

# Chávez's Jacobin Constituent Assembly moves forward in Venezuela

by David Ramonet

The International Monetary Fund's Jacobin revolution in Venezuela took a huge leap forward in late July, after President Hugo Chávez Frías succeeded in placing nearly every individual of his choice on his "National Constituent Assembly." But Chávez's stunning victory is not solely due to the popular support he enjoys, or even to the political machinery backed by the state, but is also due to the cowardice and ineptitude of the opposition, which practically abandoned the battlefield and adapted to the rules set by Chávez. He who fails to fight, is guaranteed to lose.

In the first place, both traditional parties — the social democratic Acción Democrática and the Christian Democratic COPEI — as well as the Proyecto Venezuela party of the leading Presidential candidate who had opposed Chávez, Henrique Salas Romer, all agreed to participate in the election of an illegitimate and illegal Constituent Assembly. That Assembly was convoked by a referendum which was passed by a mere 36% of the electorate. None of the opposition parties opposed the referendum. Later, to their shame, none of these parties offered any official candidates to the Assembly, concluding ahead of time that the electorate would reject anyone identified with them. When it was already obvious that the electoral process was entirely under the President's control, no one dared to take any effective measures to stop him.

In the face of this clinical cowardice, the first thing the Assembly did upon being seated, was to proclaim itself the sole political power in Venezuela, above the standing constitutional powers. It is now moving to dismantle all of the nation's institutions, creating in Venezuela a replica of the disintegration today taking apart neighboring Colombia.

To emphasize the disastrous regional and strategic implications of the Chávez revolution, the government has just announced, through Foreign Minister José Vicente Rangel, that it plans to hold direct bilateral "negotiations" with the FARC-ELN narco-terrorists in Colombia. Venezuela will hold "talks with whoever has the power," said Rangel, in an open slam at the Colombian government, and at the sovereignty of that country.

## The Chávez Constituent Assembly

With a 53% abstention of the registered voters (some 80% of the voting-age population), 128 of the members of the

National Constituent Assembly (NCA) were elected on July 25, of whom 123 were practically personally chosen by Chávez. The other three members of various organized indigenous groups who make up the 131 NCA members, were elected in an ad hoc assembly, despite the strong opposition of various organizations which complained of the manipulation involved in that election.

Chávez used every state resource at his disposal to guarantee that the only candidates known to the expectant Venezuelan electorate would be his personal candidates. Thus, among the more than 1,000 aspirants, the only ones who were fully identified were Chávez's 123 candidates.

The President's candidates accompanied him everywhere, throughout the campaign — and even before the formal campaign was launched. They enjoyed the advantage of official television and radio propaganda, for which purpose President Chávez initiated official programs, "Up Front with the President" on television, and "Hello President" on radio. Personnel from the national Armed Forces even took charge of running campaign appearances, with spokesmen from the opposition denouncing the fact that soldiers were distributing Chávez propaganda, to which the President reacted indignantly.

Chávez has learned how to channel the legitimate discontent of the population against traditional political leaders, in particular against those who have chained Venezuela to the moribund globalization policies of the IMF, such as former President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Chávez has directed Venezuelans' considerable fury against these politicians, identifying them with the country's political and social institutions, and thereby distracting the electorate's attention from the financial crisis and economic depression that has been caused by these same globalization policies and institutions. However, Chávez's no longer demonizes the IMF, and he calls for the help of pirates, such as global speculator, drug legalization advocate, and British-controlled George Soros, to come and "invest" in Venezuela.

## All power to the soviet

The National Constituent Assembly was installed one week after the elections, and the "Chavista" majority named Luis Miquilena as the Assembly's president. Miquilena is the

octogenarian leftist politician viewed by Chávez politically, as “like a father.” Three days later, the “Chavista” majority approved the internal guidelines of the NCA, which begin by proclaiming the NCA as above all institutional powers, including the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government, despite the explicit mandate of the referendum which convoked the NCA, which denies it such a nature and which charged it solely and exclusively with drafting a new Constitution.

As was foreseen, Chávez was the first to publicly support the NCA’s statement. After it was installed, Chávez appeared before its delegates to “offer to resign the Presidency should they so desire,” to present his proposal for a “Bolivarian Constitution,” and to ask them to declare a national emergency. From their position of absolute power, the NCA’s leaders answered that they would declare the emergency sought by Chávez, and did this without even discussing the issue with the entire Assembly, something which was apparently considered superfluous. Based on this emergency, they are prepared to fire “corrupt” judges as well as any state governors who are disaffected with Chávez.

It was not necessary to dissolve the National Congress: the legislators declared themselves “in recess,” in effect dissolving themselves, and went home, leaving a delegated commission behind to “collaborate” with Chávez’s Assembly, as necessary.

### **A histrionic moment**

If it weren’t for the drama, one could say that under Chávez, Venezuela is experiencing not an historic moment, but a histrionic one. Three days after the Constituent Assembly elections, Chávez celebrated his 45th birthday with a mass meeting in the middle of Caracas. There, Chávez announced that on Aug. 5, he would be presenting the NCA with his personal plan for a constitution, and he gave the NCA delegates three months to approve it. He set Nov. 7 as the date for holding a referendum to approve the constitution, and Dec. 12 as the date for electing new legislative and judicial authorities. On Jan. 1, 2000, he said, “the Fifth Republic will be born.”

Among other of Chávez’s histrionics, he said that he was happy to be “a barefoot guy,” and reminded his listeners that it was only 12 years ago that he put shoes on his feet for the first time.

But, he did not say that those were different times. Now, Chávez is visited by Giovanni Scutaro, an internationally famous fashion designer from Caracas. Chávez changes his clothes three times a day, and any one of these outfits carries a price equal to what any “barefoot guy” might earn in a year in Venezuela. Chávez, upon becoming Venezuela’s President-elect, asked Scutaro to be his adviser, according to Scutaro himself, “in the name of the miracle of rejuvenation that he had achieved with CAP [Carlos Andrés Pérez] ten years earlier, by designing his now renowned shirt-jackets,” according

to the newspaper *El Universal* of May 11.

International fashion is one of the activities promoted by Chavez’s Foreign Minister Rangel. On July 20, for example, the historic headquarters of the Foreign Ministry, known as the “Yellow House,” was decorated in gala fashion to sponsor an event, “Fashion and Music in the Yellow House,” organized by Rangel’s wife, Ana Avalos de Rangel, and by Osmel Sousa, president of the Miss Venezuela organization (owned by the Rockefellers’ favorite magnate, Gustavo Cisneros). It attracted the participation of all the glitterati of Venezuela’s fashion world.

### **Profile of a demagogue**

On the evening of July 25, in the company of his wife Marisabel, President Chávez came out on the balcony of the Presidential palace, now baptized as “the balcony of the people,” in what everyone compared to the famous appearances of Argentina’s Domingo Peron and his Evita. As is his custom on these occasions, he cited the Bible and *El Oráculo del Guerrero*, (“The Oracle of the Warrior”) to ask for “humility with the defeated” from his followers.

*El Oráculo del Guerrero* is an esoteric book which Chávez is never without. It was written by Lucas Estrella Shultz, a Chilean doctor who converted to Zen Buddhism, and is now dedicated to Tui Na.

“Jump from the precipice. Risk everything and take off. Although everything out there tells you you will die, try it. The hand of the Almighty will pick you up at the last minute. Feel the horror seize upon you during the fall. But do not doubt. If you do, you will die. Be confident that nothing will happen to you. And land softly,” is one of the passages in the book.

There is no more apt description of what is going on with the Venezuelan economy, and the speech with which Chávez seeks to convince Venezuelans to go along with a repeat of the same globalist model that already sank the banking system once before, and has kept the productive apparatus prostrate since then.

In a speech inaugurating the Fifty-Fifth Assembly of Venezuela’s Federation of Chambers of Industry and Commerce, two days following the NCA elections, Chávez explained that, thanks “to the results of the Assembly, confidence will be generated” among investors. And thanks to “the seriousness of our commitment, Venezuela is once again having an impact on the markets.” And, in fact, the *Wall Street Journal* has positively reported on Chávez’s new Constituent Assembly, assuring its readers that it will not negatively affect the activities of usury in Venezuela.

With income increasingly concentrated among 3% of the Venezuelan population, and a level of unemployment which has already reached the so-called “informal economy,” it remains to be seen whether three months will be enough time to hold the pieces of the disintegrating Venezuelan economy together.