
Dominican Republic

Drug legalizers demand Peña Gómez be President

by Carlos Wesley

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arrived in Santo Domingo on April 24, to remind the government of the Dominican Republic that José Francisco Peña Gómez has been anointed the winner of the upcoming May 16 Presidential elections by the international oligarchy, and that no other outcome will be acceptable.

The delegation included people from the National Democratic Institute, a U.S. taxpayer-funded arm of Oliver North's old guns-for-drugs "Project Democracy" apparatus within the Democratic Party. With Carter were former Colombian President Belisario Betancur, of the genocidal Club of Rome, and Argentina's José Bordón.

The visit came five days after the secretary general of the Organization of American States, former Colombian President César Gaviria, went to pressure President Joaquín Balaguer to accept OAS election monitors. This was resisted by the head of the Dominican Election Board, as a violation of national sovereignty.

A leader of the Socialist International, Peña Gómez shares membership in the Washington-based bankers' drug-legalization lobby, the Inter-American Dialogue, with Carter and Bordón. They, and their allies in the Castro-ite São Paulo Forum, have made it clear that violence will be unleashed unless Dominicans hand Peña Gómez the Presidency. The Dominican Republic shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

A March 30 editorial in the *New York Times* lied that Balaguer was "a ruthless dictator" who stole the 1994 elections. If Peña Gómez "is perceived to be robbed of victory a second time he might have a harder time calming his followers," said the *Times*.

On March 22, Tomás Borge, the Nicaraguan Sandinista leader and a member of the São Paulo Forum, said in a televised interview: "We are not going to shut our eyes, nor act with passivity in the face of any abnormality that might take place." Borge, who ran the continental terrorist arsenal uncovered in Managua in 1993, was in the Dominican Republic for a meeting of the Socialist International and to campaign for Peña Gómez. "We can't be indifferent in the face of . . . electoral fraud," said Borge, who got egg on his face when a Dominican TV program showed a photo of him posing next to Pablo Escobar, the late drug kingpin.

On March 28, five Dominican affiliates of the São Paulo Forum issued a manifesto threatening to "confront the new fraud in the streets, with mass mobilizations" and other actions. The signers included Narciso Isa Conde and others who vowed to establish a new Marxist-Leninist party at a meeting held last Feb. 27 with the leader of El Salvador's FMLN guerrillas, Shafik Handal, and other São Paulo Forum and communist leaders from Australia, the United States, Cuba, and other nations.

Hooded killers

The violence has already started. Two people were killed on April 21, in a shoot-out between supporters of Peña Gómez and his opponents in Haina, bringing the number killed in the campaign to eight, so far. In Bonao, a bomb exploded on April 12, damaging the homes of a newspaper editor and of a former governor. In Gualey, a gang of armed men wearing hoods à la Mexico's Zapatistas, seized a bridge, burned a truck and robbed the driver, and exchanged gunfire with police. Sophisticated weapons, mostly of Russian and Israeli manufacture, are entering the country in great numbers, according to security forces, who blame drug traffickers for the smuggling.

The State Department's Agency for International Development has invested millions of dollars to establish a domestic "Network of Electoral Observers," which is supposed to declare Peña Gómez the election winner even before the first vote is officially counted.

But, at this point, it seems unlikely that Peña Gómez will get an absolute majority on May 16, which will force him into a run-off, either against Leonel Fernández, of the Dominican Liberation Party, or Vice President Jacinto Peynado. If it goes to a second round, he is likely to lose, which is ironic, because this requirement was part of the constitutional amendments the United States forced the Dominicans to adopt overnight in 1994, when Balaguer's term was also cut short two years, to give Peña Gómez another shot at the Presidency.

In a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Santo Domingo on April 23, Peña Gómez insisted that the changes were Balaguer's idea, not the result of foreign imposition. "I didn't like the Pact for Democracy," he said. "But U.S. Ambassador Donna Jean Hrinak urged me to sign it." Sounding like the guy at the head of the non-henpecked line, "because my wife told me to stand here," Peña said that Ambassador Hrinak was in the audience "to disavow those who have suggested that I acquiesced to a U.S. imposition."

To counter "Project Democracy," Dominican nationalists have dubbed into Spanish two of the televised campaign addresses of U.S. Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, and aired them on Dominican TV.

Peña Gómez has also been hurt by his party's ties to Cuban-Venezuelan banker Orlando Castro. Recently arrested in Miami, Castro is suspected of ties to the Cali and Medellín cocaine cartels, and he is also a fugitive from Dominican justice.