

Andean Report by Alejandro Peña Esclusa

Chávez: 'I love Mao and Che'

Venezuela's Colonel Chávez explains his love of Mao and Che Guevara, and dislike of LaRouche and Seineldín.

In a stopover in Argentina during a tour of South America in September, the jacobin Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez (ret.) of Venezuela, famous for heading up an unsuccessful coup attempt in February 1992, granted an interview to the Argentine magazine *Gente*, in which he really let his hair down. "I have read a great deal of Che Guevara and of Mao Zedong. I deeply admire Che," he confessed. Chávez went out of his way to emphasize his links to the ongoing narco-terrorist insurgency in Chiapas, Mexico: "I take this opportunity to send an embrace of solidarity to the Zapatista National Liberation Army, with which I plan to meet shortly."

Chávez's late September tour of a half-dozen Ibero-American countries was purportedly to make "contacts with progressive and military sectors" and to analyze "the new role the armed forces" should play. Chávez's definition of "progressive" is apparently Maoist, Castroite, Zapatista, and all other current forms of narco-terrorism. And behind such contacts is an effort to undermine the influence of Lyndon LaRouche among nationalist military circles in Ibero-America, and those patriots who have publicly associated themselves with LaRouche, such as Argentine Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín (ret.), the hero of the Malvinas War.

In his *Gente* interview, Chávez could hardly contain his visceral response. Asked if he was linked to the *carapintada* international, a reference to a nationalist military alliance associated with the name of the jailed

Seineldín, Chávez exploded that this was "a total lie." He added, moreover, that Colonel Seineldín's group "appears to be related to a certain LaRouche and a magazine called *Executive Intelligence Review*, and we want nothing to do with them. They are fundamentalists and we are not."

According to the Argentine daily *El Informador Público* on Sept. 30, Chávez denied to reporters any involvement with the narco-terrorist international organization known as the São Paulo Forum. But his own statements demonstrate precisely the opposite.

On Sept. 29, the Buenos Aires newspaper *Página 12* reported that during his tour, Chávez praised Fidel Castro as "a symbol of dignity for Latin America." This is not the first time he has done so. In an interview with the Caracas paper *Ultimas Noticias* earlier this year, Chávez praised the Cuban dictator effusively, knowing full well that Castro is the creator of the São Paulo Forum.

Chávez assured *Página 12* that, had his coup attempt of Feb. 4, 1992 succeeded, he would have ruled together with the Radical Cause (Causa R) party, a full-blown member of the São Paulo Forum. Radical Cause's secretary general, Deputy Pablo Medina, is currently facing a trial by military court for links to a theft of military weapons and for having "offended" the national Armed Forces, a violation of the Venezuelan Constitution. Radical Cause, according to several denunciations published in the Venezuelan media, re-

ceives financing from such suspect bankers as Gustavo Cisneros and Orlando Castro. It also receives the protection of certain U.S. State Department officials in Washington, where Medina goes whenever he has a problem.

Another purpose of Chávez's trip, was apparently to look into privatization programs sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Ibero-America. According to the Argentine magazine *Prisma* on Oct. 2, "Chávez was in Buenos Aires to study the oil privatization and to speak with Argentine companies from that sector." The daily *Clarín* on Sept. 27 stated that Chávez held "important meetings with individuals who have worked on privatization plans and on social aspects." In Chile, he also studied that country's privatization of its social security system, one of the IMF's proudest achievements on the continent.

Chávez also proposed, according to Agence France Presse news service, that "we must put an end to the pendular movements to which the militaries have been subjected during the past two decades, during which they either served as a base of support for dictators or, on the contrary, were official eunuchs. . . . It is time to find a point of balance between the two extremes and to assign a new role to the armed forces on the subcontinent."

What is the new military Chávez is looking for? He tells us: General Liber Seregni, a Marxist-Leninist and former presidential candidate of Uruguay's leftist Broad Front—"who we greatly love and admire"—is the "new kind of military we want in Latin America."

In other words, what Chávez wants for Ibero-America's armed forces is to turn them into the armed wing of Castro's São Paulo Forum.