

Together let us defeat the drug trade, the new slavery

by General (ret.) Lucio Añez

General Añez is the former chief of staff of the Bolivian Armed Forces, and former vice president of the Inter-American Defense Board. We excerpt here his speech to the Schiller Institute's conference on the 20th anniversary of Populorum Progressio in the Washington, D.C. area on March 26.

In reviewing what has occurred in these last 20 years, since Pope Paul VI issued his historic encyclical which we commemorate today, we cannot fail to emphasize one of the leading consequences of not having paid attention to the warnings of *Populorum Progressio*: the proliferation of the drug trade.

From the rubble that the economic crisis made of Ibero-America, a powerful business has emerged in these last few years: Dope, Inc.

It emerged as a direct product of the misnamed "free enterprise" economy which, as Paul VI said in his memorable encyclical, represents "a system that considers profit the essential motor of economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics, private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, with neither limits nor corresponding social obligations. This unrestricted liberalism, which leads to dictatorship, was justly denounced by Pius XI as the cause of 'the international imperialism of money.'" (Liberal Capitalism. *Populorum Progressio*, 1967)

His Holiness John Paul II emphasized this question during his pilgrimage through Colombia last year. "To be free Christ liberated us," said the Pope, citing the Bible (Galatians 5:11), during his visit to Cartagena de Indias. "Slavery," stated John Paul on this occasion, "has been abolished throughout the world, But, at the same time, new and more subtle forms of slavery have emerged because 'the mystery of iniquity' does not cease to act upon man and upon the world. The ambition of money captures the heart of many and turns them, through the drug trade, into traffickers in the freedom of their brothers who are enslaved by a far worse slavery, at times, than that of the negro slaves. The slave traders denied their victims the exercise of freedom. The drug

traffickers lead theirs to the very destruction of the personality." John Paul II urged each of us that, "As free men whom Christ has called to live in freedom, we should fight decisively against this new form of slavery which has subjugated so many in so many parts of the world."

To do away once and for all with this new form of slave trading is the task of all civilized nations. It is crucial that we undertake a genuine war on the drug trade, a war which not only will combat the effects that drug consumption has on its victims, but which directly attacks the cause of the evil and its origins.

Dope, Inc.: threat to the West

The drug trade has grown to the point of becoming a state unto itself, which has declared war against all the civilized nations of the West. Today, the drug trade represents a financial, political, and military power that threatens all the democracies of the world. As Democratic presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche stated in 1985, we must respond in accordance with this reality: The civilized nations must declare war on the drug trade, and wage it with the weapons of war.

If we look back, during recent years the only beneficiaries of the infamous austerity programs imposed on the nations of Ibero-America as a condition for rescheduling the foreign debt, have been the drug traffickers. To the same extent that we have witnessed the constant growth of unemployment, the bankruptcy of agriculture and of our incipient industry, so have we seen the power of the drug traffickers grow.

For the impoverished nations of Ibero-America, this situation is truly dramatic. In Bolivia, it is already a tragedy. Years of blocking productive investments to channel export earnings into payment of the debt, have submerged the country, not in stagnation, but in economic regression.

Thousands of peasants have been impoverished in the past few years, due to the fall in their products' prices. The collapse of the price of tin has caused unprecedented levels of unemployment in the country. There is not—and I don't

speak of surplus to pay interest on the debt—there is not even the minimum necessary to sustain the population in a dignified way. In the midst of all this, the drug mafia arrives, offering thousands of dollars to peasants to grow coca.

Threat to national security

The drug traffickers use their billions in profits to pay terrorist armies and to attract corrupt military men into rightist coup plots, betimes headed by former officials of the German Nazi regime. This is where the greatest threat to democracy comes from. The capacity of the governments to confront these bloody threats is undermined by the growing number of officials from government, political parties, and private institutions who are bribed by the drug traffickers.

Cocaine and marijuana produced in the clandestine fields and laboratories of South America must be transported thousands of kilometers until reaching its destination in the United States or Europe. In crossing the border into the United States—be it by land, air, or sea—it still has to be transported thousands of kilometers more. Then it must pass many customs houses, state borders, and cargo review stations. Then it remains for months in warehouses until it is brought to street distributors to be sold retail. They will collect small-denomination dollar bills, which will then follow an ascending chain until they land in the most internationally reputable banks, without anyone questioning the origin of the enormous quantities of dollars deposited in bags or cardboard boxes. In all of this organized chain are politicians, security officers, financiers, and promoters of “free enterprise,” under one chain of command.

It is impossible to crush the growing political power of the drug traffickers anywhere—including the United States of America—without seizing the billions of dollars from the drug trade that move through corrupt banking institutions.

Moreover, within the same civil society we frequently meet prominent institutions and individuals who, acting as the drug mafia’s fifth column, promote a thousand variants of legalizing the drug trade. Perhaps if we were to trace back a few case studies, we would find ourselves with those same institutions and individuals who a century ago insisted on the horrendous legalization of slavery.

Given the nature of the problem, it is clear that no single nation—alone—could do away with the drug trade, not even on its own soil. No republic on its own could defeat that monstrous complex of criminal, financial, and political forces that runs the international drug trade. I believe that the nations of the Americas must show the world a good example of our commitment to our democratic traditions, to defense of our liberties, and to our noblest traditions. We must act, together and seriously, to stop this threat that hangs over us.

Consequently, we must begin to formalize serious agreements for the continent-wide eradication of any unauthorized cultivation of marijuana, poppy, or coca; destroying the laboratories and clandestine warehouses; shutting down all the

routes of illegal trafficking and distributing of drugs; and eliminating any drug mafia control over the economy.

There must be collaboration and coordination among governments of those nations which accept the challenge of wiping out this scourge, based on mutual respect for national sovereignty. In general, the nations of Ibero-America have enough trained personnel to carry out this fight, but they lack the means to do it effectively, such as airplanes, helicopters, radar, and other modern systems of detection. Collaboration with the United States would remedy this situation.

This collaboration should not be conditioned, because you cannot set conditions on a war against the drug trade. By itself, the war on drugs is to the benefit of all the nations of the hemisphere.

Further, there should be agreements to precisely regulate the activities of financial institutions, so as to be able to automatically detect deposits and transfers of funds in any direction by those suspected of involvement with the drug trade. The proper authorities should immediately take over and confiscate whatever financial, commercial, or real estate institutions, as well as the personal funds, of those who are proven to have been employed in the cultivation, processing, transport, or sale of illegal drugs.

The economic and financial resources of the drug traffickers must be confiscated, dismantling every commercial or political group associated with the drug trafficking consortium.

Special attention should be paid to the banks, securities houses, and other commercial institutions which *de facto* form part of the international financial cartel which coordinates the flow of hundreds of billions dollars a year in illegal drug profits.

We must reach agreements for disposing of the billions of dollars confiscated as the property of the drug trafficking consortium, assigning them to useful purposes, for economic development, in infrastructure, agriculture, and the manufacture of useful goods. There should also be international collaboration, so that the right of sovereign states to take possession of the properties of their citizens can be exercised, be they within national territory or abroad, based on the obligations of those citizens to the state.

I conclude with another quote from Pope John Paul II during his visit to our continent last year. On his trip through Bucaramanga, Colombia, John Paul II gave a homily in which he emphasized the responsibility of Christians “to assure the economic, social, cultural, and religious conditions that favor the unity and stability of the families, that reinforce the sense of respect for life, that attack the deep causes of violence and of terrorism, that combat all these forms of corruption of the social fabric.” As he called then, we call now to end “the extant contradiction between the underlying Catholic culture among the people and within the nation, and those social, economic, and political ‘structures’ expressing and generating injustices derived from sin.”