

# Who's pushing Colombian drugs

The U.S. pot lobby, and in particular the Kennedy and Zionist lobby political machines, has played the critical role in setting up Colombia as the drugrunners' paradise it now is.

The Feb. 12 edition of *El Tiempo*, the largest circulation daily in Colombia controlled by Alliance for Progress architect and Rockefeller Foundation affiliate Alberto Lleras Camargo, featured an Op Ed saying: "Is it not a good indication that Edward Kennedy, who according to polls could be president of the United States ... has presented a judicial reform reducing the severity of the law and sentences against marijuana?"

This is no isolated endorsement of drugs, but part of a consistent public relations push within Colombia over approximately the last two years to convert the country into one huge pot field. Every step of the way, the Colombian drug advocates have relied on the actions of the U.S. pot lobby to buttress their arguments, coupled with the backing of the right wing of the Colombian military.

The subject of legalization was launched in the summer of 1977 in *El Siglo*, the newspaper of top Colombian oligarch Alvaro Gomez Hurtado. Relying on the fact that many U.S. states had already "decriminalized" marijuana possession, a series of articles by Gomez and various staff writers urged Colombians to take advantage of this by legalizing exports while keeping drug consumption illegal within the country. After all, they argued, the moral stigma is on the U.S. consumers, not Colombians. President Lopez Michelsen was not ready to go along, however, so in Decem-

ber 1977 Gomez's generals paid him a visit demanding unprecedented powers to "preserve order."

Simultaneously, Congressman Lester Wolff (D-NY) and Peter Bourne, then President Carter's Special Advisor on Drug Abuse, were engaged in leaking "information" that members of Colombian President Lopez's cabinet were involved in drug trafficking. Also named was the nephew of Julio Cesar Turbay, the presidential candidate Lopez had endorsed. When Lopez decided to fight back on this setup, the U.S. Embassy suffered considerable embarrassment when not a single shred of evidence could be found to prove the case.

## Sabotaging paraquat

Defeated on this thrust, the U.S. pot lobby struck back with the Percy-Wolff amendment to the Foreign Assistance appropriations bill. Backed by National Association for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) board member Sen. Jake Javits, Illinois Senator Charles Percy introduced into the Senate a bill to prevent U.S. assistance for paraquat spraying programs on the grounds that the herbicide could be dangerous to the health of U.S. marijuana smokers. Since the paraquat program had already done the job against Mexican marijuana, the bill was clearly aimed at sabotaging the successful use of paraquat to wipe out the marijuana crop in Colombia. When Percy's bill ran into trouble, Wolff came to its rescue by playing the moderate; he watered the bill down to the effect that paraquat could be sprayed only if it were mixed with a dye or perfume to

## Organization promotes drug legalization

*A document entitled "Colombia's Illegal Narcotics Traffic with the United States," written by a former intern of Larry Birns' Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington, makes the following assertions with regard to the drug problem in the U.S. and Colombia.*

Legalization would mean regulation, taxing and control of marijuana coming into the U.S. It would mean eventual growth here and assure smokers of a high grade of marijuana. If the U.S. were to legalize marijuana then other countries could legalize it; take for example, Colombia. Then some of their many problems caused by the illegal narcotics traffic could be solved...

Marijuana profits are being spent by newly rich marijuana lords who have succeeded in making sound investments in purchases of homes, automobiles and real estate, and appear to be stimulating the economy ... The fact that marijuana earnings are escaping taxation

really smarts because this money could be used for law enforcement, road construction, and education.

Despite all of the corruption which has been described among high-ranking governmental officials and top bank executives, the honest officials among the bankers and coffee growers would like to see marijuana growth and exportation legalized in Colombia because of the economic benefits ...

...Evidence shows if marijuana cultivation and exportation were legalized, most of the associated problems like the loss of tax revenue on marijuana, smuggling, inflation, violence and corruption would appear solvable, because the growers and traffickers would legally be able to legitimize their occupations. And marijuana's eventual legalization here in the U.S. has good possibilities. If the U.S. legalizes marijuana, then Colombia would have no one pressuring to end marijuana cultivation and trafficking and would probably legalize it.

tell the pot smoker he was smoking a contaminated plant, and in this version it passed both houses. To date the bill remains an obstacle to Colombian eradication efforts.

When Julio Cesar Turbay won the election in June 1978, the pot lobby slander against him began to backfire. Turbay made a point of emphasizing his commitment to the total eradication of the Colombian crop, promising that none of the huge expected November harvest would leave Colombian shores.

At this point, the Colombian liberal and leftwing agents of the pot lobby went into full-scale operation. The biggest circulation left rag in Colombia, *Alternativa*, began spreading the line that U.S. paraquat spraying in Mexico was similar to the Vietnam defoliation programs, and was equally "imperialist." A Front for Guajira Liberation was formed demanding the rights of the natives of the largest pot-growing region to cultivate marijuana without government interference in their "indigenous culture."

In tandem, the National Association of Financial In-

### Bensinger: wipe it out, Mexican style

*Following are excerpts from an interview with Drug Enforcement Administration chief Peter Bensinger published in the Washington Star, Jan. 22, 1979.*

**Q: ... What about getting to the root of the problem in Colombia, where the impact of drugs is even more enormous than it is here?**

**A:** It is enormous. There might be between 100,000 to 200,000 Colombian families involved in all aspects of the marijuana business in that country. But in terms of comparative difficulty and numbers the mission can be carried out, and I think far easier than in Mexico. The land mass in Mexico is three to four times as big, the number of people affected by it is about equal. But Mexico has been tremendously successful by spraying poppy and marijuana fields and arresting farmers growing these crops. The attitudes of farmers in Mexico is changing because their illegal fields are being sprayed, they can't get a crop, they are being arrested, some 1,500 to 2,000 of them. They are deciding that it is more profitable to go back to planting corn or crops that will pay them.

**Q: That could work in Colombia?**

**A:** If the same pressure was applied in Colombia, yes...

**Q: So what's to be done?**

**A:** The way to have an impact is financial, go after the assets of the traffickers ... and try to have a better understanding of the health hazards....

If someone had said five years ago that Mexico would destroy 41,000 poppy fields, people would have said you're crazy. But that's what happened.

stitutions (ANIF), representing some of Colombia's largest businesses and banks, including the financier's of Turbay's campaign, joined the push for legalization. At a November 1978 press conference, an ANIF spokesman informed this press agency that they were financing a propaganda drive to convince the country that marijuana is not dangerous to health. "If we can convince President Trubay of this," the ANIF representative stated, "we are sure he will drop his opposition to legalization."

On the U.S. side, the Zionist lobby moved to sabotage Turbay's drug control efforts. Decriminalization advocate Benjamin S. Rosenthal, a congressman from New York City, was the man chosen to "help" Colombia control its marijuana problem. In October 1978, the Colombian government had announced a plan to militarily encircle the drug-growing Guajira province and control the entry and egress of every plane, ship and ground vehicle — to take effect Nov. 1. Days before the target date, Rosenthal, a 17-year veteran of the House International Relations Committee went to Colombia under the rubric of "U.S. cooperation." Most of his time was spent, however, meeting with some of the more notorious Colombian advocates of drug legalization, including a full day spent with the Justice Minister and Attorney General — both close associates of Colombia's number one pot lobbyist, Alvaro Gomez Hurtado. Needless to say, the Guajira sealing operation has not seriously hurt the drug traffickers.

Another side of the U.S. operation is being run by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, which includes on its Board of Directors Doug Fraser of the United Autoworkers and Rabbi Morton Rosenthal of the Anti-Defamation League. Larry Birns is the director of this organization which, though very small, has almost unlimited access to media coverage. The Council specializes in using the issue of human rights violations for political destabilization.

In Colombia, the Council is broadcasting charges of human rights violations — real enough — as part of the plan to dump Turbay in favor of a drugpushers' coup. In a document circulated by Birns, a member of the Council calls for drug legalization and the elimination of democracy in favor of more "informal" means of government.

#### How to stop them

In the past month, the calls for legalization have escalated to include support from every leading Colombian daily. Ex-President Alberto Lleras Camargo last week upped the ante, calling for the implementation of the British system of legalized drug use. The collapse of wholesale coffee prices to half their 1976 levels is being used as yet another argument for switching over to drugs as the country's principal legal export (illegal marijuana earnings already exceed those from coffee).

What will stop the drug traffickers is a full U.S. commitment to aid Colombia in carrying out a paraquat eradication program modeled on Mexico's highly successful Operation TRIZO, as well as stepped up anti-narcotics interception stateside. As Drug Enforcement Administration chief Peter Bensinger stated in a Washington Star interview, in terms of land mass to be covered and personnel

required, the job can be done in Colombia far more easily than it was in Mexico.

Though considerably more difficult politically in Colombia than in Mexico, the fact remains that the President of that country and the majority of the population is opposed to drugs and committed to eradication. Unlike the U.S., there is no wide-spread drug use, yet, within Colombia; there is no significant "drug culture" apart from the traffickers themselves.

The Colombia pot lobbyists have been able to survive only by constantly harping on the theme that the U.S. population wants Colombia dope. "We're not doing anything wrong by giving them what they want," is their constant refrain. A U.S. commitment to eradication would reverse all that.

In all, the Mexican program cost the U.S. approximately \$16 million a year for two years to bring the marijuana problem under control. Colombia now receives only \$2.6 million in Foreign Assistance Act funds for narcotics control, but the U.S. spends between \$800 million and \$1 billion on drug enforcement, control and rehabilitation.

The price of an eradication program is ridiculously cheap. The time to act on it is now.

— Laurence Hecht

## What Colombia's drug pushers are saying

**El Tiempo**, Colombia's leading progovernment liberal newspaper, printed an Op-Ed Feb. 12 signed "De Toussaints" warning President Turbay that if he does not legalize marijuana he will be overthrown in a coup:

"In view of an apparent impossibility of ending the (drug) problem, (it is worth) reflecting on the convenience of adopting the very English decision...more than anything realistic, to legalize marijuana, as was so courageously suggested some time ago by the coffee leader Leonidas Londono.

"... Drug trafficking is corrupting the Colombian population. This fabulous clandestine economy... is neutralizing our own monetary instruments, forcing us to spend 'quixotic' amounts of resources which could be invested in other much more beneficial activities....

"Instead of signing anti-drug trafficking agreements, (we should) begin a high profile campaign to explain why it will be impossible to contain production, trafficking and consumption and instead aid the prolegalization of marijuana campaigns in the United States.

"Is it not a good indication that Edward Kennedy, who according to polls could be President of the United States... has presented a judicial reform reducing the rigidity of the law and sentences against marijuana? Isn't the weed practically accepted by the society and not the law?...

"With the legalization of marijuana in Colombia, the government... would acquire some control over the business

... and most importantly would destroy the mafias, corruption ...

"The defenders of our 'noble republican institutions' should take into account that inflation brings down governments, but corruption brings down systems. One need only remember what happened to Batista in Cuba."

**General (ret.) Jose Joaquin Matallana**, in an interview with the pro-drug "leftist" magazine *Alternativa* argued in favor of legalization. Discussing the content of a special study on the drug problem he prepared while heading up Colombia's antidrug program in 1975, Matallana insisted that marijuana is not as bad as cocaine. Further, of the two alternatives Colombia has in dealing with the drug problem — a paraquat program or legalization — he chose legalization so the state could "assume control, production and sale to those countries and peoples who want to consume." He explained that the first choice would mean that Colombia would soon be beset with law suits and accusations of crop and cattle destruction. The second alternative of legalization is "much more courageous because it goes against the national and international mafias, and takes their business away. I recommend the second alternative."

**Alvaro Gomez Hurtado** is the leader of a wing of the Conservative Party whose newspaper *El Siglo* has consistently called for marijuana legislation.

Writing in *El Siglo* in August 1977, Gomez stated: "Colombia must think very seriously about legalizing marijuana immediately."

**Daniel Samper Pizano**, brother of the president of ANIF, Ernesto Samper Pizano, wrote an Op-Ed column in the Liberal paper *El Tiempo* Jan 23, 1979 under the title "Someone Wants What We Have." Pizano uses the argument that the production of marijuana cannot be stopped. "It is irrational to think that a market stimulated by such attractive propaganda as *High Times* (a U.S. drug magazine — ed.) exists, because the Guajira exists. Things are actually the other way around, and therefore they are not remedied by destroying the Guajira nor by closing down *High Times*."

**El Espectador** is the second largest liberal daily in Colombia. In a late January editorial, *El Espectador* calls on its readership to analyze the drug problem "objectively." "All of this has to be analyzed with a cool head and with the greatest attention paid to the national interest ... In terms of the global management of the (drugs) question internally and internationally, it has to be examined and intelligent measures adopted which do not fall into the puritan restraints which have failed many times in the world..."

**Alberto Lleras Camargo**, ex-President and so-called "father" of the Liberal Party, writing in *El Tiempo*, calls on Colombia to adopt the "British model" for dealing with its drug problem, i.e., legalization: "Where there is no fight against drugs, as in England, there is no problem."