

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Ad hoc delegation for observation of presidential elections in Columbia**

**Report**

**on the delegation visit to**

**COLUMBIA**

**26 May 2002**

## **Domestic situation:**

In the 1998 Colombian presidential elections, the Conservative candidate Andrés Pastrana's victory over the liberal Horacio Serpa was partly due to the fact that a few days before the elections he showed himself to be reunited with the historic leader of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia), Manuel Marulanda, known as 'Tirofijo', thus demonstrating to the Colombian people that the Conservatives proposed to bring back peace to Columbia through negotiation. During their election campaign drug trafficking was the main focus of debate.

The circumstances surrounding the recent elections have been completely different. Firstly, drug trafficking has hardly been mentioned, despite the fact that it continues to plague the country and provide a source of finance for both rebels and paramilitaries alike. Secondly, should any candidate have been photographed with a FARC commander he would thus have certainly ensured his own defeat. Thirdly, in the eyes of the Colombian people, efforts to resolve the conflict through negotiation had been exhausted since this method has not put an end to the hostilities which had been damaging the Republic for almost 40 years. Pastrana's good will in carrying out peace negotiations, and bowing to FARC pressure to provide them with a Switzerland-sized demilitarised zone, only served to encourage the rebel group to strengthen, rearm and grow internationally. Murders, kidnappings and acts of destruction of public works continue on a daily basis. The rebels' actions are becoming ever more daring: the kidnapping of a presidential candidate, five deputies and senators, an ex-minister, a dozen provincial deputies... It has become clear that negotiation within the context of continued conflict and no cease-fire has definite limitations.

A meeting was arranged in June 2001 between FARC leaders and an EP delegation, led by the then chairman of the delegation for relations with South America and Mercosur, Antonio di Pietro, and also comprising members of the delegation for observation of the elections. At the meeting the release of the kidnapped Europeans and deputies was requested as a gesture of goodwill. No response was received.

Thus, with the election campaign in full swing, the break-up of the peace negotiations, in spite of all the hopes of the 'Los Pozos Agreement' and the efforts of the group of facilitators, meant that Colombians were open to any alternative solutions. The end of the demilitarised zone marked an increase in conflict.

The ex-Liberal presidential candidate Uribe's criticism of negotiations that had brought no foreseeable end to the violence, and the release of prisoners which did nothing to stop further kidnappings, was met with approval by an electorate worn out by 40 years of war.

His declarations won over increasing numbers of voters. Some polls predicted he would gain up to 60% of the vote. FARC's response was to demand a new demilitarised zone of over 100 000 km<sup>2</sup>.

The delegation met with EU ambassadors with whom they discussed various aspects of the elections. It was confirmed that the country's long electoral tradition would ensure the validity of the elections. However, they indicated that the new president would have to deal with corruption, which was the subject of discussion among all political forces, the impunity rate of about 70% of crimes and the system of patronage and clientelism.

## **The election campaign**

The following main parties or groupings stood for election:

1. Primero Colombia: Álvaro Uribe Vélez
2. Partido liberal: Horacio Serpa Uribe
3. Movimiento Sí Colombia: Naomi Sanín Posada
4. Polo Democrático: Luis Eduardo (Lucho) Garzón
5. Partido Verde Oxígeno: Ingrid Betancourt
6. Fuerza Colombia: Harold Bedoya Pizarro

The FARC campaigned in favour of blank voting.

In view of the threats to certain candidates and the fact that one of them, Ingrid Betancourt, had been kidnapped, candidates did not hold public events during the election campaign. The majority of candidates moved regularly in order to avoid potential kidnapping or attacks such as those suffered by Uribe. Due to the country's general and longstanding atmosphere of violence, the kidnapping of a presidential candidate was hardly mentioned.

Once chances for the presidency were narrowed down to two candidates - Uribe and Serpa - there was talk in some circles of Uribe's 'security plan' as opposed to Serpa's 'social programme'.

It also became obvious that threats were being made against those who wished to vote for candidates disliked by the guerrillas or paramilitaries in zones under their control. There was also talk of cases of vote-buying in those zones.

### **Meetings with members of the government:**

The delegation met with President Pastrana, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Hernández de Soto, and the Interior Minister, Armando Estrada Villa. One of the topics under discussion was the breakdown of the peace negotiations. The EU was requested to update the list of terrorist organisations as advocated by the EP as soon as possible.

It was also mentioned that there had been great delays in delivery of EU funding.

### **Meetings with electoral authorities:**

The electoral authorities of the National Elections Council and Registration Office informed the delegation about the preparations for the elections as well as about the conduct of the last parliamentary elections in March, for which the candidates elected had not yet been announced due to various protests. It was explained that the irregularities were not detected by external bodies, but rather by the Colombian electoral authorities themselves who then took appropriate steps to correct the situation and announce the elected candidates as soon as possible.

### **Meetings with candidates:**

Meetings were also held with the different candidates and campaign leaders. At the meeting with Uribe, topics of discussion included the content of his election programme, in particular as regards his proposed 'million friends' programme, a type of public monitoring scheme, which he had already tried and tested as governor of Antioquia, as well as his education programmes, and allegations regarding his efforts to maintain good relations with paramilitary groups.

Discussions were held with the campaign leaders for Serpa and Sanín about their parties' acceptance of a possible victory by Uribe given his slight lead in the latest pre-election polls.

The left-wing candidate, Lucho Garzón, who had been one of the surprises of the electoral campaign, declared his intention to create a constructive opposition which would unite all the groupings of the left.

The delegation were in contact with leaders of Ingrid Betancourt's campaign, who called for EU mediation to secure the release of the hostages.

The delegation also met with the wives of the deputies, senators and representatives of regional deputies taken hostage by the FARC. Although the necessary releases had not yet been secured, they expressed their gratitude for the steps taken by the EU in this regard.

### **Conduct of the election procedures:**

Over the course of preceding days, rebels had threatened to take the war 'into the towns' and had destroyed large sections of the road and telephone infrastructures. Some towns had been cut off from road access and electricity.

The preparations and organisation of the election procedures by the Federal Elections Council and the Registration Office ensured that only a small number of the 1057 municipalities were unable to vote due to the FARC's destruction of election material and the impossibility of replacing it within 24 hours. In order to avoid similar disruptions elsewhere, it was decided to move ballot boxes in rural zones of conflict to their nearest alternative polling station. Over 200 000 police and military personnel were involved in ensuring security.

Despite threats from both the FARC and the AUC, the extremely difficult circumstances did not stop valid elections from taking place. The polling stations opened at 8 a.m. and closed at 4 p.m.

Counting started immediately, and after a few hours, when 97% of the votes had been counted, the results were announced to the nation. The 45.4% turnout was lower than the expected 70% and slightly less than at the previous presidential elections. In the 1998 elections there had been a 49% turnout for the first round and 41% for the second. The number of blank votes, advocated by the FARC, went up to 1.78%.

It soon became clear that the vote was in Uribe's favour, especially in the big cities (Medellín, Bogotá and Cali), and in central Columbia. The last recent polls gave him between 48 and 51% of the vote and in fact he received 53% of the votes, which meant that, for the first time since the second round had become an instituted part of the Columbian elections, the procedure was not

necessary. The Liberal candidate, Serpa Uribe, won 31.72% of the vote. Luis Eduardo Garzón came third with 6.18% of the vote.

Only a few hours after the closing of the polling stations, the various candidates appeared in the media announcing, without any reservations, that Uribe had won. The United States ambassador was one of the first to congratulate him on his victory.

On hearing the results, the EP delegation gave a statement at a press conference congratulating the new president and the Columbian people, as well as calling for dialogue and a peaceful solution to the conflict, expressing their hopes that peace would be re-established as soon as possible on the basis of shared values.

The chief of the OAS observation mission, Santiago Murray, made a statement announcing that the elections had been transparent and democratic.

### **Conclusion:**

The Columbian democratic tradition, one of the oldest on the continent, proved once more to be capable of producing technically sound elections under extremely difficult circumstances. The electoral authorities rose to the occasion, as had the various political forces and the electorate, who provided a good turnout for the elections, albeit lower than expected.

The president does of course have a huge task ahead of him:

Firstly, he will have to keep to his first election promise, which was to guarantee the security of his fellow citizens, which will be by no means easy. In his first speeches on the subject he had called for international mediation, in particular that of the UN - although he did not exclude the possibility of other possible forms of co-mediation. Moreover, as regards international public opinion, he will have to elaborate and clarify his proposed 'million friends' scheme through which the rebel forces are to be combated. He will also need to address allegations of collaboration with the AUC.

The task of making proper citizens out of former combatants will not be easy, as was proven in the case of the Central American conflict. The process of instilling respect for human rights into former combatants will be long and hard. The EU's experience and assistance could be invaluable.

Secondly, there are various economic problems to be resolved, all closely related to the violence which dominates the country. Debt re-negotiation is an urgent priority. Columbia, a country of over 1 040 000 km<sup>2</sup>, has a wealth of natural resources, including a large amount of oil. Columbia's 42.3 million inhabitants have a high level of education. The country has great prospects for developing new sectors of the economy, especially as regards tourism. Its geographical situation between the Caribbean and the Pacific is a key asset to trade.

Thirdly, the Columbian people must be encouraged to put their faith back in the state, a state which has not been fulfilling its promises in economic, social and security areas, and, which indeed is absent from vast regions of the country. To this end, fiscal reform, inter alia, is essential in order to facilitate better redistribution of Columbia's wealth, as is reorganisation of

the failing judicial system into one which brings an end to the current correlation between corruption and corruption and impunity.

Of course Columbia does already have its own institutions. The way they operate is, however, far from perfect: the legislature is subordinate to the government, which, during its four-year term, enjoys almost absolute power.

Over the next few months various political forces will reposition themselves. The Liberal party currently finds itself divided into two groups: supporters of Serpa, and those of the ex-Liberal, Uribe. The Conservative party of ex- president Pastrana did not even put forward a candidate.

Finally, even though it did not figure as a topic during the election campaign, drug trafficking must be combated as part of a regional programme targeting the cultivation, processing and exporting of drugs. In the months leading up to the elections, the Archbishop of Cali, Monsignor Isaías Duarte Cancino, was murdered for having made reference to drug traffickers. Kidnapping and illegal drug crops are both extremely lucrative sources of finance for paramilitaries such as the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

The new administration must review Plan Columbia in order to establish whether it should be remodelled. At present, despite fumigation efforts, coca and poppy plantations have not diminished in size. Uprooting by hand has not been successful either, firstly because it does nothing to offer suitable alternative employment options, and secondly because of landmines which make the task extremely dangerous.

In the view of those with whom the delegation held talks, the EU should contribute by establishing better controls as regards trafficking in precursors and money-laundering of coca dollars in Europe. From the point of view of trade, greater openness of EU markets, especially as regards agricultural products, would encourage the development of alternative crops in the coca-growing areas.

The delegation recalled the facilities open to Columbia through the Community's generalised system of preferences (GSP).

An unsuitable policy would at the very least risk spreading cultivation and illegal activities to neighbouring countries. Therefore, the only possible solution is a regional action plan which could also contribute to better and quicker integration of the Andean region.

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## Ad hoc delegation for observation of presidential elections in Columbia

26 May 2002

### Programme

**Miércoles, 22 de mayo de 2002 / Jueves, 23 de mayo de 2002**

Salida individual de los miembros de la delegación con destino a Bogotá

15.25 Llegada a Bogotá (vuelo IB 6741 proveniente de Madrid)

Traslado de la delegación e instalación en el

#### **HOTEL BOGOTA ROYAL**

Calle 100 N° 8A-01

Tel. (57-1) 634 1777 / Fax (57-1) 1218326

19.30 Reunión con los Embajadores de la UE, el Presidente de la misión de observación de la OEA, Sr. Santiago MURRAY

*Lugar: Embajada de España*

20.30 Cena ofrecida por la Presidencia española y los Embajadores de la UE

*Lugar: Embajada de España*

**Jueves, 23 de mayo de 2002**

10.00 Reunión con el Presidente de la República, Sr. Andrés PASTRANA

*Lugar: Palacio de Nariño*

Reunión con el Canciller Guillermo Fernández de Soto

*Lugar: Palacio de Nariño*

Reunión con el Ministro del Interior, Sr. Armando Estrada Villa

*Lugar: Palacio de Nariño*

11.30 Conferencia sobre la "Organización Electoral"

Ponentes: Dr. Luis Felipe VERGARA CABAL

*Presidente del Consejo Electoral*

Dr. Iván DUQUE ESCOBAR

*Registrador Nacional del Estado Civil*

- 13.00 Almuerzo de trabajo con observadores internacionales de las elecciones  
*Lugar: Av. El Dorado N° 46-20 Piso 6*
- 14.30 Conferencia sobre la "Introducción elecciones del Congreso 10 de marzo 2002"  
Ponente: Dr. Germán RUIZ  
*Politólogo Universidad de los Andes*
- 14.55 Conferencia sobre la "Coyuntura electoral en Colombia año 2002"  
Ponente: Dr. Gary HOSKIN  
*Politólogo Universidad de los Andes*
- 16.30 Reunión con el Presidente del Consejo Nacional Electoral, Dr. Luis Felipe VERGARA CABAL y el Registrador Nacional del Estado Civil, Dr. Iván DUQUE ESCOBAR
- 19.00 Cóctel ofrecido por el Consejo Nacional Electoral

<b>Viernes, 24 de mayo de 2002</b>
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- 07.30 Desayuno con las familias de cinco congresistas sequestrados
- 09.00 Reunión con representantes del partido del Dr Horacio SERPA  
*Lugar: Ave. Caracas N° 36-01*
- 10.15 Reunión con el Dr Alvaro URIBE VELEZ
- 11.30 Reunión con la Sra Noemí SANIN POSADA  
*Lugar: Calle 72 N° 8-21*
- 13.00 Almuerzo ofrecido por el Consejo Nacional Electoral
- 15.15 Reunión con el Dr Luis Eduardo GARZON  
*Lugar: Diagonal 34 N° 17-90*
- 16.15 Reunión con la representante de la campaña de la Dra. Ingrid BENTANCOURT, Dra. Yolanda PULECIO  
*Lugar: Calle 75 N° 7-24*
- 18.10 Salida de la delegación hacia con vuelo AV9550
- 19.30 Llegada de la delegación e instalación en el

**HOTEL SANTA TERESA**  
Cartagena de Indias

<b>Sábado, 25 de mayo de 2002</b>
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- 10.00 Reunión con el Alcalde de Cartagena, Sr. Carlos DÍAZ REDONDO



- 11.00 Visita de la ciudad de Cartagena
- 18.10 Regreso de la delegación a Bogotá con vuelo AV 9549

**Domingo, 26 de mayo de 2002**

- 08.00 Acto de instalación de Elecciones  
*Lugar: Pza. Simón Bolívar*
- 09.00 Desayuno ofrecido por el Alcalde Mayor de Bogotá
- 10.30 Visita a centros de votación
- 13.00 Almuerzo
- 14.30 Visita al cierre de los centros de votación  
*Lugar: Bogotá*
- 18.00 Reunión de evaluación  
*Lugar: Sala de Audiencias Consejo Nacional Electoral*

**Lunes, 27 de mayo de 2002**

- 10.30 Conferencia de Prensa  
*Lugar: Hotel Bogotá Roya*
- 17.15 Salida de la delegación hacia Europa con vuelo IB 6740 hacia Madrid

## PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

### Delegación ad hoc para la observación de las elecciones presidenciales en Colombia 26 de mayo de 2002

#### Lista de Participantes

#### Miembros de la Delegación

Nombre	Apellido	Grupo político	País
Sr. José Ignacio	SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA (Presidente de la delegación ad hoc)	PPE-	España

		• <i>Comisión de Asuntos Exteriores, Derechos Humanos, Seguridad Común y Política de Defensa</i>	DE	
Sr.	Giovanni	<b>FAVA</b>	PSE	Italia
	Claudio	• <i>Comisión de Política Regional, Transportes y Turismo</i>		
Sr.	Fernando	<b>FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍN</b>	PPE-	España
		• <i>Comisión de Desarrollo y Cooperación</i>	DE	
Sr.	Rolf	<b>LINKOHR</b>	PSE	Alemani
		• <i>Comisión de Industria, Comercio Exterior, Investigación y Energía</i>		a
Sr.	José Javier	<b>POMES RUIZ</b>	PPE-	España
		• <i>Comisión de Política Regional, Transportes y Turismo</i>	DE	

**Grupos Políticos de los Miembros de la Delegación**

PPE/DE - Grupo del Partido Popular Europeo (Demócrata-Cristianos) y Demócratas Europeos  
PSE - Grupo del Partido de los Socialista Europeos

**Secretaría de la Delegación**

Sr.	Luis	<b>MARTÍNEZ-GUILLÉN</b>	Administrador Principal
Sr.	Raymond	<b>HERDIES</b>	Asistente

**Secretarías de los Grupos Políticos**

Sr.	Juan	<b>SALAFRANCA</b>	Consejero del Grupo PPE-DE
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