

pend any extradition orders.

It is no coincidence that Vásquez Velásquez was the first government official approached by the Medellín Cartel after Galán's murder, and asked to consider negotiations with the cocaine traffickers. An Oct. 6 article in the daily *El Siglo*, by Colombia's leading congressional commentator Darío Hoyos Hoyos, claimed that, as interior minister, Vásquez Velásquez was instrumental in sabotaging President Barco's decree permitting the assignment of military mayors to towns besieged by narco-terrorism, or by mafia-tolerant officials of Vásquez Velásquez's ilk. Just prior to Vásquez Velásquez's "resignation," his political boss Federico Estrada Vélez told President Barco that the government minister's departure from the cabinet would force Estrada Vélez's withdrawal of support from a constitutional reform bill, President Barco's pet project. The President, it appears, was not to be blackmailed.

### **A matter of treason**

Although the majority of Colombia's Congress has proven itself deserving of the invective it has drawn recently from Colombians disgusted with its suspicious "do-nothing" attitude, there are exceptions. One such is Sen. Iván Marulanda, a close colleague and friend of the murdered Galán, who used the sessions called by Santofimio Botero to denounce the black-listed presidential candidate and his colleagues as "traitors," and negotiations with the traffickers as "treason."

He said, "Those who negotiate over the bodies of Galán Sarmiento, Cano Isaza, Lara Bonilla, Pardo Leal, and the thousands of other fellow citizens immolated in the fratricidal orgy of the drug trade, will go down in history for their cowardice and for their surrender of national dignity." Marulanda demanded total support for President Barco's war on drugs and blasted his fellow congressmen for having bartered their dignity for mafia money. "They are now accountable to history and to their consciences for having contributed to the nightmare the country is going through."

President Barco and the circles backing his anti-drug campaign have issued their own denunciation of these traitors, in a statement issued by the National Security Council presided over by the President: "In evaluating the characteristics of public order, the Security Council detected the application of an insidious campaign of disinformation on the part of the drug-trafficking mafias, for the purpose of diverting investigations, distracting citizens' attention, slandering officials charged with combatting that plague, reducing the efficiency of anti-narcotics operations and heaping false accusations upon organizations uninvolved in the assassinations and assaults that have shocked the nation.

"The means used by this criminal enterprise are slander, defamation, black propaganda, pamphlets, and rumor as mechanisms of psychological terrorism. . . . These are some of the various methods the drug kingpins have been using to

crush the battle readiness of honest people and, at the same time, to muddy the good image of authorities who for security reasons they have been unable to physically eliminate. . . . In this sense, it is clear that the drug traffickers seek to saturate public opinion so as to cause exhaustion and intolerance, to force society to react against the government and demand a different strategy."

The Security Council also addressed the campaign of indiscriminate narco-terrorist bombings that have been rocking the nation since Barco's anti-drug decrees were put in force. Nearly 120 bomb attacks have occurred in the five weeks since then in what has been termed by Colombian officials an "avalanche of terror." Particularly targeted have been farms, banks, businesses, political offices, supermarkets and schools.

Despite heavy militarization in major cities such as Bogotá, people are afraid to go to work, send their children to school, or go to the marketplace.

Referring to this violence, the Security Council stated, "In moments of such confusion, one can see symptoms of a collective neurosis, the product of indiscriminate terrorism applied to defenseless sectors [such as] the student population. The Security Council calls on the community to maintain its good sense and not submit to the impositions of the drug trade . . . which seek to place the national government in a precarious position to force it to negotiate the proposals presented by the Extraditables. This is blackmail that under no circumstances will be permitted."

## **Who's behind the 'Cali Cartel' ploy?**

by José Restrepo

Michael Abbell, a former senior official of the United States Department of Justice now representing Colombia's Cali Cartel drug boss Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, has offered new terms for a deal between the dope traffickers and the United States government, the *Washington Post* revealed in a front-page article Oct. 2. Abbell, the primary attorney for the Cali Cartel in the United States since he left the Justice Department in 1984, has been lobbying the U.S. Congress and legal establishment in the past month to overturn the extradition agreement with Colombia—this time from the U.S. side.

Despite the glimpse it offered into the depths of corrup-

tion of U.S. officialdom, the *Post* coverage was not a serious exposé, but a major escalation in an international campaign to get the Colombian and U.S. governments to drop all idea of crushing the drug trade and strike a deal instead with the “moderate drug-pushers” of the Cali Cartel. Key to this argument is the claim that there is a distinction between Abbell’s supposedly well-behaved and “business-oriented” clients, and the violence-prone, “lower-class” Medellín Cartel.

Thus, Abbell was able to outline on the front page of Washington’s leading newspaper an offer for a “compromise” with the “Extraditables,” whereby they would be tried and sentenced in the United States, but then returned to Colombia to serve their sentences. Abbell promoted his drug-running clients as “mainstream” and “legitimate” businessmen, who employ 5,000 people in pharmacies, banks, and other companies, and urged that they not be lumped together with the Medellín traffickers. “The people in Cali are adamantly opposed to any violence. . . . My impression is you can work with these people,” he stated.

One day earlier, the *Baltimore Sun* floated the same line, basing its story on propaganda put out by Colombia’s Department of Administrative Security (DAS), which also promotes the “divisions in the cartel” propaganda. DAS spokeswoman Diva Rojas Mayor stated on Sept. 29 that no arrest warrants have been issued for the four chiefs of the Cali Cartel, because they are not wanted for crimes committed within Colombia. Some in Colombia believe only the “revolutionary violence” associated with the drug trade is a problem, not drug trafficking itself, the *Sun* reported.

Divisions among the various cartels operating in Colombia—those of Cali, Medellín, and La Uribe (the last run by the Communist Party-controlled Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)—are important only when the dope trade is viewed at the lowest level of on-the-ground operations. When the narcotics business is examined from a higher level, as the integrated multinational that it is, these “divisions” amount to little more than psychological warfare manipulations by Dope, Inc. itself, the better to achieve its overall strategy of legalized production, consumption, and export of drugs.

## Role of the U.S. Justice Department

The high level of the Cali Cartel’s U.S. sponsors confirms that this maneuver was not decided upon at the level of Colombia’s dope-runners. Abbell himself is no minor official. From 1979 to 1984, he served as acting director and deputy director of the DoJ Criminal Division’s International Affairs section. This section, one of four sections overseen by Assistant Deputy Attorney General Mark Richard since 1980, is in charge of all criminal investigations or prosecutions which have an international dimension, including all narcotics and arms-smuggling cases and extraditions.

Within six months of leaving office, Abbell testified be-

fore Spanish courts that Rodríguez Orejuela should not be extradited to the United States, because the Justice Department—his former employer—had filed a deficient petition against his client. Since then, Abbell has made at least six trips to Cali to meet with Rodríguez and his associates, and advise them on how to avoid continued U.S. extradition requests. Abbell works out of the Washington-based law firm Kaplan, Russin and Vecchi, which also maintains offices in Bogotá, Bangkok, Santo Domingo, Taipei, and California. Working with Abbell at the firm is a former official in the State Department’s Agency for International Development (AID), one Jonathan Russin, and Bruno Ristau, another former career official from the Justice Department.

## The intelligence community

Abbell’s relationship to Rodríguez Orejuela’s gang is also no isolated case of a corrupted individual. Rodríguez Orejuela’s ties to sections of the U.S. intelligence community go back to at least the 1970s, when he worked closely with the CIA’s “labor front,” the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), in Colombia. With 70% of its funding provided by AID, AIFLD is considered “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,” in the words of CIA chronicler John Ranelagh in his book *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*.

In 1975, Rodríguez Orejuela became a partner in a business venture undertaken by the AIFLD-controlled Union of Colombian Workers (UTC), then Colombia’s largest labor federation. Rodríguez’s UTC sponsor was then Secretary-General Tulio Cuevas, for decades a member of AIFLD’s board of trustees. Thus endowed with credentials as a bona fide labor organizer, Rodríguez bought himself a place on the board of directors of AIFLD’s latest pet project, the UTC’s newly formed Workers Bank, and turned it into a major drug-laundering mechanism.

By 1984, the UTC executive was organizing a nationwide campaign against extradition of drug traffickers. A high-level delegation from the UTC traveled to Spain in November of that year to plead in defense of Rodríguez Orejuela, who had been arrested there on drug-trafficking charges along with Jorge Luis Ochoa, number-two man in the supposedly “rival” Medellín Cartel. In 1986, both Rodríguez and Ochoa were extradited to Colombia, thanks in part to the efforts of Michael Abbell, who fought the pre-existing U.S. extradition request. Ochoa promptly bought his way out of jail, while Rodríguez confidently took his case to trial and won an acquittal from a corrupt judge.

Despite Colombia’s recent anti-drug offensive, Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela continues to operate with impunity to this day, perhaps confident in the protection of Abbell’s “former” employers.