

SPECIAL FEATURE

Venezuela's CAP: The Making of a Thug

Rockefeller's international press corps portrays Carlos Andres Perez, President of Venezuela, as an international statesman and leader of a "democratic" Latin American country, charting a new course for Venezuela and the continent free of U.S. domination. But Perez, the man behind this well-coordinated public relations effort, is a dumb thug, nurtured and trained by the CIA's Latin American network and backed by the bayonets of the Venezuelan military.

Carlos Andres Perez, known as CAP, is a cop. Rockefeller has assigned him the responsibility of jamming austerity down the throats of the Venezuelan population while using the country's oil revenues to lubricate the continent for Rockefeller's restructuring and redevelopment strategy. CAP's course in carrying out these tasks is not without obstacles, but his history makes it clear that, successful or not, his future service as a Rockefeller henchman will extend the trail of blood and corpses that have earned him his present position.

CAP, a college dropout noted for his stupidity, was picked up at the age of 23 by Romulo Betancourt when the elected government of Venezuela was overthrown by a military coup, led by Perez Jimenez in 1948. Betancourt, an experienced politician, leader of the Accion Democratica (AD), and one of a growing number of "democratic" Rockefeller operatives in Latin America, fled the country. He took young CAP with him.

In the Rockefeller Web

Betancourt, with CAP in tow, spent ten years in exile establishing his links with Rockefeller's Latin American network. Shuttling between Costa Rica and Washington, D.C., the duo cultivated their connections to U.S. State Department officials, well-placed academics, and the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Among their frequent associates were Nelson Rockefeller, Arthur Schlesinger, George Meany, and Serafino Romualdi. Romualdi was a key CIA operative on special assignment in labor counterinsurgency for the CIA's American Institute for Free Labor Development.

While Betancourt and CAP hobnobbed with the cabal, the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV), the left wing of Betancourt's party, the AD, and sections of the military waged a resistance battle against Perez Jimenez. By 1958, Jimenez had lost control over the country, and was overthrown by the resistance forces. As soon as they heard the news, Betancourt and CAP

hopped a plane from New York City to Caracas and began maneuvers to muscle their way into leadership of the new government. The well-connected Betancourt and his ambitious sidekick had little difficulty, and in December 1958 Betancourt was elected President of Venezuela. The left forces, too disorganized to put forward a program of their own, fell in line behind the new "democratic" government.

Betancourt made clear his "democratic" intentions when he announced, upon being elected, "I will govern without the Congress, against the Congress, or with a Congress made to my specifications." The left that had helped him get elected began to worry: Within a year an opposition group split from the AD and formed the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR). Other discontented members of AD remained in the party as an opposition faction. It became clear to Betancourt that he needed a loyal strongman in charge of the police apparatus of the country, and he tapped his protege — CAP — as his Minister of the Interior in 1960.

The Butcher

Like his Mexican bloodbrother Luis Echeverria, CAP lost no time in wielding the power of the Interior Ministry to crush militant trade unions and left organizing. Unlike Echeverria, however, CAP did not favor big massacres, but focused the police and military on an ongoing low-profile reign of psychological terror. From the beginning of 1960, trade union meetings were broken up, leftist leaders were assassinated, and scores of leftists "committed suicide" in their jail cells. Working-class neighborhoods were periodically raided by special police units who thought nothing of spraying militant housing projects with

machine gun fire. CAP became known as "El Carnicero" — the Butcher.

The terrified opposition was able to mount only an outcry of protest through its representatives in the Congress. They called for investigations but soon found that they were not immune to CAP's terror campaign as their cars were burned, their houses surveilled and their lives threatened. Opposition political associates began to disappear "mysteriously."

Throughout the early 1960s, CAP supplemented his uniformed terror squads with paramilitary gangs recruited from local scum, the covert police apparatus, and reactionary Cuban gusanos who had left Cuba after the revolution in 1959. The most

notorious of these was the Cobra Negra. At the time, the Cuban press agency Prensa Latina exposed that this group of fascist scum was under the personal direction of CAP and was deployed to terrorize and murder Venezuelans who openly supported the Cuban revolution or leftist politics in Venezuela. In disgusting irony, today Castro sings the praises of CAP's "anti-imperialism" and is cooperating with CAP in the creation of the Rockefeller-initiated Latin American economic system SELA.

"Shoot first..."

In October 1960 the opposition's protests won a short respite from the reign of terror. But, because the left and labor movement had not been completely smashed, only a month later, in an operation called "Plan Macuare," CAP renewed his assaults with increased vigor. Soldiers and police fired upon strikes, Cobra Negra declared open season on leftists and trade union militants. In early 1961 the order came down: "Shoot first, and then identify."

CAP's murder campaign continued almost unabated well into 1963 and produced increasing fragmentation of the left and the isolation of the left from the masses of terrorized workers. In the summer of 1962 several military bases led by junior officers, many of whom had fought Jimenez, rebelled against Betancourt, but the poorly coordinated uprising was quickly crushed. Groups of the defeated soldiers joined with the emerging pro-Castro guerilla movement in the countryside. But, lacking any program to turn around the rout in the working class, the guerillas were isolated and doomed before they started. CAP mopped them up within a few years of their formation.

By 1963, only the formality of a parliamentary system stood between Rocky's Venezuelan thugs and a totally pacified population. CAP's strongarm stupidity hampered the quick success of an effective coup in the Congress, but his opposition was at such a gross disadvantage that his incompetence scarcely mattered. On Aug. 14, 1963, several months before the Presidential elections, Betancourt preferred CAP from the Ministry of the Interior to the Chamber of Deputies to take over the position of an AD opposition Congressman. CAP-the-cop wanted his entrance into the Congress to be a strong show of power, and before his arrival had the visitors gallery packed with armed thugs from the Cobra Negra and his

special police, the DIGEPOL. He entered the chamber surrounded by a phalanx of loyalist AD representatives, but the opposition deputies were not so terrorized that they would tolerate the appearance of such a bloody-handed murderer in their midst. In the face of screaming threats from Cobra Negra, the opposition refused to continue the legislative session until CAP beat a retreat. Temporarily rebuffed, CAP made his pre-election move six weeks later.

Set-Up and Mop-Up

On September 30, a bank of armed men attacked a train of weekend vacationers just outside Caracas. Two policemen were killed and the passengers robbed. Although the entire left and the guerilla groups denied any involvement in the attack, CAP ordered the house arrest of the congressmen of the Venezuelan Communist Party and MIR. He then had his successor at the Minister of the Interior issue an order to the Consejo Supremo Electoral (Supreme Electoral Council) outlawing the participation of the PCV and MIR in the December elections. Betancourt approved CAP's arrangements for, with the PCV and MIR out of the way and the AD opposition terrified, Betancourt's stooge Raul Leoni — a sort of Venezuelan Gerry Ford — was a shoe-in for the Presidency.

From 1963 to 1973 CAP operated with a lower profile. He worked with the military in mopping up the guerillas, operating behind the scenes in AD to improve his party position and endeavoring to make the blood on his hands less visible. Despite intermittent guerilla successes against the military, over a two-year period the military, with the help of CAP and the direction of Pentagon experts, continually limited the freedom of movement of the

guerilla bands. By 1966 the guerillas' capability for redeployment was severely restricted, and according to the outlines of the Pentagon "Plan Funnel," they were trapped and finished off. December 1966 saw the crushing of the last leftist outpost — the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas — when the military occupied the campus in a brutal predawn raid.

In 1968 talk started of CAP running for the Presidency, but Betancourt told him to bide his time. Rafael Caldera, candidate of the traditional conservative party, was elected President. The left parties were still prohibited from participating in elections, but after he was elected Caldera declared a plan for "pacification" which included an amnesty and the legalization of the PCV and MIR. Rockefeller had little to fear from the remains of the Venezuelan left.

Heil to the Chief

CAP moved for the Presidency with Betancourt's backing in 1973, and carried the election by a large margin. The left opposed him, trying to remind the country of CAP's crimes. But CAP, campaigning under the slogan "democracy with energy," used his "service" as Minister of the Interior to demonstrate his "firmness" in support of "order" — he succeeded in winning the large vote of the rightwing and the middle classes, aided by the strong loyalist AD machine. Following his election, CAP was paid a three-day visit by Nelson Rockefeller himself, and CAP's inauguration was attended by Vernon Walters, assistant director of the CIA.

Today the Venezuelan left to varying degrees supports or submits to their executioner on the basis of his "anti-imperialism." Teodoro Petkoff, leader of

the Movement toward Socialism, now hails CAP.

Before the 1973 elections, Petkoff had said of him: "CAP offers the advantages of a Brazilian model without the military. That is, he is exactly the candidate of the dependent neo-capitalism, the man that proposes opening the possibilities of a Brazilian miracle." Today Petkoff supports CAP and, along with other destroyed leftists, is used by CAP to attack the intransigent sections of the bourgeoisie who balk at Rockefeller's restructuring programs for the country and the continent.

In Venezuela, these programs center around the restructuring of the Venezuelan bureaucracy in order to ease utilization of the petrodollars coming into the country and to facilitate Rockefeller investment in processing and manufacturing industries. The shortage of skilled labor remains a serious problem, but youth are being militarized through the Armed Forces to instill in them "a sense of discipline" and to give them basic skills. The working class, virtually without coherent leadership, is kept in line by the descendants of the Cobra Negra, like the Gang de la Muerte (Gang of Death), and by the military, which keeps a watchful eye from the background on potential resistance.

CAP's message to the working class of Venezuela and Latin America is clear. In his New Years speech this month, CAP proclaimed: "This must be a country of producers, not just of indolent consumers. Work, work, work is the motto for all Venezuelans." To stop CAP's "work," and Echeverria's, the international left must join the ICLC in exposing the brutal thugs who wear Rockefeller's "democratic" leer.