

## Philip Morris case: Free trade is organized crime

The revelation that Cali Cartel representative Elizabeth Sarria was discussing “concessions” for Philip Morris with Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano—revealed in the most recent narco-cassette, and not denied by the President’s office—points once more to the tobacco multinational’s close cohabitation with drug smugglers and narco-traffickers. There is hardly a police agency in Europe, east or west, that has not run across the trail of Philip Morris and other tobacco companies into cigarette-smuggling and drug-trafficking networks. In fact, the famous Balkan Route, which since the early 1970s has brought heroin into western Europe, was originally used for smuggling Marlboros into the southern Italy cigarette black market run by the Camorra and Mafia.

But are Sarria’s mediating concessions for Philip Morris with Samper merely coincidental to her Cali Cartel ties? Not really. According to numerous press accounts, the Colombian cartels created and expanded the domestic black market for Marlboro and other brands as an integral part of their money-laundering system for their narcodollars abroad. Philip Morris, Reynolds, and British American Tobacco (BAT) created a wholesale market for large, container-size shipments of cigarettes precisely as an at-arm’s-length method to put cigarettes into the hands of smugglers. The cartels bought the cigarettes with dollars which were recovered as pesos from the domestic black market sales, exactly like the Camorra in Naples, Italy.

Of course, Philip Morris headquarters in New York City, in a discussion with *EIR*, denied knowing Sarria, and also denied that Philip Morris Colombia (which, through its Kraft subsidiary, buys up 25% of the annual Colombian coffee crop) would have anything to do with Sarria’s claims of Philip Morris Brazil representatives having come to Bogotá regarding the “concessions.” When questioned why Sarria, whom they allege they don’t know, would be talking about Philip Morris and

concessions, the representative lamely claimed that “use of the name Philip Morris must have simply been a code word for something unrelated to us.”

But when asked whether Philip Morris had been discussing “concessions” with the Colombian government, the answer was, “Yes.” BAT, Philip Morris, and the domestic producer Coltabac have been pushing for a reduction of Colombia’s cigarette sales tax. “We just had a meeting with the Ministry of Finance on how lowering cigarette taxes would let the legal cigarette trade take hold,” he said.

Philip Morris as the great crusader against narco-cigarette-smugglers? Not quite. For Philip Morris, government “interference” in the markets (taxes, tariffs, etc.) creates organized crime; free trade defeats it. With this “free trade” argumentation, Philip Morris tried to patent in France the name “Marley,” the surname of a famous marijuana-smoking Reggae singer since deceased, for marijuana cigarettes under (hoped for) drug legalization.

In fact, smuggling (narcotics, cigarettes) *is* free trade. The tobacco multinationals created the bulk wholesaling of cigarettes to feed supplies to smugglers to break down protectionist barriers. Since the days when British tobacco merchants planted poppy in India in order to ship opium to China under the banner of free trade, to the postwar linkage of cigarette smuggling and narcotics trafficking in Italy, Spain, and, in more recent years, eastern Europe, the powers behind tobacco have been in the middle of illegal drug smuggling. Elizabeth Sarria and her concessions for Philip Morris are merely one phase of a shake-down racket against sovereign governments: If you don’t lower taxes, the black market we helped create will drain away more of your tax revenues. It’s like the mafioso who comes to your business offering to sell you protection from the guys he hired to damage your property.

Philip Morris has been a key player of the George Bush, Margaret Thatcher-championed free-trade rape of the world’s economy. Baroness Thatcher has a \$1 million-a-year contract with the firm to help break down protectionist barriers, and Bush’s former White House Chief of Staff Craig Fuller is a senior vice president at Philip Morris.—*Roger Moore*

with the “faceless judge” system, created precisely to try crimes of drug trafficking. To protect judges hearing such cases, many of whom have in the past been assassinated, the accused are not permitted to see either the judge or the prosecuting attorney, who use special microphones to distort their real voices to prevent recognition.

The late-August resignation of Colombian Ambassador to Great Britain Noemí Sanín adds another nail to Samper’s

political coffin. Sanín, who was foreign minister in the Gaviria government, is considered one of the most prominent figures in the opposition Conservative Party, with presidential ambitions of her own. In Colombia, her resignation is seen as the move of an intelligent rat abandoning a sinking ship. Her move also reflects the pragmatic evaluation of her English hosts regarding the future of the Samper government.