

from jail of a group of drug mafiosi, who had been awaiting extradition to the United States.

Strong U.S. criticism

The Reagan administration responded to the Ochoa release with scarcely veiled accusations of cowardice against the Barco government, and with a series of retaliatory measures ranging from humiliating body searches of all Colombians entering the United States, to excruciatingly slow and detailed inspections of all Colombian goods coming into U.S. ports, especially such perishables as seafood and cut flowers.

The U.S. State Department, for all its own criminal failings in the war on drugs, declared correctly that the recapture of Ochoa and his partners was critical "for the well-being of Colombian democracy."

The criticism and the sanctions had their effect, with the justice ministry using state-of-siege provisions to issue new arrest warrants against Ochoa and the four other Medellín Cartel leaders. At the same time, a U.S. federal court added additional charges to the 39 already pending against Ochoa, which presumably paves the way for reconsidering his extradition to the United States. At least one cynical columnist in Colombia wondered how the Barco government could now justify issuing an arrest warrant for extradition purposes, when it could not do so one month earlier. "Is history repeating itself?" asked the journalist.

On Dec. 19, the Barco government was forced to deny widespread rumors that it had authorized debt-for-amnesty negotiations with the Medellín Cartel. Cartel members have repeatedly offered to pay Colombia's foreign debt in return for amnesty. According to the rumor, presidential adviser Gustavo Vasco Muñoz—considered the *eminence gris* of the Barco government—was in charge of the contact. Vasco, formerly a Communist activist who had once run for the presidency of the Colombian Communist Party, later rose to the top of the business world, becoming a member of the Santodomingo business group run by a cousin of the pro-drug former President of Colombia, Alfonso López Michelsen. Vasco ran Barco's presidential campaign, through control of a masonic conspiracy known as the Sanedrin, to which nearly half the current cabinet belongs, along with the President himself.

The financial lure of the drug trade is, of course, a key factor in the government's "narco-tolerance." Colombia's comptroller general recognized that the growth of the real estate sector of the economy in 1987 was abnormally large, due to mob money "repatriated" under Barco's tax amnesty. Thanks to this money, Finance Minister Ricardo Alarcón Mantilla has bragged that Colombia can punctually pay its debts and continue to receive foreign credits. Banker Fernando Londoño Hoyos recognized that the large loan Colombia is currently seeking is an "unprecedented case of an international banking deal which presupposes the well-being of the mafia for its compliance."

Terror wave engulfs

by Susan Maitra

With the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) still locked in battle with Tamil terrorists of the LTTE in Sri Lanka's northern province, political consolidation of the peace plan drawn up between India and Sri Lanka has been held in abeyance. Now new and powerful threats have emerged to dim the fragile hope of reconciliation further.

On Dec. 23, the Sinhala radical terrorist organization, the JVP, gunned down the chairman of the ruling United National Party (UNP), Harsha Abbeywardene, in broad daylight in the capital city of Colombo. The gunman escaped, leaving behind 28 empty shells fired from a Chinese-made T-56 automatic rifle. The 37-year-old Abbeywardene was President Jayewardene's most trusted confidant.

On the same day, in the southern district of Galle, the UNP activist who had organized President Jayewardene's Dec. 21 public meeting in Galle was stabbed to death.

The murders were the high point of a month-long campaign by the JVP, with its base in the south, against the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. The campaign has taken the lives of some 250 people since August, when the accord was signed, including at least 60 assassinations specifically targeted to crack the morale of the ruling party and terrorize anyone who dared support the accord. It was the same JVP that nearly wiped out the entire government with its bomb attack on the parliament several months ago.

According to reports from Sekhar Gupta of *India Today*, it is commonplace in the southern rural areas to see placards in front of the homes of UNP functionaries announcing their "severance" of relations with the party. Hundreds of grassroots workers have deserted, and UNP leaders in Colombo admit that it is becoming more difficult to convince partymen in outlying districts to hang on to the party and the accord.

The JVP, which stands for Janatha Vimukhti Peramuna, is not a newcomer to the Sri Lankan political arena, but its influence has exploded into a formidable threat in recent months. The organization was banned in 1983 when its pivotal role in the anti-Tamil riots that ignited the now four-year-old ethnic war in Sri Lanka was found out.

What is the JVP?

The JVP is led by Rohana Wijeweera, the son of an old communist activist, who spent three years at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow and returned to form an ultra-revolutionary group. The group launched an uprising in 1971

Sri Lanka accord

with simultaneous armed attacks on 43 police stations and Colombo city. By the time the "revolution" was over, 20,000 had been killed. Wijeweera was tried and jailed for life.

In 1977, the new Jayewardene government lifted the ban on the JVP and released Wijeweera, who took up electoral politics, outpolling the traditional left parties by 2 to 1. But it was only a prelude to the 1983 terror campaign. After the JVP was banned again—and the government's attention fixated on fighting the Tamil separatists in the north and east—Wijeweera quietly went underground in the south and began assembling his cadres, collecting weapons, and restyling JVP ideology from ultra-left to ultra-right.

By 1986, the JVP had emerged as the most rabid exponent of Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalist sentiment, against any concession to the Tamil minority.

Unconfirmed reports put current membership of the JVP at 10,000, with 2,000 full-time workers—compared to a total of 1,000 members in 1975. In Colombo, membership is said to have jumped by 60% since August 1987, capitalizing on the fact that opposition to the presence of the Indian troops and the accord itself is widespread, cutting across party lines. Its campaign against India and the accord is publicly backed by a strong faction of the opposition Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP), and privately by many members of the ruling party.

Meanwhile, the logic of extremism has made strange bedfellows: The JVP is not only allied with the SLFP, which as the ruling party in 1971 violently crushed its uprising and jailed Wijeweera himself. Intelligence officials say the JVP has made a link between the extreme Sinhala chauvinists and the Tamil separatists.

Jayewardene has vowed to liquidate the JVP terrorists, whom he calls "southern separatists." But it is a measure of the panic and disintegration of the Sri Lankan political process that many insist the only way to deal with the JVP is to lift the ban and bring the terror cult "into the political mainstream."

While it may pose the most difficult problem, the JVP is not the only obstacle to resolving the Sri Lankan crisis. The bills amending the constitution to provide for a referendum on the merger of the northern and eastern provinces and setting up a new provincial council to govern it—the political element of the accord—have been passed by the Sri Lankan parliament. But the IPKF has by no means succeeded in

neutralizing the Tamil Tigers militarily—the backbone of the accord, and the precondition for its full implementation. And the LTTE Tamil guerrilla group has meanwhile refused to accept the terms of a proposed interim council, stipulated in the accord.

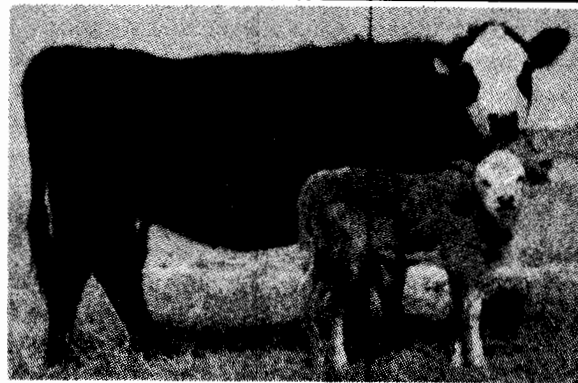
Hope dashed

The hope expressed in official circles in Sri Lanka that elections to the new council could be held shortly, in spite of the continued low-level hostilities between the IPKF and LTTE, was definitively blown up on Dec. 30 when open warfare broke out between Tamil militants and Muslims in the eastern province near Batticaloa. The Muslim population is a significant minority in the eastern province. They feel squeezed in the power play between Sinhalas and Tamils, and resent the idea of a Tamil-dominated northeast council.

The conflict broke into the open when a member of the Muslim fundamentalist El Jihad shot dead a Muslim member of the LTTE. In retaliation, the LTTE kidnaped two El Jihad members during the night; in the early morning the Muslim group hit back, killing at least four Tamil civilians who happened to be in the predominantly Muslim village.

The vengeance has continued, with the LTTE claiming to have killed at least 30 members of El Jihad, in addition to looting and burning Muslim shops and businesses.

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