

Did the CIA murder Galán to stop Ibero-American economic unity?

by José Restrepo

One year ago, on Aug. 18, 1989, the leading presidential candidate of Colombia, anti-drug statesman Luis Carlos Galán, was killed by mafia gunmen. If his death was intended to demoralize the Colombian people, scatter Galán's loyalists, and deliver the nation to the cocaine mafia and the obscenely wealthy international bankers behind them, this plan may well have backfired. Not only did Colombia respond to the murder by declaring an all-out war on drugs in August 1989, but recent events in Colombia are bringing the following shocking question before every thinking citizen: Did the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency arrange Galán's death in order both to protect the cocaine cartels, *and* to prevent the emergence of an Ibero-American economic integration that would have loosened the death-grip of the international creditor banks over Colombia and its neighboring countries?

Item: On Aug. 15, the Colombian security agency DAS released its official report on the Galán murder, which pointed to Israeli reserve Col. Yair Klein, a CIA asset, as "the presumed adviser, mercenary, and instructor" of Ga-

lán's assassins. Klein also reportedly provided at least one of the weapons used in the fatal assault. Those weapons were purchased with funds provided by then-Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams—just one of the many clandestine operations run out of Washington in coordination with drugs and arms smugglers in the name of "Project Democracy."

Item: In commemoration of the first anniversary of Galán's death, the family-founded Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento Foundation organized an Aug. 15-17 seminar on "Latin American Integration and Democracy," which featured President César Gaviria Trujillo. Gaviria had been Galán's campaign manager, and was the Galán family's choice to succeed the murdered candidate in his bid for the presidency. Gloria Pachón, Galán's widow, told an Aug. 11 press conference announcing the seminar, "The integration of Latin America was Luis Carlos's principal ideal."

Continental integration, outside the OAS

In his speech to the seminar, Galán's father emphasized the reason the theme of continental integration was chosen to honor his son's memory: "For Luis Carlos, the cultural and political integration of our countries was of equal importance to the economic integration to be carried out and consolidated in Latin America." Alongside Galán's family and the Colombian head of state were Virgilio Barco, who was President of Colombia when Galán was killed, former Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera, and the foreign ministers of Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, and several Central American countries.

The newly inaugurated President Gaviria keynoted the integration seminar. In keeping with his mandate to uphold the ideals of the assassinated leader, he announced his government's intention to promote the creation of a "Latin American Forum." He then dropped a small political bombshell by emphasizing that such a forum must be independent of the Organization of American States, headquartered in Washington.

The OAS, said Gaviria, "was created with the criterion that a natural harmony of interests existed throughout the hemisphere. The truth has proven otherwise. The fact that within the same organization there could coexist such usually dissimilar aspirations as those of Latin America and the Unit-



Luis Carlos Galan, killed by the drug mafia one year ago. His family and friends have launched a drive to see his vision of continental integration fulfilled.

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ed States, reduces the possibility that our own vision, our own criteria, our own particular form of understanding the problems of continental and international policy, will acquire the dimension required." The OAS, insisted President Gaviria, "is non-functional as Latin America's interlocutor in world politics."

Gaviria added that a Latin American forum was required because "Latin America, as a region, has a unique identity and set of problems, and has been unable to express itself effectively in the world context. In the contemporary world, it is necessary that Latin America be a valid political and economic interlocutor in the face of the great actors of the international system."

In his speech, the President also condemned the U.S. military invasion of Panama, saying that "there exist those who see in the democratization process a justification for intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. It is evident that not all countries are advancing in the direction of constructing a pluralist system and not all at the same rate. These very differences among nations should be respected." The Colombian President added that the democratization of Eastern Europe was not being accomplished through force, and insisted that "democracy cannot be used to justify the

setting aside of the principle of non-intervention."

Gaviria's dilemma

The integration seminar marks a time of great decision for President Gaviria: whether to carry forward Galán's policies—that is, Ibero-American integration, the war on the drug cartels, the destruction of corrupt political machines—or to link up with the traditional political elites of the country. If he takes the latter path, and there are heavy pressures for him to do this, he will seek out "peace agreements" with the drug traffickers via pacts with the political machine of another ex-President, the cynical Alfonso López Michelsen. He will also make deals to lift all restrictions on imports under the so-called Open Door (*Apertura*) demanded by the United States, which would ravage national industry and agriculture, and shore up the drug traffickers.

On the night of Aug. 15, the seminar organizers prepared a huge banquet in Galán's honor, which was designed as a permanent reminder to the President of his political origins. During the banquet, a book on the life of Galán was presented, along with a videotape on the same theme. While the 4,000 participants at the dinner shouted "He lives! Galán is with us!" the foundation directors presented President Gavi-

Galán: Continental unity is the key to survival

The following are excerpts from a 1985 speech given by Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento, which were included in his father's presentation to the Latin American Meeting on Democracy and Integration, held in Bogotá Aug. 15 under the auspices of the Luis Carlos Galán Foundation.

All of Latin America is in convulsion, and I think will continue to be in convulsion at least through the end of the century, because the political, social, and economic responses are in crisis. The economic horizon is dark, and will continue to be dark.

The problem of the debt is very serious for the countries of Latin America. This problem will put an end to ideological conflicts, and will reunite all the forces of Latin America, because our security, our autonomy, our chances for development, and our role in the entire world are at stake. Colombia itself already has a very serious foreign debt problem—worse than the country has been allowed to believe. At first glance, our debt difficulties are not as critical as those of Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Peru or Panama. But they are nonetheless very serious. . . .

The most serious is that the debt service figures will continue to grow, and to the extent this occurs, it will continue to compromise the state's ability to invest and will continue to condition the state's ability to respond to social and economic problems.

This is not merely a problem of Colombia. It is a problem of all of America, and must be understood as a Latin American problem with political dimensions that should be posed in all their aspects, if an answer is to be forthcoming. Latin America finds itself facing two crises, each of them very serious and their sum terrible: the crisis of North-South relations on the one hand, and the crisis of East-West relations on the other.

In the face of these two crises, it is necessary to organize strategies; it is indispensable to come up with policies if we truly want serious, and not just spur-of-the-moment and transitory responses. If we want to build and consolidate democracy in our countries, we need there to be a Latin American response to the problem of the foreign debt, and a Latin American response to the problems of security. Latin America cannot wait for its redemption to come through aid from some foreign power, whether its influence be old or new within the region. Our transformation and our progress are goals that can only be achieved through our own efforts and our own capacity to politically organize ourselves and to give our economies another direction. . . .

ria with a bust of Luis Carlos Galán, inscribed "Galán, the thinker." Gaviria was asked to keep the bust in his presidential office, where Galán himself would have been, had the drug traffickers not murdered him. When Gaviria unveiled the sculpture, he received an emotional ovation.

Before the banquet concluded, the full documentary video of Galán's life was shown. From one of Galán's public speeches was chosen the famous quote: "Colombia must battle the ignominious international drug trade that has established itself in our country, until no Colombian need feel shame in showing his passport abroad." In another speech in the video, Galán demanded the reform of the international monetary system and its overseer, the International Monetary Fund. He proposed a policy of long-term, low-interest credits for developing the Third World. In the same speech, he pledged his commitment to achieving Latin American integration such that 100 million new jobs could be created in the region by the year 2000.

Also speaking at the seminar was former Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González, the man who had succeeded the assassinated Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in 1984, after Lara—a Galán intimate and courageous anti-drug warrior—fell to mafia bullets. Parejo himself had barely survived a murder attempt in Budapest, Hungary, where he was serving as Colombian ambassador in 1987. Shot five times in the face, Parejo miraculously survived, with the help of two operations to remove the bullets. He has remained an implacable anti-drug crusader to this day.

In his closing comments, Parejo González demanded that in homage to Galán, Colombia must continue, "without truce, the fight against the drug trade and against all the forms of corruption that are fostered by it in the heart of Colombian society." The ambassador warned that if any negotiations with the drug traffickers are undertaken, Colombia would find itself compromised "as a civilized nation of law." He insisted that the war against drugs must continue even if no international help is forthcoming, because it is the institutions of the fatherland and of democracy itself which are at stake. He reiterated his opposition to the dialogue with the drug cartels being pushed from many quarters of Colombia. "If such a thing were to come to pass, morality, the state of law, and public decency would be seriously and irreparably compromised," he warned.

Integration and the United States

Former Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera also intervened in the closing session, calling Galán the new symbol of Ibero-American integration. Caldera strongly criticized George Bush's "integration" plan, saying it would only be positive to the extent the United States intended to "recognize Latin American unity" for the purpose of accepting a collective renegotiation of the foreign debt and abandoning its strategy of case-by-case negotiations. Bush's "integration plan" is based on the creation of free-trade zones which might

better be dubbed slave-trade zones.

Mexican Foreign Minister Fernando Solana took the occasion to stress that "those who seek to find in Mexico's indisputable economic links to the United States a sign of Mexico's distancing itself from Latin America, are wrong and assault the Latin American project. We are neither integrating ourselves with the United States, nor separating ourselves from Latin America."

The student group "Let Us Save Colombia," which is the principal sponsor of the plebiscite to convene a national constituent assembly in the country, proposed to conference participants that they conduct a campaign throughout Latin America to hold a plebiscite on Oct. 12, 1991, "to let the people decide if they want integration." The students presented a manifesto to the assembly to launch the collection of signatures in every nation of Ibero-America.

Finally, on the evening of Aug. 17, all the national television stations aired the video on the life of Galán. Gaviria said in introducing it, "We want the future to arrive, and we must therefore prove that, like Luis Carlos Galán, we are worthy of the country we desire for our children. It will be achieved, said Galán, by integrating the nation, integrating Colombia with Latin America, and integrating Latin America with the world. . . . The government shares this commitment and assumes this commitment. The government bears responsibility and assumes that responsibility."

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