

Andean Report by Javier Almarino

Cocaine and paying the debt

Colombia's war on drugs is making Wall Street nervous as the flow of narcodollars is threatened.

Colombian government peace negotiations with the M-19, ELP, and ADO guerrilla bands collapsed at the end of May when President Betancur refused to lift the state of siege as a condition for continued dialogue.

The state of siege, which Betancur imposed on the country May 1 after the mafia assassination of his Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, provided the President with emergency powers vital for putting the country's powerful and well-entrenched drug mafia to a most undignified rout. In just one month, hundreds of traffickers have been captured, airplanes grounded, properties confiscated, and illegal airstrips bombed under the new powers, while several dozen cocaine refining labs, some as large as small cities, have been dismantled and military justice imposed on all drug-related trials.

Colombia's borders have been fortified by presidential orders to shoot down any unauthorized overflights, and anti-drug pacts have been signed with most of Colombia's neighbors, the most recent being a trilateral agreement between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru to jointly pursue drug traffickers in the region.

President Betancur, along with his colleagues in the rest of Ibero-America, is well aware that the relationship between the drug trade and the continent's terrorist movements of both the left and right demands an unrelenting and unified war against the twin evils.

But even this is not enough, for the devastation of Ibero-America's economies under the tyranny of the

International Monetary Fund has proven an open invitation to Dope, Inc. to secure a stranglehold on the continent. The financial interests behind the IMF see the drug trade as a guaranteed source of dollars for debt repayment, and are more than willing to go to bat for their unsavory allies—in the interest of “monetary stability,” of course.

The point was made clearly in a *Wall Street Journal* column May 24 which warned that Betancur's anti-drug war could lead to economic problems: “Short-term effects of the crack-down are being felt. The black-market price of the U.S. dollar has been rising as fewer drug-connected dollars enter the country and drug traffickers flee the country with their ill-gotten dollars. Indeed, some Colombians are beginning to fear that if the drug trade were really cut off, their country could suffer economically.”

The *Journal* article went on to praise fugitive drug trafficker and murderer Pablo Escobar Gaviria for his philanthropic gestures in seeking to “eradicate poverty” in his beloved Colombia. The *Wall Street Journal* has a history of speaking out in defense of the drug underworld, as recent columns and editorials advocating the legalization of Peru's illegal economy can testify.

Such threats of economic warfare from Dope, Inc.'s allies in the financial world are not new. As *EIR* has reported, the Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* last November did not hesitate to publish threats of a credit cutoff against Colombia if Betancur per-

sisted in his “moralizing” campaign against drugs.

Dope, Inc. has its allies on the inside as well. Lara Bonilla's bullet-riddled corpse was scarcely cold when his “colleague,” Attorney General Carlos Jiménez Gómez, began working to emasculate Betancur and Lara's anti-drug war. Jiménez has been a constant opponent of the Colombia-U.S. Extradition Treaty which Lara Bonilla gave his life to defend.

After the President declared the state of siege, Jiménez publicly charged that military jurisdiction over drug cases was unconstitutional. And on May 29, Jiménez issued a legal challenge to Articles 1 through 4 of Emergency Decree 1060 which, among other things, automatically extends prison sentences for convicted drug felons.

On the initiative of yet another drug lobbyist inside the Colombia government, a ministerial vote to approve the mass application of the herbicide paraquat against Colombia's marijuana crops was narrowly defeated. Health Minister Arias Ramírez took his arguments against paraquat straight from the U.S.-based drug lobby, NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws). Arias Ramírez's ministry has been caught harboring numerous low-level employees now facing various drug-related criminal charges as a result of Lara Bonilla's ruthless intra-government investigations.

The defeat of the paraquat initiative, a personal commitment of the murdered justice minister, does not necessarily mean a victory for the drug mafia, however. Other effective herbicides, such as 2,4-D and glyphosate, are under consideration and, according to U.S. experts, are potentially as effective as paraquat in a mass eradication program.