

The Miami Herald

JOHN S. KNIGHT (1894-1981)

JAMES L. KNIGHT (1909-1991)

DAVID LAWRENCE JR., *Publisher and Chairman*

ROBERTO SUAREZ
President

JIM HAMPTON
Editor

DOUGLAS C. CLIFTON
Executive Editor

MARTHA MUSGROVE and TONY PROSCIO
Associate Editors

PETE WEITZEL
Senior Managing Editor

Set Roberto Polo free

SECRETARY of State Warren Christopher has the opportunity to redress a disquieting injustice. He can — and should — free Roberto Polo from a federal prison. Mr. Polo, an American citizen, has spent nearly a year in federal jails awaiting the final decision on a Swiss extradition request. The secretary of state has the final word on extradition requests.

Mr. Polo's case has nightmarish elements. He is an artist and investment adviser specializing in valuable art works and antiques. He also has been decorated by the French government. In 1988 the Italian police, armed with a Swiss extradition request, picked him up. He spent eight months in Italian jails. Freed on bond, he came to Miami with the help of an American diplomat.

Then, last year, he was again detained, this time in Miami, by federal officers armed with the same Swiss extradition request. Mr. Polo has no criminal record. He has not even been charged in Switzerland, where an examining magistrate has asked for Mr. Polo's extradition in order to question him about fraud allegations made by two of his former clients.

HE REMAINS JAILED UNJUSTLY

Still, Mr. Polo has been denied bail in American courts. His incarceration, taking up scarce jail space, has cost American taxpayers several thousand dollars.

One of Mr. Polo's former clients, Emilio Martinez-Manautou, is an immensely wealthy Mexican politician who is under investigation for "sacking" the Mexican Treasury and sending millions of dollars out of Mexico. He has not ceased in his pursuit of Mr. Polo, to whom he entrusted a considerable fortune.

In January, U.S. Magistrate Ted E. Bandstra of Miami granted the perplexing Swiss extradition request. Mr. Polo rightly has appealed Mr. Bandstra's ruling. If the appeal is denied, the secretary of state has the discretionary authority to free Mr. Polo, who already has spent more time in jail than many convicted criminals.

Mr. Polo is convicted of nothing, yet he has been jailed unjustly. Mr. Christopher ought to free him.