

to the level of Spain or Greece. Ominously for Germans, the mark has lately been slipping against the pound and dollar. The strong Deutschmark has enabled Germans to enjoy package tours all around the world and to impress underprivileged aborigines with their bulging beer-bellies and gold bangles. The luxury holiday has become a way of life for them. Not being able to afford package holidays would be an unthinkable blow to the German *Wohlstand*.

Germans dare not lose their living standard because they have nothing else. (Appearances of prosperity are somewhat deceptive: for example, Germany has the lowest percentage of owner-occupied property in Western Europe, and there is a large black market of foreign laborers who take or send their untaxed wages home.) The danger for the Bonn establishment is that, if the German people are no longer allowed to be fat, they may begin to wonder why they have to remain impotent.

Michael Walker writes from Cologne.

Letter From Colombia

by Jeffrey Roberto Villaveces

Drugs and the People's Will



When American drug czar Barry McCaffrey visited Colombia last October, the two-year freeze on top-level contacts between the United States and the world's foremost producer and exporter of cocaine finally came to an end. U.S.-Colombian relations had reached an all-time low last March, when Washington "decertified" Colombia—meaning Bogotá can no longer qualify for American aid in the war on drugs—for a second consecutive year, ostensibly for not doing enough to battle narcotraffickers. "Colombia is of tremendous importance to the United States in economic, politi-

cal, and cultural terms," said McCaffrey, "but I must underscore that in the short term, our relationship must be determined by the drug issue."

Colombia has always been one of the most isolated countries in this hemisphere. The country is even divided internally by an incredible topography. A traveler crossing from one valley to another should not be surprised to find starkly different dialects spoken and traditions observed. Contraband has moved through Colombia since colonial times, and no government, much less one based in Lima, could hope to control the region.

The situation remains the same 400 years later, with constant clashes between divergent political and geographical realities in which the centralized government provokes continuing resentment in outlying regions. This anti-Bogotá resistance has given the guerrilla movement a regionalistic as well as populist base. At the same time, the centralism which has been such a powerful force in Colombian politics since the constitution of 1886 has made buying off the government just that much easier.

The power hierarchy in Colombia can be safely divided between "tools" and "nontools" of the Cali drug cartel. The "nontools" can be further divided into those who resist the cartel and those who are passive observers. The latter describes the vast majority of Colombians today. "Live and let live" rarely had it so good as it does here. A robbery or even a homicide will rarely provoke a response from onlookers. Once, after hearing glass breaking outside of my apartment, I was surprised to see a car-stereo thief running through a dense crowd of bystanders with no reaction from any of them. Not many heroes out there, unfortunately.

This "neutering" of Colombia, as I call it, is a result of many years of violence which has killed the people's will to fight back. One of the most spectacular examples of this process was the 1984 Lara assassination. In 1982, Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria was elected to the Colombian congress with a *suplente*, or running mate, named Dr. Jairo Ortega Ramírez. They were part of the "New Liberal" coalition, a Liberal Party faction which included political dissident Luis Carlos Galán and which was, ironically, strongly anticorruption. Pablo Escobar was certainly a new breed of politician, but one which most Colombians would

The God-Simulator

by Richard Moore

(On the Discovery that the Experience of God can
be Duplicated in the Laboratory)

"God's nothing, mere effect.
Thus, to the brain, called mind,
we cleverly connect
electrodes, knobs, and find

mere magnetism yields
God's presence. God, You blew it!"
God answered, "Magnet fields
were how I chose to do it.

With such connections, you
can make your poor brains feel
presence of apples too.
Are apples, then, unreal?"

just as soon do without. The New Liberals' leader at the time, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, expelled the two after the Bogotá daily *El Espectador* revealed their connections to the Medellín cartel. Escobar was nevertheless reelected, in part due to his "soccer field in every barrio" program in Medellín. The next year, Rodrigo Lara was named Minister of Justice and announced a program to combat campaign finance corruption. Jairo Ortega, in a debate in Congress, promptly displayed a one million peso check to Rodrigo Lara from narco-trafficker Evaristo Porras. The media railed against Lara's hypocrisy, and the justice minister was called to court. Weeks later, Lara was assassinated in an incident now directly connected to Escobar. Planting doubt as to the credibility of *all* politicians is a common ploy, for in the end, everyone appears equally guilty.

The demise of the Medellín cartel has made the penalties for honesty less lethal, but the empowerment of the cartels has already been completed. Colombians are not any less honest than other people, but they are much more cynical. Pop culture here does its best to cope with a critically damaged world image; a number of political and social satires lead the television ratings. One newsprogram, *Panorama*, has an interesting segment, "*La Maquina de la Verdad*," in which celebrities and politicians take a televised polygraph test. I doubt that many American politicians would be willing to go that far. While in other countries students are calling for an end to Western culture, students from several universities recently took to the streets of Bogotá to call for a more honest Colombia.

The absurdity of the present administration's recent television campaign calling for greater honesty has not been lost on many Colombians. The current president, Ernesto Samper, has become a symbol of the narcocracy currently in power. While questions remain as to the president's culpability in several incidents, such as the discovery of cocaine in the nose of the presidential jet, it is widely assumed that he knew about the \$6 million in contributions that the Cali cartel made to his 1994 campaign, and his fingering of several cabinet members for this crime has made him few friends.

America's certification process has not helped Colombia's image; it has been duplicitous at best, certifying Mexico (a country today with drug cartels as strong

as Cali and with a government as corrupt as that in Colombia) but decertifying Colombia. Colombia probably deserves to be decertified, but so do a dozen other countries which have not been. Certification seems to hinge on the amount of legislative action against drug trafficking. Extradition, an effective weapon against narco-traffickers that was annulled by a court interpretation of Colombia's 1991 constitution, has little chance of being resuscitated. While the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers of Cali appear to be going down in the record books as the first cartel chiefs to receive substantial prison terms (23 and 24 years each without parole), they are probably just victims of Colombia's attempt to win Washington's favor.

Arguments against extradition on the grounds of national sovereignty ignore the fact that Colombia's sovereignty has been for sale for some time. As Karl Penhaul of Reuters reported last October, "U.S. officials are coy about the number of radar stations they have in Colombia and the size of the U.S. contingent that operates them."

Coca eradication is a prime government tactic in battling the cartels. This extremely ineffective—but easy to implement—strategy is the principal one used throughout the Andes. Until recently, a country could become certified simply by eradicating x hectares of coca fields and y number of maceration pits (used to create coca base from the coca). Eradication, however, has not hindered narco-traffickers in the least. The poor coca farmer, despite physical intimidation and arbitrary imprisonment without trial, continues to grow the plants because the prices have stayed relatively high compared to other crops, and because more eradication means better prices for the coca that remains. The film clips of coca eradication are only useful as State Department propaganda.

The greatest tool of the drug trade is the guerrilla movement of Colombia. In earlier times, the *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* managed its own marijuana plots in Guajira (Colombia is the origin of a majority of American-smoked weed), but now they, like other guerrilla groups, have become mere lackeys of the Cali cartel. The *Frente Armado Revolucionaria de Colombia* (FARC) is by far the largest and most active guerrilla group in the country. Led by Jacobo Arenas, an old-school communist who rarely mentions the word "communism" any-

more, FARC has created a winning populist strategy since the 1970's by aiding *invasores*, squatters in the frontier zones of the country, mostly south of the *cordillera oriental*. One of the wealthiest guerrilla movements in the world, FARC is paid both by Cali and by business interests that pay "protection" fees so that they can operate in FARC-controlled zones. This includes mostly petroleum companies and bus services, both of which still suffer attacks from people working on their own in the disordered frontier regions. The chaos that this creates makes much of rural Colombia an ideal area to produce and export cocaine.

The triad of narco-traffickers, politicians, and guerrillas that is running the country into the ground faces only a handful of politicians, judges, and journalists trying to stop the rampant corruption. Like Rodrigo Lara, many of them have been assassinated, including Guillermo Cano Isaza, the editor of the Bogotá paper *El Espectador* and the most prominent of the 117 journalists assassinated here in the last ten years; Judge Tulio Manuel Castro Gil, who brought the assassins of Rodrigo Lara to justice; and presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, because he was one man Cali could not buy and because he wasn't afraid to extradite drug dealers. The cost of honesty has left a few outlaws (within the law) who run the country, and millions of innocents who have learned to keep their mouths shut.

Colombians are widely disgusted with the current administration, but there has never been a populist movement capable of removing a president here, as Ecuadorians recently removed *El Loco*, a.k.a. Abdalá Bucaram. While Colombians insist, correctly, that the demand side must be attacked for the drug problem to be controlled, they have not fallen victim to the libertarian fallacies of legalization proponents.

If Colombians only took the legalization crowd's advice, goes the argument, they could leave violence behind and start a new free market day. Employers in Colombia could begin to pay their workers in *basuco* legally, instead of illegally. Coffee fields could be replanted with coca, so higher quality leaf could be grown at the correct altitude rather than in the rain forest. Coca, marijuana, and heroin labs could work openly to develop the most addictive drugs possible with less danger to their pharmacists, who bat-

the unsafe and uncomfortable labor conditions. The cartels could incorporate and work as a multinational with Mexico and Italy. And the national airline Avianca could send cocaine worldwide with its new rapid airmail service. Best of all, presidential candidates would no longer need to hide campaign contributions, as is done in the United States.

No, Colombians live too close to the reality of drugs to take that bait. They may have been silenced, but not willingly. They may have been victims of extortion, but they will not be conned.

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Letter From Michigan

by John Attarian

Be Sensitive—or Else!



Horror stories about punishments for insensitive behavior on college campuses are old news. But leftist hypersensitivity has permeated everyday life in the real world as well. In Manassas, Virginia, a white woman called 911 at 3:08 A.M. to report that some black men—whom she referred to as “niggers”—were trying to break into her house. According to the *Detroit News*, the 911 dispatcher, also a white woman, sent police but went on to lecture the besieged woman: “The next time I would appreciate it if you would not call black gentlemen ‘niggers,’ OK? That offends me, and I don’t like to hear it.” She asked the distraught caller how she would like to be called “white trash.”

As this case illustrates, the sensitivity police are everywhere. They are especially prevalent here in Michigan, where the sensitive are using intimidation and tyranny to flog the insensitive into line. For example, in May 1996, 57-year-old city councilwoman Gloria Sankuer of Warren (Michigan’s third largest city) complained that the City Council’s letterhead, referring to her as “councilman,” was offensive. “This mistake makes Warren look sexist and back-

ward,” she said. “It needs to be fixed. It’s a matter of what’s proper.” Warren had a four-year supply of this offending stationery. The council unanimously decided to expend it by sending all Warren city volunteers and unpaid board and committee members letters of thanks, costing over \$400. All to placate one touchy feminist in a snit.

As Sankuer’s case illustrates, the sensitivity mania opens up vast opportunities for busybodies. Ann Arborite Mark Hiselman, hearing of Sankuer’s complaints, “drove 60 miles to be at the council meeting so he could offer an alternative voice.” He tried unavailingly to get the council to adopt the gender-free “councilor” over “councilman,” “councilwoman,” and “council member.”

At one time, this officious stranger, who does not even live in Warren, would have been deemed a public menace—which he is. By today’s standards, Hiselman is in the *avant-garde* of righteousness. But if anybody’s business is everybody’s business, nobody is safe from molestation.

And then there is the Steenbergh case. On the night of September 11, 1996, Warren’s Mayor Mark Steenbergh confronted John Harris, a 16-year-old black male, near Harris’s home. Earlier that day, Harris allegedly punched a 15-year-old girl, Wendy Smith, a friend of Steenbergh’s daughter, in the face. Mayor Steenbergh decided to stick up for her and sought Harris out. He allegedly choked Harris, shoved him, and shouted “I’ll get all you niggers” as he left the scene.

Within a week FBI agents were interviewing Harris’s family. In November, Steenbergh’s lawyer said, Michigan state police made a surprise after-hours raid, without a search warrant, on Warren City Hall looking for new evidence against Steenbergh. They found nothing. Apparently the sensitivity police wanted to get Mark Steenbergh badly enough to drag in the FBI and trample his constitutional rights with unreasonable searches and seizures.

Mayor Steenbergh was eventually charged with assault and ethnic intimidation. The maximum punishment for assault—a misdemeanor in Michigan—is a jail sentence of 90 days and a fine of \$500. Ethnic intimidation, on the other hand, is a felony; those found guilty can be jailed for up to four years. Under Michigan’s 1990 ethnic intimidation law, using a racial slur during a fight is

not ethnic intimidation—but a fight or threat motivated by racial animosity is. The whole thing turns, then, on the motives of the miscreant—in other words, whether or not he is a racist.

After deliberating for one and a half hours, an all-white jury acquitted Steenbergh of all charges. Said jury foreman John Boyd, “It was the general feeling that some of the stories of the witnesses who supposedly were right there didn’t make sense. Basically, it was the lack of credible evidence to support the charges.”

Apparently, however, a lack of credible evidence is not enough to deter the FBI. Even though Steenbergh has been acquitted of state charges, as we go to press the FBI has not closed its case against him, leaving open the possibility that he may be prosecuted for violating Harris’s civil rights, a federal offense.

A more grotesque case is that of Wayne County Circuit Judge Andrea Ferrara. In February 1997, Ferrara’s ex-husband, Howard Tarjeft, released to the media tapes of telephone conversations in which a woman, supposedly Judge Ferrara, used slurs such as “nigger” and “Jew whore.” The Detroit NAACP wrote to Wayne County Circuit Judge James Rashid, asking him to order Ferrara to resign from the bench. The Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission began investigating Ferrara. Meanwhile, her friends and supporters, including African-Americans and Jews, rallied to her defense. Ferrara claimed that she never made the remarks, that the tapes are fakes, and that Tarjeft is out to embarrass her.

Tarjeft and Ferrara divorced bitterly in 1985. Tarjeft claims he made the tapes to “protect himself” during their vicious custody battle with Ferrara over their 14-year-old twin sons. He says he released them because he felt guilty about helping a racist get elected to the bench. Sure he did. Tarjeft released the tapes just days before he and Ferrara were scheduled to appear for a hearing over \$12,000 that Ferrara claimed he owed her for back child support for their sons.

Asked by Judge Rashid to step down temporarily while the allegations of racism are being investigated, Ferrara announced in March that she was taking a three-month medical leave, until June 2. The Michigan Supreme Court suspended her with pay on May 6. On June 11, it appointed Vesta Svenson, former