

Another Dope, Inc. stooge falls in Colombia

by Andrea Olivieri

A Jan. 22 decision by the former campaign manager for Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano, to “come clean” and finger his boss as “deeply involved” in taking drug money, is probably the final nail in Samper’s political coffin. After spending nearly 18 months dodging mounting accusations of corruption, the cocaine cartels’ wholly-owned President has now run aground, and his resignation, or impeachment, is considered imminent.

Six months ago, on Aug. 18, *EIR* published a feature entitled “Dope Inc. Stooges Go Down in the Caribbean”—a reference to the series of George Bush-endorsed Presidents who had fallen to corruption and fraud charges, or who, like Mexico’s Carlos Salinas, barely made it out of the Presidency (and the country) ahead of the law. That article pointed to Colombia’s Samper as the next to go, noting in particular the Clinton administration’s firm decision to take down Colombia’s cocaine- and heroin-trafficking Cali Cartel.

Today, Samper is literally under siege. Figures from across the political spectrum are demanding his resignation. These include his own former ambassador to London, the Conservative Party’s Noemí Sanín; Liberal Party Presidential hopeful Juan Manuel Santos, part of the powerful Santos family which runs the influential daily *El Tiempo*; Conservative Party Sen. Enrique Gómez Hurtado, leader of an anti-Samper congressional bloc known as “The Decent Ones”; former Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González; and Samper’s former Presidential rival from the Conservative Party Andrés Pastrana. A number of these political figures are currently living abroad, out of fear for their lives.

Samper’s ambassadors to both the United States and to neighboring Venezuela, have reportedly resigned. Samper’s health minister, brother of the martyred Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, resigned because “the credibility of the

government is gravely damaged.” All of the country’s top business federations have issued a statement describing the political and economic situation in the country as untenable, and urging Samper to “relinquish office.” The head of the National Federation of Armed Forces Reserves has called on the military to “take power, if necessary.” Even the long-loyal daily *El Espectador* editorially withdrew its support for Samper, while the opposition daily *La Prensa* headlined its coverage of Botero’s revelation, “It’s Over!”

The revelations

Samper’s former campaign manager Fernando Botero, described in the corrupted U.S. news media as a “highly respected former cabinet member,” has in fact spent the past five months in a military prison on charges of “illicit enrichment,” related to the multimillion-dollar infusions from the Cali Cartel into Samper’s Presidential campaign. The son of Colombia’s most famous painter, and scion of one of the country’s most oligarchic families, Botero was, until recently, a close friend of Samper, and had been rewarded with the choice post of defense minister in Samper’s cabinet. His sudden decision to “get it off my chest” and reveal the truth, was reportedly linked to Samper’s failure—thanks to U.S. intervention—to ram through congressional legislation that would have decriminalized “illicit enrichment,” and also to the expiring deadline on leniency for those cooperating with the Prosecutor’s office.

In his jailhouse interview with the media, Botero posed the question, “‘Did President Samper know of the narco-financing of his campaign?’ With sadness, because President Samper is my friend, I have to answer categorically that, yes, he knew. And not just that, I must also say President Samper is deeply involved in those actions.” Botero, who makes the

incredible claim that he personally knew nothing about the infiltration of drug money into the campaign until its final days, has also identified Samper's powerful Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe as the man who personally distributed the Cali Cartel's millions to various campaign offices around the country. Serpa Uribe was a co-president of the 1991 Constituent Assembly, which was massively bribed by the Cali Cartel, and voted up a constitutional ban on extradition. He is a longtime intimate of President Samper.

Botero, who has sent his youngest children out of Colombia for fear of retaliation, is now engaged in a two-week-long process of giving documented testimony to the Prosecutor's office. That testimony, unless Samper has resigned first, is likely to lead to a Supreme Court recommendation for impeachment.

Samper's initial response was to go on national television and radio to label Botero "a liar out to save his own skin," and to insist that he will remain in the Presidency until he can walk out with his "head high, or dead." A follow-up address to the nation Jan. 24 repeated the line that "resignation is for cowards," but acknowledged the crisis in the country, and suggested a national referendum and/or congressional debate on his continued rule. Both proposals have been denounced as too easily rigged. Said the director of the ruling Liberal Party Luis Guillermo Giraldo, "I think the President should resign or step down temporarily. Who would believe a referendum in the face of judicial evidence?"

Samper's call for reopening the "investigation" by the tainted Congressional "Accusations Committee," which only a month ago ruled "a lack of evidence" to proceed with an investigation of Samper, was met with equal contempt.

Despite a heavy military contingent stationed around the Presidential palace and throughout Bogotá to "keep order," students have already massed in the streets of the capital, demanding Samper's resignation. The top military command has declared that it will remain "impartial," but there are unconfirmed reports that the Clinton administration will revoke the entrance visas of several senior officers in the Colombian military, including the commander of the joint chiefs of staff Gen. Hernando Camilo Zuñiga, and his deputy Gen. Jesús Vergara. According to the *Washington Post*, they had been named by former Cali Cartel paymaster Guillermo Pallomari, today a protected witness in the United States, as being on the Cartel payroll. According to U.S. Ambassador Myles Frechette, "a great number" of other Colombian visas were in similar danger of being revoked, but further decisions on that are still pending.

Behind Samper

Samper was groomed for his role as the cartel's towel-boy by former President Alfonso López Michelsen (1974-78), who picked up Ernestito as a 25-year-old economist and brought him into the inner circle of "The Godfather," as López came to be known. Samper learned fast, and in 1979, told an

interviewer: "Morality, like criminality, is not an absolute category, as if set for all time. Criminal behavior is a political determination born of the State, which establishes that determination based on an interpretation of a *historical ethos*, that is, on popular ethical sentiments. That which was a crime yesterday, today is no longer, because of the golden rule of the nature of the function of the State."

Dope, Inc.'s capture of the Colombian Presidency through Samper was made possible through a pact struck with the Cali Cartel by Samper's predecessor (1990-94) César Gaviria Trujillo. Gaviria, whose only other claim to fame is a collection of Beatles records said to be the largest in Colombia, climbed into the Colombian Presidency over the corpse of Luis Carlos Galán, the anti-drug front-runner who was assassinated by the mafia in August 1989. With the full backing of the Bush administration in Washington and of Dope, Inc.'s headquarters in the City of London, Gaviria delivered the Colombian economy over to the illegal drug trade, and launched the political "reforms" which eventually brought Samper and his cartel buddies fully into power. For a job well done, George Bush gave Gaviria the post of secretary-general of the Organization of American States. Samper will not be so lucky.

One analyst nervously described Samper's political demise as "opening up a Pandora's box." In reality, it offers the opportunity not only for a long-overdue purge of the narco-corruption and narco-terror which ravages Colombia, but makes possible a global assault on the Bush/British forces *behind* Dope, Inc. If the opportunity is lost, however, it will give those networks a chance to regroup and consolidate their hold. It is no accident that British-Mont Pelerin Society mouthpieces everywhere have begun a renewed drive for drug legalization, claiming that this is the only way to stop corruption and violence.

The U.S. State Department has been extremely cautious in its comments on the latest escalation in Colombia's "narcogate," preferring to await the results of Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso's investigations before taking a public stand. However, the mid-January visit of CIA director John Deutch to Colombia immediately following the prison escape of Cali Cartel boss Santacruz Londoño, was described as "extremely tough," with the cabinet-level U.S. official refusing outright to meet with Colombia's General Zuñiga and reportedly "reading the riot act" to Samper. The latest announcement of the revoked U.S. visas was also a carefully timed diplomatic intervention designed to have an impact on the quickly growing scandal.

A Clinton administration move on March 1 to deny Colombia certification as a "fully cooperating partner" in the war on drugs, until and unless Samper and his allies throughout the various branches of government are purged, would go a long way toward breaking the Cali Cartel's stranglehold over that victimized nation, and would be a "shot heard 'round the world" in the war on drugs.