

The grey Mercedes wound its way through the narrow streets of *urbanización* Ruperto Lugo, a deteriorating, working-class neighborhood in northwestern Caracas. Occasionally, as the car stopped for a light, a passing pedestrian or a driver in a nearby car glanced in and reacted with surprise. Some waved or shouted hello and the bulky, graying Senator in the front seat, already looking tired at the start of yet another long day, waved back. Finally, our car reached its destination, a huge, low-income, public housing project on the edge of the district. The candidate and his bodyguard jumped from the car and the waiting crowd surged forward, shouting "Luis Herrera, Luis Herrera." Social Christian (COPEI) militants, some dressed in the party's green colors, reached through the crowd to shake their presidential candidate's hand. As our group walked through housing project high-rises, Senator Herrera entered some of the buildings for prearranged visits to the apartments of COPEI activists. Amid the second-hand furniture—the walls often adorned with religious paintings and a poster of the candidate—Herrera talked earnestly with various family heads—a factory worker, nurse, and transit policeman. As we left one crowded dwelling, I asked "How many live in this apartment?" "There are 16 of us—3 families," a woman replied, "all 100 percent *copeyano*."

Once every 5 years, Venezuelan voters—now numbering some 5.5

million—elect a president, both houses of Congress, and the municipal councils.¹ Universal suffrage extends to everyone over the age of 18, and voting is technically obligatory.² In December 1978, shortly before this *Report* appears in print, Venezuela will hold its fifth presidential election since the reintroduction of democracy in 1958. Whatever the outcome, incumbent President Carlos Andrés Pérez will peacefully hand the reins of government to the victor as have his four predecessors in the country's recent democratic era. Given the current domination of military regimes, generally authoritarian in nature, throughout South America, Venezuela's democratic electoral process merits further examination. No other country on the continent enjoys such intensely contested elections, nor such a high level of popular involvement in the campaign.³

The Selling of a Venezuelan President: The Politics of Exhaustion

Luis Herrera Campins' hectic trip to Ruperto Lugo was the second of three walking tours he had scheduled for Caracas that week (mid-June 1978). During the walk, he also addressed a series of meetings of functional interest groups (business, labor, a woman's organization) and gatherings of *copeyano* militants. Then Herrera departed for the interior on his regular three-to-four-day weekend tour of the country's smaller cities and villages. Venezuelan presidential campaigns involve an

extremely high level of direct contact between the candidate and the electorate. Herrera in particular, a warm, gregarious man, favors small, face-to-face gatherings over mass rallies. In his efforts to meet as many voters as possible, he typically works a 16-hour day, sleeps no more than 5 to 6 hours (the night before the housing project tour he had managed only 4), and catches 5-minute naps in his car or plane.

"I guess you could say that I started efforts to reunite the party, and my campaign for the presidency, two days after our disastrous 1973 defeat," he told me. "Since getting the nomination last August (16 months before the election), I generally have campaigned six days per week and try to keep one day open for rest and quiet planning with my advisers."

Herrera Campins' principal opponent, Deputy Luis Piñerúa Ordaz of the incumbent Acción Democrática (AD) Party also engages in frequent walking tours, but more often stages mass meetings of the party faithful, the general public, or specialized interest groups. Given AD's vastly superior financial resources in this campaign, he also benefits from a huge mass media campaign. Yet, Piñerúa, too, has been intensely working for years toward this moment. As AD Secretary of Organization during the 1973 election, and later as Secretary General of the party, he carefully cultivated grassroots support for his candidacy.

For the leading "third party" candidate, José Vicente Rangel, standard-bearer of the Movement to Socialism (MAS), this is the second consecutive presidential race. In one typical campaign day which I spent with Rangel, he began his activities with a 7:00 A.M. gathering of sanitation workers in Caracas' Los Caobos park. He then moved on to an open air market to discuss food prices with housewives doing their morning shopping. After meeting with workers at a cement factory at the edge of town, the candidate paused briefly for lunch. The afternoon was spent walking up and down the hills of Gramovén, a vast shantytown above the road to the Caracas airport. Rangel's day concluded with an outdoor speech and rally (in front of a Catholic Church) in the working-class district of Lídice, some 15 hours after his first appearance.

Rangel, a handsome and charismatic man, is probably the most effective orator of the three principal candidates. Moreover, he shares Herrera Campins' preference for direct, face-to-face contacts with small groups of voters. It is an activity in which both men excel, intently grasping the shoulder or hand of the prospective supporter in an attempt to establish personal rapport. Because of MAS' extremely limited financial resources, the party places particular emphasis on walking tours through *barrios* (low income neighborhoods) such as Gramovén. "I never really stopped campaigning since the last election," Rangel told me. "In the last four and one-half years I have visited virtually every working class *barrio* in Venezuela."

Running for the Venezuelan presidency, then, is clearly hard work. For the major political parties (AD and COPEI), it is also very expensive. Given television's prevalence in Venezuela today (nearly every home seems to have one), it isn't surprising that increasing stress has been placed on media "blitzes" for "the selling of the president." AD and the Social

Christians supplement their TV campaigns with radio, newspaper, magazine, and movie theater ads (before the feature film). Nobody seems to know (or admits to knowing) precisely how much is spent by the major parties, but experts agree the figures are staggering. Two noted American political scientists who covered the 1973 campaign estimated that AD and COPEI each spent over \$40 million in the 1973 election.⁴ Other analysts place expenditures far higher, and the 1973 figure will be exceeded this year. The 1973 outlay by each major party was approximately the same amount spent by Richard Nixon in his winning U.S. campaign one year earlier. On a per capita basis, expenditure in the current Venezuelan election will exceed the outlay of the Carter-Ford race by a factor of more than five to one! Moreover, these estimates do not include large amounts of funds which the incumbent administration (COPEI in 1973, AD today) spends indirectly for its party's candidate. It is likely, therefore, that Venezuela's two major parties expend more money per voter in their campaigns than do electoral contestants anywhere else in the world.

Such expenditures have inevitably led to the Americanization of Venezuelan elections and the introduction of Madison Avenue techniques. Foreign consultants were introduced into Venezuelan campaigns in 1973 when AD candidate Carlos Andrés Pérez used several Americans on a part-time basis and COPEI employed West German campaign technicians. In the current race, both major parties and the leading independent candidate, Diego Arria, have turned to American media experts. Early in the campaign the *adecos* brought in Joe Napolitan—a former consultant to Hubert Humphrey and author of *The Election Game and How to Play It* (1972)—to work on the Piñerúa campaign. Napolitan, who worked for Pérez in 1973, is the only foreigner working in the current race with previous Venezuelan

experience. He has been joined by Clifton White, a strategist for former Senator James Buckley of New York. At first the Social Christians refrained from hiring foreign advisers and, indeed, pointed an accusing finger at AD for "letting Americans run their campaign." Later, when the COPEI media strategy floundered, they, too, succumbed to the lure of alleged American expertise and brought in David Garth, author of Edward Koch's upset mayoral victory in New York City. Diego Arria, the former Minister of Information who is running as a well-financed independent, has demonstrated his ecumenical outlook by employing John Dierdorf, a campaign aide to Gerald Ford, and Pat Cadell, pollster for Jimmy Carter. Of course each party accuses the other of depending on foreigners, simultaneously refusing to deny (or confirm) their own use of outsiders.

The various Venezuelan third parties (mostly on the left)—MAS, MIR, MEP, FUN—have no such resources. In 1973, for example, the combined campaign expenditures of all third party candidates was less than *one tenth* the AD and COPEI outlays. MAS and MIR, the leading Marxist parties, rely heavily on posters, handouts, and extensive volunteer labor by student activists. Only rarely does a paid Rangel ad appear on television or in the movie theaters.⁵ For the other three leftist candidates and the two rightists, the purse strings are even tighter. It is rumored by inside campaign observers that MAS has received unpaid tactical advice from campaign technicians furnished by the Italian Communist Party.⁶ The *masistas* strenuously deny this.

Background to the 1978 Campaign

In any Venezuelan national campaign, Acción Democrática begins as the front-running party. Its 900,000 registered members far exceed the membership of any other Venezuelan political party. *Adecos* have secured the largest congressional delegation in every democratic election held in the

country and will undoubtedly lead in this year's congressional race. Finally, in presidential campaigns, only once (in 1968) has the AD candidate lost, and then, only because of a party split that drew substantial support from the *adeco* candidate.⁷

Five years ago, AD candidate Carlos Andrés Pérez launched one of the most effective electoral campaigns in recent Latin American history. Skillfully using the mass media, he projected himself as a man of great strength and energy, and reversed a 15-year decline in AD's vote total, achieving a victory of stunning proportions over his COPEI opponent. The 49 percent of the vote attained by Pérez nearly equaled the highest total ever reached by a presidential candidate in Venezuela's modern democratic era (1958-1978).⁸ Once in office, the new president set about broadening his already substantial support base. During the first year of his administration, he used emergency economic powers granted him by the congress to raise the minimum wage and grant workers extensive indemnification protection against dismissal. He promised the country more jobs, schools, and agricultural output and called for a more equitable tax system that would tap the income of the nation's wealthy for the first time. Moreover, President Pérez inherited an incredible oil bonanza produced by the 1973 OPEC price increases. Government revenues during Pérez's first year in office were triple the previous year's, and the current administration has been able to spend more money in 5 years than the total government budget during the previous 143 of the nation's history! Expenditures for agriculture, education, and industrial development were expanded correspondingly.

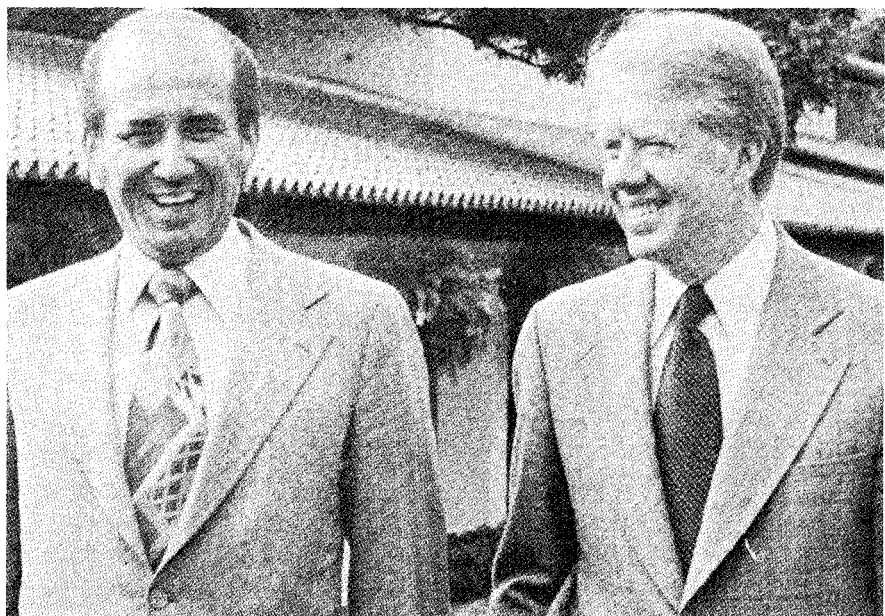
Given the benefit of an incumbent administration, a dynamic president,

and such extensive economic resources, AD might have been expected to start the current presidential campaign with a tremendous advantage. Yet, at the start of the 1978 campaign, journalists and politicians to whom I spoke described a national mood of disappointment and uneasiness. Opinion polls conducted at that time indicated COPEI candidate Luis Herrera had established a lead of some 6 percentage points over his less dynamic *adeco* opponent.

Several factors contributed to Acción Democrática's inauspicious start, some of them attributable to administration policies and others beyond the government's control. To begin with, President Pérez had inadvertently raised popular expectations beyond reasonable levels. Like his friend Jimmy Carter, the Venezuelan president had a tendency to promise more than he could deliver. Oil wealth brought great prosperity to a minority of the population, slightly raised the economic level of many others, and accelerated sharply the rate of inflation for all.⁹ In Caracas, the cost of middle income housing had exploded, with new, two-bedroom apartments costing more than \$140,000 to buy (the usual practice) or upward of \$650 per month to rent.

The nation's cities, particularly Caracas, have suffered from a combination of rapid urban migration—Venezuela is now 80 percent urban—and chaotic economic expansion. Each month some 6-8,000 new vehicles are added to Caracas' already-clogged streets, intensifying the mammoth traffic jams. Crime and pollution, the twin nemeses of modern urban life, have reached alarming proportions in the nation's capital. Urban services, particularly water and electricity, have failed to keep up with demand and Caracas has been hit with periodic blackouts and water shortages. A recent poll revealed that during 1977, two-thirds of all Venezuelans experienced some breakdown of water or electrical delivery. Not surprisingly, services have become a major campaign issue.

Finally, government efforts to alleviate these problems have been plagued by inefficiency and corruption. Huge increases in government oil revenues have opened up new opportunities for plundering the public treasury. INOS, the government agency charged with laying water and sewage lines (and thereby reducing serious water shortages) is known as a cesspool of corruption. The



Presidents Carlos Andres Pérez and Jimmy Carter in Caracas, March 29, 1978.

Comptroller General's office recently charged INOS with consistently overpricing, overbuying, overcharging, and distributing contracts without competitive bids. In 1976, the nation's Auditor General resigned in protest, accusing the government of only investigating 2 percent of the 19,000 objectionable government payments to private firms his office had uncovered. Corruption has reached such alarming proportions that Rómulo Betancourt and other members of the president's own party decry the low level of public morality. A recent Gallup poll indicated that 70 percent of all respondents believed that government corruption is a serious problem, while 36 percent felt the current administration is doing nothing to alleviate it.

In short, while most Venezuelans are probably living better now than ever before, improvements have often failed to match expectations. The lower half of the population is well aware that their gains have been marginal compared with those of the upper-middle and upper classes. And, for all citizens, the oil boom has proved a mixed blessing, bringing with it inflation, chaotic urban growth, spiraling crime, corruption, and insufficient urban services.

Acción Democrática Nominates a Candidate: Division and Conflict

At the start of the current campaign, AD difficulties were compounded by internal party divisions and leadership clashes. The most public arena for *adeco* conflict was the party's 1977 presidential primary, the first of its kind in Latin America.¹⁰ AD's nearly one million members were offered the choice of two congressional leaders with strongly contrasting styles and images. Deputy Luis Piñerúa Ordaz in many ways represented the traditional populist *adeco* self-image as the "party of the people." Born of lower-middle-class origins and never having finished high school, Piñerúa worked his way up the party ranks to become Governor, Minister

of the Interior, Congressman, and, ultimately, Secretary General of AD. He remains the consummate product of the *adeco* machine—steady, loyal, ready to do his work for the party and to wait his turn. Piñerúa Ordaz is respected by his political allies and opponents alike for his organizational skill, feel for the popular pulse, dedication, honesty, and personal integrity. His limitations are equally evident. He is neither a man of great intellectual creativity nor charisma; he is an administrator rather than a leader. My own first encounter with Piñerúa illustrated this vividly. A short man, he stood unassumingly in front of his campaign headquarters on a major Caracas thoroughfare, surrounded by his campaign workers. Pedestrians walked by in large numbers and none noticed him or said hello. Though a presidential candidate, he was still "the average Venezuelan," lost in the crowd.

Opposing Deputy Piñerúa was Jaime Lusinchi, leader of the AD delegation in the Chamber of Deputies. Lusinchi is widely admired in the Congress for his sense of humor, pleasant personality, and parliamentary skills. If Piñerúa represented the traditional picture of Acción Democrática, Lusinchi projected the more modern image that some see as the AD of the future. While Piñerúa tended to appeal to the party's traditional blue-collar and peasant voter base, Lusinchi, a pediatrician, represented the nation's growing professional and middle classes.

Behind the Lusinchi-Piñerúa contest, however, also lay a more fundamental conflict between President Pérez and the AD party machinery. Some degree of conflict between the president and his party has existed in most previous administrations as each chief executive has sought to demonstrate that he is his own man. President Pérez' flamboyant style, obvious desire for personal popularity, and failure to be a "team man," however, had put him at a greater distance than normal from

his party machinery. Party spokesmen were particularly disturbed by the president's appointment of independents (some of them inimical to *adeco* leaders) to the Cabinet and other high-ranking positions. For example, they were furious when President Pérez appointed Carmelo Lauría, a ranking business leader with no ties to AD, to the powerful post of Secretary to the President. "That position is critical in gaining access to the president's ear," one high-ranking *adeco* told me. "Picking an independent to hold it did not sit well with party activists." "Listen," he added vehemently, "he can choose independents for other positions, but that one is ours."¹¹ Pérez had also caused some consternation among top *adeco* politicians by weakening the party's prior links with well-established big business groups (the Boultons, Eugenio Bondoza in favor of a more aggressive and modern "new capitalists" such as Lauria himself and the Cianeros family.

Finally, the AD primary involved a personal conflict and a struggle for party leadership between the president and ex-president Rómulo Betancourt, the party's founder and most revered elder statesman. Ironically, Pérez had begun his political career as Betancourt's personal secretary and had moved through the *adeco* ranks toward the presidency as the "old man's" protégé. Once in office, however, the new president had struck his own course and had abandoned several policies dear to Betancourt's heart. Most notable of these was the so-called "Betancourt Doctrine" in foreign policy which stipulated staunch opposition to (and diplomatic nonrecognition of) both Castro's Cuba and Latin America's rightist military regimes. Seeking to establish Venezuela (and himself) as a Third-World leader, Pérez has abandoned Betancourt's hard-line anticommunism, established friendly diplomatic ties with Cuba, and, at the same time, dealt more openly with right-wing military dictatorships in Brazil and

Argentina.¹² In addition to his dissatisfaction with Pérez's policies, Don Rómulo (as his admirers call him), a man of unquestioned integrity, was also upset over the high level of corruption and "immorality" in the present administration.

As the primary developed, then, each of the two presidents sought to implant his own leadership, and his own vision of Venezuela, on the party and on the prospective AD nominee. Betancourt, still a powerful figure in the party machinery, placed himself squarely behind the candidacy of his close friend Luis Piñerúa. Officially, President Pérez remained staunchly neutral, but his preference for Lusinchi was widely known. On July 17, 1977, over 740,000 *adeco* members cast their ballots and overwhelmingly selected Luis Piñerúa. To be sure, Lusinchi had never really stood a chance and both he and President Pérez realized months before the primary that they were beaten. Betancourt and the AD party machinery had geared up for Piñerúa, and their network of people who had been promised jobs in a new administration, people for whom the party had secured public housing and other direct personal contacts built up over the years were more than enough to insure victory.

Three weeks later, at the AD convention formally endorsing Piñerúa's candidacy, party blood-letting continued. In his speech to the delegates, Betancourt pointedly criticized government corruption and implicitly disassociated the new candidate from the record of the current administration. The party's grand old man showed his coolness toward Pérez by speaking only of "the president" and never mentioning the chief executive by name. Similarly, in his acceptance speech, Piñerúa suggested that his administration would be quite different from the current one. On the other hand, Carlos Andres Pérez, not surprisingly, insisted to the assembled delegates that AD's

only chance of winning the election lay in a strong defense of his own administration's record. In the weeks after the convention, AD wounds were slow to heal. At a January 7, 1978 party assembly, Betancourt spoke openly of party-government differences and cited "public immorality," inflation, crime, and poor public services as major campaign issues. Subsequently, several letters from Betancourt to party leaders (all leaked to the press) took President Pérez to task for permitting corruption and administering a weak foreign policy. Pérez, in turn, was rumored to be so incensed that he threatened to deny administration aid to the Piñerúa campaign, or even to back the independent candidacy of his friend and Information Minister, Diego Arria, unless the attacks ceased.

COPEI: Party Unity and the Coronation of a Candidate

Like Acción Democrática (or any large political party), COPEI has also experienced internal debates and divisions. To be sure, the Social Christians are far more ideologically heterogeneous today than are the *adecos*. Their viewpoints range from Opus Dei traditionalists and business-oriented fiscal conservatives on the right, to communitarian, quasi-socialists on the left.¹³ But, unlike AD—which suffered three debilitating schisms in the 1960s—COPEI has never expelled nor lost a party faction. Due in part to the dominant role of its founder, Rafael Caldera (the party's presidential candidate in every election from 1947 through 1968), internal differences have been kept within manageable bounds. In 1977, the *copeyanos* moved toward the selection of their presidential candidate more harmoniously united than ever.

Selection of the COPEI nominee was carried out through a national convention, rather than a primary. Months before the Social Christian delegates convened, it was clear their overwhelming choice would be Luis Herrera Campins. A founder of

the *copeyano* youth movement at the time of the party's inception in 1946, Herrera has served 15 years in the Chamber of Deputies and one term in the Senate. While the career of this opponent, Luis Piñerúa has developed close to the country's rural, grassroots, Herrera—a lawyer and journalist—has had considerable international experience as his party's delegate to the world conference of parliamentarians and to various international Christian Democratic Congresses. As a member of COPEI's National Directorate since the 1950s and, more recently, leader of the party's congressional delegation, the Senator stands squarely within the *copeyano* centrist "official wing." Yet, he is generally considered more progressive than long-time COPEI standard-bearer Rafael Caldera. Indeed, he was favored by the *copeyano* left for the nomination in both 1973 and the current campaign. In 1973, then-President Caldera apparently used his influence to block Herrera Campins' nomination, fearing Herrera's ties to the party's left would cost COPEI critical middle-class and business support.

After the Social Christians stunning defeat in 1973, Herrera Campins began to tour the country seeking both to unite the party and to build support for his own nomination. By 1977, the extremely popular Senator had secured the backing of all the party's ideological wings. On August 17, 1977 the 4,552 delegates to the COPEI national convention nominated him by acclamation. *Copeyano* leaders, convinced that the country was ready for a change and that they had fielded a far stronger candidate than AD, looked toward the race with scarcely concealed confidence and enthusiasm.

MAS and the Venezuelan Left: The Search for Unity

Following 20 years of Acción Democrática's predominance in Venezuelan electoral politics and COPEI's emergence as AD's major

challenger, the role of the nation's "third parties" remains unclear. In the first three elections held during the modern democratic era, third-party presidential candidates secured a sizable percentage of the vote, ranging from a total of 35 percent in 1958 to 47 percent in 1963. In the 1973 campaign, however, support for challengers to AD and COPEI collapsed. The reform-oriented URD (which had drawn between 19 and 33 percent of the vote in the previous 3 presidential elections) and the left-of-center MEP (which drew nearly 20 percent during its first campaign in 1968) both failed to exceed 5 percent of the vote in the last election. In addition, the far-rightist CCN (National Civic Crusade), which had secured a substantial congressional vote in the 1968 election, virtually disappeared from the political scene. In all, the 10 presidential candidates ranged against AD and COPEI in 1973 attained a total of only 14.5 percent of the vote, less than one-half their lowest previous combined total. Consequently, many political analysts argued that the 1973 election was the first step toward a two party Venezuelan political system.

Development since the last national election suggest that reports of the third parties' demise may be premature. During that period, the Marxist left—particularly MAS and, to a lesser extent, MIR (the Leftist Revolutionary Movement)—has reorganized, recast its image, and emerged as the principal challenger to AD-COPEI dominance. Essentially, the two leading leftist parties have attempted to extricate themselves from the isolation caused by their unpopular and unsuccessful guerrilla effort in the 1960s.¹⁴ The core of their current support is found among students, sectors of the labor movement (particularly younger, skilled, industrial workers), and professional elements of the middle class. Marxists currently lead the student governments in 50 percent of the nation's high schools and universities. They have also been

elected to high-ranking positions in several professional organizations (including the national association of journalists), and demonstrate considerable strength within the petroleum workers' union, among iron and steel workers, and in the industrial unions of Caracas, Ciudad Guayana, Carabobo, Aragua, and Zulia.

MIR, led by its co-founder (and only congressional representative), Americo Martín, remains the most militant of the country's four leftist parties. While *mirista* strength in some strategic labor unions and on the nation's campuses has been growing, the party has so far failed to attract a substantial following among the general electorate. MAS—whose congressional delegation includes Teodoro Petkoff, Eloy Torres, and other former leaders of the Communist Party's guerrilla effort—rejects MIR's strident Leninism, favoring a more moderate Marxist stance akin to Italian Eurocommunism.¹⁵ Having left the Venezuelan Communist Party in a protest against democratic centralism and Stalinism, *masista* leaders seem firmly committed to free debate and electoral democracy. In 1973 the party purposely went outside the ranks of its own membership to choose José Vicente Rangel as its presidential candidate in a further effort to moderate its image. Rangel, a respected lawyer and journalist, had served as a Congressman for the URD (a non-Marxist, left-of-center party) during the period of guerrilla insurrection and had never been associated with the *masista* leadership's insurgent activities.

Following a rather modest showing in its first electoral campaign in 1973, MAS has emerged as the leading party of the left and the nation's principal third party.¹⁶ *Masista* support is particularly strong in the Caracas metropolitan area, home of one-fourth of the Venezuelan electorate. In a 1977 Gallup poll of greater Caracas, 21 percent of the voters were identified as AD

supporters, 16 percent identified with COPEI, and 10 percent supported MAS.¹⁷ National surveys conducted during the first 6 months of 1978 indicate that total third party support—principally for MAS and the independent candidate, Diego Arria—is likely to reach 25 percent of the vote in this December's election, some 10 percent above the 1973 total.

As MAS moved toward the selection of its 1978 candidate, however, its prospects seemed clouded by internal divisions and by differences between the parties of the left. As they have moderated their political image, *masistas* have found themselves outflanked on the left by the more militant *miristas*. The problem has been particularly serious on the nation's university campuses, a critical source of party activists. In the 1977 elections at the Venezuelan Central University (Caracas), MIR candidates ended five years of MAS dominance in student government. *Mirista* upsets followed at the University of Carabobo and at Los Andes. Similarly, in union elections at the huge, government-owned SIDUR steel plant (Ciudad Guayana), MAS candidates lost ground to MIR and COPEI slates. In the wake of these setbacks, MAS Deputy-Secretary-General Teodoro Petkoff blamed party youth leaders (who were identified with *masista* Secretary General Pompeyo Márquez) for the losses on the university campuses. Petkoff, in turn, came under sharp attack by Germán Lairer, a leader of the party's most moderate wing and, with Petkoff, a co-founder of MAS in 1971. Lairer and fellow moderate José Urbina accused Petkoff of being a Stalinist in disguise, not truly committed to the party's democratic principles. The "Teodoristas" (followers of Petkoff) dismissed the moderates as closet Social Democrats, little different from AD.

Amid these party squabbles, two candidates emerged to seek the MAS presidential nomination. The first was José Vicente Rangel, a member of the *masista* delegation to

the Chamber of Deputies and the party's standard-bearer in the previous election. The handsome, impeccably-dressed, 47-year-old lawyer-journalist, had developed a high degree of voter recognition and respect during his 1973 campaign and subsequent political activity. Indeed, in a 1976 national survey conducted well before a clear AD or COPEI candidate emerged, Rangel was named by more voters than was any other single politician as their choice for president in 1978. His highly respectable image offered MAS a clear break with its founders' guerrilla past and an opportunity to attract voters among lower and middle class moderates. For this reason, he was backed by MAS Secretary General Pompeyo Márquez.

Rangel's principal opponent was Teodoro Petkoff, leader of the MAS congressional delegation, party Deputy-Secretary-General, and MAS' most widely known and popular spokesman. Teodoro, as he is known in party ranks, joined the Venezuelan Communist Party at the age of 16 and was active during the 1950s in underground opposition to the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. During the 1960s he was a leader of the Communist Party's guerrilla activities and engineered two dramatic escapes from prison. Later in the decade, after the guerrilla's effort's collapse, his two books attacking the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and calling for a non-Soviet form of Venezuelan Marxism featuring free debate and democracy made him the leading spokesman for the dissidents who quit the Communist Party in 1970 to form MAS.¹⁸ A man of immense personal charm and sweeping intellectual interests, Petkoff is possibly the most popular member of Congress among the nation's television and press corps. One leading congressional correspondent (and no supporter of MAS) indicated to me that Petkoff is the most well-prepared and

articulate member of the Chamber of Deputies. In seeking the MAS nomination, Petkoff argued that, however great Rangel's qualifications, *masistas* should not again support a candidate who was not a party member. Petkoff's opponents argued that the fiery leader's guerrilla past would alienate many potential MAS voters.

One month before the party's December 1976 convention, Petkoff withdrew from the race after it became apparent that Rangel had enough votes to secure the nomination. *Masistas* had apparently decided to leave the militantly left vote to MIR in hopes of attracting a larger number of more moderate voters. While they had lost the presidential race, the "Teodoristas" emerged from the convention with 19 of 35 seats on the MAS national directory, thereby assuming control of the party organization. Strenuously denying rumors of a personal rift with Party Secretary Márquez, Petkoff and his allies rallied behind Rangel's candidacy.

The selection of the *masista* candidate fully two years before the December 1978 election posed a problem for the other parties of the Venezuelan left. During the previous national campaign, MIR had endorsed Rangel for the presidency,

but had been rebuffed in its efforts to field a single, MAS-MIR congressional slate. With the advent of the current campaign, efforts were launched to form a united front, and select a presidential candidate who could be endorsed by all four parties of the left. In addition to MAS and MIR, the proposed front would include the Communist Party and MEP (the Popular Electoral Movement). While spokesmen for all these parties expressed enthusiasm for unification, differences persisted over critical details. Should a leftist coalition involve only the presidential candidate or should a single congressional slate also be chosen? By what means would the presidential standard-bearer be selected? What role would each party play in the proposed coalition? And, of course, who would be the presidential candidate?

In the absence of a quick resolution to these problems, each party proceeded to name its own candidate, while making clear its willingness to withdraw that nominee in the future should unification be achieved. The Communists, probably the left's weakest party since the defection of its best leaders to MAS, selected Hector Mujica, president of the national association of journalists. While well-liked in Venezuelan



Luis Herrera Campins (COPEI) touring low-income housing project during his campaign.

political and press circles, Mujica has little national following. MEP, the left's least radical party (indeed, the only one that does not label itself Marxist), turned to its co-founder Luis Beltrán Prieto, who led MEP out of Acción Democrática in 1968. The tall, aging educator is known simply as "el maestro" (the teacher). The nation's only black presidential candidate, Prieto is widely loved for his warmth and humanitarian concern. He has had an illustrious career as an author (25 books), educator, Minister of Education, UNESCO official, and founding father and former president of Acción Democrática. In 1968, as the MEP nominee, Prieto drew an impressive 20 percent of the vote. Today, at age 76, he is clearly past his prime.

Finally, in October 1977, MIR—which had been most vociferously committed to a united front candidate—nominated the party's leading spokesman, Américo Martín. Seventeen years earlier, Martín—then the 22-year-old president of the Central University's student government and leader of the Acción Democrática youth wing—had abandoned a highly promising career in AD to found MIR and take up arms against the government. Today, his current campaign slogan—"Américo, Manos Limpias" ("Américo: Clean Hands")—expresses MIR's continued insistence on ideological "purity" and its refusal to accept MAS' more flexible position toward the establishment parties. Martín, the still-young, strikingly handsome, ex-guerrilla, is probably the most charismatic of all the current presidential candidates. Despite his uncompromising, militant ideology, he is personally well-liked by most of his political foes (including his erstwhile AD colleagues) and greatly respected for his political talents.

Efforts at leftist unification continued into the early months of 1978. In January, the four parties formed a commission charged with trying to select both a single presidential nominee and a common

congressional slate. But the commission's efforts were doomed from the start. MAS, the dominant party of the left, was intent on controlling its own destiny, establishing an independent position, and disassociating itself from the old left. Consequently, it rejected offers by MIR and the Communists to back Rangel because those offers were conditioned by a demand for co-direction of the Rangel campaign. *Masista* leaders saw no great value in allying with the Communists—who have never attracted more than 2-3 percent of the vote—or with MEP—a party in sharp decline. They do respect MIR and Américo Martín and hope to reach some accommodation with the *miristas* in future campaigns. But such a coalition is unlikely unless MIR moderates its hard-line Leninist position. For the present, however, only Rangel and MAS represent viable third party opposition, with the other 3 leftist candidates unlikely to exceed a combined total of 5-7 percent of the December vote.

The Non-Party Independents

If the 1978 presidential election tests the viability of third party alternatives, it also probes the continued strength of another Venezuelan political phenomenon, the independent populist candidate. A major achievement of Venezuela's political leaders during the past 20 years has been the development of well-organized, stable, and responsible political parties that transcend personal loyalties. Indeed, the emergence of a mature party system is a hallmark of political development in the modern world. As in most of the Third World, however, personalism (i.e., political loyalty to charismatic personalities rather than to parties, ideologies, or programs) has remained a strong element of the Venezuelan political system.

In 1958, following the overthrow of military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the URD selected as its presidential candidate, Admiral

Wolfgang Larrázabal, a leader of the junta that had replaced Pérez Jiménez. Larrázabal, with no political party background or political experience beyond his brief tenure on the junta, was extremely popular among the urban poor because of his dynamism, honesty, and commitment to social reform. Running with URD and Communist backing, he swept Caracas and finished a strong second nationally, behind Rómulo Betancourt (AD) and well ahead of COPEI leader Rafael Caldera. In the next two national elections both Jóvito Villalba (URD's 1963 candidate) and Luis Prieto (MEP-1968) seemed to attract votes more on the basis of personalistic appeal than on party loyalties. That phenomenon was even more apparent in the case of ex-dictator Pérez Jiménez who led his ad hoc party, CCN, to a surprisingly strong congressional showing in 1968.

The 1973 election produced no personalistic candidate and, indeed, was dominated to an unprecedented degree by AD and COPEI. Yet, Venezuelan voters seem to still maintain a certain ambivalence toward their political parties. In a 1973 survey of Venezuelan public opinion, political scientists John Martz and Enrique Baloyra found that three-fourths of the electorate felt political parties were important to the nation, although voters simultaneously expressed dissatisfaction with the actual performance of existing parties. Three-fourths of the respondents believed Venezuelan parties were controlled by small oligarchical groups. A 1977 survey of the Caracas metropolitan area showed that 51 percent of all voters refused to endorse any party. Finally, in a nationwide Gallup poll conducted in May 1978, 20 percent of the voters said existing political parties were useless, while an additional 26 percent felt they only had slight utility. Only 42 percent indicated that parties were very useful to the nation.¹⁹

This ambivalent attitude is apparently coupled with a negative

assessment of politicians. Martz' and Baloyra's study showed 80 percent of the electorate believing that "politicians are predisposed to lie at every turn." These critical evaluations would seem to present opportunities to a presidential aspirant claiming to be "above political parties" and "free of corrupt political ties."

During the current race, two such independent candidates have emerged to challenge the party system. The first was Renny Ottolina, Venezuela's most popular talk-show host and television personality. His frequent appearance in television advertisements and variety shows, and his hard work as a fund-raiser for various charitable causes, had made Renny (as he is universally known) a household name with a tremendous personal following. In July 1977 he launched his independent candidacy for the presidency. Financial backing for his campaign apparently came primarily from conservative business interests including associates of former dictator Pérez Jiménez. Yet, ironically, Renny's appeal among the urban lower classes (particularly among women) threatened to encroach on MAS' hopes for increased support among the nation's slumdweller. Despite his fame, virtually nothing was known of Ottolina's political orientation. Repeatedly refusing to offer a concrete program or to define his ideology, he spoke in broad platitudes, stressing Venezuelan nationalism, honesty, the value of hard work, and, most of all, rejection of the political party system. "People should be elected on the basis of talent," he repeated, "not just because they are AD or COPEI."

Initially, neither party leaders nor Venezuelan political analysts took Ottolina's candidacy seriously. Both groups apparently underestimated his popularity and his political acumen. By February 1977, opinion polls indicated he was drawing the support of 7 percent of the electorate, only a few less than MAS. *Copeyanos* and *masistas*

began to express private concern that he might draw anti-administration, protest votes away from them. The number of votes he might have drawn, and its effect on his AD, COPEI, and MAS opponents, will never be known. On March 16, merely two weeks before the official start of the national campaign, Ottolina's private plane crashed into a mountainside outside Caracas killing him and his companions.²⁰

The day after the crash (at that time the wreckage had not been found and Ottolina was merely reported missing), the President's office announced the resignation of Minister of Information Diego Arria, thereby clearing the way for Arria's independent candidacy for the presidency. Actually, Diego (who, like Ottolina, is usually referred to by his first name) had made his decision to seek the presidency four months earlier, long before Renny's death. Arria's awkwardly timed "resignation" from the President's Cabinet came before he had intended it and was precipitated by pressure from his many political opponents in AD. On May 21, the former Information Minister appeared on national television to announce his candidacy.

Diego— young, extremely handsome, articulate, and vain to the point of arrogance— had built his career as a political maverick. In 1973, he resigned a technocratic position in the COPEI administration to help direct the presidential campaign of AD candidate, Carlos Andrés Pérez. He quickly earned a reputation as a media whiz and expert "image maker" while at the same time establishing a close bond with the *adeco* candidate. Subsequently, Arria was rewarded for his critical role in Pérez's impressive electoral victory with an appointment as Governor of the Federal District of Caracas. In his new post, Diego used his direct line to the President, and his aggressive style, to by-pass the AD party machinery in the city council and push through an ambitious program. In short order: he initiated

a giant office-housing complex; began a well-publicized, low-income housing project; cleared beggars and vendors off Caracas' streets; and closed parts of the downtown area to traffic. His admirers claimed that as Governor, "he did more to make Caracas a livable city than any other person in the history of the country."²¹ His detractors, however, accused him of initiating projects that were poorly planned, inadequately financed, and designed primarily for Diego's self-aggrandizement.

In 1977, AD politicians—who despised Arria's playboy, country club, social background and his blatant disregard for party protocol—pressed President Pérez to remove him from the governorship. Consequently, the President asks his good friend to head the newly created Ministry of Information and Tourism. There Arria became one of the Cabinet's most influential members, while directing an enormous (publicly-financed) media campaign to "highlight the accomplishments of the Pérez administration." The flashy, smooth-talking Minister, never a team man, remained anathema to *adeco*'s stolid, middle-class leadership. With both COPEI (which he had deserted in 1973) and AD closed to him, Diego's only possible channel for political advancement lay in an independent candidacy.

Diego Arria's political orientation is generally liberal with a strong technocratic bent. His friends and political allies have included slain Chilean leftist Orlando Letelier (whose body Arria had flown to Venezuela for burial), wealthy Venezuelan industrialist Pedro Tinoco, and the Nuñez Arismendi family, owners of the conservative Caracas daily, *El Universo*. His extensive media campaign suggests that Diego has powerful financial backing that belies his populist image. Like Renny Ottolina, he is basically running on an antiparty platform built around his campaign slogan, "For Diego, the People Come First." Also like Renny, he

purposely avoids both concrete proposals and ideological definition. Indeed, he has refused to issue a political program, claiming "the country's problems are obvious."

Backed by his blonde, socialite wife Tiki (whom some see as a would-be Eva Peron), Diego has concentrated his campaign on the nation's younger voters (nearly 20 percent of the electorate is under 22 years of age) and on Caracas shantytowns where he enjoys great popularity from his days as Governor. More than any other candidate, he relies on the media and on Madison Avenue techniques. The most "Americanized" of the current nominees (he speaks fluent English and has lived in the United States), he has received campaign advice from Jimmy Carter's pollster, Pat Cadell, and image maker, Jerry Rafshoon. While Arria has no chance of winning the presidency, he hopes to attract the votes of the many disaffected Venezuelans who had leaned toward Renny Ottolina or who might be considering MAS.

The Campaign Takes Shape

Diego Arria's entry into the race completed the cast of major presidential candidates. By that time, however, his opponents, Luis Piñerúa, Luis Herrera, and José Vicente Rangel, had completed more than six months of intense campaigning, and the character of the electoral contest had taken shape.

COPEI, exulting in Herrera's early lead and sensing a mood of public discontent, launched a vigorous attack on the Pérez administration's record. Luis Herrera implicitly accepted the thrust of President Pérez's programs in agriculture, industrialization, housing, education, and social welfare, but insisted that those programs were not working. The *copeyano* Senator denounced breakdowns in public services, corruption, and maladministration, suggesting that the tremendous oil revenues collected by the *adeco* government had been squandered. Coupled with

their denunciations of AD policies, the Social Christians' campaign slogan assured the nation that "Luis Herrera will Straighten This Out."²²

The Acción Democrática campaign, by contrast, started off haltingly. While their standard-bearer, Luis Piñerúa, worked tirelessly, he lacked Herrera's charm and was a singularly ineffective public speaker. A February speech by Piñerúa to 12,000 AD youth was so uninspiring that nearly half these strongly committed supporters left after the first hour of their candidate's overly long discourse. Posturing himself somewhat to the right of both Herrera and President Pérez, Piñerúa advocated a greater role for the private sector in the economy, called for a national police force to combat crime in the streets, and accused COPEI of being soft on communism.

Through the first weeks of 1978, the *adeco* candidate seemed to carry forward the scars of the party's primary and the divisions between the nominee and the outgoing president. Thus, Piñerúa was nearly as critical as his COPEI opponent of the Pérez administration's record. He promised a "war against corruption and delinquency," criticized the administration for closing down several prisons, and promised to improve social services. In short, both major candidates' early campaign rhetoric sounded strikingly similar. Each seemed dissatisfied with the existing situation; neither offered solutions that differed substantially from the other's nor from the incumbent administration's; both seemed merely to be saying that they could do the job better.

Paso a Paso: The Administration Defends Itself

If AD candidate Luis Piñerúa was not ready to defend the incumbent administration's record at this stage of the race, President Pérez and his Cabinet had no such compunction. While Venezuelan law prohibits members of the executive branch from campaigning on behalf of their

own party's candidate, it permits a government to advertise its own real or alleged accomplishments. From the closing months of 1977 onward, the nation's television, movie theaters, and press were inundated with a flood of advertisements touting government social and economic development projects. The slickly produced ads, emanating from Information Minister Arria's office, featured fast-moving films of President Pérez briskly striding from one project to another as his voice was superimposed over dramatic background music. Each ad finished with the message, "Step by step, the work of the government is being completed." Throughout 1978, the "Paso a Paso" ("step by step") campaign, as it came to be known, saturated the media, exceeding in volume the combined advertisements of all the presidential candidates. One political insider told me the government had spent \$40 million of the taxpayers' funds on the campaign.

Some aspects of the government's program of self-congratulation were quite questionable. In January, for example, as the country approached the twentieth anniversary of the overthrow of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship (and of the birth of the contemporary democratic regime), posters and banners appeared throughout the nation hailing "20 Years of Democratic Action." This blatant identification of the democratic era with the incumbent Acción Democrática party was loudly protested by COPEI and MAS. Shortly thereafter, the national Electoral Council, a multiparty organism charged with regulating the election campaign, ruled that these banners violated restrictions on political advertisement prior to the official opening of the campaign on April 11.²³ Still, the banners and posters remained.

AD Comes Together

By March 1978, as the nation approached the official opening of the electoral campaign, a subtle change had taken place in the

nature of the race. AD polls had indicated that the party's chances for victory would be greatly impaired unless its own internal splits were healed. Consequently, Luis Piñerúa and his associates, including Rómulo Betancourt, abandoned their earlier criticisms of the administration and began to defend the Pérez record with growing vigor. It was even rumored that President Pérez had agreed to dismiss Diego Arria from the Cabinet in March in return for Piñerúa's promise to run on the administration's record.²⁴ Piñerúa's strategists were also well aware that by associating their candidate with the Pérez administration, they could benefit from the government's massive "Paso a Paso" advertising campaign. Finally, it had begun to appear that the national mood of discontent during fall 1977—spurred on by serious breakdowns in water delivery and shortages of certain food items—had been less deep-seated than previously imagined. Several months without disruptions in water or electrical service, a record new year's harvest that promised to alleviate food shortages, and President Jimmy Carter's impending visit to Caracas, all seemed to boost the government's popularity. A Gallup poll showed that 68 percent of all Venezuelans expected 1978 to be a

better year than the previous one. Indeed, Venezuelans were more optimistic in this area than were respondents in any of the other 17 nations in which Gallup asked the same question.²⁵

Having smoothed over their earlier differences, the *adecos* geared up their superbly organized machine to do what AD does best, win elections. In a further move toward party harmony, Piñerúa's primary opponent, Jaime Lusinchi, was placed on AD's powerful National Electoral Command. *Adeco* strategists skillfully polished their candidates image, emphasizing his most positive characteristics—administrative experience (which Herrera lacked), diligence, and honesty. Because of Piñerúa's weakness as a public speaker, AD television spots during the first months of 1978 rarely featured the candidate and never showed him speaking. Instead, a wave of ads featured testimonials from students, housewives, truck drivers, slum dwellers, small farmers, a star soccer player, and a professional pianist. Each "average Venezuelan" explained how his or her life had been improved by the current *adeco* administration and why each believed that under Luis Piñerúa's honest and capable management the country would do even better.

The core of the Piñerúa campaign was the media blitz. While data were unavailable, my own observations suggested that during the first half of 1978, there were perhaps four times as many television commercials for Piñerúa as for Luis Herrera. Following his entry into the race, Diego Arria almost matched the quantity of COPEI advertisement, while no other candidate was able to afford appreciable paid television time. If one were to add together the Piñerúa spots with the "Paso a Paso" commercials, pro-*adeco* media exposure would dwarf their opponents' efforts.

COPEI: The Search for an Effective Issue

The Social Christians opened their own, far more modest, media campaign with an aggressive attack on the Pérez administration. Herrera focused on the enormous amount of money spent during the past four years and charged the *adecos* with maladministration and corruption. Borrowing from a speech by their congressional leader, Eduardo Fernández, the *copeyanos* adopted a new campaign slogan: "Donde están los reales?" ("Where has the money gone?"). Looking for a poignant example of public waste, they pointed to a large exhibition center that the government had started building years earlier in downtown Caracas. Despite the expenditure of \$10 million, the unsightly structure—commonly called "King Kong's Cage"—had still not been completed. Thus, COPEI jingles offered an answer to their own question: "Where has the money gone?—Into King Kong's cage."

While waste and corruption are certainly rife in the current administration, the COPEI attacks failed to take hold. Despite documented evidence of maladministration, most voters were not convinced that a COPEI administration would do much

Luis Herrera Campins (COPEI) campaigning in low-income housing project.



better. Herrera's charges, moreover, tended to be far too broad and vaguely stated. To simply ask "where has the money gone?" was to invite a huge number of AD and government advertisements (including the "paso a paso" ads listing the current administration's many positive accomplishments—power plants, steel mills, irrigation projects, schools, and hospitals. Given the vast amount of money the Pérez administration had spent, even after allowing for waste and corruption, many impressive programs had indeed been initiated.

Other serious weaknesses became apparent in the Herrera campaign. While criticism of the incumbent was a perfectly valid electoral technique (and, indeed, there was much room for both praise and criticism), Herrera was far too prone to overkill and gross misstatement. To call the Pérez administration "the worst [in Venezuela] in this century," as Herrera did, or to claim that the country was falling apart "like a leper in advanced stages" was clearly absurd. Moreover, COPEI campaign propaganda was almost exclusively negative in tone. The administration's record was continually criticized, but never did Herrera indicate what positive changes he would implement. In short, ineffective campaign strategy and poor "packaging" of their candidate had cost the *copeyanos*. Luis Herrera, a man known by his associates for his warmth, sincerity, and concern for the nation's "have nots," had come across to the voting public as vague and pugnacious. As one party leader put it, "it looks like our media program was written by an *adeco*."

By April, various opinion polls indicated that Herrera had lost his lead and that the COPEI campaign effort was stalled. The party harmony brought on by the euphoria of the previous fall began to fade. Several leaders and factions seemed more interested in jockeying for position for next year's selection of party Secretary General than in aiding the Herrera campaign.



¡CORRECTO!

Herrera's campaign manager, Rafael Andrés Montes de Oca, himself a potential party Secretary, had alienated many COPEI leaders and had failed to make use of some of the party's more prominent personalities on the campaign trail. Former President Rafael Caldera took pot shots at Abdón Vivas Terán (spokesman for the COPEI left), while Caldera and Herrera followers tried to outmaneuver each other for greater control of the campaign.

In an effort to put the Herrera candidacy back on track, COPEI turned to American campaign strategist David Garth. Insiders report that Garth was aghast at the weakness of COPEI strategy and media propaganda. Old campaign

Political poster. Luis Piñerúa as presidential candidate for Acción Democrática.

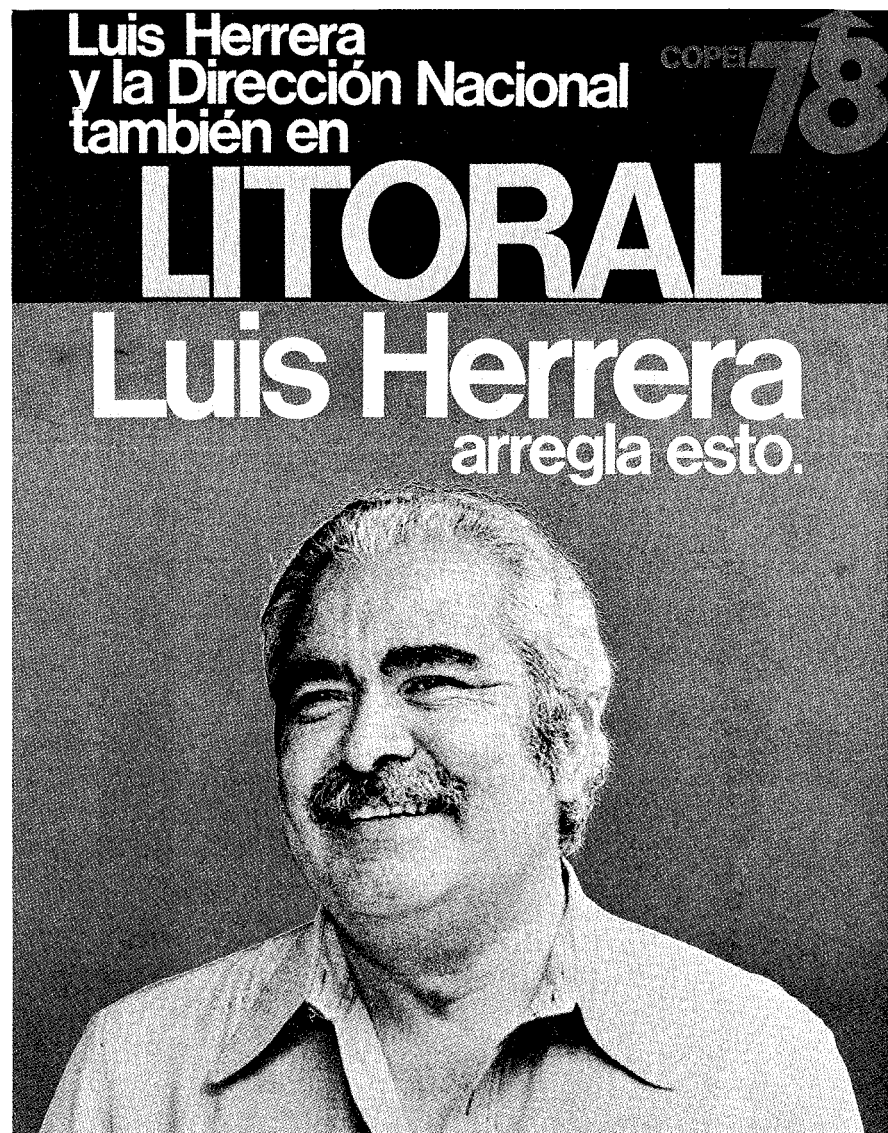
slogans, television advertisements, and even posters were called in as the *copeyano* strategists shifted gears. On Garth's advice, Herrera abandoned the folksy, down-to-earth image he had been trying to project for a more statesman-like appearance. The open-necked peasant shirt he had sported so frequently on the campaign trail was generally abandoned for jacket and tie. The "King Kong Cage" campaign was dropped, as was the aggressive tone of *copeyano* speeches. "Leave the low road to Piñerúa," Garth suggested. It was determined that Herrera should become more

specific in his criticisms of the AD administration and devote more time to offering positive solutions. Finally, COPEI strategists determined to take greater advantage of Herrera's superiority over Piñerúa as a public speaker. COPEI television ads would feature its candidate more prominently in an effort to highlight Piñerúa's dependence on packaged endorsements and the paucity of appearances by the *adeco* candidate. Herrera also challenged his opponent to a televised debate, a challenge which Piñerúa quickly rejected. By June, further erosion of Herrera's position had apparently been halted. It remained to be seen whether COPEI's candidate could regain his earlier lead.

MAS Looks to the Future

During the first months of the campaign, the Venezuelan press focused most of its attention, not surprisingly, on the two major party candidates. Once it was clear that the left had failed to unite behind a single presidential standard-bearer, media interest in MAS (and, even more so, the other leftist parties) declined. Due perhaps to its earlier internal conflicts, MAS' campaign efforts were slow in getting off the ground. The public turnout was disappointing for an 18-kilometer march through Caracas (featuring Rangel, Petkoff, Márquez, and other party luminaries) officially kicking off the campaign on April 1. Gradually, however, the party began to rebound. An impressive mass rally in late May held in downtown Caracas attracted 60,000 to 90,000 and convinced many doubters that Rangel's candidacy would have to be taken seriously. Opinion polls confirmed *masista* expectations that they would emerge in this election as the major party of the left. Barring a surprisingly fast finish by Diego Arria, Rangel and the *masista* ticket appeared sure to far outdistance any other third party candidates.

Unlike AD and COPEI, however, MAS viewed their progress as merely a stepping stone toward a



long-term challenge to the establishment parties. Rangel's campaign differed in both quality and quantity from Piñerúa's or Herrera's efforts. As one of the 4 parties to attain 5 percent of the vote in the last election, MAS was entitled, under Venezuelan law, to a modest government campaign subsidy of about Bs. 3,300,000 (\$750,000). Additional funds were raised in many inventive ways, including the sale of paintings by prominent Venezuelan artists sympathetic to MAS. The party obviously could not draw on the large contributions from big business that go to AD, COPEI and, to a lesser extent, the independent Arria campaign. Consequently, their

Political poster. Luis Herrera Campins, COPEI candidate.

economic resources were modest. Rangel's television exposure was limited almost exclusively to unpaid appearances on interview programs and, of course, the news.

Neighborhood walks by Rangel as well as other MAS leaders were a critical element of the party's strategy for reaching the electorate. Lack of funds also put a premium on unpaid volunteers, most drawn from high schools and universities. In one Rangel march that I attended, hundreds of orange-shirted students (orange is the official party color) accompanied their candidate

through a low-income *barrio* of Porlamar, a small provincial capital. Barcelona, Maracay, Valencia, and other Venezuelan cities were covered with MAS posters and wall drawings put up by young volunteers. *Masista* wall art was generally considered the best of any party's and, as two observers of the 1973 campaign noted, it was least often defaced.²⁶

It was not merely resources and technique that distinguished Rangel's campaign from Herrera's or Piñerúa's, but its objectives as well. Most immediately, MAS wished to establish itself as the major third party challenger to AD-COPEI. Campaign slogans were designed to project MAS as a party on the verge of victory. "One step from victory," declared MAS posters, while young militants at party rallies chanted "we can do it, we are MAS" ("mas" is the Spanish word for "more" or "a majority"). Independent surveys, as well as spokesmen for all 3 major parties, indicated Rangel would attract over 10 percent of the vote in December (twice his 1973 showing) and might possibly win close to 15 percent. Despite their public insistence that they were in the race to win, both Rangel and his campaign manager, Freddy Muñoz, indicated to me that they would be pleased with a respectable third-place finish and anything over 10 percent of the vote. Such a showing, they said, would create a base for future growth.

Looking beyond the present election, MAS spokesmen saw their campaign effort as part of a long-term educational process. The party's strategists (including many of the nation's leading social scientists) perceived three critical aspects of Venezuelan public opinion: first, there was widespread disaffection with the specific performances of Venezuelan politicians and of the two establishment parties;²⁷ second,

MAS supporters, many wearing orange hardhats, carry their party banner through the streets of Caracas.

members of the middle and lower classes were keenly aware of the maldistribution of the nation's wealth; but, at the same time, MAS' potential constituency among the urban poor and industrial working class generally rejected the socialist alternative as a solution to these problems. Consequently, Rangel, Petkoff, and other party leaders saw the electoral campaign as an opportunity to "raise the political consciousness [i.e., class consciousness] of the working class and middle class."

MAS political propaganda insisted that AD and COPEI were essentially indistinguishable in their policies because both were beholden to big business interests. The reformist measures implemented since 1958 by the two establishment parties, maintained the *masistas*, had failed fundamentally to solve the problems of the lower classes and had, in fact, permitted a widening gap between rich and poor. Consequently, MAS called for the expropriation of the nation's largest, private industrial and commercial firms (but favored



leaving smaller businesses in private hands). The party also wished to reduce (but not eliminate) Venezuela's economic linkages to the United States.²⁸

While Rangel and his colleagues effectively articulated the injustices and inequities still existent in Venezuelan society, they failed to show the average voter how socialization of major economic sectors or reduced "dependency" on the capitalist world would solve the problems of most immediate concern to the lower classes— inadequate housing, poor public services, and high crime rates. MAS spokesmen reportedly stressed Venezuela's extreme inequalities of wealth and income, and MAS intellectuals undoubtedly perceived a clear linkage between socialism and improvements in the quality of daily life. Yet, surveys indicated that the voters the party most wished to reach—the poor and the working classes—were more concerned with crime and garbage collection than with economic distribution.²⁹ This may explain why support for MAS was positively correlated with the voter's educational level. MAS had its highest level of support among people with high school or university educations, and was weakest among voters who had failed to complete their elementary education.

Ultimately, then, the long-term growth MAS seeks depends on the party's ability to expand beyond its present constituency of university students, Caracas professionals, middle class intellectuals, and skilled industrial workers. As the MAS campaign director for Caracas indicated to me, a major goal of this year's campaign was to build strength among the urban poor—i.e., unskilled and unorganized worker, maids, the unemployed, and other "sub-working-class" elements. But ironically, to reach these voters, Rangel had to talk in immediate, pragmatic terms that differed little from Piñerúa's or Herrera's rhetoric.

As he went into the shantytowns and low-income *barrios*, Rangel spoke, not of a "new socialist society," but of better water and electrical service, improved transportation, and better housing.

Conclusions: The Campaign in Perspective

In a close election such as Venezuela's 1978 presidential race, candidates often experience surges and declines in popularity. In January 1978, many political analysts were conceding the election to Luis Herrera. Acción Democrática was too badly split, they said, and Luis Piñerúa could not inspire the electorate. Some three months later, the common wisdom was that Piñerúa was a stronger candidate than expected and that Herrera, plagued by indecisiveness and bad campaign strategists, had blown the election. AD would win as usual. By July, "political experts" were shying away from any predictions. Gallup polls issued that month indicated that Piñerúa had moved ahead of Herrera by 3.2 percent, while the highly respected Datos poll showed Herrera still maintaining a 2 percentage point edge. In September, at the time that this Report was written, the presidential race appeared to be a toss-up. Given Acción Democrática's tremendous organizational capacity and its two-to-one advantage in party membership, however, Luis Piñerúa would have to be considered a slight favorite.

Should the *adecos* win once again, the psychological effects on COPEI are likely to be devastating. The Social Christians began the year with a healthy six-point lead. AD appeared to be badly split and Luis Piñerúa was generally considered the least dynamic of the major candidates. If the personable *copeyano* Luis Herrera is unable to win under these circumstances, it will raise doubts as to whether COPEI can ever defeat AD in a presidential race.³⁰ With each successive victory, AD appears more and more invincible. Even

when Luis Herrera led his *adeco* opponent by a healthy margin in January of this year, the majority of Venezuelan voters expected Piñerúa to win.³¹ Of course, such ingrained expectations can well become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The viability of COPEI (or any other party) as a challenger to AD is a matter of concern for many observers of Venezuelan politics. Hermógenes López, a respected independent Senator, has warned that another AD victory might lead the country toward a "Mexican-type" political system in which opposition parties exist, but one party always wins.³² Senator López' warning and fears seem greatly exaggerated to this observer. There may be legitimate cause for concern, however, over the problem of infusing new blood and ideas into the Venezuelan political system if AD continues its winning tradition.

Looking further down the list of candidates, José Vicente Rangel is likely to lead MAS to a third place finish ahead of Diego Arria's independent candidacy. A critical question for MAS' future, however, is what proportion of the vote they will draw. If Rangel attracts a mere 6-7 percent of the vote (as Datos suggested in July)—that is, a gain of only 1-2 percent over his 1973 showing—party morale will suffer badly. Renewed internal bickering and in-fighting may develop. If Rangel can live up to earlier survey predictions and surpass 10 percent, then MAS will have achieved its intended growth rate. After Rangel and Arria, no other candidate, save possibly MIR's Américo Martín, is likely to garner more than 2-3 percent of the vote.

Whatever the outcome, some salient features of the Venezuelan electoral process merit further comment. Venezuelan voters' attitudes toward their elections are somewhat contradictory. Voter turnout is high, some 80 percent of the eligible electorate. However, voting is technically obligatory (though enforcement procedures are very lax) and in one survey many

voters indicated they wouldn't bother to vote if they weren't required to do so.³³ The same study found that the majority of voters felt it made little difference who won the Venezuelan national elections. Yet, at the same time, respondents overwhelmingly stated that having elections was very important.

My own feeling is that voters accurately perceive that there is little difference between AD and COPEI policies. This same understanding may well account for their limited commitment to voting.³⁴ My observations indicate that compared to other Latin American nations, indeed compared to the United States, popular involvement in the Venezuelan electoral process, through party marches, rallies, and the like, is very high. Moreover, large numbers of citizens experience direct personal contact with one or more of the candidates. Venezuelans can scarcely avoid seeing their candidates on television or hearing them on radio. Watching the animated reaction of most onlookers as AD, COPEI, or MAS auto caravans wound their way through the streets of Venezuela's cities, I was struck by their obvious sense of involvement in the electoral process. In short, the electoral process seems to serve the critical function of reinforcing popular commitment to democratic institutions.

Other critical functions, however, were not carried out by the current campaign. Throughout the hundreds of hours of media ads and the hundreds of rallies and speeches, there was a notable absence of issues. *Adeco* publicity featured smiling voters who testified that life has been good under AD and "therefore, I intend to vote for Piñerúa—Correct." COPEI ads, on the other hand, offered a somber Luis Herrera who explained how badly Venezuela was doing and promised that he would "straighten this out" in some unexplained way. Despite his distinctly different ideology, José Vicente Rangel's efforts to reach the nonideological, lower-class voter were

undistinguished. For his part, Diego Arria merely told the voters that he opposed existing political parties and that for him "the people come first."

Up to a point, the homogeneity of campaign rhetoric, the lack of sharp issues, is a healthy sign reflecting the broad area of political consensus so critical in maintaining Venezuela's stable democracy. For example, all major parties support extensive government-sponsored social welfare activity in areas such as public housing. All endorse government ownership of the petroleum, steel, aluminum industries, and other critical sectors of the economy. The lack of sharp debate also reflects the absence of the intense polarization and class (or ethnic) conflict that divide so many developing nations.

What is not healthy, however, was the lack of meaningful interchange between the candidates, their tendency to talk past each other, their use of vague slogans and clichés, and their failure to offer concrete programs for addressing Venezuela's many remaining socioeconomic problems. Earlier in this *Report* (and in the preceding study of Venezuelan parties) I noted Venezuela's seriously inequitable distribution of wealth and the problems of chaotic urban growth and economic expansion. Beyond vague promises, the candidates offered the country little in the way of concrete solutions to those problems.

The Venezuelan presidential race is also far too long and overwhelming. By June, six months before the election, both the principal candidates and the voters were exhausted. The candidates continued talking, but it wasn't clear how many of the voters were still listening. The country was inundated with political propaganda, which few citizens seemed to take seriously. A July Gallup poll showed that a startlingly low 11 percent of the electorate believed that the propaganda of the various parties was credible. Indeed,

less than half the voters committed to AD or COPEI believed their own party's ads. The increasing use of American campaign advisers—most of whom fly in for periodic consultations, speak no Spanish, and know little about Venezuelan socioeconomic conditions—contributes further to an emphasis on style over substance.

The tremendous barrage of campaign propaganda is linked, of course, to great expenditures. Venezuelan journalists estimate that the total cost of the 1978 campaign will reach \$175 million—over \$30 for every vote cast. This figure dwarfs American electoral outlays and threatens to turn Venezuelan elections into a contest for buying votes through the media. Third party candidates, particularly those on the left who cannot attract contributions from big business, are obviously put at a disadvantage. Moreover, as campaign expenses continue to grow, there is the danger that AD and COPEI will become increasingly beholden to contributions from vested economic interests.

In the current campaign, expenditures were heavily skewed, with Acción Democrática spending more than twice as much as COPEI and at least 25 times as much as MAS. While AD's superior economic resources alone cannot win the election, the tremendous amount spent on Piñerúa's media blitz probably helped overcome the early Herrera lead. The figures just cited do not take into account the government's own extensive self-advertisement campaign which clearly worked to Piñerúa's advantage.

The government's indirect involvement in the Venezuelan electoral campaign was perhaps the most ominous aspect of the 1978 election. Despite laws prohibiting members of the executive branch from participating in the campaign, the urge to use government resources on behalf of the incumbent administration's party appears to be irresistible. Both

Rafael Caldera's *copeyano* government (in 1973) and Carlos Andrés Pérez's *adeco* government (1978) succumbed to that urge. However, the magnitude of the government's involvement in the last election was unprecedented. Ads promoting the Pérez administration's record were not only omnipresent but frequently appeared on television back-to-back with Piñerúa spots, which pledged to continue the good work of the government. When spokesmen for COPEI and MAS complained about this practice, Information Minister Celestino Armas replied that it wasn't the government's role to tell television stations in what order they should present their commercials.

In July 1978, the Supreme Electoral Commission (the government body in charge of regulating campaign practices) ruled that 6 of these 26 government television advertisements so blatantly invoked the name of Acción Democrática that they constituted government-sponsored support for Piñerúa and should, therefore, be pulled from the air. Initially, Information Minister Armas insisted that the Electoral Commission's authority only

extended to campaign ads by the parties and candidates and that it had no power to regulate advertisements by the government. A legal confrontation was averted when the government "voluntarily" withdrew the six ads.

At approximately the same time in the campaign, it was revealed that the Venezuelan government had paid "Public Affairs Analysts," a U.S. firm, \$1.5 million for the purposes of monitoring Congressional attitudes and U.S. public opinion regarding Venezuela; analyzing the American press for the Venezuelan government; and lobbying for Venezuela in the U.S. Congress. Since this same company was headed by Joe Napolitan and Clifton White, both of whom were advising the Piñerúa campaign, the government's contract with "Public Affairs" was highly questionable. It was obviously impossible to know whether that contract was not actually an indirect payment to Napolitan and White for work done on the *adeco* campaign. Once again, Information Minister Armas' response to this revelation was not very satisfactory. Surely, he said, the government and AD each had the right to employ whichever

American consulting firms they thought were best. It wasn't the government's fault if AD picked the same firm.

Venezuelan electoral practices, then, seem sorely in need both of new direction and further regulation. Several party spokesmen acknowledged to me that some regulation and limitation of campaign spending would be desirable. Clearer, more far-reaching restrictions on government campaign involvement also seem in order. However, no reform legislation appears likely to be introduced in the near future.

In spite of these problems, one critical fact remains clear. This December 3 the Venezuelan people will freely choose between the candidates of several capable and responsible parties. They will vote with the assurance that whoever they elect will take office early in the following year. That in itself is far more than the citizens of most Latin American nations can currently expect.

(September 1978)

NOTES

1. This *Report* is the second of a two-part series on Venezuelan political parties and the presidential election of 1978. Readers unfamiliar with Venezuelan politics are referred to the first article, "Venezuela's Political Party System on the Eve of National Elections," *AUFS Reports*, No. 44, 1978. This *Report* is based on interviews and campaign excursions with two Venezuelan presidential candidates—Luis Herrera Campins of COPEI and Jose Vicente Rangel of MAS—as well as interviews with various party spokesmen whose names are listed in footnote 11 of the first *Report*. I am also greatly indebted to journalists Joseph Mann, Kim Fuad, Alan Yale, Luis Esteban Ray, and to Gene Bigler for increasing my understanding of Venezuelan elections. Of course, none bears any responsibility for the information and opinions in this article.

2. The president is elected by direct, popular vote with victory going to the candidate who receives a plurality. In other Latin American nations (e.g., Chile before the 1973 coup), if no presidential candidate receives an absolute majority, the election goes to the Congress for resolution. Since 1958, no candidate for the Venezuelan presidency has received a majority and one candidate, COPEI's Rafael Caldera, won the 1968 election with 29 percent of the vote. Members of both houses of Congress (the Senate and, the more important branch, the Chamber of Deputies) as well as the municipal councils are elected through a complicated system of proportional representation. The voter is given two "cards," choosing a presidential candidate on one, a party slate on the other. The party vote expresses a single preference for both houses of Congress and for the local municipal council. A voter may choose the presidential

candidate of one party and the entire congressional *and* municipal slates of a second party. The vote cannot be further split and these are the only two votes (president and legislative slates) the Venezuelan electorate casts (governors are appointed by the president). Given the length and intensity of Venezuela's national campaigns, this is probably merciful. For a comprehensive discussion of the proportional representation system used to select national and municipal legislatures, see John Martz and Enrique Baloyra, *Electoral Mobilization and Public Opinion: The Venezuelan Election of 1973* (University of North Carolina Press, 1976).

3. In February 1978, I visited Bogotá, Colombia during the last two weeks of the national congressional elections and the presidential primary. Colombia is currently the only Latin nation in South

America besides Venezuela with a democratically elected, civilian government, but the contrast to Venezuela was marked. On the weekend of the election thousands of troops filled the streets of Bogotá to maintain order. Men were routinely frisked for arms and documents. In the February election and in June's presidential vote, fewer than 25 percent of the eligible voters participated. Public apathy toward the Colombian voting process has been growing in recent years. I observed even greater apathy several months later in Ecuador as the country prepared to return to civilian government after six years of military rule. On July 16, a presidential run-off was held to narrow a large field of candidates to two. During the next two months an electoral tribunal disqualified thousands of votes. Two of the candidates alternated in the second place spot as the recount continued. Yet, the public seemed totally uninterested and only wall posters gave evidence that a second round was set for late 1978.

4. Martz and Baloyra, pp. 201-203.

5. From April 1, the date on which Venezuela's current election laws allow extensive mass media advertising, through late August, the latest period covered by this *Report*, the vast majority of television and other mass media advertisements were for AD candidate Luis Piñerúa. COPEI advertisement, sparse through the early months of the campaign, began to pick up somewhat in June, though not to AD's level. Nonparty candidate Diego Arria's entry into the race in late May was supported by an impressive television commercial campaign that nearly equaled COPEI's in quantity. Through August, neither Rangel nor any other third-party candidate had paid television exposure worth mentioning and Rangel particularly depended heavily on the optimum use of unpaid appearances on interview shows. Of course, the more poorly financed candidates tend to save their media funds for the closing months of the campaign and their television exposure may have increased since August.

6. See *Auténtico*, June 5, 1978.

7. See "Venezuela's Political Party System..." (footnote 1) for a discussion of the 1968 AD split. When the party machine denied the nomination to Luis Prieto, a party founder and the clear choice of *adeco* rank-and-file, his

supporters left AD and founded MEP, a new left-of-center party. Prieto attracted nearly 20 percent of the votes cast, drawing overwhelmingly from AD. He thereby enabled COPEI candidate Caldera to beat the AD nominee by less than one percent.

8. During Venezuela's brief attempt at democracy from 1945-1948, AD presidential candidate Rómulo Gallegos won nearly 75 percent of the vote in the 1947 election. Since the restoration of democracy in 1958, winning percentages have ranged from 29 percent (Caldera in 1968) to 49 percent (Betancourt in 1958 and Pérez in 1973).

9. Inflation rates in Venezuela have always been low by Latin American standards and still remain well below the continental average. Before 1973, official inflation rates rarely surpassed 3 percent, but the rate since then has generally hovered around 10 percent. Official government figures, which tend to understate price increases, indicated that the cost of living rose slightly less than 10 percent in 1977. However, the actual figure was closer to 15 percent.

10. In fact, the AD primary may have been the first in the world in which all card-carrying party members voted in a single constituency, on a single day, in a binding primary. In February 1978 the Liberal Party of Colombia had an indirect presidential primary in which the two leading presidential aspirants agreed that the nomination would go to the candidate whose followers won the largest vote in the congressional election.

11. Aside from Lauría's appointment, *adeco* politicians objected strongly to two other presidential aides: Pérez's Minister of Development and economic adviser, Gumersindo Rodríguez, had left AD in 1961 with the Marxist-revolutionary MIR. He subsequently "returned to the fold," but retained the enmity of Betancourt and other *adeco* hard-line anticommunists. The Pérez aide most unpopular in *adeco* circles was Information Minister Diego Arria. Arria had left Caldera's COPEI administration in 1973 to help engineer Pérez's election victory. After a short period as governor of the Federal District of Caracas (a presidential appointment), where he totally alienated the AD municipal council members, he assumed the newly created position of Minister of Information and Tourism. Always his own man, Arria remained aloof from AD's leaders.

12. COPEI President Caldera had first initiated contacts with Cuba and abandoned other aspects of the Betancourt Doctrine. Betancourt had expected his former protégé to return to the doctrine and was undoubtedly disappointed when he didn't. President Pérez has not abandoned Venezuela's long-standing hostility to right-wing military dictatorships. Indeed, his administration has broken diplomatic ties with Uruguay (in a dispute over a political prisoner who was seized by Uruguayan police in the garden of the Venezuelan Embassy while trying to gain asylum) and, more recently, has exerted pressure against the Somoza regime in Nicaragua and in behalf of the democratically elected government in the Dominican Republic. But, Pérez has been more pragmatic (and less moralistic) than Betancourt and has received the presidents of Argentina and Brazil in Caracas. This angered Betancourt, as did the current administration's cordial relations with Cuba.

13. For a more detailed discussion of COPEI ideological factions as well as the AD schisms of the 1960s, see my first *Report* in this series. The COPEI communarians vigorously insist that they are non-Marxist and would probably object to my description of them as "quasi-socialist," but I consider the title appropriate.

14. In 1962, two years after they had been expelled from Acción Democrática, MIR leaders attempted to emulate the Cuban revolutionary experience by initiating guerrilla action against Rómulo Betancourt's government. They were soon joined by Douglas Bravo, Teodoro Petkoff, and other young Communist Party activists who formed the Armed Forces for National Liberation (FALN). The revolutionaries greatly miscalculated the public mood, failing to realize that, despite extensive unemployment in the early 1960s and widespread political disaffection among the urban lower classes, there was little support for violence and armed insurrection. A later survey of Venezuelan public opinion by Enrique Baloyra and John Martz reveals the basis for the guerrilla's failure. While many Venezuelans expressed considerable skepticism and cynicism about their political parties' and politicians' performance, they maintained a strong commitment to the country's democratic institutions. See

Baloyra's "Public Attitudes Toward the Democratic Regime" in John Martz and David Myers (eds.), *Venezuela: The Democratic Experience* (Praeger, 1977).

15. Petkoff, Torres, and Martín were all imprisoned during the 1960s for their guerrilla activities. While both MIR and MAS are now committed to working within Venezuela's democratic institutions, *masistas* are much more forthright in labeling their earlier guerrilla activities as an error. MIR leader Martín succinctly summarized the difference between the two Marxist parties when he was asked to comment on a MAS campaign poster showing José Vicente Rangel waving to a crowd. "If that were a MIR poster," Martín mused, "he would have his fist clenched." For an extended and fascinating discussion of the Communist Party guerrilla efforts of the 1960s and of the MAS exodus from the Communist Party, see Norman Gall, "Teodoro Petkoff: Crisis of the Professional Revolutionary, Part I" [NG-1-'72], *AUFS Reports*, East Coast South America Series, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1972 and Part II [NG-3-'73], *idem*, Vol. XVII, No. 9, 1973.

16. MAS had only been formed two years before the 1973 election. Rangel received 4.2 percent of the vote and finished fourth behind the leftist MEP candidate Paz Galarraga. The *masista* congressional slate finished a distant third (behind AD and COPEI) with slightly over 5 percent of the vote, electing nine Deputies and two Senators. See Martz and Baloyra.

17. All other parties received the combined support of only 2 percent of the respondents. Of course, these figures are only for Caracas, describe the situation prior to the selection of AD's or COPEI's presidential candidates, and reflect party allegiance rather than voting intention. MAS has yet to establish that it can contend with AD or COPEI for the more than 50 percent of the electorate that consider themselves independents. In other words, they have failed to enlarge greatly on their base of strongly-committed support which they enjoy before the electoral race begins. Survey data are drawn from the CIDAL News Summary (June-September 1977).

18. Petkoff's works, *Czechoslovakia: Socialism as a Problem* (1969) and *Socialism for Venezuela* (1970) are discussed in Gall (see note 15 above). His works were read avidly by the

dissident Marxist underground in eastern Europe and were roundly denounced by *Pravda* and by Soviet Communist Party Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. Petkoff, the son of a Bulgarian Jewish immigrant, is reportedly a hero among disaffected Bulgarian Marxist intellectuals.

19. See Baloyra; CIDAL; *Auténtico* (Caracas); June 12, 1978. It is useful to keep in mind, though, that allegiance to political parties and belief in their utility is undoubtedly far higher in Venezuela than in most Latin American countries.

20. The crash took place in an inaccessible, heavily wooded area and, despite an intense military search ordered by President Pérez, the wreckage was not found for several days. Confirmation of Ottolina's death set off a wave of national grief. Regardless of how Venezuelans viewed Renny's political ambitions, they admired his talents as a broadcaster, his dedication to charitable causes, and high standards of professionalism.

21. See *Resumen* (Caracas): January 29, 1978.

22. Herrera's campaign strategists were determined to depict Venezuela in the grimmest of terms. They cancelled a tentative contract to perform campaign tunes for Herrera with noted Venezuelan musician Carlos Moreán because they felt music would not be appropriate to the somber tone their candidate was presenting to the country.

23. Under regulations administered by the Electoral Council, the national campaign does not officially begin till April 1 and the parties are restricted in their volume of advertising prior to that date. On April 1, all the parties "kicked off their campaign" with giant rallies or marches. In actuality, of course, the race had already been under way for months.

24. The *adecos* entertained a paranoid fear that Arria was using the Information Ministry to further his own presidential intentions at AD's expense. In fact, Diego's "Paso a Paso" campaign and his bolstering of the Pérez administration's image was more beneficial to Piñerúa's cause than to any other candidate including Arria himself.

25. The proportion of respondents in some of the other countries who expected 1978 to be a better year than 1977 was: Mexico—57 percent;

Britain—53 percent; Chile—48 percent; United States—45 percent; Canada—29 percent; Sweden—26 percent; Japan—18 percent; West Germany—13 percent. These figures suggest that in some of the countries with high levels of positive response (Mexico, Chile), optimism may simply have reflected the feeling that 1977 was so bad that 1978 would have to be better. While most Venezuelans expected 1978 to be a better year than 1977, 35 percent felt they were worse off in 1977 than they had been 5 years earlier (before the oil boom) and only 39 percent felt they were better off in 1977. See, *Auténtico* (Caracas): June 5, 1978.

26. See Martz and Baloyra.

27. For further confirmation of this, see Baloyra.

28. For a more detailed discussion of the MAS program, see Handelman.

29. Ironically, the study showed that middle class Venezuelans often cited maldistribution of income as a major national problem, while low income people were far less concerned with that issue. See, CIDAL New Summary (January 1977).

30. COPEI's only presidential victory during the current democratic era occurred in 1968 as the result of an AD party schism. Acción Democrática's Secretary General, Jesús Angel Paz Galarraga, and its most popular presidential aspirant, Luis Prieto, pulled their many followers out of the party. In the ensuing election, Prieto, running on the MEP ticket, drew more than enough votes from AD to throw the election by a paper thin margin to *copeyano* leader Rafael Caldera. In 1973, Carlos Andrés Pérez led AD back into power with a stunning presidential triumph.

31. *Auténtico* (Caracas): January 17, 1978.

32. PRI, Mexico's dominant political party, faces opposition in each election, but it has never come close to losing a national election since its foundation more than 35 years ago.

33. Baloyra.

34. That many citizens lack a strong commitment to voting may mean they reject the utility of their electoral process (the apparent situation in Colombia, for example) or they are passively satisfied

with the system (probably more common in the United States). Given their professed belief in the importance of having elections, I suspect that most

Venezuelan citizens who said they only vote because it is required fall in the latter category. In any event a political system can maintain a fairly high degree

of legitimacy even if most eligible citizens don't bother to vote. Witness the United States where only about one-third of those eligible actually register and vote.