

# The dope lobby's war against the ADC

by Susan Welsh

When Anti-Drug Coalitions were formed in the United States, Colombia, and seven other countries during 1979-80, the international drug mafia immediately went on red alert. The ADCs, with their *War on Drugs* publications in six languages, operated in a totally different way than previous anti-drug efforts. They set out 1) to gather and publish hitherto-suppressed intelligence on who the real controllers of the drug trade are—sparing none of the “citizens above suspicion” who might sit in plush corporate boardrooms, government offices, or academic institutions; and 2) to rally the population behind programs for high-technology industrial expansion, shaking off the poverty and cultural pessimism on which the drug traffic feeds.

From the start, this two-pronged strategy made the ADCs plenty of enemies from among the financial oligarchs who make billions from dope. Furthermore, the ADCs did not confine themselves to destroying the local kingpins of organized crime, but operated across national borders. The U.S. National Anti-Drug Coalition was founded in September 1979; three months later, its Colombian counterpart was launched. The two worked in tandem to mobilize their respective populations to prevent Colombia from being turned into a drug plantation and an exporter of poison that would destroy the youth of the United States.

The ADC effort in Colombia was immediately countered by a harassment campaign against Fausto Charris Romero, a farm union leader who had emerged as a spokesman for the anti-drug majority in Colombia. The harassment did not come directly from the dope mafia, but from the U.S. embassy, which repeatedly refused him a visa—including in 1979 when he sought to travel to the United States for the founding conference of the ADC there. Then in November 1980, the Colombian government issued an arrest warrant for Charris, who was by then president of the Colombian ADC. The charges stemmed from a phony legal case against him for alleged theft of funds from the National Agrarian Federation—charges which had been thrown out of court the year before.

It took a two-month mobilization of the forces of the ADCs internationally to convince the government to lift the arrest warrant against Charris. Meanwhile, death threats against him began—threats which have continued to this day

against him and his colleagues, ADC Vice-President Maximiliano Londoño and *Guerra a las Drogas* editor Patricia Paredes de Londoño.

## Betancur's war on drugs

The harassment of the ADC in Colombia intensified sharply after the inauguration of the government of President Belisario Betancur in August 1983. Betancur and his Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla began to implement a war on drugs of the kind the ADC had proposed, including going after the top-level financial gangsters. Simultaneously, Maximiliano Londoño was gaining national prominence for his fight to shape a debtors' cartel, as outlined by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. in a document called *Operation Juárez*. The influence of the ADC and the Andean Labor Party had reached unprecedented proportions. But so did the threats against them:

- On Oct. 12, 1983, a telephone death threat was received against Charris and Patricia de Londoño. That afternoon, Patricia was robbed of money, keys, and identification papers while traveling on a bus. She found herself later in a disassociated state far from her destination. Doctors who examined her suspected use of Scopolamine, an easily administered drug which produces short-term unconsciousness and amnesia.

- On Oct. 20, 1983, the Londoño's home was robbed.

- On Nov. 22, 1983, Patricia Chang Rojas, a Peruvian ADC member, was assaulted and drugged in downtown Bogotá, Colombia, robbed, and left—amnesic and disheveled—on a streetcorner.

- On Dec. 23, 1983, a second robbery occurred.

- In January 1984 there was an attempted entry to their apartment, after incessant telephone calls had established when the apartment would be empty. The ADC office was also under surveillance by suspicious individuals.

Justice Minister Lara Bonilla was under attack from the drug mafia during the same period, and on October 19 the government announced that it had just thwarted an assassination plot against him. The conspiracy involved both U.S. and Colombian drug traffickers, and was exposed with the collaboration of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

While the death threats continued against Lara and the ADC leaders, President Betancur's brother, Jaime Betancur Cuartas, was kidnapped on Nov. 23. The Justice Minister's war on drugs continued until his assassination on April 30.

Lara had written to the ADC on December 1: “With genuine concern I have learned of the threats and attacks which the Colombian National Anti-Drug Coalition has suffered as the result of its praiseworthy efforts.

“From the moment that I undertook a strong battle against the mafias and the drug trade, both as senator of the republic and as Minister of Justice, I have known what it is to feel threatened. That is why I am fully in solidarity with you and offer you my fullest spirit of cooperation and aid.”