

Editorial

Again, the 'Grasso Abrazo'

Two events occurred in the middle of March, which, to the astute observer, represent one of the sharpest ironies of our time. First, on March 17, the *Washington Times* published an opinion column by financial columnist Lawrence Kudlow, in which he praised New York Stock Exchange head Richard Grasso to the skies. "Richard Grasso, Hero" read the headline. "This is America's bull market, but surely Dick Grasso deserves credit as one of its key drivers," wrote Kudlow. Because of Grasso, "the vile terrorist enemy has failed utterly in its effort to cripple the U.S., and the American model of free-trade capitalism is alive and well."

The next day, March 18, the U.S. Justice Department issued a wide-ranging indictment for three top members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), for drug-trafficking—a significant shift from the U.S. government's previous treatment of the FARC as a legitimate guerrilla movement. In announcing that indictment, Attorney General John Ashcroft said, "Today's indictment strikes at the heart of the terrorism/drug-trafficking nexus by charging that members of the FARC created a, quote, 'safe haven' for drug traffickers in Colombia." Their cocaine was exchanged for weapons.

In some respects, both speakers were telling the truth. Grasso does have significant responsibility for keeping up the stock market, and the FARC is a leading narco-terrorist group. But what has been left unsaid, is what's interesting—the connection between the two.

The crucial link is provided by a famous meeting, and photograph of the two embracing, from June 1999, dubbed the "Grasso Abrazo" by *EIR*. At that time, Grasso took a trip to the jungles of Colombia, where he held negotiations, under Colombian government sponsorship, with Raúl Reyes, the "money man" for the FARC. Grasso told the press after his trip, that he was highly impressed with the sophistication of the FARC treasurer, and that he looked forward to deepening relations, including hosting Reyes on Wall Street.

Does the connection begin to click? Does it dawn

upon you, that perhaps the phenomenal success which Grasso has had in keeping up the stock market, in the middle of the deepening depression, has something to do with his encouragement of the investment of dirty money, including drugs? Perhaps you even remember that Adam Smith's "free trade" had everything to do with promoting traffic in opium, and other drugs.

Is it a "good thing" that the stock market is going up, as a result of the infusion of drug money into our banks, and other financial institutions? Or is it a "good thing" that our government is finally beginning to understand that drugs, and drug money, represent the heart's blood of terrorism? Would a really concerted effort to shut down the flow of drugs and drug money, actually hurt the flow of funds into the nation's banking system? Or do the likes of Richard Grasso actually find it against their interests, to support a clampdown against drug-money laundering?

We have reached a crucial contradiction, where the two sides cannot co-exist. Either the shift of the Bush Administration against toleration of the narco-terrorist FARC, which it was previously negotiating with, will become a farce, because the Administration refuses to clamp down on the drug bankers, or the support for the speculative stock bubble, which is dependent upon those drugs, will be dropped in that very clampdown. You, the citizen, cannot have it both ways.

For, you see, the United States never has had a real war on drugs, the kind of war that would start at the top of the financial drug-money chain, and actually take out the kingpins. Instead, there has been a lot of fakery. Under the Reagan and Clinton Administrations, every stab in the right direction, was immediately stymied by the banking interests who were trying to protect their own. For example, Richard Grasso.

Actually, our security is at stake. To stop terrorism, and the speculative bubble, the drug money empire of Wall Street is going to have to be stopped. The tools are all available; it just takes the guts to go after the guys at the top.