

Samper exonerated by Cali Cartel partner

by Javier Almario

Colombia's Ambassador to Mexico Gustavo de Greiff, who, on Aug. 16, 1994, acted in his capacity as that nation's Prosecutor General to exonerate newly inaugurated President Ernesto Samper Pizano of charges that his electoral campaign had taken drug money, was a partner of Cali Cartel chieftain Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela in a company called El Dorado Airlines, according to the daily *El Espectador* on Aug. 27.

In 1980, while both a partner and president of El Dorado Airlines, De Greiff agreed to take on additional partnerships in the company, including Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela—who is today sitting in a Colombian jail awaiting trial on drug trafficking charges—and his first wife and son. Later that same year, once the Rodríguez family had become majority holders in the company, De Greiff sold his shares to Alberto Giraldo, the Cali Cartel's public relations mouthpiece who used the cover of "journalist" to operate as a high-level agent of political influence for the cartel drug-lords. Giraldo, who is also in jail, served as the liaison for brothers Gilberto and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, for the \$6 million or more those cartel kingpins passed to the Samper Pizano presidential campaign.

After the *El Espectador* revelations, De Greiff admitted that he was indeed a partner of Rodríguez Orejuela, and it is now expected that he will resign as ambassador to Mexico.

Maximiliano Londoño Penilla, president of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement, had repeatedly demanded the resignation of then-Prosecutor General Gustavo de Greiff, in 1992, 1993, and 1994, charging that De Greiff's actions in that post did not serve in the prosecution of criminals, but rather to propagandize his advocacy of drug legalization. In 1993, *EIR* published an article which charged that the naming of Gustavo de Greiff as Prosecutor General, of Carlos Gustavo Arrieta as Attorney General, and of Jaime Giraldo Angel as justice minister, was part of a deal brokered by former President Alfonso López Michelsen, in which then-Medellín Cartel boss Pablo Escobar and his associates had demanded pro-legalization appointments to those posts. López's negotiations with the cartel were fully endorsed by the government of Samper's predecessor, César Gaviria Trujillo, who today serves as secretary general of the Organization of American States.

Legalization of the drug trade has been a key element of Samper Pizano's program since at least 1978, when, as president of the bankers' lobby known as the National Association of Financial Institutes, he launched a high-profile global campaign in favor of drug legalization. In 1993, the Colombian Constitutional Court, in evident coordination with De Greiff, legalized the consumption of the so-called "personal dose" of narcotics in Colombia, through which decision Samper hoped to enter the presidency with part of his program already in place.

The Aug. 16, 1994 ruling with which De Greiff absolved Samper says textually that the Prosecutor General's office had reached the "unequivocal conclusion that in the concrete case of the Ernesto Samper Pizano campaign, severe auditing controls had been established from the beginning to make it impossible for any sum of money of doubtful origin to enter campaign coffers." De Greiff's office had based its finding on the official accounting records of the Samper electoral campaign. Today, the manager of that campaign, former Defense Minister Fernando Botero Zea, is in jail, accused by the current Prosecutor General's office of "illegal enrichment" to the benefit of the Samper presidential campaign, and for having falsified campaign accounts.

The national treasurer of the Samper campaign, Santiago Medina Serna, is also in jail for the same reason, and has so far confessed that at least \$6 million of Cali Cartel money went to Samper's campaign. The Accusations Committee of the Colombian House of Representatives is investigating Samper himself for the same causes. Current Communications Minister Armando Benedetti is similarly under investigation for having accepted drug money to finance Samper's campaign on the Atlantic Coast. Samper's wife, Jacquín Strauss de Samper, had to testify before the Prosecutor's office, for having used the funds of an ecological foundation to finance her husband's campaign. Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe also recently had to testify before the Prosecutor's office, under suspicion of using improper means to spy on the Prosecutor's investigations.

Many were absolved

De Greiff, Gilberto Rodríguez's "former" partner, not only absolved Samper, but did the same for Helmer Herrera Buitrago—the only one of the seven top kingpins of the Cali Cartel who is not yet behind bars—along with several other drug traffickers and "former" partners of Gilberto Rodríguez, who were effectively given safe conduct after they personally appealed to him in his capacity as Prosecutor General.

Samper's situation today is desperate. He is clinging to the presidency despite zero credibility, because he believes that his status as President enhances his ability to legally defend himself. He prefers to be judged by the House of Representatives, which is chock full of criminals who took drug money for their own campaigns, than to have to deal

Philip Morris case: Free trade is organized crime

The revelation that Cali Cartel representative Elizabeth Sarria was discussing "concessions" for Philip Morris with Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano—revealed in the most recent narco-cassette, and not denied by the President's office—points once more to the tobacco multinational's close cohabitation with drug smugglers and narco-traffickers. There is hardly a police agency in Europe, east or west, that has not run across the trail of Philip Morris and other tobacco companies into cigarette-smuggling and drug-trafficking networks. In fact, the famous Balkan Route, which since the early 1970s has brought heroin into western Europe, was originally used for smuggling Marlboros into the southern Italy cigarette black market run by the Camorra and Mafia.

But are Sarria's mediating concessions for Philip Morris with Samper merely coincidental to her Cali Cartel ties? Not really. According to numerous press accounts, the Colombian cartels created and expanded the domestic black market for Marlboro and other brands as an integral part of their money-laundering system for their narcodollars abroad. Philip Morris, Reynolds, and British American Tobacco (BAT) created a wholesale market for large, container-size shipments of cigarettes precisely as an at-arm's-length method to put cigarettes into the hands of smugglers. The cartels bought the cigarettes with dollars which were recovered as pesos from the domestic black market sales, exactly like the Camorra in Naples, Italy.

Of course, Philip Morris headquarters in New York City, in a discussion with *EIR*, denied knowing Sarria, and also denied that Philip Morris Colombia (which, through its Kraft subsidiary, buys up 25% of the annual Colombian coffee crop) would have anything to do with Sarria's claims of Philip Morris Brazil representatives having come to Bogotá regarding the "concessions." When questioned why Sarria, whom they allege they don't know, would be talking about Philip Morris and

concessions, the representative lamely claimed that "use of the name Philip Morris must have simply been a code word for something unrelated to us."

But when asked whether Philip Morris had been discussing "concessions" with the Colombian government, the answer was, "Yes." BAT, Philip Morris, and the domestic producer Coltabac have been pushing for a reduction of Colombia's cigarette sales tax. "We just had a meeting with the Ministry of Finance on how lowering cigarette taxes would let the legal cigarette trade take hold," he said.

Philip Morris as the great crusader against narco-cigarette-smugglers? Not quite. For Philip Morris, government "interference" in the markets (taxes, tariffs, etc.) creates organized crime; free trade defeats it. With this "free trade" argumentation, Philip Morris tried to patent in France the name "Marley," the surname of a famous marijuana-smoking Reggae singer since deceased, for marijuana cigarettes under (hoped for) drug legalization.

In fact, smuggling (narcotics, cigarettes) *is* free trade. The tobacco multinationals created the bulk wholesaling of cigarettes to feed supplies to smugglers to break down protectionist barriers. Since the days when British tobacco merchants planted poppy in India in order to ship opium to China under the banner of free trade, to the postwar linkage of cigarette smuggling and narcotics trafficking in Italy, Spain, and, in more recent years, eastern Europe, the powers behind tobacco have been in the middle of illegal drug smuggling. Elizabeth Sarria and her concessions for Philip Morris are merely one phase of a shake-down racket against sovereign governments: If you don't lower taxes, the black market we helped create will drain away more of your tax revenues. It's like the mafioso who comes to your business offering to sell you protection from the guys he hired to damage your property.

Philip Morris has been a key player of the George Bush, Margaret Thatcher-championed free-trade rape of the world's economy. Baroness Thatcher has a \$1 million-a-year contract with the firm to help break down protectionist barriers, and Bush's former White House Chief of Staff Craig Fuller is a senior vice president at Philip Morris.—*Roger Moore*

with the "faceless judge" system, created precisely to try crimes of drug trafficking. To protect judges hearing such cases, many of whom have in the past been assassinated, the accused are not permitted to see either the judge or the prosecuting attorney, who use special microphones to distort their real voices to prevent recognition.

The late-August resignation of Colombian Ambassador to Great Britain Noemí Sanín adds another nail to Samper's

political coffin. Sanín, who was foreign minister in the Gaviria government, is considered one of the most prominent figures in the opposition Conservative Party, with presidential ambitions of her own. In Colombia, her resignation is seen as the move of an intelligent rat abandoning a sinking ship. Her move also reflects the pragmatic evaluation of her English hosts regarding the future of the Samper government.