

ARISTÓBULO ISTÚRIZ

Mayor of Caracas

Born in December 1946 of a middle class family in a town near Caracas, Aristóbulo, partly from his father who was an active member of Acción Democrática fighting against the dictatorship, became interested in politics at a very early age. He was active, first in student politics in the 60s, and then with various groupings through the 70s and 80s, seeking those which at different times seemed to be most oriented towards radical reform.

He graduated with a teacher's degree in 1965, and then taught high school for twenty years in Caracas.

In the early 80s he joined up with Andrés Velásquez, at present Governor of Bolívar State and a presidential candidate, in a grouping called "Causa R", or The Radical Cause. Causa R has in the past ten years become an important rising political force in the country. It has a trade-unionist orientation and has managed to gain labour support away from the AD (traditionally the trade-unions' party), mainly because it presented a credible image of representing the views of the common person and being fiercely opposed to corruption, at a time when AD's reputation on both accounts was failing.

This, then, is the political/philosophical background from which Aristóbulo is coming. He was elected Deputy in 1988, and became one of those most critical of CAP and his government, particularly following the 4 February 1992 coup attempt.

In December 1992, he ran in the municipal elections for Mayor of Caracas, and against all expectations, defeated the incumbent, Claudio Fermín, who is from Acción Democrática. (Notwithstanding this loss, Fermín, a populist young politician with considerable support from AD party members, managed later to be chosen his party's presidential candidate for the coming elections.)

Aristóbulo's performance so far as Mayor has received mixed ratings. The problems of Caracas, particularly personal security and maintenance of infrastructure, however, are enormous.