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## Colombia

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# Anti-drug daily is 'voice of freedom'

by José Restrepo

On Oct. 11, the Bogotá office of this news service received a statement by the directors of *El Espectador*, Colombia's leading anti-drug newspaper, with the request that their communiqué be printed in *EIR* (see *Documentation*). *El Espectador* identified itself in its statement as "a free newspaper" with a commitment to the preservation of "Colombia's democratic system," and demanded full government protection of its operations from the cocaine mafias. *El Espectador*, in fact, represents a critical front of the Colombian government's declared war against the drug cartels, and its survival or extermination could well determine Colombia's future as a sovereign nation.

On Dec. 17, 1986, *El Espectador* editor Guillermo Cano was murdered by mafia assassins. Cano had been outspoken in his demands for a full-scale war against the drug mafias, and had begun naming the names of mafia front-men for investigation. *El Espectador* escalated its anti-drug polemics in response. On Sept. 2, 1989 the central Bogotá offices of *El Espectador* were severely damaged by a car-bomb that wounded nearly 80 people. The newspaper continued to publish. In late October, two of *El Espectador's* employees in mafia-riddled Medellín were slain, and 11 others threatened with death unless the newspaper permanently shut its doors in that city. It continues to publish, although home delivery has been suspended in Medellín and street vendors are selling the newspaper on the sly, if at all.

On Oct. 16, the offices of the regional daily *Vanguardia Liberal*, located in the Colombian city of Bucaramanga, were destroyed by a powerful car-bomb. Four people were killed and seven wounded in the Bucaramanga attack on the government-linked daily. The Bucaramanga bombing is seen as the mafia's latest effort to muzzle the remaining media outlets in Colombia, which continue to serve as the country's voice of conscience. Numerous other newspapers, including the

major Conservative Party dailies *La Prensa* and *El Colombiano*, are burying news of the government's military offensive against the cartels while editorializing incessantly for "dialogue" with the criminals who are slaughtering their country's finest.

In an Oct. 16 column, director Fernando Cano wrote, "Never have we been so free as now, with *El Espectador* under siege from the drug traffickers. . . . Daily they insult us and demand that we shut up. They murder us en masse, as directors, as journalists, as workers. . . . In the depths of this solitude, we are defending the others, all the others, all Colombians. A single word could bring bombs or assassinations. Is it not in such total responsibility, in such total solitude, that our freedom is to be found?"

Under constant threat of extinction and faced with a growing "fifth column" inside Colombia's political elite arguing for surrender to the drug mob, *El Espectador* has not hesitated to point the finger at the traitors within. On Oct. 14, an *El Espectador* columnist denounced Conservative Party presidential candidate Alvaro Leyva Durán and "respected" politician Joaquín Vallejo Arbeláez as "emissaries of the drug traffickers," for their advocacy of a government-mafia dialogue.

And on Oct. 17, the newspaper editorialized: "Some communications media fancy themselves the official agents of the most degraded circles of organized crime. . . . They are giving the public the mistaken notion that the country is losing the war, obscuring the blows the enemy is taking in its hiding places [while] reducing everything to the fact that the big drug-trafficking chieftains have not fallen into justice's hands. . . . They are putting undue pressure on public opinion, in contradiction to the national interest, giving it a defeatist sense. This . . . constitutes a genuine act of treason."

### Seeking international support

*El Espectador's* directors have been touring internationally in search of support for their newspaper. Publisher Luis Cano was in Mexico Oct. 10, attended a meeting of the Inter-American Press Association, which formally expressed its support for *El Espectador*. He declared that he had been traveling for the previous 10 days in search of at least \$2.5 million in loans to rebuild the newspaper's offices. One million dollars have been pledged by publishers worldwide, who have also published editorials on the Colombian newspaper's behalf. On Oct. 16, the U.S. government sent Ambassador Thomas McNamara to tour the newspaper's damaged Bogotá office, along with U.S. Information Service director Bruce Gelb. No financial assistance was offered, however. Cano warned, "If we do not manage to rebuild the newspaper in the next 30 or 60 days, we cannot go on."

Domestically, *El Espectador* has won an important ally in its battle against the proponents of a government-mafia dialogue. In statements to the Italian magazine *30 Giorni*,

Colombian Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo revealed that he had been receiving constant death threats from the drug traffickers, but that he stood firmly opposed to any dialogue with criminals. This stands in sharp contrast to the report, carried by the *Washington Times* of Oct. 20, that U. S. administration sources are now saying Washington would "accept Colombian proposals for plea bargaining in specific cases or partial amnesties if these furthered the goal of stopping the shipment of drugs to the United States." One can only wonder if Kissinger Associates, Inc., reportedly considered for hire by the Colombian drug mob as its public relations and consulting firm, is already on the job.

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## Documentation

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### El Espectador demands government protection

*El Espectador on Oct. 10 requested an audience with acting President Dr. Carlos Lemos Simmonds, to give him the following declaration:*

*El Espectador* has on several occasions, and despite the tremendous blows it has received—the last being the assassination in Medellín of its administrator Martha Luz López and its circulation manager Miguel Soler—reiterated its decision to continue in defense of the Colombian democratic system.

Such determination, however, does not rely exclusively on the directors or employees of a newspaper, but on the government's fulfillment of its constitutional obligation to "protect the lives, honor, and goods of all persons resident in Colombia, and to assure the fulfillment of the state's social duties," among them the guarantee of freedom of the press, the right and exercise of free enterprise.

There exists the public threat to prevent the circulation of *El Espectador* in Antioquia. That threat should not be seen as solely against this company, but against freedom of the press in the country. The war declared against the drug trade is not merely to silence this daily, but against the Colombian state, upon which depends the freedom of the press and all other freedoms.

*El Espectador* demands due protection for its company and its employees, and declares that it will only be able to survive as a free newspaper if the government meets its obligation to defend our lives and our goods.

Juan Guillermo Cano, director

Alfonso Cano Isaza, general manager

Fernando Cano B., director

## Kremlin sponsors 'New Age' kookery

by Mark Burdman

On Oct. 11, the Soviet Foreign Ministry sponsored a most unusual press conference. With Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov standing by his side, Soviet mystic and faith healer Anatoly Kashpirovsky boasted to journalists about the success of his activities. "They idolize me," he said of the Soviet people. "I can reverse what was thought irreversible. I tap the inner resources of the body."

The next day, Radio Moscow's English-language broadcast lauded Kashpirovsky's "psycho-therapeutic" techniques, saying that Kashpirovsky's show on Soviet television was watched by 200 million viewers, and that he had "cured many of them." He would now be turning his bio-energies to curing AIDS, said Radio Moscow.

On Oct. 12, the London *Daily Telegraph's* Moscow correspondent commented that Kashpirovsky has become a "Soviet superstar, the talk of the land. When his television show is on, the streets are deserted. . . . As faith healer, hypnotist, national comforter and healer of the sick, he has millions hanging on his words."

Kashpirovsky is not the only popular occult game in town. Hundreds of thousands of Soviets, every morning, watch "healing energy" personality Alan Chumak on television. He has been called a "Good Samaritan version of the czarist mystic Rasputin." Chumak claims miracle cures for the multiple crises now facing the U.S.S.R. For example, on the devastating food shortage, he asserts: "Vast amounts of our farm produce just rots before it can get to the stores. Now we're doing an experiment to see if I can radiate the energy that will be a preservative and help store fruits and vegetables."

The Soviet government daily *Izvestia* recently reported that "practically every city now has its popular extrasensory healer. . . . *Glasnost*, miserable medical care, and a certain naive belief in extrasensory powers have led to their remarkable success in the Soviet Union."

The sudden obsession, both in the official media and in the population at large, with phenomena ranging from UFOs to the Abominable Snowman ("Yeti"), has begun to receive attention in the West. Britain's *Sunday Correspondent* re-