

the bankruptcy and immorality of the financial sector; E) the reactivation of narco-terrorism; F) aggravation of tensions in Central America.

We do not feel that analysis and solution of this series of problems is the exclusive responsibility of the government, of other branches of public office, of the economic and industrial associations, [or] of the financial institutions, but of a united and strong union movement . . . within the concept of “harmony of interests. . . .”

Of the problems mentioned, the most severe is the growth of unemployment . . . principally caused by the imposition of the so-called adjustment program. . . . This policy of austerity . . . is no more than a continuation of the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund monitoring, and the goal is to force Colombia to sign a formal letter of intent, to serve as an international strike-breaker in the fight being waged by countries like Peru and our own against the usury of the international financial institutions. . . . The international bankers—anticipating the resistance of the workers to these programs and policies—have given the order to disable, weaken and destroy democratic trade unionism. . . .

We accept that morality cannot be separate from any human activity, and therefore we are prepared to bring this teaching into practice inside democratic trade unionism and our own labor confederation. That is why we oppose narco-terrorism, since the moral fiber and future of our society is being shattered by those who traffic in illegal drugs and turn our sons and brothers into drug addicts. We support the determination to move ahead with eradication of this plague and will be alert, because we know that the money of the mafia will continue to try . . . to take control of the institutions of the country. It is not accidental that the labor movement is being besieged by the narco-financial interests.

We feel it is urgent that, regarding immediate measures to fight unemployment, we undertake a program of infrastructure to give the nation railroads, canals, water control, highways, ports, public health, etc. . . . For this a large percentage of foreign capital is not necessary, merely the mobilization of national resources, issuing money for this activity without this increasing inflation since what would be happening is the reactivation of unused resources to create new wealth. . . .

We believe that the promotion, on the part of the World Bank and other analogous organizations, of the “micro-company” does not help the country . . . since these, through their low productivity, are incapable of competing on the international markets. The “micro-company” represents a generalization of poverty. Colombia should be an agricultural and industrial power, not a colony producing raw materials and crafts.

We commit ourselves to defend, spread, and fight for such a program of action . . . and will continue our efforts to purify and moralize the union movement as a step toward its necessary and urgent . . . programmatic unity.

Interview: Orlando Obregón Sabrojal

A new labor unity

Mr. Obregón Sabrojal was comptroller of the Union of Colombian Workers (UTC) until the UTC national plenum of July 25-26, 1986, in the city of Cali. The interview which we excerpt here was given to EIR's Bogota correspondent, Javier Almario, at the headquarters of the National Union of Social Security Workers, where the coordinating committee of the soon-to-be-founded national labor movement meets.

EIR: What happened at the UTC plenum?

Obregón: The 32nd plenum of the federation had been called, and several incidents occurred . . . demonstrating how the Colombian labor movement has been handled. In the first place . . . we discovered that some credentials had been granted which did not carry the signature of the comptroller, who is the person responsible by law for controlling entrance to these events. Some credentials were signed exclusively by the UTC president [Victor Acosta] to admit certain individuals who were brought from different parts of the country, having nothing to do with, no links to, the national plenum.

The main purpose of the event was analysis of the situation within the federation; thus the comptroller gave a detailed report on how it has been managed . . . administratively, economically, failures on a moral order in labor relations, the vacuum existing within the federation in addressing the country's problems. He also reported in his document on the personal activities of certain . . . executives of the federation who are dishonoring the labor movement, such as in the case of Alfonso Vargas, in the handling of certain contributions that a labor organization sent—nearly 600,000 pesos—which never found their way to the federation. Also denounced was the relation of this gentleman and other executives of the federation to elements clearly identified in the country as drug-traffickers. Other executives of the federation were denounced for their immorality and betrayal of the labor movement. . . .

The response of those indicted was grotesque, prompting 30 organizations to withdraw from the meeting, since no guarantees of their right to intervene were given; only friends of corruption were allowed to speak. The comptroller had the opportunity to question a pre-plenum meeting that was held,

campaign



financed by AIFLD [the American Institute for Free Labor Development] to the tune of one and a half million pesos, and where the plot to expel persons who have been questioning the mistakes of the federation was launched.

The 30 organizations agreed to form a national unity movement of democratic trade unions. They also assigned a coordinating committee to work with other labor sectors to achieve the unity of Colombian trade unionism.

EIR: The president of the Union of Nariño Workers said that, after the 30 organizations pulled out of the Cali plenum, the UTC was left with just a bunch of initials.

Obregón: This is not far from true. . . . The individuals who have encrusted themselves in the leadership of this movement want to continue to use the initials. And it appears that this is all they will be left with, since the base is not going to support them, and as has been demonstrated, the federations which pulled out are very important, with the majority of members, and are the most representative of the labor movement in the country.

EIR: In your comptroller's report you directly accused UTC secretary general Alfonso Vargas for his trip to Spain to visit the drug trafficker Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela. What was his response?

Obregón: This is what enraged all the delegates, because the friends of corruption and immorality appealed . . . to Christian sentiment, going so far as to claim that their relation with the narcos was exclusively an act of Christian charity. . . .

EIR: Regarding the AIFLD, there have been charges that that institute gave money, not to labor organizations, but to individuals, so that they could use the money as they wished. Is this true?

Obregón: Yes. A letter was presented [at the plenum], signed by the former director of the AIFLD, which says that three checks were drawn to the name of Victor Acosta. We have a copy of those checks, which are for nearly 400,000 pesos. We also charged that the AIFLD gave a check to one Agustín

Garzón for 150,000 pesos, which were never used for a single union event, but were personally used by that trade unionist. All of this we denounced at the plenum, how the AIFLD is financing individuals who are involved in the corruption of the trade union movement.

EIR: What do you think is the AIFLD's purpose in giving money this way?

Obregón: We don't know what the AIFLD is seeking . . . but the only reasonable explanation that can be suggested is

We seek to create a single labor federation that can recover the force and vigor that the labor movement has lost. We are going to take on those who want to gut workers' rights and reimpose the policies of the International Monetary Fund, and those who want to open the doors to those linked to the dirty business of drug addiction.

that they want to keep trade unionism weakened, introducing and financing within the labor movement individuals whose personal histories are unclean. In this way, we feel they are trying to weaken and also corrupt the labor movement.

EIR: Simultaneous with the UTC plenum, the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC) held its plenum. Is this a coincidence or was there some kind of coordination?

Obregón: It is a rare coincidence that seems to have been well orchestrated, because on the same date the two federations held their plenums, and with the same purpose: to expel those persons who have been denouncing the immorality within the trade union organizations and who seek the unity of the labor movement. It would seem that those who direct the presidents of those labor organizations are fighting tooth and nail against the unification of the Colombian trade union movement, and have sought to block that process by expelling, both from the UTC and CTC, friends of labor unity.

EIR: Victor Acosta, president of the UTC . . . accused the President of the Republic, Belisario Betancur, and Labor Minister Jorge Carrillo of promoting the division of the federations, because they hope to use the workers to conduct their future political activity. What do you think of these charges?

Obregón: The truth is that those who are dividing the labor movement are embedded in the trade union leadership, above all in the case of the UTC . . . who have seeded immorality in the federation and are the true enemies of the unity of the labor movement. . . .

EIR: Following the UTC plenum, what will happen with the labor movement? Will a new confederation be formed?

Obregón: We will continue to fight for the unity of trade unionism. We believe that we must turn all our efforts to this end. We are already holding very important meetings with sections of the CGT, the CTC, with certain independent sectors. We seek to create a single labor federation that can recover the force and vigor that the labor movement has lost. We believe . . . that we are going to create the largest force of the labor movement, to take on those who want to gut workers' rights and reimpose the policies of the International Monetary Fund, and those who want to open the doors to those linked to the dirty business of drug addiction.

EIR: The President-elect, in one of his speeches in the Department of Choco, said that he agreed with the idea of unity of the labor movement. Do you think that Dr. Barco is going to support this kind of movement?

Obregón: In view of these statements of his, we think that Dr. Barco will see in the unity of the labor movement a useful contribution to his government. He has said, and we hope he follows through, that he will need the popular forces of the country to make great changes in the country. And these popular forces must be unified and organized. . . . So we think that this unified labor federation will be well received both by him and by many other sectors who believe that democracy needs a strong trade union movement. . . .

EIR: There has been tremendous pressure by the business sector to reform the labor code so as to eliminate many gains. . . . How do you think Dr. Barco will deal with this kind of pressure? Will he be influenced by it?

Obregón: We will have to wait and see what position the President of the Republic takes. We hope that he will not yield to the pressure of the economic associations. That is why we are organizing. . . .

EIR: Do you think that behind the pressure to reform labor legislation are supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which in other countries like Panama and Argentina have pushed for labor reforms?

Obregón: Yes, undoubtedly behind all this is, especially, the IMF. That is why we are insisting on the strengthening of the labor movement, because we will have to apply strong pressure of our own so that what the IMF wants to impose—which would put an end to the workers by denying them their rights—is not complied with.

Britain sees more

by Mark Burdman

Following the Aug. 3-5 "mini-summit" on South Africa of the seven Commonwealth nations in London, the British Broadcasting Corporation on Aug. 6 proclaimed that there was a state of "war" between British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Commonwealth.

The BBC description is appropriate, even if Mrs. Thatcher avoided fist-fights with her Commonwealth interlocutors. Tactically, Mrs. Thatcher chose instead to make a positive use of the time-honored British method of deft diplomatic verbal obfuscation: She will "not stand in the way" of European Economic Community sanctions, a negative formulation of non-intention. She will encourage a "voluntary ban" on tourism to South Africa, a non-legally binding, meaningless formulation. And there will be no "new investments" in South Africa, again, a non-policy, since there have been no new investments in South Africa in any case for many months.

In substance, she held the line against sanctions. And, in taking on the Commonwealth, in her own manner, Mrs. Thatcher was engaged in combat with the international institution that is Her Majesty's most prized possession.

The real issue

What transpired in London from Aug. 3-5, then, is only one significant battle in a war for much larger stakes. The fate of South Africa is critical, because it has become the front-line in Soviet-led attempts to undermine the economy and strategic position of the West.

But in British terms, what is fundamental, is the further escalation of the "Palacegate" scandal, provoked by the House of Windsor's extraordinary and illicit (by British political-constitutional standards) mid-July declaration of war against 10 Downing Street. Through "leaks" against Mrs. Thatcher, emanating from the Palace, and appearing in the July 20 London *Sunday Times*, it became known that the Queen was extremely displeased with her prime minister on a whole range of issues, from sanctions against South Africa, which the Queen favors, to the use of British airfields for the U.S.