

# Abrams, Castro's friends team up

by Gretchen Small

Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams has found a new political ally in the U.S. Establishment's war against the institutions of sovereignty in the Western Hemisphere: Fidel Castro's friends in the Ibero-American branch of the Socialist International.

The star of the State Department's new alliance is Carlos Andrés Pérez, former Venezuelan President, vice president of the Socialist International, and the leading candidate in Venezuela's December 1988 presidential elections. Under his leadership, the Socialists have joined Abrams in seeking to establish supranational rule over Haiti, and to overthrow the government and military of Panama.

When Pérez organized the Socialist International to send a delegation to Haiti on Jan. 14 to pressure for a multinational force to run "elections" there, the Socialists were hailed as "the first to intervene publicly" by the *Washington Times*. Until then, U.S. news media had screamed that no Ibero-American country had been willing to demand that trade and aid to Haiti be cut, to force Haiti's military to accept foreign rule.

Likewise, the Socialist International is now at the center of the State Department's plot to force the Commander of Panama's Defense Forces, Gen. Manuel Noriega, to quit. Pérez, a close adviser to Panama's opposition movement, the Civic Crusade, told Noriega "to abandon the leadership of the Army," warning of the danger of "militarism," Caracas's *El Nacional* reported Jan. 17.

The latest game of the State Department and the socialists in Panama, has become known as the "Blandón Plan," a proposal that Noriega quit, the Defense Forces be restructured, and a transitional government be formed. The only thing new about the Plan, is that it was drawn up by Panama's New York consul general, José Blandón, and is thus supported by an "insider" in Panama's government. The State Department is counting on the Socialists to get Panama to accept. So, Pérez, Colombia's former President Alfonso López Michelsen (the friend of Fidel Castro who made himself an intermediary for the chiefs of the Medellín cocaine cartel in 1984), and the chief powerbroker of the Panamanian opposition, Gabriel Lewis Galindo (himself a long-term business associate of López Michelsen), have teamed up to apply pressure on Panama.

Blandón has been a Socialist International channel into Panama's Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) for years.

He claims to have personally kept Panama's President Eric Delvalle from coordinating debt policy with Peruvian President Alan García in 1985.

Is this Socialist-State Department coordination a momentary tactical alliance? All signs point to a more permanent shift in Washington: an attempt to use a new Pérez presidency as the focal point of a bankers' "democratic" alliance on the continent, linking Pérez, Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico, and Raúl Alfonsín's hand-picked successor in Argentina.

Only two years ago, a second Pérez presidency was effectively vetoed by the Reagan administration, as a dangerous return to the radical politics that dominated the hemisphere under Jimmy Carter's Trilateral administration. Today, Pérez's socialist credentials are his selling point for a U.S. Establishment obsessed with the new world order negotiated with the Soviet Union.

## Abrams's Sandinista connection

The pact with the State Department was sealed at the first meeting of the Socialist International's Latin American and Caribbean Committee in Caracas on Dec. 8-9. Pérez co-chaired the meeting, along with José Peña Gómez, the former President of the Dominican Republic.

Haiti, Central America, and the INF Accord ("the Socialist International supports the Reagan-Gorbachov summit," Peña Gómez declared from the outset), were the major points on the agenda. The meeting made the decision to send the delegation to Haiti.

Panama was also on the agenda, behind closed doors. Here, the negotiations began to secure the release of retired Panamanian Col. Roberto Díaz Herrera, jailed in Panama on charges of sedition. Indeed, when Díaz Herrera was flown to Venezuela on Dec. 25 aboard a plane sent by Pérez, Pérez acknowledged that he had intervened because of his "long-term friendship" with Díaz.

U.S. military intelligence and anti-drug agencies had identified Díaz Herrera as one of the closest friends of Fidel Castro's Cuba in Panama. His links to prostitution, contraband, and drugs in Panama is notorious. In June 1987, Díaz called Castro "an extraordinary friend," and said that he, Castro, and Peña Gómez were part of a network of occultists holding high office who were preparing to unleash "a psychic, mystic, and religious war" throughout the region.

According to accounts in the Venezuelan press, his release was secured by three-way negotiations among the Socialists, Delvalle, and General Noriega, and . . . Elliott Abrams.

What other negotiations began at that conference? Comandante Bayardo Arce, one of the nine top Sandinista leaders, was a special guest, telling the meeting why he wanted no part in Cardinal Miguel Obando's peace proposals. Bayardo praised "the closeness of our long-term relationship with [Venezuela's] Democratic Action party, and especially, Compañero Carlos Andrés Pérez."