
Interview: Sonia Sgambatti

Debt burden weakens the anti-drug fight

The following interview with Dr. Sonia Sgambatti, Vice Minister of Justice of Venezuela, was conducted on Jan. 31 by EIR correspondent Dolia Estévez Pettingell in Washington.

EIR: Venezuela has stood out in the fight for the integration of the Ibero-American nations in the struggle against drugs. What are the fields where a greater coordination of efforts is being sought?

Sgambatti: The President of Venezuela, Dr. Jaime Lusinchi, at the outset of his administration, assumed a clear, radical, and very coherent position in relation to the anti-drug struggle. In this sense he asked that all brother countries move to make a unified call to the United Nations to have drug trafficking considered a crime against humanity.

This would lead us to think about a series of important questions such as how the anti-narcotics legislation Latin American countries ought to be harmonized, to count on these unique legal instruments, which would serve as very clear communicating vessels, enabling us to confront the modern anti-Christ which is drugs.

The fact that drug trafficking passes over national borders should allow us a more fluid fight. In this sense, we can not be content with just a declaration of crimes against humanity, nor simply with the fact that it is very important to consider that the drug question is not a single or ordinary crime but a multiple-offense crime against the defense and security of the state.

EIR: What is the role that the United States can and should play in this process of Ibero-American integration in the anti-drug fight?

Sgambatti: We are asking the United States, as a great power, to give general, complete aid to the countries which are in one form or another caught up in this terrible scourge—some as cultivators of drug crops, others as a bridge, others as consumers of drugs, etc.

In this sense it is demanded and asked of the United States that it move from a theoretical position to practical execution. Not only material aid, of course, which it has the *wherewithal* to give, but that it see the necessity, as the first power in the

world, to control the sources of drugs. The United States does not necessarily have to proffer aid to the countries which have this serious problem, but must also give them economic, material, and technical aid—an intelligent aid.

In other words, to put the best of its technology, its computers, and its intelligence networks to provide us with aid and we in this sense can, with a very clear posture and with the most appropriate tools and mechanisms, fight against drug trafficking.

EIR: In what form do the International Monetary Fund's austerity policies affect the anti-drug fighting capacity of the Ibero-American countries?

Sgambatti: We have a situation of weakness which is the enormous foreign debt. This drains us as a nation, weakens us, and forces us to confront this problem: We assume that we have to pay and we will pay, but not much beyond the demands made by the creditors, because if we asphyxiate ourselves, we will fall into serious social problems, and these social problem will debilitate our institutional systems. In this sense I think that all the creditor countries should offer all possible breathing-room to the debtor countries and not oppress their economies.

EIR: What else could the United States do to help Ibero-America in the fight against drugs?

Sgambatti: The United States has the DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] in El Paso, which is very important for my particular area of responsibility. The United States should also help us develop an intelligence network to know where the laboratories are, how the narcotics traffickers deploy, who are the men involved, not the "mules" and the street pushers, who are really the little fish.

I also feel that the United States should give all the technical aid, let us say in computer processing of intelligence to deal with drug trafficking at its three watersheds: suppression, rehabilitation, and prevention.

In the last Latin American Convention against drug trafficking in Bogota, it was agreed that Buenos Aires will function as the center of everything concerning rehabilitation of drug-dependents. Lima, Peru, would be the center for suppression of drugs to train functionaries of the different brother countries and finally, Venezuela would be the facilitator, the preventer of drug abuse through education.

EIR: The mafia is threatening the life of every public official who combats it. What do you advise, in the face of these threats, to your colleagues in other countries?

Sgambatti: I think the posture has to be very clear, very coherent, and very energetic: No quarter can be given to drugs. This is a war without borders. I think that all countries which are involved in one way or another have to unite to really make an effective fight, to effectively combat the narcotics trafficking problem.