

Ibero-American fight against drugs suffering from U.S. economic policy

by Valerie Rush

Mexican press headlines reporting on the government's spectacular drug busts over the week of Nov. 8-15 were very specific in observing that when 8,000 tons of seized marijuana were burned by federal troops, it was "Ten Billion Dollars Up in Smoke!" Some newspaper commentators did not miss the opportunity to note that a substantial chunk of Mexico's whopping foreign debt could have been paid off with that amount of dope.

In fact, few Ibero-Americans today are unaware any longer of this link between the flourishing drug trade across the continent and the austerity conditions they are being forced to impose on their own depressed economies to pay the foreign debt. Yet, faced with the choice of paying their debts by destroying their food-producing capacity, their labor force, their youth, their national sovereignty, and their morality, the majority of Ibero-America's nations have made the choice of declaring war on Dope, Inc., instead.

The recently concluded Sixth Conference of the South American Agreement on Drugs (ASEP), held in Bogotá, Colombia the week of Nov. 5, reaffirmed Ibero-America's determination to view the drug trade as "a universal crime against humanity" and to forge the appropriate apparatus for defeating it. Among other things, the ASEP conference determined to create a uniform legal code against drug trafficking which would enable any nation on the continent to impose identical criminal sentences against captured drug traffickers. Intensified collaboration on border interdiction and shared law-enforcement efforts against the mafia will stem from what several of the participants at ASEP characterized as "a universal war against a universal enemy."

Kissingerians in bed with Dope, Inc.

Standing in the way of turning this continental fight into a steamroller against the mafia is the Reagan administration's blind support for "the magic of the marketplace," which has not only led it to embrace the brutal debt-collection policies of the International Monetary Fund, but also to encourage those regimes—like the Seaga government of Jamaica—which have turned their countries into vast drug cultivating, exporting, and laundering operations.

These devastating policy errors were made explicit at a recent seminar on the Ibero-American debt, held by the Atlantic Council in Iguazú, Argentina. There, government of-

ficials, economists, and bankers from Europe, the United States, and Ibero-America heard a prominent spokesman for Wall Street and a spokesman for the U.S. State Department issue the same line, that the solution to Ibero-America's debt problem is the continent's continued export of capital, "at least through the end of the decade"! And yet, with these countries' reserves nearly depleted, what "capital" is left to export short of earnings from the only remaining "growth industry," the drug trade?

Morgan Guaranty Trust's top economist, Rimmer de Vries, declared that through the continued "adjustment" of the Ibero-American debtors to high interest rates and IMF conditionalities, the debt would remain "manageable." Kenneth Dam, U.S. undersecretary of state, declared unequivocally: "Economic growth is impossible outside the framework of the International Monetary Fund."

The case of Jamaica is a classic example of the Reagan administration's stupidly choosing to ally with an "anti-communist" regime whose embrace of the "free enterprise" system under IMF auspices has taken the form of turning that island-nation into a dope plantation.

Jamaica's marijuana income has increased sevenfold since Eduard Seaga became the country's prime minister in 1980. According to an article on Nov. 11 in the *Washington Post*: "Ganja is the ubiquitous, powerful Jamaican marijuana, a cash crop worth an estimated \$3.5 billion a year, a sum larger than the country's official gross national product." When Seaga took office, Jamaica's annual marijuana crop was estimated at a net worth of a half billion dollars.

Any resistance to Seaga's open partnership with the country's ganga growers and traffickers was wiped out by wave upon wave of IMF-dictated austerity which has knocked the props out from under any legitimate industry in the country, including the key aluminum refining industry. Last month, Seaga ordered drastic new cuts in the import of industrial raw materials, claiming that Jamaican industries were producing "too many consumer goods for the domestic market."

Seaga also ordered the firing of some 3,900 civil servants in line with a goal set by the IMF of eliminating a total of 5,500 government workers by the end of 1984. This in a country where real unemployment approaches 40% of the labor force. The Jamaican currency stood at 1.75 to the dollar when Seaga came into office. It now stands at 4.65.

Seaga's partnership with the drug traffickers is not so indirect, however. On Sept. 11, the prime minister announced that instead of outlawing the country's known leading drug traffickers, he was going to legalize their operations by taxing their profits. Bills to the top 28 traffickers for taxes due were sent out at once.

And, on Nov. 7, the Jamaican parliament unanimously approved legislation which allows U.S. companies to establish drug laundering operations, euphemistically known as "tax shelters" or "foreign sales corporations" (FSCs), on the island. The parliamentary vote followed a decision by the U.S. Treasury to certify Jamaica as a host for the "FSCs."

These tax shelters, according to the *Journal of Commerce* of Nov. 8, "require only a minimal presence in the countries approved . . . and do not fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. customs." Neither do they pay corporate income tax, local business taxes, or taxes on dividends to shareholders and investors. They are exempt from foreign-exchange regulations and can import any materials needed for operation duty free.

The perfect off-shore, off-limits, no-questions-asked kind of home Dope, Inc. is on a perpetual search for! No wonder, as the *Journal of Commerce* notes, "Edward Seaga, Jamaica's prime minister and finance minister, said earlier that this island was particularly suited to host the FSCs."

David Rockefeller, visiting Jamaica last week in his capacity as chairman of the U.S./Jamaica Business Community on Investment and Employment, has also given his approval to the recent changes in Jamaica's economy. According to the local daily *The Jamaican Gleaner* of Nov. 12, Mr. Rockefeller told a gathering of local and foreign businessmen Nov. 11 that "his optimism [about the future of the Jamaican economy] was based on his observation that the necessary steps had already been taken to secure growth and development in the economy."

'The Anti-Christ of the 20th Century'

Ibero-American leaders have stated unequivocally how they view the drug trade and why they will wage a war with no quarter to defeat it. Speaking to *EIR* at the Bogotá ASEP conference, Venezuelan Vice-Minister of Justice Sonia Sgambatti described the drug problem as "the anti-Christ of the 20th century." Colombian Justice Minister Enrique Parejo González told *EIR*: "We believe the drug trade is threatening all of humanity because consumption of drugs degrades the human being and affects one morally, physically, and psychologically as well."

Carlos Norberto Cagliotti, executive secretary of ASEP, told *EIR* that in his opinion, drug trafficking represented a form of "genocide . . . a very subtle genocide, very perverse, in which not only people lose their lives, but also, in the majority of cases, their personal and social development. . . . Thus our concept that it is 'a crime against humanity.'"

'The anti-Christ of the 20th century'

Interview with Venezuela's Deputy Justice Minister Sonia Sgambatti, conducted by Javier Almario at the conference on illegal drugs held in Bogotá, Colombia during the week of Nov. 6.

EIR: What repercussions does it have to say that drug trafficking is a crime against humanity—does this mean that there could be a judgment as there was against the Nazis at the Nuremberg Tribunal?

Sgambatti: In the first place, our President Jaime Lusinchi in the Quito Declaration proposed that drug trafficking be declared a crime against humanity. We intend this emphasis and importance so that the South American countries can make conscious and unify all their efforts to fight to absolutely eradicate, by any means necessary, this grave scourge which is undermining our physical and spiritual health, and, above all, in a situation which is so violent and intolerant that I would consider it the anti-Christ of the 20th century. Moreover, as deputy justice minister of Venezuela and official representative of the delegation, I also proposed, in continuity with this Venezuelan leadership, that the possibility be considered of unified legislation to have one anti-drug law throughout the subregion, and I proposed as an example the brand-new law on narcotics and psychotropic substances just passed in Venezuela.

EIR: The possibility of a joint army has been mentioned, so that security forces of different countries could make common action to combat the drug traffic.

Sgambatti: I don't think one could talk about a multinational force, but I do think that one could speak of border accords because this crime has no frontiers. . . .

EIR: The Venezuelan justice minister mentioned having received threats from the dope trafficker Carlos Lehder. What were these threats, and what preventive measures are being taken?

Sgambatti: When people are committed to a fight, even though they receive death threats and even though they might be carried out as happened to the late Colombian Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who became a martyr of the

anti-drug struggle, despite all these threats we will never capitulate but will follow through in the full conviction that it is not the responsibility of one minister, one person, but a responsibility of the Venezuelan state to fight against drugs.

EIR: Many things have been mentioned, such as eradication of crops, prevention of consumption, but one point is seldom mentioned, which is how to stop the flow of drug traffic monies, since if the dope mob lacked the ability to hide these monies, business couldn't function. We think there is a certain complicity of the banks, both at the national and international level, to protect the names of the accounts and the origin of the money. What do you think?

Sgambatti: An interesting question. We spoke initially of the Venezuelan position of seeking the unification of our legal instruments to act in concert, as one man. One of the important things was not just facilitating extradition, but also easing the confiscation of wealth belonging to drug dealers, and, of course, within that wealth, investigation of money. That includes going much further and changing, modifying the burden of proof, not waiting until the definitive sentencing, but instead, if they have a flow of money whose provenance they cannot explain, they have to explain where it came from and, in the meantime, the state or the judicial branch will seize all the wealth they have illicitly acquired. This would be an emphatic and intimidating decision.

EIR: And in respect to economic policies, don't you think that, for example, the International Monetary Fund by applying its conditions to certain countries, in a sense, affects the real economy, but also forces the drug traffic to appear to be a possible economic option?

Sgambatti: No, I don't think so. I simply believe that obviously the drug trafficking problem is a problem of a transnational entity without scruples, without morality, without ethics, which not only targets the psychological health of a country, but also the institutions, the state, which it wants to subjugate. Therefore I think that the government as such, and each of our governments of this Andean Pact, all have to help each other, and cooperate to combat, destroy, attack at the very heart those individuals who degrade the human being.

EIR: There have been some politicians who have been benevolent about having a dialogue with known traffickers or, as in the case of Colombia, Ernest Samper Pizano, who was the secretary of Lopez Michelsen's presidential bid in the past elections, conducted a campaign favoring the legalization of marijuana. Don't you think that this type of attitude favors the growth of drug trafficking and means that the drug mob is starting to get political back-up?

Sgambatti: I think as an official of the Venezuelan executive, which simply has to do with fighting drugs, and must carry out a war without quarter, without looking over our shoulders, and never, never can be an interlocutor [of the drug traffickers].

Behind Mexico's big

by Josefina Menéndez

In a historically unprecedented crackdown against the drug mafia in Mexico the week of Nov. 8-15, federal agents backed by Mexican army troops uncovered and destroyed numerous fields and depots where the production, processing, and packaging of some 9,000 tons of marijuana and poppy were ongoing. The estimated value of the captured drugs on the black market, according to the Mexican authorities, was as much as \$10 billion. "Operation Pacific," as the anti-drug drive has been dubbed, was carried out in several different municipalities in the state of Chihuahua, located in northern Mexico, whose principal political controller is the National Action Party, or PAN.

Thanks to the vast proceeds from the illegal operations in its bastion, the PAN succeeded last year in "winning" elections in five municipalities of the state, including the border enclave and capital, Ciudad Juárez.

Confidential reports from the states of Chihuahua, Sonora, Nuevo León and Sinaloa, reveal that with Operation Pacific, the PAN has virtually lost the congressional and municipal elections scheduled to be held nationwide next year, in view of the billions of dirty dollars that would have gone to finance their electoral campaigns but which instead went up in smoke. Additional rumors that have begun to circulate are claiming that prominent political figures not only from Chihuahua but from neighboring states as well have been identified as up to their necks in the massive drug operations uncovered.

The three most important drug complexes discovered in the vicinities of Ciudad Jiménez, Ciudad Camargo and Ciudad Delicias—cities not unexpectedly controlled lock, stock and barrel by the PAN—are El Búfalo, with 4,000 tons of marijuana; Sierra del Chilicote, where another 4,000 tons were discovered, and Julimex, with 1,000 tons. Each drug depot was in the midst of a vast concentration camp.

Buried within the Sierra mountains, the drug fields and processing facilities were discovered to have some of the most modern installations available to agriculture generally. Once dried, processed and packaged, the drugs departed for the U.S. in giant trailers, primarily along the Ojinaga and Ciudad Juárez highways which border on the state of Texas. Trucks abandoned at the drug centers were found to carry Texas and Arizona license plates.

Like Nazi concentration camps

The thousands of peasants—men, women, and children—lured to work in the drug camps from around the