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## Colombia

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# Samper forced to jail his narco financiers

by Our Special Correspondent

On May 4, 1994, with only 25 days to go before Colombia's presidential primary elections, Santiago Medina, the treasurer of Ernesto Samper Pizano's presidential campaign, traveled to Cali in the company of the Cali Cartel's "PR" man Alberto Giraldo, to meet with Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, and José Santacruz Londoño, kingpins of the narcotics cartel which produces 80% of the cocaine and much of the heroin consumed in the United States.

According to Medina's own sworn testimony before Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso, Samper and his campaign manager Fernando Botero Zea had given Medina "precise instructions to request 2 billion pesos [about \$2.5 million] needed to finish out the first round." According to Medina, the Cali drug lords contributed half. Medina read to the cartel bosses candidate Samper's five promises. Among the five points was Samper's pledge to back then-Prosecutor General Gustavo de Greiff, who used his post to defend drug legalization; a commitment to negotiate significantly reduced jail terms with the cartel; and a promise to suspend the war between the state and the drug traffickers.

On May 29, 1994, Ernesto Samper Pizano won the presidential primary with 2,586,103 votes, only 20,000 more than his closest rival. On June 15, with only four days left before the definitive elections, Medina was sent once again to Cali to ask for \$4 million more. The traffickers agreed to the donation and delivered the cash later that day, wrapped like birthday presents, to Santiago Medina's home.

These details, taken from Santiago Medina's July 28, 1995 confessions, have already caused the resignation of Fernando Botero Zea from his post as Samper's defense minister, and have sent the Samper government itself into a tailspin.

How is it possible that Samper Pizano, who for 20 years had promoted the legalization of drugs, who had taken money from the cartels in 1982 as head of former President Alfonso López Michelsen's presidential campaign, who had again taken money from the traffickers in 1990 when he ran against Luis Carlos Galán for the presidential nomination of the Liberal Party, has today put six of the Cali Cartel's seven kingpins in jail?

## To make, and break, a President

On Saturday, June 18, 1994, the top directors of the Samper campaign, among them candidate Samper himself, met at Medina's home. Samper congratulated his treasurer and promised to name him ambassador to Switzerland or another European nation. On June 19, Samper won the election by 120,000 votes, a margin of less than 1%.

But the campaign directors were not the only ones who knew of their dealings with the Cali Cartel. Although it is not yet known precisely who taped the conversations (some suspect either the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration or some Colombian security agency with DEA assistance), several audio tapes which have come to be popularly known as the "narco-cassettes," were distributed to all the communications media. In them, Alberto Giraldo and the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers can be heard speaking, apparently by telephone, about the donations to the Samper campaign. The narco-cassettes were published in all the newspapers and broadcast on all the television news programs on June 21 and 22, 1994, turning the world upside down.

In the face of such a scandal, Samper tried desperately to win the confidence of the United States, while at the same time trying to win Great Britain's support against the Clinton administration's hard line. Samper traveled to the United States in his capacity as President-elect, but received a frigid welcome, and the Clinton government let it be known that it was fully aware of Samper's pro-drug past, but would give him a second chance. "The past is less important than what you do from here on in," he was told. And the external and internal pressure on Samper's government began to escalate.

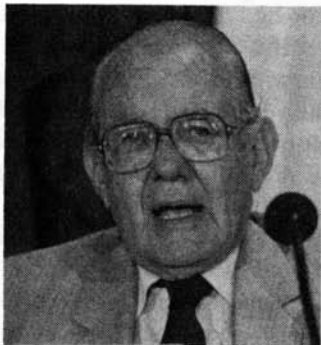
On July 15, 1994, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved a resolution whereby economic aid and benefits to Colombia for its fight against drugs would be conditioned upon Clinton administration certification that the Samper government was indeed waging war against the drug trade.

Later that month, the Colombian Supreme Court ruled that Prosecutor Gustavo de Greiff, who was using his post to defend drug legalization and who as a result had publicly and repeatedly clashed with U.S. authorities, could no longer continue as Prosecutor General, having reached the age of 65, which was mandatory retirement age within the Colombian judicial system. On July 26, the Colombian Congress chose as its new Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento, whose first cousin Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento died at the hands of cartel assassins in 1989 while running for President.

On Aug. 16, just before stepping down from his post, De Greiff declared that there was no evidence to warrant an investigation of President Samper in connection with the narco-cassette revelations. De Greiff called on Joseph Toft, veteran DEA chief in Colombia, to testify before the Prosecutor's office as to whether the cassettes had been taped by the DEA. The Clinton government's embassy in Bogotá rejected De Greiff's demand, pointing to Toft's diplomatic immunity.

## Alfonso López Michelsen

The political godfather and sponsor of Ernesto Samper Pizano, López Michelsen, is the man whose 1974-78 Presidency oversaw the mushrooming of the drug trade in Colombia. The son of a former President and a wealthy oligarch, one of López's first acts in office was to



undertake a drastic reform of Colombia's banking and financial system, under cover of an "economic emergency" issued by executive decree. He was guided by his Finance Minister Rodrigo Botero Montoya, today a vice-chairman of the Washington-based pro-drug legalization lobby Inter-American Dialogue. Part of that reform was the creation of the so-called "sinister window," a black market window set up at the central bank to accept illegal drug dollars, no questions asked. Later, the former president of the Federation of Latin American Banks, Fernando Londoño Hoyos, wrote that if the government really wanted to catch drug traffickers, "they should capture them on the lines at the sinister window."

Under López's Presidency, the powerful Grupo Grancolombiano financial conglomerate, under the control of his first cousin Jaime Michelsen Uribe, amassed a vast fortune and came to be known as "The Octopus" for its propensity to swallow up legitimate enterprises. Grancolombiano's "research institute," the National Association of Financial Institutes (ANIF), was the launching pad for Ernesto Samper Pizano's political career. In 1977, Samper was named president of ANIF, and quickly turned it into the national lobby for drug legalization. In a July 1980 press statement, Samper characterized ANIF as "the Latin American coordinator of the international alliance to reform marijuana laws."

Asset-stripping, self-lending, and pyramiding eventually brought down the Grancolombiano Group, sending Jaime Michelsen fleeing to Miami in early 1984. In 1982, López's bid for a second presidential term had failed miserably, despite having taken drug cartel contributions through his campaign treasurer, Samper Pizano. But by 1984, López had succeeded in reestablishing his credentials with the dope mob; he placed Samper Pizano on the board of directors of the Cali Cartel-owned Banco de los Trabajadores (seized by the government two years later), and himself mediated repeated efforts by the drug cartels over the coming years to buy their way into the country's political machinery.

López Michelsen singlehandedly did more to turn Colombia into a "narco-democracy" than any one else, and it is he, that Colombians and the rest of the world have to thank for the Samper Presidency today.

As a reward for his exoneration, President Samper granted De Greiff the post of ambassador to Mexico, a charge which he still occupies. In the narco-cassettes, the Rodríguez brothers affectionately refer to De Greiff as "the old man."

On Sept. 30, 1994, Toft announced his retirement from the DEA and from his post in Colombia. In the same press conference, he denounced the Samper government as a "narco-democracy," warning that the DEA had proof that Samper had received several million dollars from the traffickers to finance his presidential campaign. Spokesmen for the Clinton administration stated that Toft's comments were not an official government declaration, but refused to deny or confirm them.

In November 1994, the Samper government moved to de facto legalize the production of coca leaves in Guaviare and Putumayo departments, after coca producers were organized by the narco-terrorist FARC to conduct an armed "strike" against fumigation of their illegal crops.

On Dec. 6, 1994, according to certain sources, Samper Pizano—under pressure from the DEA—appointed Gen.

Rosso José Serrano director of the National Police. General Serrano began an immediate clean-up of the institution, which had come to be known as one of the most corrupt in the country.

In January 1995, Fernando Botero publicly apologized to the drug traffickers for a raid that the joint army-police "Search Bloc" had carried out during a birthday party for Gilberto Rodríguez's daughter.

On Jan. 27, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Myles Frechette announced that neither the Clinton administration nor the U.S. Congress would certify that Colombia was fighting drugs. Samper launched major diplomatic efforts to avoid such a decertification, and pledged to the U.S. government that he would dismantle the Cali Cartel. The certification was then issued under a "national security waiver," with President Clinton clarifying that the certification was not for the Samper government, but for the country.

On April 20, the Prosecutor's office arrested Eduardo Mestre Sarmiento, former Colombian ambassador to Switzerland, who had served as an intermediary for the Cali Car-

tel's donations to the Samper campaign. It also ordered the arrest of Alberto Giraldo, the "journalist" who served as a high-level public relations agent for the cartel. The Prosecutor's office also called on the Colombian Supreme Court to open up an investigation against eight congressmen, Attorney General Orlando Vásquez Velázquez and Comptroller General David Turbay Turbay, for having taken money and other payoffs from the Rodríguez Orejuela organization. The payoffs to the 10 people mentioned occurred during a tour they had taken with candidate Samper in 1994.

In early June of this year, Samper met with the entirety of the military and police command structure and warned that if they did not produce concrete results against the Cali Cartel, "I'm going to go, and so are you." In other words, his government could fall unless they could practically demonstrate that he did not have ties to the drug traffickers. The U.S. pressure was on.

On June 9, the police captured Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela. After that, more were captured and others surrendered.

On July 17, Santiago Medina was called to testify before the Prosecutor's office, and was unable to explain the origin of a \$48,000 check drawn on the account of a Cali Cartel shell company to his name. The check had been used to cover expenses of the Samper campaign in Cali.

On July 26, the Prosecutor's office arrested Medina. Despite pressure from several Samper emissaries, Medina decided on July 27-28 to collaborate with the Prosecutor, and revealed that Fernando Botero, in his capacity as Samper's campaign manager, had managed a secret bank account at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. He also revealed that, on orders from Samper and Botero, he had met with the cartel bosses to request contributions.

On Aug. 1, the Prosecutor's office called on the Supreme Court to consider opening an investigation against Fernando Botero and against Armando Benedetti, Samper's communications minister, who had also taken mafia money for Samper's campaign, according to Medina.

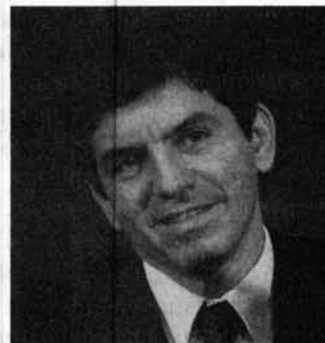
On Aug. 2, Defense Minister Fernando Botero resigned his post. Samper urgently brought National Police director Gen. Rosso José Serrano back from New York, where he had been attending a seminar. Samper told Serrano that the only thing that could save his government would be the immediate arrest of Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela.

On Aug. 3, the Prosecutor's office sent the "Accusations Committee" of the Colombian House of Representatives a dossier of evidence, to determine whether or not it should initiate a trial against President Samper Pizano. A copy of the dossier was also sent to the Federal Prosecutor's office urging an investigation of the conduct of Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe, who had tried to pressure Medina against collaborating with the judicial authorities.

On Aug. 6, the National Police captured drug trafficker Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela in Cali. After his arrest, Samper declared that, with six of the seven top cartel leaders in jail,

## César Gaviria Trujillo

Former Colombian President (1990-94) César Gaviria Trujillo today holds the prestigious position of secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS). Both posts were reached by striking a deal with the narcotics cartels,



which included climbing over the corpse of assassinated presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, whose 1989 campaign Gaviria had managed.

According to 1992 press revelations, Gaviria turned the security apparatus of his government's Justice Department over to the men who had been his campaign bodyguards, and those of Galán before him. These men, it turned out, were part of a network of thugs known as "The Black Ants," who worked for the Medellín Cartel and are believed to have brought in the trainers and weapons used in Galán's assassination. "The Black Ants" became a terror and blackmail machine within the very core of Gaviria's government, and were responsible for the security at Envigado prison, which housed Medellín Cartel boss Pablo Escobar after his June 1991 "surrender" and from which he easily escaped one year later.

But Gaviria's complicity with the mob was evident long before the 1992 revelations. Immediately following his Aug. 7, 1990 inauguration, Gaviria named a cabinet which included Antonio Navarro Wolf, the "former" head of the recently legalized narco-terrorist group M-19; Ernesto Samper Pizano; and Rudolf Hommes, the former business partner and close associate of Rodrigo Botero Montoya, architect of López Michelsen's infamous 1974 "tax reform" and "sinister window." Gaviria went on to facilitate the rewriting of a new national constitution in 1990-91, which among other things banned extradition of drug traffickers, and decreed a new, lenient "surrender" policy for the cartel bosses. For his appeasement of the cartels, Gaviria earned the gratitude of the Bush government in Washington—and eventually his cushy job at the Organization of American States.

“the Cali Cartel is dead,” thus proving that he has nothing to do with the cartel. He insisted that any evidence put forth to prove his connections to the Cali Cartel constituted “moral terrorism” against his government.

However, the arrest of Miguel Rodríguez was unable to hide the mounting evidence against Samper. On Aug. 7, a new “narco-cassette” circulated in the press, on which the voice of Samper himself could be heard talking with Elizabeth Montoya de Sarria, wife of Jesús Sarria, a drug trafficker who has been sought by Interpol since early 1993. Sarria and his wife attended Samper’s Aug. 7, 1994 inauguration as special invited guests. Elizabeth de Sarria, in particular, had raised large quantities of money from her friends and acquaintances for Samper.

### **Between a rock and a hard place**

International pressure, especially from the United States and from nationalist civil-military sectors within Colombia, have forced Samper to jail those who financed his campaign, to try thereby to prove that his government is not a narco-government.

The outcome is not yet decided: The Cali Cartel has been seriously wounded, but is by no means dead, as Samper publicly insists. Gilberto, Miguel and Jorge Eliecer Rodríguez Orejuela, José Santacruz Londoño, and their various followers still possess all their vast properties. Nothing has yet been confiscated. They still have at their disposal their army of lawyers and another army of assassins, and they still hope to be judged by the penal code those lawyers wrote.

If Samper changes these conditions which benefit the drug lords, he will have definitively betrayed the traffickers who financed his campaign, but he will have done a great service to his nation, freeing it of the corruption which has been slowly suffocating it.

But even such an action would be no guarantee that he can stay in power much longer. The evidence against Samper is so extensive that covering it up would be like trying to block the sun with one’s thumb.

In 1989, cartel hitmen mistakenly assassinated José Antequera, a leader of the Colombian Communist Party. Samper, who happened to be at the airport, casually chatting with Antequera at the time, was hit by numerous bullets. Miraculously, and with the help of quick medical attention, Samper survived. At the time, a police source told *EIR* that Samper had received a multimillion-dollar indemnification from the drug traders while in Europe, who assured him the bullets were not meant for him.

In Medina’s famous confession, the former Samper treasurer reveals that after having recovered from the incident, Samper went abroad accompanied by the cartel’s Alberto Giraldo, who carried a suitcase stuffed with dollars to pay whatever costs Samper might incur.

It would appear that God spared Samper that day in 1989, in order to face the public scorn his government is now experiencing.

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## Mexico

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# Drug trade boomed in Bush-Salinas ‘miracle’

by Carlos Méndez

In a two-part article printed July 30 and 31, the *New York Times* claimed that during President Carlos Salinas’s 1988-94 administration, millions of narco-dollars entered Mexico, that U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials reckon that some \$7 billion went into Mexico, and that “American officials say huge amounts of drug money have flowed into Mexico’s tourism, transportation, and construction industries, helping to fuel the speculative rise of the economy until last year.” The article’s author, Tim Golden, also quotes James Moody, an FBI official, who stated “without offering details,” that “many of the state-owned companies privatized under Mr. Salinas had been bought by traffickers.”

The article also documents that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), pushed by Salinas and then-U.S. President George Bush, was used to restrain anti-drug actions in Mexico. “People desperately wanted drugs not to become a complicating factor for NAFTA. . . . There was a degree of illicit activity that was just accepted,” said John P. Walters, a senior official for international drug policy at the Bush White House. Author Golden also quotes a U.S. official “who dealt extensively with the Mexicans,” according to whom, “Once Salinas and Bush decided to go ahead with NAFTA as their number-one goal, then everything else had to be made manageable. On the issue of high-level officials being involved in drugs, we said, ‘Carlos, as long as we are getting results, we are not going to micromanage.’ ”

What the *New York Times* is now revealing—with what intention we cannot say—*EIR* had already warned about four years ago: “NAFTA will also reorganize the entire Ibero-American banking structure, and thereby create the conditions under which the vast financial flows originating in the Ibero-American drug trade can be more readily laundered into the cash-strapped Anglo-American banking system.” And, “NAFTA’s banking takeover will open up the banking system of the Americas to all sorts of speculative hot money flows—including those of the drug trade. Such activity does not aid production; it destroys it.” (See “Auschwitz Below the Border: Free Trade Pact Is George ‘Hitler’ Bush’s Mexican Holocaust,” May 1, 1991.)

Years later, this *EIR* prognosis was confirmed by one of the main players in the process: Richard Thornburgh, the Attorney General of the United States in the Bush administration, stated cynically that the Justice Department was investi-