

Andean Report by Robyn Quiljano

Venezuelans democratically reject CAP

Voters smashed Carlos Andrés Pérez's party, exposing his manipulation of the previous week's coup attempt.

Carlos Andrés Pérez, the darling of the U.S. establishment's "democracy" mafia, lost big in Venezuela's regional and local elections on Dec. 6, less than two weeks after a failed coup attempt in that country. Despite his now incontestable lack of popular support, CAP's admirers, from U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States Luigi Einaudi to spokesmen for the Inter-American Dialogue, continue to threaten all levels of retaliation, from oil boycotts to OAS invasions, should Pérez be ousted and brought to trial. Pérez's services to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and U.S. neo-colonialist policies in general still make him Washington's top "democrat" on the continent, even if less than 10% of Venezuela's eligible voters agree.

CAP's Democratic Action (AD) party national secretary had admonished Venezuelans to come out "massively to vote, to say no to the coup d'états," and the government ran a heavy week-long media campaign to demonize the opposition.

But instead, while official tallies show that over 50% of the voters stayed home, some analysts calculate that 60-75% abstained. Those who did vote gave the AD only 3 out of 22 governorships. One of CAP's close political buddies lost the mayoral race in Caracas to the leftist Causa R party. In some areas of the capital, up to 80% abstained.

The harsh rejection of the corrupt Pérez regime demonstrates that the controlled media orchestration to make CAP into a hero after the coup

failed, fooled few.

In the days after the rebellion, the government charged that coup leaders were in cahoots with leftist rabble and that both were responsible for the deaths of nearly 200. The message was that the only alternative to Pérez was leftist terrorism and bloody anarchy. The day after the coup, some of the middle class, which hates Pérez for wrecking the economy, rallied to him as they were shown scenes of violence and bearded leftist thugs calling on the people to arm themselves. CAP claimed that the population rejected the attempt to overthrow him, and that "bad officers" had allied with leftists to cruelly assassinate "humble Venezuelans." CAP announced that the people supported him, as his political police began arresting key "notables" of the opposition who had been demanding his resignation and the creation of a national unity government. For 48 hours after the coup, the AD's psychological warfare had some impact.

But the facts soon came out. From Peru, Brigadier General Visconti, a leader of the coup, said that the thugs who appeared on national TV as the coup began, claiming to represent the rebellion, were unknown to the leaders of the move to oust Pérez. The plan to play a taped message of Visconti explaining that the insurrection was not against the Constitution, but against the corrupt regime that is destroying the nation, was sabotaged. Visconti's intention was to install an emergency civil-military government, bring Pérez to trial, and stop the IMF austerity program that has de-

stroyed the economy. Elections would follow the emergency.

While Pérez had boasted that there would be constitutional guarantees for the elections, he sabotaged the prime-time showing of an interview with opposition leader Rafael Caldera of the Christian Democratic (COPEI) Party two days before the election. The government's director of communications told Caldera that Pérez "could not accept at this time" that Caldera's charges be made public.

In the interview, which was later aired to a much smaller public at 11:30 p.m., Caldera reported that the leftist thugs that appeared on television claiming to represent the rebellion were brought there by the government to terrorize the population. The overwhelming support of Venezuelans for the removal of the hated Pérez was checked by confusion and fear which would not have been the case had the tape of Visconti been shown. Caldera charged that the government was now trying to blame all its political opponents who had denounced the errors and excesses of the government for the coup. CAP intends to clean out the opposition, to keep the same clique in power until after 1994, to ensure the continuation of the "nefarious policies that he has developed that have been repudiated by the population," charged Caldera.

According to columnist Andrés Galdo, CAP is moving to ensure that his apparat stays in power, in part so that he will not be brought to trial for corruption, for which there is massive evidence.

Already, CAP is moving to jail and terrorize the opposition. There are orders for the arrest of 500 civilians for alleged collaboration with the rebels, and, if CAP gets his way, they will be tried in military court.

That's what the U.S. establishment means by "democracy."