

Fidel Castro brokers Colombian President Samper's exoneration

by Gretchen Small

By a vote of 111-43, the Colombian House of Representatives voted on June 12 to absolve President Ernesto Samper Pizano of charges of illicit enrichment, fraud, and cover-up, all criminal charges carrying prison terms. Ignored was the mountain of evidence presented by Colombian Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdívieso Sarmiento, that drug traffickers had paid more than \$6 million to buy the Presidency for Samper in 1994.

While Samper has trumpeted his victory to the world as proof of his "innocence," there was no surprise in the Congressional vote in his favor, given that at least 60% of sitting Colombian congressmen, including many from the President's Liberal Party, are believed to have taken drug money for their own campaigns.

The real shocker, however, is the systematic cover-up by the major international press, of the role played by Cuba's Fidel Castro in achieving that vote. This deliberate blackout, is a case where "no news," is becoming a bit of real news in itself.

The Samper regime should have been unceremoniously thrown out of office, long before the vote was taken. On March 1, President William Clinton had taken decisive action toward that goal, when he "decertified" the Samper regime, declaring it non-cooperative in the fight against drug trafficking, and thus subject to an escalating series of U.S. sanctions. The external pressure galvanized further resistance within Colombia, where the drug mob has terrorized all but the most brave into silence, permanently silencing many in the grave.

International backers of the cartel government countered with their own mobilization, from the British House of Lords itself, to the ever-present political control apparatus over the region, the Inter-American Dialogue. The determination demonstrated by the U.S. President's Executive action, however, opened a serious flank against the mob regime, from within President Samper's Liberal Party itself. The faction headed by former Colombian President César Gaviria, now secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS), came to the conclusion that Samper's exoneration would bury the party's chances for a 1998 Presidential win.

The possibility that Gaviria's forces, including Colombian Vice President Humberto de la Calle Lombana, would join the anti-Samper opposition, forced the cartel-Samper combination to "take measures."

On April 2, the brother of former President Gaviria was kidnapped. The narcos paid for the kidnapping, a guerrilla group carried it out, and when the moment came to kill him, Castro stepped forward, to broker the deal which secured the Congressional exoneration of Samper—freedom for Gaviria's brother, and protection for the guerrillas involved.

Gaviria had been disarmed as a potential opponent of Samper's, and de la Calle was warned that he, too, could become a target anytime, anywhere. As the London *Financial Times* cynically wrote on June 14, "The freeing of former President César Gaviria's brother by kidnapers just before the Congressional vote could be significant in this process: The smiling embraces of Mr. Samper and Mr. Gaviria suggest that support—or at least less antagonism—from the Gaviria wing of the Liberal Party might be forthcoming."

The kidnapping, and its outcome, was a raw display of the Castro regime's continuing power in the Americas, staged personally by Fidel Castro in the most public manner possible, to deliver a message: The Colombian narco-terrorists are Cuba's.

EIR has warned that the narcoterrorist capability wielded by the Castro regime through its São Paulo Forum, constitutes one of London's most dangerous weapons against the security of the entire Western Hemisphere, the United States most emphatically included.

The refusal in Washington to speak the truth about Castro, has now helped sink President's Clinton's efforts to break the drug cartel's grip over Colombia. The Cali Cartel is firmly ensconced in the Presidential palace. In July, the three Ochoa brothers who head the Medellín Cartel, walk free, after running their business for five years and five months from their jail cells.

If people in Washington allow what just happened in Colombia to occur without a peep, the message delivered to the nations of the hemisphere is, cut your deals with the Castro-narco machine now, because that is who is in charge.

Castro's brutal kidnapping

Juan Carlos Gaviria could barely walk when he was released, because the terrorists, operating under the name "Dignity for Colombia," had held him, doubled over, in a 13x31 inch cell for 72 days. He was allowed no daylight, and taken out only for the requisite pictures to prove that the tortured man was still alive, needed to accompany the terrorists' propaganda diatribes.

In a June 14 interview from Istanbul, Turkey, where he was attending the United Nations Habitat II conference, Castro told Colombia's WV radio, that he, personally, had played a pivotal role in arranging Gaviria's release. What "helped to resolve the kidnapping," he said, were Cuba's ideological ties with Hugo Torres Restrepo, alias "Commander Bochica," the Army of National Liberation (ELN) terrorist who directs "Dignity for Colombia" from the jail cell where he is serving a 24-year sentence for homicide. "Bochica" is "a person close to our way of thinking," said Castro. "The motives for this kidnapping were purely political, and therefore I believed it possible to speak with them."

"In my 35-year career, I've never seen such evil or heartless people," Colombia's National Police chief Gen. José Rosso Serrano told the press June 13. Although eight members of Dignity for Colombia were allowed to fly to exile in Cuba, another 50 members remain at large, he said, and they are very dangerous. Their plans include kidnapping Vice President de la Calle, and launching a terrorist wave in Bogotá.

The Lucio connection

Dignity for Colombia first surfaced a year ago, with the assassination of former Sen. Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, a leading critic of Samper's narco-government. The group has since threatened journalists, including *EIR*'s personnel in Colombia, and others, such as Prosecutor General Valdívieso.

Colombia's National Police report that "Dignity" first operated as the Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Commando (JEGA), formed by "dissident" members of the April 19 Movement (M-19), infamous for its 1985 assault on Colombia's Justice Palace on behalf of the drug cartels, and of the Army of National Liberation (ELN), a group of narco-terrorists which, like the M-19, has been controlled from the outset by the Castro regime (see *EIR*, Nov. 10, 1995, "New Terror International Targets the Americas," for profiles on both).

Most Colombians suspected that the Samper regime was behind Dignity for Colombia, when the group took credit for killing the regime's most outspoken opponent, Gómez Hurtado. Now, in the wake of the Gaviria kidnapping, that link has been proven. Law enforcement sources report that they have established ties between JEGA-Dignity for Colombia, and Congressman Carlos Alonso Lucio, the member of the legalized section of the M-19 and outspoken defender of the drug trade, whom the Samper regime has used as one

of its leading instruments against the United States and its law enforcement personnel.

In October 1995, the Samper regime used Lucio as its conduit for publicizing transcripts of conversations between U.S. government officials, which the Colombian government's political police, the DAS, had received through illegal wiretaps of the U.S. Embassy. U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Myles Frechette told the Jan. 1, 1996 *Journal of Commerce*, "It is our belief that those conversations were intercepted by the Colombian government. We aren't happy about it."

The Samper government protested mightily against the accusation, but it did not stop bugging U.S. Embassy phones. Clinton's Assistant Secretary of State for Anti-Narcotics and Terrorism Robert Gelbard told Bogotá's *El Tiempo* on June 18: "The DAS is intercepting the calls" of U.S. Ambassador Frechette; "Bogotá is like Moscow in the 1970s."

Dignity for the drug trade

The first communiqué issued by Dignity for Colombia after kidnapping Juan Carlos Gaviria, directed its fire at Prosecutor General Valdívieso and Gaviria's brother, the former President, denouncing them as "disguised gringos" serving a foreign power. "Drugs are not the cause of the misery of the Colombian people," and the drug cartels are not the country's problem, they declared.

The kidnapers issued a series of communiqués over the course of the next three months, repeating the demands and threats of the drug cartels and the narco-terrorists: that the system of trials by "faceless judges," adopted to protect the identity of judges from retaliation by the narco-terrorist machine, be eliminated; repeated attacks against any talk of renewing extradition between the United States and Colombia, which the drug kingpins most desperately fear; threats to attack any and all U.S. property and persons, if any U.S. soldiers step onto Colombian soil; threats to force the expulsion of U.S. Embassy personnel, one by one.

A May 9 communiqué contained the first call for the Cuban regime to play a role, demanding that Castro's intimate, Colombian narco-literati Gabriel García Márquez, take up their cause. The set-up for negotiations was put in place on May 29, with a communiqué in which they promised to assassinate their captive, at the point that the House of Representatives absolved Samper.

As the clock ticked toward his brother's death sentence, the annual meeting of the OAS took place in Panama, under the direction of its secretary general, César Gaviria. There, a majority of the member-nations of the OAS passed a resolution condemning the Helms-Burton law, recently signed by President Clinton, which proposes to strengthen the trade blockade against Cuba. It was an unusual diplomatic defeat for the United States, and U.S. officials complained that the OAS organizers of the conference had rammed the vote through without warning.

One week later, the Congressional debate on Samper's

innocence was winding up. On June 11, Castro issued a brief public “appeal” to Gaviria’s kidnappers, “to make contact with the family in order to seek a humane and honorable solution.”

Then, just hours before the vote in the Congress occurred, late in the night on June 12, eight terrorists, the captive, Juan Carlos Gaviria, and National Police director General Rosso Serrano boarded a plane in Pereira, where Gaviria had been kept captive, and flew to Bogotá’s international airport, the terrorists’ guns trained on Gaviria throughout the flight. Once in Bogotá, the terrorists, still armed and their faces covered, accompanied by an official from the International Red Cross and a Cuban official, boarded a waiting plane, which was given immediate clearance to leave for Cuba, by air traffic controllers who had been ordered to stop all other flights, because this was “a national security flight.”

Exactly what happened, when, is not known, but that this was a deal negotiated between narcos, terrorists, Castro, and the Samper government, is unquestionable. It is also acknowledged by all that two Cuban government officials were the intermediaries for the operation, one of them being Cuba’s ambassador to Colombia. According to a June 18 report in the well-informed opposition daily *La Prensa*, Castro’s two personal emissaries were, in fact, the only ones to actually go to where the victim was being held, and to escort him to waiting authorities.

According to *La Prensa*, negotiations included the move of “Commander Bochica” from where he was being held, to the Modelo prison. There, he was placed in a cell adjoining that of a top Cali Cartel drug trafficker, Victor Patiño Fomeque. A meeting was then held at the Modelo prison, this report goes, between “Bochica,” the drug trafficker, the director of the jail, and, possibly, the National Police director himself, from which, it is said, the terrorist “Bochica” placed the call ordering Gaviria’s release.

After the exoneration of Samper, Inter-American Dialogue President Peter Hakim urged the Clinton administration not to impose strong sanctions against the Samper government, because, as he insisted to the *Washington Times* of June 14, the Samper regime “is not a terrorist state. This is a country with which we have strong relations.”

Samper’s forces, however, brazenly declare otherwise. In his final speech during the Congressional debate over Samper on June 12, Dignity for Colombia’s congressman, Lucio, outlined a program for how to continue in power, indefinitely. Accepting drug money for political campaigns is no crime, he raved; there is hysteria against the drug trade, because this is how poor people can become rich, and that should be a cause for joy. “We” must prepare ourselves, so that in the next elections, two years from now, “we” continue in power, and so, drugs must be legalized, the “faceless judges” program stopped, and all contracts for opposition media which is “servile” to the anti-regime “conspiracy” orchestrated by the United States, cut, he concluded.

Lee Kuan Yew declares himself a British agent

by Michael O. Billington

On June 5, the *Singapore Straits Times* reported that Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew has confirmed publicly, and embraced, what *EIR* has repeatedly stated, that Lee Kuan Yew is the principal spokesman for British financial and political interests in Asia, especially in regard to British plans for the dismemberment of China. At a meeting of the Business Council in Williamsburg, Virginia, and subsequently, in an interview with NBC-TV’s Tom Brokaw, Lee proudly described himself as a “product of the British Empire,” who sees the world “through British eyes,” and who “has the habit of reading British weeklies such as the *Economist*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, and listening to the [British Broadcasting Corp. as] the best sources of information.”

This admission has a striking resemblance to the famous declaration of Henry Kissinger, before the leaders of British intelligence gathered at Chatham House in London on May 10, 1982, that throughout his years of service in the U.S. government, he considered the British Foreign Office to be his primary center of loyalty. Indeed, Kissinger and Lee Kuan Yew are close associates, and allies in imposing British geopolitical policies in Asia. For example, Lee Kuan Yew, in his presentation before the Business Council, berated Taiwan’s President Lee Teng-hui for his Japanese training and education, pronouncing:

“Unfortunately, the Japanese worldview does not accord high regard for China” (unlike the British—“no dogs or Chinamen allowed”). This effort to pit Japan against China is precisely the method used by Kissinger to explain his feigned support for China, a familiar British geopolitical “balance-of-power” strategy aimed at maintaining British control over both.

The British anti-development strategy

As *EIR* has documented over the past months, the British have launched a public campaign to reassert the power of the Empire, building upon the structure of that Empire as it exists today in the British Commonwealth. Asia is central to the new Empire, with Singapore and Australia the two primary centers for control. On March 1-2, a conference of Asian and European nations was held in Bangkok, Thailand, organized on the initiative of Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore and the leaders of