

lic Church hierarchy to bow before him, arguing that “Christ was resurrected from the dead, to become the People”; since Chávez, in his own mind, represents the People, he threatened to unleash “legitimate violence” against those in the Church who opposed him. In so doing, he presented himself at the same time, as a dyed-in-the-wool Catholic.

Then in January 2002, Chávez announced he had become a born-again (Protestant) Evangelical Christian, only to retract the statement four days later. Meanwhile, Chávez’s disaffected wife, Marisabel Rodríguez, has shown up at born-again (Protestant) Christian rallies, to urge Chávez to mend his ways.

‘Hyperkinetic and Imprudent Man’

Chávez’s most recent public display of clinical dissociation came in a rambling, five-hour presentation on his national TV/radio show “Hello, President,” on Dec. 15, 2002. There Chávez ordered Army troops to ignore any rulings by the courts which were unfavorable to him, and to follow no one’s orders but his own. As for those calling for his resignation, he retorted:

“Chávez will leave only when God commands, because I am in the hands of Christ. . . . He is the commander, and when He speaks I obey, understood? And secondly, [I obey] the People. And I assume the voice of the People is the voice of God. I will not leave because of pressures from a group of businessmen, a group of coup-makers, a group of fascists.”

From this substratum, numerous secondary expressions of Chávez’s insanity are nourished, some of which have been noted in the public media. For example, *The New Yorker* magazine published a profile of Chávez in its Sept. 10, 2001 issue, written by Jon Lee Anderson, which contained a report on the author’s interview with Chávez’s psychiatrist, Dr. Edmundo Chirinos. Dr. Chirinos, who considers himself a supporter of the Venezuelan President, explained that Chávez “prefers to embrace dreams that seem impossible to achieve, rather than confronting the harsh realities of life.”

Anderson summarized Dr. Chirinos’ description of Chávez, as “a hyperkinetic and imprudent man, unpunctual, someone who overreacts to criticism, harbors grudges, is politically astute and manipulative, and possesses tremendous physical stamina, never sleeping more than two or three hours a night.”

Anderson also interviewed officials at the prison where Chávez was incarcerated in the early 1990s, including the secretary of the prison psychologist from that period. “Every morning, he [Chávez] sat in a chair in the open-air caged yard that had been built specially for him outside his cell,” they reported. “There was a plaster bust of Simón Bolívar there, and he would speak to it.” He would turn the head around to face him for the conversations, they reported.

Anderson also noted that Chávez’s aides today report that he is a “caffeine addict,” who used to drink 26 cups of espresso a day, until his staff managed to wean him down to “only” 16.

IMF Orders Closure of Colombia’s Symphony

by Javier Almario

To comply with budget cutbacks ordered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and with a barely concealed zeal to suppress Classical music in Colombia, the government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez is on the verge of shutting down the Symphony Orchestra of Colombia and the country’s National Band.

In protest, the National Band and the Orchestra decided to launch an unusual protest in the early weeks of December 2002. Through concerts before the media and in public plazas, the musicians have come out in defense of the institutions they work for, and one of the “weapons” they are using is Mozart’s well-known serenade, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*.

The first announcement on public policy regarding these cultural institutions was made by Rudolf Hommes, former finance minister under then-Colombian President César Gaviria (1990-94), and the person responsible for having applied the infamous policy of “opening” to unrestricted imports and economic globalization, that left the economy—and the state’s revenues—in ruin. In an article appearing in the Nov. 26 edition of the daily *Portafolio*, Hommes stated that it was necessary to “resign ourselves to make the decision to allow the disappearance” of the Symphony Orchestra, since that institution “absorbs 20% of the lean operating budget of the Culture Ministry.”

A Culture of Usury Instead

Hommes is widely known as the “Rasputin” of President Alvaro Uribe, and was first proposed by Wall Street’s bankers as financial minister for Uribe’s government. However, his all-too-visible ties to Wall Street, and in particular with Violy Byorum & Partners—a company which has played a major role in orchestrating power-sharing negotiations with the narco-terrorist FARC—frustrated his aspirations. But Hommes has become a newspaper columnist and quite a show biz personality, and his interviews and commentaries in the press—ranging from defense of homosexuals’ “right” to marry, to threats against government officials, to simplistic advice on the economy—(“buy cheap and sell dear”)—appear in all the media.

Every time the Uribe government threatens to go outside the confines of IMF dictates, Hommes comes out as a kind of demolition club to prevent the slightest deviation. Uribe tried to defend Colombia’s agriculture with tariffs, and Hommes set his Wall Street contacts in motion to sink that initiative.



The Colombian Symphony Orchestra is one of only two in the entire country; yet it is threatened with disbandment in budget cuts demanded of Colombia by the IMF. By contrast, Germany still has 500 publicly supported orchestras.

Uribe announced that his government would promote the idea of children playing Classical musical instruments, and now Hommes comes out with the idea of smashing that musical genre. In his article, he shamelessly urged the Symphony Orchestra to finance itself by organizing “mariachi bands to serenade the girlfriends of Bogota’s yuppies.”

Culture Minister Adriana Mejía repeated Hommes’ argument, insisting that the Symphony Orchestra and National Band are “an onerous burden which annually costs the State \$1.2 million.” What neither Hommes nor the minister say is that the government is spending \$1.2 billion in bonds of the Financial Institutions Guaranty Fund to rescue the national banks (which are little more than branches of the international banks) from imminent bankruptcy; and more than 50% of the budget is dedicated to servicing the foreign and domestic debt. If the government were to stop paying that subsidy to the private national and international banks, Colombia would have a zero deficit.

The debate that Hommes began coincided with the visit to Colombia of IMF director Horst Köhler, who demanded that the government apply all the reforms designed by the Fund, among these a cutback in pensions and on health and education expenditures. The IMF wants the deficit reduced from nearly 5% of the GNP to 2%—without, of course, cutting payment on the debt. So what goes, instead, is the Colombian people’s health, education, pensions, and Classical culture.

If the Colombian people do not defend the Symphony Orchestra, the next assault will be against the music departments of the state universities, which have been described by the “experts” at the Finance Ministry as inefficient from a “cost-benefit” standpoint, because they give individual classes to instrumentalists—as compared to the presumed ef-

iciency of law classes, where one teacher has 100 students per class.

It would not be the first time that Hommes has “disappeared” an orchestra. When he was Finance Minister (1990-94), he forced the provinces of Colombia to carry out severe budget adjustments, and in the process, the symphony orchestras of Valle, Antioquia, Medellín, and the Orchestra of the Caribbean were all cut, reduced to unstable groups which, in order to survive, only come together when they are paid for a performance.

Cultural Optimism the Real Target

Added to Hommes’ neoliberal ideology is the “neo-Maoist” thinking which permeates not only Hommes’ arguments, but those of the Culture Ministry over the past few years. Mao Zedong, during the years of the so-called “Cultural Revolution” in China, decided to eliminate Classical music, with the argument that it was “Western” music which was perverse and bourgeois, and that the only valid music was Chinese folk music. Mao ordered the destruction and burning of all pianos, violins, cellos, and other symphonic instruments, as well as of recordings and scores of Classical music, in his zeal to preserve backwardness. Musicians and many other professionals were sent into forced labor, as part of a so-called “re-education” program. Three generations of Chinese suffered this brutal cultural repression.

By the same path, the Virgilio Barco government eliminated the Colcultura Chorus in 1986 because, according to Barco, the Colombian population had no right to listen to an opera chorus, since that wasn’t “our culture.” In late 2001, supposedly for budgetary reasons, the Santa Fé de Bogotá Chorus, the only professional chorus in all of Colombia, was eliminated.

The late culture minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera stated in 2000, during the Andrés Pastrana government, that it was absurd that the culture budget be spent in sponsoring “foreign music” like opera, or that the state universities were involved in teaching Classical music; instead, she directed, efforts should concentrate on the promotion of *vallenato* popular lamentations.

Current Minister Adriana Mejía stated that the symphonic genre “has no national representation,” and left it implicit that it was preferable to spend money on *papayera* bands in the different provinces, exclusively dedicated to dance music.

Hommes revealed the same neo-Maoist mentality when, upon leaving the Finance Ministry to take a post as dean of Los Andes University—which aspires to be the Harvard University of Colombia—he not only threw out all economics professors who opposed globalization, but also launched an attack on the Music Department. He failed to do away with the Department, but he did succeed in eliminating its music program for children.

Perhaps what Hommes really seeks to eliminate is any sense of optimism within the Colombian population, espe-

cially that which stems from Classical culture. A brutalized population will feel hopeless to oppose the enforcement of IMF policies, the same policies which have bankrupted the economies of nearly every nation on the planet.

Interview: Liz Angela García

'We Are the Nation's Real Educators'

Liz Angela García is the acting concertmistress of the Colombian Symphony Orchestra. She was interviewed for EIR by Javier Almario and Maximiliano Londoño.

EIR: Before being concert mistress of the orchestra, you studied in Germany. How many German orchestras are financed by the State, be it national, state, or municipal?

García: There are 300 state orchestras in Germany. There is at least one orchestra in every city. In Munich, where I studied, there are five orchestras, and of these five, two are immense: the Symphony Orchestra of Munich and the University Orchestra. They are very complete orchestras. In Berlin, there were seven orchestras. Of course, with the unification of East and West Germany, some fused; but in any case, there are still five orchestras in Berlin. As I said, there is at least one orchestra in each city, and all are financed by the state.

EIR: Are there private orchestras in Germany?

García: In Germany, the orchestras are all state-run, although I don't know if perhaps in the past two years, they may have created some private ones. I don't believe so.

EIR: I know it is disproportionate, but how would you compare Germany with Colombia in this regard?

García: In Colombia, there are only two orchestras, the Bogotá Philharmonic and the Colombian Symphony orchestras, which have survived with great difficulties. In reality, there are only these two.

EIR: And if there are only these two, why do they want to do away with them?

García: It is a policy that the State has adopted, following the absurd model of privatization and globalization.

EIR: The first to speak publicly about eliminating the Symphony Orchestra was Rudolf Hommes, former finance minister and adviser to Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe Vélez. What official information do you have on this?

García: Officially, nothing. What happened simply is that



Concertmistress Liz Angela García has become a spokesman for the orchestra, campaigning against its "disappearance."

after Hommes' article came out, some of the musicians of the Orchestra went to the Planning Ministry for information about the budget, and discovered that our budget had disappeared, and had been assigned to other activities. So, it was this information, plus other information we had received that there was a plan to wipe out the Orchestra, that led us to launch this campaign in defense of the Orchestra and culture in Colombia.

EIR: To paraphrase former Colombian President Ernesto Samper, at the most heated moment of the scandal of drug-money financing of his campaign, is this being done "behind the back" of President Uribe, or did he personally make this decision?

García: I'm afraid that the President personally approved this decision.

EIR: Isn't this contradictory, given that the President said he was going to promote the idea of children learning to play musical instruments, because a child who takes up an instrument is a child who will never take up a weapon for any terrorist group?

García: Completely contradictory. It is a problem of defining which way the country is going to go. It is absurd to encourage children to learn music and to play instruments, and at the same time, to close orchestras. The greatest aspiration of a music student is to belong to the Symphony or Philharmonic orchestras. It is very good that the conservatories, the music schools, and the academies generate interest in music, but they also have to produce music at a professional level.

We are 75 musicians, the majority very young, who, with the proper support and publicity, could reach many more people and participate more in the musical education of those children and youth who are training.

EIR: A recurring argument among those who, in the name