

Andean Report by Javier Almario

Extradited: a man 'above suspicion'

Colombia's President signed papers turning over soccer executive Hernán Botero to U.S. justice.

On Nov. 14, Colombian President Belisario Betancur and his Justice Minister Enrique Parejo signed the authorization to extradite the professional soccer executive Hernán Botero and other drug traffickers to be put on trial in the United States for having "laundered" more than \$55 million in drug money, counterfeited documents, and defrauded the government.

Botero heads one of the largest soccer teams in Colombia, one that had been singled out by former Colombian Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla as a major drug money laundering conduit, before Lara was killed by the mafia last April 30.

The extradition of a figure so prominent and well-connected—after all, Henry A. Kissinger is the ex-president of the World Soccer Federation—is Betancur's answer to the blackmail pressure he has been put under by the International Monetary Fund and Kissinger's banking friends, to squeeze the last drop out of the Colombian economy for debt repayment. It is no secret in Colombia that the international financiers who hold the debt are eager to collect it by looting the economy through drug trafficking.

The decision was taken only one week after the opening in Bogotá of the Sixth Latin American Conference on Narcotic and Psychotropic Drugs, where the idea of declaring drug trafficking a crime against humanity was reaffirmed, and there was discussion on the need to unify judicial criteria and punishment against drug trafficking in the Ibero-American countries,

along with the possibility of establishing extradition accords and information exchanges between the national agencies, to combat the dope trade in an adequate and timely way.

Two days after the decision was made to extradite Hernán Botero, extradition was approved for three other gangsters wanted by U.S. justice, bringing to six the number of Colombian citizens whose extradition has been okayed. Among these six is the self-confessed drug trafficker Carlos Lehder, who generously financed the last presidential campaign of former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen when he made his second bid for the highest Colombian office in 1982.

The underworld had waged a phenomenal campaign against the extradition treaty, taking out paid advertisements in the press, promoting public forums against extradition, and arguing that a Colombian citizen must be tried according to Colombian law and that extradition is a "violation of national sovereignty" to try to gain popular support against extraditions. For this business, the mafia was able to count on the backing of some leftist has-beens who colored in the mafia proposals with "anti-imperialist" jargon.

The President of Colombia not only adopted the doctrine of the Nuremberg Code which established the existence of "crimes against humanity," as the term was applied to the genocide carried out by the Nazis, and today to the slow but effective geno-

cide of trafficking in illegal drugs. He also put this doctrine into practice by deciding to extradite Hernán Botero, who as the director of a soccer team enjoys popularity, especially in the industrial region of Antioquía.

The other heads of the national athletic team directed by Hernán Botero mobilized rapidly to defend their chief. They proposed to León Londoño, the "big fish" of the Dimayor, the private association that coordinates all the professional soccer games in Colombia, to pull off a soccer strike in protest against the decision of President Betancur. The games which were supposed to take place on Sunday, Nov. 18, were instead to be postponed to the following Wednesday. The protest was agreed upon and set to go.

On Saturday, Nov. 17, President Betancur threatened León Londoño and the soccer teams—where the drug traffickers have heavy investments—that if they did not play the games that Sunday as scheduled, the government would order the shutdown of the soccer stadiums, which happen to be state property, and create new soccer teams. The terrified leaders of the drug dealers' strike, many of them marked as mafia by the assassination of the last justice minister, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, hastened to fix things up in time to play on the designated day.

On Sunday night, while coming out of the stadiums, or watching the games on television, all of the citizens were commenting on how the games had gone ahead because the President had had the guts to fight against the mafia.

The top banker who is fleeing from Colombian justice, Jaime Michelsen Uribe, cousin of ex-President Alfonso López Michelsen, is now running scared because Colombia fulfilled the extradition treaty. He could be claimed by Colombian justice now and extradited from his vacation in Miami.