

LATIN AMERICA

Colombian dope pushers drive toward legalization

by Cynthia Rush

Information received by *EIR* this week confirms that the terrorist M-19's takeover of the Dominican embassy in Bogota, and the crisis it has generated in the surrounding region, has brought Colombia very close to legalizing its vast marijuana trade.

For all his weaknesses as a national leader in Colombia, President Turbay Ayala has steadfastly refused to legalize marijuana consumption or production—as demanded by Conservative Party leader Alvaro Gomez Hurtado and numerous other prominent figures. As documented in the Special Report just published by *EIR* (“Iran Comes to Latin America: The Bogota Embassy Takeover”), Gomez is deeply implicated in orchestrating the embassy takeover and the corresponding scenario to “Iranize” Colombia, the Caribbean and Mexico. In the case of Colombia, his aim is either to pull a coup against Turbay or so politically weaken the nominally “democratic” regime that Turbay will have no option but to legalize.

Since the market for an increased marijuana flow is the United States—primarily the youth of the United States—these plans should be of grave concern to all Americans.

A measure of the success that Gomez Hurtado's allies have had to date was the announcement made by Defense Minister Gen. Camacho Leyva within days of the Feb. 27 embassy takeover. Camacho said that 3,500 troops now stationed in the marijuana-growing region of the Guajira Peninsula would be removed from the region, supposedly to be replaced with special units of the national police. The 3,500 troops had been sent into the Guajira as part of the government's national antidrug effort.

The significance of the decision to withdraw troops cannot be underestimated. In mid 1979, sources close to the Turbay administration told *EIR* of the Colombian President's estimation that unless he received a strong commitment of aid from the United States—a commitment which was not forthcoming—he could not long resist the “pot lobby's” demands to legalize.

The decision has been met with euphoria by pot lobby leader Ernesto Samper Pizano of the prestigious banking association ANIF—which indicates that the government

may have reached the point Turbay warned about. When asked to comment on the decision, Samper told the press that it meant “defacto legalization” for the country.

Press hype builds

Complementing the troop withdrawal, over the past week and a half the Colombian press has published a major series of articles promoting marijuana legalization. Exemplary is that published March 16 by a columnist for the conservative magazine *Guion*, Enrique Caballero, which not only calls for legalization but offers elaborate detail on how a scenario for Iran-style social upheaval would emerge in Colombia.

Caballero, a member of one of Colombia's most prominent oligarchic clans, chastises Turbay for repressing the drug trade just to please the United States or to save its “hippie” drug-consuming youth. More significantly, he warns the government that if it *doesn't* legalize, it could face uprisings of enraged peasants whose “prosperous” marijuana cultivation has been “repressed” by the armed forces' antidrug units. Making an analogy to the 18th century “Comunero Revolt” when Colombian peasants rose up to protest Spain's monopoly of tobacco and other products, Caballero warns that “then, as now... these events occurred in a pre-revolutionary social climate.”

Colombian Anti-Drug Coalition responds

In light of this offensive, Colombia's Anti-Drug Coalition announced that it will launch a major organizing and educational campaign to halt the legalization drive. Coalition president Fausto Charris, well known for his efforts to unite both the American and Colombian populations in the battle against drugs, explained that the Coalition will organize at schools and universities as well as publish a special pamphlet on what legalization would mean for the country. “We will seek the collaboration of the National Anti-Drug Coalition in the United States to make every Colombian and American aware of what is at stake here,” Charris stated recently.

The Colombian Anti-Drug Coalition has played a crucial role in exposing the ties of ANIF president Samper Pizano to domestic financial entities suspected of laundering drug monies, as well as to the U.S. “pot lobby,” represented by the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). Samper's call for legalization, based on the argument that de facto marijuana legalization already exists in the United States, has also received major buildup this week in such “respected” daily papers as Bogota's daily *El Tiempo* as well as in the leftist magazine *Alternativa*. Samper's book on why marijuana should be legalized will be published shortly in Colombia.