

Colombian 'godfather' trapped by global anti-drug manhunt

by Nora Hamerman and Tim Rush

The former President of the South American nation of Colombia, Alfonso López Michelsen, has run screaming to his country's President, because *EIR* has spread the charge worldwide that he is "in the service of the drug mafia" and "sponsoring the kidnapping of one Mrs. Paredes de Londoño."

López Michelsen's complaint to Colombia's current President, Belisario Betancur, was intended as a private message. But instead, President Betancur insisted that the desperate cable sent from Paris, where López Michelsen fled after *EIR*'s international anti-drug campaign made things too hot at home, be publicized together with the President's answer throughout the Colombian press and via Colombia's diplomatic channels abroad. The result has been a humiliating cold shower for the former Colombian chief of state, at the same time that his cousin and piggybank, banker Jaime Michelsen Uribe, faces extradition from his Miami hideout to face banking fraud charges at home.

On Aug. 21, Radio Caracol in Bogota reported that López Michelsen sent a cable to Betancur from Paris, complaining that "in Panama, New York, Copenhagen, and presumably all over the world an *Intelligence Executive Review* [sic] story is being circulated according to which I have been in the service of the drug mafia, threatening your Excellency, and sponsoring the kidnapping of one Mrs. Patricia de Londoño, who is supposedly married to the president of the Andean Party and the Anti-Drug Coalition, but who appeared explaining her absence as a dispute with her husband. They add information that, being the cousin of Jaime Michelsen, I sponsored legislation favoring him during my government."

López Michelsen was referring to two lengthy dossiers issued by *EIR* after the abduction of Colombian Anti-Drug

Coalition leader Patricia Paredes de Londoño on July 26. They presented evidence linking the Colombian ex-President to a conspiracy that involves the deployment of illegal drugs, brainwashing cults, and terrorism against Western civilization.

President Betancur's reply, the model of courtesy to the "honor" of the former President, read in part: "I add my protest to yours and ask our diplomatic agents to make your message and my answer known, so that this attack against an ex-President of Colombia, who honored his country and serves it with admirable lucidity and abnegation, be protested in the proper manner."

But on the very same day, a Colombian judge issued an arrest order against López Michelsen's multimillionaire cousin, Jaime Michelsen Uribe. Jaime Michelsen, now illegally living in Miami, Florida, fled Colombia last December to avoid facing investigation into the monumental drug money laundering run through his financial empire, the Grupo Gran-colombiano—an investigation launched by the government of Belisario Betancur!

Alfonso López Michelsen himself fled Colombia precipitously Aug. 15 for what he described as at least a three-month absence. The same day, Colombian Judge Tulio Castro Gil handed down arrest warrants for 14 suspects in the mafia-style assassination of anti-drug champion, Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, on April 30. Included were at least two individuals whom López Michelsen had confessed to meeting in secret negotiations in Panama in early May: Pablo Escobar Gaviria and Juan Ochoa Vásquez. The subject of López Michelsen's treasonous parley had been the conditions for the surrender of the Colombian government to the mafias.

'Drugrunning is genocide'

In a mass leaflet issued for distribution on three continents on Aug. 22, *EIR* announced that it is not only sticking to the original charges, but accuses Alfonso López Michelsen of "crimes against humanity," as complicity in drug-running was defined in a formal communiqué from the Aug. 11 meeting in Quito of Ibero-American heads of state.

The Quito communiqué is now being submitted to the Organization of American States and the United Nations for universal adoption by all civilized nations of the world. In it, the Presidents of Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador evoked the language of the Nuremberg Statutes against Nazi war criminals, to say that *drug trafficking is "a crime against humanity, with all applicable juridical consequences."*

The Venezuelan government, which together with President Betancur of Colombia has assumed a coordinating role in the continental fight against drugs, announced immediately after Quito that it will take the anti-drug manifesto to the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations for worldwide adoption (see article, page 31).

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Isidro Morales Paúl, announcing the Venezuelan diplomatic offensive, compared the drug trade with the war crimes committed by the Nazis, and identified the result also as the same: genocide.

EIR put out two dossiers on the López-linked dope mafia on July 30 and Aug. 10, and is about to issue a third. The dossiers were prepared at the behest of U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, who initiated the founding of anti-drug coalitions in nine countries, including Colombia and the United States, in 1979. The heat on the drug runners will soon be turned up by the publication next month in Spanish of the bestselling book, *Dope, Inc.*, which names the names of the top-level conspirators behind the drug trade.

Most of *EIR*'s evidence against Alfonso López Michelsen came from his own mouth. On July 29, in a long interview in the Bogota newspaper *El Tiempo*, the former President argued that the Colombian government should negotiate with the big dope traffickers. *EIR* simply translated the full text and issued it with background information, in the first dossier on July 30. In the interview, he brazenly admitted that he had met with Colombia's leading drug mafiosi in their Panama refuge on May 6—only one week after thugs hired by the dope mafia had murdered the Colombian justice minister in the streets of Bogotá. In fact, a number of the individuals López Michelsen met with are now being sought by the Colombian courts for questioning in that murder case.

Thanks to *EIR*'s information campaign, the dope mafia was forced, on Aug. 1, to release Patricia de Londoño, whom they were attempting to brainwash "Patty Hearst style," using thugs from a cult called the Universal Christian Gnostic Church, which uses perverse sexual rituals to "annihilate the ego."

Battle for Bolivia

The drug mafias are turning their brutality on the weakest

link in the chain of countries they have put under siege: Bolivia.

They are playing out a "protection racket" game, in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A small storeowner in mafia-run sections of any large city will recognize the phenomenon: the store windows smashed one night, inventory looted; and the next day the same thug, now dressed in tie and jacket, shows up ready to sell a contract for "protection."

The "smashed windows" in the Bolivia case is an economy reduced to beggaredom by IMF "conditionalities," which have put productive investment off-limits to entrepreneurs and rewarded only those going into Bolivia's booming cocaine trade. This week the Bolivian government was forced into a new devaluation of fully 75%, when the "black market" exchange rate reached 9,000 pesos to the dollar—versus an official rate of 2,000.

The "protection contract" offer came within days. "Cocaine king" Roberto Suárez met with the head of the National Campaign Against Drug Trafficking, Rafael Otazo, to offer a "substantial loan" to "resolve the acute economic problems of the country."

That is, Bolivia's \$5 billion foreign debt would be paid off in a peculiar specie: the minds of American youth blasted by cocaine.

A Colombian specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank confirmed how the IMF and the pin-striped shake-down artists behind it are working in that country. "The volume of dollars involved is so large that the government has very little choice in this matter. The sheer size of the trade means that it can always be laundered. . . . The size of the trade means it cannot be stopped. *Whether it is moral or immoral is immaterial.*"

The specialist reviewed the current economic collapse in Colombia, not dissimilar to that of Bolivia: "The country's reserves dropped from \$3.1 billion to \$1.8 billion. . . . There is a shortage of raw materials. The pressure is on." Who did the specialist meet in the halls of the Colombian Central Bank? "I ran into the IMF people," he volunteered; "you must recognize that López Michelsen's statements [that the government should legalize drug dollars in order to pay the debt]

Gnostics feel the heat, too

López Michelsen, known in Colombia by the nickname "The Chicken," is not the only one beginning to run for cover. So also is the Gnostic Church, an anti-Christian brainwashing cult based on a mixture of Nazi ideology and Satan worship, which is the "mother" of Colombia's M-19 guerrilla gang. Two prominent members of the Gnostic Church are implicated in the Londoño abduction of July 26.

The Gnostic Church of the Dominican Republic sought and obtained airtime late last week from a Santo Domingo radio network, Radio Mil, to respond to charges against the Colombian Gnostic Church which had been aired the week

before on the same radio station by Colombian Anti-Drug Coalition President Fausto Charris. The defense? A heated denial that there was "any connection" between the Dominican Gnostic Church and the Gnostics in Colombia, "charged with being involved in drug running, kidnappings, and brainwashing."

Should López Michelsen, who legalized the status of the Colombian Gnostic Church in 1974, be thinking of finding refuge in neighboring Venezuela, he may have to think twice. According to reliable sources, 500 copies of his interview in *El Tiempo*, in which he presented a courtroom-style brief on behalf of Colombia's most heinous assassins and drugpushers, are being circulated by Venezuelan officials at the "highest levels of the government," in order to state clearly, "Never again!" and "Never here!"

In an Aug. 21 TV interview on the newscast "Buenos Dias," Venezuelan Justice Minister José López Manzo González unleashed an unusually harsh attack on Dope, Inc. "The drug runners and subversives have planted in the United

States of America an H-Bomb formed by 20 million drug addicts, as occurred in the Opium and Vietnam wars, when British and Communists, in each case, drugged their adversaries," he said.

López Manzo called the drug menace a "national security" problem which, if unchecked, will produce another Colombia in Venezuela. The risks are many, he said, but it is necessary to fight for the nation's honor. López Manzo added that the drug traffickers are a "transnational crime syndicate," and said that the controllers of the drug trade in Venezuela are a select group in the highest circles.

Asked by the interviewer about personal threats against him, López Manzo was blunt: "I have been threatened by Carlos Lehder, an admirer of Hitler who used to have a green newspaper and a party, a green party like Petra Kelly's, which is a Nazi party." Carlos Lehder, as *EIR* reported in the dossiers and in our Aug. 14 issue, is the Colombian drug-runner who financed Alfonso López Michelsen's 1982 presidential campaign to the tune of 20,000,000 pesos!

The López Michelsen-Betancur interchange

The following item was read on news reports throughout Colombia, starting at 7 p.m. the night of Aug. 21. President Betancur ordered it to be relayed to world public opinion by all Colombian diplomatic stations.

Attention, Bogotá: Ex-President López Michelsen sent President of the Republic Belisario Betancur the following message from Paris:

Mr. President Betancur
Presidency of the Republic
Bogotá

In Panama, New York, Copenhagen, and presumably all over the world, an *Intelligence Executive Review* [sic] story is being circulated, according to which I have been in the service of the drug mafia, threatening your Excellency, and sponsoring the kidnapping of one Mrs. Paredes de Londoño, who is supposedly married to the president of the Andean Party and the Anti-Drug Coalition and who has emerged to explain her absence as a dispute with her husband. They add information that, being the cousin of Jaime Michelsen, I sponsored legislation favoring him during my government.

I think that I—as an ex-President of Colombia and friend of your Excellency, whom I informed about every step related to the Panama meeting,

and, according to the book by Hernan Echeverría, I proceeded rigorously within the law in the Gran-colombiano case—have the right for my honor not to be so damaged universally and in newspapers such as *ABC* of Madrid, in the face of the indifference or silence of the agents of the Colombian government, whatever their political affiliation might be.

Your friend and compatriot,

Alfonso López Michelsen

President Betancur responded to the Liberal former President with the following message:

Mr. Ex-President Alfonso López Michelsen
Colombian Embassy, Paris

Although acts like the one you protest are deplorably common and increasingly tarnish individuals' honor without any consideration, I must express my displeasure with the intolerable extremes reached in your case, and which undeniably harm not only your dignity, but the country's as well.

I therefore add my protest to yours and ask our diplomatic agents to make your message and my answer known, so that this attack against an ex-President of Colombia, who honored his country and serves it with admirable lucidity and abnegation, be protested in the proper manner.

Receive a cordial salute of solidarity from your compatriot and friend,

Belisario Betancur, President of Colombia