

Ibero-American war on drugs needs more U.S. aid

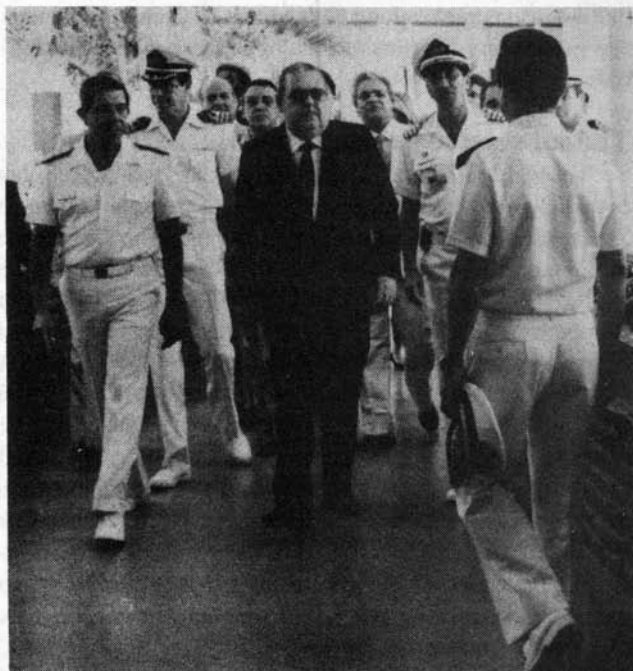
by Valerie Rush

In the aftermath of the First Interamerican Naval Conference on Drugs held in Caracas Aug. 26-30, the continent's ongoing battle against the drug mafias has greatly intensified. Collaboration among the Ibero-American nations has tightened against the common enemy, but the Reagan administration continues to be the subject of criticism and to receive appeals from its neighbors to shoulder its share of the burden. In what is rapidly becoming a full-scale shooting war in many nations, the Reagan administration has spoken of support, but has yet to provide material aid commensurate with the need.

Peruvian Deputy Minister of the Interior Agustin Mantilla, quoted in the Sept. 8 edition of the daily *Expreso*, declared that serious and tangible U.S. backing for the fight against drugs was critical to its success. "To the extent that they support us, materially and logistically, we will be able to be more effective in this task, given that the cocaine trade not only affects Peru, but them as well."

A Peruvian diplomat in Bogota, Colombia, told the press that the United States must accept some blame for the drug plague ravaging the hemisphere, since "the extremely modern installations that the drug traffickers set up in Caballococha would not have been possible without the capital and the technology of the North Americans. . . . The underground [drug] warehouses, truly masterworks of engineering constructed on not very suitable terrain, also could not have been built without U.S. technology."

Peruvian Interior Minister Abel Salinas told British radio on Sept. 11: "If we speak honestly and seriously, I must say that we still consider the anti-drug aid offered us by the U.S. to be very meager." He added that, given the fact that it is the youth of the Western nations who are the ones consuming the drugs, "there must exist a co-responsibility among the



Venezuelan Justice Minister Manzo González with the heads of Ibero-America's navies, at the Inter-American Naval Conference in Caracas Aug. 20-30.

rulers of the nations in the fight against the drug traffic." Salinas also pointed out that, while some of the profits of the drug trade remain in the country, the majority leaves the country to reside "surely in the secret vaults of many Western banks."

Peruvian President Alan García will be traveling to New York in mid-September to participate in the U.N. General Assembly. His speech, it is reported, will focus heavily on

the debt and drug problems of the hemisphere, and will urge closer collaboration between the United States and Ibero-America in resolving these problems.

Drug war spreads

The push for closer collaboration in the continental war on drugs stressed at the Caracas naval conference appears to be yielding results. Peruvian Interior Minister Abel Salinas reports that a "subregional front" in which Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru would participate, was being formed to battle the drug mafia. The Colombian daily *El Espectador* of Sept. 6 reports that the national police departments of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia—the entire Andean region—have begun an ongoing interchange of intelligence and support in joint anti-drug operations, with Colombian President Belisario Betancur coordinating.

Venezuela's deputy justice minister, Sonia Sgambatti, and deputy foreign relations minister, German Nava Carrillo, arrived in Brazil on Sept. 3, where a plan for Brazilian-Venezuelan collaboration against the drug trade will be hammered out. Colombia's ambassador to Peru, Diego Tovar Concha, declared on Sept. 1

governments will get "closer and closer" in their anti-drug efforts. "The economies of Colombia and Peru cannot be implicitly dominated by the power of the drug-dollar. . . . We have no means of organizing our economies if they are torpedoed by the drug dollar."

Inside Peru itself, where the battle against the drug mafia is currently at its height, 8 more police generals and 118 colonels were dismissed by the Garcia government. Although connections to the drug trade were not specifically cited as the reason for their dismissal, the more inclusive term "corruption" was being loudly whispered.

Important heads are expected to roll as anti-drug investigations continue. The Peruvian daily *El Popular* reported, "The investigative commission of the 'Villa Coca' case has discovered incredible evidence compromising many individuals from the political world. The mafia of [Reynaldo] Rodriguez, who is just one of the drug trade's godfathers, absorbed the most solvent businessmen and politicians of the previous regime. When the investigations end, various ex-ministers, ex-congressmen, diplomats, hundreds of industrialists, hundreds of high officials of the public administration, and, of course, many generals of the investigative police and civil guard, should be in jail."

The Garcia administration's decision in early September not to renew the appointment of Peruvian Central Bank director Richard Webb Duarte must be seen in this context. While Webb is publicly blamed for drastic collapse in Peru's money supply, it is known that Webb turned a blind eye to the vast flows of "narco-dollars" that nearly sank the Peruvian economy. Webb is a member of the executive council of the Institute for Freedom and Democracy (ILD) of Peru, which publicly advocates legalization of Peru's "informal" economy.

'The peace of the world is at stake'

The following are excerpts from the speech presented by the head of Venezuela's National Commission Against Drug Abuse, Dr. Bayardo Ramirez Monagas.

. . . We, on the American continent—and today I want to refer to it as the American continent, to include the United States—this great giant of democracy is still asleep regarding a geopolitical strategy on drugs for the continent, because it continues to view it as nothing more than a problem of public health. Yesterday, or the day before, I had the honor of a telephone conversation by satellite with U.S. Attorney-General Edward [sic] Meese, and when he spoke he presented the problem of the public health of the people as related to the problem of the drug trade. . . .

We speak of the "scourge" of drugs; when we speak of a scourge we are losing the concept of the "global phenomenon" of drugs. When we speak of "global phenomenon" we are using a professional concept which all disciplines and social sciences require to be able to fight this global phenomenon. When we speak of "scourge," we are speaking from a psychological position of defeat; scourge is a calamity, hunger in Africa, the product of a drought is a scourge. The drug trade is not a scourge, it is activated and organized by the giant multinational and transnational organizations of crime, and it must be fought with organization.

We must have a professional approach, from the military, law-enforcement, juridical, and medical-sanitary point of view, of what a "global phenomenon" is. We cannot continue to behave on an emotional level, as if it comes to us as "punishment" visited on us like the Seven Plagues of Egypt. . . . Were we to merely pose the problem of drug traffic and consumption . . . as a problem of public health, it would appear that the blame for the existence of the drug trade should fall on the consumer, which isn't so. . . . It is the drug trafficker, with his market of supply and demand, which controls the behavior of the people and transforms their way of thinking and their habits, introducing something so powerful that we always forget from the functional and medical-sanitary standpoint that drugs are a powerful commodity.

What is the idea. . . ? That we begin to take a geopolitical approach to security and defense. . . . The United States of North America, which is a democracy of more than 200 years

I have always deeply believed that the greatest achievements of man would never have been accomplished without the sacrifice of blood. And if our armed forces do not intervene, our underdeveloped police forces will be unable to defeat the giant organizations.

with a powerful economy and great resiliency that sustained it throughout the Vietnam war, yet still has one death every day because the Vietnam war continues through the drug trade, has not changed its concept to that of security and defense and the sovereignty of the people. This is one of the entreaties I wish to make today. . . .

The consumption and traffic of drugs is *not* the ethnic consumption of the Peruvian and Bolivian Indian who is disappearing from history; this "global phenomenon" of the drug trade is not the magical-religious and cultural consumption of the Bolivian and Peruvian Indian. It is an entirely different thing. . . . It is the Spanish conquistador who for the first time discovered the socio-economic connotation of drugs and used it to exploit the mines. . . .

And later it was the British, who corrupted the Chinese people. We were always made to believe it was the Chinese who brought us opium. I remember in my youth, when we were reading Jean Cocteau's *Opium*, when we read all the European literature on the decadence of the artists who consumed drugs in Europe of the '30s and which was to come to us in the '50s. And when we thought "opium," the image of a Chinaman came to us. And this disinformation never allowed us to learn that it was the British who were the second ones to manage drugs worldwide as it is managed now: as a neo-colonial element of domination. . . . It is no longer nations which become neo-colonial conquistadors; it is the transnational structure of organized crime which is going to seize the sovereignty and the economies of the people to conduct their vast enterprise of drug sales.

What is the other error we make? We speak of the drug trade as merely a crime. . . . a crime of public health. Wait a moment! Within the framework of law there are multiple-offense crimes, because they offend our sovereignty, our cultural values, our development; they go beyond the ethical-judicial framework to become assaults on the identities of peoples. . . .

It is more complicated still, because it is a factor of dependency, a powerful commodity. . . . The drug trade manages more than \$200 billion clandestinely, while the oil industry involves some \$165 billion, and the GNP of the

countries of the West an average of \$75 billion. While the steel industry of the United States, which is one of the most powerful in the world, operates with \$25 billion, this clearly demonstrates that if these \$200 billion were in a clandestine market they would collapse the world economy, as Fidel Castro hoped that by our not paying the debt we would collapse the world economy. Therefore, this money acts as a factor of dependency, because it enervates all that belongs to the world's legal economy. . . .

And the nations lose foreign exchange, which goes abroad, and lose taxes and are unable to consolidate themselves as legal economies. The clearest example is the neighborhood where people live off the drug trade. They will never be shoemakers, nor artisans, nor industrialists. . . .

It corrupts all the possible structures of states, at every level of power, and reduces the armed capacity of the State. Here is the point I wanted to get to: Every armed institution has one fundamental characteristic: If there is not subordination, obedience, and discipline, there is no armed institution. It doesn't matter what the philosophic context, be it Marxist, socialist, monarchical, totalitarian, or democratic. . . . There must be subordination, obedience, and discipline. Here is the fundamental basis for the deterioration of the armed institutions when drug consumption is introduced. It is not a war, a war isn't necessary, it is slow, subtle, and cautious undermining. . . .

We don't deny, we don't want to be misinterpreted; [drugs are] a grave problem of public health. . . . Without public health the people cannot develop. . . . [Drugs] assault our sovereignty, the integrity of the nation, and its spiritual values. Why? Because present-day man hardly reads, because our Latin American people have almost lost the golden thread of integration, because all of our youth are going to immediately be motivated by the underground sub-culture, which changes us and attacks even language, which is the spiritual unity of the people. . . .

So we must view it now as a security problem; if we can unite the navies in the "Unitas" maneuvers and in multiple other operations to demonstrate that we will defend the hemisphere, why not unite our armed forces to fight the common enemy which is the drug trafficker who assaults the social and economic stability of all the people? Why not use our navies and our armies, to test their competence, their training capabilities against this common enemy? Why not attack [the drug trade] in the Caribbean zone with our ships, our equipment, and our armies if it is an enemy? Our foreign debt is also at stake. What do they want us to do? Pay our foreign debt with the drug trade?

. . . Until the armed institutions intervene, we will never defeat the drug traffickers. I am no anarchist, but I have always deeply believed that the greatest achievements of man would never have been accomplished without the sacrifice of blood. And if our armed forces do not intervene, our underdeveloped police forces will be unable to defeat the giant transnational organizations, with their technical equipment,

their security capability, their accountants and economists. . . .

Latin America owes \$360 billion, of which we must pay \$40 billion for debt service. It is a very serious problem, and if we add to it the drug trade, there will be no chance for the economies to develop, to become stable nations with the development of industry and technology. Because everything is consumed by the drugs, everyone will invest in drugs and if there is no oil, there is [cocaine], the white oil. . . .

. . . An in-depth geopolitical study must be made, in which the United States must be united with Latin America . . . from the point of view of the security and defense of the progress of the hemisphere. Because although you may not want to accept it, it is perhaps we, the Latin Americans, who are going to have to save the world, who will contribute the ideas, because we should not lose our creative capacity, our capacity to propose new ideas to resolve problems. . . .

[The United States] has its share of the blame, as we also have ours. But we Latin Americans must begin to take responsibility within the geopolitical context of the continent for the drug traffic problem. . . . For the first time we are saying to the world, we Latin Americans, we the underdeveloped, we the Indians . . . say to the entire world that this is a problem of security and defense, not a problem of public health, in which the peace of the world is at stake.

The following are excerpts from the speech presented by Venezuelan Justice Minister Jose Manzo González to the First Interamerican Naval Conference on Drugs.

. . . Remember in the past war what was called the Fifth Column, that is, the nationals of a country who acted in favor of the watchword of Nazism to undermine, to weaken, to question the institutions of that country as the step toward invasion. . . ? Well, the drug traffic with the specific characteristics of its management and its activities and for the damage it causes, serves the same purpose as the Nazis 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 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.

. . . Imagine the price on the coasts of the United States of 70 metric tons of cocaine, that is, 70,000 kilos of cocaine. Imagine the price of 40,000 kilos of heroin, and 150,000 kilos of marijuana. There is no national police, no national armed forces which, if it does not act in coordination, if it does not act jointly, while respecting the legal and constitutional characteristics of every country, would be able to de-

stroy that which is no longer a mere threat but is a concrete and real fact.

Not to act in mutual cooperation is virtually a crime, if we are facing figures of this magnitude. And this cooperation and this coordination and this mutual aid must be not only from what we call the producer nations, as is the case of Latin America, of Bolivia, as in the case of Peru and in Colombia, where they are dismantling important laboratories, but where, unfortunately, they continue to produce, demonstrating yet again that the power of national authorities is not strong enough to destroy the danger by reducing it to its minimum consequences.

Joint action and collaboration must also come from countries like ours, which are not merely producers, but also users, since, of the drugs that arrive on the coasts of the United States, part remains here to poison our population. At this moment, I remember an important fact from the past world war. . . . I remember that in the past world war a battle where the naval forces of the warring powers played an extraordinarily important role, the so-called battle of the Atlantic. We all know that the triumph over Nazism was a combined action of the allied powers, and that in that fight the United States, putting its industrial capacity at the service of war production, was able to provide the indispensable weapons to the theaters of battle in Europe, Africa, and the Orient. . . .

In this era of the great technological and scientific advances, if we put even a part of these at the service of this war, at the service of the fight against the drug trade, we would be able to destroy or at least reduce it to nearly nothing, not merely because moral, political, and institutional right is on our side, but because, however large their financial resources may be, they could never be as large as the combined resources of all the countries of Latin America with the collaboration of the United States of America. All that is lacking is decision, will, the firm, sincere, and loyal will to coordinate efforts, to coordinate the task of intelligence, of repression, of technical and financial aid. . . .

The foreign debt, hunger, misery, crime, and the drug trade seem to me, seen from a distance and without further analysis, an extraordinarily dangerous combination which meets the interests of neither the United States nor of our countries, and our duty, the duty of those patriots who love the fundamental values of our culture—freedom, democracy, social progress, the strengthening of our institutions—is to bring these about.

We face a situation . . . which threatens our civilization. And if it threatens our civilization, we have the patriotic duty to fight it; we have no other option. This war has no armistice, this war has no moment of peace, this war cannot end with a treaty, this war has no return, this war can have nothing but victory, our victory, the victory of the nationalist democratic forces of the entire continent, against an enemy more dangerous or as dangerous as Nazism. We cannot avoid this war. . . .