

Carter's Colombian Drug Bonanza

COLOMBIA

The following is the first in a series of articles on Colombian agriculture and industry.

Colombia's principal foreign exchange commodity is no longer coffee, which during last year's so-called "bonanza" brought in a mere \$2 billion in revenues. The real bonanza is drugs, which in 1976 netted Colombia over \$3 billion, according to the *Latin American Commodities Newsletter*. As a result, acreage that was once feeding the Colombian working population with wheat and corn is now sown with dope, leaving the nation's agriculture on the brink of collapse, in an effort to pay Colombia's debts to U.S. banks.

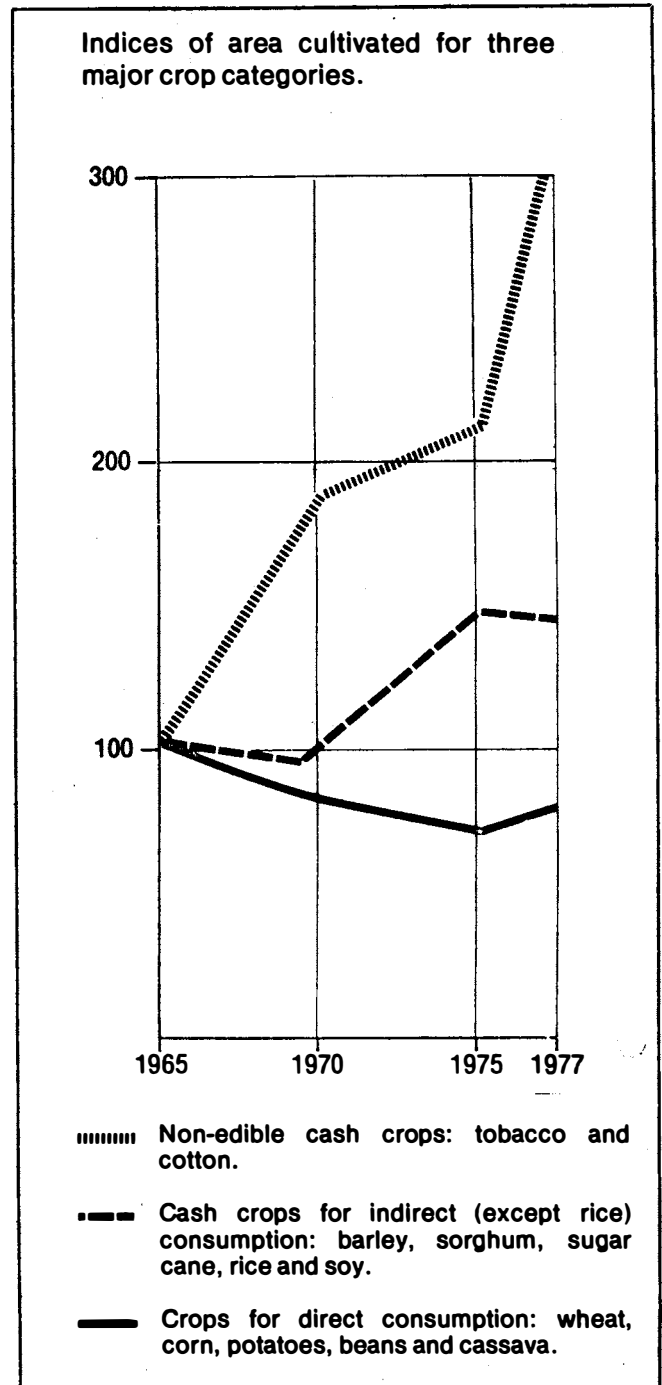
In response to the Carter Administration's drug-pushing policies, and in anticipation of the legalization of marijuana in the U.S., Colombia is now being swept with a rush into drug cultivation. According to interviews with peasants, a recent raid on a 1500-hectare marijuana plantation in the Guajira peninsula, which was equipped with modern sprinkler irrigation networks, was a mere drop in the bucket. The entire province is planted with the drug. Peasants are paid 200 pesos a day to work these pot farms, compared to the 80 pesos peasants are earning on the "highest-paying" cash crop farms. Even the fishermen along the northern coast have abandoned their vocation, using their small boats instead to transport tons of "yerba" to ocean-going freighters offshore. Throughout the northern part of the country, a reported 10,000 families are dependent on the drug traffic, and according to the *Commodities Newsletter* article, which was also reported in the *London Times*, the Colombian government itself is directly involved in the effort to transform marijuana into a major cash crop. Government researchers are reportedly developing a new "high-yield" strain of the plant in anticipation of massive, legal exports to the U.S.

This "pot boom" is the lawful conclusion of a process of Rockefeller-directed "triage" against the production of essential foodstuffs since the 1960s in favor of large cash crops, followed by a rapid shift during the past two years into non-edible produce — particularly cotton, tobacco, and now, drugs.

The Deliberate Destruction of Production

From the Rockefeller perspective, the objective of increasing Colombia's output is not to feed people, but to pay the nation's debt to Wall Street banks. Under policies dictated by the Rockefeller Foundation, which set up the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA), the govern-

ment entity responsible for *all* food crop research, the total area planted in five of the major food staples in the national diet declined by 25 percent between 1965 and 1975. (See graph.)



Total acreage sown in corn, for example, the mainstay of the average diet and by far the most extensively cultivated crop in Colombia, dropped by approximately one-third during this ten-year period, with total production diving by a similar proportion. The harvesting of wheat is rapidly being eliminated altogether, with output today almost 75 percent below 1962 levels.

The result has been a net deterioration in the average diet. The loss of almost 250,000 tons of corn and wheat per year is supposedly compensated by increased output of crops suitable for backwards minifundios and requiring no capital inputs, such as potatoes, frijoles, and yuca. The most rapidly increasing of these three substitute crops, yuca, which is now a major staple, is nutritionally worthless. Nor have imports compensated for the loss of corn and wheat, since foodgrain imports are only equivalent to about 5 percent of total production.

On the other hand, during the same 1965-75 period, the total area cultivated with five of the main food cash crops — rice, barley, sorghum, refined sugar, and corn — has increased by 40 percent. Although Rockefeller apologists point out that rice is an item of immediate consumption, in fact expanded rice output has not resulted in a higher nutrition level for the bulk of the population. To the extent it is not being exported or, even more widely, smuggled out of the country, it is being used as a wheat substitute in such commodities as flour — representing a net qualitative decline in the diet.

A third category of agriculture produce — non-edible cash crops — has enjoyed a similar boom at the expense of basic foodstuffs. While total area planted in coffee, a special case, has remained constant, cotton acreage multiplied by almost two-and-a-half times between 1965 and 1975. In 1976 it jumped by another 10 percent, as cultivated area in rice and soy fell off sharply. This year, cotton acreage is expected to soar by another 45 percent. Meanwhile, tobacco area is also reported up by 20 percent for 1977.

It is likewise cash crops that have received what little capital inputs have gone into Colombian agriculture. Cotton and sugar cane have the highest percentages of area mechanized, over 80 percent, in contrast to yuca, potatoes, beans and corn, which are less than 15 percent mechanized. Further, except for potatoes, food crops receive almost no fertilizer.

In 1975, even these meager inputs began to decline. Yields in rice, sugar, barley, and soy fell by 10 to 15 percent during 1975 and 1976, along with simultaneous drops in area planted, as Rockefeller began to force bankrupt growers into cotton and marijuana. The sudden leap in cotton acreage in 1976 and 1977 parallels a similar dash into the drug trade.

The Black Market and Starvation

The fomenting of Colombia's black market, one of the most extensive smuggling operations in the world, has been key to the monetarist looting of the agriculture sector. Millions of tons of produce are smuggled out of the country each year to generate the foreign exchange needed to finance the country's growing debt. Estimates on the extent of this operation have placed the value of smuggled produce — primarily to Colombia's two oil-producing neighbors, Venezuela and Ecuador — as equal

to that of goods *traded legally* throughout the whole economy. An estimated 3 million head of cattle are smuggled into Venezuela alone each year.

This is not the work of a quaint, indigenous mafia. It is an operation headed by local intimates of the Rockefeller family who have been running drugs through Rockefeller's "Black International" networks for decades. Above board, these same smugglers comprise what passes for the Colombian government, under the nominal patronage of Wall Street's stooge, President Alfonso Lopez Michelsen. The fact that the black market mafia and the major bourgeois parties are one and the same was revealed when alvarista Agricultural Minister Nognera recently attempted to assure the public that he knows for a fact that smuggling is not as widespread as reported; he is in a position to know, he said, since he is a close acquaintance of most of the smugglers!

Lopez officially abets the black market by making legal exports prohibitive, under the rhetoric of guaranteeing sufficient domestic supply. With his most recent measure, legal exporters are forced to freeze their foreign exchange earnings in Central Bank accounts for 90 days, leaving growers with no alternative but to turn to smuggling.

The ultimate result of this monetarist atrocity is the destruction of Colombia's most valuable resource — its labor power — through starvation. Even according to official statistics, which are constantly doctored, daily average caloric consumption has dropped from 2350 in 1957 to 2100 in 1974 — and this process has accelerated up to the present time, as FAO statistics continue to show a decline in absolute food production per capita. A study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture revealed that between 1950 and 1970, per capita annual consumption of

Present, short-term and long range potential yields with improved seed and modern technology.

	(Kg. per hectare)		
	Yield 1976	Potential 1979*	Long Range
cotton	1,500	2,100	3,000
rice, irrigated	4,300	5,000	7,000
barley	1,500	2,000	3,200
beans	700	1,000	2,000
corn	1,300	3,000	4,500
potatoes	13,200	15,000	30,000
sorghum	2,400	2,900	4,000
soya	1,900	2,600	3,000
wheat	1,300	2,000	3,500

Sources: USDA, Ministry of Agriculture, FAO and the Society of Colombian Agriculturists (SAC).

* Defined by the SAC as "immediate goal"

beef fell by more than 25 percent, while consumption of pork plunged 30 percent. At the same time, the proportion of starches and carbohydrates in the average diet is increasing, as animal protein consumption continues its downward spiral. Already, unofficial estimates place per capita caloric intake at 1800 — the “Africa” level, at which normal biological resistance to most diseases is impossible.

Stopping It

The first step in putting a stop to destructive drug cultivation is to stop Carter. Colombians must make it clear to the White House that the intent to legalize marijuana and cocaine in the U.S., a flagrant violation of the 1961 Single Convention, will not be tolerated.

Simultaneously, the Colombian working class, peasantry, and farmers must be mobilized behind a broad agrarian development program. The driving conception behind such a program must be the eventual transformation of the country’s peasantry into a modern, skilled, and culturally advanced industrial labor force capable of carrying out a long-range industrialization program on a regional basis, as outlined by the Comites Laborales Latinoamericanos in the recent draft titled, “Why Venezuela Must Double Its Oil Production.” Agricultural development is the *means* by which a decreasing proportion of the country’s working population will supply the economy as a whole with a constantly improving diet, thus freeing labor power for industrial development.

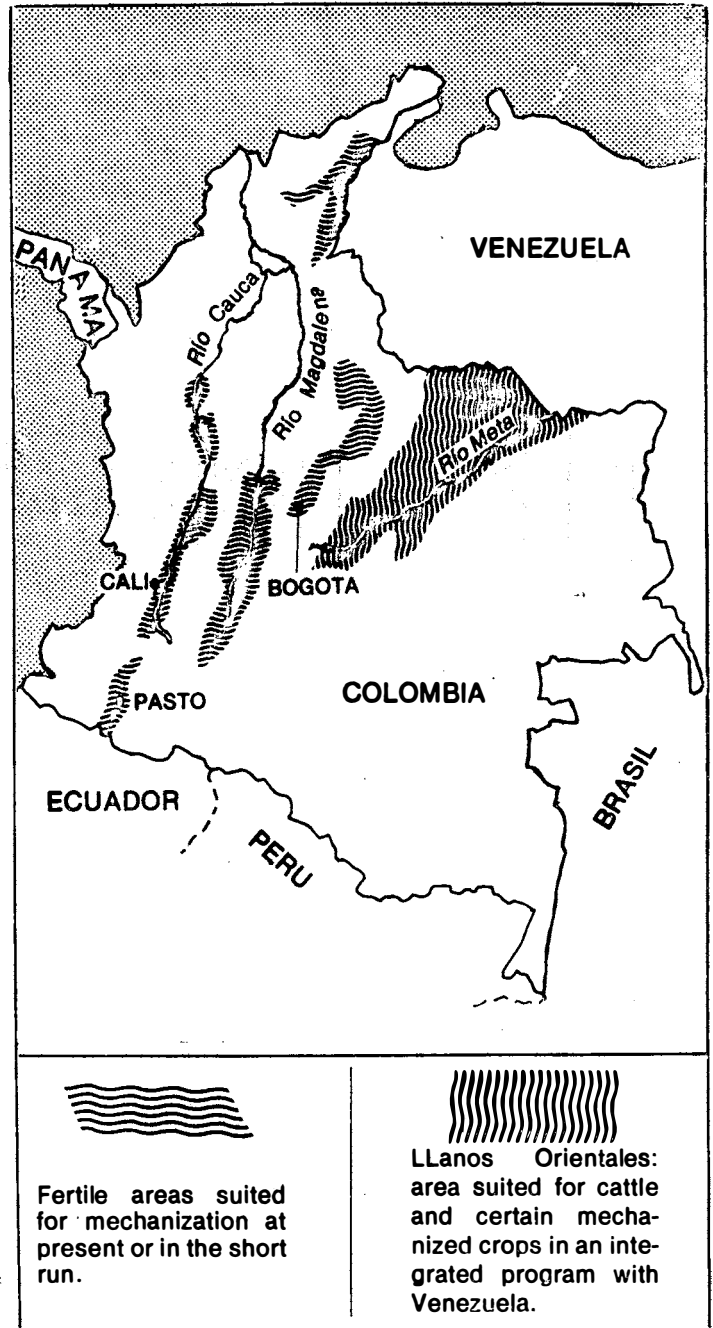
According to studies by the FAO, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia (SAC), measures within immediate access of the Colombian economy would permit an increase of total agricultural production by approximately 50 percent within roughly three years. The necessary steps are as follows:

- 1) A campaign for mechanization would very rapidly increase yields per hectare on presently cultivated land by as much as 50 percent. (See Table for potential yields.) To increase the present ratio of 1 tractor for every 150 hectares to 2 tractors-150 ha. would require an investment of about \$160 million, doubling the present total of 31,000 tractors.

- 2) Fertilizer consumption must be increased from the current 200,000 tons to 500,000 tons by 1979, through a program to develop Colombia’s significant deposits of phosphates, and by accelerating the integration of the Andean Pact petrochemical sector.

- 3) All primitive minifundio farming, which now accounts for over 60 percent of agricultural produce, must be eliminated through a policy of encouraging modern cooperatives.

- 4) These policies will enormously increase productivity merely on the land that is now under crop cultivation. Beyond 1980, new areas can begin to be incorporated into total crop production. According to various studies, cultivated land can be almost doubled from the present 3.3 million hectares to approximately 6.4 million, through more efficient crop rotation and the conversion of 10 percent of the vastly underutilized 20 million hectares of pasture located in the central region of the country. These studies indicate that such expansion



could occur primarily in areas already classified as the most fertile and mechanizable. Particular emphasis must be placed on the upper Cauca valley (see map), the most advanced agricultural area in Colombia. With this increase in area, total production can be almost tripled provided adequate capital inputs.

- 5) With slightly modified practices beef production can be increased by more than 30 percent by 1980. By increasing the amount of artificial pasture — now only 30 percent of total grazing area — and implementing a concerted sanitation program, the vast plains of the Meta river area alone can eventually hold 11 million head of cattle, or 10 times the present amount. (See map.)

- 6) The Llanos Orientales, consisting of approximately 30 million hectares, must become part of an integrated cattle development program with Venezuela that will

undermine the production shortages which spur contraband.

7) Finally, credit for the agrarian sector must be dramatically increased and oriented exclusively toward increased production. Refinancing of accumulated debt must be stopped, and debts to farmers affected by floods and drought must be repudiated. Most urgently, not a further cent of Colombia's revenues from the coffee "bonanza" must be allowed to pay off dollar-denominated foreign debt, nor to support monetarist agencies

such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the BID. Lopez' traitorous policy of "freezing" coffee revenues — the same trick Wall Street agents have attempted in Venezuela with petrodollars — must be reversed.

An exclusively "agrarian" approach will not solve the agricultural problem. Nor will increased produce prices and police measures stop the cancerous growth of the black market. The only solution is regionally-integrated expanded production on the basis of the implementation of the most advanced agricultural technology.

Rosalynn Takes Carter Diplomacy To Latin America

Of all the statements made by Rosalynn Carter during her tour through seven Latin American countries, the one, "I am glad I'm a woman," was probably the closest to the truth. If she weren't, her governmental hosts would never have tolerated the deliberate and provocative statements she issued on behalf of the Carter Administration. As it was, she managed to get — with the help of scurrying U.S. diplomats and the U.S. press corps — only meagre coverage and a response of toleration.

A shrewd Rosalynn did manage to extract the propitiation of, notably, the Peruvian government. The smile on the face of Foreign Minister Jose de la Puente remained fixed throughout Rosalynn's remarks that both she and the President were "concerned" about Peru's scheduled purchase of Soviet planes. She deftly used the issue to keep relations between Peru and Ecuador heated.

The decision to buy the planes from the Soviets was made last year on the economic basis of the extremely easy terms of purchase, a primary concern for debt-strapped Peru. Since the agreement however, the "ideological implications" imputed to the purchase have been one of the principal means the U.S. Administration has used to bludgeon Peru into imposing the economic austerity measures of the International Monetary Fund and the New York banks as conditions for debt refinancing. Following Rosalynn's departure, the military junta ordered troops into the streets and announced its final approval of those stringent measures. Any opposition will be answered with bayonets.

Rosalynn's comments on the Peruvian plane deal were also tailored to fit her declarations in Ecuador where she encouraged local rivalries with neighboring Peru. By stressing the U.S. Administration's insistence that Ecuador not purchase Israeli planes, she laid the basis for being considered "principled" in Peru. There, she noted to the press that the Ecuadorians — who are not

buying planes — were worried about the possible Peruvian purchase of military hardware. But in Ecuador, Rosalynn got stoned for her services.

In Brazil, Rosalynn was received according to diplomacy by government officials and the press. Prepared for her arrival, however, was a letter from several unspecified "students" for delivery to Carter, protesting the "lack of human rights" in Brazil. Brazilian student organizations and senators were quick to announce that they had no intention of allowing the U.S. to exploit their national problems in order to destabilize the government and limit Brazil's national sovereignty. It was soon widely reported that Terence Todman, who accompanied Rosalynn, had been responsible for "leaking" the information on the letter to the press. When asked about such interference in their internal affairs, Brazilian Foreign Minister Da Silveira stated that "if it is true, it is an extremely grave matter."

The sole purpose of her stay in Brazil was to remind the government, which has so far refused to buckle under to Carter's no-nuclear-energy demands, what U.S. destabilization capabilities are. She met personally with two hirsute missionaries who "protested" their mistreatment in Brazilian jails. Pictures of that meeting were widely publicized by the U.S. press. U.S. Ambassador to Brazil John Crimmins had earlier warned the Brazilians that he "could do nothing to prevent" such publicity from whipping up a large campaign to rectify Brazil's bad "human rights" record.

At the last stop of her journey, Rosalynn was met by Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez' wife Blanquita, who promptly complained of "nausea."

Mrs. Carter did not stop in Argentina, a country which reportedly decided that after its experience with Evita and Isabel Peron it had had enough of "women with a whip."