

AIFLD: friend of drug traffickers

Narco-terrorism in Ibero-America got an early start through the State Department-funded CIA creation known as the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). As John Ranelagh describes in his book, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*, "[Agent] Cord Meyer had had the original idea for the institute in the late 1950s, and since its inception over two hundred thousand Latin American labor union officials have been trained at its center at Front Royal, Virginia. It has been one of the more successful CIA ventures, indirectly organizing a very sophisticated collaboration between government, business, and labor, carrying out a clear policy conceived as being in the external interests of the United States. Presumably it also had the additional advantage of providing the CIA with informants and agents throughout the labor unions of South and Central America."

What Ranelagh leaves out is that AIFLD is also "one of the more successful" efforts of Soviet agents of influence within the U.S. intelligence community to establish an intelligence/counterintelligence conduit into—and out of—Ibero-America. A Communist collaborator and World Federalist who worked throughout the 1950s and 1960s to create the networks which yielded Castro's Cuba, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, and the Nazi-communist drug-trafficking apparatus, Cord Meyer and his AIFLD "brainchild" are the narco-terrorists' best friends.

AIFLD's links to the narcotics trade, elaborated in more than one *EIR* special report, are exemplified in Colombia, where its puppets in the labor movement are not only collaborators of leading drug traffickers, but highly public lobbyists for their interests. This is most easily seen in the case of the U.S.-Colombia extradition treaty, which both the "anti-Communist" UTC and the Colombian Communist Party have ferociously denounced as a "violation of national sovereignty."

The figure of Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela gives in a nutshell the essence of AIFLD and the broader network of which it is a part:

- In 1975, Colombian "banker" and "entrepreneur" Rodríguez Orejuela becomes a partner in a business venture undertaken by the Union of Colombian Workers (UTC), then the largest trade union federation in Colombia and a showcase of AIFLD training and financing. Rodríguez Orejuela, who is to become a leading financier for the "Medellín Cartel" of

drug-traffickers, already has an unsavory reputation for kidnapping exploits in his youth; DEA documents from the period show that his links to the drug trade go back at least to 1976.

- Endowed with labor credentials as a UTC partner, Rodríguez buys heavily into the UTC's newly-formed Workers Bank. The bank funds AIFLD-designed projects, and would become part of a network of drug-money laundering banks throughout the region.

- In 1984, UTC president Victor Acosta organizes a nationwide campaign against extradition of Colombian nationals to the United States, a campaign which complements that being run through the above-ground publications of then-fugitive cocaine czar Carlos Lehder.

- In November 1984, Rodríguez is arrested in Spain with one Jorge Luis Ochoa Vásquez, number-two man in the infamous "Medellín Cartel." Within months of his arrest, a delegation of Colombia's leading trade unionists—including the secretary general of the UTC—arrives in Madrid to plead his defense.

- In 1984, the UTC's Workers Bank is accused of being one of four banks involved in laundering drug money for one Hernán Botero, a wealthy soccer team owner who earns the distinction of becoming the first Colombian drug-trafficker extradited to the United States. He is currently doing 30 years in a U.S. jail.

- During his 1985 Miami trial, Botero's defense attorney brings up one Mario Valderrama, the head of the UTC's Medellín affiliate, to argue Botero's innocence.

In March 1985, Panamanian authorities shut down First Interamericas Bank, S.A., whose majority stockholders are Rodríguez Orejuela and Jorge Luis Ochoa Vásquez. Managing the bank at the time is former UTC treasurer and Workers Bank director Antonio Beltrán.

- In 1986, the U.S. embassy and AIFLD jointly underwrite a UTC convention, which names Valderrama vice president of the national federation.

- In 1986, both Rodríguez and Ochoa are extradited from Spain to Colombia, despite a previous U.S. extradition petition. Ochoa, accused in Colombia only of illegally importing wild bulls, is promptly released from jail and disappears. Rodríguez, wanted on drug-trafficking charges, remains in jail through 1987. His trial is expected to yield a verdict soon.

- In 1987, a U.S. extradition petition against Rodríguez Orejuela is rejected by Justice Minister Edmundo López Gómez, who promptly resigns his post in protest against administration pressures to change his decision. López Gómez tells the press that his "principled stance" was taken on the advice of former President Alfonso López Michelsen, whose 1974-78 administration helped sponsor the drug trade in Colombia. In 1984, López met with the country's drug kingpins only days after their contracted murder of Justice Minister Lara Bonilla. He then mediated their offer to pay the national debt with their drug profits in exchange for an amnesty.