

# Bush's legalization strategy set back in Colombia

by Valerie Rush

The arrest of Cali Cartel kingpin Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela in Colombia, and the indictments against Cali Cartel networks inside the United States, have implications far beyond the dismantling of a single South American criminal organization. The apparent determination of the Clinton administration to reverse nearly two decades of inaction and/or outright betrayal of America's anti-drug commitments by taking action against the drug cartels is a direct slap in the face to the Anglo-American financial interests which stood behind, especially, the George Bush government, and whose networks still infest the halls of power in Washington today.

As *EIR* documented in its April 1991 *Special Report* entitled *Bush's Surrender to Dope, Inc.*, "the international financial system has become progressively more addicted to the flow of drug monies, to the point where today, the banking system is as hooked as a junkie on heroin." The international financial elites, to preserve that decadent banking system, are determined to maintain control over Dope, Inc.'s billions. That, the report insists, means promoting drug legalization by any and all means.

British financial interests have been especially outspoken in their advocacy of drug legalization. For nearly a decade, the London *Economist*, a mouthpiece of British banks, has repeatedly called for drug legalization. In June 1989, the magazine editorialized, "It is obvious . . . that drug dealers use banks. . . . The business . . . has become part of the financial system. . . . If you had morals or ethics in this business, you would not be in it."

The role of the Bush government was to wage a phony war on drugs while encouraging, through such bankers' institutions as the Inter-American Dialogue, the legalization of drugs as "a necessary evil." As early as 1986, the Dialogue was promoting "selective legalization" to "decrease vice and corruption." In 1989, the Dialogue was warning that "the fight against cocaine can threaten democratic governments as seriously as trafficking itself." In 1988, the State Department's annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report suggested that the profits of the drug trade "can provide benefits to some otherwise economically unattractive countries."

Colombia was chosen as the testing ground for legalization. As the *EIR Special Report* noted, "Today, Colombia's

government—under pressure from the Bush administration—is in the process of negotiating a virtual power-sharing arrangement with the cocaine cartels. With the cartels de facto legalized, the de jure legalization of their product is just around the corner."

And so, while President Bush pretended to support a "war on drugs," Colombia was deprived of the means to wage such a war. Its most dedicated leaders were assassinated, its population demoralized, and its government eventually driven to pursue a "deal" with the cartels. Meanwhile, hundreds of tons of narcotics were pouring into the United States.

## George Bush's duplicity

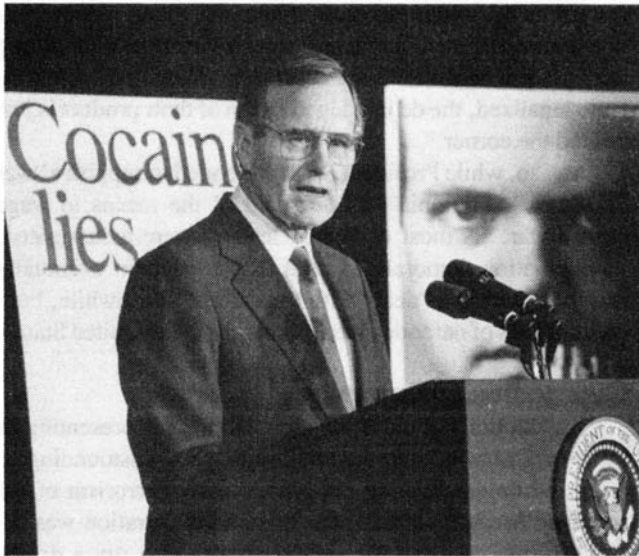
The duplicity of the Bush administration in presenting its "War on Drugs" as a foreign policy success is astounding:

- While denouncing the bloody narco-terrorism of the so-called Medellín Cartel, the Bush administration was secretly hiring that cartel's violent elements to run a drugs-for-guns supply operation to the anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan "Contras." A July 1985 plan by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to capture all of Colombia's top drug lords in one bust in the Caribbean was sabotaged by Vice President George Bush and his "Contra" project director, Lt. Col. Oliver North. Three days before the operation, North leaked information and photographic evidence to the press about the Sandinista government's involvement with the cartel, thereby alerting the cartel leaders and frustrating the raid.

DEA informant Barry Seal, who had played a key role in the plan, and who knew details of how Bush and North were financing the Contras with drug money, was murdered a short time later, when cartel assassins "discovered" his *unprotected* hideout in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

- While criticizing the Colombian government for its failure to rein in the narco-terrorists, the Bush government was denying crucial financial aid, logistical support, and technology and defense matériel to that country's ill-equipped Armed Forces. Former U.S. Southern Commander Paul Gorman testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1988, "We have been promising the Colombians matériel help since 1983. We have simply not delivered." In September 1989, National Police Chief Gen. Miguel Gómez Padilla protested that \$65 million in emergency aid sent to Colombia from the United States was largely "symbolic," and "more suitable for conventional warfare than the kind of struggle we are waging here against the drug traffickers."

- While Bush ordered an invasion force into Panama in 1989 to murder thousands of innocent civilians, destroy its defense forces, and kidnap its leader on the pretense that he was working with the Colombian drug cartels, the puppet government set up by Bush in that unhappy country was chosen directly from the boards of directors of some of the most prominent drug banks at the time, including the *jointly owned* Cali and Medellín cartels' First InterAmericas Bank



George Bush lies too. His "war on drugs" was a phony, promoting such pro-legalization outfits as the Inter-American Dialogue.

and Florida's Dadeland Bank.

- Were Bush networks also behind the September 1989 assassination of Colombia's front-running presidential candidate and anti-drug leader Luis Carlos Galán? Documentation that later appeared indicated that the weapons that had been used in the cartel hit against Galán, had originally been financed by U.S. intelligence cut-outs for a Panamanian "Contra" force against Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega. It has never been clarified how they got into the hands of Colombian cartel assassins. Galán's campaign manager, who succeeded him as presidential candidate and went on to take the Presidency, was César Gaviria.

- Even while the Bush administration knew that then-Colombian President César Gaviria was tainted, George Bush personally sponsored Gaviria's 1994 bid for secretary general of the Organization of American States, which he holds today. Bush knew, for example, that Gaviria had possession of videotapes, made with DEA assistance, showing cartel bribery of the 1991 Constituent Assembly which banned extradition, and that Gaviria had buried those tapes. Bush also knew that Gaviria had appointed to his administration four proponents of legalization—Health Minister and "former" M-19 narco-terrorist chieftain Antonio Navarro Wolf, Justice Minister Monica de Greiff, Development Minister Ernesto Samper Pizano (today President of Colombia), and Prosecutor General Gustavo de Greiff—and yet Bush publicly applauded Gaviria as "a man of courage, devoted to law and liberty."

The Bush strategy to encourage the legalization "solution" was centered around a working alliance with one of Colombia's three narcotics cartels, the so-called Cali Cartel of Gilberto and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, purportedly in

order to enlist their support in "fighting communism" in Nicaragua and elsewhere. Throughout the 1980s, and especially at the height of the violence in Colombia when high-profile political assassinations and car-bombings were paralyzing that nation, the U.S. media was repeating the administration line that, unlike their Medellín-based brethren, the Cali traffickers "deplored violence," "are businesslike and efficient," "have many legitimate businesses," and "do not seek public office." Bush's strategy was boosted by Gaviria, whose 1990 presidential campaign claimed an alleged distinction between mere "drug traffickers" and "drug terrorists."

Although many in the DEA and in other law-enforcement agencies knew better—after all, the Ochoa clan from Medellín were *business partners* with the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers from Cali—the myth that "one can work with" the Cali Cartel continued to appear in the U.S. media and in government layers. Small wonder, when Michael Abbell, for 17 years an employee of the U.S. Justice Department, who became section chief of the department's office of international affairs (in charge of extradition procedures), quit his post in 1984 to become the official lobbyist and lawyer for the Cali Cartel. It's all right, he assured the *Washington Post*: "The people in Cali are adamantly opposed to any violence. . . . My impression is you can work with these people."

In fact, the U.S. government *had* been working with "these people" since the mid-1970s, when taxpayers' dollars were being given by the State Department to the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), widely considered a dirty-tricks arms of corrupt U.S. intelligence networks, and ended up bankrolling drug-mafia money-laundering operations. In 1974, a half-million-dollar grant from the U.S. Interamerican Foundation (on whose advisory board sat AIFLD director William Doherty, Jr.) was given to the Colombian UTC labor federation as seed money to start the Colombian Workers Bank. The head of the UTC at the time, Tulio Cuevas, was an AIFLD trustee. Cuevas became a director of the Workers Bank, and six months later began legal maneuvers to sell off the banks' assets to "legitimate businessman" and banker Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela. In 1978, AIFLD's Cuevas and Rodríguez Orejuela were sitting together on the bank's board.

Rodríguez Orejuela retained his holdings in the bank until 1984, when his notoriety as a trafficker began to spread. Shortly after divesting himself of his bank stocks, the Workers Bank was officially identified as one of four Colombian banks involved in drug money-laundering, and taken over by the Colombian government. Later that year, Rodríguez Orejuela was arrested in Spain on drug charges. Thanks to the efforts of former Justice Department official Michael Abbell and of Cuevas's successor at the UTC, Victor Acosta (who in 1986 travelled to Spain to testify on Rodríguez's behalf), Rodríguez Orejuela was extradited to Colombia instead of the United States, where he used his influence to get the charges against him dropped.