
Colombia

Samper cheats to stop Bedoya electoral threat

by Javier Almario

“Several thousand followers of the ‘*Fuerza Colombia*’ movement were unable to vote for our movement’s candidates to the Senate and the House, because the Samper government prevented them from exercising their right to vote in the March 8 elections” for Congress and other positions, charged Presidential candidate Gen. Harold Bedoya (ret.), in a press conference given at his campaign headquarters following the election. In the majority of polls held prior to the election, Bedoya had consistently appeared among the top three challengers in the next Presidential election, in May. Ever since President Samper booted him from his post as head of the Armed Forces, Bedoya has been a persistent thorn in the side of the Colombian oligarchy, and of its London controllers, who haven’t yet figured out how to eliminate him from the list of Presidential contenders.

The explicit fraud committed by the Samper government reveals the degree of panic that has infected Samper and his chosen successor, Horacio Serpa, over the possibility that Bedoya may win the Presidency on May 31. Bedoya has, in fact, already won over a substantial portion of the population, who believe that the reigning disorder in the country can only be addressed by someone who can firmly apply the law. However, that sector of the population lacks the machinery to defend its vote. Samper’s fraud could nonetheless produce precisely the effect it was intended to prevent, by prompting Bedoya to begin building a political machine through the creation of thousands of committees to defend the vote, and through the country’s retired military which, enraged over their lost votes on March 8, could turn out en masse for Bedoya in the election.

According to reliable sources, Samper’s Defense Minister Gilberto Echeverry Mejia took action just three weeks before the March 8 election, sending to the National Registrar’s Office a list of names and voter registration numbers of active military personnel who, according to law, are forbidden to participate in the elections. However, included in that list were also the names of *retired* military personnel, including many who had already voted in previous elections, as citizens with full rights. According to Bedoya, at least 1 million citizens were affected by this outright fraud on the part of the

Samper regime. Samper knew full well that the majority of retired military intended to vote for Bedoya candidates, particularly for Gen. Ricardo Cifuentes (ret.) and Fernando Vargas for Senate, and in Bogotá, for Gen. Hernando Zuluaga (ret.) and Jaime Duque for the House of Representatives. Despite the fraud, Cifuentes received 33,500 votes, just 1,500 votes short of winning a seat in the Senate, while Zuluaga garnered 15,500 votes, a mere 100 short of a seat in the House.

Fuerza Colombia, the movement founded by General Bedoya, was thus prevented from achieving legislative representation. However, and despite the fraud, Luis Elmer Arenas, a Bedoya supporter from another anti-drug movement known as “Vamos Colombia,” did win a Senate seat. It is expected that Samper’s next move will be to try to use the vote results as a pretext for stripping Bedoya’s movement of its legal status, thereby sabotaging Bedoya’s Presidential bid.

Samper’s dirty trick was so transparent that Bedoya, who has been out of the military since July 1997, was unable to find his own registration number on the voters’ list, when he went to Bogotá’s Kennedy neighborhood to cast his ballot. Only after a lengthy exchange with election authorities was Bedoya finally permitted to vote.

The same thing happened to Jaime Duque, who was a candidate of Fuerza Colombia to the House of Representatives. Duque is not only a retired military man, but also a lawyer. He was nonetheless forced to argue for two hours with election authorities before they would restore his right to vote. The large majority of military retirees appearing on the Defense Ministry’s list, however, were forced to leave the polls, deprive of their most fundamental right as citizens.

Balkanization or national reconstruction?

These dirty operations are aimed not only at the political elimination of Bedoya as a Presidential candidate, but also at the very integrity of the national territory, and at the existence of Colombia as a nation. Bedoya is the only candidate committed to eliminating the scourge of narco-terrorism, and to the reconstruction of the nation, politically, morally, and economically. The other candidates seek only to hand more and more concessions over to the FARC and ELN narco-terrorists, in the name of winning an illusory “peace” underwritten by the United Nations, a peace which would culminate in the division of the nation into pieces, or the “balkanization” of Colombia.

On March 1, some 500 FARC narco-terrorists ambushed one of the battalions of the No. 3 Mobile Brigade in Caqueta province, killing at least 55 soldiers. Another 50 soldiers are still missing, possibly dead or kidnapped, and fighting in the region is still ongoing as of this writing. The FARC’s goal is to demonstrate that it has near total control over that part of the nation’s territory, and to create a kind of coca-growing “republic” which the United Nations would officially recognize.