

EIR Investigation

The truth about Carlos Andrés Pérez

by the Venezuelan Labor Party and
the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement

On May 19, one day before the Venezuelan Supreme Court was to announce its verdict on whether there were sufficient grounds for trying President Carlos Andrés Pérez (known as "CAP") for corruption, the Venezuelan Labor Party and the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) jointly published a pamphlet entitled "The Truth About CAP." EIR is serializing the translated text of the pamphlet in six installments. The first chapter, "CAP Destroyed the Productive Economy," appeared in our July 30 issue; the second, "Washington's Man and the New World Order," in our Aug. 6 issue; the third, "Venezuela's Drug Traffic under CAP's Rule," in our Aug. 13 issue; and the fourth, "Corruption and CAP's Financial 'Inner Circle,'" in our Aug. 20 issue.

"The Truth About CAP" is not only important for Venezuela and Ibero-America, but also for the United States. President Bill Clinton has continued to apply the major elements of George Bush's policy toward the continent, for which Pérez—currently suspended from the presidency—considered himself the spokesman.

Chapter 5: CAP and terrorism

Not only have the drug-trafficking networks benefitted under the administration of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, to the point of becoming the financial axis of the country, but, just as under his first administration, there has been a daily increase in insecurity, threats, covert operations, and links between government entities and terrorist groups and

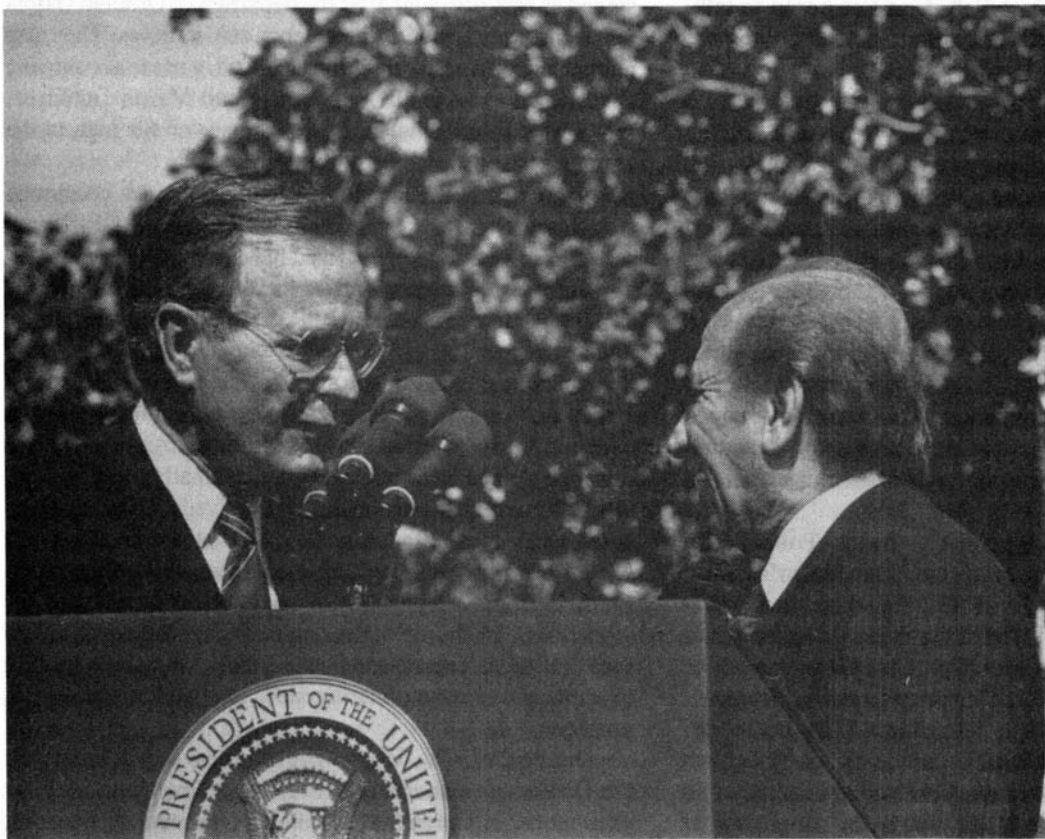
networks. The scandals that emerged during 1991 around various members of CAP's "inner circle" reveal how a shady band of gangsters can reach the highest levels of power in a nation.

The affair began when a number of opposition journalists in early 1991 denounced the existence of a shadowy group of individuals linked to government security and engaged in espionage and harassment against individuals and political and business groups, for the purpose of keeping serious acts of public corruption from reaching the light of day. Among those threatened were several journalists from *El Nacional*, Rafael Poleo, the editor of *El Nuevo País*, and José Vicente Rangel.

It was also stated that this group had a massive espionage capability for tapping phones with sophisticated equipment, and which sold information to the tune of some 3 million bolivars a day. Those responsible were identified as the head of the Military Intelligence Bureau (DIM), Gen. Herminio Fuenmayor; the President's security chief, Orlando García Vásquez; and a "Caribbean adventurer," Lázaro Rogelio Ugarte Bresslau, who is tied to Orlando García (*El Nuevo País* April 24, 1991). Each of their histories clearly exposes what kind of people make up the "inner circle" of President Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Orlando García and his Gardenia

In May 1991, Gen. Carlos Julio Peñaloza, commanding general of the Army, appeared before Congress to confirm press exposes of corruption in the sale of munitions to the



*Carlos Andrés Pérez
with George Bush at the
White House in 1990.*

Army. It dealt with the Margold Corp., whose proprietor, Gardenia Martínez, is a relative of CAP's mistress Cecilia Matos and the wife of CAP's agent Orlando García.

The Margold Corp., an intermediary of the Spanish arms-producing company Santa Bárbara, was given the contract to purchase about \$5 million worth of munitions. Within three days of winning the bid, Margold altered the contract, claiming a change in costs incurred by the producer company based upon documents which later turned out to be falsified. The munitions were never delivered, although they were scheduled for delivery in late 1989. These manipulations were accomplished through intense pressures from the presidential "inner circle," including calls from Cecilia Matos to the military in her friend's favor.

CAP insisted that the accusations were false, and that his security representative, Orlando García, never even sold the Army "a little boat." Later investigations revealed that the real owner of Margold is Orlando García, and that he was already involved in another series of crimes. Under pressure from the military and the media, Orlando García was forced to retire from CAP's security retinue, with which he had been linked for four decades. Orlando García flees the country whenever he is sought for interrogation. To handle security matters, CAP has substituted his associate Ugarte Bresslau, but under the alias of "Armando Méndez Cárdenas."

The misfortunes of Herminio Fuenmayor

Everything was going very well for Gen. Herminio Fuenmayor, the director of DIM in CAP's administration, until a truck carrying 621 kilos of cocaine was stopped in the township of Peracal, near Cúcuta. Driver Mario Schillacci bore credentials from the Venezuelan political police, the DISIP (Dirección de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención). The owner of the shipment, Edwin Rincón, was stopped despite the fact that he was driving a vehicle with military plates. It turned out to be a BMW belonging to DIM director Herminio Fuenmayor. The Rincóns are business associates of Zulia businessman Iván Camacho—an intimate friend of Fuenmayor—then accused of being one of the key men in the drug trade's "Caribbean connection."

Apparently, the police pursuit of the Camacho and Rincón network had involved Osmeiro Carneiro, a commissioner of the DIM linked for some years to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) who was also known for his ties to the editor Rafael Poleo. General Fuenmayor immediately ordered the reopening of a disciplinary investigation against Carneiro dating back five years, in which he was accused of "abuse of authority" in the arrest of soldiers who were selling weapons to the Colombian guerrillas. Although he was left a paraplegic after suffering a stroke, Commissioner Carneiro was arrested and taken to San Cristóbal prison. Afraid that

Fuenmayor might order him killed, Carneiro began to talk. So serious were Carneiro's revelations that the Congress named a special commission to investigate them.

On June 12, 1991, Army Commander Carlos Julio Peñaloza, called on Defense Minister Vice Adm. Jurado Toro to subject General Fuenmayor to a military commission of inquiry, since he possessed "irrefutable evidence of the criminal behavior of said general." Peñaloza requested that the minister seek the urgent authorization of President Pérez, which was necessitated by the rank of the accused. The request was ignored.

One day later, on June 13, the home of newspaper editor and former Democratic Action (AD) congressman Rafael Poleo was assaulted by a commando force which blew open his two safes and carried away all the documents. The editor fled into exile, while public opinion held Fuenmayor's DIM responsible.

Several days later, the Judicial Technical Police (PTJ) seized the presumed authors of the assault on Poleo's house, but because of their links to the DIM, they were turned over to the latter. On July 3, the head of the group, Winston Vivas Useche, was found shot to death in the DIM basement, where he had been held. DIM officials claimed it was a suicide.

Two days later, on July 5, before leaving for the swearing-in of Defense Minister Gen. Fernando Ochoa Antich, an implacable enemy of Fuenmayor, CAP called Fuenmayor to ask him to resign. On July 11, despite being sought by the justice system, Fuenmayor fled to Miami.

But not everything was proving calamitous for Fuenmayor; CAP had not forsaken his friend. In August of that year, CAP publicly stated that he had the results of the investigation into the assault on Rafael Poleo's house, which concluded that Poleo had set it up to look like a kidnapping attempt, and that the death of Vivas Useche was confirmed a "suicide." The president of the ruling AD party, Humberto Celli, was the first to respond that the national executive committee of the AD did not believe the version offered by the President. Despite this, the Superior Judge overseeing the case issued an arrest warrant against Poleo. The Inter-American Press Society and other international bodies protested, but things remained as they were, and Fuenmayor returned to Venezuela.

Who is Ugarte Bresslau?

As on other occasions, CAP deceived the nation when the activities of his agent Luis Rogelio Ugarte Bresslau began to be revealed. "He doesn't exist," CAP first declared. "I have had no other security chief but Orlando García." The then-minister of the secretary of the presidency, Beatriz Rangel, told Congress that she knew of no official with that name working out of her office. "He has never worked in the Miraflores [presidential] Palace," she stated.

Nevertheless, the national press presented the documents which Ugarte Bresslau, alias "Méndez Cárdenas," had

signed as security chief after the departure of Orlando García from the secretariat of the presidency at Miraflores. They also published the trip authorizations paid to Ugarte to accompany CAP, together with Orlando García and Martín Gutiérrez, "former" security chief to Pedro Tinoco, on his trips to the United States, Colombia, and Europe.

Similarly, DISIP head Raúl Jiménez Gainza confirmed that Ugarte Bresslau worked at Miraflores on the DISIP payroll. The Venezuelan vice consul in Miami, Anelo Espinoza, also informed Congress that he had known Ugarte Bresslau in the Miraflores Palace since the first CAP administration in 1974.

According to abundant information in the press (see *El Nacional*, Aug. 13, 1991), Luis (in some publications he is called Lázaro) Rogelio Ugarte Bresslau is of Cuban-Spanish origin, obtained U.S. citizenship, and, finally, only in April 1991, Venezuelan citizenship. He arrived in Venezuela in 1969, when Luis Posada Carriles (convicted of blowing up a Cuban airliner) was working as Venezuelan police chief. From 1971 to 1974, under the name of Luis Contreras, he worked as CIA liaison to the Armed Forces Information Service (SIFA), later replaced by the DISIP, on matters relating to subversion, counterintelligence, and Soviet and Cuban problems.

During 1975-76, Ugarte Bresslau leaves Venezuela for the Dominican Republic. In 1979 he is adviser to the Bank of Bogotá, in Colombia. In 1982 he appears in Ecuador, working at the Pacific Bank of Guayaquil and as security adviser to the presidential campaign of Febres Cordero. He also travels to Uruguay, Argentina, and Spain. In 1984 he returns to Venezuela, then travels to Guatemala to work in the presidential campaign of Vinicio Cerezo, and there he carries out intelligence functions for the Venezuelan government with a diplomatic passport. In 1988 he is incorporated into CAP's electoral campaign, together with Orlando García and the chief of security of Banco Latino, Martín Gutiérrez.

The leaders of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party, Víctor Hugo Di Paola and Rafael Guerra Ramos, accused Ugarte Bresslau of drug trafficking before Congress, at the beginning of hearings on the case. There they sought an investigation into "the connections of this individual with the financial system, specifically with the Banco Latino, due to the fact that it is well known that drug dealing not only operates out of the police and security corps of the state, but is also carried out through economic power, in the financial system and in the business sector."

Di Paola and Guerra Ramos stated that Ugarte Bresslau "is also suspected of having links with Banco Latino Vice President Gustavo Gómez López," who, together with Martín Gutiérrez, has a security office in Altamira where "it appears they are carrying out purchases of the Venezuelan foreign debt" at precisely the time that their former boss Pedro Tinoco had been appointed by CAP as president of the Venezuelan Central Bank (BCV) and as negotiator of the

Venezuelan foreign debt (*El Nacional*, July 26, 1991).

The press speculated that Ugarte Bresslau was similarly linked to Mario Anello, a Cuban-born double agent who lived in Argentina and Uruguay and who became the key figure in a drug-trafficking network that operated from Argentina into both the United States and Europe, a network in which the relatives of Argentine President Carlos Menem are also implicated in what has come to be known as the "Yoma case," now under investigation in Spain by Judge Baltaza Garzón (*El Nacional*, July 30, 1991 and Jan. 28, 1992).

Ugarte Bresslau has also been associated with Cuban-born agent and drug trafficker Ramón Puentes, who also lived in Uruguay and Spain and whom the DEA believes to be the treasurer of the network. Apparently, Puentes participated in a 1984 meeting in Spain in which the Colombian drug cartels joined operations with the Italian mafia, under the protection of high-level political figures in several countries.

"Who protects this person?" asked *El Diario de Caracas* in a Sept. 26, 1991 editorial, referring to Ugarte Bresslau. "Any other Venezuelan would already have been arrested for far less serious crimes." It added:

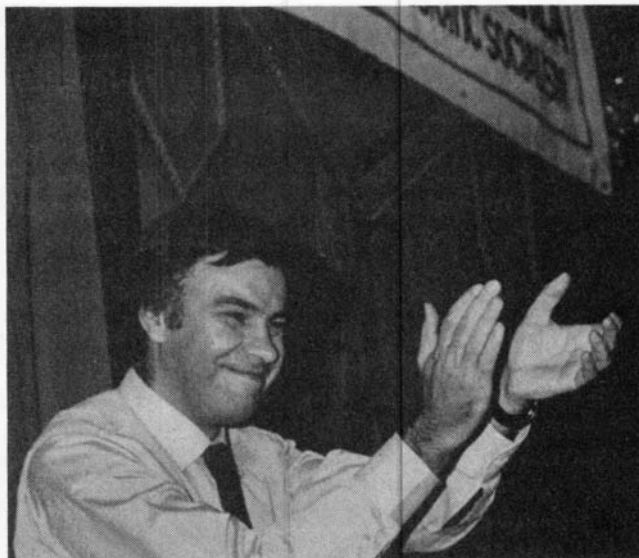
"Lázaro Rogelio Ugarte Bresslau, Armando Méndez Cárdenas and Luis Contreras are but one person with three different names, and is accused of carrying three identity cards. . . . He appears as representative of a company—Celere, Inc.—linked to the drug trade and to money laundering in three different instances in a DEA report. This document was given to the 'Carneiro Commission' last Sept. 4 by PTJ director Mauro Yáñez Pasarella.

"The working minutes of the Drug Investigation Division of that police agency, also given to the Congress by Yáñez Pasarella and, according to him, sent to the criminal court on Feb. 26, 1988, also link that company with a shipment of drugs discovered by U.S. authorities aboard the vessel *Mercedian Continent*.

"According to statements of Interior Minister Alejandro Izaguirre, Ugarte Bresslau did work at Miraflores, and traveled with the President of the Republic on official missions. He was a public official.

"Among the revelations heard by the 'Carneiro Commission' is also [Ugarte Bresslau's] work as a CIA informant and his supposed links to the sabotage of the Cuban airplane in which 72 athletes lost their lives. 'He is known as the *éminence grise* of the death squad which operated out of the SIFA and then the DISIP,'" Osmeiro Carneiro publicly charged.

"Former DISIP director Jiménez Gainza declared: 'I kicked Commissioner Lázaro Ugarte out of the DISIP after receiving the report of Commissioner Anelo Espinoza from Miami, which involved him in a drug matter.' On Tuesday, speaking before Congress, Ugarte Bresslau asked the congressmen not to believe the PTJ, and that the DEA [report] was false."



Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González. He has often relied on his fellow socialist CAP to transfer ETA terrorists from Spain to Ibero-America.

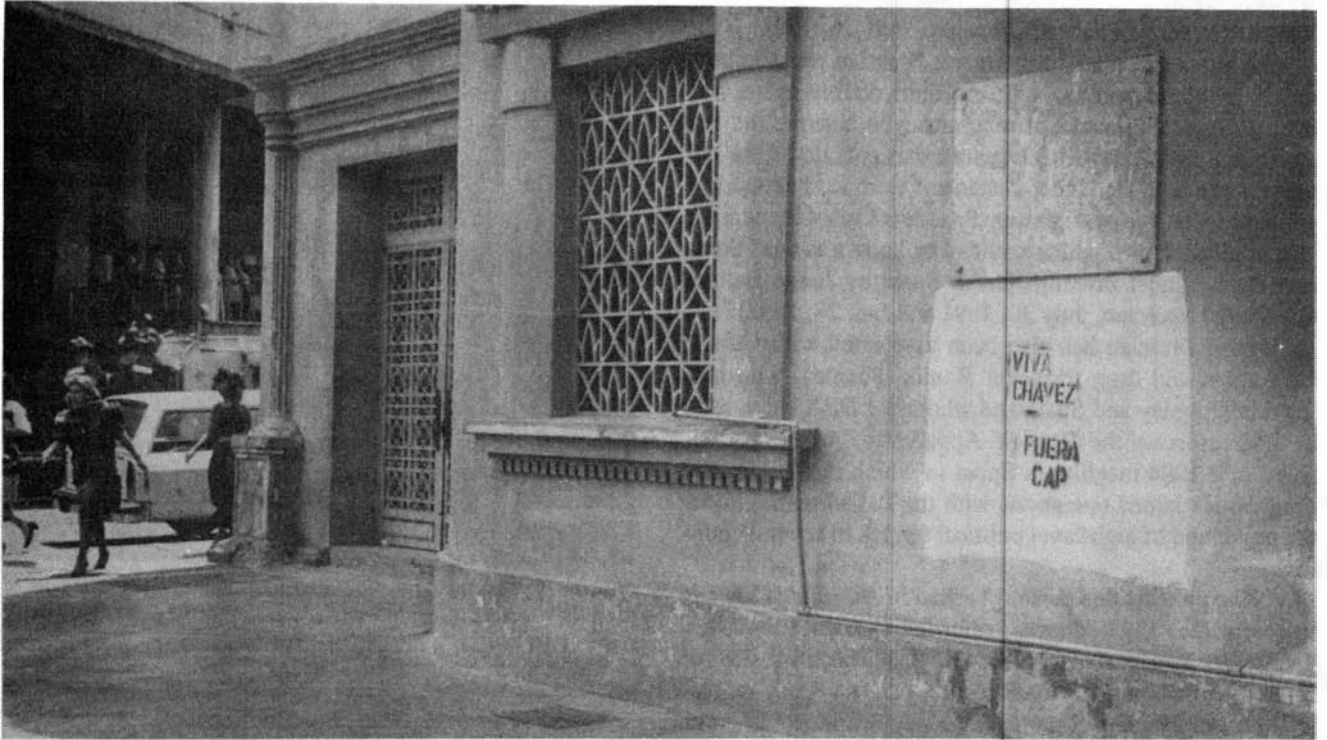
The *El Diario de Caracas* editorial concludes:

"It is obvious that Ugarte's protection has given him tremendous power that has put him above the PTJ, the Interior Ministry, the DISIP, the CIA, the DEA, and all of our laws."

One would have to add that the same networks involved in the drug case around Celere, Inc. in Miami, including the *Mercedian Continent* ship, were captured in late 1991 in Houston and Miami with a cargo from Venezuela amounting to more than 18,000 kilos of cocaine, hidden inside concrete posts. As noted earlier, former Caracas Gov. Ramírez Torres, imprisoned for drug trafficking, said about this cargo that "with the money from that operation, they [the traffickers] planned to participate in the privatization process."

Carneiro draws back the veil

The revelations concerning the President's security gang were so serious that by mid-1991 there were four separate congressional commissions investigating them: the Media Commission was dedicated to investigating intimidation of journalists and the assault on Poleo's home; the Interior Relations Commission was investigating the security of individual complainants and the death of Vivas Useche; the Defense Commission was investigating what was going on with the Bureau of Military Intelligence (DIM) during the Fuenmayor period, and was proposing its reorganization; and finally, given the gravity of the accusations by Commissioner Carneiro, a Special Congressional Commission was created, known as the Carneiro Commission. "Should it be proven," said the press, "even partially, that Carneiro is telling the truth, Venezuela will confront the greatest scandal of corruption, drugs, and abuse of power in its history, and the matter



A wall in Caracas in 1993 reads, "Long Live Chavez, Out with CAP."

will take on international proportions."

With his 23 years as a policeman and as liaison between the DEA and the DIM, with the rank of commissioner general, Osmeiro Carneiro began to be questioned by the congressional commission on July 26 at the San Cristóbal military hospital, where he was being held. Exonerated of all charges a few weeks later, he returned to Caracas where for the following months he continued to attend various congressional hearings upon request, providing new information and evidentiary documentation. In 1992, after serious harassment and judicial persecution against him, he had to leave the country.

The following are the most important of his revelations about CAP's "personal entourage":

Ugarte Bresslau is characterized as a "sinister man." In 1969, when I knew him, said Carneiro, he was called Luis Contreras. He was head of the CIA office that operated out of SIFA, which then became the DISIP. In the 1970s, Carneiro helped to dismantle a "death squad" headed by Ugarte Bresslau which was uncovered in connection with the assassination of the lawyer of Alberto Aguilar Serrada and inspector Alberto Nuñez Tenorio. Policeman Larry Espinosa, a member of the death squad, later told all.

During the Lusinchi presidency, Carneiro saw Ugarte again. He was presented by the DISIP as **Luis Armando Méndez**. "Ugarte is a member of the CIA, an adventurer, drug trafficker. I personally saw his dossier at the DEA. . . . Wherever he goes, death follows."

Herminio Fuenmayor ran telephone espionage through Norberto Villalobos Fuenmayor (Herminio's cousin), whom he made chief of investigations at the DIM. A large part of the espionage equipment was stationed in Miraflores Palace. With this equipment, purchased in Germany by Fuenmayor himself at government expense, lucrative trade activity is conducted by Fuenmayor, in the company of other former policemen like Rafael Rivas Vásquez, through the company Metra 3,500.

Carneiro states that a Fuenmayor subordinate, Col. Rafael Angel Belmonte, personally hired a group of Medellín hitmen to assassinate General Ochoa Antich, but the operation in the end was unsuccessful.

He also describes his investigation into the Caribbean Connection in Maracaibo, where he discovered that Iván Camacho and Edwin Rincón, friends and associates of Herminio Fuenmayor, had built a marina from which motors were sent to the United States for repair. Inside the motors were drugs. When Carneiro reported this to his chief in Maracaibo, Gen. José Antonio Guerra Sánchez, he was asked to suspend his operations and leave the city.

Carneiro stated that the DIM received strange airmail packages, and, on the one occasion that an agent opened one of these, cocaine was found. The package was addressed to a niece of Fuenmayor named Pilar, who was in charge of DIM public relations. This information came from DIM agent Vivas Useche, who worked for Fuenmayor but was on occasion a confidant of Carneiro. He said that he knew Vivas

Useche well, and that he would never commit suicide. He had a "commando's training, made for survival," said Carneiro.

Concerning the police networks linked to CAP and the drug trade, Carneiro added that 1,200 kilos of cocaine had been seized in Calabozo in 1989. The drug financier, who carried DISIP credentials, was linked to the secretary of DISIP director and Cuban-Venezuelan Rafael Rivas Vásquez. Carneiro lamented that CAP merely fired Rivas Vásquez after the incident.

Carneiro called **Orlando García** a "Caribbean gangster," the creator of a terrorist apparatus during the first CAP government, and the primary author of the 1976 bombing of the Cubana de Aviación airplane in which 72 people died. He accused García of being an accomplice in the assassination of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier that same year. Commissioner Carneiro said that he had filmed terrorist Cuban agents who participated in the event, in which they give all the details. Further, he stated, it was no accident that the files on the Cubana airplane case were in the hands of Judge Lucy Hernández Buitrago, who is the current wife of Ugarte Bresslau, and that very important elements of that file which implicated Ugarte and Orlando García in the crime had been adulterated.

The terrorists of '76

On Sept. 21, 1976 just a few blocks from the White House in Washington, D.C., a bomb exploded under the car of the former Chilean foreign minister of the Salvador Allende government, Orlando Letelier, killing him and his American secretary Ronnie Moffit. Investigations concluded that an agent of the Chilean secret police (DINA), Michael Townley (also tied to the CIA), had planted the bomb, together with two exiled Cubans living in the United States. Later, Maj. Armando Méndez Larios, who was also a DINA agent, deserted the Chilean Army and secretly traveled to Washington, where he acknowledged his involvement in the attack on Letelier "on orders from above," and was sent to prison. The "intellectual author" of the crime was said to be the then chief of DINA, Gen. Manuel Contreras. Letelier was buried in Venezuela, where he had lived in exile the previous year.

The attack against Letelier and other events during that period triggered an international reaction to the government of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, including a trade and diplomatic blockade by the United States and other countries.

In September 1991, some 15 years later and with Pinochet out of government, the Letelier case was reopened in Chile with accusations against General Contreras. All the media covered his testimony before Judge Adolfo Banados, who heard the case: "The assassination of Orlando Letelier was committed by the Central Intelligence Agency . . . and also involved men from the Venezuelan Intelligence Bureau, the DISIP," stated Contreras. He added: "This was with the knowledge of Mr. Carlos Andrés Pérez, President of the Venezuelan Republic."

The Chilean judge, through the Foreign Ministry, sent a petition to President Pérez to respond to certain questions regarding the case. The Chilean press also speculated at the time that similar petitions would be sent to former U.S. President George Bush and to Vernon Walters, respectively director and deputy director of the CIA during the period in which the attacks were carried out, and historically linked to the network of Cuban terrorists in Miami.

As evidence against CAP's Cuban agents, Contreras's defense had presented the Chilean court with the testimony of Commissioner Osmeiro Carneiro, and of the lawyer who defended Orlando Bosch in Venezuela in the case of the Cuban airplane bombing, Pío González.

The defense argument of the Chilean DINA was based on the fact that the Letelier assassination was a provocation to force international repudiation and the collapse of the Pinochet regime. Why would a Latin American government that was having problems with the United States, want to kill an internal opponent who had been recently released from jail with a bomb in the middle of the U.S. capital, also killing a citizen of that country, they asked?

Further, there are certain facts that point to the band of terrorists that CAP brought to Venezuela at the inception of his first administration:

- The CIA helped in the reorganization of the DISIP through various Cuban agents trained by it for the Bay of Pigs invasion and later for terrorist actions. Among these are Luis Posada Carriles and Rogelio Ugarte Bresslau, who were then closer to the COPEI government which was about to end. Also included were Orlando García, Ricardo Morales Navarrete, and Rafael Rivas Vásquez, all directly linked to CAP. After only a few months in the country, Morales Navarrete was put in charge of Division 54, the DISIP's foreign intelligence division.

- According to Morales Navarrete, in mid-1976 there was a meeting held in Bonaó, Dominican Republic of all the Cuban exile factions, to carry out actions that would supposedly cause the fall of the Fidel Castro regime. Morales Navarrete and Posada Carriles were there, and a general plan was worked out to include the assassination of Orlando Letelier.

Morales Navarrete explained years later, on Miami television, the details of these operations. He stated that he was working under orders of Orlando García and that he personally presented CAP with a report on the Bonaó meeting and the Letelier assassination plan, three months before the attack.

One year later, CAP sent Diego Arria to Chile to win Letelier's release from prison, and he was brought to Caracas. Because of differences that later surfaced with Arria, Letelier finally went to Washington! Arria, another "jewel" in CAP's circle, had been CAP's ambassador to the United States during his second administration.

- Fifteen days after the Letelier attack, on Oct. 6, 1976,



Vernon Walters.

the bombing of the Cuban commercial airliner of Cubana de Aviación occurred. Seventy-two people died, including the entire Cuban fencing team which had just competed in Venezuela. CAP immediately sent David Morales Bello to Barbados and Cuba to ensure that investigation of the case would take place in Venezuela, which was accomplished despite the fact that the crime took place in Barbados against Cuban citizens and in a Cuban government airplane. Blamed for this “atrocious crime,” according to international law, were Cuban extremist Orlando Bosch (secretly brought to Venezuela by his DISIP friends only days before the bombing), former police chief Luis Posada Carriles, and two Venezuelan aides to the DISIP.

- Both Bosch and Posada Carriles have for years repeatedly proclaimed their innocence, blaming CAP’s police for the assassinations. On the other hand, Morales Navarrete, an anti-Castro Cuban who in his own words was everybody’s agent, when he publicly claimed responsibility for the bombing, stated that it was a legitimate act of war since Cubana de Aviación was transporting Cuban troops and equipment to Angola. Morales Navarrete added that the attack had been planned by CAP security chief Orlando García, and that “we got President Carlos Andrés Pérez’s permission to carry out the operation in the Caribbean, in exchange for running operations against Guyana. . . . We were going to destabilize the

Guyanese government” (*Zeta* magazine, Aug. 15-26, 1991, transcription of the television program on which Morales Navarrete spoke).

In reopening this case, the Venezuelan press noted that Morales Navarrete was assassinated in a Miami bar some time later. In the edition cited above, *Zeta* presented the Morales Navarrete transcription, and added the note: “On Dec. 9, 1981, four men gathered in Suite 1534 of the Holiday Inn in Miami — Ricardo Morales Navarrete, Francisco Chao Hermida, (the famous Venezuelan lawyer) Raymond Aguiar, and Osmeiro Carneiro—to speak at length of the bombing of the Cubana de Aviación airliner. . . . Of these four men, three have died under highly suspicious circumstances; only one, Commissioner Gen. Osmeiro Carneiro, is still alive.”

- Returning to the Letelier case, the Chilean DINA further insisted that CAP’s Cuban agents tried to infiltrate DINA at least twice, sending supposedly anti-Castro Cubans to seek DINA support for terrorist activities. The DINA discovered that they had been sent by the DISIP and returned two of them to the United States, where they were wanted by the FBI. They further stated that Orlando García and Morales Navarrete were not only agents of the CIA and the DISIP, but also of Fidel Castro and of the Cuban secret police (DGI).

- Finally, U.S. prosecutor Eugene M. Propper, responsible for investigating the Letelier case, revealed that the Carlos Andrés Pérez government threw obstacles in the way of his investigations by denying him permission to interrogate Orlando Bosch and other terrorists being held in Venezuela. He did, however, interrogate Rivas Vásquez and Orlando García, who admitted in sworn statements that the Pérez government had brought Cubans accused of terrorism in the United States into Venezuelan security agencies; they nonetheless denied any involvement in the Letelier attack.

CAP terrorists today?

With such a history in the area of international terrorism, CAP has always been considered by those who know him well to be an expert in handling such cases. His friend Felipe González (Prime Minister of Spain) has on several occasions relied on his help in transferring ETA terrorists to Ibero-America, under certain conditions. His Oil Minister Valentín Hernández was the negotiator, for example, when the terrorist “Carlos” kidnapped Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries representatives in the 1970s.

In addition to what we have covered in Chapter 3 regarding CAP’s public interventions in favor of communist guerrillas such as the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, the FMLN of El Salvador, and the Guerrilla Coordinator and M-19 of Colombia, it is worth emphasizing that in the M-19 case in particular, we are dealing with narco-terrorists whose leaders have repeatedly insisted on dialogue with drug traffickers and on legalizing the drug trade. They were also responsible for the

siege against the Colombian Justice Palace in 1985 and of murdering more than 10 Supreme Court magistrates who were overseeing drug trafficking cases.

What military, paramilitary, or terrorist response was the dying CAP regime plotting, to allow it to survive following the two military coup attempts against it in 1992, many Venezuelan news analysts have asked. This question is not rhetorical. Two months after the Feb. 14 coup attempt, various Venezuelan media published the rumor that, because of internal crises within the Venezuelan Armed Forces and security agencies, a corps of foreign mercenaries had been hired to protect CAP and to guarantee the failure of any other coup attempt by his opponents.

Hermínio Fuenmayor, the former head of the DIM and part of CAP's special operations team, told the press that there existed a subversive plan to assassinate Venezuelan opposition leaders such as writer Arturo Uslar Pietri, former President Rafael Caldera, and Attorney General Ramón Escobar Salom. The intention, according to Fuenmayor, was to blame the government for the assassinations and cause its fall.

Uslar Pietri commented: "President Pérez has had the tendency to surround himself with foreign and some Venezuelan professional police, to have a very unrespectable and uncommendable security apparatus which could trigger serious disturbances in the country that would allow things like this to be said and to foster the belief that they could happen. There is a very faint line between certain kinds of police and certain kinds of criminals."

CAP considered Uslar's statement false and exaggerated. But shortly afterwards, on May 10, MAS leader Teodoro Petkoff identified two sites where mercenary squads were being trained: one in Guárico and one on the "Somosagua" estate (along the coast of Falcón state), owned by Martín Gutiérrez Ramírez, the "former" Banco Latino security chief and adviser to CAP along with Orlando García and Ugarte Bresslau.

'Somosagua'

According to Petkoff, whose charges were later confirmed by journalist José Vicente Rangel, residents of the area reported on the disembarkation of nearly 100 men in the area of San Juan de los Cayos, heading for "Somosagua." Days later, the Defense Ministry ordered an inspection visit to the place and found no mercenaries.

However, Army Col. Ernesto Durán Barrera, one of the DIM chiefs in Falcón, following a March 20, 1990 raid of "Somosagua" to check out suspicious occurrences, prepared a report. Colonel Durán's report, according to *El Nacional* on June 10, 1992, stated that "among the presumed occurrences were overflights by small airplanes at low altitude, to discharge certain dark shapes; an intense mobilization of all-terrain vehicles on the property; numerous security personnel . . . ; bearing of weapons exclusively used by the police and

military, Uzi sub-machineguns . . . ; military-style sentry posts along the property perimeters; a heliport; mistreatment of residents of the town La Viña."

The report continued: "The presumed owner of the estate 'Somosagua,' citizen Martín Gutiérrez . . . bore government license plates on his vehicle."

One month later, the head of a PTJ delegation from Falcón carried out its own investigation of the case. Its report indicated that "on the day of the raid, it was not possible to inspect the entire estate, because the colonel in charge of the proceedings received telephone calls from Miraflores, from military and from political figures, demanding his departure. They never got to see the airstrip because of the immediate order to withdraw from the place. They had one helicopter, registration YV503CP, which transported staff from Caracas."

A second PTJ report added: "With such characteristics as mentioned earlier, with such a large number of personnel, this estate could not have been very profitable if one considers that it only had 1,200 livestock, insufficient to maintain the estate nor cover the payroll. The investment in equipment, motorcycles, machinery, vehicles and infrastructure in general did not conform to a company truly committed to agriculture."

Finally, the report noted that according to residents of the area, "that estate was owned by President of the Republic Carlos Andrés Pérez, who used DISIP Commissioner Martín Gutiérrez and his two sons as front-men. The security personnel for the estate were former police officials."

Attacks

In one form or another, apart from brutal repression and constant threats against the political sector and the media, starting in mid-1992 Venezuelans began to see something which had not occurred for a long time in Venezuela: political assaults, sometimes confused with the rise in common crime, against business and political leaders, journalists, and military men, directly or against their families. Also, the Catholic Church has exposed a campaign of threats and intimidation against it.

A supposed terrorist commando squad, bearing every sign of having been created in a laboratory, has also appeared under the name "Bolivarian Liberation Forces." These terrorists claim responsibility for the September 1992 attack against labor leader Antonio Ríos and for another in November against the former president of the social security institute, Pedro César Izquier. The presumed authors of the latter attack insisted to the media that they have a list of another 127 targeted victims.

Although the children of Antonio Ríos at once pointed to CAP as being behind the attack on their father, Ríos was more discreet. After his recovery and later arrest for alleged involvement in a corruption case, Ríos stated: "I am a political prisoner of the same person who tried to kill me."