

Colombian anti-drug fighter slain by Kissinger, IMF

by Valerie Rush

The International Monetary Fund and the networks of Henry A. Kissinger showed a desperate hand in the April 30 assassination of Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla. The cabinet member was driving home from work with his young son when two professional assassins on a motorcycle machine-gunned him to death.

The murder of Lara Bonilla was neither the act of a vengeful drug trafficker nor of terrorists, as some have claimed, but a warning to President Belisario Betancur and a challenge to the continued survival of Ibero-America's nation-states on the part of Dope, Inc.'s enforcers. Lara's singleminded war on drugs was threatening an empire.

Two weeks before his murder, Lara, speaking in Caracas, Venezuela, echoed Betancur's earlier call for a "world pact" against drugs, including universal extradition procedures against traffickers. Unity of action against the common enemy was Lara Bonilla's *raison d'être*, and it was but a short step to go from identifying the drug trade as the enemy to uncovering the international network of political and financial institutions that lay behind it. That is why he was killed.

Lara was pulling together a continental effort to battle what was clearly an enemy which respected no borders. He had succeeded in forging an Andean-wide pact against drugs, and was seeking bilateral and multilateral anti-drug agreements with Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and the Central American countries as well. He was lobbying intensively for a reversal of President Betancur's anti-extradition stance, and had succeeded in convincing the Betancur government to approve the experimental use of herbicides against Colombia's vast drug crops, a move with potentially universal repercussions.

A joint declaration of the Mexican Labor Party and the Andean Labor Party being distributed as a mass leaflet

throughout Ibero-America declares that "in order to win a war, you must know your enemy. The paid thugs who killed Lara Bonilla worked on orders from the international financial oligarchy, which runs the \$250 billion illegal drug traffic."

As proof of these startling charges, the joint statement by the two parties, both inspired by the ideas and program of *EIR* founder and U.S. political leader Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., cites the following:

"1) On Nov. 3, 1983, the daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, mouthpiece of the Swiss banking aristocracy, demanded that the anti-drug campaign of President Belisario Betancur be put to an end. The newspaper recalled that 'In the past decade, Colombia could depend annually on \$2 to \$3 billion which flowed from uncontrolled exports of the most varying sorts [a euphemism for illegal drugs]. . . . Were the government's *moralizing campaign* to become the basis for a reduction in this area, Colombia . . . would see itself . . . no longer in a position to earn the foreign exchange necessary for its economy.' The threat could not have been clearer.

"2) It was precisely at that time that the first assassination plot against the justice minister was discovered, a plot which included wiretapping of his private telephone. . . . At the same time, the Andean Labor Party and the National Anti-Drug Coalition, for years the most energetic enemies of the drug mafias, were hit with a series of threats from the drug networks.

"3) Meanwhile Henry Kissinger was preparing his report on the Bipartisan Commission on Central America, in which he says that the region's economy must be 'restructured' following the model of the British colonies: 'Hong Kong, Singapore, and others,' i.e., the Asian centers of the dope trade. . . . The colonial plantations of United Brands, the banana company whose ships reportedly transport some 20%



Rodrigo Lara Bonilla

of the illegal marijuana and cocaine that enters the United States, are cited in the report as 'model employers and model citizens'—embodying the type of 'private initiative' intended in Kissinger's plans. . . .

"4) The International Monetary Fund at that moment heightened its pressures to force nations in the region to definitively abandon all attempts at industrial growth. . . . At the end of January, the creditors' cartel, meeting at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, announced its 'final solution' for Ibero-America: to seize control over the national economies and turn them into feudal plantations.

"5) Coinciding with Kissinger's renewed ascent to political power in the United States, the international banking apparatus of 'Dope, Inc.' was reorganized, with the personal intervention of Kissinger himself. American Express merged with the banking apparatus created around the late dope mobster Meyer Lansky and headed by the president of United Brands, Carl Lindner, and the mysterious Edmund Safra. In March 1984, hardly a month and a half before the assassination of Lara Bonilla, Kissinger was pulled onto the executive board of American Express.

"6) Meanwhile, the oldest opium trafficking banking house in the world got ready to leave Hong Kong for the new paradise offered by Henry Kissinger. . . ."

Taking up the challenge

President Belisario Betancur responded to the murder of his justice minister with the announcement: "The Colombian government accepts the challenge . . . and, above all, shall wage war against the drug traffickers."

Betancur has declared a nationwide state of siege, placing all drug-related criminal cases under military jurisdiction and ordering raids against the homes and offices of dozens of

suspected mafiosi. Eight members of the infamous Ochoa clan, including its head Fabio Ochoa Restrepo, have fallen into the dragnet and Evaristo Porras, the drug trafficker who smeared Lara Bonilla with the claim that he had accepted a 1 million pesos bribe, is also in jail. A private zoo owned by Pablo Escobar in Medellín was raided by the police, and discovered to contain a virtual fortress within its walls.

The Ochoa family, Escobar, and Porras were all named as the owners of the giant cocaine refining complex busted earlier this year in the southern jungle department of Caquetá. The complex, which had been dubbed "Tranquilandia" by its owners, was a virtual city, with sophisticated laboratories, modern conveniences, and fleets of cars and planes. The government raid, coordinated by Lara Bonilla together with specially trained narcotics police, yielded an unprecedented 10 tons of refined cocaine.

All governors in the country have been granted free rein to apply military law as they see fit, and other "extraordinary measures" are being decreed by the president on an hourly basis. The Council of Ministers has been convoked on Betancur's request to consider granting provisions for the expropriation of all assets belonging to known drug traffickers.

Especially important is Betancur's turn-around decision to grant the extradition of Colombian drug traffickers. In his speech at Lara Bonilla's burial, the shaken president declared: "For philosophical reasons, for conviction, . . . for Christian arguments, I opposed the extradition of Colombians sought by other governments, because I felt and continue to feel that they should be judged and convicted or absolved by their own countrymen. But we are in an hour of reflection. . . . Colombia will hand over those criminals sought by the crime commissions of other countries, so that they are punished in exemplary fashion in this universal operation against an equally universal attack."

The nation rises to its feet

In the 24 hours that followed Lara Bonilla's death, a surge of nationalist commitment to take up where he left off swept not only Colombia but much of the rest of the continent. As soon as Lara's murder was known, thousands upon thousands of Colombians displaying white armbands filled the main streets and the Plaza Bolívar of Bogotá to mourn for the man who had died battling their nation's enemies. May Day celebrations of the nation's trade unions were converted in many parts of the country into memorials for the slain justice minister.

The Colombian Workers Union (UTC), the country's largest trade union federation, also issued a public statement deploring the assassination and calling for a nationwide day of mobilization. "This nation must rise to its feet, without exception, to surround the government and offer its manifold support, to encourage the decisions required to defend the constitution and the law."

Luis Carlos Galán, presidential candidate and leader of the "New Liberalism" faction of the Liberal Party to which

Lara Bonilla belonged, declared over his friend's grave: "The struggle against drug-trafficking cannot be seen as the work of a handful of idealists who die like Rodrigo Lara Bonilla. . . . All political forces and all social sectors must understand this reality as an essential common cause if the state is to survive."

The "Contadora" nations (the Contadora Group—Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia—have been seeking a regional solution to the Central American conflict), as well as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, expressed their sorrow at the loss of an Ibero-American patriot, and promised to "battle drug traffic in their respective states with all the means at their disposal as well as to collaborate for their definitive eradication."

The Organization of American States (OAS) dedicated its ongoing session to pay homage to Lara Bonilla. President Reagan sent a telegram of condolence. U.S. Ambassador Lewis Tambs declared, "Lara Bonilla was not only an official friend but a personal one. He had an unequalled sense of humor and the courage to match it. . . . Our government is in mourning over the death of this brave and good minister."

The citizens above suspicion

In his nine months in office, Lara Bonilla had dedicated his energies to uncovering the "citizens above suspicion." The untouchable billionaire Pablo Escobar, whose congressional post provided him immunity from innumerable drug, murder, and conspiracy charges, became Lara's number-one target for prosecution. Sports magnates who used their big-name soccer teams to launder drug money suddenly found their names splashed across the front pages of Colombia's dailies. Corrupt judges were put on notice and government officials began to receive indictments. Respectable bankers began to flee the country with not-so-respectable criminal charges on their heads.

On Dec. 1 of last year, Lara sent a message to the leaders of the Colombian National Anti-drug Coalition (CNA) in solidarity with their cause, offering his office's assistance against the campaign of harassment and intimidation the CNA was enduring: "With genuine concern I have learned of the threats and attacks which the CNA has suffered as the result of its praiseworthy efforts.

"From the moment that I undertook a strong position of battle against the mafias and the drug trade, both as senator of the republic and as Minister of Justice, I have known what it is to feel threatened. That is why I am in fully solidarity with you and offer you my fullest spirit of cooperation and aid."

Lara Bonilla made powerful enemies in Colombia. Scarcely a day passed that he or his family did not receive a death threat by mail or phone. His ministry and telephone lines were discovered last February to have been intercepted by mafia assassins mapping out his daily routines. At least twice he was forced to defend himself publicly from mafia-orchestrated scandals implicating him in drug-related corrup-

tion. And yet the threat Lara Bonilla posed went beyond the local godfathers.

Uncovering the enemy

Right after the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* issued a public warning last November to Betancur to end his war on drugs or face the consequences, Colombia was slammed with a near-total cutoff of international credit, leading to the draining of her international reserves and a heightened vulnerability to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund. Betancur has been forced to seek dollars and gold to boost the country's flagging reserves.

And in recent months, dope-allied press outlets moved to smear and discredit Lara Bonilla, creating the environment for his assassination. The April issue of the French porno magazine *Actuel* carried an article by Spanish neo-fascist Gonsales-Mata asserting that Lara Bonilla was on the take from the drug traffickers and that government seizures of cocaine caches had been falsified.

Rodolfo Schmidt, the editor of the Venezuelan newspaper *Diario de Caracas*, published a series of articles over the past several months accusing Lara Bonilla of being "anti-Venezuelan" and of running cover for the drug trade. In an unsigned commentary published after Lara Bonilla's murder, *Diario de Caracas* claimed that the justice minister's name was found on bags of cocaine uncovered during a drug bust in Venezuela several months back and that during the justice minister's recent visit to Caracas he had been accompanied by a known drug trafficker.

Fausto Charris Romero, the head of the Colombian Anti-drug Coalition, has announced that the national anti-drug organizations on the continent will be forming a single Ibero-American Anti-drug Coalition and will be publishing a continental magazine, entitled *Guerra a las Drogas (War on Drugs)*. The first issue of *Guerra a las Drogas* will include a lengthy article by Charris on the parallels between Britain's Opium Wars against India and China during the early 1800s and the neo-colonialist assaults on Ibero-America today.

Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, the founder of the U.S. National Anti-drug Coalition who provided the inspiration for the founding of sister coalitions throughout Ibero-America, has similarly pledged to win the war that Lara Bonilla was courageously waging. In a statement carried in several Colombian newspapers, LaRouche declared: "A great and courageous man has died, fighting the Kissinger-linked drug mafias and Kissinger's pro-drug Liberal Party friends.

"Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was a personal friend of our associates in the National Anti-drug Coalition of Colombia. . . . Lara Bonilla had wanted to go to Cairo this week to be with us in an international conference of the Club of Life. That conference could not be held through international pressures brought to bear by Kissinger and his associates.

"Lara Bonilla was a soldier against evil and drugs. We, soldiers like him, will keep fighting his battle in his name."