

ogist by default; a large chunk of them are even pro-nuclear, and most of them believe in justice for the Third World. Some have gone so far as to denounce the mass sterilization of Brazilian women, and say that only technological development will slow down the growth of the world population.

Evidently, apart from the lunatics and the murderous, anti-science extremists, there is great confusion. The real issue here is Christian economics, the connection between morality and advancement of the universe. When this issue is powerfully brought forward, those who act as the battering ram of the Anglo-American counterculture, those whom my Algerian friends call the "imperialist greenies," can be isolated. My job is to do just that.

EIR: Your movement also took part in a limited way in the cantonal elections. These candidates introduced some issues which were otherwise not heard at all; saving agriculture from the GATT negotiations, a European-wide infrastructure program, and development of Africa.

Cheminade: We ran, as a test, eight candidacies under the name of Nouvelle Solidarité (New Solidarity). Two candidates got between 3 and 5% of the vote, and five others between 1 and 2%. With absolutely no money and only two weeks of campaigning, this result is significant. In those neighborhoods where we talked to 400 people, we got more than 60 votes, so there is an unprecedented openness to ideas, and discussion over programmatic approaches. There is also a strong "anti-Bush" feeling, and even anti-Americanism, because of his economics and, among the better-informed, because of his military policies.

EIR: How did you come to choose the name Nouvelle Solidarité?

Cheminade: Because, as a close supporter put it, it was Poland's Solidarność, in French *Solidarité*, that collapsed the dictatorships in the East; today, what is called for from the West, is a just program for the East. Moreover, the monetarist dictatorships right here at home must go. A movement has to be built to do that, a citizens' movement. We have called it "Nouvelle Solidarité," against the Versailles *ancien régime*. . . . People take to the idea of such an anti-*nomenklatura* programmatic force, so internationalist that it must be patriotic in the real sense, in the best tradition of France, not for its green pastures and so-called pure bloodlines. The French still read history avidly, and our feature centerfolds in the newspaper *Nouvelle Solidarité* have already educated more than a few.

EIR: What are your perspectives for the future? Legislative elections are scheduled for 1993.

Cheminade: We want to run 75 candidates to be registered as a national party. We think there is great potential if we are a bit more creative than in our past efforts. A few friends feel the same.

Will Colombia tread Venezuela's path?

by Valerie Rush

Despite the protestations of the César Gaviria government that the revolutionary ferment in next-door Venezuela could never take root in Colombia, the fact is that Gaviria's embrace of Bush administration policies demanding the internationalization of Ibero-America's debt-strangled and drug-bloated economies, and power-sharing with Marxist terrorists, may leave Colombians with no option but to tread their neighbors' path.

Indeed, the devastation wrought by Gaviria's so-called *apertura* (opening), a package of free trade and privatization measures designed to re-make the Colombian economy into a playground for drug cartel investors and their international financiers, is now forcing widespread resistance to the surface.

For example, under the *apertura*, the elimination of import barriers, of preferential development credit, and of price supports has driven many food producers to the verge of bankruptcy and is forcing the abandonment of food and even coffee croplands to poppy growers with their own sources of financing. Agricultural associations like the prestigious Society of Colombian Growers (SAC), have written letters to Gaviria's Finance and Agriculture ministries demanding a halt to dumping policies disguised as "free imports."

At the same time, a forced policy of disinvestment in the country's electrical energy grid over the past decade—thanks to the imposed "adjustment programs" of the World Bank, in particular—has led to the current situation of 18 hours a week of electricity rationing throughout the country, and as much as 27 hours a week in the industrial heartland of Medellín. It is feared that rationing could go as high as 72 hours a week, if drought conditions persist, and could last a year or more.

Another Ibero-American 'tax shock'

What has triggered the most outrage and unified economic and political opposition forces across the spectrum is Gaviria's newly proposed tax reform, on the model of the infamous "tax shocks," or *impuestazos* which have been imposed in Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, and elsewhere. Although Finance Minister Rudolf Hommes claims that the purpose of the reform is to get additional resources into the hands of provincial authorities, to meet seriously under-financed

health and education requirements, there is not a Colombian who believes him.

Even the magazine *Semana*, run by the son of Liberal Party chieftain Alfonso López Michelsen, admits that the revenues to be raised through the tax reform “are not going to be distributed to society through an increase in public spending,” but rather are intended to fill the “340 billion peso hole” created by dropping import tariffs, as part of the *apertura*.

The most egregious aspect of the tax reform is the dramatic hike of the value-added tax from 12% to 18%, and its application to virtually all products, including gasoline, with only a handful of basic “market basket” items exempted. Income taxes were also raised, including on previously exempt non-profit organizations.

The opposition to the tax reform has been virtually universal. The small businessmen’s association Fenalco has announced plans to take its objections before Congress, “to correct the barbarities proposed.” The National Industrialists Association (ANDI) opposes the reform, along with at least seven other prominent industrial, business and farm associations. Both the independent Conservative and Social Conservative caucuses in Congress are against the reforms, with the Social Conservative first vice president of the Chamber of Deputies Jaime Arias Ramírez warning that “the tax reform may well generate social chaos with serious repercussions in the country, if it is approved.”

Responding to charges from many circles that his economic policies are being carried out in adherence to International Monetary Fund dictates, President Gaviria insisted that his administration “has no contract” with that organization, and that “we are committed to policies of privatization and modernization of Colombian institutions of our own free will and, therefore, will continue with this process.”

A member of his own Liberal Party, Congresswoman María Cristina Ocampo, denounced Gaviria to his face for betraying the ideals of Luis Carlos Galán, the assassinated presidential candidate whose mantle was purportedly taken up by Gaviria, and for embracing the IMF instead.

An equally strong indictment of Gaviria’s economic policies came from another Galán associate, former justice minister and newly elected Bogotá City Councilman Enrique Parejo González. Parejo wrote on March 15 in the daily *El Espectador* that Gaviria’s “ultra-reactionary neo-liberalism”—or “Manchester capitalism”—was essentially indistinguishable from communism, which seeks to destroy the state and which also demands the sacrifice of several generations “for the happiness of future generations,” a happiness which never comes.

Power-sharing with narco-terrorists

Even as the Colombian people are being subjected to the same turn of the IMF austerity tourniquet that is driving the Venezuelans to revolt, they are simultaneously being forced

to witness the obscene spectacle of their government engaging in so-called peace talks with the same drug-trafficking guerrilla gangs which have been terrorizing the population for decades with kidnappings, assassinations, and economic sabotage.

When six months of “dialogue” in Caracas between the Gaviria government and the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Group (CNGSB, an umbrella of the Communist FARC, the Maoist ELN, and a splinter faction of the EPL) yielded nothing but breathing space for the besieged narco-terrorists, a break was called. The “peace talks” were relaunched in Tlaxcala, Mexico beginning March 10, and have already set a dramatic precedent, with the Gaviria government agreeing to put its primary demand—a cease-fire—at the *bottom* of the agenda and permitting discussion of its economic, foreign, and human rights policies—the guerrillas’ demands—to occur first!

Gaviria has already defended his decision in a March 18 television interview, in which he insisted that “there can be no peace without concessions.” The reversed agenda of the “peace talks” is a particular slap in the face to the Colombian military, which has been circulating a confidential document insisting that the government “not negotiate matters which are of the exclusive domain of the government or Congress.”

The narco-guerrillas are so emboldened by Gaviria’s concession that they are calling upon representatives of Colombian industrial federations, trade unions, coffee growers, etc. to come to Tlaxcala and join in the talks. As Colombia’s economic crisis grows, the CNGSB hopes to absorb the resistance.

Gaviria’s readiness to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement, first with the M-19 terrorists, then with the cocaine traffickers of the Medellín Cartel, and now with the communist narco-guerrillas, has nauseated many Colombians, who see the talks as the prelude to yet another surrender on the part of the government.

Latest reports are that 500 people have been kidnaped by the guerrillas in the past 15 months, with 87 kidnaped in the first three months of 1992! Among the latter are two former congressmen and a 77-year-old former cabinet minister, who has since died while a hostage to the ELN.

The ongoing “peace talks” have given the CNGSB a platform to present themselves as the people’s defenders against the IMF, and as critics of Gaviria’s *apertura*, even while they admit that Colombia’s entrance into the “universal market,” and “internationalization of the economy” is necessary!

Yet no one but the Gaviria government takes them seriously, as exemplified by *El Espectador*’s March 19 editorial, which charged: “It is crazy to think that the [*apertura*] policy will be changed through an unholy pact between the government and armed subversion, as if the latter had sufficient standing to become co-legislator with the government and replace the organ of legislative power.”