

Peru elections say no to Thatcherism

by Luis Vásquez

The top news of Peru's June 10 presidential elections was not the victory of "Japanese" candidate Alberto Fujimori, but the defeat of Thatcherism. The most costly and spectacular media propaganda campaign in Peru's history could not induce the exhausted Peruvian population to vote for the kind of International Monetary Fund (IMF) devastation being imposed on countries such as Poland and Mexico. Candidate Mario Vargas Llosa, who promised to implement "economic shock" policies, was defeated 2-1 by the relatively unknown Alberto Fujimori.

Had Vargas Llosa been elected, his government would have been one of the most important peons of the Bush administration in its strategy of imposing an inter-American "common market," based on ending all protection for Ibero-America's weak domestic industries. Such "free trade" liberalism, now being imposed by Washington's "Project Democracy" puppets in most Ibero-American countries, has been used to facilitate genocidal looting by the Anglo-American creditors.

In contrast to the position expressed by Fujimori, Vargas Llosa was willing to allow U.S. troops to roam the Peruvian Amazon on the pretext of fighting drugs. Vargas Llosa is a conspicuous member of the Inter-American Dialogue, an Establishment planning group which has set out to eliminate Ibero-American armed forces. That would leave Peru at the mercy of the Sendero Luminoso narco-terrorists, who have murdered 17,000 people and have done \$15 billion in damage during the past decade.

The Bush administration also counted on a Thatcherite government in Peru to block all efforts to begin economic conquest of Peru's vast Amazon territory. One may recall that Mario Vargas Llosa was one of the continent's leading supporters, for "ecological" reasons, of President Bush's veto of Japanese plans to build the final small highway link integrating Brazil to Peru and the Pacific Basin.

Will Fujimori be any better?

There is great uncertainty, however, over how Fujimori will tackle Peru's awesome problems. The almost-unknown candidate of Japanese descent won the elections without presenting a coherent program for Peru's economic recovery. His few isolated proposals range from promising economic "gradualism" in financial aspects, to encouraging small business. The former could lead him into the policies of the World Bank, from which he has drawn many of his advisers.

Fujimori's victory can be understood as a rejection of the country's old oligarchic structure, the small group of families which has dominated the country for centuries. His victory came from the votes of a number of social minorities including small industrialists, unemployed, and dispossessed peasants who have been marginalized from the country's political life until now. The Fujimori vote was a vote *against* Peru's oligarchy, more than a vote in favor of any program.

In this heterogeneity and programmatic poverty lies the weakness of "Cambio 90," the electoral alliance which brought Fujimori to power. Two key elements in that alliance leave open the possibility that the new government might turn against its mandate, and impose a retooled version of Vargas Llosa's liberal economics.

The overall strength of the political machine of fundamentalist evangelical groups within Cambio 90 represents a significant force pushing economic liberalism within the Fujimori camp. Although the fundamentalist sects represent a small minority in Peru (less than 300,000 members nationwide), by working feverishly inside Cambio 90, they have grabbed a disproportionate slice of political power, taking a surprising 9% of the seats in the national parliament. Fujimori's second vice-president, Carlos García, for example, is a former director of World Vision, the international evangelical association which became notorious for its backing of the government of crazed evangelical killer, Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt, who ruled Guatemala briefly in the 1980s.

Another Trojan Horse in the coming Cambio 90 government looks to be Hernando de Soto, a champion of the so-called "informal economy" whose National Endowment for Democracy-funded Institute for Liberty and Democracy put together Vargas Llosa's program in the first place. On June 14, World Vision's García reported that De Soto would be invited into the cabinet amid press rumors that he might even be named prime minister.

But Fujimori's victory could also open the possibility for the development of Peru and the South American continent. Fujimori recently adopted one of the proposals which had a big impact during the election campaign promoted by the Independent Solidarity Movement. This 100-candidate slate issued a comprehensive development program which included a proposal that Japan help build a high-speed railroad corridor linking the Amazon Basin with the Pacific Basin. Fujimori announced that he would propose this railroad during his late-June visit to Japan.

The Japanese have recently shown interest in investing in great projects in Peru and Brazil, including building trans-continental transportation routes between Peru and Brazil to unite the Brazilian economy with that of the Pacific Basin. Brazil and Peru have the largest concentration of descendants of Japanese origin outside Japan itself, and the Fujimori election aroused great sympathy in Japan. Peruvian television showed scenes of jubilation in Japan on news of Fujimori's victory.