

## Andean Report by Ana María Papert

### Opposition denounces CAP's folly

*Even the old families of the Venezuelan Establishment are fulminating against the Pérez government.*

Despite Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez's insistence that he has the reins of power fully in his grip, behind the scenes a rebellion is brewing against both his economic and foreign policies. In fact, the implications of Pérez's 200% support for George Bush's colonial Middle East adventures are driving even the most cautious to revolt.

Alberto J. Vollmer, a representative of one of Venezuela's oldest and most tradition-bound families, published two articles in *El Diario de Caracas* opposing Pérez's policy vis-à-vis the Middle East conflict. The second, which appeared Sept. 15, was widely viewed as a warning to "CAP," as the President is known, that his policy would not be tolerated by the country's elites.

"What guarantees are there that Venezuela, with its immense petroleum reserves, will not also someday be gobbled up by the U.S.A. or by England?" asks Vollmer, adding that the entire Anglo-American military operation has become basically an economic affair. Vollmer calls those who have backed the operation "mercenaries"—without specifying whether or not he is referring to the President, whom he has otherwise supported on many occasions.

A declaration of war can be understood when the integrity and sovereignty of a nation is threatened, writes Vollmer, but not when it is "the pocket" under attack. "Who could have convinced President Bush and Mrs. Thatcher of such barbarity? . . . Those who control the communications media, those who control the in-

dustries which produce war matériel, the oil producers."

Despite the warning, CAP has not backed down. During one of his tours through the state of Guárico, a hostile journalist challenged the President: "Who is Venezuela with, its OPEC partners or the common enemy of Latin America, the United States?" CAP responded by defending Bush and comparing Saddam Hussein to Hitler: The United States "is our ally and also that of Latin America and the world. . . . We have always stood by democracy's side, and with all its defects and flaws, between Hitler and the United States I don't think anyone would doubt who to support, in this fight for Kuwait's freedom. . . . At the United Nations, one must back the U.S. position. Thus, Venezuela's position is very clear."

Polarization inside Venezuela is growing daily, as the opposition to CAP's economic policies also mounts. That opposition has focused, in part, on a bill to refinance the foreign debt, which was in nearly continuous debate for the past four months, but nevertheless failed to win congressional passage. Among other things, the bill demands that the Venezuelan government give up its legal jurisdiction over any debt disputes, leaving their settlement to the courts of New York City, rather than Venezuela. It further establishes that the government represent the Venezuelan government "commercially," that is, as if Venezuela were a private enterprise that could be raided, reorganized, declared bankrupt, and so forth.

Fearful of incurring its creditors' wrath with the delay, the Venezuelan government called Congress into a week of extraordinary sessions between Sept. 17 and 21, to force approval of the bill. On the last day in session, the measure passed, due to the combined efforts of the ruling Democratic Action (AD) party and a faction of the opposition Christian Democrats (COPEI).

Independent deputy for the Democratic Republican Union (URD) Reynaldo Cervini immediately labeled the law unconstitutional, and announced that a group of opposition congressmen would be turning to the Venezuelan Supreme Court to seek an injunction that would halt the law's implementation.

Others opposing the law have decided to break ranks with the government. Superintendent of Foreign Investment Edison Perozo resigned his post on Sept. 18. Perozo, who has opposed CAP's economic measures for opening the door to a "narco-economy," said he was not in disagreement with either the President or with Finance Minister "Bobby" Pocaterra. However, Perozo implied that the existence of a sovereign entity to control foreign investment in the country would have little to do in CAP's administration, since the President has determined to surround himself with a group of international advisers who are counseling him as to which investments should be made, and which not. This group includes Henry Kissinger and Fiat's Gianni Agnelli, among others.

Still others seem to feel that more drastic measures are called for. The daily *El Nuevo País* published a front-page article in mid-September, under the headline "20% of Venezuelans want a uniform," meaning a military government. Comments on the street the next day were, "Only 20%? No, many more!"

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