

## Andean Report by Valerie Rush

### A narco-democratic 'peace'?

*New peace mediation offers are designed to sabotage Colombia's military offensive against the narco-terrorists.*

**C**orrupt elements within the Catholic Church have joined forces with Colombia's narco-terrorists in pushing a U.N.-styled "negotiated peace" which would not only reward their strategy of blackmailing the nation through mass terror, but would hand the narco-terrorists a substantial quota of political power as well.

The "narco-bishop" of Bucaramanga, Dario Castrillón, who earned a dirty name for himself in 1984 when he publicly confirmed that he was on the payroll of the Medellín Cartel's Carlos Lehder, has announced that he plans to answer a personal appeal from fugitive cartel chieftain Pablo Escobar by attempting to "mediate" the drug trafficker's negotiated surrender. Castrillón revealed that among the demands Escobar is issuing as conditions for his surrender are that he be given his own kitchen, a personal telephone line, and private quarters within the Itagui jail, where more than a score of his collaborators and bodyguards are already detained.

It was the Gaviria government's shameless acceptance of similar conditions one year ago which led to Escobar's short stay in a luxury "prison" of his own construction, from which he carried out his daily business of drug trafficking and assassinations and was served hand and foot by his "imprisoned" associates and hand-picked prison guards alike.

Far from denouncing Bishop Castrillón's "offer of service" to Escobar as a conscious effort to obstruct Colombian justice by trapping the government into another treasonous plea-bargain arrangement, the head of the

Colombian Bishops Conference, Archbishop Pedro Rubiano, endorsed Castrillón's offer as "a pastoral service." An emboldened Castrillón now claims to have Vatican backing for his mediation efforts.

At the same time, the "formerly" narco-terrorist M-19, now a legalized political party, has offered to mediate peace negotiations with a 700-man guerrilla force known as Socialist Renovation, a faction of the Cuban-linked ELN which finances its kidnappings, assassinations, and dynamite attacks on the country's energy, communications, and transportation infrastructure with money from the drug trade.

Although President César Gaviria has insisted, at least in public, that a total cease-fire and abandonment of all "criminal activity" would be the condition for such negotiations, he has nonetheless embraced the M-19's offer.

M-19 chieftain Antonio Navarro Wolf, like his Communist Party counterpart Manuel Cepeda, has issued a formal petition to the United Nations to appoint a mediator to facilitate an El Salvador-style "peace pact" between Colombia's government and a variety of rampaging terrorist forces, including the ELN.

Last year's efforts by the Gaviria government to negotiate separate paces with Escobar's cocaine cartel and with the narco-terrorist guerrilla forces proved disastrous, when the guerrillas *escalated* their terrorist tactics as a bargaining chip in the negotiations, and when Escobar used his plea-bargained arrangement with the

government to facilitate continued trafficking operations. Following those fiascos, Gaviria made the decision, under intense pressure from the military, to retake the path of repression of these criminal forces.

That this strategy has begun to pay off, with the capture of many top criminals in both camps, is triggering anxiety attacks among promoters of the "El Salvador model" both inside and outside of Colombia, who are counting on negotiated deals such as the ones Bishop Castrillón and the M-19 are promoting, to undermine the national sovereignty and armed forces of Ibero-America's republics.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that one such defender of the Salvadoran "peace" model, Colombian Defense Minister Rafael Pardo Rueda, told the daily *El Espectador* of March 14 that he has no interest in defeating subversion, but merely in convincing the narco-terrorists to negotiate. Pardo Rueda, Colombia's first civilian defense minister, who previously held the post of "peace adviser" to the presidency, declared: "It's not a question of annihilating subversion, but of weakening their criminal apparatus to the point that they are obliged to opt for the peaceful path the government has offered." Pardo has given the terrorists a generous 18 months to see the light.

This "peaceful path," as defined by the new national Constitution which was fashioned in 1991 under the tutelage of the M-19's Navarro Wolf and Pablo Escobar's front-men in the Congress, would permit Colombia's narco-terrorists to put down their weapons in exchange for a full government amnesty and government financing. Most importantly, they would get guaranteed seats in the House and Senate, and on municipal councils *without the necessity of going through elections!*