

South American governments unite against common foe: the drug trade

by Valerie Rush

The largest drug busts in history were carried out in Ibero-America during 1984, ranging from last March's dismantling of Colombia's vast complex of "cocaine cities" buried in the jungles of Caquetá to the spectacular raids of Mexico's giant marijuana processing plants in northern Chihuahua state in November.

The cocaine busts not only dumped nearly 10 tons of refined cocaine powder in the Yari River, but also began the process of dissolving the stranglehold that the dope mafia has maintained in Colombia for nearly a decade. In Mexico, the *federales* burned almost \$10 billion worth of potent psychotropic weed, and along with it the seed money that powerful anti-government interests in the region were counting on to buy the elections in 1985.

These unprecedented successes in the global war on drugs paralleled equally impressive advances in Ibero-America's resolve to do battle against a common foe through a uniting of forces:

- In Quito, Ecuador, Ibero-American Presidents from seven leading nations met on Aug. 11 to call for the creation of a "multinational against drugs" and to declare drug trafficking "a crime against humanity with all applicable juridical consequences."

- The OAS Special Task Force on Narcotics convened on Aug. 20 to call for an inter-American conference to carry forward the Quito resolutions.

- During the week of Sept. 24, the U.N. General Assembly heard Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi, Colombian Foreign Minister Augusto Ramírez Ocampo, and other prominent Ibero-Americans demand global attention to the "universal plague" of the drug trade.

- On Nov. 6, justice ministers from throughout Ibero-America met in Bogota to formulate a uniform legal code against drug trafficking and to establish a continent-wide intelligence exchange to assist in the persecution and capture of drug felons.

Identifying Dope, Inc.

The dramatic escalation in Ibero-America's anti-drug offensive during 1984 reflects a deeper awareness on the part of governments across the continent that the drug trade is

more than a particularly nasty illegal enterprise. Rather, it has served as the cutting-edge of a deliberate destabilization operation which, through the selective use of terrorism and the general application of the debt/austerity tourniquet to Ibero-America's economies, would reduce the continent to the status of colonies of the world financial community.

EIR was, in fact, the first to identify the hydra and its myriad heads back in 1978 when it coined the term "Dope, Inc." Shortly thereafter, the best-selling book of the same name was published, describing in detail the powerful network of world-class bankers, unreformed Nazis, corporate executives, old European nobility, tainted intelligence operatives, and professional assassins who control the \$200-billion-a-year dope trade and, through it, a substantial percentage of total world money flows.

The book also explains in detail how the same financial interests ran the Opium Wars against China in the 1840s and '50s that now are running the second Opium Wars, or the Debt Wars, against the developing sector nations today. In 1984, the colonialist looters are no longer the British East India Company but the debt-enforcers at the International Monetary Fund, and their home-grown propagandists like Henry Kissinger.

Take, for example, the Kissinger Commission's National Bipartisan Report on Central America released in early January, which employs the old "free market" rhetoric of Adam Smith and the British East India Company to urge the conversion of Central America into a vast drug plantation on the model of the British Empire's Hong Kong and Singapore drug capitals. Just like the British East India Company's mouthpiece Parson Malthus, the Kissinger Commission also insists on population reduction and forced intervention as necessary to keep the Central Americans in their place.

The Commission's showcase "free-market" model can best be viewed in the "island paradise" of Jamaica, where during 1984 industrial production and even the production of food was being legislated out of existence to give rein to the "private initiative" of the drug traffickers. What might have become a genuine nation-state is being rapidly converted into a drug-and-gambling emporium surrounded by a vast human garbage heap, courtesy of Her Majesty's Prime Minister Ed-

ward Seaga and the International Monetary Fund.

If the hydra is to be defeated, its heads must be lopped off simultaneously. Ibero-America's governments took a major step forward in this direction during the month of December, when high-profile diplomacy among the Presidents of its three leading democracies—Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia—served to send a single resolute message to their colleague in the White House. Whether delivered personally by Venezuela's Lusinchi, who spent several days in Washington meeting with Reagan and addressing high-level gatherings there, or through the public communiqués and press conferences convened by Presidents de la Madrid of Mexico and Betancur of Colombia, in Mexico City, the demand was the same: developing Central America into sovereign prosperous nations, freeing the continent from the genocidal debt-collection policies of the international banks, and smashing the twin evils of drugs and terrorism were the top, interrelated priorities of the inter-American community.

Tragic losses

In 1984, Ibero-America has scored some dramatic successes but also suffered some tragic casualties in its war on drugs. One of the continent's most courageous leaders on the anti-drug front lines was Colombian Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who was felled by a mafia assassin's bullets on the evening of April 30. If there can be any consolation from such a loss, it is that his death galvanized the continent into unprecedented and unified action.

At this stage in the war, Dope, Inc.'s on-the-ground forces in Ibero-America are in considerable disarray, with local capos in many areas hiding out as fugitives from the law, traditional production and supply lines disrupted, and financial godfathers under intensified scrutiny, even indictment in some cases.

Exemplary is the case of Jaime Michelsen Uribe, former Bank of Colombia director and currently a wanted fugitive facing innumerable counts of fraud, embezzlement, and breach of confidence. Should Michelsen ever be brought to stand trial, his role as a top launderer of dirty money through his massive banking and financial empire would quickly surface, no doubt entangling many others along the way.

Dope, Inc.'s grand-slam political ambitions were also dealt a serious setback in 1984 when it sent out former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen to test the waters for the outright purchase of a government—and got doused instead. López was deployed to hold negotiating sessions with Colombia's fugitive mafia chieftains in early May, just days after Lara Bonilla's murder, holding out the offer of total amnesty and legalization in exchange for bringing home to Colombia sufficient cash from the drug trade to pay off the country's pressing debts. A similar scenario was attempted in bankrupt Bolivia.

At the same time, Dope, Inc.'s stringers in the media—and particularly in the Wall Street press—deployed to dis-

credit the continent's anti-drug efforts as worse than useless. The *Wall Street Journal*, the *Journal of Commerce*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other U.S. press organs ran an un-ending series of articles and commentaries warning that interdiction of narcotics shipments only drove up the prices—and thereby the profits—of the mafia. They argued that persecution of the mafia only led to bigger and bloodier retribution. They insisted that eradication of drug crops violated the human rights of the "indigenous" producers and, besides, represented intolerable interference with free enterprise. Especially, they threatened that inhibiting the drug trade in Ibero-America would bring down "drug-dependent economies" like that of Colombia and Bolivia.

López and his mafia colleagues were clearly banking on the persuasive tactics of the Kissinger Commission and the International Monetary Fund to make their offer one that couldn't be refused. What they didn't anticipate was the near-universal repudiation of their offer as morally repugnant and politically unacceptable. The combined backlash of his miscalculation and this publication's intensive public scrutiny of his spotted past and present forced López into a hurried departure from Colombia on an extended European vacation not long thereafter. Colombia's mafia kingpins, like Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder, and the Ochoa clan, found themselves facing extradition to the United States instead of their looked-for place in the sun as Colombia's financial saviors.

Narco-terrorism

Dope, Inc. has not, however, played out its hand. What it cannot buy it would destroy. Peru is a case in point, where the synthetic terrorist group known as Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) is sowing economic, political, and social havoc in the wake of its indiscriminate slaughter. The electoral debate leading to Peru's March 1985 presidential elections has been devoted as much to whether to "dialogue" with the rampaging Shining Path butchers as to how to deal with Peru's devastating economic crisis, and insistent coup rumors threaten to put an end to Peru's tenuous democracy. A perfect Nazi-Community synthesis, Shining Path is deployed to make Peru into a "horrible example" to its more resistant neighbors.

As the economic crisis worsens across Ibero-America in 1985, the efforts of Dope, Inc. to capture a vulnerable continent will intensify. Ibero-America's determination to close ranks against a common enemy must therefore be broadened to include the debt enforcers of the International Monetary Fund, whose partnership with the drug mafia has been all too plain to see. Winning the government of the United States away from its free-market fantasies and into a community of common interest with the rest of the continent is the critical next step to be taken if the war against Dope, Inc., is truly to be won. Colombian President Betancur's Dec. 7 call for a government-level inter-American conference on the debt, to be held in early 1985, could be precisely the vehicle required.