
Venezuela

President Lusinchi hits EIR's persecutors

by Gretchen Small

The Cisneros family of Venezuela has just been told it does not run the Venezuelan government, and cannot stop the government's war on drugs. It would seem that, in their haste to eradicate *EIR*, and *EIR*'s influence, from Venezuela, the family's private security and judicial networks have overplayed their hand.

On May 25, Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi blasted the degenerate condition to which the nation's police forces were reduced by the previous administration of Luis Herrera Campins. He charged that administration with "deliberately" destroying the Judicial Technical Police (PTJ), while giving such exaggerated powers to the Security and Investigative Police (DISIP), that it had reached a state of "hypertrophy." Measures to correct that balance have therefore been taken by his government, the President stated, in order to reconstruct viable national police forces.

Those persons alluded to in the President's statement, immediately identified themselves. On May 28, former Interior Minister Luciano Valero, former Justice Minister Reinaldo Chalbaud Zepa, and former director of the DISIP, Arpad Bango, called a press conference to defend themselves from the President's charges. The three denied the DISIP had been used to intervene in the PTJ under their administration. Of the three, Arpad Bango was "excessively terse," the press reported, although he did deny that his private security agency had been raided by government agencies.

Arpad Bango had reason to be quiet. In some businesses, notoriety is not advantageous. Bango's private security agency works for the Cisneros family, among others, a job which included most recently, running errands related to the Cisneros family's war against *EIR*. Bango was not so quiet then; he boasted all over Caracas that it was he who still ran the DISIP, and had directed DISIP operations against *EIR*. In February, Bango was sent to New York to meet with *EIR* representatives as a messenger boy for Gustavo Cisneros. Fearful of the message that *EIR* gave him to deliver to his boss, Bango preferred to resort to lying—as reported in *EIR* on March 19, 1985.

Infiltrate the anti-drug war

At stake in the exchange between the President and former police officials, is the entirety of Venezuela's narcotics policy. With "Latin Connection" king Carlos Lehder being

driven out of Colombia, the drug mafias are seeking a new base of operations, and Venezuela, where powerful private families have turned the country into a major drug-money-laundering center, is targeted for transformation into a full-scale processing and transshipment center. The mob, therefore, set out to infiltrate the government's anti-narcotics apparatus, as the most efficient path to subvert Lusinchi's declared war on drugs.

When *EIR*, on Jan. 23, 1985, published an updated version of its blockbuster exposé, *Dope, Inc.*, this time in Spanish, the plotters panicked. *Narcotráfico, SA* documents how the \$400 billion a year drug business is controlled, from the very top, by old oligarchical financial interests, who owe allegiance to no nation.

Narcotráfico, SA reports the connections of Venezuela's Cisneros family to international interests who have been publicly implicated in money laundering for the drug trade. Those international bankers kept quiet, but Gustavo Cisneros, the young social climber now heading the family, loudly mobilized every asset in his power against *EIR*, reportedly on the advice of a man dubbed the Godfather's "Councilor," José Rafael Revenga. Judge Ana Luisa Gandica ordered *EIR*'s offices raided; Bango's DISIP arrested and deported four *EIR* correspondents; Cisneros's Venevision TV station launched McCarthyite slanders of *EIR* and its founder, LaRouche; and Judge Alirio Abreu Burelli took the unprecedented step of banning *Narcotráfico, SA* from circulation in Venezuela, at the request of Cisneros and Revenga. Cisneros's legal argument was simply: "Respected" families with power, such as his, are, ipso facto, "above suspicion." And that since the book, he claimed, was "anonymous," a normal slander suit could not be pursued, and that therefore proscription was in order.

EIR was not silenced, of course. On May 6, *EIR* filed suit before the Venezuelan Supreme Court, requesting that the prohibition of *Narcotráfico, SA* be lifted. The book is not "anonymous," *EIR* argued, and if Cisneros found it offensive, he should sue for slander. Otherwise, book-banning is an unconstitutional attack on freedom of expression, which has no place in a democracy such as Venezuela.

Venezuela's Supreme Court, after initially accepting the case for review, then punted, sending it back to *EIR*'s lawyer on May 28, citing a mistake in preparation of *EIR*'s power of attorney committed by a Venezuelan consul in the United States. *EIR* is now refileing.

The Cisneros family has responded in the manner to which they are accustomed. *EIR* lawyer Randolph Rosal Machado began receiving death threats, warning him to "stay away from foreigners." Then, on June 4, Judge Ana Luisa Gandica, the same judge who signed the order for *EIR*'s offices to be raided, filed suit against Rosal Machado in criminal court, charging he had "falsified documents" in another case he is handling. Rosal has counter-sued, citing deliberate false accusations of crimes by Gandica.

Gandica, like Bango, is frank about her employers. Cur-

rently holding the post of Criminal Court Judge of the Sixth Part, in the First Instance, Gandica's long-term employment is as legal counsel for Pepsi-Cola in Venezuela—a family franchise of the Cisneros since its founding. One can't fault Gandica for lack of honesty on the matter; she often explains in private that she was "transferred" to the judicial system by the Cisneros family, because "they wanted someone they could rely on."

National interest, over families

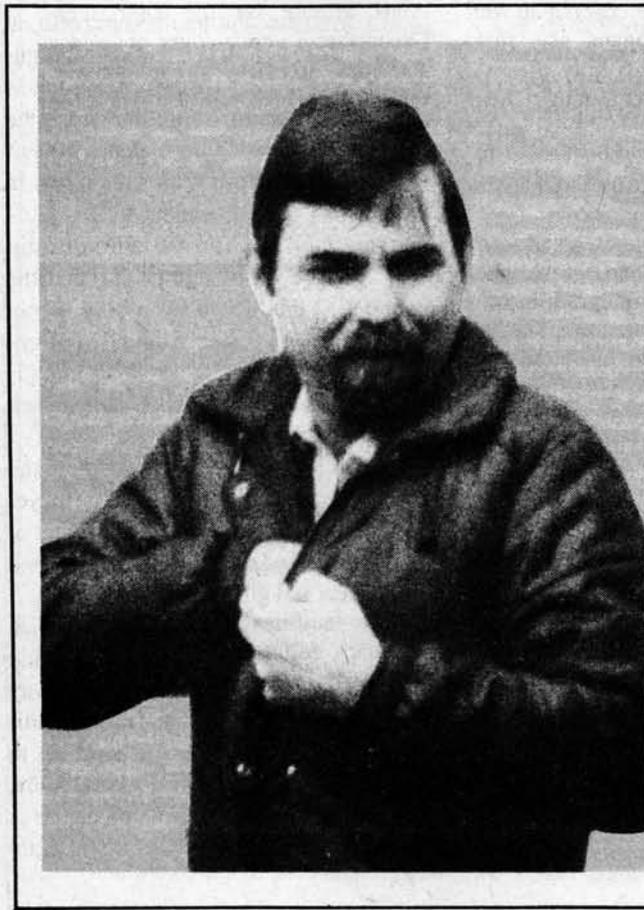
Power blinds some, but not all. President Lusinchi's warning to the police forces, was requested by the head of the government's Commission Against Unlawful Use of Drugs, Bayardo Ramirez Monagas. The Commission centralizes all aspects of the government's anti-narcotics policy and operations, under the provisions of the tough new anti-drug law passed last fall. According to *Diario de Caracas*, Ramirez Monagas requested that the President intercede personally to instruct police forces to adhere to the Law Against Narcotic Substances, which requires that anti-drug information be centralized with the PTJ, and not forwarded directly to judges.

The reference, unnamed but unmistakable, was to that same Judge Ana Luisa Gandica and the DISIP. Great publicity was given to a small drug-bust by DISIP forces in mid-

April, after information on the bust had been handed over to Judge Gandica. Gandica, in turn, convoked a press conference, and demanded that the Law Against Narcotic Substances be modified, to give the DISIP equal weight to the PTJ in the anti-drug war.

Government officials have now begun issuing warnings that a "respectable" family pedigree is not enough to buy permanent immunity from justice. Stated Attorney-General Hector Serpa Arcas on May 30, "One is filled with surprise, when it is proven that apparently honorable people, distant from crime, have been tied to this business [drugs] for some time." Arcas added that his office has been very active in the war on drugs, even if quietly, the public credit."

The families' hysterical flight-forward has been driven by their fear that the governments of the region are consolidating a joint command of military forces and justice department capabilities, aimed at the highest levels of Dope, Inc. The attorneys general and justice ministers of Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia met to coordinate policy at the end of May, preparatory to the June 15 summit between the Presidents of Colombia and Venezuela, dedicated to the war on drugs. A number of bankers and other "citizens above suspicion" could end up in jail before they can launder their next million.



Bango defends drug king Lehder

Arpad Bango, pictured here, is the former head of Venezuela's political police (DISIP). He is currently covering for the Nazi-communist alliance behind the Ibero-American drug trade.

Venezuelan drug-runner Lizardo Marquez Perez, an associate of Colombian drug king Carlos Lehder, is now on trial in Florida. Like Lehder, Marquez Perez argues that the continent needs governments like Hitler's Reich, to be established through "liberation struggles." Drug traffic is their major weapon, they say.

Bango, whose participation in the Scotch Rite is a matter of frequent public display, told *EIR* in February 1985 that Lehder was not that important, not warranting further investigation.

Now, Marquez Perez has testified in Florida that weapons were also seized when he was arrested, but Bango's DISIP caused them to "disappear." In response, Bango declared to the press June 2: "Marquez Perez is trying to confuse U.S. justice, claiming the cocaine found in his airplane was to be negotiated for arms because he is idealistic and patriotic . . . The drug-trafficker practices the criminal trade . . . in return for juicy economic gain."

Does Bango fear what may come out of the Marquez Perez trial about the Nazi-communist alliance?