

'Dope, Inc.' wins in first round of Colombian Presidential elections

by Javier Almario and Dennis Small

Horacio Serpa Uribe, the official candidate of narco-President Ernesto Samper Pizano, won the first round of the May 31 Presidential elections in Colombia, by a narrow margin of 27,000 votes against his closest challenger, Andrés Pastrana Arango. Each obtained just over 34% of the 11 million votes cast. The result is that the Liberal Party's Serpa and the Conservative Party's Pastrana will be rival contenders in a second election round, which will take place on June 21. The winner will be the next President of Colombia—if there is still a nation to be called Colombia by then.

Serpa's relatively strong showing—he was expected to run 10 points behind Pastrana—shows that the “narco-democracy” which has been imposed in Colombia is now on course to consolidate its power, despite all the scandals the Samper narco-government has had to face.

Should Serpa actually take the Presidency, this will pose a serious security threat to the entire continent, and to the United States. Serpa is known as “Comandante Serpa” for his long-standing intimacy with the narco-terrorist National Liberation Army (ELN). Serpa's proposed “peace” program would involve major concessions to both the ELN and to the equally bloodthirsty Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), giving give these narco-terrorist irregular armies control over vast swathes of Colombian territory, which would lead to shattering the nation into various mini-drug-states run by Dope, Inc. warlords—precisely the fate that London's policy architects have in mind for Colombia and most Third World nations. On May 23, Serpa told a campaign rally that, if elected, his administration would promote a “peace process” with the narco-terrorists which would include:

- undertake negotiations without any conditions, not even a cease-fire;
- implement any evacuations necessary to facilitate the negotiations—i.e., remove the military from national territory to be ruled by the FARC/ELN;
- allow regional “dialogue”—i.e., allow local governments to negotiate separate terms of surrender;
- call on the UN to mediate the negotiations—which would be the death knell of national sovereignty;
- “modernize” the Armed Forces—i.e., shrink them by

as much as two-thirds, and permit terrorists to enlist;

- have representatives of the Armed Forces sit at the negotiating table with narco-terrorists as co-equals—which the military has so far emphatically refused to do; and
- convoke a Constituent Assembly to ratify the resulting agreements, another central FARC/ELN demand.

But Serpa's runner-up, Andrés Pastrana—although not owned outright by the drug mob, and therefore preferred by Washington—also ran on the same program of capitulation and “negotiation,” which was perfectly acceptable to the narco-terrorists and to their London sponsors. Pastrana, too, is for the demilitarization of the areas demanded by the FARC and ELN; he, too, is for paring down the Colombian military; and throughout the campaign, he studiously avoided attacking Serpa as a wholly-owned asset of the narco-terrorist apparatus.

Pastrana, who has a well-deserved reputation as a political wimp, shares part of the responsibility for Serpa's victory: He and his backers, unfortunately, have a history of pulling their punches. In his 1994 campaign against Ernesto Samper, he released audio tapes containing hard evidence that Samper had gotten millions of dollars from the drug cartels . . . two days *after* Samper had won the elections! Once he had lost the elections, Pastrana made the revelations, and then fled the country for fear of reprisals. He only returned to Colombia three years later.

There is strong opposition to Serpa among anti-drug circles in Washington. At one point, media were reporting that U.S. White House drug policy adviser Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) had communicated to some political leaders in Colombia that a Serpa Presidency would be “unacceptable.” More recently, however, some quarters close to Henry Kissinger put out the line that there is “no credible evidence” of Serpa's links to the drug trade; and the *Wall Street Journal* and other London outlets have given Serpa their stamp of approval as a candidate who is “credible and honest.”

The Bedoya factor

But 30% of voters opposed both of those candidates, and cast their votes instead for the two independents: Noemí Sanín, a Conservative Party politician who ran as an independent, and Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), the one candidate who

campaign on a program to drive the drug mob out of Colombia.

The character of these campaigns differed sharply. Sanín, who came in third, is a fervent Anglophile and a former ambassador to London, and her campaign was built up by such dope-linked powerbrokers of the Colombian establishment as former President Alfonso López Michelsen, to keep the protest vote against the two traditional parties, within the system. She received 2.8 million votes, or 27%, which is unprecedented for an independent candidate. Although Sanín has expressed no preference for either Serpa or Pastrana in the second round, her political godfather, López Michelsen, has already announced he will support Serpa.

Bedoya received only 192,000 votes—about 2% of the total. But, despite the low totals, Bedoya's voice was decisive and caused panic in London. From the moment he entered the political arena, the election debate was centered around Bedoya's battle with Serpa, which led Bedoya to rapidly gain points in the voter polls, until they showed he might win more than 20%. At this point, in December 1997, Serpa decided to suspend any debate with Bedoya, and focussed his efforts instead on attacking Pastrana, whom he had always defined as his most likely rival.

Beginning in January, López Michelsen and other establishment figures mapped out what became popularly known as "the third option" strategy, which consisted of uniting all the "minor" candidates, those who were believed to command less than 5% of the vote, and to forge a "third" candidate as a "viable" option. The intent, of course, was to drive Bedoya out of the top three places in the first round vote. This strategy began with the withdrawals of candidates Alfonso Valdivieso (former prosecutor general, who threw his support to Pastrana), and Carlos Lleras (former ambassador to Washington), and by the decision of former Bogotá Mayor (and clown) Antanas Mockus, to abandon his Presidential bid and accept the vice-presidential slot on the Sanín ticket.

At the same time, the Bedoya campaign was hard-hit by terrorism: Three of Bedoya's campaign offices were dynamited; one of its leaders, former Defense Minister Gen. Fernando Landazábal, was assassinated in broad daylight three weeks before the vote; one campaign worker was injured, losing an eye. The Bedoya campaign could not even venture into many parts of the country, because of the violent opposition of the FARC/ELN narco-terrorists. These terrorist attacks frightened Colombians, provoking some citizens to voice fears that a vote for Bedoya would make them a possible military target of the FARC or ELN.

Also contributing to the anti-military environment with which Bedoya had to contend, was an orchestrated campaign of provocative statements of one-worldist human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as George Soros's Human Rights Watch, which received the full backing of the *Washington Post* and the U.S. State Department—despite the fact that other elements of the Clinton administration are

known to favor a more cooperative approach to Colombia's beleaguered military (see below). As a result, less than two weeks before the elections, the human rights lobby and the State Department forced through the formal dismantling of Colombia's 20th Brigade, the Army's military intelligence unit, for alleged human rights violations. The message was unmistakable: The narco-terrorists have the run of the country, and any "hard-line" response, either political or military, will be undercut and destroyed.

Despite all of this, Bedoya received almost 200,000 votes—votes from individuals who refused to be intimidated, who refused to be manipulated by the media, who resisted the brainwashing to which Colombians are usually subjected, i.e., that one should not vote for the best candidate, but rather for the one most likely to win. After the election, Bedoya said, "We have 200,000 leaders. That is an army. Bolívar, with a significantly smaller one, confronted a storehouse of crime and violence. I believe that we have 200,000 heroes who understand that it is necessary to fight the evils in Colombia."

Furthermore, Bedoya announced that "Fuerza Colombia," the movement founded around his campaign, will not disband, because its aim is not just to win an election, but to save the nation of Colombia. "Fuerza Colombia" has already produced the first issue of a newspaper which the movement intends to publish regularly. In it, were two articles signed by Maximiliano Londoño, well known as the head of the LaRouche movement in Colombia.

Economic crisis looming

Perhaps most serious of all is that Colombia is on the brink of an economic catastrophe similar to that which is causing the disintegration of Indonesia (which does not suffer the twin problems of drug trafficking and terrorism which plagues Colombia). Samper has bled the national budget with buying up political power as a means of keeping the narco-Liberal machinery in power, and has created a fiscal deficit of more than 5%, which has nothing to do with any sort of state investment in economic infrastructure.

The Colombian peso has been devalued by more than 9% in the course of the year. The Central Bank has spent more than \$400 million trying to defend the peso, and has also raised interest rates from 30% to 52%, causing interest rates on every kind of credit in the country to soar. Samper's economic team is currently discussing the possibility of raising interest rates to 150%, as Russia has just done (to no avail).

These high interest rates threaten to create an unprecedented social crisis, which could leave millions of Colombians without housing and jobs. Many are putting up their homes for sale to pay these usurious rates, only to discover that their homes are valued at less than what they owe, threatening them with being both homeless and still in debt.

Only with a full break with the drug economy can Colombia join other nations in beginning to address these issues.