

Andean Report by Javier Almario

Samper on the take

It's confirmed that the Cali Cartel did finance Samper Pizano's 1994 presidential campaign.

Santiago Medina, an antique dealer who in 1994 served as treasurer to the electoral campaign that made Ernesto Samper Pizano the President of Colombia, was unable to explain to the Prosecutor General's office why he accepted a \$47,000 check to the campaign which was never registered in the official accounting books of the presidential campaign. Medina's sudden lapse occurred while testifying before the Prosecutor General's office on July 17, as part of an investigation into the multimillion-dollar donations made by the Cali narcotics cartel to a variety of prominent personalities.

The check was drawn on the account of the company La Estrella Ltda., which turns out to have been a front for the Cali Cartel created on Jan. 12, 1994 and dissolved on Aug. 9, 1994, two days after Samper's inauguration. On Jan. 12, 1994, the cartel also created two other companies, La Loma and El Diamante. The three companies, combined, paid out some \$18.5 million, according to accounts that fell into the hands of the Prosecutor's office, to scores of prominent individuals, including eight congressmen who have already been accused before the Colombian Supreme Court of "illicit enrichment," Comptroller General David Turbay Turbay, and Attorney General Orlando Vásquez Velázquez. The latter officials were immediately responsible for overseeing the legality of all actions, or omissions, by public officials, and all related state expenditures.

When the check was shown to Medina, he stammered the "explanation"

that the check had been collected and deposited in Cali by the campaign committee of that city, and that is why it never showed up in the campaign's books. This, despite the fact that the check was made out to Medina personally, and not to the Samper campaign! Nor was Medina able to explain why the check did not pass through the Samper campaign's ethics committee, which was supposedly set up to protect against the infiltration of drug money into the campaign. "This is the first legal evidence of double accounting by the campaign, and of effective infiltration of mafia money," wrote the newspaper *El Tiempo*.

Prosecutor Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento, who from the beginning of his appointment has tried to fight the drug trade and political corruption without besmirching the Presidency itself, was upset over the leak to the press of Medina's interrogation. The fact is, that Valdivieso is sitting atop a mountain of evidence, which, if fully revealed, could cause a revolution in Colombia. At any moment, that mountain could become an active volcano.

For example, it has just been revealed that during a raid on one of the apartments belonging to fugitive cartel leader Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, two accounting books were discovered containing the names of 2,800 individuals who had received the sum of \$16 million from the Cali Cartel between January and May 1994. Although the majority of these beneficiaries are identified by code, it is clear that the bribes went to journal-

ists, politicians, bankers, and even employees of the Attorney General's and Prosecutor's offices.

A book was also found containing all the intelligence-gathering efforts of the Rodríguez brothers, including detailed reports of raids that were to be carried out by the special joint army-police "Search Squad," and confidential memorandums that the U.S. and Colombian Prosecutors' offices had issued on cartel investigations.

According to the daily *El Tiempo*, the book was analyzed by the CIA, which concluded that the cartel's intelligence network was comparable "to the early days of the postwar Soviet KGB."

Former Prosecutor Gustavo de Greiff, currently Colombian ambassador to Mexico and an ardent defender of drug legalization, had hurriedly absolved President Samper in July 1994, after the press published transcripts of scandalous cassette tapes in which the Rodríguez brothers negotiated the best means of providing multimillion-dollar donations to the Samper campaign.

After learning of the \$47,000 narco-check, former Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González, who himself barely survived a 1987 assassination attempt by the drug mafia, demanded the reopening of the "narcocassette" investigation. In a letter to Valdivieso dated July 24, Parejo warned that "if the prosecutor doesn't reopen the investigation, he will not only be breaking his word, but will be engaging in corruption."

Perhaps most ironic, is the fact that, due to enormous national and international pressure, it has fallen to President Samper to deliver what could prove to be fatal blows to his old allies. And yet with all these anti-drug "successes" to tuck under his belt, Samper has been unable to erase the fact of his own relationship with Dope, Inc.