

International Intelligence

New Rules Set for Venezuela Recall

Venezuela's National Election Council has issued a new set of rules for holding a recall referendum on Hugo Chavez's presidency which, while a setback to Chavez—who had hoped to permanently bury the initiative—nonetheless does push back the anti-Chavez referendum by many months, during which time anything can happen.

The Council had recently invalidated the millions of petition signatures garnered by the opposition earlier this year, claiming they had been collected prior to a constitutionally-mandated date. The new rules give the opposition four days to gather a minimum of 2.5 million signatures, after which the Council can take up to 97 days to validate, or invalidate them. The opposition is hoping to get twice the minimum required. Once validated, the recall vote could be held as early as next February, barring challenges and other stall tactics the Chavez regime might cook up.

The petition-gathering will be launched in about three weeks, which is how long the opposition believes it will take to ready the signature gathering booths around the country, and the personnel to staff them. It is widely believed that Chavez would badly lose such a recall vote, if it were held today. Fully aware that that is the case, it is expected that the Chavez regime will throw everything—from court challenges to full-scale thuggery, against the recall initiative.

Right-Wing Slanderer of Cheminade Is Guilty

Justice was done to the leader of the LaRouche movement in France, Jacques Cheminade, and his Presidential campaign, when the 17th Chamber of the Paris Tribunal de Grande Instance sentenced Nicolas Miguet, a notorious fraudster, to pay a 7,500 euro fine for "public slander" of Cheminade.

In 2002, when Cheminade prepared for the second time to run for President and put

the LaRouche perspective at center-stage of French political life, Miguet was an oligarchs' weapon to prevent that breakout, through slander and intimidation. Miguet himself, a "traditionalist Catholic" (i.e., an anti-Vatican II Synarchist) and a stock-market guru—who was sentenced several times to jail for financial fraud—was also trying to gather the 500 signatures of grand electors required to be in the Presidential ballot. To steal their souls, he sent a free subscription to his weekly leaksheet *l'Hebdo* to each of the country's 36,000 mayors, who are among the grand electors.

Right before the deadline for handing in signatures, four successive issues of *l'Hebdo* hammered Cheminade with false and gross charges, as "leading a movement considered a cult, and mentioned by the report of the French parliamentary committee on cults." Mayors were warned that their "personal and public situation would be thoroughly checked from all sides" by the higher administration if they gave their signature for Cheminade. While Cheminade had over 500 pre-commitments of such officials, the intimidation and pressure brought the final result down to 406—still the largest number obtained by any real independent candidate, and far more than many candidates who got major media coverage. This included Miguet who could only come up with 259, former Environment Minister Lalonde (164), and Green Party leader Waechter (152).

Italy Lawmakers Question Cheney's Role

Sen. Oskar Peterlini and nine other Senators, two of whom belong to the government majority, filed a written inquiry on Sept. 24 with the ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defense, asking about the "international debate on the truthfulness of information regarding possession and possible imminent use by Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and of nuclear material, which, during the weeks preceding the Iraq war, have been of decisive importance for the U.S.A., Great Brit-

ain, and the other nations in rejecting the UN mediating role and justifying the war against Iraq. The American press mainly, but also representatives of American and other countries' institutions, are raising questions about the primary role played by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney in using dubious information, eventually leading to a justification of the war against Iraq." The Italian government supported the Iraq invasion, over the clear opposition of 90% or more of Italians.

The Senators' interrogatory says: "Considering that . . . a war has been fought as a consequence of such information which many insist to be dubious or even false; around these facts the new strategy of preventive war was initiated, and those same representatives of the so-called neo-con group around Cheney in the current U.S. Administration, who had advocated a war against Iraq, have presented plans to make more wars against so-called 'rogue states'; this information has been used to neutralize and exclude the United Nations from its international mediating role in situations of severe crises.

"We therefore ask: whether the Italian government . . . intends to undertake an effort to give back to the UNO its historic and proper role of mediation and war prevention, whose authority has been badly hurt?"

The inquiry was signed by senators Peterlini, Cortiana, Fabris, Di Siena, Gubert, Malabarba, Baio Dossi, Betta, Boco, and Forlani.

Nigeria, ESA Achieve Space Firsts

Europe's first mission to the Moon blasted off on Sept. 27 from Kourou, French Guiana, aboard an Ariane 5 rocket. The mission was the Smart-1 Moon exploration probe, which will take 15 months to reach lunar orbit, and remain there for up to 30 months.

On the same day, Nigeria achieved the launching of its first space satellite, which was launched aboard a Russian rocket from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome in Russia. The

IRAQI minister of communications ridiculed the U.S. demand that American firms run everything. Hayder Awad Aabadi, a highly experienced Iraqi engineer, told the *New York Times* on Sept. 27 that "he could have had a [communications] network running 30 days after major hostilities ended, a claim supported by other telecommunications executives in the region. Aabadi adds that there are many skilled Iraqis, but 'they will not be motivated in a situation where things are run by a foreign occupying power.'"

INDIA offers \$1 billion to set up the Asia Bond Fund, according to Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai, speaking in New York on Sept. 29. The proposal will be considered by finance ministers under the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) framework, Sukariart said. The Asia Bond scheme, proposed by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, would enable Asian surplus capital to be used for investment in the region's poorer nations, and to defend against currency speculators.

UPHEAVAL was spreading across Bolivia at the end of September, including protesting coca-producers demanding an "Indian republic." The violence which erupted in mid-September has escalated, ostensibly over the government's plans to export natural gas to the United States through Chilean ports. What makes the country a powder-keg, and vulnerable to manipulation by the George Soros-backed Jacobins of the "cocalero" movement, however, is the fact that it has been looted extensively by President Sanchez de Lozada's IMF privatization and free-trade "reforms."

TONY BLAIR should quit, a majority of Britons think, according to a poll carried out for the *Financial Times* between Sept. 11-16. Some 50% said Blair should resign, whereas 39% believed that he should stay. A far large majority, 64%, think that Blair wronged the nation on the issue of the Iraq invasion. London saw a mass protest rally Sept. 28.

government plans to use the Landsat-type satellite to monitor water resources, soil erosion, deforestation, and potentially to monitor natural disasters, said space agency spokesman Solomon Olaniyi to Associated Press. AP quoted a security guard in Lagos, "It makes me proud to be a Nigerian. It shows our nation is progressing. We've joined the space age."

Mexico Mass March Against Privatization

Mexican electrical workers' unions on Sept. 28 announced a multi-union march against electricity privatization. The Mexico City march is scheduled for Oct. 1. PRI Sen. Manuel Bartlett and PRD Congressional coordinator Pablo Gomez addressed the meeting of thousands of electrical workers where the march was announced. "The apostles of privatization no longer use the examples of privatization in other countries, because they ended in disaster," Bartlett told the meeting. "Now they say the problem is that the state has no money to invest. They lie. . . . We can no longer trust anyone but the rank and file, because all the privatizations have been done stealthily, in agreements made at the top, behind the people's backs."

Senator Bartlett's comments referred to a meeting held last week, where various PRI leaders, including Chamber of Deputies PRI coordinator Elba Ester Gordillo, met with various cabinet ministers to discuss "reforming" the electricity sector. The government position was that the Federal Electrical Commission is effectively bankrupt, and will not be able to pay its debts within five years, and therefore, without opening it up to foreign capital, Mexico's lights will go out. The Salinas wing of the PRI (of which Gordillo is a part) has made clear it's willing to cut a deal, with Salinista PRI Chairman Roberto Madrazo claiming on Sept. 28, that "we are very close" to an agreement on "reforms," "because the PRI has renewed its commitment to vote for the reform."

Senator Bartlett, and others in the PRI,

point out that the PRI program, adopted at the last party national assembly, explicitly rejected any change in the Constitution's strict provision that Mexico's energy supplies are strictly a state responsibility, which cannot be transferred; and that any change in the program would require convening a meeting of the PRI national assembly to vote that up. I'd like to see how Gordillo and Madrazo could argue that one, Bartlett commented.

'Six Powers' Urge Korea Security Pledge

Meeting privately in New York Sept. 25, foreign ministers of Russia, South Korea, China, and Japan told U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell that they "want a clear security guarantee for North Korea, in order for the Six Power talks to proceed, which they must," a Korean diplomat told *EIR*. "This means the U.S. must come up with something new, and something clear," he pointed out, and not just keep repeating unilateral demands for North Korea to disarm.

It was after this that Russian President Vladimir Putin raised the issue personally at his Sept. 27 press conference with President Bush, saying that "Russia believes that ensuring nuclear non-proliferation regime should be accompanied by extending to North Korea guarantees in the sphere of security." China's foreign minister was also reported by the Korean press to have very strongly pressed President Bush on the security guarantee for North Korea, in a private New York meeting.

South Korean President Roh also stated Sept. 25 that he can't decide about sending troops to Iraq, while there is no security guarantee for the Korean Peninsula. "Isn't it difficult for the country to accept the dispatch of our troops abroad in such an uncertain situation as we don't know how the six-way talks will go in the future and what will happen when?" Roh asked a group of reporters on Sept. 24. "We need something predictable about stability on the Korean Peninsula," he said.