

Andean Report by Leonor Rubiano

CAP's mafia unleashes terrorist wave

The new terrorism in Venezuela is very selective: All victims are opponents of Carlos Andrés Pérez.

On the night of Aug. 8, the home of Marcel Granier, editor of *El Diario de Caracas* and director of Radio Caracas Televisión and of Radio Caracas Radio, was machine-gunned. The attack occurred as part of an unprecedented terrorist outbreak in Venezuela, which in the course of three weeks included letter-bombs sent to magistrates of the Supreme Court, bombs in various parts of Caracas, and gunshots against congressmen and judges.

On the same day as the attack against Granier, his newspaper had published an editorial entitled "The Price of the Truth," which warned that the mafia of "suspended President" Carlos Andrés Pérez was preparing terrorist actions against that newspaper because of its investigations into Pérez and his "inner circle," the results of which have been published recently.

The editorial further noted an important earlier development: On Sept. 27, 1992, *El Diario de Caracas* had devoted an exposé to the growing concentration of control over the media in the hands of the powerful Cisneros-Tinoco group, with the support of then-President Pérez. One day later, on Sept. 28, an attack was carried out against Mrs. Hope Phelps de Robinson, the leading stockholder of Radio Caracas Televisión, an attack which has kept her in a coma to this day.

In its Aug. 8 issue, *El Diario de Caracas* also reproduced an article from last year on the Cisneros-Tinoco group, as well as a questionnaire entitled "Questions for CAP," on Pérez's recently discovered foreign bank ac-

counts. Hours later, the editor's home was machine-gunned in a commando raid.

What the editorial did not mention, but what all of Venezuela knows, is that the July 20 issue of *El Diario de Caracas* published as a paid insert the pamphlet entitled "The Truth About CAP," prepared by the Venezuelan Labor Party (PLV) and the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA), which presents a detailed account of Pérez's crimes, including his links to drug traffickers and international terrorists, as well as to his "financial inner circle," especially the Cisneros-Tinoco group (see *Investigation*).

After the pamphlet was published, a series of threats were directed not only against the PLV as the author of the exposé, but also against the media which published it and/or gave it publicity, including *El Diario de Caracas* and Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV). Giacomo León, the executive president of Banco Latino which belongs to the Cisneros-Tinoco group, responded to "The Truth About CAP" with a full-page ad in *El Diario de Caracas* and RCTV, accusing them of sponsoring the pamphlet, and yet without once mentioning the PLV.

Other media have referred to actions which those denounced in the pamphlet might be preparing against PLV Secretary General Alejandro Peña Esclusa. The most recent threat was by a reporter of the afternoon newspaper *El Mundo* on Aug. 11, which stated: "Peña Esclusa is playing

with fire . . . and could get burned. An investigation is being opened up to find out who is financing the campaigns against Venezuelan politicians and financial groups that his party is running."

The changed political situation in Venezuela does not, however, allow for any more such persecutions. The recent threats and terrorist actions, which have provoked widespread rejection among Venezuelans — including President Ramón J. Velásquez, the Armed Forces, and the Catholic Church — is attributed by many to the powerful groups that are behind the still-active "suspended President." This has been openly suggested, from the Prosecutor's Office and Supreme Court magistrates who are responsible for CAP's "suspension" from the presidency (and who have also been threatened), to the majority of journalists and politicians of nearly every political stripe.

According to press commentaries, the purpose of the selective terrorism is to "foment chaos," to intimidate those forces who want to see change in the country, and to prevent CAP's permanent separation from the presidency on Aug. 20. That day will complete the 90 days of his temporary suspension, at which point the Supreme Court could open up criminal proceedings that could land CAP in jail.

In further developments, the Supreme Court has ordered a trial of former President Jaime Lusinchi, CAP's predecessor from the same party, which will undoubtedly affect the results of next December's elections.

In any case, it would appear that the acts of terrorism have proven counterproductive for those who had hoped to benefit from them, since the public has been fully alerted. The trials of Pérez and of the powerful groups behind him are only just beginning.