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The CIA Orchestrates a Pre-Election Campaign in Paraguay

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The marked increase in numbers at the US embassy in Asunción over the past year is being necessitated by the need to maintain control over the Paraguayan government. The pre-election campaign is in full swing and in order to «manage it by hand», the intelligence apparatus operating under the roof of the US embassy need staff reinforcements. Political forces potentially hostile to the interests of the United States must not be allowed to come to power. Federico Franco, the acting president of Paraguay who, in June 2012, ensured the CIA-scripted «constitutional removal» of the legally elected president, Fernando Lugo, has fulfilled his mission. His successor needs to be just as reliable and just as manageable.

The Robinson 44 helicopter crash that killed Lino Oviedo, one of the Paraguayan presidential candidates, briefly became a world sensation... The crash happened during the night of 2 and 3 February this year as Oviedo returned to Asunción following several meetings with voters in the north of the country. The route in its entirety was no more than 200 kilometres and the helicopter was being flown by a former military pilot experienced in night flights. The third person on board was Oviedo's bodyguard, who was completely trusted by the retired general and leader of the National Union of Ethical Citizens (UNACE) party. The helicopter took off in favourable weather conditions with a cloudy front just visible over the horizon.

The first stage of the flight passed normally and the helicopter's progress was monitored by the control centre at Asunción airport, which checked the radio link several times. Suddenly, the radio went silent. Attempts to re-establish contact with the helicopter proved useless. A rescue group was sent out in the early hours of the morning to search for Oviedo and his fellow travellers. A radio beacon mounted in the helicopter meant that the crash site could be located quickly. Mutilated bodies and fragments of the helicopter were discovered in a palm grove, and rescuers were surprised to find the remains scattered in a fan-shaped pattern 100-150 metres from the area where the helicopter's cabin and engine had embedded themselves into the ground. This circumstance has given rise to the idea that Oviedo was the victim of an assassination attempt using an explosive device.

In the first official, rather cautious, reports concerning Oviedo's death, the idea that it was an act of terrorism was not ruled out. The dynamic and contentious politician often referred to as the last Paraguayan caudillo had a lot of enemies. A career serviceman, Oviedo broke into the country's political life in February 1989 as one of the key players in the overthrow of the dictator Stroessner. From 1993 through to 1996, Oviedo was in charge of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. According to his enemies, it was during this period that he laid the foundations for his financial prosperity, providing cover for smugglers and drug cartels.

His attempts to convert his popularity among the people into a presidency were unsuccessful. Rivals triumphed and never forgave Oviedo for his behind-the-scenes methods of struggle, his attempts to organise coups d'Etat and his use of violence against opponents. As a result – his search for political asylum in Brazil and then Argentina, and his ten-year prison sentence in a Paraguayan prison which he did not serve in full due to «good behaviour».

Oviedo, who would have turned 69 this year, said that his participation in the 2013 elections was his final attempt to become president. He was in third place in the popularity ratings among voters and was doing everything possible to turn the tide in his favour. Oviedo's pre-election efforts were met with a hostile reaction from his main rivals, whom he labelled using the word «Mafia». First and foremost Oviedo was referring to the Colorado Party, which was in power during the Stroessner dictatorship. Oviedo himself during the 1980s belonged to a movement of «traditionalists» in the party who were interested in the theory of the «third path» advocated by Argentinian President Juan Perón at the end of the 1940s. In 2002, Oviedo created his party UNACE, which was joined by many ex-members of the Colorado Party. Horacio Cartes, the Colorado Party's presidential candidate, believed that Oviedo's potential for attracting voters with moderately conservative views was extremely dangerous, as these are the voters traditionally relied on by the Colorado Party. Hence the reason why the fierceness of the confrontation between Cartes and Oviedo was on the increase on the run up to the elections on 21 April 2013.

Speaking of his chances of victory, Oviedo continuously said that he would become president as long as he was not killed by the «Mafia». In fact, Oviedo had hinted at the Mafia origins of Horatio Cartes' multi-millions that had enabled him to «hire» the Colorado Party in order to realise his presidential ambitions. Oviedo talked about this in his final interview, which he gave to the Guyra Campana radio station just a few hours before his death. What is interesting is that Cartes' «mafiosity» has not raised any doubts in the American intelligence agency. There has been quite a lot of information in WikiLeaks documents about Cartes' illegal operations laundering drug money, financing drug shipments to America, Brazil and Argentina, as well as contraband alcohol and tobacco products. During a regional meeting between representatives of the CIA and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), specific details were discussed regarding a complex operation to obtain incriminating information on Cartes. That this information was obtained is beyond doubt. American intelligence agencies run the show on the continent just as they do at home. But how exactly was this incriminating evidence used? If we are to believe statements made by the millionaire, he has never had a problem visiting America either on business matters or for a holiday. So a «compromise agreement» has definitely been reached, and it is not difficult to guess at its content. Despite all of his millions, Cartes is dangling on a fishhook.

It should be mentioned that the US embassy never had such «loyal» regard for Lino Oviedo. What were the American intelligence officers saying about him at their headquarters and State Department? Here are some extracts from dispatches sent to the State Department in April 2008: «He is a strong leader prone to messianism. He is known for his mental instability, his anti-democratic and violent tendencies, and his ability to deceive and manipulate. He is a pragmatist who believes that a relationship with the United States is a necessary evil. Oviedo maintains an anti-American stance, although he goes after America's blessing (when resolving his own issues). He is a populist and is more in sympathy with authoritarian right-wing forces than left. He is extremely ambitious and yearns for power. He is unmanageable» The key word here is «unmanageable».

In the CIA's file on Oviedo, which was passed on to the parliamentary commission investigating the activities of drug cartels in Brazil, there was information about the Paraguayan's involvement in the illegal trade of drugs, arms and contraband operations. It also alleged that Oviedo had managed to scrape together capital to the tune of one billion dollars. The file particularly stressed the fact that he had a negative influence on Brazilian businessmen and corrupted them with easy money. The credibility of this kind of information demands to be rechecked. American intelligence agencies often use questionable, as well as deliberately falsified, information in order to «justify» the persecution of undesirables. Such undesirables included Oviedo. It is possible to suppose that the CIA handing the file over to Brazil was a targeted action aimed at compromising Oviedo in the eyes of Brazilian politicians and members of the military. From the very start of his activities he preferred to focus on Brazil, America's main strategic opponent in the Western Hemisphere, and so as far as CIA agents were concerned he did not deserve any kind of leniency.

Presidential candidate Efrain Alegre and vice-presidential candidate Rafael Felizolla are taking part in the election campaign as a duo from the ruling Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA). They are both former ministers from Fernando Lugo's government. Alegre dealt with construction and communication issues, while Felizolla was in charge of domestic policy. The US embassy has had no problems with them of an ideological or criminal nature, which explains their conflict-free inclusion in the election process. Left-wing parties accuse Alegre and Felizolla of collaborating with structures of «American domination» in Paraguay. Neither politician has come out with any weighty denials of this charge: is there any point drawing the voters' attention to such a delicate issue?

However, it is possible to talk about Felizolla's political career in more detail. He first came to the attention of the US embassy in 2005. Felizolla had taken part in a seminar dedicated to strengthening the relationship between Paraguay and Venezuela. He talked quite critically about Washington's policies, but spoke approvingly of Chávez's government as well as the activities of «populists» such as Lula, Kirchner and other left-wing Latin American leaders. Despite «isolated immature attacks», Felizolla as a «young, promising politician» began to be invited to receptions at the US embassy. Before his appointment as Interior Minister, Fernando Lugo «received advice» from the US ambassador. And suddenly Felizolla became one of the most popular ministers in Lugo's government. It was through him that the Americans reformed the country's political and intelligence agencies, infiltrating them with their own agents, carried out special operations against «Arab terrorists» in the Tri-Border Area, and dealt with the «Marxist guerilla movement» in Paraguay, as well as the disruptive influence of «the emissaries of Chavez, Ortega and others».

Victory for the Authentic Radical Liberal Party in the presidential elections is a possibility. They have the opportunity, considering that without even waiting for her husband's funeral, Lino Oviedo's widow has already announced that his UNACE party will be supporting the «Alegre-Felizolla duo». Bearing all this in mind, Washington cannot lose. Work has been done with the favourites in the election race and the necessary guarantees have been obtained, there is not going to be any unexpected surprises.

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