
Venezuela

EIR seeks to remove ban on anti-drug book

Lawyers for *EIR* and the New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Company, Inc. went before Venezuela's Supreme Court on May 6 to demand the overturning of the ban on the explosive book *Narcotráfico, SA (Dope, Inc.)*, which exposes the highest-level financiers and managers of the international dope trade, and the first book to be banned in Venezuela since the end of military dictatorship in 1957. Civil court Judge Alirio Abreu Burelli had ordered a ban on the distribution of *EIR*'s book on Feb. 15, to the satisfaction of the Venezuelan kingpins of the dope trade.

The publisher's lawyer, Randolph Rosal Machado, argued to the Supreme Court that the judicial decree banning the book lacked any legal basis and "restricted freedom of expression."

An *EIR* spokesman declared, in a press statement issued May 7, that the case must be seen "in relation to the war on drugs now being waged by several presidents of the Americas, including Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi, whose fight against the drug mafias we have supported from the beginning. . . . The financial side of the narcotics traffic, which is the main subject of *Narcotráfico, SA*, has come to light.

"The real issue at stake is whether or not it will be possible in Venezuela to publicly discuss this financial side of the drug trade. For that to happen, *Narcotráfico, SA* must circulate in Venezuela as it does in the rest of the Free World."

The Spanish-language edition of *Dope, Inc.* has been shaking up the entire continent of Ibero-America since it was published on Jan. 23, 1985. Venezuela was turned upside down, by the chapter linking Venezuelan "business" success-story Gustavo Cisneros to circles involved in international dirty-money laundering. Within three weeks of the book's first circulation in Venezuela, Cisneros and his associate, José Rafael Revenga, vice president of Cisneros' Venevision television chain, went to court to have the book banned.

On Feb. 5, the DISIP political police raided *EIR*'s office in Caracas, seizing all copies of *Narcotráfico, SA*, documents, and personal effects of staff members, and taking four

EIR foreign correspondents to jail. The journalists were interrogated for four days, and then expelled from the country.

The raid and book-banning 10 days later made the headlines across Ibero-America, and sales of *Narcotráfico, SA* skyrocketed, especially in Colombia and at the Miami International Airport.

Cisneros defends his 'honor'

Cisneros and Revenga's lawyers went to court Feb. 12 to demand that Judge Abreu protect them "against acts which harm [their] honor and reputations," ostensibly committed by a book "not attributed to any specific author" and which they claimed "appears to be published by 'The Benjamin Franklin House, New York, New York, 1985,' when, in reality, and we are sure of this, it was published in Mexico City, where most anonymous editions and those seeking to evade author royalty payments tend to be published."

Abreu readily accepted these strange opinions, saying that the book "does not originate from an author nor even a publisher which could be identified."

Rosal Machado, lawyer for The New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Company, Inc., told the Supreme Court that calling the book anonymous, "is a crude, and strange defamation and distortion of a manifestly evident fact"—the names of both *EIR* and the publisher "are clearly, repeatedly and boldly printed not only on the front cover, the spine and the back cover, but also on several pages of the book, along with its official registration number, as required by the federal laws of the United States of America, precisely to prevent any edition from being anonymous."

Cisneros and Revenga themselves seemed to have something to hide. The demand for an injunction they submitted to the court, Rosal Machado noted, "is some 23 typewritten pages, without any kind of letterhead or signature: that is, absolutely anonymous. Those sheets launch an implacable, rude, and distorting attack" against *EIR* and the book's publisher; against the American writer and politician Lyndon LaRouche; and against the well-known Venezuelan banker, José Vicente Pérez Sandoval, to whom, after he was subjected to a storm of improprieties, is imputed the financing of the book's publication.

Now, this is interesting, Rosal told the court, "because the petitioners for the injunction suddenly remember that 'Narcotráfico, SA' does have a responsible author and editor, forgetting that their principal argument had been the anonymity of the publication."

The entire proceeding, Rosal Machado continued, was intended to make it impossible for the authors and editors of *Narcotráfico, SA* to defend their assertions, since they were never allowed to present their case.

"Normal procedures have been established to impose legal sanctions as necessary," Rosal added. But by his peremptory action, "the judge . . . has trampled on the constitutional rights of my clients to free expression of ideas."