
Battle report on Ibero-America's war on drugs

Venezuela's dope-running families ban EIR's *Narcotráfico, S.A.*

by Cynthia Rush

The Venezuelan branch of Dope, Inc. has lashed out desperately to protect its assets, even while its counterparts in Panama, Colombia, and Mexico are feeling the pressures from the international war on drugs launched by the Reagan administration in collaboration with several Ibero-American governments.

On March 5, a circuit judge in the state of Miranda issued a constitutional injunction prohibiting the circulation within Venezuela's national territory of *Narcotráfico, S.A.*, the book that exposes the workings of the international drug cartel menacing Venezuelan sovereignty. Published by *Executive Intelligence Review*, whose correspondents were illegally expelled from Caracas on Feb. 8, the book is an updated Spanish-language edition of *Dope, Inc.*, originally published six years ago. It has been updated with new chapters, including a section on the Cisneros banking clan of Venezuela, which coordinates with the Caribbean-Cuban drug trafficking networks in the laundering of dirty money.

This is the first time since 1958, when Venezuela returned to a constitutional democracy after 10 years of military dictatorship, that a book has been banned. The judge's decision stands in opposition to the most elementary concepts of constitutional law. If it is allowed to remain on the books, it will not only vitiate Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi's stated policy of combatting the drug trade; it will put in jeopardy the very existence of the Venezuelan republic.

The injunction was purportedly issued in accordance with articles 49, 50 and 66 of the national constitution, and article 89 of Venezuela's Law Governing Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances. In a legal argument that turns reality on its head, the presiding judge claimed that *Narcotráfico, S.A.* "could lead to the mistaken belief that drug trafficking is a possible and highly profitable business, which is run under the cover of legal activities and is carried out with impunity and directed by persons or institutions that society holds to be honorable. So interpreted, the text could constitute a stimulus, a subliminal message, which is prohibited by the above-cited law."

According to this logic, anyone who attempts to expose or denounce the drug mafias and their "respectable" backers in the banking and business community, is *encouraging* the

drug trade! The court ordered all judicial, police or administrative authorities to seize any copies of *Narcotráfico, S.A.* still circulating in Venezuela.

Mafias are hurting

The judge's decision reflects the fact that the international war on drugs is making it increasingly difficult for the Venezuelan oligarchy and its drug assets to operate with impunity. In the aftermath of the *EIR* expulsion from Caracas, U.S. congressional sources in Washington, D.C. have begun to reveal intelligence on the major Venezuelan banking groups involved in drug-trafficking, with promises of more to come. The Venezuelan national congress has also recently initiated an official investigation into the laundering of drug money inside the country.

The extreme response to *Narcotráfico, S.A.* is explained by the fact that the forces associated with 1984 U.S. presidential candidate and *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche are in the forefront of the anti-drug fight, providing directives and intelligence that are some of the weapons in this war.

Nor is Venezuela the only place where the mafias are feeling the squeeze. In Colombia, those pro-drug forces who understand that LaRouche's intervention is crucial to the success of President Belisario Betancur's antidrug offensive, launched a wild slander campaign against LaRouche in the daily *El Tiempo*. A mouthpiece for the drug interests grouped around ex-President Alfonso López Michelsen, *El Tiempo* began a three-part series on March 2, rehashing charges made by the *Washington Post* earlier this year that LaRouche was a fanatic, anti-Semitic cult leader whose primary activity was slandering "prestigious" political figures and selling disinformation under the guise of intelligence.

The giveaway in the *El Tiempo* series is that it was penned by journalist Daniel Samper Pizano, brother of drug-legalization advocate Ernesto Samper, who managed López Michelsen's failed presidential campaign in 1982. On March 3, *El Tiempo* whined that when in 1978 Ernesto "proposed the legalization of marijuana in Colombia, the [Andean Labor Party—PLAN] took to the congested streets of Bogotá with loudspeakers and leaflets against Samper's proposals." Ernesto obviously never recovered from the humiliation he

suffered at the hands of the Colombian Anti-Drug Coalition, which made his role as a towel-boy of the drug mafias known internationally.

El Tiempo further lamented that “when former President [López Michelsen] and the attorney general met with representatives of the drug traffickers in Panama, Maximiliano Londoño, head of the PLAN, issued a leaflet with the headline ‘Kissinger, López Michelsen and [pro-drug novelist] García Márquez seek to assassinate Lara Bonilla again.’” (Justice Minister Lara Bonilla was assassinated by drug mafias on April 30, 1984.)

Warfare accelerates

The financial oligarchy that controls the drug trade understands that its success rests on its ability to destroy the collaborative relationship that has developed between the United States and several Ibero-American governments—both by the kind of recent provocations launched against Mexico, and by insuring that the Reagan administration does not break with the policies of the International Monetary Fund that are so beneficial to the drug mafias.

In recent weeks, several Ibero-American governments have taken initiatives to strengthen cooperation with other governments in the region as well as with the United States. On April 4, President Betancur of Colombia will be meeting with Reagan for a “working visit” to review the status of the anti-drug effort. On March 6, the Colombian head of state signed extradition orders for three Colombians sought on drug-trafficking charges by the United States, bringing to 12 the number ordered extradited to the United States on these charges.

On March 3, Betancur and Argentine President Raul Alfonsín signed a joint communiqué stating that [because] “the traffic of drugs and psychotropic substances has become a criminal activity whose roots extend to many parts of the world, and the fight which the affected states separately wage against it is insufficient to eradicate it, [the Presidents] expressed their intention to promote coordinated international action which is necessary to extinguish said illicit traffic, which can well be characterized as a crime against humanity.” Alfonsín will be meeting with Ronald Reagan in Washington on March 19, and it is expected that the topic of the drug trade and efforts to combat it will be discussed extensively.

In Panama, the offshore banking haven that has for years catered to drug traffickers, President Nicolás Ardito Barletta is responding to pressure from both Reagan and Betancur to take aggressive action against drug networks. On March 1, the National Banking Commission of Panama cancelled the operating license of the First Interamericas Bank for its involvement in “unethical” operations. The majority of the bank’s stock is held by Colombian Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, now under arrest in Spain pending extradition on drug

charges to the United States.

The bank intervention occurred on the same day that President Barletta issued a call to the banking community “to jointly seek a solution which avoids the use of our banking and financial system by narcotics traffickers.” Sources in Panama report that the government has agreed to waive its banking secrecy laws to let DEA officials investigate bank records of individuals clearly involved in the drug trade.

Brazil, recently criticized by a House Foreign Relations Committee report for not aggressively combatting drugs, launched a major anti-drug sweep called “Operation Eccentric” at the end of February, planned in collaboration with the DEA. Brazilian federal police used long-accumulated intelligence to bust up half a dozen major drug operations over a 2,000-mile strip along its borders with Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia. DEA and Brazilian agents discovered thousands of acres of coca bush plantations just inside the Colombian border as well as Brazil’s first modern cocaine refinery near the Bolivian border.

President Reagan might get the hint that there’s something wrong with IMF policy if he looks at the case of Jamaica. David Rockefeller’s model of free enterprise development only seems to be efficient in producing marijuana. On Feb. 18, U.S. Customs agents seized 5,900 pounds of marijuana on an Air Jamaica airbus at the Miami International Airport. The Seaga government made a show of firing the men who had run the loading of the plane and announcing it would have dogs sniff all cargo headed for the United States.

But one week later on Feb. 22, customs officials again discovered 40 pounds of *ganja* (marijuana) stuffed into mailbags on an Air Jamaica jet at Kennedy International Airport. The airline was fined \$1 million.

Drug interests have dragged out the same old toadies to try to disrupt the developing collaborative relationship among nations. NBC-TV, the same U.S. network that vilified LaRouche in several news broadcasts in early 1984, charged in a March 4, 1985 news program that the government of Mexico is doing little to halt the flow of drugs into the United States, citing corruption in the government. The report was issued just as the Reagan administration and the de la Madrid government had ironed out problems stemming from the anti-drug fight and resolved to work more closely together.

The office of Mexican attorney general Sergio García Ramírez quickly put NBC in its place. A March 4 statement charged that the NBC program “had absolutely no basis in reality. This transmission made slanderous and defamatory accusations against Mexico and its government. . . . The government of Mexico rejects these slanderous imputations. Topics as delicate as those pertaining to drugs merit serious journalistic treatment, with facts that adhere strictly to reality. To disseminate false information with notorious irresponsibility discredits with malicious intent and produces injury and offense.”