign Minister Augusto Ramírez Ocampo

was equally explicit about the role of the M-19 in acting out the vengeance of the drug mob. In an interview with *Le Monde* on Nov. 13, Ramírez declared:

"The assault on the Judicial Palace was never a peaceful operation by the M-19. From the first moment, the guerrillas killed a janitor and three soldiers who were guarding the underground parking area. The assault took place on the same day that the constitutional judges of the Supreme Court began their study of the charge of 'unconstitutionality' against the treaty with the United States which permits extradition of drug traffickers. The judges had received death threats in the event they reaffirmed the validity of the treaty.

"During their occupation of the judicial court, the heavily armed assailants identified by name each and every one of the judges charged with studying the treaty. Furthermore, among the demands made by the terrorists was cancellation of the [extradition] treaty. . . . The rebels burned the archives and the library where all the documents related to drug traffickers' extraditions were kept. Their conditions were non-negotiable, one of them being a public trial of the head of state to be carried out by the assailants themselves. . . . President Betancur answered by offering the only thing the Constitution permitted him to do: safeguard the lives of the assailants and promise them a fair trial."

In contrast to the witchhunt by the media, republican forces internationally have mobilized to back the Colombian President's fight to defend his nation's institutions. The Peruvian daily *El Popular* insisted that Betancur made the only possible choice: "The taking of hostages . . . [threatens] to destroy the juridical ordering on which society is based. President Betancur has given an example of valor and lucidity

which should be followed. Authority should not bend over and kiss the feet of assassins.”

The Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano* emphasizes the connections of the M-19 to the drug mafia, and insists that Betancur's response to the siege was part of a “war without quarter” against the drug trade. The Schiller Institute has mobilized its forces internationally, generating hundreds of telegrams of support to Betancur from prominent citizens across the United States and Europe.

## What really is the M-19?

As this publication has documented on several occasions, the M-19 is a well-financed collection of brainwashed terrorists steeped in Gnostic mysticism and deployed in league with the drug mafia as a battering ram against the sovereign institutions of Ibero-America.

Despite the claims of the *Washington Post* that the M-19's first “spectacular action” was the theft of Simon Bolívar's sword, the reality is that the “right-wing” M-19—initially made up largely of disaffected ex-military officers—first exploded into the public eye in April 1976 with the highly-publicized kidnaping and cold-blooded “execution” of one of Colombia's top labor leaders at the time, José Raquel Mercado Martínez.

The M-19 conversion into a “left-wing” guerrilla army coincided with the 1979 Sandinista overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua, in which the Colombian armed band allegedly played a role. Then, in 1980, an M-19 assault commando seized the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá during a high-level reception, capturing over a dozen ambassadors along with nearly 60 other hostages. They held the embassy for 61 days, demanding freedom for “political prisoners,” \$50 million in ransom, publication of their manifestos, and safe conduct out of Colombia.

*EIR* at the time asked “What is the M-19 really? Who ordered the embassy takeover?” and answered: “Far from being an ‘honest’ group of unhappy leftists, the M-19—like its sister organizations, the Baader-Meinhof and the Red Brigades—is run by oligarchic intelligence circles centered around Europe's Jesuit black nobility.”

The occupation of the Dominican Republic embassy ended with capitulation by the then Turbay Ayala government, which reportedly paid one to two million dollars in cool cash as ransom, along with providing safe conduct to Havana for the terrorists and their hostages. That ransom fueled a drug-trafficking terrorist apparatus which showed its true colors in the Nov. 6 Supreme Court takeover.

After its collaboration with the Jesuit-dominated Sandinista leadership, the M-19 plunged headlong into mysticism. M-19 honcho Jaime Bateman Cayón recruited youth into the M-19 ranks with the promise that a special “mental chain” made them invincible. In an interview with the Peruvian magazine *Caretas* of Nov. 28, 1983, Bateman declared, “What do you think the mental chain is for? What's going on is that my mother is a Gnostic; my mother was in charge of

setting up gnosis in Santa Marta. And every Saturday they do a chain to protect us, the organization. . . .”

The M-19's Gnostic belief structure made a perfect match with that of Carlos Lehder Rivas, the one-time auto thief who rose to become Colombia's kingpin in the cocaine trade. Lehder grafted his own elaborate Nazi belief-structure onto a pseudo-nationalist political program which became the basis for a 10,000-person “Latin National Civic Movement,” dedicated to the legalization of drugs and the overturning of Colombia's extradition treaty with the United States.

Relations between Lehder's drug-trafficking network and the M-19 go back to 1981, when the M-19 was first documented to be deeply involved in a drugs-for-guns smuggling deal which stretched from Florida to Cuba, through Panama down to Colombia.

## Narco-terrorist alliance goes public

On Dec. 5, 1984, M-19 head Iván Marino Ospina held a Mexico City press conference, in which he announced the M-19's full support for mafia threats to “kill one American for every Colombian extradited to the U.S.” Said Marino Ospina, “These threats should be carried out throughout the world against the representatives of rapacious imperialism . . . and will serve as the basis for negotiations if some day these traffickers, who are also Colombians, decide to use their money to build the nation.”

Several weeks later, cocaine czar Lehder made his warm admiration for the M-19 a matter of public knowledge. Asked to comment on Marino Ospina's endorsement of the mafia assassination plot, Lehder said: “The M-19 is the only movement that has declared itself against extradition. The M-19 plays an important role before the masses, like that played by [my] Latin Movement. Iván's call in Mexico is a call for the guerrilla movements to join in the [drug] bonanza.”

Betancur's government has not only been targeted for destabilization by the international mouthpieces of *Dope, Inc.*, but by its domestic accomplices as well. The drug-tainted leadership of the opposition Liberal Party has taken advantage of the national shock and grief generated by the Supreme Court tragedy to demand a “public trial” of the Colombian President's action, calling it “the worst failure of Colombian democracy in its entire history.” Not by coincidence, Colombia is already in the throes of campaigning for the 1986 presidential elections.

Other Liberal spokesmen have called outright for Betancur's resignation, while three separate Liberal-sponsored indictments have been brought against the President inside the Congress. Attorney General Carlos Jiménez Gómez, a notorious apologist for the drug mafia who has violently attacked the extradition treaty as “unconstitutional,” declared in an open letter, “I do not share the military solution [to the hostage crisis].” He pledged, however, to stay in the presidential peace commission in order to “raise a clamor” from within about “the chaos sown by the seizure and bloody rescue of the Justice Palace.”

## Colombia's battle with the terrorists

*The following are excerpts of the Nov. 10 confrontation between Colombian Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González and the international press, as the minister left a mass held for the slain Supreme Court judges.*

**Q:** Why didn't the President negotiate [regarding] the seizure of the Palace of Justice?

**Parejo González:** It was totally impossible, within the constitutional framework under which we are governed, to enter into negotiations with terrorists, who asked that the fundamental tenets of the Constitution be set aside. . . .

I want you to keep in mind a fact which is of utmost importance. The guerrillas did not arrive at the Palace of Justice with the purpose of talking. . . . They entered killing. . . . They sought out as the immediate target of their action the four judges of the Constitutional Hall of the court and the judges of the Criminal Court, the same judges whose lives had been threatened previously for having given favorable opinions on the extraditions. . . .

There is another important fact which cannot be overlooked. The day the guerrilla movement took the Palace of Justice, the four judges of the Constitutional Court were meeting to decide upon the request to declare the extradition treaty [unconstitutional]. . . . One cannot have many illusions about the fate the judges were to suffer.

**Q:** According to the report of events that occurred Wednesday and Thursday, the government talked with the guerrillas, but only to ask them to surrender. . . .

**Parejo González:** Pardon me, no. It was to persuade them to change their attitude, giving them guarantees that their lives and integrity would be protected. But if the M-19 asks the President of the Republic to go to the Palace of Justice, or send someone in his name to stand trial, with the guarantee that the M-19 will see to it that whatever sentence is given is followed through, do you think there is any possibility of negotiation on that? . . .

**Q:** Was the decision taken by the army, going above the President of the Republic?

**Parejo González:** The decisions were not taken by the army above the President of the Republic, because that would have meant . . . a coup d'état.

**Q:** It has been argued that, in the taking of the Palace, international norms were violated . . . that in a war, shooting is suspended to save the life of the hostages. . . .

**Parejo González:** Look, I cannot be a judge, neither of the acts of the government, nor even of the guerrillas. It is precisely for that reason that we are forming a commission, so that the acts of the government and the acts of the guerrillas be judged. . . . The blow to justice has been very great, but the blow to government has also been supremely great. So no one can think that the government didn't have the desire to defend the lives of the judges, quite the contrary.

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**Q:** So President Betancur gave the order to burn and shell the Palace of Justice?

**Parejo González:** My God, why are you asking me these kinds of questions? Those who began the action were not the government, nor the army; they were guerrillas. They came in, killing. Do you believe that, while armed guerrillas were arriving—just look at the arsenal which they brought with them—the response of the government should have been, "Gentlemen, keep calm, let's talk?" Or should the force of order respond to the criminal attack coming from groups which have taken up arms?

**Q:** Is it true that when you sent the message to the guerrillas, that message was not able to get through to them . . . which means that the army got out of the control of the government at that moment?

**Parejo González:** At no time was the army out of the control of the government. . . .

**Q:** You say the drug traffickers had an interest in burning the files that were there, something which seems strange. . . . And the fact has not been mentioned that a mere three months ago the Council of State made a far-reaching and historic judgment condemning the army for tortures. Did it not represent for the army a great opportunity to destroy the evidence in the files which incriminated it for tortures, and couldn't the gross cruelty with which they fired cannons at places where there were civilian hostages also be a retaliation and revenge by the army against the symbol of Justice. . . .

**Parejo González:** The first thing which discredits the content of that question: No magistrate from the Council of State was killed. Therefore such a terrible charge as you level against the army . . . is answered with an obvious and evident fact: all the judges of the Council of State emerged alive from the Palace of Justice. . . . If judgments have been issued already by the Council of State, which public opinion is well aware of, what benefit would there be in making the files disappear? . . .

On the other hand, the drug-traffickers did have an interest, even though we have no reason to compare the Armed Forces and the drugrunners on the same level, but for the sake of your question, the drug-traffickers did have an interest in making the court records related to the extradition requests disappear.

**Q:** But the *New York Times* correspondent is aware that that affirmation you are making lacks reality, because the DEA has authentic files, as well as the U.S. Embassy, and I believe there are such files in the Justice Ministry itself. . . .

**Parejo González:** And you know that the drug-trafficking gentlemen know all these intricacies of the court cases? . . . How do you know that they know them? Ehh? I wonder, how do you know? . . . To you, who sound like their attorney, their intent was to eliminate a case which was before the Court. But for them, the fundamental thing was . . . to threaten, to take the lives of the judges in penalty for their integrity of character in turning down demands that the extradition treaty be declared inapplicable.

By God, let us not distort the truth. The government does not evade its own responsibility; it wants to submit it to the judgment of an independent and autonomous court. But let it not be thought that the criminal assault here was by the government, that it was the government which seized the Palace of Justice, that it was the government which went in there shooting, that it was the government which murdered the judges of the court, when there is testimony of those same judges, who say the guerrillas murdered the judges in cold blood—in cold blood. And this doesn't seem to worry you, eh? You are not grieved and disturbed by these crimes.

## Chronology of the Bogota court seizure

### Wednesday, Nov. 6

**09:40** M-19 chief Almarales gains access to Supreme Court building, using his identity card showing him to be a lawyer.

**11:40** Thirty-five guerrillas (including 8 women), in police garb, enter the basement of the building in a bus, and kill two private guards, the janitor, and a secret service agent with a burst of machinegun fire.

**11:45** The terrorists penetrate the upper floors, using

machineguns and bombs, and occupy the part of the building where the Supreme Court judges are. Police efforts to retake the building are repelled.

**12:05** Belisario Betancur calls an emergency cabinet meeting in the presidential palace.

**14:05** Two armored cars break through the main door of the building and enter the central plaza of the building. Troops begin to free secretaries, lawyers, and employees. The guerrillas enter the third and fourth floors, where they take the President of the Supreme Court and 10 other judges, plus dozens of others, hostage.

**17:12** An M-19 representative in Madrid issues a communiqué to the press saying, "We believe that the war now begins, because it is impossible to hold a dialogue in Colombia."

**21:30** The terrorists set off bombs in several parts of the building. Smoke and flames are first seen, rising to 15-20 meters at 22:00.

**23:00** The eastern part of the court building is totally gutted by fire; firemen are forced to leave. Gunfire stops.

### Thursday, Nov. 7

**01:00** Labor Minister Jorge Carrillo emerges from 13-hour cabinet meeting to announce, "The government will not negotiate" as long as rebels are holding hostages. He says he has "not the slightest doubt" the M-19 are linked to the narcos.

**02:10** Big explosions are heard as army police and DAS try to enter the building. There is a shoot-out inside.

**Early morning** Almarales personally murders Supreme Court President Alfonso Reyes Echandia and Judge Maria Ines Ramos.

**10:00** After a long ceasefire, there is another violent explosion.

**10:15** M-19 gives an ultimatum saying that it would start killing one hostage every half-hour, if the President does not send in his brother, Jaime Betancur, and Jose Manuel Arias Carrizosa.

**11:25** The military controls most of the fourth floor. It says they have found 25 guerrillas dead on the first three floors.

**14:10** The fourth, and final, assault by 500 troops and police. The soldiers knock out three machinegun nests manned by surviving terrorists, as they fight their way floor by floor, liberating people trapped in the building amidst exchanges of gunfire.

**15:30** The M-19 leadership begins to blow the brains out of the judges, one by one. In the final shootout with troops, the remaining terrorists are either killed or commit suicide.

**16:20** Army takes full possession of the Palace of Justice, ending the occupation.

**20:15** Betancur speaks to the nation on radio and television, taking personal responsibility for the entire operation to save the national institutions.