

Gnostic drug cultists make violent try for power in Panama

by Gretchen Small

On June 9, the State Department's American Republics Division gave official backing to a campaign of "civil disobedience," riots, and strikes in Panama. Promised U.S. support, the "opposition," a group of gnostic cultists and drug runners tied to Fidel Castro, has stated it will fight until the military heads quit, and the government hands over power to their new "Junta."

The coup attempt in Panama is being masterminded by an organization more evil than most ordinary citizens have the power to conceive—the Gnostic International. This Gnostic International, based on satanic beliefs that were used against Christianity already in ancient times, runs the world's narcotics trade through its centers in the Soviet satellite nations of Cuba and Bulgaria. *EIR* documented a textbook case of this in 1984, the gnostics' control of Colombia's M-19 terrorists.

Yet—in the latest treasonous act of George Shultz's State Department—U.S. embassy personnel were ordered out on Panama's street corners early in June, to cheer on Castro's gnostic allies in their efforts to overthrow an allied government and military, which has provided exemplary collaboration with the United States in the war on drugs!

The followers of Baba

The crisis was triggered on June 6, when the former Deputy Commander of Panama's Defense Forces, Col. Roberto Díaz Herrera, called reporters to his home, promising to release "proof" that Panama's military high command had engaged in corruption, murder, and fraud to keep themselves in power. Díaz Herrera issued a series of accusations, by and large repeating the slanders circulated early in 1986 by the U.S. National Security Council, then headed by Adm. John Poindexter, who was later dismissed in the Iran/Contra scandal.

Díaz Herrera charged that the Defense Forces (PDF): 1) put Nicolás Ardito Barletta in as President of Panama through fraud in 1984, and then forced him to resign in 1985; 2) ordered the assassination of [Libyan-financed arms and drug-runner] Hugo Spadafora in September 1985; and 3) allowed widespread corruption, including accepting \$12 million from the Shah of Iran. Díaz Herrera spoke of his former superior and long-time factional opponent, Gen. Manuel Antonio No-

riega, the commander of the PDF, with particular venom.

Noriega is the principal Central American foe of the very same illicit Contra drugs and arms trafficking networks, who were (and are) protected by the "parallel government" of the U.S. Iran/Contra affair—including not only Poindexter and Oliver North of the NSC, but Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, who has yet to be fired.

Díaz Herrera added one new accusation. In 1981, he charged, then-Colonel Noriega had plotted with the American CIA, U.S. Southern Command head Gen. Wallace Nutting, Panama's Christian Democratic party leaders, and Col. Alberto Purcel (now Deputy Commander of the PDF), to assassinate Gen. Omar Torrijos. Torrijos died in a mysterious plane crash in August 1981.

Díaz Herrera offered nothing concrete to back up his allegations, only claiming that he had given "proof" to Panama's Catholic Archbishop, Marcos MacGrath.

The colonel had resigned from the PDF one week before, for "health reasons." Now it became clear, he was forced out for *mental* health reasons. Díaz Herrera announced that he was acting in accord with instructions from the new "man-God," Indian guru, Satya Sai Baba, whom he called a new "divine incarnation like Jesus Christ." After seven months of studying Baba's writings, "I felt the desire to transform Panama," Diaz Herrera told the *Wall Street Journal's* reporter. He added, "I have no doubt that he, not I, is in command of everything." Baba is my "secret weapon" against Noriega, he raved.

Díaz Herrera continued to give almost non-stop interviews to domestic and foreign journalists, frequently contradicting himself in the process. In his babblings, however, Díaz Herrera revealed the existence of a broader gnostic esoteric network in the Caribbean, which he threatened is prepared to unleash "a psychic, mystic and religious war" in the region.

The network includes Cuba's Fidel Castro, and Socialist International Vice-President José Francisco Peña Gómez. Peña Gómez can corroborate my charges on the Torrijos assassination, because he, too, knows of Baba and esotericism, Díaz Herrera asserted. "He told me that he has spoken twice with the spirit of Torrijos, that the spirit of Torrijos is restless because he was assassinated," Díaz Herrera swore.

"Fidel Castro is an esoteric," he added. "I have spoken two times to Castro, and we spoke in these terms. He is a spiritual man, despite the fact that he is a Marxist-Leninist." Díaz Herrera praised Castro as a "profoundly human man, a great friend not only of Panama, but an extraordinary friend of mine."

Uprising begins

Díaz Herrera's gnostic "revelations" were used to trigger the uprising against the government for which the opposition had been preparing for over a year. On June 9, five opposition parties, led by the Christian Democrats, announced the founding of a "Patriotic Junta of National Resistance." The Junta, in turn, ordered party members to refuse to pay taxes and tolls, and take to the streets to demonstrate and block traffic. A broader coalition of "civic" and business groups joined with the new Junta to found a "Civilian Crusade to Rescue Democracy," which then called an indefinite general strike until the government, as well as Noriega and the rest of the High Command, resign.

The followers of Arnulfo Arias, the octogenarian, three-time President of Panama who lost the 1984 election to Barletta, took to the streets, proclaiming the return of Arias to power, since Díaz Herrera's charges proved that Arias was now the legitimate President. Arias, like Díaz Herrera, is an occultist, initiated into several secret societies in the 1920s. He was overthrown as President in 1940, with U.S. help, because of his proclaimed support for Adolf Hitler, later accused of protecting drug-traffickers in Panama, and campaigned for the presidency in 1984 on the grounds that it was "foretold in the stars" that he should be the one to usher in the Age of Aquarius to Panama.

By June 10, "civil disobedience" had turned into riots, trashings, and burnings. As the riots continued, a state of national emergency was declared on the night of June 11. President Eric Delvalle backed the Defense Force High Command, and denounced the opposition's actions as the result of a foreign conspiracy against the country. Speaking at a rally called to demonstrate popular support, Noriega declared, "They want deaths, but we will not give them deaths. The Armed Forces reiterate our intention to defend the constitutional order."

The drug connection

Cheering on the general strike are the opposition newspapers, *La Prensa* and *Extra*. Less than three weeks before, the same newspapers had angrily attacked U.S.-Panamanian cooperation in the war on drugs, protesting the Panamanian government's decision to lift the rights to bank secrecy for accounts used by drug-traffickers. When it was announced on May 7 that Panama had frozen 54 accounts in 18 Panamanian banks, in collaboration with the Drug Enforcement Administration's most successful anti-drug sweep ever, "Operation Pisces," *La Prensa* and *Extra* cried that the action

"will devastate the Panamanian banking center." Panama's offshore banking center was set up by Ardito Barletta, a former economics student of George Shultz at the University of Chicago, when Barletta was head of Panama's monetary board in 1970.

Guillermo Cóchez, one of the leading assemblymen of the Christian Democratic party now leading the "resistance" to the government, also protested Operation Pisces as a violation of national sovereignty. *La Prensa* blamed the military. "Matters dealing with drug-trafficking and money laundering are handled by Panama's Defense Forces solely for propaganda purposes and to serve U.S. interests," the paper editorialized on May 12. U.S. anti-drug officials later reported that Díaz Herrera had attempted to sabotage the military's cooperation with Operation Pisces.

La Prensa's opposition to lifting bank secrecy is understandable. The owner, Roberto Eisenmann, and the former director of the paper, Winston Robles, had been implicated in the money-laundering operations of the Fernández marijuana syndicate, when the leaders of the syndicate were brought to trial in 1985!

Yet, on June 10, State Department spokesman Phyllis Oakley announced that the Department "support[s] the efforts of Panamanians to get all the facts out in a manner that is fair to all. Panamanians can resolve this situation only on the basis of the truth." Challenged by *EIR's* Washington correspondent, Nicholas Benton, on June 11, that the Department's position "gives credibility to Díaz Herrera, who is a gnostic and an admirer of Fidel Castro," Oakley reiterated that "the U.S. supports all efforts to get out all the facts in an atmosphere of democracy."

Panamanian sources report, that support included ordering U.S. embassy personnel out on the streets to cheer the demonstrators on.

U.S. military men have not been so quick to join the State Department in supporting a man they have long identified as an opponent of the United States. General Nutting, named by Díaz Herrera as part of the plot, called the charges "ridiculous," in an interview with the *Washington Times* June 10. "Col. Díaz Herrera is doing this for his own personal reasons. It sounds to me as though he's making a power play internally to take power from Noriega," Nutting stated.

The State Department's Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics Affairs, Anne Wroblewski, chose to make public her office's hopes for continued cooperation with the existing government of Panama. Wroblewski released a statement on June 10 announcing that the U.S. and Panamanian governments have agreed on strengthening the cooperation which led to the successes of the first Operation Pisces.

As the crazed Díaz Herrera told the *Washington Post* on June 11, he is counting on the CIA and the Pentagon to provide the "proof" of his wild charges. "Nobody in Panama wants to be a kamikaze hero if the U.S. is concealing information and protecting Noriega," he said.