

Editorial

Time to dump AIFLD

On Dec. 12, the Colombian Supreme Court annulled the treaty of extradition of drug traffickers to the United States, the centerpiece of Colombia's war on drugs. The court ruled unanimously that the law authorizing the treaty was unconstitutional, on the technicality that it had been signed by the acting President while the President was out of the country.

Did the government of the United States itself give the go-ahead for this catastrophic setback to the joint U.S.-Colombian war on drugs?

It is a fact that the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, and the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), an institution officially funded by the U.S. State Department, are the ones who bankroll the activities of Colombia's pro-drug trade unionists, who have been working to wreck that treaty.

These are the very same U.S. circles which are under scrutiny in the "Irangate" scandal, for trafficking arms to the Iranian terrorists and using the money to finance the Contras.

Since 1984, when the body of murdered Colombian Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was not yet cold in its grave, these pro-drug trade unionists, led by such individuals as Tulio Cuevas, Victor Acosta, and Alfonso Vargas, put out a proclamation against the treaty. From that moment on, they have not missed a chance to condemn it. These same pro-drug trade unionists have traveled to various countries to intercede on behalf of imprisoned Colombian drug traffickers, as when Alfonso Vargas, Tulio Cuevas, and Manuel Felipe Hurtado went to Spain to beg for mercy for the gangster Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela. These same pro-drug unionists became involved in sordid banking deals backed by the AIFLD, such as that of the Workers Bank of Colombia, to help "launder" money from narcotics trafficking.

Throughout these activities, these characters have enjoyed the financial backing of the U.S. embassy in Bogota and AIFLD. It goes even further: Only a few days before the Supreme Court of Colombia took its decision on the extradition treaty, the U.S. embassy and AIFLD generously underwrote the "convention"

of what remains of the Colombian Workers Union (UTC)—now that a new, anti-mafia mass labor organization has been formed in its place.

At this "convention," Victor Acosta ended up as president of the UTC, and Mario Valderrama as vice president. Valderrama had gone to Miami to defend the jailed drug trafficker Hernán Botero, who hid many of his illicit activities behind the facade of a soccer promoter. Valderrama himself was until a short time ago the second-in-command of the Medellín Independent football team, which Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, shortly before he was assassinated by the mafia, mentioned among the sporting enterprises linked to drugs. Now, after the violent death of the team's president, Valderrama has taken his place. In many political circles it is rumored that Valderrama is the link between Victor Acosta and the drug trafficker Pablo Escobar.

Solidaridad Iberoamericana, a newspaper which has consistently exposed these facts, has been receiving telephone threats. Its editor, Maximiliano Londoño Penilla, who is also vice-president of the National Anti-Drug Coalition of Colombia, has earned the hatred of the mafia, which is defended by the pro-drug unionists. The U.S. embassy and AIFLD are so happy to fund. It is obvious that if anything untoward happens to the editors of *Solidaridad Iberoamericana*, it will be the responsibility of the people who are thus spending U.S. taxpayers' money.

What will President Ronald Reagan do? Clearly one part of his government—the same implicated in the "Irangate" scandal—financed the activities of individuals who defend the drug mafia and fight against the collaboration of the nations of the Americas against drug trafficking.

Will Ronald Reagan make good on his pledges of a war on drugs? Or will he look the other way, as he did in the case of the mobster Ramón Mata Ballesteros, who, although he is considered the mastermind of the murder of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena, today walks around free in Honduras, with the protection of elements of that country's government?