

*Philip Greer*

# Robert Vesco's World Shrinking, Despite His Immense Wealth



NEW YORK—The world of Robert Vesco, loaded as it may be with riches, is shrinking steadily. Large sections of the world have put out the "unwelcome" mat for the fugitive financier, who is accused of masterminding the biggest corporate swindle in history and then trying to buy government officials to help cover it up.

So far as anybody knows, Vesco and his family are tucked away in Costa Rica, where he has pumped some \$60 million into the economy and built a fortress-like home.

Last week, the Central Bank of the Bahamas closed Bahamas Commonwealth Bank, the hub of Vesco's empire. The bank itself is not too important, since it's unlikely that much of the money he is accused of stealing is located there. The government's move, though, was very significant because it represented a sharp change from the earlier live-and-let-live attitude.

In addition to the loss of the bank, Vesco and an associate were cited for contempt of court in March for flying off in a jet plane that had been ordered kept in Nassau. For the moment, at least, that closes off the Bahamas.

HE CAN'T come back to the U.S., of course, because there are four arrest warrants and three criminal indictments waiting for him here. He is yet to be tried for his part in the Mitchell-Stans case and there are two charges growing out of his use of International Controls Corp., which he formerly controlled, to take over IOS, Ltd., the once-

huge Swiss financial complex. The Internal Revenue Service has attached his assets here and there are private civil suits as well as the Securities and Exchange Commission fraud case that started most of the others.

Europe, if not officially off-limits, is at least a dangerous place for Vesco. The suit that got him arrested in Geneva in 1971 has been

dropped, but the Swiss have hinted frequently that they will issue an arrest warrant if they find Vesco anyplace where they can pick him up. After Bernie Cornfeld spent nearly 11 months in a Geneva jail and Vesco associate Milton Meissner sweated it out for a while in a Luxembourg lockup, it's unlikely Vesco would risk a trip to the Continent.

Last year, Vesco tried to set up a haven in Argentina and won a vague court ruling that he would not be extradited from that country. Lawyers have since questioned the validity of the ruling and, besides, the Argentine government quickly said Vesco would not be issued a visa to enter the country.