

However, the young officers who had launched the popular-liberalizing revolution of 1945 began, after 1947, to become dissatisfied with Acción Democrática's radical program. After several attempts had failed, a coup d'état succeeded in November of 1948. Acción Democrática was ousted and outlawed, and the army once more took charge of the Government. They decided to halt the political and social revolution and resume their long tradition of exclusive domination of Venezuela's politics. A military junta ruled until 1953, when Col. Marcos Pérez Jiménez, after staging a notorious electoral farce which clearly demonstrated popular antipathy to him, assumed the office of President. For the next 5 years he ruled as an absolutist military dictator. The political reforms introduced by Acción Democrática disappeared. The material gains achieved by the lower and middle income groups were preserved, but few new ones were introduced.

In January 1958, the dictatorship, which appeared firmly entrenched, succumbed with surprising ease to naval and air force opposition backed by the populace. A revolutionary junta then arranged for free elections, which were won in late 1958 by Acción Democrática. Early in 1959 Betancourt was inaugurated as President. He is now reactivating the long-range political, economic, and social reform program he began back in 1945.