

Dope, Inc. steps up its assault on Colombia's Barco

by José Restrepo

Dope, Inc. has stepped up its drive to force the Colombian government of Virgilio Barco to surrender to the cocaine lords who have been slaughtering the Colombian people and spreading mind-destroying drugs to the world's youth. For the first time, drug legalization became an official plank in the platform of a leading candidate for the presidency in Colombia; and for the first time, a South American government went on public record calling for legalization of drugs. Both of these events occurred on Sept. 25, three days before President Barco traveled to the United States to seek support for the war on drugs.

On Sept. 25, Ernesto Samper Pizano, a presidential candidate in Colombia's ruling Liberal Party, called for drug legalization, as an alternative to the courageous fight Barco's government has put up since the mafia murdered front-running presidential contender Luis Galán in August. On the same day, the foreign minister of neighboring Peru, which used to back Colombia's efforts to stamp out the narcotics traffickers, went before the United Nations to argue for surrender to the drug pushers.

Peruvian Foreign Minister Guillermo Larco Cox suggested the "decriminalization" of drug use, arguing that "social and economic considerations" made the outright eradication of coca crops in his country unfeasible. Peru's ambassador to Washington César Atala also told a Senate Governmental Affairs committee that the U.S. should buy up Peru's coca crop as a cheaper alternative to trying to stop the traffickers.

Ernesto Samper Pizano, whose chances to become Colombia's next President were boosted when Galán died, owes his political career to the big money-center banks that keep afloat from the profits on laundering the fabulous profits of the drug trade, and to the U.S. Eastern Establishment media who speak for those banks. In the Carter era, Samper was invited to the U.S. by the State Department to argue for the "economic" benefits of legalizing drugs—until exposure by Lyndon LaRouche's political movement forced the Carter folks to put that policy on the back burner. Now Samper is invoking a full-scale revolt by the Liberal Party against President Barco.

Every call for "dialogue" with the drug lords has been amplified throughout the U.S. media, and every one is a page taken straight from the script written by the drug kingpins. In an interview published in mid-September by the Spanish magazine *Interviú*, Medellín Cartel chieftain Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha admits that the cartel launched its bloody offensive to force the government into the negotiations Samper is now demanding. "In Colombia they have dialogued with everyone except us. . . . What we want is to dialogue, what we want is peace. We want nothing more. . . . At this point it is up to the government, to propose what is to be done."

U.S. media traitors love it

Larco Cox's appeasement plan was applauded by left-liberal *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry, who suggests that market forces—not morality—should determine national drug policy. That same argument has been actively defended by the right-wing liberal economist Milton Friedman, and of course by Samper.

Interviewed in Colombia's *La República* on Sept. 25, Samper asserted that "if repressive action" against the drug cartels fails, "the road left is legalization of drugs." Samper chose the moment of President Barco's departure for the U.S. to demand a meeting of Liberal congressmen to formulate a new policy on the war on drugs. He told the RCN radio station that one needn't "blindly" follow government policy simply by virtue of being a member of the Liberal Party.

The Samper coup attempt was timed with Justice Minister Monica de Greiff's resignation, announced upon her return from the United States. She said, "I am going to collaborate with Ernesto Samper Pizano in his campaign." Samper called on the Liberal Party to issue a statement of solidarity with De Greiff.

On Sept. 26, De Greiff told the daily *El Tiempo*, she opposed the extradition of drug traffickers, which is *the* key issue in Barco's anti-drug war. In the Justice Ministry, she said, "All of us were aware that it wasn't a popular measure. Philosophically, the majority of the ministers did not like the idea of Colombians being tried abroad. . . . Extradition has

been the most difficult measure. . . . And it is possible that part of the violence that has been generated has been because of the extradition.”

De Greiff also confessed to *El Tiempo* that, like Samper Pizano, she believes in dialogue with the traffickers: “The government said that it will not dialogue, but one must wait and see how things develop. I don’t believe that the decisions of a government should be absolute, because situations are always changing. The President has said that dialogue is impossible. Suddenly, later, the question changes. Furthermore, in Colombia wars have almost never ended, because in nearly all of them arrangements were made. . . . In the United States, they asked me about extradition, and I told them it was unpopular, that it was not going to solve the problem of drug trafficking.”

The bankers’ blessing

Samper Pizano is getting the blessing of the U.S. Eastern Establishment bankers’ controlled media, known for promoting “recreational” drugs. The *Los Angeles Times* on Sept. 15 had a lengthy article drooling over the “courageous and patriotic” candidacy of Samper. The paper painted Samper as “anti-drug,” and made no mention of his decade-long advocacy of drug legalization, but did report his opposition to extradition. The Sunday *New York Times* of Sept. 24 showcased Samper as a popular anti-drug figure with an “international solution” to the drug problem. Again, it did not report that his proffered solution is legalization. On Sept. 29, the *New York Times* devoted ample coverage to De Greiff, but ran only a tiny paragraph on Barco’s meeting with President Bush to seek more support for his anti-drug offensive.

The U.S. publicity does not seem to be helping Samper’s electoral chances inside Colombia. According to a poll published by the pro-Samper magazine *Semana* of Sept. 25, 38-41% of Colombian voters back candidate César Gaviria Trujillo, successor to the martyred Luis Carlos Galán. The poll gives Samper only 15-18%.

Perhaps hoping to cash in on a “popular” issue, Samper has joined his voice in solidarity with a group of congressmen—including rival presidential candidate Alberto Santofimio Botero—who, it has just been revealed, have had their entrance visas to the United States canceled because of suspected drug ties. Samper’s protest, like those of the tainted politicians named, is that the State Department’s action constitutes an “imperialist” violation of Colombia’s “national sovereignty.”

However, the National Congress is far from a popular institution in Colombia these days. The anti-drug daily *El Espectador* devoted its lead editorial Sept. 26 to the growing suspicion that Colombia’s sovereignty is being violated by a Congress largely in league with the drug mafia. The editorial notes that the U.S. diplomatic black list was drawn up months earlier, but the targeted congressmen are only now howling against “Yankee imperialism,” in tandem with the “extradit-

ables” themselves. *El Espectador* writes, “The government has not dared to entrust [Congress] with its emergency legislation on the drug trade, perhaps because of this business of the visas and their protagonists. [Their names] were already known. The government feared a self-interested rebellion. There is no Congress. Why insist?”

When President Barco presented an executive decree to permit the naming of military mayors to those municipalities which required it, the Congress opposed his measure and forced it to be overturned. It was the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Norberto Morales Ballesteros, who told the press Sept. 23 that he has received several calls from Cartel chieftains Pablo Escobar and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, urging his intervention to force a government-mafia dialogue. Morales said, “Many feel that some day the war has to end, whether it is won or not. I believe that [dialogue] is an expeditious road, a door that has been opened. We will see if someone wants to enter.”

Sen. Juan Slebi Slebi, whose visa was canceled by the U.S. embassy, said Sept. 21 that “the inclusion of my name on the black list could be the result of my public position regarding the drug trafficking problem: that the only way to attenuate the business and lower the pressure is by legalizing consumption, as indicated by a British economic magazine,” *The Economist*.

The war goes on

Despite the pressures, President Barco has remained single-minded in his commitment to winning the war the mafia started. The National Narcotics Council has already allocated 180 of 375 planes seized from narcotics traffickers to the Colombian armed forces and national police force. Thousands of troops have been deployed onto the streets of major cities to protect banks, movie theaters, supermarkets, official buildings, and other mafia targets from an escalating series of bombings directed increasingly, according to military authorities, at “civilian targets.” Colombian and Venezuelan military officers spent three days in the city of Cartagena Sept. 23-25 to study joint plans for security and for fighting narco-terrorism along their common border.

On the eve of his departure for the United States to address the U.N. General Assembly and meet with President Bush, Barco vowed that his government “will never give in to the pressures of the narco-terrorists.” He said that the drastic measures he has dictated against the drug cartels are fully supported by the Colombians and have also received unprecedented international solidarity. Barco said that during his speech to the U.N., he would stress the global aspects of the battle against the drug trade, including the need for: a war against drug consumption in the advanced sector; a war against drug money laundering in the advanced sector; and a war against the uncontrolled export of chemicals and other products used in the production of cocaine, as well as against the uncontrolled export of weapons.

The Barco government has not been as clear-cut in its policy toward the narco-terrorist guerrilla groups. On Sept. 26, Colombia signed a long-debated peace accord with the M-19, the same terrorists who in November 1985 murdered half the Supreme Court and gutted the country's Justice Palace on orders of the drug cartels. That day, the M-19 published a full-page paid advertisement in the daily *El Tiempo*, urging dialogue with the drug mafia and elaborating a detailed agenda on how to accomplish this. While the M-19 covers itself by calling for an end to the drug trade, "because of the damage it causes to the health and dignity of man," its proposals are the same as the drug cartels. Point C of its agenda urges "suspension of all extradition requests. Amnesty for those who comply with the commitments stemming from this negotiation."

Dope, Inc.'s lobbyists

Working right alongside the legalization advocates are the doom-sayers and the anti-military crowd. On Sept. 11, the daily *La Prensa* published the statements of a supposed former member of Colombian army intelligence, insisting that "it will take billions of dollars and more than a decade to remove the threat posed by the drug traffickers." Next to these statements, *La Prensa* reported that "the government increased the military expense budget in 1990 by 17% [which will] limit increases in expenditures on schools, hospitals and other public works." *La Prensa* is owned by former President Misael Pastrana (Conservative Party) who has persisted in arguing the impossibility of a successful war against drugs, and who has led his party into vociferous opposition to the government's policy, a treasonous posture under war-time conditions.

Claims that military corruption is responsible for the drug trade are not only coming from the Colombian Communist Party and its media hirelings, like journalist Jorge Child, but from within the government. Attorney General Alfonso Gómez Méndez, married to M-19 sympathizer Patricia Lara, has told the press that "it is not for lack of military might that the big narcotics traffickers have not been able to be captured, or that they have an undefeatable army. It is because they have informants in the army and police that warn them ahead of time when operations are going to be executed."

Communist infiltrator Ricardo Gómez Mazuera, a former military intelligence officer, claimed at a press conference in Brazil Sept. 26 that "about 80% of the [Colombian] police are linked to the drug trade," and that the anti-drug offensive was therefore doomed to failure. He also accused both the army and police of clandestine killings of leftists, criminals, and homosexuals. Before his flight from Colombia, Gómez Mazuera—denounced by the Colombian Defense Ministry as "a mercenary of disinformation"—left his statement of accusations with the Attorney General, who is expected to conduct a formal investigation of the charges.

Gómez Mazuera's charges are designed to feed a growing campaign to undermine President Barco, who is being ac-

cused of having full prior knowledge of alleged military ties to paramilitary/drug trafficking networks. The Colombian Communist Party, the Samper networks, and circles around the Conservative Party's Pastrana are all pushing this scandal scenario, in hope of forcing the President's resignation and ending his anti-drug offensive. Their joint campaign is neatly represented by Clara López Obregón, a Communist politician and niece of Samper's mentor, former President Alfonso López Michelsen, who wrote in the Latin American-wide magazine *Visión* that "Nazi paramilitarism" has corrupted the Colombian armed forces, and is responsible for the violence wracking the country.

The "Nazi" charges are the ultimate cynical trick in the bag of those who demand that Colombia sit down and come to terms with the drug cartels without firing a further shot. By their logic, no one should have ever opposed Adolf Hitler's genocidal pretensions to power. After all, would it not have been simpler, since wars always end with peace talks, to have proceeded directly to the negotiating table with the Nazis? The analogy is not stretched: The cocaine cartels against whom the Barco government, and the majority of Colombia's people, are arrayed in the present war, share Hitler's values and methods down to the last detail. And those bankers, controlled media, and sleazy politicians who promote "dialogue" with them today, are no different from the collaborationists and appeasers of the Nazi era.

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