

Colombia certification battle at fever pitch, as deadline approaches

by Andrea Olivieri

As the March 1 deadline approaches for President Clinton's decision on whether or not to certify Colombia as a "fully cooperating partner in the war on drugs," a battle royal is ongoing in Washington. Rumors of policy splits between various branches of government abound. Pro-certification pressure from such Washington think-tanks as the pro-drug-legalization Inter-American Dialogue and the Forum for International Policy, is intense. And several legislative initiatives have been undertaken on Capitol Hill, designed to influence President Clinton's March 1 decision in favor of certification.

At the same time, drug-tainted Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano is doing his utmost to cling to power, by lobbying for a pro-certification vote in the United States which would give his administration a new lease on life. His vice-president, Humberto de la Calle, appealed to U.S. counterpart Al Gore in favor of certification. So, too, did a letter to President Clinton from five former Colombian Presidents. Colombian Ambassador to the United States Carlos Lleras de la Fuente has been dragooning delegations of Colombian businessmen to come to Washington and lobby for certification. One such group, however, was snubbed by Assistant Secretary of State for Narcotics Affairs Robert Gelbard, who is considered a key voice in influencing how Clinton will decide.

Why Samper must be decertified

Also in Washington for ten days was Maximiliano Londoño, the head of the Colombian branch of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA), and a veteran fighter in the war on drugs. Londoño met with congressmen, administration officials, and others, on the urgency of withdrawing U.S. support for Samper, in the form of an unequivocal decertification decision. During his visit, Londoño ran into universal sympathy, but also two arguments against decertification: 1) Samper will fall anyway, and 2) why "punish" all of Colombia for a few "rotten apples" like Samper.

Londoño emphasized that Samper has no intention of resigning, as indicated by his widespread use of terror against his opponents and his elaborate efforts to bribe, threaten, and

cajole members of Congress and other relevant institutions regarding his case. The only thing Samper fears, insisted Londoño, is withdrawal of U.S. support and the kind of financial and trade sanctions that would trigger an immediate revolt inside Colombia against his reign. Londoño also pointed out that Samper is but a puppet for powerful political and financial interests, both in Colombia and abroad, which are deeply entrenched over decades. Decertification would send an unequivocal message that their criminal reign of terror will no longer be tolerated by the United States.

If, however, the Clinton administration grants certification, this would give Samper's Presidency a seal of approval, and a new lease on political life that would have devastating consequences for Colombia and its people. Decertification, on the other hand, is a sovereign U.S. decision, in fulfillment of U.S. law, which would strip Samper of his legitimacy in the eyes of the world, while allowing Colombians to clean up their own act. "Take away Samper's international props, and we'll take care of business at home," said Londoño.

Samper's U.S. 'props'

While President Clinton struggles to come up with the right policy toward Colombia, his administration has been hit by at least two Congressional initiatives designed to yield a decision in favor of Samper's certification. One is an open letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher by a group of congressmen, urging U.S. backing for the appointment of a United Nations "human rights rapporteur" to monitor the situation in Colombia. The letter relies on the information of such pro-terrorist non-governmental organizations as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, to attack Colombia's Armed Forces and police—the final bulwark against narco-terrorism in that country—as violators of human rights, while praising President Samper for his efforts to address the problem! The initiative is co-sponsored by, among others, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who is closely identified with speculator George Soros, a leading financier of drug-legalization causes worldwide.

A second initiative is the bill proposed by New York Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and California Democrat

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, demanding that President Clinton decertify Mexico. The bill, while identifying a very real problem of drug trafficking and corruption in Mexico, nonetheless functions as a deliberate diversionary tactic at a moment when all eyes are on Colombia, as a test case for whether Clinton's war on drugs is going to proceed, or not. As Lyndon LaRouche put it in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on Jan. 27: "It's simply that the Mexican government is not a puppet of the drug lords in the way that the Colombian government is. That's the difference."

A memorandum issued by *EIR* on why Clinton must decertify Colombia has circulated extensively in Washington and abroad, and has already drawn blood. Samper's ambassador to Mexico, Gustavo de Greiff, an avid lobbyist for drug legalization who used his position as General Prosecutor in the previous Colombian administration to whitewash pre-election evidence against Samper, received a copy of the *EIR* memo, and sent its editors a letter of protest at the supposed "string of lies" presented therein. *EIR*'s response identifies in detail the involvement of both De Greiff and his daughter Monica, in the drug cartel's conspiracy to buy the Colombian Presidency. Both letters are reprinted below (see *Documentation*).

Samper's 'war on drugs' is a farce

There are also arguments, such as that published in the *Wall Street Journal* of Feb. 23, by Terry McCoy, director of Latin American Studies at the University of Florida, to the effect that "the war [on drugs] is being vigorously prosecuted, and outright decertification would undermine Colombian efforts." Nothing could be farther from the truth. Despite the courageous efforts of many, such as National Police Chief Gen. Rosso José Serrano, to run down the cartel leaders and put them behind bars, Samper's "war on drugs" is a farce.

Not only are imprisoned traffickers operating their business from their prison cells, and walking away from them when they choose, but the courts are not even able to impose serious jail sentences on those still behind bars. For example, the number-five leader in the Cali Cartel, Victor Patiño, was just given a nine-year prison term, with possibility of parole after just four years. It turns out that Patiño had plunked down a cool \$100,000 at a \$20,000-a-plate fundraiser for Samper just three days before the June 1994 Presidential elections.

Cartel assets, both illegal and illegitimate, are still virtually untouched in Colombia, with a few exceptions. The banking system continues to function with impunity as a laundry for the cartel's drug profits, despite recent stern warnings by General Prosecutor Alfonso Valdivieso. All State intelligence agencies are now concentrated in the hands of Interior Minister Horacio Serpa Uribe, who is one of Samper's controllers. Serpa is deeply implicated in the scandal of cartel financing of the Presidential campaign, and is currently under investigation by Prosecutor Valdivieso, as well.

Daily, there are more revelations on the extent of the corruption in Colombia, ranging from the political police, or DAS, which has been implicated in harassing Council of State magistrates and witnesses against Samper, to the Comptroller's office, whose deputy director has resigned to protest the use of State funds to buy political support for Samper. Congress is even planning to vote itself an amnesty so that its 120 members suspected of corruption by the cartels can escape investigation.

Samper's use of violence and terror to eliminate his opponents inside Colombia continues unabated. The latest victim is the son of Army Gen. Ricardo Emilio Cifuentes, who resigned his commission in January, announcing that he could not serve under Samper's corrupt regime. His son, a medical doctor visiting Colombia from the United States, was assassinated mafia-style on Feb. 16, with one bullet to the head. Similarly, death threats have been renewed against Londoño's MSIA, which has been organizing anti-Samper demonstrations in Bogotá. One caller to MSIA offices, who phoned after a university rally, asked provocatively, "Is this the movement to overthrow Samper?" When told it was the MSIA, the caller threatened, "You're going to die from the little bullets we're going to shoot you with."

And, only days after his return to Colombia from Washington, Londoño himself received an anonymous letter, "warning that we are giving you a deadline of 48 hours to write: Yes to certification; No to extradition; Yes to legalization," or he and his family would be murdered. Londoño and his associates have been the victims of death threats, assaults, robberies, and intimidation for over a year and, despite repeated appeals to the authorities, have been denied security protection for themselves and their families.

EIR answers De Greiff: Cali Cartel ties exist

In February, the editors of EIR received a letter from Colombian Ambassador to Mexico Gustavo de Greiff, who is a former General Prosecutor of Colombia. In that letter, dated Feb. 7, from Mexico City, De Greiff complained that a memorandum published by EIR (see EIR, Jan. 26, p. 40) had contained "a string of lies" about Colombia, and about himself personally, and he demanded rectification. That EIR memorandum urges U.S. President William Clinton to deny Colombia certification as a full partner in the war on drugs, because of the Ernesto Samper Pizano government's collusion with international drug cartels. We include below the full text of De Greiff's letter, and EIR's Feb. 15 response,