

## Continent's navies vow 'war of no return' against drugs

by Ana María Mendoza

The First Inter-American Naval Conference Against Drugs, held Aug. 26-30 in Caracas, Venezuela, represented a historic moment for the continent. It signaled the beginning of unified military action between the United States and Ibero-America against the drug trade which threatens them both. The military spokesmen who attended the conference each and all emphasized the necessity for addressing the problem as an undeclared war, the same premise elaborated last March by *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche in a document presented to a continent-wide anti-drug conference held in Mexico City.

José Manzo González, Venezuelan justice minister, gave the keynote address to the anti-drug conference: "This war can have no armistice, no moment of peace. This war will not end with a treaty. It is a war of no return. This war can end in nothing but victory, our victory; the victory of the nationalist democratic forces of the continent, against an enemy more dangerous than Nazism. This is a war we cannot avoid."

Before 36 representatives of the continent's naval forces, Manzo González declared his commitment to a fight to the death against the drug trade. And he emphasized the importance of the current economic situation in that regard: "Our countries are burdened with immense debts, and if one adds to that misery the drug factor, the mixture becomes truly explosive and dangerous." He added: "The foreign debt, hunger, misery, crime, and the drug trade are an extraordinarily explosive combination."

At the beginning of his speech, Manzo González referred to a meeting that Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi had held with the directors of the country's newspapers, stressing

the importance of their role in the campaign against drugs. Manzo insisted that the owners of the communications media had the responsibility "to create an awareness in, and not dishearten, the population." It was this type of awareness that made possible the defeat of Nazism, he stated. He also emphasized the need to use the scientific and technological advances of our era to defeat the drug trade, just as the United States made use of such advances during the Second World War to defeat Nazism.

### Paying the debt with drugs?

Bayardo Ramírez Monagas, president of Venezuela's Commission Against Drug Abuse, intervened dramatically to question the attitudes of some military and political figures on the continent: "Why not use our navies and armies against this common enemy? Why not attack it in the Caribbean with our ships, with our equipment, and with our armies if it really is the enemy. . . . What do they want? For us to pay the foreign debt with the drug trade?"

He had hit the problem on the nose. The International Monetary Fund and its leading defenders on the Ibero-American continent have been saying that this would be an ideal solution for the debt problem, despite the fact that it would mean the destruction of the productive economies and populations of both the developing and advanced sectors.

Later, Ramírez Monagas noted: "The drug trade is not only a plague, but is run and organized by the giant multinational and transnational organized-crime organizations. Therefore, one must fight it with organization."

Asked to comment on the anti-drug efforts of Peruvian President Alan García, Ramírez Monagas responded: "It is

very important that Alan García, as a democratic President, is trying to resolve the problem, because a very serious conflict has exploded in that country with the discovery of the complicity of numerous officials. . . . This is what it means to take responsibility, which is what I maintain Latin America must assume: responsibility to take on the drug trade."

Bayardo Ramírez, who has been fiercely attacked by the protectors of the drug trade in Venezuela, mentioned in his speech a telephone conversation he had with U.S. Attorney-General Edwin Meese, and indicated that he was very pleased with Meese's attitude by quoting the him: "We cannot be neutral on the question of the drug trade; it must be attacked before we all fall into what we [in the United States] have already fallen into."

### **The IMF is no friend**

Toward the end of Bayardo Ramírez's address, Panamanian Navy Lieutenant Torrero asked about the influence of the International Monetary Fund on the cultivation, production, and trafficking of drugs, to which Bayardo Ramírez answered: "I think that the IMF at this moment is not Latin America's best friend, but I do think that an economic formula must be found for resolving the debt-payment problem. Not to pay the debt means to collapse the world's economies, and to pay it as the IMF is asking is to drive our countries into a worse economic crisis. Because we are simply not prepared to be able to pay even the service on the debt. I think that the IMF, and above all the private banks, must revise the foreign debt payments to be able to save the situation. . . . It is a world crisis that has never before existed, and all of it is intimately connected to the oil problem and to the drug trade."

Several representatives of the delegations in attendance expressed their acknowledgment and support for President Alan García's war on drugs. The Venezuelan Justice Minister asserted that the actions taken by President García were very positive, and made special mention of his dismantling of illegal airports in that country.

The Peruvian representatives, Navy Capt. Guillermo Tirado Villena and Frigate Capt. Víctor Cavero Leal, the latter also the head of the Peruvian Coast Guard, expressed his total support for President García and also hailed the efforts of the Colombian police, who made possible the success of García's anti-drug Operation Condor.

David Morales Bello, currently a representative of Venezuela's Democratic Action party and possible presidential candidate, honed in on the banks, without which the drug trade would be nothing.

Said Morales Bello: "Those who have these immense quantities of money, must be managing immense quantities of cash, because the daily quotation is paid in dollar bills. . . ."

He then noted the obvious participation of the banks in the laundering of the drug trade's "dirty" money, noting specifically certain U.S. banks which have been investigated by the U.S. government but which have yet to receive the

punishment warranted. "Recently," he said, "the U.S. government fined Chase Manhattan Bank, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Irving Trust, and Chemical Bank. Why were they fined? Because in the United States, there is a law called the Banking Secrecy Act, which was used to initiate the case of Sunshine State Bank . . . but it is now no less than Chase Manhattan Bank and, even more, Manufacturers Hannover Trust. It was discovered that they were not abiding by this law. The fines represent an unprecedented punishment, but it is insufficient, because those accounts are opened under calculated risk and represent a minimal portion of the profits involved. And at whose cost? Of the drug traffickers? No! At the cost of the lives and health of the consumers."

### **A Nazi fifth column**

In his speech, Manzo González reported that "President Reagan feels that all the efforts of his nation, all these efforts of the greatest industrial power in the world, should be oriented and channeled to eradicating this menace, which not only threatens the health of Americans, but its own democratic institutions and way of life as well."

Manzo emphasized the need for Ibero-America to be able to count on the economic, technological, and military backing of the United States in this war. "You will remember in the last war what was called the fifth column, that is, those nationals of the country who acted on the side of the Nazis to undermine, weaken, and question the institutions of that country, as the stage before invasion. . . . Well, the drug trade, with the specific characteristics of its management and its activities and for the damage it causes, serves the same purpose as the Nazi fifth column in the last world war."

"That is why the armed forces of our different countries, and the navy as one of its most important branches, must act in the vanguard of the fight against the drug trade, because from a constitutional viewpoint, the armed forces make up the foundation and the vanguard of the national defense, and must be the foundation and vanguard against any such direct threat against our institutions. It would be inconceivable in a country where its armed forces have the duty to defend its territorial integrity, its sovereignty, and the functioning of its democratic institutions, for [the military] to be marginalized from such an important, vital, and essential battle."

To conclude his intervention, the Venezuelan justice minister emphasized: "Not to act in mutual cooperation would be virtually a crime, when we are faced with figures of such magnitude. We all know that the victory over Nazism was the result of the combined action of the Allied powers, and that in that fight the United States, placing its industrial capacity at the service of war production, was able to guarantee that indispensable weaponry arrived at the theater of battle. If it were not for that circumstance, it is possible that the bravery of the armies would have been dismantled, because in war it is not sufficient to have valor alone, but the materials of war as well."