

# After bombing, Colombia is firm: no deals with narco-butchers

by José Restrepo

The Dec. 6 bus bomb which destroyed the 11-floor headquarters of Colombia's security police, the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), damaged another 500 buildings, and killed 52 people and injured another 1,000, was just about the last straw for Colombians who are in a war against the cocaine traffickers.

The bombing was the second major massacre by the "extraditables," the terrorist arm of the drug traffickers. At 7:30 a. m. on Dec. 6, they used a crane to leave a bus loaded with 1,100 pounds of plastic explosives in front of the building. Experts have also determined that the "accident" that caused an Avianca Airlines passenger jet to explode on Nov. 27, killing 111 people, was also a bomb. The "extraditables" took credit for that massacre. The same group assassinated Judge Bernardo Jaramillo in the city of Medellín Dec. 4.

The bombings were designed to scare Colombians into submitting to the traffickers' demands for state power. But they are having the opposite effect. The growing popular revulsion against the traffickers brought Conservative Party presidential contender Rodrigo Lloreda Caicedo to demand "the death penalty for the crimes of terrorism, kidnaping, torture, and homicide for terrorist purposes."

Cesar Gaviria, the anti-drug contender for the Liberal Party nomination, reaffirmed Dec. 6 his "unrelenting decision to battle the drug-trafficking crime with absolute rigor and to make the entire weight of our law fall upon the criminals." Gaviria, the successor to assassinated candidate Luis Carlos Galán, is the candidate most likely to win the presidency.

President Virgilio Barco, who was in Japan negotiating trade agreements and financing for development projects, spoke to Colombians via satellite, to warn that "the vile assault by the criminal organization of the drug runners, which has cost so many innocent Colombians their lives, with threats of death and destruction, is the way demented criminals seek to subjugate a people and a government, an entire country, under their control."

President Barco swore that the traffickers would not defeat his country. "We are in battle and shall continue. The war is against all of Colombia, against democracy. We are

not going to let ourselves fall under the bloody tyranny of the narco-terrorists."

The Council of Ministers proclaimed Dec. 5 that the Colombian government "reiterates to the country its unbending will to liberate Colombia from the threat of narco-terrorism . . . the greatest threat which any democracy has faced."

## Congressional treason

The bombing of the secret police headquarters took place the morning after the House of Representatives voted to include the issue of extradition in a referendum scheduled to be held on Jan. 21. The decision, yet to be approved by the Senate and full Congress, would mean that voters would decide whether or not the country should continue extraditing Colombian narcotics traffickers wanted for trial in the United States and other countries. By means of bribes and threats, the drug traffickers brought the majority of the congressmen to support the referendum they wanted. The "extraditables" sent out a press release stating, "We are joyous over the smashing majority vote of the House of Representatives." They warned they would only suspend the war when the Congress approved their demands, including the legalization of cocaine "because 40 million North Americans already have legalized it."

President Barco went on national television to condemn the House decision, and to argue in defense of extradition (see *Documentation*).

A few weeks ago, the "extraditables" promised in communiqués that if the House of Representatives approved placing their referendum on the ballot, they would declare a truce. Instead, they bombed the police headquarters. Interim President (while Barco was traveling) Carlos Lemos Simmonds called it "a good demonstration of what the drug traffickers are capable of doing. First they speak of a truce, then they assassinate a judge, and after the truce they do this bombing. They obtained a very significant victory in the House of Representatives yesterday. Everybody thought that after their victory they would calm down. And whoever said that voting down extradition would bring peace to the Republic, and whoever voted in good faith for Colombia to return

to normalcy, should today realize how seriously wrong they were." It is a terrible mistake to believe, Lemos continued, "that in return for concessions on extradition, peace plans, and offers of dialogue, the narcotics traffickers are going to calm down and not commit more crimes."

In the House vote, those who opposed the cartel voted "no" in secret to avoid reprisals. "In a fraudulent vote, the Chamber of Representatives openly violated the Constitution and the country's laws," the courageous daily *El Espectador* editorialized Dec. 7. "And by violating them, they have deserved the public's disrespect and the corresponding sanctions which lead to isolation."

As stated in another editorial in *El Espectador*—the newspaper which suffered a dynamite attack and the assassination of its director by drug traffickers—Colombia is divided into two parties: the party of the majority of the population, and that of the drug traffickers. The cartel's party is small, but very powerful. The congressmen sided with the minority. The majority does not want to live under the cartel's tyranny.

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## Documentation

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# Drug traffickers must be extradited

*Following are excerpts of the speech delivered by Colombian President Virgilio Barco on Nov. 30, 1989, in opposition to including the issue of extradition of drug traffickers in a national referendum, to be held Jan. 21, 1990.*

It is not appropriate to use the referendum to decide on extradition. The country cannot be fooled about where a referendum on extradition would lead us, and on the deadly consequences it would have for the morale of the country and the survival of our democracy.

First of all, we are not talking about extraditing Colombian criminals to be tried in other countries, but of extraditing drug traffickers who have committed crimes abroad. Extradition is not a sanction against society, since it refers only to drug traffickers; nor is it an affront to sovereignty as some have tried to present it. Extradition has been dealt with in Colombia's international treaties. By constitutional authority, the direction of foreign policy is the prerogative of the President. The Congress can hardly take the initiative to put an end to public extradition treaties. . . .

For 100 years, Colombia has been extraditing

criminals. . . . I repeat, 100 years since the treaty of 1888, and only now, since extradition has applied to drug traffickers, objections appear to alleged violations of sovereignty. . . .

Extradition is not a general threat to all Colombians; rather it affects only those who've committed drug-trafficking crimes abroad.

Some people have argued that extradition provokes violence and that this would disappear with its elimination. This is not true. . . .

In December 1986, a Supreme Court decision nullified the extradition treaty. After this, that is, while the treaty was not applicable, Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos was assassinated; Andrés Pastrana, now the mayor of Bogota, was kidnaped; [*El Espectador* owner] Guillermo Cano was killed, as was political leader Jaime Pardo Leal, and hundreds of Colombians.

Last year, while the extradition treaty was not in effect, over 600 Colombian peasants were assassinated, in more than 40 massacres carried out by hitmen on the drug mafias' payroll. And let us not forget that the governor of Antioquia, Antonio Roldán Betancur, Judge Carlos Valencia, Col. Franklin Quintero, and Senator Luis Carlos Galán, were assassinated while extradition was not in effect.

It is also said that extradition is undignified because it sends Colombians abroad to be tried, and that it is more dignified for them to be tried and sentenced here, in our country and by our judges. Nonetheless, the drug traffickers have sent to their deaths over 200 judges and officials of the judicial branch.

Can we believe the drug traffickers, then? Can we believe that extradition is what has brought us violence? Can we have a free and dignified country with these gangs of multimillionaire killers?

We know that extradition is only for drug traffickers. We know what they have done and what they are capable of. We have suffered their terrorist actions. Many courageous Colombians have been murdered due to the sole fact that they were opposed to the drug trade.

Do you believe there could be a free electoral campaign, free from intimidation, on this issue of extradition? Do you believe that those who oppose drug trafficking could, without fear, express their opinion? It would be a campaign plagued with terrorism, intimidation, and drug money. . . .

To introduce extradition in the referendum would serve only as the means for a few, less than 100 drug traffickers, to use their money and terror, to intimidate public opinion, the media, and all Colombians, to avoid being tried and sentenced for crimes they have committed abroad. The conditions of terrorism don't allow this issue to be freely contested.

There are those who say the drug traffickers want peace and tranquility. Let me say that eliminating extradition won't bring tranquility but rather impunity and more violence.