

Andean Report by Carlos Méndez

Venezuela and the anti-drug fight

Accords with Colombia and Mexico are a step in the right direction, but Venezuela must realize it is in a new Opium War.

Since Dr. Jaime Lusinchi assumed the presidency of Venezuela, the Venezuelan government and congress have been taking a series of important measures against illegal drug trafficking, one of which was the decision to establish a convention with Mexico to jointly combat drug trafficking.

In the last week of April, the Venezuelan congress will introduce a bill against narcotics trafficking, to facilitate and make more successful the action of the police and security forces, whose labors up to now have been limited due to the legal cunning of the dope smugglers and their accomplices.

At the same time, Venezuela has continued to put into effect the anti-drug trafficking convention signed with its neighbor Colombia, one of the countries hardest hit by "Dope, Incorporated."

The importance of the convention with Mexico consists, principally, in the fact that up to now Mexico is the only country which has carried out an in-depth and sustained campaign against dope production and smuggling. Mexico has used law enforcement, the herbicide paraquat (which kills opium and marijuana plants), and the most advanced technologies to detect and destroy drug crops; hence, the experience and resources Mexico can bring to Venezuela are highly valuable.

Venezuela can also benefit greatly from Colombia's experience, especially in combating the "laundering" of dirty money through banking and financial institutions, something which

has started happening in Venezuela, and to which it is vulnerable.

However, the only way that Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico can succeed in their war on international drug trafficking and "narco-terrorism" is by putting it into its actual perspective: a modern Opium War against Ibero-America. If this is not understood, the struggle against dope trafficking and narco-terrorism will fail, just as China failed in the past century in the face of the Opium War declared against it by the British Empire.

This is demonstrated, among other things, by some of the proposals of the Report of the President's Bipartisan Commission on Central America ("Kissinger Report"), as well as the recent announcement that the British trading company Jardine, Matheson & Co. is considering moving its headquarters from Hong Kong to Bermuda, according to an article titled, "A Flight from Hong Kong?" The article, published in *Newsweek* April 9, says also that Jardine, Matheson & Co., was "founded by two Scottish opium runners 152 years ago" and that it is "... the oldest, largest—and infinitely most prestigious—multinational firm of the [British] colony of Hong Kong."

What the writer of the article does not say is that Jardine, Matheson & Co. directly participated, as the interested party it was, in the Opium War the British declared on China when the Chinese emperor started a campaign against opium smuggling and consumption. On the eve of that war, one

of the Mathesons blithely wrote to his superior, Jardine, who was in London at the time discussing the matter with British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, such things as the following: "... The Chinese have fallen into the snare of rendering themselves directly liable to the Crown. . . . I suppose war with China will be the next step."

And so it was. The Chinese lost the Opium War because when they realized that the British Crown was behind the dope trade it was already too late. For its part, the Kissinger Report on Central America says that the region's economies must "be restructured" along the model of the British colonies of "Hong Kong, Singapore, and others." The Kissinger Report also proposes as a model for foreign investment United Brands (the former United Fruit Company), an enterprise whose owners are described in the Kissinger Report as "model employers and model citizens"—even though it is on the public record that much of the illegal drugs coming into the United States arrive aboard that company's vessels!

If this reality is not taken into account, and if one does not consider the colonialist policy which is behind them, drug trafficking will never be rooted out. The problem of drug trafficking is not a problem of gangsters, but of the gangster's owners, for whom drugs have always been a tool in the sacking, degradation, and manipulation of whole peoples. Only if this is understood can the proposals undersigned in the joint Mexican-Venezuelan communiqué be realized: "... Their governments, conscious of the reality of the problem of drug trafficking and of its international ramifications, will adopt joint measures to coordinate the fight against drug trafficking and to promote a concerted international effort on this matter. . . ."