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**The “prehistory” of marihuana consumption and growing in Colombia
between 1930 and 1960**

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Resumen

Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. “La Prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia: consumo y cultivos entre los años 30 y 60”, Cuadernos de Economía, v. XXVI, n. 47, Bogotá, 2007, páginas **-**

El consumo de marihuana en Colombia no se extendió como un simple result del aumento en su uso, en el *counterculture* norteamericano de los años 60. Aunque los cultivos aumentarían, vertiginosamente, para satisfacer la demanda norteamericana a finales de la década de los 60 y comienzos de los 70, ya existía un mercado importante para el consumo doméstico en Colombia. De

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otra parte, se cuestiona la literatura académica “exculpatoria” que tiende a ver a países como Colombia, en tanto que “víctimas” pasivas de fenómenos inducidos desde afuera.

Palabras claves: marihuana, Colombia, mercado doméstico, cultivos ilícitos.

JEL: N56, N 96, N 01.

Abstract

Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. “The prehistory of marihuana consumption and growing in Colombia from 1930 to 1960” *Cuadernos de Economía*, v. XXVI, n. 47, Bogota, 2007, pages **-**

Marihuana consumption did not become widespread in Colombia as the simple result of its increased use as part of the north-American counterculture of the 1960s. Even though marihuana-growing spiraled to satisfy north-American demand at the end of the 1960s and 1970s there was an important market for domestic consumption in Colombia. “Exonerating-type” academic literature tending to see countries such as Colombia as the passive “victims” of externally-induced phenomena is thus questioned.

Key words: marihuana, Colombia, domestic market, illicit crops. **JEL:** N56, N96, N010.

Résumé

Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. « La préhistoire de la marijuana en Colombie : consommation et cultures entre les années 30 et 60 », Cuadernos de Economía, v. XXVI, n. 47, Bogota, 2007, pages **.**

La consommation de marijuana en Colombie ne s'est pas étendue comme un simple résultat de l'augmentation de son utilisation dans le contexte de la *counterculture* nord-américain des années 60. Bien que les cultures accroîtraient, vertigineusement, pour satisfaire la demande nord-américaine à la fin des années 60 et au début des années 70, un marché important existait déjà pour la consommation domestique en Colombie. D'autre part, on met en controverse la littérature académique « *exculpatoria* » qui a la tendance à voir à des pays comme la Colombie, en tant que « victimes » passives de phénomènes induits en dehors.

Mot clés : marijuana, Colombie, marché domestique, cultures illégaux. **JEL**
: N56, N 96, N 01.

“... I am a degenerate, I am a dope fiend, drinking and dancing to the strains of my song...”

Porfirio Barba Jacob, “Balada de la Loca Alegría”

Smoking marihuana in Colombia did not just become widespread as a simple result of its increased use during the north-American counterculture of the 1960s. Even less so could marihuana be considered a “counter-revolutionary weapon” against “young Latin-American rebels” who, “were blocked during their march towards a generalised Cuban revolution,” as stated by Arango and Child (1986). One also cannot agree with the statement that, “the *Alianza para el Progreso* peace bodies served as useful idiots for the Pentagon for spreading the marihuana and rock counterculture in the universities and rural districts of the Andes” (Arango and Child 1986, 144²). Some academic literature on drug-trafficking tends to adopt an “exonerating” attitude and sees countries such as Colombia as being the victims of externally-induced phenomena (Camacho Guizado 1988 and Tovar Pinzón 1999).

Even though marihuana-growing spiralled to satisfy north-American demand at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s there was still a significant market domestic consumption in Colombia as shown in this article. This means that one cannot agree with Roberto Junguito and Carlos Caballero Argáez’s statement in an article published three decade ago that, “it is well known ... that growing it has been on the increase during the last three or four years, having

² For a similar view, see Betancourt and García (1994, 47).

begun on very small areas of land at the end of the 1960s” (Junguito Bonnet and Caballero Argáez 1978, 118). A strong north-American influence was seen in the perceptions and policies leading to marihuana use becoming condemned since the end of the 1930s.

Francisco Thoumi stated more than a decade ago that writing mentioning the existence of marihuana-growing and consumption in Colombia before the export boom was based on “impressionist ... evidence” (Thoumi 1994, 124). In fact, recent literature has not shown much of an advance in this respect. This work was aimed at rectifying the matter by using raw material from historical studies (unedited documentation taken from archives and records). Material was taken from correspondence from the Colombian Home Office and Foreign Office, the *Archivo General de la Nación* in Bogotá and the US National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The evidence presented shows that marihuana already had a long history in Colombia before any north-American influence was felt.

Early prohibition

Marihuana consumption was not considered as being a public health problem in the USA until the 1930s. Until then it was perceived as being a vice only affecting ethnic minority groups, bohemians, jazz musicians, sailors and other marginal elements in society. A US government report stated that marihuana

use in the USA, “was noted, particularly amongst Latin-Americans and the Spanish-speaking population. Cannabis cigarettes are sold on a large scale in the states on the frontier with Mexico and in the cities of the south-east and south-west, the same as in the city of New York and, in fact, wherever there are colonies of Latin-Americans” (Federal Bureau of Narcotics 1930, 15 and Musto 1993, 248-254).

When it began to be reported that young Anglos were smoking “weed” then pressure became applied by groups of educators and religious communities to have the practice declared illegal. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), the north-American federal agency responsible for repressing drug trafficking, was behind efforts aimed at criminalising marihuana, making public statements that it was a drug which induced violence amongst those who smoked it. Such pressure was successful when President Franklin D. Roosevelt sanctioned the Marihuana Tax Act in August 1937 criminalising its sale as being a federal crime (Himmelstein 1983 58-71; Morgan 1981, 138-142; Walter 1989, 99-107).

Curiously, and perhaps due to recent legislation and strong campaigns against it in the USA, marihuana’s effects were described in worse terms than those of other drugs. Harry Anslinger (FBN director) declared that, “Prolonged marihuana use ... usually leads to insanity, the same as crime” (Jonnes 1996, 160), and added that, “fifty percent of violent crimes committed in districts inhabited by Mexicans, Spanish people, Latin-Americans and Greeks can be

traced to this evil ... the worst of evils” (Speaker 2004, 215). The medical specialist, Lawrence Kolb, has stated that, “... marihuana is a dangerous drug, much more harmful, in certain aspects, than opium” (Musto 1972). Kolb emphasised that, “... an alcoholic, a marihuana consumer, causes many crimes,” during a congress organised by the FBN in December 1938 (Marihuana Conference 1938).

Colombian authorities had already noticed the existence of marihuana-growing in 1925, the same as its consumption by sailors, stevedores and prostitutes in the ports (Ruíz Hernández 1979, 111). However, a similar effect in Colombia was only felt as a result of pressure against marihuana and its recent banning in the USA. For example, the *Revista de Higiene* (the Ministry of Health’s official organ) published an article by Kolb in September 1939 entitled, “Marihuana: the weed which drives you mad.”³ Even though measures related to marihuana had already existed in Colombia since the 1920s (Sáenz Rovner 1997, 5; López Restrepo 2000, 91), the Colombian government absolutely prohibited marihuana-growing. It ordered the destruction of existent plantations and established that those who violated this disposition would be sanctioned, “as illegal traffickers in drastic drugs ... according to the penal code.”⁴

³ “Informe del gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1939,” Archivo General de la Nación, Bogotá, Fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (hereinafter cited as: AGN-FMRE), box 120, folder 940, folio 184.

⁴ “Informe del gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1939,” AGN-FMRE, box 120, folder 940, folio 182. “Resolución 645 September 18 1939,” *Diario Oficial*, October 6th 1939.

It should be remembered that campaigns against marihuana replicated debate relating marihuana to violence and crime in countries such as Cuba (Sáenz Rovner 2005, 55-56). Heated debate took place in México, whilst the newspaper *Excelsior* stated that many crimes were committed, “under the pathological influence of marihuana.” High government functionaries questioned the official north-American view and even proposed treatment (not punishment) for those addicted to other drugs. Pressure applied by Anslinger and the US government led to an embargo being imposed on selling legal drugs to México, the Mexican government, in turn, opting for repressing consumers (Walker 1989, Astorga 2003).

In spite of prohibition ...

In spite of new legislation in Colombia, cases of marihuana were common up to the end of the 1930s and the start of the 1940s in cities such as Barranquilla. Trafficking ranged from selling a few cigarettes⁵ to the case of a pair who were found with a kilo and half of marihuana (the woman escaped from justice and her husband served a sentence of almost six months in prison).⁶

⁵ “Informe del gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1939,” AGN-FMRE, box 120, folder 940, folio 189. “Arturo Robledo, Secretario, Secretario del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, a Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores,” Bogotá, February 28th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 941, folios 57-58. “Pour le Directeur de la Section du Trafic de l’Opium a Ministre des Affaires étrangères de Colombie,” Geneva, May 30th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 305, folder 36, folio 6.

⁶ “Informe del gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1939,” AGN-FMRE, box 120, folder 940, folio 189. “A Jefe de la Sección Encargada del

An official report about marihuana on the Caribbean coast in 1939 stated that marihuana cigarettes, “were generally sold in brothels or establishments frequented by low social classes. Also in ‘fritangas’ (greasy fried food) and where guarapo (drink made from herbs with sugar-cane or pineapple) is sold.”⁷ The national government began a campaign “matching the persecution of the traffickers and consumers in its campaigns. For example, a film showing the ravages caused by Indian cannabis was projected during several days in several towns.”⁸

The Colombian government stated in February 1940 that, “the campaign against the use of marihuana has provided satisfactory results,” and indicated, as supposed proof, that supply had become reduced and that cigarettes had reached their highest price (in acquisitive terms of the time) of one peso and fifty centavos.⁹ “The struggle against drug addiction has been pursued with optimistic results,” declared the minister of Work, Higiene and Social Welfare when describing the antidrug policy in 1941 (Caicedo Castilla 1941, 10). However, reality was different to official rhetoric; numerous arrests for possession, sale and even growing were repeated, especially in Barranquilla and

control del tráfico del opio. Sociedad de las Naciones,” Bogotá, November 13th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 34, folio 11.

⁷ “Informe del Gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1940,” AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 32, folio 45.

⁸ “Informe del Gobierno de Colombia sobre el tráfico de estupefacientes durante el año de 1940,” AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 32, folio 45.

⁹ “Arturo Robledo, Secretario, Secretario del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, a Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores,” Bogotá, February 28th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 941, folios 57-58.

its surrounding area. Marihuana was easily acquired in the city's brothels and marginal barrios. "Weed" was grown in the Atlántico department and the neighbouring Magdalena department. Searching available archives led to documenting around 60 cases of possession, selling and growing marihuana in Barranquilla and its surrounding areas between 1940 and 1944.¹⁰ It is not surprising that a north-American report in 1945 stated that marihuana production and consumption had considerably increased in Barranquilla. This

¹⁰ See: "Le Chef de Section chargé du Service du contrôle de l'Opium a Ministre des Affaires étrangères de Colombie," Geneva, August 10th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 35, folio 1. "Arturo Robledo, Secretario, Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, a Secretario del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores," Bogotá, June 12th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 942, folio 33. Société des Nations, "Résumé des transactions illicites et des saisies communiquées au Secrétariat de la Société des Nations du 1er juillet au 30 septembre 1940. C.160.M.145.1940.XI," Geneva, October 1, 1940, p. 17, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 34, folio 51. "Anselmo Gaitán U, Secretario, Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, a Secretario del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores," Bogotá, October 2nd 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 948, folio 36. "Le Chef de Section chargé su service du Contrôle de l'Opium a ministre des Affaires étrangères de Colombie," Geneva, December 27th 1940, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 304, folder 32, folio 27. "Anselmo Gaitán U, Secretario, Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, a Secretario del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores," Bogotá, January 7th 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 949, folio 4. "Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria," Bogotá, April 19 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 120, folder 949, folio 86. "Al Presidente del Comité del Opio," Bogotá, May 12th 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 305, folder 39, folio 64. "Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria," Bogotá, June 18th 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 121, folder 950, folio 24. "Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria," Bogotá, July 22nd 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 121, folder 950, folio 46. "Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria," Bogotá, August 26 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 121, folder 950, folio 62. "Informe de la Sección Jurídica del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, relativo a un caso de tráfico ilícito de marihuana descubierto en Barranquilla," Bogotá, February 1st 1943, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 305, folder 43, folio 100. Société des Nations, "Résumé des transactions illicites et des saisies en 1942," Geneva, February 16th 1943, p. 43, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 45, folio 130. "Informe de la Sección Jurídica del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, relativo a varios casos de tráfico ilícito de marihuana," Bogotá, September 9th 1943, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 170 (hereinafter: NACP-RG170), 170-74-12, Box 21. "Informe de la Sección Jurídica y de Policía Sanitaria del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social sobre algunos casos de comercio y uso de marihuana, comunicados por la Dirección Departamental de Higiene del Atlántico," Bogotá, October 25th 1944, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 305, folder 44, folio 31.

report also stated that the Mexican vessel “Hidalgo” had made three trips to Barranquilla in just six months with “enormous amounts” of marihuana and seeds to be planted. Consumers (according to the report) could acquire the “weed” through taxi drivers or in the brothels and the price of a marihuana cigarette had fallen to ten centavos, a negligible price when compared to that reported in the official Colombian report in 1940.¹¹

Regarding arrests for marihuana in other cities on the Atlantic coast at the start of the 1940s, cases of sellers can be documented in Cartagena, Santa Marta and Fundación.¹² Several cases also occurred in the interior of the country, especially in the Caldas department. For example, two people were surprised with three pounds of marihuana for sale in Manizales; the “weed” apparently came from Pereira and was grown in the backyard of the house of the mother of one of those being detained.¹³

¹¹ “HEM Thompson, Lieut., USNR, to the Ambassador, American Embassy, Bogotá,” July 7th 1945, NACP, RG170-170-74-12, Box 21.

¹² “Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria,” Bogotá, October 23rd 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 121, folder 950, folio 96. “Informe de la Sección Jurídica del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, sobre un caso de tráfico de marihuana descubierto en Santa Marta,” Bogotá, April 28th 1944, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 305, folder 44, folio 98. “Informe de la Sección Jurídica y de Policía Sanitaria del Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social sobre algunos casos de tráfico de marihuana,” Bogotá, March 25th 1946, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 45, folio 123.

¹³ “Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria,” Bogotá, July 22nd 1941, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 121, folder 950, folio 47. “Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria,” Bogotá, April 20th 1942, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 122, folder 951, folio 36. “Ministerio de Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social, Policía Sanitaria,” Bogotá, June 1st 1942, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 122, folder 951, folio 52.

A law passed in 1946 (known as “Ley Consuegra” as it had been presented by Néstor Consuegra, a senator from Barranquilla) toughened the penalties for selling and consuming marihuana, considering them to be crimes against public health (*Semana* 1949; López Restrepo 2000, 92). President Mariano Ospina Pérez’s government issued another decree against marihuana in 1949, after stating that marihuana, “has poisonous properties and produces a habit... growing it and selling it only leads to determining great evil for the healthiness of those associated with it ...” It decreed that, “Growing and selling marihuana within the territory of the Republic is prohibited,” and ordered the authorities to proceed, “to the immediate destruction of existing plants.” Penalties of six months to five years in prison were fixed, which could be increased for those supplying marihuana to minors or addicts.¹⁴ Another decree issued in 1951 described, “those growing and selling marihuana as criminals.”¹⁵

In spite of all the decrees, cases of growing, possession or selling marihuana continued being relatively common in the Atlántico, Magdalena and Bolívar departments.¹⁶ According to an observer, smoking marihuana was already “very

¹⁴ AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 47, folio 191.

¹⁵ “Daniel Henao Henao a Presidente del Comité Central Permanente del Opio,” Bogotá, September 25th 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 48, folio 80.

¹⁶ “Informe de la Sección de Estupefacientes del Ministerio de Higiene de Colombia sobre algunos casos de tráfico y uso de marihuana,” Bogotá, May 11th 1949, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 46, folio 58. “Daniel Henao Henao, Sub-Secretario, Encargado del Departamento Diplomático, a Presidente del Comité Central Permanente del Opio,” Bogotá, February 21st 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 48, folio 125. “Daniel Henao Henao a Presidente del Comité Central Permanente del Opio,” Bogotá, July 27th 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 48, folio 98. “Jorge Velandia, Jefe de la Sección, Ministerio de Higiene, a Jefe de la Sección de Organismos Internacionales, Ministerio de Relaciones Internacionales,” Bogotá, December 12th 1951, AGN-FMRE,

common” in brothels, bars and even theatres in Medellin by the middle of the century,¹⁷ whilst local authorities also reported cases of trafficking in the “weed” in the Antioquia department.¹⁸ As stated in a report from 1949 in a nationally circulating Colombian journal, “... marihuana cigarettes continue being smoked, as always, in spite of penal restrictions, in so-called ‘bonches’ (groups of smokers, though the word literally means a punch-up) which might well take place in an intimate gathering, in the house of some dissolute person, or during a trip, on any public highway, into late hours of the night” (*Semana*, 1949).

The explosion of domestic consumption

As well as consuming marihuana having become well-established, Colombia began to be a source of exports from the 1950s onwards. A confidential Colombian Foreign Office report in 1952 stated that Santa Marta had become a very important origin for marihuana being exported to different ports in Florida from whence it was forwarded in banana boats. The report stated that someone known as “T the T” was growing the “weed” on a farm near Santa Marta,

transfer 10, box 122, folder 955, folio 121. “Daniel Henao Henao a Presidente del Comité Central Permanente del Opio,” Bogotá, December 14th 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 48, folio 53.

¹⁷ “Jack T. Kilgore, Vice Consul, to Department of State,” Medellin, January 26th 1950, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59, 821.53/1-2650.

¹⁸ “Jorge Velandia, Jefe de la Sección, Ministerio de Higiene, a Jefe de la Sección de Organismos Internacionales, Ministerio de Relaciones Internacionales,” Bogotá, October 16th 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 10, box 122, folder 955, folio 110. Daniel Henao Henao a Presidente del Comité Central Permanente del Opio,” Bogotá, October 18th 1951, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 306, folder 48, folio 63.

supplying the local brothels and being the main exporter.¹⁹ It was reported that Colombian sailors had brought marihuana to New Orleans in 1957 aboard the vessel *Ciudad de Bogotá* belonging to the Grancolombiana merchant fleet.²⁰ There were also suspicions that Colombian marihuana was being exported to other countries in addition to the USA; for example, some years later, a pound of the product was confiscated from a boat flying the Argentinean flag in Buenos Aires and, “it was suspected that it had been smuggled in from Colombia.”²¹

The Colombian delegation at an Interpol meeting held in Washington in October 1960 stated that, “illicit trafficking in marihuana was widespread. The police had confiscated large amounts of marihuana.”²² Lieutenant colonel José A. Ramírez Merchán, Inspector General of the Police and one of the Colombian delegates at the Assembly, confirmed that, “marihuana is produced in Colombia ... whose illicit production and trafficking account for very high figures.”²³

¹⁹ “Informe del gobierno de Colombia sobre el comercio de estupefacientes y lucha contra la toxicomanía. Año de 1952. Ministerio de Salud Pública. Estupefacientes,” NACP-RG170, 170-74-12, Box 21.

²⁰ “Pedro Vélez to Consul of the United States, Guayaquil, Informal translation,” April 17th 1957, NACP-RG 170, 170-74-12, Box 23.

²¹ “Samuel H. Young, American Vice Consul, Narcotic Traffic in Argentina,” Buenos Aires, June 27th 1949, NACP-RG170, 170-74-12, Box 19.

²² “International Criminal Police Organization. 29th Session of the General Assembly. Washington, October 10-15th 1960. Drugs Committee,” NACP-RG170, 170-94-005, Box 22.

²³ “Tte. Coronel José A. Ramírez Merchán, Director General de la Policía Nacional, Circular No. 109/A – P.N.D./181,” Bogotá, December 6th 1960, p. 11, AGN-FMRE, transfer 3, box 298, folder 41, folio 44.

The report presented by the Colombian delegation to the Inter-American Consultative Group about overseeing narcotics in Río de Janeiro in 1961 stated that (based on a report from the country's secret police) marihuana was being grown in the Valle del Cauca, Caldas and Antioquia departments. In the Valle department it was being grown in Cali and in the rural area of Buga; the report stated that, "production and trafficking is extremely sizeable. Large areas of the crop were discovered in sugar refineries' sugarcane plantations close to the city." It added that, "an average of ten dissolute people are arrested per day in the border section between the Caldas and Valle departments from whom four to ten paper cones (of marihuana) are seized per person."

According to the report, in Caldas, marihuana was being grown in Villamaría (a town close to Manizales) and in the towns of Bello, Santa Bárbara and San Jerónimo in Antioquia. Marihuana-growing was also being grown in other departments, such as Huila, Magdalena (in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada), Cauca, Tolima and Cundinamarca. Regarding Bogota, the report stated that, "recently, it has been invaded by traffickers and gangsters," and the sectors where marihuana was most being consumed were, "areas of tolerance, small cafes and low-class hotels, located close to the marketplace."²⁴

²⁴ "Grupo Consultivo Interamericano sobre fiscalización de estupefaciente. Rio de Janeiro, 1961. Informe de los participantes de la República de Colombia al Grupo consultivo sobre fiscalización de estupefacientes, señores doctores Edgar Velasco Arboleda y José Quintero Chica," NACP-RG170, 170-74-4, Box 10.

Not just the recently mentioned official report documented the increase in growing and consuming marihuana in Colombia at the beginning of the 1960s. The *Directorio Liberal Municipal* from Maicao in the Guajira department denounced the mayor of this town in 1962 for having ordered that a man accused of trafficking marihuana be put at liberty; the same trafficker was arrested three days later by the DAS and “a large amount of marihuana” was found on him.²⁵ Marihuana crops were discovered in Tame, Arauca, in 1964; 5 individuals were arrested.²⁶ Six “mariguaneros” were arrested in June 1964 in Bogotá and another 3 in July.²⁷ Gustavo Hitzig (a high Colombian government functionary) declared in 1966 that at least 50,000 people were smoking marihuana in the country.²⁸

The Caldas department (in the heart of the coffee-growing area in Colombia’s central mountains) was one of the main foci of the re-emergence of violence at the end of the 1950s and beginnings of the 1960s. In fact, there were 390 murders in Caldas during the first six months of 1959, the greatest number for any province in the country for this six-month period.²⁹ The governor of Caldas

²⁵ “Directorio Liberal Municipal a Ministro de Gobierno,” Maicao, July 15th 1962, Archivo General de la Nación, Bogota, Fondo Ministerio de Gobierno (en adelante citado como: AGN-FMG), box 141, folder 1.104, folios 96-97.

²⁶ “Silvano Novoa Bonilla, Alcalde Municipal, a Alfredo Araújo Grau, Ministro de Justicia,” Tame, June 3rd 1964, AGN-FMG, box 54, folder 430, folio 273.

²⁷ “Departamento de Policía de Bogotá. Estudio sobre criminalidad mes de Julio,” Bogotá, August 24th 1964, AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 60.

²⁸ “Permanent Central Narcotics Board. Mission of the Board to Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, March-April 1966. Report by Mr. V. Kusevic,” Geneva, September 5th 1966, p. 8, NACP-RG170, 170-74-4, Box 10.

²⁹ “Muertos por causa de la Violencia en los departamentos bajo estado de sitio durante los primeros 7 meses de 1959,” AGN-FMG, box 7, folder 51, folio 14.

sent the following message to the Minister of Government (Home Secretary) in 1961, “Violence continues becoming intensified, especially in the Quindío area, meaning that I have requested Minguerra (the Ministry of War) to increase army personnel ... I have also asked that the Caldas department police-force be increased.³⁰ Coffee-growers have also expressed their alarm at the “intensification of violence in our department, especially in coffee-growing areas...” and blame the phenomenon on “the communist doctrines” coming from Fidel Castro’s government’s “proselytising campaign”.³¹ With or without communist influence, the coffee-growing areas of Tolima and Valle del Cauca were also the epicentre for a great many murders.³²

However, for other people, smoking marihuana was more related to crime and violence. A local newspaper in Riosucio (in western Caldas) stated that, “whilst the police do not redouble their vigilance and mount an offensive against marihuaneros and antisocial elements, the city will continue being menaced,

³⁰ “Restrepo Restrepo, Gobernador, a Augusto Ramírez Moreno, Mingobierno,” Manizales, January 31st 1961, AGN-FMG, box 21, folder 182, folio 151. See also, Ortiz Sarmiento: *passim*.

³¹ “Comité Departamental de Cafeteros a Ministro Gobierno,” Manizales, February 4th 1961, AGN-FMG, box 21, folder 182, folio 49.

³² “Teniente Coronel Edmundo Rubiano Groot, Comandante Sexta Brigada Encargado, a Jefe Orden Público, Ministerio Gobierno,” Ibagué, April 25th 1960, AGN-FMG, box 13, folder 104, folio 10. “Rafael Parga Cortés, Gobernador, a Manuel E. Carvajalino, Jefe de Orden Público, Ministerio de Gobierno,” Ibagué, May 5th 1960, AGN-FMG, box 13, folder 104, folios 86-87. “Alonso Aragón Quintero, Gobernador, a Ministro de Gobierno, Ministro de Guerra,” Cali, October 27th 1960, AGN-FMG, box 14, folder 114, folio 22. Valle del Cauca, Secretaría de Gobierno, Orden Público, “Homicidio. Ansermanuevo,” Cali (¿?), December 6th 1960, AGN-FMG, box 13, folder 108, folio 1.

making (normal) night-life impossible.”³³ The government of Caldas went further and began a “Campaign against marihuana” at the start of 1961, stating that, in its opinion (and taking up arguments made at the end of the 1930s), “trafficking and growing marihuana constitutes one of the origins for the disturbances of Public Order which are currently affecting the department,” and offered a reward of up to 500 pesos, “to anyone who denounces the existence of such crops.”³⁴ Germán Guzmán Campos stated in 1962 that, “marihuana... serves daily as a stimulant in Quinchía for the bandits of captain ‘Venganza’, who was a marihuanero” (Guzmán Campos 1962, 224).

Arrests regarding cases involving marihuana shot up from 1961 onwards throughout the whole of the Caldas department. Consolidating information taken from the Caldas department’s Home Office (*Secretaría de Gobierno*) provides the following information:

- Total of people arrested (for cases involving marihuana) for the 17 months for which statistics are available (i.e. June 1961 to July 1963): 108;
- Average number of people arrested per month, for the months and years for which there is information: 1961, 6; 1962, 3.2; and 1963, 10.4;
- Arrested for trafficking in marihuana: 85;
- Arrested for growing: 13;

³³ “Atracado en la zona urbana James Bonilla,” *El Mundo*, Riosucio, August 22nd 1964, p. 1, press-cutting, AGN-FMG, box 58, folder 451, folio 274.

³⁴ “Memorando al Señor Ministro de Gobierno sobre medidas tomadas por la Gobernación de Caldas, sobre orden público en el Departamento,” Manizales, January 18th 1961, AGN-FMG, box 23, folder 209, folio 9.

- Arrested for growing and trafficking: 3; and
- Arrested for simple possession: 7.

Amongst those arrested, 21 individuals had other crimes pending; 105 were male and only 3 were female. Arrests were made in 26 towns throughout the length and breadth of the department which at this time comprised territories which later became part of the new departments of Quindío and Risaralda. Exactly half of the arrests were made in 6 towns (Salamina, La Virginia, Ríosucio, Anserma, Pereira and Santa Rosa de Cabal). Only Pereira out of the department's three main cities (Manizales (the capital), Armenia and Pereira) had an important number of arrests, to which those from Dosquebradas (a newly founded industrial area neighbouring Pereira) were added.³⁵

³⁵ "Gobernación de Caldas. June 1961," AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios 185-189. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, January 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 163-166. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, February 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 167-169. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, March 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 170-173. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, April 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 174-176. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, May 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 67-71. "Miguel Alvarez de los Ríos, Sub-Secretario de Gobierno, a Ministro de Gobierno," Manizales, September 1st (sic) 1962, AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios, 177-179. "Gobernación de Caldas. Secretaría de Gobierno, Número 00010," AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios 72-74. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 00011," AGN-FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios 19-22. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 00012," AGN, FMG, box 233, folder 2198, folios 23-27. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0001," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folios 262-267. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0002," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 251. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0003," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folios 228-235. "Relación de las capturas registradas en el mes de Marzo 1963," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 228. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0004," AGN-FMG, box

In spite of the campaign being launched, significant marihuana crops and trafficking were found in Caldas from 1961 onwards during the rest of the decade. For example, crops were discovered in rural areas near Riosucio and Pueblo Rico; a farm having three thousand marihuana plants was found in the latter.³⁶ A female carrying 10 pounds of marihuana was arrested in Dosquebradas.³⁷

By the end of the decade, the southern part of Caldas (which had been administratively reorganised as the new department of Quindío) went back to being one of the main areas for producing and trafficking marihuana within the country, if one abides by the evidence of arrests made by the police. Farms were found growing marihuana in the rural areas of Armenia, Buenavista and Quimbaya and there were a significant number of arrests for marihuana trafficking, especially in cities like Armenia (the capital) and Calarcá, a nearby town.³⁸

48, folder 396, folios 204-208. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 000," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folios 172-176. "Relación de las capturas registradas en el mes de Mayo 1963," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 178. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0006," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folios 143-149. "Secretaría de Gobierno del Departamento de Caldas, Número 0007," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 122. "Relación de las capturas registradas en el mes de Julio de 1963," AGN-FMG, box 48, folder 396, folio 121.

³⁶ "Descubierta marihuana en La Peña," *El Mundo*, Ríosucio, August 22nd 1964, p. 4, press-cutting, AGN-FMG, box 58, folder 451, folio 274. "Boletín Informativo Polícivo," (hereinafter cited as: BIP) December 15th-31st 1967, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 236.

³⁷ "BIP," October 15th-31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 132.

³⁸ "BIP," February 15th-29th 1968, p. 4, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 170. "BIP," March 1st-15th 1968, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 153. "BIP," March 15th-

By this time marihuana-growing had expanded all over Colombia. The police localised a three-hectare area in February 1968 where marihuana was being grown on a farm in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada near Santa Marta.³⁹ Another marihuana crop was discovered in the rural area of Ciénaga in the middle of 1969.⁴⁰ Cases of marihuana-trafficking were repeated in different places throughout the department⁴¹ and several people were arrested on numerous occasions; 30 pounds of “weed” were seized in one of the cases.⁴²

In the Cesar department, neighbouring that of Magdalena, there was a significant number of cases of marihuana-trafficking, the greater part occurring in Valledupar (its capital).⁴³ A marihuana crop was discovered in Cerro Azul in

30th 1968, p. 6, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 135. “BIP,” April 15th-30th 1968, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 99. “BIP,” December 16th-31st 1968, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 189. “BIP,” January 1st-15th 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 5; “BIP,” January 16th-31st 1969, p. 6, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 27; “BIP,” February 1st-15th 1969, p. 7, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 48; “BIP,” February 28th-March 15th 1969, p. 6, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 888, folio 86. “BIP,” April 30th-May 15th 1969, p. 7, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 142.

³⁹ “BIP,” February 1st-15th 1968, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 188.

⁴⁰ “BIP,” July 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 36.

⁴¹ See: “BIP,” February 16th-28th 1969, p. 18, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 78; “BIP,” March 15th-30th 1968, pp. 5-6, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folios 134-135; “BIP,” February 1st-15th 1969, p. 6, box 117, folder 882, folio 47; “BIP,” August 15th-31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 85; “BIP,” December 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 153.

⁴² “BIP,” March 1st-15th 1968, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 153. “BIP,” December 16th-31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 188. “BIP,” February 28th-March 15th 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 85.

⁴³ “BIP,” February 1st-15th, 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 46.”BIP,” March 15th-30th 1969, p. 4, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 103. “BIP,” April 30th-May 15th 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 140. “BIP,” December 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 151.

March 1969, on the border with Magdalena department.⁴⁴ Three men were arrested in a house in Valledupar in December 1969 in possession of six arrobas of marihuana (a unit of weight of between 11 and 16 kg (24-36 lbs), according to region), “within a recipient, especially ideal for being transported to Venezuela.”⁴⁵ Individuals accused of marihuana-trafficking were arrested in other departments on the Atlantic coast (Atlántico, Bolívar, Córdoba, Guajira and Sucre) in possession of amounts ranging from “a few paper cones” to considerable amounts of marihuana.⁴⁶

Within the country (as well as in Caldas), numerous arrests were also made for marihuana-trafficking. The police discovered marihuana plants being grown on a farm near the town of Miranda and another crop in the Bolívar jurisdiction in Cauca, in the south of the country.⁴⁷ The police arrested two individuals in possession of three arrobas of marihuana in a rural area near the town of El Tambo.⁴⁸ An arrest for marihuana-trafficking was made in Popayán (the

⁴⁴ “BIP,” February 28th–March 15th 1969, p. 4, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 84.

⁴⁵ “BIP,” December 1st–15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 151.

⁴⁶ See, for example: “BIP,” January 15th–31st 1968, p. 3, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 201; “BIP,” March 1st–15th 1968, p. 3, AFN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 151; “BIP,” April 15th–30th 1968, pp. 4, 6, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folios 98, 100; “BIP,” July 15th–30th 1968, p. 4, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 4; “BIP,” January 1st–15th 1969, p. 6, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 6; “BIP,” January 16th–31st 1969, p. 14, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 35; “BIP,” February 1st–15th 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 46; “BIP,” February 16th–28th 1969, pp. 4-5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folios 64-65; “BIP,” March 15th–30th 1969, p. 3, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 102; “BIP,” December 15th–30th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 170.

⁴⁷ See: “BIP,” June 1st–15th 1968, p. 3, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 51; “BIP,” August 15th–31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 83.

⁴⁸ “BIP,” August 1st–15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 65.

department's capital)⁴⁹ and two adolescents were arrested when they tried to smuggle a package of marihuana for a prisoner in the prison in Popayán.⁵⁰ The police confiscated the following on a farm in the El Paraíso rural area near the town of Algeciras: 11 sacks of raw marihuana, 21 pounds of seed and 41 pounds of already-prepared product.⁵¹ Other individuals were arrested for marihuana-trafficking in other cases and in different parts of the neighbouring Huila department.⁵² Marihuana crops were found in Antioquia⁵³ and individuals were arrested for marihuana-trafficking and possession in Antioquia, Urabá Chocoano, Cali, Santander del Sur and Norte de Santander.⁵⁴

Some authors have pointed out the contradiction of president Mariano Ospina Pérez's government which struggled against vice, including smoking marihuana, whilst importing cannabis seeds for producing fibre which was to be used by national industry (i.e. in making hemp sacks) (Salazar 1998). As shown in this document, well before "Santa Marta Golden" became famous amongst north-American consumers, Colombians already knew that cannabis was good

⁴⁹ "BIP," August 15th-31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 83.

⁵⁰ "BIP," August 15th-31st 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 83.

⁵¹ "BIP," February 15th-29th 1968, p. 16, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 182.

⁵² "BIP," January 1st-15th 1969, p. 5, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 5. "BIP," December 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 155.

⁵³ "BIP," June 1st-15th 1968, p. 2, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 50. "BIP," March 15th-30th 1969, p. 2, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 101.

⁵⁴ For cases of marihuana trafficking, possession and sale in these regions, see: "BIP," May 15th-30th 1968, p. 2, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 64; "BIP," July 15th-30th 1968, p. 6, AGN-FMG, box 99, folder 743, folio 6; "BIP," January 16th-31st 1961, p. 7, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 28; "BIP," February 16th-28th 1969, p. 3, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 63; "BIP," April 30th-May 15th 1969, p. 8, AGN-FMG, box 117, folder 882, folio 143; "BIP," July 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 36; "BIP," November 15th-30th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folio 145; "BIP," December 1st-15th 1969, AGN-FMG, box 130, folder 977, folios 163-164.

for more than making sacks and string. Its widespread domestic growing and consumption throughout the country was already old, well before the vertiginous increase in north-American demand at the end of the 1960s.

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