

Argentina's choice
Result of the race for the presidency of Argentina, with 97.2 percent of the ballot counted Monday morning.

FERNANDO DE LA RUA
Alliance coalition (Alianza) 48.4%*

EDUARDO DUHALDE
Justicialista Party (Peronista) 28%*

All others combined 13.6%*

About 80 percent of the 24 million registered voters cast ballots Sunday.

*Aggrieved estimate AP/Wide World/CNN

De la Rua elected Argentina's president

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Calling his overwhelming election victory a strong mandate to implement his policies, President-elect Fernando de la Rua vowed to blot out corruption and bring Argentines more jobs and better health care.

With 97.2 percent of the ballot counted yesterday, official returns showed de la Rua, the opposition leader, with 48.4 percent of the votes. The ruling Peronist

party's candidate, Buenos Aires Province Gov. Eduardo Duhalde, had 38.0 percent. The rest of the votes were split among eight other candidates.

De la Rua's victory was seen as a vote for change after the decade-long rule of flamboyant President Carlos Menem, who immediately began to make good on his promise to attempt a comeback in the year 2003 by virtually launching a campaign.

Workers were busy at several Buenos Aires neighborhoods pasting white and blue signs — Argentina's national colors — with Menem's photograph and the slogan, "Menem 2003. Let's take good care of him. The nation needs him."

De la Rua — mayor of Buenos Aires and the candidate for the center-left opposition Alliance — promised to pursue policies that do not neglect the poor.

"From now, we start a new road," de la Rua told thousands of joyful supporters who held a huge street fiesta Sunday night, honking horns and setting off fireworks.

"The people have given us the authority to carry out our program," Duhalde conceded defeat, saying he had called de la Rua to congratulate him.

"Argentines have elected a

president we can all trust. We must all help him, and we must all help Argentina," he said early in a news conference. "I hope the people voted for change."

As Menem prepares to relinquish power on Dec. 10, the Argentine economy is in a deep recession, with unemployment topping 14 percent. Corruption is widespread and rampant and is on the rise.

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