
Colombia

Samper's dilemma: Annihilate the cartels or fall with them

by Javier Almario

With Colombian Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso's decision to abandon the policy of *sigilo y secreto* ("sealed and secret"), with which his predecessor Gustavo de Greiff had tried to hide the magnitude of cocaine cartel infiltration into the Colombian body politic from Colombians and from the world, President Ernesto Samper Pizano has been left with but two choices: Either he uses the power of the national government and of the Armed Forces to wipe out the drug cartels and to eliminate the economic and political cancer that they represent, or he goes down in history as a cartel puppet, who very likely will not finish his Presidential term.

Following Valdivieso's request on April 21 for a formal investigation against six congressmen, and his citation of another 15 politicians and prominent figures in national political life for questioning about their links to the drug cartels, the prosecutor general has been turned virtually overnight into a people's hero. While there is still broad concern that Valdivieso's charges will never reach the stage of conviction against these suspected political agents of the drug trade, the mere naming of names has given the nation a rebirth.

The six Liberal Party congressmen accused by Valdivieso organized a meeting of legislators to try to force a reversal of the ruling party's decision to expel them from its ranks, at least for the duration of the investigation. The party, fearful that their retreat on the issue would only open up a Pandora's box, stood by its decision to expel them, but the six immediately called on former President Alfonso López Michelsen, widely known as the "political godfather" of the drug cartels, for his "genial" advice on how to save their necks.

Walking a tightrope

However, conditions today are not the same for López Michelsen as they were in 1984, in 1989, and in 1990, when he held a series of meetings with the drug kingpins to work out an agenda for negotiations between the government and the traffickers. The deal eventually struck with the drug cartels was faithfully adhered to by then-President César Gaviria Trujillo (today the secretary general of the Organization of American States) and by his pocket-prosecutor Gustavo de Greiff, allowing the drug traffickers to expand their political

and economic influence in the country. A series of devastating scandals that broke out around the Presidential elections last year has made it more difficult for President Samper to follow through on his side of the deal.

Those same scandals have also put López Michelsen on very thin ice, since every Colombian knows that during López's (failed) Presidential bid in 1982, Samper Pizano was his treasurer and, in that capacity, accepted substantial "donations" from the drug cartels to finance López's campaign. Ever since 1984, when he met clandestinely with the chiefs of the Medellín Cartel in Panama, López has strongly advocated that the government "make its peace" with the drug trade.

On May 5, López complained that the press was "perniciously" using "information [relative to the drug trade] to disorient and, to be redundant, to misinform," which López characterized as a direct attack on "democracy." López was referring specifically to the actions of Prosecutor General Valdivieso. According to López, those actions and the interpretations given them by the media have created enmity between the press and the country's political class, and he warned that this could lead to a "Watergate" against Samper.

President Samper, for his part, has no other choice but to support Valdivieso's investigations. Anything he might say against them would be immediately interpreted as an abuse of power to obstruct investigations against his own political party—and, more importantly, to protect himself. The previous prosecutor, De Greiff, had absolved Samper in the so-called "narco-cassettes" scandal immediately before leaving the country to become ambassador to Mexico. (Among documents found by law enforcement authorities in the city of Cali was a cartel check for 200 million pesos written to De Greiff!)

The 1994 "narco-cassettes" scandal centered around tape recordings of secret conversations between Cali Cartel bosses Miguel and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela and narco-journalist Alberto Giraldo, regarding cartel contributions to Samper's Presidential campaign. At the time, De Greiff conducted a superficial investigation of the narco-cassettes case, and ruled that the only crime that had been committed was the tapping of the cartel's telephones without legal authorization.

Although Valdivieso's call for investigations into the six

congressmen had not touched on the narco-cassettes scandal, the heat his actions generated was so intense that Samper himself decided to call for a reopening of the narco-cassettes investigation that De Greiff had so precipitously shut down.

Valdivieso's response was to refuse, for now, to reopen that investigation, but the cases he is pursuing are all nonetheless directly related to the Samper Presidential campaign. For example, Samper's 1994 campaign treasurer, Santiago Medina, has been called to testify as to why a Cali Cartel business donated 200,000 "Samper for President" t-shirts to the Samper campaign. Valdivieso's office has also confirmed that Monica de Greiff, daughter of the former prosecutor who exonerated Samper and herself, and the 1993 treasurer of Samper's Presidential campaign, was the one who, in her capacity as manager of the

state company Concesión Salinas in 1992, had signed a contract with the Cali Cartel company Exposal which was then used to try to export five tons of cocaine to the United States. Exposal's warehouse in Panama was raided, and the cocaine shipment—along with revealing documents—seized. Monica de Greiff was functioning at the time as a subordinate to Samper Pizano, who in 1992 held the post of economic development minister under then-President Gaviria.

Indeed, the incriminating evidence that points to President Samper is so overwhelming that the only way the Colombian head of state can clear his name would be to use all the power of the national government he heads, decidedly including the nation's defense forces, to wage a war to the death against the cartels.

LaRouche: Bush league threatens Colombia

In a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on April 27, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. was asked about the Colombian prosecutor general's investigation into politicians who are accused of receiving drug money from the Cali Cartel.

If you go back to 1983 on, dear old Georgy-Porgy Bush, then the president of vice of the United States, operating under National Security Decision Directives No. 2 and No. 3 from a special position in the National Security Council, running an aperture out of the back hole of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, together with stooges such as Oliver North, were running drugs and weapons all over the world. And they were playing games with the Colombian cartels. In the end, they preferred the Cali Cartel to the other [Medellín] Cartel.

As a result of these policies from the United States, from George Bush's friends' influence in U.S. policy, the anti-drug policy of the Colombian government was undermined. The industry of Colombia was undermined, the economy of Colombia was undermined. And drugs became more and more powerful. They were called, politely, "hot money." So whether the drug lords themselves did or did not move the money through, directly into the hands of the politicians, the hot money in Colombia was all based on drug money; so, directly or indirectly, nearly everybody in Colombia who is in politics, depended upon hot money, which meant, indirectly, drug money, which meant a deal with George Bush and his friends for their existence.

Now today, you have a situation in which everybody in Central and South America is alerted to the use, by Fidel Castro's friends in Germany and France and elsewhere, of

a bunch of terrorists who are called the EZLN [the Zapatistas], in Chiapas state in Mexico, who are engaged in the process of attempting to destroy Mexico.

The group behind this, is twofold. First of all, the group has cooperated with a U.S.-connected organization called the Inter-American Dialogue, which is the pro-drug lobby without which George Bush's drug trafficking (and Ollie North's) in Central America would not have worked too well. Another group is the São Paulo Forum, of which the old synarchist, Fidel Castro, is the head. Now Castro's crowd is trying to destabilize every country in South America, as well as in Central America; and the Mexican example is prominent in the eyes of everybody who's paying attention to what's going on.

So these guys, in Colombia and elsewhere, realize that they are in a situation of vulnerability, and know that the danger comes from Fidel Castro's friends, who are the same as George Bush's friends; kind of ironical, because George Bush's old buddy, or his neighbor, Paul de Menil, the husband of Monique Schlumberger de Menil, was the guy who funded Castro's landing in Cuba. He paid for the boat, the *Granma*, as well as other things. And he was very dirty, while he was still alive.

So this Castro threat, or Castro/Inter-American Dialogue, etc. coordinated threat, with support from certain church circles in Germany, for example, and France, and elsewhere, is a major threat to every nation in South America.

Therefore, patriots in Colombia, looking at the political-historical clock, say the time has come: Either it's them or it's us. And therefore, actions are being taken, on a minimal level, with some encouragement from some circles in the United States, to clean the mess up and to neutralize the power of the drug lords and their agents, in controlling the internal politics of countries such as Colombia. Because if they don't, the countries are doomed.