

Andean Report by Cynthia Rush

Another corrupt U.S. asset in Venezuela

The U.S. State Department is promoting the leftist Causa R party, in support of the IMF's austerity agenda.

Several Venezuelan press commentators have recently pointed out that Andrés Velásquez, presidential candidate of the Radical Cause or Causa R party in the Dec. 5 elections, has been seen on a number of occasions in the company of the new U.S. ambassador, Jeffrey Davidow.

In an article published in the Nov. 1 *El Nacional*, historian Agustín Salinas, president of the Bolivarian Youth of Caracas, pointed out that it is not only depressing to see Velásquez begging for U.S. support, but dangerous as well. Velásquez "uses the U.S. ambassador as a crutch," Salinas said, "in order to capture votes . . . and what's worse, reinforcing the old Third World dependency on a power that still considers us its back yard."

A full-page article in the Oct. 31 *El Globo* by José Sant Roz made the point even more forcefully. Under the headline "Causa R's Dramatic Decline," Sant Roz nastily charged that Andrés Velásquez's actions "make him look more every day like Carlos Andrés Pérez," the deposed President who is about to go on trial for massive corruption and abuse of power. Now, Sant Roz argued, "it is the United States and not the Venezuelan people which awaits Causa R's triumph; what's important for Mr. Andrés Velásquez is the opinion of the 'gringo' ambassador, not his compatriots."

The comparison of Velásquez to Carlos Andrés Pérez is appropriate in many regards, particularly in their shared penchant for corruption. In a Nov. 1 *El Nacional* article, writer

Manuel Alfredo Rodríguez denounced a series of irregularities in the administration of Bolívar state, where Velásquez is governor. Rodríguez pointed to several Causa R "excesses," such as using the state budget to finance bashes at luxurious restaurants, and unlimited use by Causa R members of the governor's car pool. Referencing Velásquez's promise that, should he win, he will govern "with the people" and his ministers will be chosen "from the people," José Sant Roz revealed that one potential ministerial choice, deputy David Fermín of Mérida, has a pile of unpaid bills in practically every bar in the state.

For decades, Carlos Andrés Pérez was the State Department's prime example of a "democratic" Ibero-American leader whom it defended even when the evidence of his political corruption exploded into a public scandal too big to ignore. Velásquez has tried to pass himself off as a leftist alternative to the corrupt Venezuelan "partyocracy" which was the target of two attempted military coups in 1992. In fact, he is nothing but an asset of the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD), the Washington think-tank which dictates the Clinton administration's policy for Ibero-America.

The IAD and the State Department are desperate to contain the continent's growing nationalist civic-military resistance to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) austerity policies and the corruption of existing political structures; their strategy is to

promote the Ibero-American political parties belonging to the São Paulo Forum, a coalition of leftist parties and "reformed" narco-terrorists set up by Cuba after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Six parties belonging to the forum are running presidential candidates in their respective countries, among them Causa R.

The policies the São Paulo Forum defends are the same ones backed by existing political parties. They support IMF policy and payment of the foreign debt; demand the destruction of the armed forces and other institutions of the nation-state; and promote satanic New Age cultural and educational reforms. The only difference is that Forum members dress these policies in leftist and "democratic" rhetoric, in an attempt to attract those forces which might otherwise rebel against the IMF. Given Venezuela's very unstable situation, the State Department doesn't want to risk having the country fall into nationalist hands.

In April of this year, Princeton University hosted six of the IAD's preferred presidential candidates, among them the stand-in for Andrés Velásquez, Causa R's Pablo Medina. Immediately following this, Medina and two others were invited to Washington for discussions with high-level administration officials, including former IAD president Richard Feinberg who now handles Ibero-American affairs at the National Security Council.

So Andrés Velásquez's cozy relationship with Ambassador Davidow is no accident. Before Davidow's arrival, Velásquez used to hang out with U.S. Ambassador Michael Skol and frequently attended U.S. Embassy functions. Skol was a special invited guest at the inaugural ceremony of Andrés Izturiz, the Causa R candidate who became mayor of Caracas.