

Green Watcher by Rogelio A. Maduro

Hoaxsters declare war on Venezuela

It is only a matter of time before this scandal leads to a long-overdue probe of the environmental movement.

On April 5, leading environmental organizations will launch an unprecedented global war against the nation of Venezuela. Under the guise of stopping the slaughter of dolphins for sharkbait by Venezuelan fishermen, these organizations will lead a campaign to force a total economic boycott of Venezuela. To prove their point, these groups are distributing a film which depicts the capture and slaughter of a dolphin by Venezuelan fishermen. This film was shown by CNN and other major television channels last November. The networks, most of which did not bother to check the facts, aired environmentalist allegations that dolphins are beings slaughtered every day in Venezuela, as many as 67,000 per year, and that this was condoned by the Venezuelan government. The film started a storm of protest against the Venezuelan government.

The question is, why a boycott now? Although not reported by the national news media, on March 4, the Venezuelan government responded to the charges by demolishing the credibility of the film at a press conference in Miami, Florida. Francisco Herrera Terán, director of Venezuela's Fisheries Department, presented the results of an extensive inquiry. According to Herrera, the dolphin film was staged by Venezuela's leading environmentalists in collaboration with international environmental groups. Herrera told the press that he had tracked down the fishermen featured in the film and found out that they had been paid to harpoon the dolphins and butcher

them in front of the camera.

The dolphin slaughter was filmed by Aldemaro Romero, head of Venezuela's leading environmental organization, Bioma. According to Herrera, Romero was working in collaboration with the Earth Island Institute and Adena, the Spanish branch of the World Wildlife Fund.

Herrera revealed that he had obtained a full, uncut version of the film, which demonstrated that Romero had staged the entire dolphin kill. Herrera showed the original news reports by Miami's Channel 7 and CNN, which had spliced the dolphin film in such a way that the audience could only see the fishermen harpooning and butchering the screaming dolphin. Herrera then showed more extensive clips of the same scenes in which Romero could be clearly heard instructing the fishermen as to what to do. At one point in the film, Romero tells the fishermen to shake the harpoon lodged on the dolphin's body so blood could gush out. He can be heard screaming "I want the blood, I want that blood."

The film also reveals that the fishermen simply did not know what they were doing. As a matter of fact, when one fisherman, curious as to why anybody would want to kill a dolphin, asked Romero why they needed to kill a dolphin, he answered that it was "for research for the university."

Herrera, in his capacity as a Venezuelan government official, was not at liberty to tell the press who was really behind the dolphin campaign. Shortly after the press conference, on March 15, Herrera resigned his post and

promptly gave a press conference in Caracas, Venezuela, where he revealed the extent of the conspiracy against Venezuela. Herrera noted that now that he was a private citizen, he could reveal information linking Romero and the Earth Island Institute with a campaign by multinational corporations intent on destroying Venezuela's tuna and oil industry. He said that these corporations include Starkist and the Sun Oil Company (Sunoco), and he presented a chart showing how they channel money to the Earth Island Institute's dolphin project.

The international boycott against Venezuela is specifically targeting Venezuela's oil industry. The environmentalists are planning to demonstrate against electric utilities which buy Venezuelan oil, and will also boycott and picket Citgo gas stations (the chain is owned by the Venezuelan government) and 7-Eleven stores which are associated with Citgo.

Observers note, however, that the boycott must be a desperate attempt by environmental groups to defend an untenable position. For the first time ever there is clear evidence that environmentalists actually stage animal slaughter for political purposes and in order to boost their fundraising drives.

The boycott against Venezuela is being organized by the Dolphin Freedom Foundation, the Earth Island Institute, the Humane Society, Monitor, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. At the same time, however, almost every single environmental organization in Venezuela (more than 150), has denounced the film as a fraud and has condemned the actions of Aldemaro Romero, Bioma, and the Earth Island Institute. These environmental organizations conducted their own investigation and have corroborated Herrera's charges.