

Center for Latin American Studies
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The United States and
Illegal Crops in Colombia:
The Tragic Mistake of Futile Fumigation

Juan Gabriel Tokatlian

Director of Political Science and International
Relations

Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina

June 2003

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CONTENTS

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION1

HOW FUMIGATION BEGAN IN COLOMBIA.....2

THE FUMIGATION BUILD-UP6

PERSISTENT FUMIGATION10

FUMIGATION RE-EDITED.....14

TENACIOUS FUMIGATION20

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION.....23

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, fumigation has been one of the most controversial aspects of the process of eradicating illegal crops in Colombia. The toxicity of the herbicides used and the importance that fumigation acquired in the international strategy of the United States against drugs, have caused this subject to become an essentially polemical one.¹ The present article takes an historical look at the matter and describes and explains the fumigation policy imposed by the US on Colombia as part of a drug diplomacy which has characterized relations between the two countries over the past twenty-five years. Before beginning this chronology, however, it would be worthwhile to take a look at the basis for the US policy in this regard. Fumigation with herbicides corresponds to a rationale based on five premises:

An implicit refusal to accept the notion that every demand produces a supply. When it come to repression, therefore, the emphasis is placed on growing, producing, processing, transporting and trading in drugs, rather than on the centers where drugs are consumed or on the places where there is the greatest margin of profit for the international illegal trade in drugs.²

It is assumed that, in terms of results and resources, strong repressive measures taken at the centers which *provide* drugs constitute the most effective way of combating the drug trade.

It is assumed that punitive strategies designed and executed by those states in which the demand exists, and in those where the supply has originated, are pertinent when it comes to attacking a highly lucrative illegal trade that arises and evolves in a non-state situation and

which is in the hands of powerful groups within society.

It is assumed that, for the consumer countries, a greater and more effective eradication of illegal crops will lead to three results: fewer stimulants of this kind will be available on the market, they will be more highly priced, and they will be less pure. As a consequence of this triple assumption, it is supposed that there will be a decrease in urban criminality associated with drug dealing and a decrease in consumption.

It is assumed that greater and more efficient eradication of illegal crops in the producing countries will lead, among other things, to a reduction in the value of illegal crops in the zones of production, a weakening of the drug traffickers' power, a containing of violence generated by drug traffic affecting the more vulnerable sections of the population linked to these illegal plantations, and a decrease in the environmental damage caused by illegal plantations in soil which is fragile and extremely valuable.

HOW FUMIGATION BEGAN IN COLOMBIA

During the administration of President Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978-1982), Washington began putting pressure on the Colombian government to use chemicals for eradicating marijuana crops, especially in La Guajira on Colombia's Caribbean coast. By 1978, Colombia had become the number one producer and exporter of marijuana to the United States. Of the 10,000 tons introduced into the US during that year, between 60 and 65 percent was supplied by Colombian traffickers. At the time it was estimated that Colombia had between 25,000 and 30,000 hectares planted with marijuana.³

During the administration of President Jimmy Carter (1976-1980), interdiction and

eradication were the two keynotes governing international anti-drug policy. The attempt to manually eradicate marijuana plantations was no longer seen by Washington as sufficient. Congress and the White House began to agree that herbicides should be used to put an end to plantations not only of marijuana (especially in Colombia) but also of poppies (particularly in Turkey, where poppies were being employed to produce opium).

In Latin America, herbicides had already been used in Mexico and in Jamaica. In the mid-seventies, *Operación Condor* (Operation Condor) in Mexico attempted to destroy marijuana plantations and was presented as a resounding success in the fight against drugs. The initial results seemed to be positive; there was a reduction in the area employed for growing marijuana, exports to the United States decreased and, for a time at least, the channels of access to the US market were cut off. By the end of that decade, marijuana from Mexico available on the US market had become a mere 10 percent of the whole amount on offer at the time (although by the mid-eighties it had increased again and represented 35 percent of the total). One factor which helped reduce the import of Mexican marijuana into the United States was the US consumer's refusal to buy marijuana which might have been sprayed with *paraquat*, as well as an increase in production inside the US of a more potent and less dangerous variety.⁴

The "successful" experience in Mexico, and the so-called *Operación Bucanero* (Operation Buccaneer) in Jamaica, moved the United States government to persuade the Colombian authorities to try the same tactic. It seems that Washington gave the Turbay Ayala administration the idea of undertaking a program of eradication by means of herbicides. However, Turbay preferred to try a frontal military offensive against drug

traffickers. It was a decision made by the president himself, strongly supported by his Defense Minister and perhaps influenced by US officials. Towards the end of 1978, therefore, some 10,000 soldiers were assigned to *Operación Fulminante* (Operation Fulminating) with the mission of attacking the production and illegal trading of marijuana in the Guajira.

This operation showed that the Colombian authorities did not hesitate to collaborate with Washington in the anti-drug war. By committing the military to combat marijuana growing, they were adopting a mechanism even more aggressive than chemical eradication. In any case, eradication did not meet with the approval of certain sectors within the government itself or of public opinion generally; so it was replaced by militarization, which enjoyed a certain consensus, at least in government circles. The public debate sparked off in the United States by the use of *paraquat* contributed to the fact that Washington would accept, at least temporarily, the non-fumigating anti-drug tactics of the Colombian administration. Besides, towards the end of the seventies the Percy Amendment, which was still binding, forbade the use of federal funds for the application in foreign countries of herbicides which were prohibited at home.

Nonetheless, neither the US executive power nor certain sectors of the legislative were ready to give up the idea that Colombia should be obliged to eradicate by means of crop-spraying. The US went about committing the Colombian government to its plan for chemical eradication in a subtle manner. The US ambassador in Bogotá, Diego Asencio, repeatedly insisted that Colombia would receive increased assistance from the United States in its anti-drug campaign if it opted for fumigation. In March 1979, the Subcommittee for Hemispheric

Relations in the House of Representatives in Washington approved an amendment to increase economic aid to Colombia to combat drug trafficking. Yet, according to a report produced by six US congressmen — three of whom belonged to the Committee on Abuse and Control of Narcotics — who visited Colombia in April 1979, their conversations with the Colombian president did not produce positive results. President Turbay was reluctant to initiate a program of fumigation because of the international controversy on *paraquat*, and also because of environmental concerns within Colombia. Despite that reluctance, however, the members of the committee insisted on recommending an “effective program of eradication” which implicitly advocated the use of chemical products.⁵

Bogotá looked for a technical loophole in order to avoid a political confrontation with Washington. Colombia’s Attorney General traveled to Mexico in June 1979 in order to study the results obtained in this country by chemical eradication of marijuana plantations. Shortly afterwards, the Colombian government brought together a number of experts and created a scientific commission to examine the use of fumigation with herbicides for attacking marijuana production. This commission opposed the use of chemical substances. From there, the issue was passed on to the National Council on Narcotics (its Spanish initials are CNE) which had been set up in 1974. This body — an adjunct of the Justice Ministry — was made up of representatives from that ministry and from the Health and Education ministries, the Attorney General’s Office, the National Security Agency (DAS), the Director of the National Police Force, the Director of Customs and Excise and the Institute of Family Welfare. In light of the opinion which had been presented by the CNE experts, the Council decided not to apply the procedure of eradicating crops with herbicides. However, some trial sprayings

had already been carried out, with the participation of the army and using *paraquat*, in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.⁶

In short, the Colombian government refused to practice a massive eradication with *paraquat*, despite the insistence of the Carter administration. Although the US Congress abolished the Percy Amendment in 1981, and under President Ronald Reagan (1980-1988) the US began to put increasing pressure on the Turbay government to fumigate chemically, Colombia's attitude did not yet change. The Colombian executive was able to provide irrefutable evidence that it was taking strong measures against the drug trade, and demonstrated its close collaboration with Washington in various ways: it signed an extradition agreement with the United States in 1979, and an agreement on Mutual Legal Aid in 1980. Meanwhile, the Colombians adduced scientific and technical arguments to justify their opposition to the eradication alternative. In the early eighties, Bogotá still had a certain margin of maneuverability in some aspects of the drug war. Colombia's image abroad was not yet that of a totally drug-ridden country, and in the atmosphere of the Cold War, Colombia was seen as one of Washington's unconditional allies in the fight against Communism.

THE FUMIGATION BUILD-UP

From the beginning of President Belisario Betancur's four-year period (1982-1986) the US executive began reiterating its thesis about the need to eradicate chemically, and continued to bring pressure to bear on Colombia to this end. In August 1983, a group of US congressmen visited the country and tried to persuade the president to carry out a program of marijuana fumigation. However, they did not meet with success.⁷ President Betancur's objection was

the same as that of his predecessor. Yet, the Betancur Conservative Party government changed its opinion in 1984, no doubt because of the murder of the Justice Minister, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, an assassination evidently ordered by Mafia bosses. The government's change of attitude towards drug trafficking included the extradition of Colombian citizens to the United States and an increased militarization of the fight against drugs. The government also decided to fumigate, despite public controversy and disputes among bureaucrats. Sporadic anti-government demonstrators against chemical eradication were not able to form a socio-political coalition with much weight within Colombia itself, nor did the anti-fumigation lobby obtain the support of influential people abroad.

In May 1984, the National Council on Narcotics (CNE) again discussed the possibility of using *paraquat* for fumigating marijuana plantations, especially those on the Caribbean coast. The Council gave its approval, but left it to Cabinet to decide how chemical substances should be applied. Cabinet gave its approval in that same month, but to avoid controversy over the possible use of *paraquat*, the government opted for the use of *glyphosate*. That way the government would be acting in accordance with the US authorities by fumigating, but they would be doing so with a different chemical substance, one which supposedly was less harmful.

In June of that year, 1984, the Justice Minister ordered fumigation to begin.⁸ Immediately after, protests broke out in Colombia. People in the Caribbean region organized demonstrations against the government's decision and stirred up the debate for the following six months. The media gave voice to the complaints and criticisms aimed at the use of *glyphosate*.⁹ Colombia's National Congress called for a report from the Health Minister, and

several members of Congress representing Caribbean constituencies expressed their opposition to chemical spraying.¹⁰ However, the government refused to modify its position. Relatively low internal costs (in political terms) were compensated by the support and the congratulations the administration received from the US executive and the US Congress; fumigation plus extradition and militarization were greatly appreciated by the US authorities, who expressed their approval by offers of further aid.

By the end of 1984, according to US statistics, 3,400 hectares of marijuana had been eradicated (or 3,171, according to Colombian figures), and by 1985 the US authorities estimated that some 6,000 hectares had been eradicated (although Colombian figures gave only 2,375 hectares). Areas sprayed by herbicides reached 12,000 hectares in 1986 (or 9,700 according to US estimates). The center of operations was the Caribbean coastal area, especially the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Perijá mountain range. The area planted with marijuana was considerably reduced, and exports of marijuana to the United States began to fall off noticeably. Before this, Colombia had accounted for 80 percent of the total import of marijuana into the US; now the figure fell to less than 25 percent. Figures seemed to show that the use of *glyphosate* had resulted in a resounding triumph in the fight against marijuana.¹¹

However it was no more than a Pyrrhic victory. By 1988 Colombia had once again become the principal exporter of marijuana to the United States, producing approximately 8,000 tons that year.¹² Fumigation, it was true, did produce some positive results, but only partially, and production was transferred from the Caribbean area to the department (state) of Cauca in southern Colombia, where the quantity produced per hectare rose spectacularly

from 1.1 metric tons to 3.5 metric tons. The area actually sown in marijuana was reduced, but overall production increased, and plants were camouflaged and disguised by legal crops grown around them. The Colombian producer acted in a manner very similar to that of his US counterpart; in 1985, after the failure of Operation Delta 9 designed to eradicate marijuana crops in the United States, production began to be carried on in small farms, national parks or, hydroponically, in private basements.

Chemical spraying, then, had not produced satisfactory results in Colombia; it had not halted marijuana production, nor was it going to be any more successful when it came to eradicating coca plantations. From 1984 onwards, with the support of the United States, the Colombian government strove to find a chemical substance which could be used to eradicate coca plants without causing any other damage. In December 1985 the herbicide known as *garlon-4* was used to destroy approximately 1,000 hectares. However this practice was given up almost immediately, that is in early 1986, since *garlon-4* proved to be highly dangerous and damaging, and the company which produced it — the Dow Chemical Corporation — refused to supply it to Colombia for fear of being sued.¹³

The above chronology shows how the spraying of marijuana and coca began in Colombia. By accepting the US insistence on using this method, the Betancur government was tacitly admitting that the problem of narcotics existed primarily in the place where drugs were being produced and going against Colombia's official notion that drug dealing was a multilateral and international problem. In the matter of drugs, Washington's pressure on Bogotá became more and more evident and difficult to counter through autonomous strategies of a national nature. Thus the Colombian government's margin of maneuverability

began to be gradually and notoriously diminished when it came to the fight against the drug trade.

PERSISTENT FUMIGATION

The administration of Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) inherited an even more intricate and worrying situation regarding illegal drugs than that which had been experienced by his two immediate predecessors. It was estimated that Colombian traffickers were supplying 80 percent of the cocaine and 25 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States, and demand in the US was certainly not diminishing.¹⁴ Colombia's income from the cocaine trade was increasing enormously and was totally uncontrolled. The social penetration of narcotics was also increasing, as was evidenced at the production and processing sites, as well as in those places where drug traffickers made their investments and exerted their influence. The presence of drug traffickers was felt politically through bribery, intimidation and the straight-out use of force. Violence generated by this phenomenon multiplied notably after extradition laws were passed in 1984, and became even worse once paramilitary groups were organized, especially in the region of the Magdalena river valley.

The new Liberal Party government under President Barco felt called upon to step up the intensity of anti-narcotic activities which had been set in motion during the second half of the previous administration, when the Conservative Party was in power. It was thought that chemical eradication should continue in the case of marijuana, while manual eradication was recommended for the coca plantations. Although there was no lack of criticism of these measures, no coalition forces achieved the clout necessary to put a brake on fumigation with herbicides, nor to assess the real progress (or otherwise) being made in the fight against

illegal drugs. According to the CNE (National Council on Narcotics), massive spraying of marijuana plantations never received approval. The facts, however, would seem to indicate the opposite, especially during 1986. Colombia's official environmental protection agency, INDERENA (National Institute for Renewable Resources and the Environment), denounced the ecological devastation produced by *glyphosate* in the Tayrona National Park and surrounding districts. Nonetheless, in 1987 some 10,368 hectares were sprayed with this substance, and in 1988, a further 4,400 hectares.

The eradication of coca diminished from 2,000 hectares in 1985 to 760 in 1986, and to 230 in 1988. This reduction was due to several factors.¹⁵ First, various technical reports, both official and non-official, pointed out the negative effects of using herbicides, and also demonstrated that a temporary lull in production due to spraying would not necessarily mean the end of illegal crops.¹⁶ In 1985, for example, marijuana crops had occupied 8,000 hectares, yet by 1987 they occupied 13,000 hectares. And as we have seen, large-scale growing of marijuana was transferred from the Caribbean area to Cauca, where conditions were even more favorable and therefore production per hectare increased. Additionally, smoking type marijuana was accompanied by the production of marijuana oil and hashish, so that in the United States the marijuana business actually became more prosperous than ever.

Second, those living in the regions submitted to eradication practices became more vociferous in their protests, not only because of the ecological damage being caused by the use of herbicides, but also because of a lack of effective programs to replace illegal crops with a lucrative alternative. Third, there was no agreement within the CNE about what procedures and techniques should be used to fumigate while reducing environmental damage

to a minimum. The opposition of local people, the difficulty of undertaking eradication in productive zones which were under the control of (or at least to some extent occupied by) guerrilla forces, and a lack of sufficient resources were all factors impeding the taking of unanimous decisions by common consent.

Fourth, in 1988 there was a slight change in the government's strategy for combating the drug trade. Colombia's executive promoted and supported, once again, a major participation by the armed forces in the fight against drug producers and traffickers. However, the government wished to avoid some of the concomitant problems arising from the army's previous direct commitment in this area, such as, protests and criticisms by farmers, the risk of greater corruption sparked off by the placing of drug traffickers and Colombian soldiers in the same scenario, and the impossibility of attacking simultaneously all the points in the drug traffickers' internal network. Emphasis was placed, therefore, on the search for (and destruction of) both urban and rural laboratories for cocaine processing, as well as on the arrest of hitmen in the pay of traffickers. Military Intelligence tasks were also included, and an effort was made to round up and capture the leading drug dealers. As a result of these new priorities, both chemical and manual eradication became less intense and affected a reduced area of operations.¹⁷

Fifth, in the light of the poor results produced by the attempt to eradicate marijuana, it was natural that the Colombian authorities should feel frustrated. The chief consumers of Colombian marijuana were still North American citizens, and the dealers continued to design new clandestine mechanisms for exporting their product. Marijuana crops occupied an area of between 10,000 and 12,000 hectares between 1988 and 1989, and there was certainly no

decrease in exports. The government had had some success in 1986, but the phenomenon persisted, so much so that by 1988 Colombia had become, once more, the world's major marijuana producer — followed by Mexico and the United States itself.

Sixth, in the second half of the Barco administration it became urgent to establish priorities in actions designed to counter the ever-expanding drug trade. On the one hand, the country's budget limitations imposed a rational use of the meager resources available. Besides, aid from the United States had been reduced from US\$11,553,000 in 1987 to US\$9,767,000 in 1988. On the other hand, it became important to decide on priorities, given the dimensions of the problem. Priority had to be given to those tasks which were both feasible and most urgent. The Liberal Party government continued to insist that eradication was the prime tactical mechanism to be used against the production and exportation of illegal drugs. Nonetheless spraying was reduced, despite urgings from Washington. In 1990, seeing that the policy of manual and aerial fumigation offered no practical results, eradication began to occupy a less important place in Colombian anti-drug policy. Emphasis was placed more and more on "the drug war"; that is to say, on military action and extradition.

Between August 1989 and August 1990, President Barco's government extradited a number of Colombian citizens to the United States, and for this paid a huge price in terms of violent upheaval within Colombia. Perhaps this explains why Washington did not put greater pressure on the Colombian government to implement a more aggressive eradication policy. In any case, reduced pressure from the United States again gave the authorities in Bogotá a margin of maneuverability in which to define certain internal aspects of their anti-drug strategy. This margin was due, also, to the fact that the efforts being made by Colombia to

counteract the drug trade had been acknowledged internationally — and in particular by Europe.

FUMIGATION RE-EDITED

The administration of President César Gaviria (1990-1994) inherited from its predecessors very poor results as far as the policy of eradication was concerned: experimental fumigation during the Turbay regime, massive fumigation in the period of Belisario Betancur and sporadic fumigation by the Barco government — all of them ineffective, clumsy and deplorable. Colombia had tried *paraquat* and then *glyphosate* in an attempt to stay the advance of marijuana, and *garlon-4* against the coca plantations. The merchandise was different in each case, the legal herbicides used were different also, but the results were very similar: organized drug traffickers in Colombia had efficiently diversified the production and the processing of illegal drugs, while successive governments were combating them with actions that did not seriously affect the illegal trade itself nor the increasing power of Colombia's drug lords. It seemed difficult to overlook these antecedents; yet President Gaviria and his team did not appear to have learnt any lessons from the experience of previous administrations.

In the final months of the Barco administration, chemical fumigation had ceased, and yet this fact did not seem to have an adverse effect on relations between Bogotá and Washington. In a routine manner, those US officials in charge of international anti-narcotic policy would suggest a return to fumigation, but they did not do so peremptorily, nor were these suggestions accompanied by any strong threats. Manual eradication of coca was being carried on, and the number of hectares dedicated to marijuana crops had decreased; so it seemed

unnecessary to give pride of place to fumigation in the narco-diplomacy between Colombia and the United States. What altered this situation dramatically was the discovery that Colombia was becoming — albeit incipiently — an important zone for the growing of poppies.

Poppy plantations were first observed in 1983 in the department of Tolima. In 1984, small plantations were destroyed in Tolima and Meta. In 1986, invasions and confiscations were carried out by government officials, but they were relatively insignificant. The first 2,297 grams of heroin were seized in that same year; and in 1988 two laboratories for processing heroin and morphine were discovered, one in Bogotá and the other in Barranquilla.¹⁸ In September 1991 the weekly magazine *Semana* published a long report on the sudden appearance of poppies on the national scene, quoting official sources that claimed to have discovered 2,000 hectares of what was called “the cursed flower.”¹⁹ At the end of that same year, the National Security Agency (DAS) spoke of some 2,500 hectares where poppies were being grown,²⁰ and the Anti-narcotics Police pointed out that the year had seen an unprecedented increase in the number of poppy plantations in the main Colombian mountain ranges within the jurisdiction of a number of departments such as Huila, Tolima, Cauca, Boyacá, Cundinamarca, Caquetá, Antioquia, Caldas, Meta, Nariño, Risaralda and Santander, to name only the most important ones.²¹

The government responded to these alarming facts by reporting the manual eradication of 1,406 hectares of poppies, the seizure of 17 kilograms of morphine and 30 kilograms of opium, and the destruction of five laboratories for morphine-processing in Neiva.²² It is worth mentioning, also, that as from May 1991, Colombian heroin began to be identified and

seized in the United States.²³ It was hoped that having eradicated 56 percent of the plantations reported in 1991, the question of poppy crops would not acquire alarming proportions. Nonetheless, in March of that year, the director of the Anti-narcotic Police, General Rosso José Serrano, stated that poppy production might very well soon expand to occupy 10,000 hectares of Colombia's soil.²⁴ A month later, press reports spoke of a possible 20,000 hectares already in existence.²⁵ A study made under the auspices of the National Council for Defense and National Security claimed that approximately 20,000 hectares of poppy plantations did indeed exist and were located in seventeen different departments within Colombia.²⁶

In January 1992 the CNE had authorized both manual and aerial fumigation, with *glyphosate*, of another 2,900 hectares of poppies.²⁷ It seems that this decision was not the result of any special pressure from Washington, even though there did exist a powerful incentive to avoid negative reactions in Washington after the Colombian government had refused to accept US\$2.8 million in official US aid to set up an anti-narcotics unit in the army similar to that which already existed in the Police Force.²⁸ Washington could hardly justify an unusually strong protest against Bogotá's behavior regarding the control of poppy fields, since Colombia was not even a medium-sized producer of heroin.²⁹ Officials from DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and the US Embassy in Bogotá urged the Colombian government to spray the poppy fields, and they were pleased to see that their wishes were carried out. They also helped legitimize the use of *glyphosate* by circulating scientific papers and opinions by United States experts in favor of the substance.³⁰ Nevertheless, the decision to spray the poppy fields with that particular chemical seems to have been taken by President

Gaviria's government on discovering, to its surprise, the proportions of the Colombian poppy/heroin phenomenon, rather than because of any imposition from Washington.

From 1992 onwards little effort was made to eradicate coca and marijuana plantations. 944 hectares of coca were destroyed in 1992, and 100 of marijuana; and in 1993, 846 hectares of coca were destroyed, and 138 hectares of marijuana.³¹ This reduction in efforts to eradicate was due, in part, to two notions which predominated among bureaucrats and experts since the Betancur regime. On the one hand, that Colombia was not an important coca producer, but rather was the main scenario for the *processing* of cocaine and of its exportation to the principal markets for consumption abroad. And secondly, that the United States was effectively replacing imports thanks to the development of its own national variety of marijuana (the so-called "seedless" type) which was satisfying the home market and causing a considerable decline in the number of Colombian marijuana planters.

Such reasoning was only partially correct. In the nineties, for example, Colombia coca-growing not only increased, but the quality of the leaf improved considerably. On top of that, severe frosts in the United States occasionally affected marijuana crops there, and that, together with repressive measures against marijuana-growing in Mexico, tended to explain why, from time to time, there was a resurgence of the marijuana business in Colombia. Colombia's infrastructure made it easy to plant more coca and marijuana whenever attractive market conditions justified doing so. It was unrealistic, therefore, to think that Colombia had to overcome serious problems in order to produce illegal substances. In February 1994, on being informed by US sources that coca plantations covered an area of 39,700 hectares,³² the Colombian government ordered aerial spraying. At the same time, marijuana crops had

increased from 2,000 hectares in 1991 to 5,000 hectares in 1993.³³

The poppy boom kept growing throughout 1993. A new report from the National Council for Defense and National Security showed that the poppy business was flourishing in eighteen departments.³⁴ 12,864 hectares of poppies had been destroyed in 1992 (9,561 of these with *glyphosate*). In 1993, 9,821 hectares were eradicated, but in 1994 poppy fields were still proliferating. During the year 1994, 5,314 hectares were eradicated (of these, 4,676 by aerial fumigation).³⁵ However, according to US estimates, poppy fields that year did not fall below 20,000 hectares, an estimate that was never denied by the Colombian authorities.³⁶

The illegal heroin trade of the eighties and nineties appeared to follow a similar pattern to that of the marijuana business in the sixties and seventies. In the case of marijuana, the production triangle in this hemisphere had been made up of Mexico, Jamaica and Colombia. When repression took its toll in one country, especially due to the use of herbicides, the business moved to another, although it always returned to the spot where initially larger amounts had been planted. Something similar occurred with poppies between Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia. The original problem of illegal crops was never overcome, nor were the authorities able to dismount the equipment and infrastructure which enabled such plantations and laboratories to stay in business in the above-mentioned countries. By attacking temporarily, and in an isolated fashion an illegal crop, public anti-drug policy automatically attacks the weakest and least decisive link in the vast and complex chain of illegal drug dealing, and at the same time has the worst possible negative effect from a social viewpoint on small farmers and Indian populations, while affecting hardly at all the area of organized crime financed by (and supporting) the drug traffickers.

The Gaviria administration had decided to deal with the drug problem by placing its emphasis on a policy of submission and making clear that it differentiated between drug trafficking and narco-terrorism. President Gaviria stated that “while narco-terrorism is our problem, drug trafficking is an international phenomenon.” Nonetheless, in the case of poppy growing, Gaviria did what former governments had done in their attacks on coca and marijuana fields. The results of his efforts were insignificant and ephemeral, as were those of his predecessors. When a government acts on the basis of punishment alone and without offering incentives, believing that it is indulging in a technically-approved and non-harmful type of fumigation, it finishes up contributing to environmental damage and to a greater social breakdown in the zones where the plantations are grown.

Occasional voices were raised to criticize chemical fumigation. But discussions on the subject assumed an elitist, moral tone: on one side were the “good, hard-line, intelligent people” uncontaminated by drug traffic, and on the other “the softies, the badies, the dumb idiots” who were either mouthpieces of the traffickers or were unconsciously letting themselves be used by them. In February 1992, Colombia’s Justice Minister made a comment which illustrates this point: he claimed that “a cloak of complicity has been thrown over things by those who object to herbicide fumigation for environmental reasons, while all the time playing into the hands of the drug traffickers.”³⁷ At no time was there a lobby sufficiently coherent, serious and affirmative to combat the government’s determination to keep on fumigating. The executive did not receive substantial criticism nor impediments to the actions it carried out through legislation and the judiciary. The government was therefore able to go ahead with its eradication policy with few internal restrictions. Even so, the result

was not very positive; the rise of the poppy emporium in Colombia amply demonstrated the limits of the government's public anti-narcotics policy and the dramatic consequences of unremitting prohibition on the part of the United States.

The Colombian government did not attack drug trafficking or narco-terrorism on the financial front. In accordance with the logic of the so-called economic liberalization fomented by the government in the early nineties, it made no sense to place restrictions and greater controls on the free movement of capital. In 1993, a report by the Vienna-based United Nations International Board on Fiscal Control of Narcotics recommended that "Colombian legislation consider the laundering of capital resources to be a crime and that banking laws should become stricter in order to allow for multilateral cooperation..."³⁸

TENACIOUS FUMIGATION

The alleged financing of the presidential election campaign with drug money formed the backdrop to the anti-narcotics policies of President Ernesto Samper's administration (1994-1998). As months went by, the coercive diplomacy which the United States had hitherto been exerting on Colombia became transformed into "blackmail diplomacy."³⁹ The president's capacity for political survival led him to "North Americanize" the fight against drug trafficking in Colombia; that is to say, the president accepted and implemented a strategy virtually imposed by the United States. The Samper government undertook an all-out chemical eradication campaign far beyond anything seen in the two preceding decades, with massive use of *glyphosate*. Fumigators also employed *imazapyr*, a more powerful granulated herbicide, and were planning to use *tebuthiuron*, an even more devastating killer than the others. Ernesto Samper also became the president who most helped criminalize the drug

trade, while in Colombia it became almost impossible to discuss the subject of legalizing drugs, something Samper himself had suggested in the late seventies, given the failure of repressive measures taken at that time by the Turbay administration and fomented by the United States.⁴⁰

The Samper government even went beyond the demands of the United States executive and legislature. In 1995, months before the infamous “Frechette Memorandum”⁴¹ began to circulate — a document which suggested that Colombia should adopt legislation and take drastic measures in the anti-drug war — President Samper had launched his “integral plan” announcing, amongst other things, the creation of *Operación Resplandor* (Operation Shining) designed to put a definite end to all illegal crops which existed in Colombia in the space of two years.⁴² An all-out eradication policy had been set in place. In 1994 (coinciding with the end of the Gaviria period and the beginning of the Samper years), 4,094 hectares of coca were eradicated. In 1995, the Samper administration eradicated 25,402 hectares; and in 1996, 9,711 hectares. In 1994, the Gaviria and Samper administrations had eradicated 5,314 hectares of poppies. In 1995, the Samper government eradicated 5,074 hectares; and in 1996, 6,044 hectares.⁴³ Between the years 1995 and 1996, *glyphosate* was used on a massive scale to destroy illegal crops.⁴⁴

Even so, the idea of putting an end once and for all to illegal crops proved again to be illusory. In 1996, the US government estimated that the number of hectares dedicated to the planting of coca in Colombia had reached 53,800 hectares, while independent estimates placed the figure at around 80,000 hectares.⁴⁵ This meant that Colombia had surpassed Bolivia, a country which traditionally was second only to Peru as a coca producer in South

America. The same official US source estimated that Colombia had 4.133 hectares of marijuana (compared with just 1.650 in 1992) and that the country had produced 63 tons of heroin in 1996.

However, Colombians had their greatest surprise of all in 1996 when small farmers from the south, especially from the Caquetá region, suddenly made their presence felt in mass demonstrations and protest marches. Nobody had expected this. It was as if the whole population had discovered overnight, and a little belatedly, that the country had ceased to be the processor of these stimulants and had transformed itself now into something else: a huge grower of illegal crops. People also came to realize that the state simply did not operate at all in a large and strategic portion of the country's territory, and that power, at the local level, was in the hands of insurgent groups, especially in those of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Colombians came to realize as well that violent measures alone were not going to solve the profound and intricate social, political and economic problems which had been incubating for decades in the nation's geographic wilderness.⁴⁶

In sum, fumigating with herbicides in southern Colombia in 1996 turned out to be as useless for dismantling the illegal business of drug dealing as had similar efforts in previous years. The difference was that, in 1996, paramilitary detachments were multiplying at a frightening rate in the south. The political blindness of people in government, police officers and the military, together with the administration's obsequious submission to United States policies, led to a repeat, in 1997, of the indiscriminate fumigation with herbicides — on a huge scale with glyphosate, to a lesser extent with imazapyr. In 1997, Colombia sprayed 41,847 hectares of coca and 6,962 hectares of marijuana. Twenty-two hectares of coca were

eradicated manually, as well as twenty-five hectares of poppies and 261 hectares of marijuana. In just over three years, the government had fumigated more than 100,000 hectares of illegal crops. But paradoxically that only went to prove, as never before, just how mistaken, harmful and counter-productive the chemical destruction of such crops could be; in 1998, almost 110,000 hectares of the national territory were dedicated to plantations of coca, marijuana and poppies. In that year, the Samper administration (which ended in August), and that of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), fumigated 66,083 hectares of coca and 2,931 of poppies, and manually destroyed 3,126 hectares of coca, 181 of poppies and 18 of marijuana.⁴⁷

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

From the mid-nineties up to the present time, Colombia has broken all historical records in the matter of fumigation. And yet the data on the eradication of illegal crops in Colombia has never been more negative. For example, according to US estimates, in 1990 heroin production in Colombia was hardly worth mentioning; there were 32,100 hectares of coca plantations, and marijuana was being grown in 1,500 hectares. In 1996, Colombia was producing 63 tons of heroin annually, while 32,100 hectares were planted in coca and 4,133 in marijuana.⁴⁸ In 1998, Colombia produced 435 metric tons of cocaine, and in 1999 it was producing 520 metric tons, and in the year 2000 production had gone up to 580 tons.⁴⁹

According to Colombia's Anti-narcotic Police, the Pastrana government had destroyed approximately 50,000 hectares of coca plantations by 1999 (or 43,246, according to estimates from Washington), and the US State Department gives a total of 56,254 hectares (47,000 in coca, and 9,254 in poppies) eradicated by Colombia in the year 2000.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the total area planted in coca in 1999 amounted to 120,000 hectares,⁵¹ and the US State Department declared that this had increased to 136,200 hectares in the year 2000. This means that in just four years, from 1996 to 2000, the surface planted in coca in Colombia has doubled; the total number of hectares went from 8,280 to 13,200. An increase in the fumigation of illegal crops has not resulted in a decrease in the area planted with illegal crops, nor to a decrease in the production of illegal drugs.

To this evident failure one must add the fact that, on the US market, cocaine and heroin have become both cheaper and purer (See Fig.)⁵². It is worth noting, also, that something similar has occurred in Western Europe where, in 1999, a gram of cocaine was worth US\$90, and a gram of heroin was fetching US\$98. So, the rationale which attempts to justify a strong eradication policy in the centers of supply has proved to be way off the mark. It had been presumed that the massive destruction of illegal drugs where production and processing were taking place was going to lead to less availability of narcotics in the centers of demand, an increase in price for the ultimate consumer and a lowering of standards of purity in the stimulants themselves. Quite the opposite has happened; in the year 2000 one could procure in the United States more drugs of better quality than ever before, and at lower prices.

Besides, in terms of illegal drug consumption and of drug-related crime, the United States record has not shown substantial improvement. In 1988 the number of occasional consumers of heroin was reckoned at 167,000; in 1995 it had reached 322,000; while the total number of heroin consumers worldwide went from 692,000 in 1992 to 810,000 in 1995. The overall demand for heroin was 1,800,000 grams per year in 1988, but by 1996 it had

soared to 2,400,000.⁵³ Despite certain laudable achievements in reducing drug consumption in the United States, it is evident that a strong demand still exists. In this context it is worth quoting Bruce Bagley: “Some 13 million US drug users spent approximately US\$67 billion on illicit drugs in 1999, making the US market the most lucrative one in the world for Colombian traffickers.”⁵⁴

Concomitantly, in 1990 the total number of arrests in the area of drug-related law infringements (consumption, sale, distribution, manufacture, etc.) was 1,089,500, whereas in 1996 the figure had risen to 1,128,647. In 1990, 53 percent of prisoners in federal jails were serving sentences for narcotic-related crimes; in 1995 the statistic had risen to 59.9 percent.⁵⁵

Finally, the environmental cost to Colombia of chemical eradication has not been sufficiently studied and quantified. However, it is estimated that “for every hectare of poppies sown, an average of 2.5 hectares of woodlands are destroyed; in the case of coca plantations the ratio is 1 to 4, and for marijuana it is 1 to 1.5.”⁵⁶ However the negative effects of herbicide fumigation have not been assessed in this process of forest destruction. What we do know is that the mere fact of fumigation forces the growers to move elsewhere in order to plant their illegal crops, and that entails necessarily a further environmental disaster.⁵⁷

Despite the fact that organizations such as Greenpeace, the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Dow Agrosiences (the firm which produces *tebuthiuron*) are opposed to the use of this herbicide, the United States authorities have insisted that it is quite harmless. They have gone even further; during the Pastrana administration especially, they have been putting pressure on Bogotá to apply a dangerous fungus, *fusarium oxysporum*, in the process of obligatory eradication.

It is evident, however, that more chemical sprayings will only lead to additional problems for Colombia. It was probably this kind of concern which induced Andrés Pastrana, during his electoral campaign for president, to propose a different strategy for combating the phenomenon of illegal crops. In his original peace proposal, the then candidate, and today's president of Colombia, made the following statement:

Closely related to the social problem and to violence is the matter of illegal crops for narcotics. I believe that they will not be eradicated by means of fumigation, nor by strong-arm tactics. These crops are not so much a legal problem as a social one, which has its origin in the extreme poverty of thousands of peasants and small farmers who are engaged in this activity, finding themselves ruined by the mistaken political agrarian policies of the present government (that of Ernesto Samper). Industrialized countries should aid us to execute a sort of Marshall Plan for Colombia, one which will enable us to invest seriously in the field of social action, in the farming sector of our economy and in regional infrastructure, so that we can offer the man on the land an alternative to illegal crops (...) This will be complemented by an integral program of land reform, which will go beyond simple distribution and will assist those engaged in agriculture at the centers where their products are to be marketed, ensuring their crops' viability, their transport and their real added value, a program which will create a food industry that can compete in the marketplace. It will be indispensable, also, in order to successfully confront the problem of drug crops and all their implications, that we find a solution to the armed conflict.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, after almost four years in government, the Pastrana administration has not taken the risk of rethinking the procedure of chemical eradication. On the contrary, since coming to power in August 1998, Pastrana has persisted in an unquestioning policy of intensive fumigation. He has gone even further than his predecessors, in that he accepted the setting up of an Anti-narcotics Battalion within Colombia's armed forces, in accordance with the wishes of the United States as expressed over the past few years. In 1999, this special unit of 1,200 men under the command of the Colombian army but monitored by "Washington's magnifying glass," replaced the anti-narcotics unit of the police force in the

most critical of tasks, namely those to do with illegal crops.⁵⁹ In 2001, as the so-called “Plan Colombia” went into operation — insofar as it touched on aspects of security and the anti-narcotic policy of the United States — three battalions of the Colombian army were charged with combating illegal drugs. In short, there has been nothing new as far as eradication is concerned. Rather things have gone on as usual, in the hope that Colombia’s armed forces, by playing a definitive role in the fight against drugs, will somehow turn things around and produce a fundamental change in favor of the government and of the United States.

The risk that Colombia is taking by continuing to obsessively and obsequiously spray crops is an enormous one. By insisting on this unfortunate and counter-productive measure, the government is committing a serious political error and is leading the country to the brink of a catastrophe which will affect both the population and the country’s ecology, but will not effectively help to overcome the drug problem. Chemical eradication has already produced multiple negative effects: for a start, it has contributed to greater devastation of the environment; it has led, also, to an even closer marriage between drug traffickers and paramilitaries and, at the same time, has encouraged guerrilla fronts to depend more than ever on income from the drug trade; it has served to increase corruption at different levels of society; without achieving any positive results, it has involved the government unnecessarily, in some of the most violent aspects of the drug war; it has exposed some of the weakest and most vulnerable members of Colombia’s society — peasants, Indians, poor farmers, and others — to greater threats, often forcing them to migrate and leaving them totally unprotected; and finally it has helped to further stigmatize Colombia in the eyes of the world, despite the fact that no other country has sprayed crops with herbicides to nearly the same

extent. Nonetheless, it would seem that nothing is going to change in this regard; the year 2002 will probably see more futile fumigations.

To sum up: notwithstanding the intense war being waged to combat it, the drug trade will continue to prosper. It could hardly be otherwise, given that it is such a highly profitable business. When coca paste leaves Peru, it is worth US\$400 per kilo; it then reaches Colombia, where it is processed and becomes cocaine, valued at US\$1,200 per kilo; in Miami, the same amount is sold for US\$20,000, and is transported to Chicago, where it fetches US\$30,000 wholesale and is sold to individuals for approximately US\$140,000 per kilo. Figures for heroin are even more fabulous; its sale is four (or even six) times more profitable. This being so, one might spray Colombia all over, from the Amazon to the Andes, with every kind of chemical or fungus available, and the effect would be precisely the same: the drug phenomenon will continue to thrive. Meanwhile, this phenomenon is rapidly becoming a tremendous catalyst for a kind of rebellion, one which is brewing amongst those who have traditionally been excluded from Colombia's society. It may not constitute a genuine revolution, but could well explode in an amorphous, uncontrollable uprising by the dispossessed.

Notes

¹See Rosa de Olmo, *Herbicidas y derechos humanos en América Latina*, in Rosa de Olmo, *Prohibir o domesticar? Políticas de drogas en América Latina* (Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1992).

²In the late nineties, slightly under the influence of Europe and partly because of insistence on the part of Latin America, official rhetoric in the United States assumed a double thesis: that the consumption of drugs was an important factor in the growth and expansion of the drug trade, and that there existed an international co-responsibility for a more symmetric treatment of this lucrative illegal business. Nonetheless, for the past three decades almost 70 percent of the anti-drug budget in the United States is oriented towards combating the offer of

drugs and only about 30 percent is spent on trying to reduce the demand. In the wider context of international cooperation, Washington has shown that no multilateral policy has taken the place of the US unilateral policy on drugs, and that global concertation on the matter is carried out only within US repressive parameters.

³See US Congress, Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, Fact Finding Mission to Colombia and Puerto Rico (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1979); and Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras, Marihuana: Legislación o represión (Bogotá: Biblioteca ANIF, 1979)

⁴See President's Commission on Organized Crime, Report to the President and the Attorney General, America's Habit: Drug Abuse, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1986), 135.

⁵US Congress, Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, Fact Finding Mission to Colombia and Puerto Rico, 10.

⁶Ministerio Público, Informe del Procurador General de la Nación, Guillermo González Charry, al Congreso Nacional (Bogotá: Procuraduría de la Nación, 1980), 30-33.

⁷See US Congress Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, International Narcotics Control Study Mission (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984).

⁸See El Espectador, (Bogotá) Jun.1984. According to a report by Colombia's Procurator General, fumigation in 1984 was preceded by negative concepts on the part of Inderena (Colombia's official Natural Resources Protection body), the Ministry of Health, the National Health Institute and the Scientific Commission. The secretary of the Council of Ministers states that the matter of massive fumigation was resolved quickly and negatively by Cabinet. The Justice minister, Enrique Parejo, ordered the fumigation without being authorized to do so.

⁹See the pronouncement against fumigation with herbicides made by the Colombian Society of Ecology in El Mundo (Medellin) Jul.1984. Indigenous groups — Arahuacos, Koguis and Malayos — began an almost massive exodus towards Valledupar (Department of Cesar) and other places. The legal representative of communities in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta published a "Red Book" explaining to the Procurator General the harmful effects of herbicides. The Association of Agronomists from Cesar department also made a forceful protest. On all this, see El Espectador (Bogotá), 6-24 Jun. 1984.

¹⁰See Anales del Congreso, no. 15 (July 1984).

¹¹See US Congress Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, Latin America Study Mission Concerning International Narcotics Problems (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986).

¹²See US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989).

¹³See US General Accounting Office, Drug Control: US-Supported Efforts in Colombia and Bolivia (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988); and Clifford D. May, "US Secretly Grows Coca to Find Way to Destroy Cocaine's Source," The New York Times, 12 Jun. 1988.

¹⁴See Bruce M. Bagley, "Colombia and the War on Drugs," in Foreign Affairs 67, no.1 (1988).

¹⁵See US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.

¹⁶ See El Espectador, 12 Oct. 1988, 24 Oct. 1988, 25 Oct. 1988 and 8 Nov. 1988. For studies on eradication and its effects, see Firma Consultora Ecoforest Ltda., "Declaración de efecto ambiental para la erradicación de cultivos ilícitos en zonas de jurisdicción de Corinto," Ministry of Justice, Consejo Nacional de Estupeficientes (Sept. 1988); Corporación Autónoma Regional del Cauca, "Diagnóstico preliminar y agenda de tratamiento de emergencia para la erradicación de cultivos ilícitos en zonas de jurisdicción del municipio de Corinto," Cali, Informe Técnico, SRN-GGA-032, 19 (Sept. 1988); Inderena, "Evaluación de la declaración de efecto ambiental para la erradicación de cultivos ilícitos en zonas de jurisdicción de Corinto, Cauca-Fase 1," Bogotá, Concepto Técnico 115/88, Ministry of Agriculture, Bogotá, 26 Sept. 1988; Ministry of Justice, "Erradicación de cultivos en Corinto, Cauca," Press Release, 29 Sept. 1988 and Ministry of Justice, "Fumigación de cultivos de marihuana, zona de Corinto, Cauca," Acta No.8, 25 August 1988 and Acta No.9, 15 Sept. 1988.

¹⁷In the United States also voices were raised in favor of rethinking the functional role of the armed forces in combat against drugs, in order to achieve greater efficaciousness and less tensions with the civilian population. Following on the US anti-narcotics law of 1986 and an Executive Order by President Reagan, 5 May 1987, a commission was set up, which in due course prepared a report for the president on the subject of how and with what means the drug phenomenon should be confronted. One of its main recommendations was the following: "Concentrate resources for eradication on the destruction of laboratories for processing cocaine, instead of on the destruction of illicit crops." And they added: "Do not support the substitution of crops or programs for replacing crops abroad with funds from the United States." See *The White House Conference for a Drug Free America* (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1988),134. The assistant director for DEA operations made a statement along these same lines in May 1989. See Gregory F. Traverton, *Combating Cocaine in the Supplying Countries: Challenges and Strategies. A Conference Report*, (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1989).

¹⁸The first discoveries of poppies and the Colombian government's initial reaction are summed up in Virgilio Barco, *La lucha contra el narcotráfico* (Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1988); and Virgilio Barco, *Informe del Presidente de la República. Virgilio Barco al Congreso Nacional* (Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1989).

¹⁹*Semana* (Bogotá), 10 Sep. 1991.

²⁰See Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, *Aspectos de interés sobre el cultivo de amapola*, (Santafé de Bogotá: 1991, Mimeograph).

²¹Anti-narcotics Police, *Policía Antinarcóticos. Balance Actividades 1991* (Santafé de Bogotá: Policía Nacional de Colombia, 1991),18-20.

²²*Ibid.*, 18-20.

²³See Joseph B. Treaster, "Colombia's Drug Lords Sending Heroin to US," *The New York Times*, 14 Jan. 1992.

²⁴This statement was made by General Serrano Cadena in a seminar on glifosato organized by Centro de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá.

²⁵Edgar Torres, "Amapola: se disparan cifras" in *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), 19 Apr.1992.

²⁶See Presidencia de la República, *Consejería para la Defensa y Seguridad Nacional, La amapola en Colombia* (Santafé de Bogotá:1992, Mimeograph).

²⁷See *Policía Antinarcóticos, El glifosato en la erradicación de cultivos ilícitos* (Santafé de Bogotá,: Policía Nacional de Colombia, 1992).

²⁸See *El Espectador* (Bogotá), 28 Feb. 1992.

²⁹The ten countries with the largest crops followed different paths: five applied aerial eradication (Guatemala, India, Mexico, Pakistan and Thailand), one used only manual eradication (Burma), one used no eradication procedure at all (Afghanistan), in another (Iran) it is not known whether they eradicated or not, and two countries eradicated only minimally (Laos and Lebanon). See Michael Childress, "A system Description of the Heroin Trade," in *Rand Note*, (1994), 12.

³⁰See US Department of State, *Estudio conciso del medio ambiente para la erradicación de la amapola y la marihuana en Guatemala* (Washington D.C.:1987, Mimeograph). In Colombia, also in the nineties, national experts published papers indicating the presumed ecological damage caused by aerial fumigation with glifosato. For this, see, among others, Luis Eduardo Parra Rodríguez, "Impacto ambiental de los cultivos ilícitos en Colombia," in *Coloquio* 5, no. 3 (March 1997).

³¹See *Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, Hacia un compromiso global frente al problema de la droga* (Santafé de Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 1994),14. The figures on the destruction of poppies were as follows: 12,864 hectares in 1992, and 9,821 in 1993. Mexico, a more important producer than Colombia in terms of the quality and quantity of heroin, eradicated in those same years 11,220 and 13,020 hectares respectively. See *Mexican Government, Drug Control in Mexico, National Program 1989/1994: Progress and Results* (Mexico, D.F.: Procuraduría General de la República, 1994).

³²US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), 24.

³³*Ibid.*, 25

³⁴“In 174 Colombian municipalities representing 17 percent of the total of municipalities in the country, poppy plantations have been discovered. The municipalities in which poppies are being grown can be found in the departments (states) of Huila (28), Cundinamarca (19), Boyacá (19), Cauca (19), Nariño (18), Santander (12), Tolima (11), Valle (9), Meta (7), Antioquia (6), Cesar (5), Norte de Santander (5), Risaralda (4), Caquetá (3), Quindío (3), Caldas (3), Bolívar (2) and Putumayo (1).” *Presidencia de la República, Consejería para la Defensa y Seguridad Nacional, La amapola en la tradición colombiana: Producción para la especulación. auge regionales y violencia*, (Santafé de Bogotá: 1993, Mimeograph), 70.

³⁵See US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, (1995).

³⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

³⁷*El Tiempo* (Bogota), 21 Feb. 1992.

³⁸International Board for the Control of Narcotics, *Report of the International Board for the Control of Narcotics corresponding to 1993* (New York: United Nations, 1993), 47-48.

³⁹ On “blackmail diplomacy” see Alexander L. George, *Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics*, in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons (eds.) *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

⁴⁰Besides, the participation of the armed forces in combat against drugs was evident in the so-called *Operación Conquista* in the south of Colombia during 1996; to this must be added the maritime agreement with the United States in 1997 and positive signals from Bogotá permitting more intensive aerial operations in tasks of interdiction in accordance with hemispheric plans designed by the United States in this regard. Also, in 1997 Colombia, by means of a bilateral agreement, accepted that US military assistance would be conditioned by respect for human rights on the part of those Colombian brigades charged with carrying out anti-narcotics operations. (The Leahy Amendment in 1996 established that US anti-drug aid could not be given “to any unit of security forces in a foreign country if the Secretary of State had bona fide evidence showing that such a unit had committed grave violations of human rights.”) Additionally, the Colombian laws on termination of property rights (1996) and increased penalties (1997) were passed in the context of a growing criminalization of the different stages in the illegal business of drug trafficking. Finally, the extradition of Colombian citizens was restored, although it was not retroactive. The Samper administration was nationalistic in its rhetoric, but in fact accepted almost entirely the US diagnosis on the problem of drugs. Taking advantage of the Colombian president’s weakness, both internally and externally, the government in Washington achieved the “American Dream” of “North Americanizing the war against drugs” in Colombia.

⁴¹Myles R. R. Frechette was the US Ambassador in Colombia during the greater part of the Samper administration and was noted for his attitude as a true proconsul when it came to drugs and other matters related to Colombia’s internal and external politics.

⁴²Ernesto Samper Pizano, *Palabras del Señor Presidente de la República, Ernesto Samper Pizano, en el acto de presentación de la política contra las drogas* (Santafé de Bogotá: 6 Feb. 1995, Mimeograph).

⁴³Presidencia de la República, *Compromiso Colombia: Por un país libre de drogas* (Santafé de Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1997), 11-13.

⁴⁴Chemical eradication in 1996 was undertaken as part of “Operación Conquista.” See *Presidencia de la República, Colombia: La Lucha contra las drogas ilícitas. 1996, Un año de grandes progresos* (Santafé de Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1997), 11 and 24.

⁴⁵See several authors, *Drogas...*, op. cit.

⁴⁶See several authors, *Conflictos Regionales: Amazonia y Orinoquia* (Santafé de Bogotá, IEPRI/FESCOL, 1998); and Graciela Uribe, “Caquetá: Contexto y dinámica de las marchas campesinas” in *Coloquio* 5, No. 3 (March 1997).

⁴⁷See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *La lucha de Colombia contra las drogas ilícitas: Acciones y resultados en 1998* (Santafé de Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 1999).

⁴⁸Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The National Drug Control Strategy, 1998* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998).

⁴⁹The policy of fumigation has been shown to be clumsy and mistaken, not only in Colombia. Despite years of forced chemical eradication on crops, world figures for coca plantations has gone up from 240,000 hectares in 1987 to 270,000 in 1999, and poppy plantations have gone from 211,000 in 1988 to 217,000 in 1999. In 1999, the global production of heroin reached 580 metric tons, while that of cocaine reached approximately 1,000 metric tons, and that of marijuana was close on 30,000 metric tons. See United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP), *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2000* (New York: UN, 2000).

⁵⁰US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (Washington D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 2001).

⁵¹Colombian and US figures can be seen in *El Tiempo* (Bogota), 14 Feb. 2000.

⁵²Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The National Drug Control Strategy, 1998*. See Marsha Rosenbaum, "Are We Really Winning the War on Drugs?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 Mar. 2000.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Bruce M. Bagley, *Drug Trafficking, Political Violence and US Policy in Colombia in the 1990s*, (Coral Gables: University of Miami, 2000, Mimeograph).

⁵⁵Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The National Drug Control Strategy, 1998*.

⁵⁶Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, *Hacia un compromiso global frente al problema de la droga*, 14.

⁵⁷It is worth underlining the fact that the United Nations has become more and more aware of the problems related to chemical fumigation of illicit crops. In fact, a study sponsored by the UN Program for Drug Control points out the following: "Finally, the environmental impact of herbicides used to eradicate illicit drug cultivation is also a cause of concern." United Nations International Drug Control Programme, "Economic and Social Consequences of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking" in UNDCP Technical Series 6, (1997): 37.

⁵⁸Andrés Pastrana, *Una política de paz para el cambio* (Santafé de Bogotá: 1998, Mimeograph), 16-17.

⁵⁹See *Semana* (Bogota), 20 Sep. 1999.