

The Catholic Church warns 'total war' imminent in Colombia

by Valerie Rush

In mid-July, Colombia's Catholic bishops met to consider the fact that, in their own words, a full 80% of the national territory was now penetrated by narco-terrorists, and one step away from "total war." As one of the few remaining institutions in the country which has retained any moral authority to pronounce on the matter, the Colombian Episcopal Conference issued a concluding document, an "alarum" to the Colombian citizenry, which denounced the degraded political leadership in the country for "turning public service into electoral recompense," and for allowing "the banners of social change to be left in the hands of subversion."

"The institution of Cain has taken hold of so many that they already make up an organized and salaried criminal class. The worst of our situation is having become anesthetized to the situation, which has been left to the responsibility of the authorities, and that society—perplexed, stunned, and intimidated—does not see its duty to defend itself as a legitimate strategy of defense," warned the bishops.

The Catholic Church in Colombia is responding to President Virgilio Barco's increasing capitulation to political forces—both at home and abroad—which want to see drugs and subversion take over in the region, forces which have made major inroads against the country's judicial system, are demanding reforms of the 1886 Colombian constitution which threaten to undermine the power of the presidency, are on the verge of seizing control of the national economy, and are sponsoring reform of the government-Vatican "Concordat" which provides the moral underpinnings for this very Catholic nation.

Should Colombia, at the gateway between South and Central America, fall to these combined assaults, the bloody chaos that is Central America today will rapidly spread southward—with Moscow and its narco-terrorist allies ready to reap the fruits.

Under pressure from the drug mafia's political godfather,

former Liberal President Alfonso López Michelsen, and from the degenerate five-man *lopista* directorate of the ruling Liberal Party, a paralyzed President Barco has permitted the dismantling of the Colombian justice system by the drug-traffickers and their "narco-terrorist" army:

- In February of 1987, the terrorized Supreme Court overturned an emergency decree placing trial of drug-traffickers under military jurisdiction.

- On June 25, 1987, the Supreme Court overturned the 1979 U.S.-Colombian extradition treaty, which had been identified by the country's number-one anti-drug specialist, Col. Jaime Ramírez Gómez, just before his assassination by the mafia, as the litmus test of the nation's commitment to fighting drugs.

- On July 23, 1987, the Justice Ministry revoked outstanding arrest warrants against the fugitive chieftains of the infamous Medellín Cartel of drug traffickers—warrants premised on U.S. extradition petitions—giving them *carte blanche* to return to their "business activities" unimpeded.

- Several days later, a corrupt judge in the city of Cali absolved of drug-trafficking charges, and freed from jail, Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, a leading executive of the Medellín Cartel, who has been identified by the U.S. authorities as head of the world's largest drug-trafficking network.

A special agent of the Colombian Attorney General's office, Fernando Navas Talero, responded to Rodríguez's release with the warning that natural law had been abandoned, and that the legal system had instead been converted into "a discipline which admits all kinds of accommodating interpretations . . . according to the criteria of the judge."

- Secretary to the presidency Germán Montoya has been publicly accused by the leadership of the opposition Conservative Party not only of rampant corruption through his influential office, but of business links to narco Rodríguez Orejuela. Congressional investigations are being called for.

Descent into colonialism

Under pressure from the international creditor banks—which make much of their profits from the international drug trade—and from such bankers' agents in his cabinet as Interior Minister Gaviria, President Barco has also agreed to turn the nation's natural and productive wealth into a vast looting preserve for foreign investors.

- On July 10, the Barco government issued decree 1265, which eliminated all restrictions on foreign investment, and now permits up to 100% participation in any and all sectors of the economy. The decree included permission for foreign investors to remit as much as 25% of their profits abroad.

According to Planning Minister María Mercedes Cuéllar, the government would concentrate its investment in the "social sector," leaving it to private interests to develop industry and such activities as petroleum, gold, and coal exploitation. The only private interests with sufficient funds for such investments are foreign or the drug mafia.

- On July 17, ex-President López Michelsen told a high-level audience, including cabinet ministers and ex-Presidents, that "such Pharaonic projects as a new inter-oceanic canal" were unnecessary, too costly, and impractical, and that government funds would be better spent fighting "absolute poverty," precisely the "basic needs" viewpoint of the IMF/World Bank.

- On July 19, all the Colombian press reported on creditor bank approval of a jumbo loan of slightly more than \$1 billion. The conditions for that loan include *weekly* monitoring of the Colombian economy by the IMF, supremacy of New York and London law over Colombian in any legal disputes regarding the loan, and agreement to promote debt-for-equity exchanges, with special emphasis on mining and financial sectors. Repayment arrangements on Colombia's now \$16 billion foreign debt comprise 47% of annual export earnings.

The Church has not been silent on the debt crisis either. The opening presentation of Colombian Monsignor Darío Castrillón at the first general assembly of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), in Bogotá, continued the attack on the moral decadence of today's political leadership. Castrillón pledged that the Church would remain "neither angels nor cherubim" while society "self-destructs." He insisted that "there are persons in Colombia who want to put wings on the bishops so that, like little angels, they will fly over this scene and not see the assassinations, the dead people in the garbage dumps, the exploitation of men and women who work for 60 years and afterward remain in the same misery as the day they began to work, and a little more. . . ."

"That would be very pretty, but we leave that to other religious groups, as the Romans did with the pagans. . . . We are very different. We want transformation and we are illuminating it, and that illumination necessarily has political repercussions, because it reveals social problems."

With the continental debt crisis being a major focus of the Church's concern, the monsignor announced the convocation of a special CELAM-sponsored meeting to consider the "politics of usury." He said that solutions proposed at the meeting would be neither "populist fantasies" nor suffer from "the coldness of the International Monetary Fund, which is capable of asphyxiating our people and subjecting them to a regimen of misery under the pretext of providing a solution that enables payment to the creditors. . . ."

The 'Cain' of the Americas

The warning of the Colombian Episcopal Conference that the "institution of Cain" was taking hold in the country is not without special significance for Colombians. During the period of the Malvinas War between Argentina and England, Colombia was the only country on the continent to oppose Argentina's sovereign claim to the contested territory, earning it the epithet of "Cain" from its brother nations.

Today, when countries throughout Ibero-America are up against the twin evils of economic and narco-terrorist warfare, the Barco government's submission to the enemy has drawn an unprecedented warning from the country's moral leaders. The Colombian bishops' document quotes Pope Paul VI, from his August 1968 trip to Colombia, where he declared: "Don't forget that certain major crises in history would have gone in other directions, if the necessary reforms would have—with brave sacrifice—prevented the explosive revolutions of desperation."

The only temporal forces in the country which have taken up Monsignor Castrillón's challenge to "give responses and execute solutions" have been those around former labor minister and veteran trade unionist Jorge Carrillo Rojas, currently the president of the Unified Workers Confederation (CUT) of Colombia. The CUT was formed in 1986, by Carrillo, to provide an alternative to the drug mafia-infested union federations that dominated the country's organized labor.

The CUT's program, formulated by Carrillo and designed to serve as an intervention into the Colombian political process, not only advocates a Peruvian-style approach to the debt problem—that is, imposing a 10% limit on allocation of export revenue to pay the debt—but also proposes the adoption of a "great projects" approach to solving the problem of economic and social collapse. In particular, Carrillo is associated in Colombia with his proposal for constructing a second inter-oceanic canal, using PNEs (peaceful nuclear explosions), through the undeveloped department of Choco, just below Panama.

It is not accidental that both of these issues—the debt and the canal—are currently at the center of a raging polemic among Colombian political circles, who are fighting over whether the country is to become a cocaine plantation under IMF auspices, or a sovereign republic. The decision of the Church leadership in Colombia to employ its moral force to intervene in this battle could well tip the balance.

Bishops demand national unity

In the second week of July, the Colombian Bishops Conference issued a pastoral document on the narco-terrorist offensive threatening that country. Below are excerpts.

Climate of violence

We are living with such calamity, that one further step would be total war. The institution of Cain has seized hold of so many, that they have already become an organized and salaried criminal class. The most serious aspect of our situation is our having become anesthetized to a phenomenon that has been handed over to the responsibility of the authorities, and before which society—perplexed, stunned, and intimidated—does not see its defensive duty as a legitimate strategy of defense.

We see a climate of violence. . . subversion is daily arming itself and sowing insecurity across the land; the drug traffickers impose their power through bloodshed and money. . . . If we reflect well, we are all responsible for this unhappy situation; some as actors, others by omission, cowardice, or inertia.

Drug traffic

It is one of the worst calamities in human history. . . . With reason the Pontiff exclaimed in Cartagena: "Today . . . the lust for money has seized the hearts of many persons and turned them, through the drug trade, into traffickers in the freedom of their brothers." "Death trade" it has been called at times, and in truth it is an insane business that includes all manner of crime. . . .

As forces of evil seek to complement each other, so those up in arms have allied themselves with the drug traffickers, for mutual benefit. The one contributes the dirty money of the drug trade to provide weapons to the villains, and these lend their strategic support to protect the criminals of the drug trade.

The government

It is the serious and unavoidable duty of every official, both individually according to his position, and all together and in solidarity, to offer social guarantees to the citizenry. As a single authority lacks sufficiently broad power to be in

all places and all situations, it should convoke the citizenry, without distinction or condition, to total solidarity, especially when the situation becomes critical, and is threatening public power.

Therefore, today more than ever, all branches of public power must rescue the principle of authority, act in harmony and total convergence, such that they join their energies and capacity to respond to the call for salvation of the nation. The lack of coordination, even contradiction, that we have seen [among powers] must not be repeated, since it weakens the power required for responding to the clamorous, almost desperate call of public welfare. The executive power, without vacillation or delay, must call on all the forces and institutions of peace and order . . . to lead Colombia out of the dilemma posed by the violent ones and the criminals. . . .

The political parties

The traditional parties have written brilliant and meritorious pages on national history. But as early as 1981, we were already raising this voice of alarm: "In general terms, the Colombian people are severely disillusioned by their rulers, the national institutions and the political class. . . . Public service turned into electoral recompense is the maximum degradation of power."

. . . This is the moment to repeat to Colombian politicians the severe admonition of Paul VI to Colombia's leaders: "Don't forget that certain major crises in history would have taken other directions, if the necessary reforms had—by brave sacrifice—prevented the explosive revolutions of desperation." (Aug. 23, 1968). . . .

Economic powers

The economic vacuum that annually removes more than \$2 billion, to accumulate in banks of powerful foreigners, is dramatically expanding the absolute poverty of our people; leaving a population without land and without jobs, delivered without hope to the informal economy. . . .

National convocation

Today, when the ferocious alternatives of terrorist violence, the drug trade, and totalitarian and Marxist despotism conspire to humble Colombia, we must have an alliance, a pact, a convergence, a union of all healthy and constructive minds and wills to save the nation, rescue the values and rights of the human individual, make of Colombia a real home for all, reorganize the economy to function for all . . . with a state, government, and politicians at the service of society.

The country can no longer tolerate the injustice of having a legitimate government, and at the same time vast territories ruled by the guerrillas; having a double army, one that defends the institutions and one that seeks to overturn them; a double justice, one that administers the law, and then a death penalty imposed by the guerrillas and the drug trade.