

## Andean Report by Carlos Méndez

### Venezuelan sovereignty still at issue

*Clinton wants Venezuela's new President to continue CAP's collaborationism in enforcing "democracy" on the continent.*

Although the ousting of social democrat Carlos Andrés Pérez (CAP) as Venezuela's President has been accomplished, the fight for national sovereignty and economic development is far from over. One indication is the interventionist letter sent by U.S. President Bill Clinton to Venezuela's new head of state Ramón J. Velásquez. Another is the recent denunciations issued from his jail cell by Rear Adm. Hernán Gruber, one of the leaders of the Nov. 27, 1992 military rebellion against CAP.

In his letter, dated Sept. 15 and released to the Caracas press on Sept. 21, Clinton congratulated Velásquez for his ratification as Venezuelan President, but insisted that he continue the policies of his predecessor: "Together, we must continue the arduous battle against authoritarianism, wherever it threatens democracy in this hemisphere, as we have recently and successfully done in Guatemala and are in the process of doing in Haiti." Clinton added his hope for continued "close working relations with the government of Venezuela, in search of common objectives."

It is well known that CAP was the United States' key man in Ibero-America in the effort to destroy the national sovereignty and armed forces of Ibero-America, and to give supranational powers to the Organization of American States, even to the point of endowing it with its own multinational army, to enforce such imperialist policies.

Clinton's letter represents the same undisguised "expansionism"

that characterized the predecessor Bush administration, and is a concrete reflection of the concepts recently expressed by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, who announced that the United States will be undertaking an expansionist international policy premised on spreading democracy and the free market everywhere. That is, the same discredited "manifest destiny" policy, but under a new guise.

In light of these renewed pressures, the charges just issued by Rear Admiral Gruber take on added significance. In his book *Insurrección Militar del 27-N-1992: por el Honor de las Armas* ("The Military Insurrection of Nov. 27, 1992: For the Honor of Arms") published in August, Gruber attacks the multinational force concept with which the United States hopes to impose "its democracy." Gruber says that "a study carried out by the Aspen Institute of the United States, reveals a series of retaliatory measures which, under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS) and as an undisguised initiative of the U.S., would be taken against any government which attacks a Latin American democracy. . . ."

"But," asks Gruber, "which is the democracy that is going to be protected through the use of multinational forces, with the resulting violation of national sovereignty? Which is the democracy in whose defense diplomatic, economic and military measures capable of sinking a nation would be undertaken? The democracy exercised by a government which has systematically violated the constitutional

principles of equality, justice and well-being? Who is invoking the sacred name of democracy to save a government which has lost its mandate with its own people? What dark interests hide behind the insistent threats and interference of the U.S. ambassador?"

On Sept. 20, Gruber charged that the Aug. 1 issue of the Caracas *Daily Journal* carried a photograph showing U.S. Southern Command chief Gen. George Joulwan awarding the Legion of Merit to Venezuelan generals Iván Darío Jiménez Sánchez and Pedro Rangel Rojas, former defense minister and Army commander, respectively. The reasons cited for such a distinction included "exceptional services, including the thwarting of the Nov. 27 coup d'état." Present at the ceremony were former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Michael Skol and Vice Adm. Radamés Muñoz León, Venezuela's current defense minister.

Commented Gruber: "These are my concerns: Is the defense minister and high military command's opposition to the cause of the Feb. 4 and Nov. 27 rebels explained by this ceremony? Have we already lost our sovereignty? . . . Was I then, as a Venezuelan soldier, a faithful guardian of the sacred legacy of our liberators, or was I perhaps in fact a U.S. soldier; to whose flag did I pledge allegiance? Why is the U.S. decorating generals 'victorious' in an internal conflict of a supposedly sovereign country? Would it have been acceptable if after the U.S. Civil War, a foreign nation had decorated some of the generals of the North or South? . . . I feel ashamed even by the pose taken by those two Venezuelan military officials. . . . After the Feb. 4 events, I rejected a decoration with these words: 'In a battle among brothers there are never victors; we all lose in one way or another.' "