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## ULTIMAS NOVEDADES EN LA PRENSA INTERNACIONAL (INGLES Y FRANCES):

### ARTICULOS EN INGLES

Si se quiere denunciar el fraude electoral que se ha cometido en Venezuela a la prensa internacional y explicar claramente lo que sucedio y como, ella puede ser contactada aqui:

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Este es el articulo en el que manifiesta sus dudas:

[http://www.usatoday.com/tech/world/2004-07-12-venezuela-evote\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/world/2004-07-12-venezuela-evote_x.htm)

**Posted 7/12/2004 3:56 AM**

**Doubts over touchscreen tech choice for Venezuela recall By Alexandra Olson, Associated Press**

CARACAS, Venezuela — Despite an electronic voting fiasco in 2000 and the furor over e-voting in the United States, Venezuela is using untested touchscreen computers for its recall referendum on Hugo Chavez's presidency.

Critics fear touchscreen voting machines in the Aug. 15 vote could fail spectacularly, exacerbating a crisis over Chavez's rule that has polarized the world's No. 5 oil exporter and killed dozens in sporadic political violence.

The touchscreen machines on which a third of the U.S. electorate will vote in November are dangerously vulnerable to hackers, rigging and mechanical failure, computer scientists generally agree.

That didn't deter the Chavez-dominated Venezuelan Elections Council from choosing Smartmatic, a little-known Boca Raton, Fla.-based company, to provide similar technology — albeit with a printed record of each vote — for the referendum.

Smartmatic has never tested its machines in an election. And there has been no independent analysis or certification of its touchscreen system, although the council says the system will be audited before the vote.

In the United States, touchscreen computers are partly an attempt to eliminate hanging chads and other problems associated with the disputed U.S. presidential election results in Florida in 2000. Chavez often cites the Florida debacle to question George W. Bush's presidential credentials.

Yet in Venezuela, an electronic voting system produced that very same year what is widely known as the "mega-flop."

The biggest election in Venezuela's history was supposed to take place on May 28, 2000. More than 6,000 public offices were up for grabs, and Chavez, elected in 1998, was seeking re-election.

But two days before the vote, the Supreme Court postponed the election because of problems with computer software needed to tabulate votes and register more than 36,000

candidates. It was humiliating for election officials who had insisted things were going smoothly.

The Omaha-based software provider, Election Systems & Software, blamed constant changes by election authorities in posting thousands of candidates.

E-voting did take place in July 2000 with few problems. But the postponement prompted authorities to reject any new deal with ES&S and to retire machines from the Spanish company Indra.

This year, a pro-Chavez majority on the five-member elections council voted to sign a \$91 million contract with Smartmatic and its two partners, Venezuelan software company Bitza, and CANTV, Venezuela's ...

"Smartmatic is a company that hasn't tested its system anywhere in the world — and it's going to test it here in Venezuela in a process as important as the recall referendum," complained Luis Planas, a member of the opposition COPEI party.

Suspicion deepened after *The Miami Herald* reported in May that a Venezuelan state industrial development fund had invested in Bitza, whose role is to integrate manual votes into the electronic system. Some 10% of voters, mostly in rural areas, will cast manual ballots.

Bitza quickly announced it would buy back the government's 28% stake.

Smartmatic President Antonio Mugica, who also co-founded Bitza, insists his firm is apolitical, and he brushed aside concerns about Smartmatic's inexperience. ...

A square piece of paper popped out of the computer, a physical record of his vote. That, Mugica insists, is the system's primary safeguard against fraud: A paper trail that allows for a recount of any contested election. ...

Mugica, an engineering graduate from Caracas' Simon Bolivar University, founded Smartmatic in 2000 with three other Venezuelans. The software firm handles its finance and sales in Boca Raton but does most research and development in Venezuela. It reported sales of \$1.47 million for the six months ending June 30, 2003, according to Dun & Bradstreet.

Mugica said the firm began developing its electronic voting system in 2001, inspired partly by Venezuela's 2000 elections. He said the data storage and transmission will be encrypted, which should frustrate tampering.

But U.S. computer experts have found numerous security flaws in touchscreen machines, including incorrect use of cryptography, said Aviel D. Rubin, a computer science professor at Johns Hopkins University.

"Computers can be made to produce any outcome that you want without anybody really knowing that's what was done," Rubin said.

**Story from BBC NEWS:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/3570538.stm>

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**What next for Venezuela after the referendum?**

**Venezuela's opposition has called for a manual recount of voting in Sunday's referendum on President Hugo Chavez rule.**

Mr Chavez won the vote by a wide margin but his opponents claim the result is fraudulent.

They also want a full audit of the brand new electronic voting machines that were used in the referendum.

International observers have said they found no evidence of fraud.

**What is the future for Venezuela after the referendum? How can people in Venezuela reunite? What is the possible global impact of the situation in Venezuela? Can international organizations help at all? Send us your comments**

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The following comments reflect the balance of opinion we have received so far: ...

**All the people around the world writing beautiful things about Chavez helping the poor should take some time and visit Venezuela and verify how many of the poor are actually better off since he took power.**

No improvements. People are poorer. Also, check the life styles of his cabinet members, Supreme Court, Congress. They were not rich people, none of them, and their salaries do not allow for luxurious life style. Go check on that too. See the spending and rich life styles they all have presently. For the poor? yeah, right!

**E. Casanova, Miami - USA**

I believe that there was a very subtle fraud in last Sunday's referendum. Some international observers were taken in. I will not play this game again. I will not vote again until I see in office, at the National Election Council (CNE), people that inspire confidence in fair play. The European Union observers did not endorse the election process. Too bad that the Carter Centre and OAS were led to believe that it was a clean process. It wasn't. International organizations can help by cutting off all initiatives this government may have to "export the revolution" to other countries. This will help other countries. Our situation will have to be dealt by the Venezuelan people.

**Cesar, Caracas, Venezuela ...**

Unfortunately people believe that Chavez is helping the poor. The levels of poverty and corruption from the government are one the highest in our history.

How can we talk about a revolution and a president for the people when we had the highest revenues from oil in the past 10 years, and the poverty, cost of living, and inflation just keep going up? What revolution is that? We need help this is a fraud!

**Mayari Genova, Boston, USA ...**

This is the biggest fraud I have ever seen. As a Venezuelan living outside of my country I feel very disappointed with this result, especially after checking by myself what the people wanted, which is what happened in the London voting centre, where the SI (YES) won over 90% of the votes.

**Jesus Núñez, UK ...**

I see a dark future for our great country, unfortunately. The president does not have the knowledge to run a country, and everybody around him, are taking advantage of this. Some people are getting very rich while the rest of the country is getting poor.

**Andres, Caracas, Venezuela ...**

I'm a Venezuelan who opposes Mr Chavez. Obviously the referendum is a fraud. What's next to Venezuela? we only can pray and hope that the international community take a position, because a new dictatorial regimen is being born in our country and the world can not let appear

another Cuba or Iraq.

**Álvaro Moncada, Venezuela ...**

My wife is Venezuelan and I grew up there. This is nothing but a fraud. Chavez cannot be trusted. This is a person that divides the people by creating resentment. The poor aren't better with him, they are just concerned with the "rich" being poor, and that is what it all comes down to. Lower classes are not doing much better. I see nothing good coming.

**Marcus, Washington DC (Caracas) .....**

Venezuelan people are victim of a fraud again. Please, Venezuela needs the help of the international institutions. Chavez is a dictator and want to destroy my country. Please help us. After the referendum and before this fraud, we are asking for help

**Ana, London-UK ...**

It's a bad day for democracy in Venezuela if Chavez does stay in power. Venezuela is just another nation with great oil wealth and can't manage it in a way most people get any benefit from it. Same goes for Nigeria, Mexico, Russia and most of the Middle East. So much wealth going to so few people lead to so much of the world's instability. This is where change is needed and with Chavez maintaining his grip on power, that change is nowhere down the line.

**Dan Braverman, Minnesota USA ...**

<http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/Swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=5149537>

**August 17, 2004 6:15 AM**

**Chavez vows to deepen revolution**

**By Patrick Markey**

CARACAS, Venezuela (Reuters) - Venezuela's left-wing President Hugo Chavez has easily won a referendum on his rule and offered to open a dialogue with opponents while also vowing to intensify the reforms at the heart of the nation's political conflict.

World oil prices eased on hopes the clear result would end more than two years of confrontation between the populist leader and critics who say he wants to convert the world's fifth-largest oil exporter to Cuban-style communism.

A triumphant Chavez, who survived a coup two years ago and a gruelling oil industry strike a year later, urged his opponents to accept his offer of talks rather than turn to violence.

"We've initiated a new phase to deepen this project ... The people must know that now more than ever we will pay the social debt," said Chavez, whose reforms have diverted oil wealth to housing, medicine and education for the poor.

"Venezuela has changed forever ... Any dialogue must be to move this project forward," he said at a news conference.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who led an observers' mission, said their verification matched results from the National Electoral Council, which gave Chavez 58 percent of the vote in Sunday's recall vote. Officials said more than 8.5 million of the 14 million registered voters participated.

Chavez' victory was a blistering defeat for the opposition, a coalition of political parties, labour unions and civilian groups that fought for more than a year to secure a vote against a leader they accuse of authoritarian rule.

After the results, Caracas remained calm apart from small pockets of protests. Gunmen on motorbikes killed one woman and wounded at least four people in wealthy eastern Caracas after opposition leaders called for protests to challenge "a gigantic fraud", officials and witness said.

Critics forced the referendum on Chavez by obtaining 2.4 million signatures on a petition, but the results showed the country's poor backed the charismatic president, a friend of Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

United often only by hatred of Chavez, the opposition coalition struggled to present an alternative. Buoyed by soaring oil prices, Chavez meanwhile bolstered public spending on his programs for the impoverished majority.

#### NO SIGNS OF FRAUD

Chavez foes often criticised top National Electoral Council officials as biased in favour of the president, who was first elected in 1998. They said the recall results were a fraud aided by electronic voting machines. But Carter dashed opposition hopes of international sympathy.

"We have so far not found any element of fraud in this process," he said.

In Washington, U.S. officials said the observers' assessment pressured the opposition to either accept defeat or flesh out their fraud claims so they could be investigated.

Chavez presents himself as a regional voice against U.S. imperialism and he has clashed frequently with Washington over the direction of his left-leaning government. But he said he hoped the vote result would help improve relations.

Oil markets worried a Chavez defeat could trigger unrest in the military and the state oil firm PDVSA, sectors he has purged to ensure key posts are in the hands of loyalists. But Venezuelan oil industry officials said operations were running normally after the vote.

Oil prices slipped from record highs close to \$47 to about \$46 a barrel, with energy traders saying Chavez's victory eased the threat of disruptions to exports, especially to the United States.

The clean victory for Chavez leaves his critics with few options but to regroup before congressional elections next year and a presidential election in 2006.

But the win also raises questions about where the firebrand leader will take his "Bolivarian revolution" -- a mix of nationalist ideas of Venezuelan liberation hero Simon Bolivar and socialist tenets of equality.

**<http://www.nmpnews.net/index.php?topic=International>  
New Mexico Progressive News by Edrar González Ruiz. Rebellion 6/23/04  
Shady Businesses of Bush Family in Venezuela**

The government of Bush Jr. has promoted a bloody military intervention in Iraq and has attempted by all means, from coup d'etat to "democratic" ploys, to destabilize the government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. What the two nations have in common is their enormous petroleum resources.

The governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, brother of President Bush, is one of the most strident promoters of the overthrow of Chavez, whom he calls "a crazy guy" and "whose government isolation is most important for the international community". According to the governor, "the support that Chavez receives from (Fidel) Castro and the support that Castro receives from Chavez incites them. To isolate them would have significant potential for the region and for Latin America".

Notwithstanding the unconvincing rhetorical defense of "democracy", used to justify the destabilization of Venezuela, the Bush clan has had long ties with multimillionaire businessmen in that country who, as Jeb, have not made a fortune benefiting others, including notorious Cuban exile figures who happened to pass through Venezuela.

A news article by journalist, Gerardo Reyes, published on November 19, 2000 in Miami, mentions that in 1977, when his father was named director of the CIA, Jeb was established in Venezuela as a representative of the Commerce Bank of Texas, owned by James Baker, who was a friend of Bush Sr. and later became Secretary of State.

In those days, Jeb spoke Spanish fluently thanks to his relationship with the Mexican Columba Garnica, who became his wife, thus "the family was accepted quickly by the oil-rich society circles of Venezuela." In 1980, when his father was elected vice-president, he moved to Miami, the place he considers to be "the most international city in the country". In following years, in order to become a millionaire, Jeb united with the Cuban city planner and director of the anti-Castro Cuban American National Foundation, Armando Codina, with whom he earned large commissions, even 50,000 dollars, to find investors for Codina's firm, something that was an obvious influence peddling. He also became related to Miguel Recarey, a Cuban-American industrialist who was accused of a millionaire fraud involving federal funds for his medical centers in Miami. Recarey diverted money earmarked to provide public health services in Miami in order to fund hospital services for the mercenaries of the Nicaraguan Contras through his firm, International Medical Centers (IMC). Also, Jeb received 75 thousand dollars from the company to find a new location, work that was never done.

In 1994 Jeb amassed a fortune in this type of business of more than 2 million dollars at the age of 41. Three years later, Recarey said that "he bought influencing" for Jeb Bush and other powerful political figures in the eighties and that a good amount of money was spent in contracting Jeb Bush and people close to former president Ronald Reagan and then vice-president George Bush to try to prevent federal inspectors from closing their businesses. After removing about 300 million dollars from the coffers of the State, Recarey escaped to Venezuela and later flew to Spain. When confronted with these accusations, Jeb denied everything: the checks from Recarey were the fruit of commissions from the sale of real estate.

It is well known that Jeb Bush has supported his friends and radical Cuban partners in exile who have participated in many (covert) operations in Venezuela. In 2001, Jeb Bush, congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lethinen, along with the Heritage Foundation and extreme right, Republican Senator, Jesse Helms, supported the nomination of Cuban exile, Otto Reich, for State Department Secretary for the Western Hemisphere. Reich, an extreme right-winger with a sinister agenda, headed the Office of Public Diplomacy for the State Department during the government of Ronald Reagan and was U.S. Ambassador in Venezuela from 1986 to 89. He has also been accused of supporting the failed overthrow of Chávez in 2002, whose visible head was industrialist Pedro Carmona, president of the Venezuelan employer's association, Fedecámaras, and holder of interests in the oil sector. Among the first measures to be decreed by the ephemeral dictator (whose government only lasted 48 hours) was to double oil exports and turn off supplies to Cuba, measures evidently dictated by Bush, the main promoter of the coup against Chavez.

Also in 2002, Senator Christopher Dodd said that when Reich was (Venezuelan) ambassador, he helped Orlando Bosch, a Cuban exile accused of terrorism, escape to the U.S. Bosch was in prison in Venezuela due to the bombing in 1976 that downed a Cubana airliner near Barbados. In February 1987 Orlando Bosch left prison in Venezuela and illegally went to the U.S. using a visa granted by Reich. Once in the U.S. he was immediately arrested on a violation of parole. Working for the Cuban American National Foundation at that time, Ileana Ros Lethinen and Jeb Bush organized an intense campaign to free him.

In addition to Bosch, the anti-Castroite Luis Posada Carriles also participated in the Cubana terrorist attack. According to Colombian journalist, Hernando Calvo Ospino, Posada had worked for the CIA in Venezuela since 1967 as "advisor for security forces in charge of repressing leftist organizations". Ospino added that the proceedings against those

responsible for the bombing "was accidental due to the succession of resources by the defense". The case had to be transferred to the military, because the civilian judge quit due to death threats. Elio Garcia, President of the Military Tribunal, did not back down and his son was assassinated. "Under these conditions, it would be naive not to think that the CIA was somehow implicated. Greater suspicions surfaced when the U.S. government did not provide any information regarding Posada or Bosch.

But other members of the Bush family also have important contacts in Venezuela. After the failed coup against Chavez, Gustavo Cisneros, television mogul and friend of former president Bush, father, was pointed out as the principal promoter of the counterrevolutionary rebellion. Cisneros publicly denied his role in the coup, but the weekly magazine, Newsweek, noted that Pedro Carmona "was seen leaving Cisneros's office" before going to the Government Palace to be sworn in as provisional president. According to Newsweek, Venezuelan legislator, Pedro Pablo Alcántara, told the magazine that the brief Carmona dictatorship was organized in Cisneros's office and that he was the "Supreme Commander" of the plot. Newsweek also reported that Otto Reich had spoken to Cisneros "two or three times" during the coup. One of the calls to warn Reich on Saturday, 13th, that a crowd of furious Chavez supporters had surrounded the Venevision building, was from Cisneros.

According to Venezuelan sources, on Thursday, April 11, 2002, when Chavistas and anti-Chavistas clashed violently, leaving 25 dead (most on Chavez' side), Pedro Carmona was not at the march but comfortably lounging in the Venevision TV bunker with the president of the Episcopal Conference, Baltazar Porras, newspaper businessman, Rafael Poleo, and other figures.

It would not be surprising for Cisneros to be picked as the Bush prospect to face Hugo Chavez at the next presidential election, if the opposition wins the upcoming referendum with the support of the U.S.

The 57-year-old, Gustavo Cisneros Rendiles, owns a fortune estimated at 5 billion dollars, one of the largest in Latin America, after Mexican Carlos Slim. According to Forbes magazine, he ranks 64th among the 500 richest persons in the world.

Being of Cuban origin, Cisneros is the major stockholder for Univision, the main Spanish language broadcast network in the U.S. and owns several large audience channels such as Venevision in Venezuela, Chilevision, Caracol Television de Colombia and Caribbean Communications Network. He also owns Panamco bottling and is a stockholder in Coca-Cola, the transnational that employed President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Gustavo Cisneros shares fishing trips in Venezuela and Florida with his friend, George Bush and, showing that capital does not have scruples nor ideology, he also cultivated good relations with the government of Bill Clinton, where Secretary of State Cyrus Vance served as a contact.

Cisneros belongs to the International Council of Advisors for the Society of the Americas, a non-profit organization where David Rockefeller and the Chilean media tycoon, Agustín Edwards, are members. The latter was a key figure in the conspiracy against the constitutional government of Salvador Allende for which he received the backing of the CIA.

In January 1985, several sympathizers of U.S. leader, Lyndon Larouche, were arrested in Venezuela and 200 copies of a book titled, NARCOTRAFFIC S.A. (Dope Inc.), in their possession, were confiscated. The book stated that the Cisneros family had connections to individuals and institutions dedicated to money laundering. Years later, the editors of the publication presented documents showing that on February 14, 1985 an airplane belonging to Pepsi-Cola Corp. of Venezuela and operated by a business of the Cisneros family (Aeroservicios Alas), was searched by agents of the Customs Service in Hollywood, Florida,

finding 50 kilos of cocaine inside a bag. Cisneros admitted to the incident saying that Customs did not file charges.

Gustavo's brother and second in the managing of the family emporium, Ricardo Cisneros was implicated in the worst financial scandal in the history of Venezuela: the collapse of Banco Latino in 1994, resulting in an order of arrest on Ricardo issued by a Venezuelan judge on charges of fraud by a member of the bank's board of directors. According to the charges, the directors of the bank approved loans to enterprises -some owned by the bank- above established limits and also diverted bank funds. When the arrest order was issued, Ricardo was abroad and remained there.

Luis Giusti is a Venezuelan collaborator of President Bush and serves him in the capacity of energy advisor. AS President of the Venezuelan state-owned petroleum company, PDVSA, from 1994 to 1999, he attempted its privatization. According to petroleum economist, Rafael Quiroz, Giusti always questioned patriotism, nationalism and sovereignty, saying that such terms have to "conform with current world realities" in order to explain the necessity of dispensing with PDVSA. "Questions of sovereignty and patriotism are brandished here. Enough of that." (El Nacional, July 7, 1998, page E/2), Giusti argued. Later, in August of the same year (1998), he said at the 54th Annual Assembly of Fedecamaras: "I believe that the enterprise (PDVSA) should place its stock in the market." Upon leaving his position at PDVSA, Giusti went to live in the U.S. to work for Shell Petroleum Corp. which he probably never stopped serving. He now works there for his former bosses as an efficient "Shell man" and, having converted into a "Bush man", he is an adviser for President Bush's Hemispheric Energy Plan.

translation: lam

Boletín Latino

Official organ of the Gen. Francisco de Miranda Bolivarian Circle of New Mexico and Vermont

Story from BBC NEWS: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/business/3562388.stm>

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### **Crude oil prices set fresh highs**

### **Oil prices touched new highs on Tuesday after economic data indicated that rising have yet to slow economic growth or the demand for energy.**

US crude hit a new 21 year high of \$46.95 a barrel in New York, ending the day up 70 cents at \$46.75.

Brent crude settled 30 cents higher at \$42.99 in London.

Prices had dipped earlier in the day on reports that Russian oil firm Yukos would be able to maintain oil exports at least until the end of September.

However, later on Tuesday Yukos lost an appeal for more time to pay a \$3.4bn tax bill, creating fresh uncertainty about its ability to maintain production.

Prices were also stiffened by economic data published on Tuesday, showing the first decline in US consumer prices in eight months and a fall in energy costs.

The figures, for June, indicated that underlying inflation was in check - and thus that demand for goods and services is likely to remain high.

With global oil production capacity under pressure, oil prices could be pushed even higher, analysts said.

"The latest data implies that demand for oil will continue to be strong because it appears that higher energy prices have had little impact on overall inflation," said Phil Flynn, an analyst with Alaron Trading.

### Price pressure

Oil price fears had eased somewhat on Monday after Venezuelan voters backed President Hugo Chavez in a generally peaceful referendum.

"I expect the market to recover slightly from here," a Singapore based trader said.

Oil prices have set a succession of new records in recent weeks, propelled by fears that world oil production is barely keeping pace with strong demand from the US and China.

Concerns over problems in the Middle East and over the future of Russian oil giant Yukos, have also contributed to the oil price rally.

The company, which accounts for about 2% of world oil output, has warned that the tax demand could force it into bankruptcy.

However, company chairman Viktor Gerashchenko told the Reuters news agency that it expects to be able to export through to the end of September at least.

Any news of further supply disruptions in Iraq, which controls the world's second-biggest proven oil reserves after Saudi Arabia, could also push prices higher.

Iraq's oil exports are currently running well below their potential level because of insurgent attacks on pipelines and other oil facilities.

<http://newsfromrussia.com/world/2004/08/17/55441.html>

#### Oil prices set new records

12:33 2004-08-17

Oil prices eased from new record highs on Monday as victory for Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in a referendum on his rule eased fears that unrest could upset the country's oil exports.

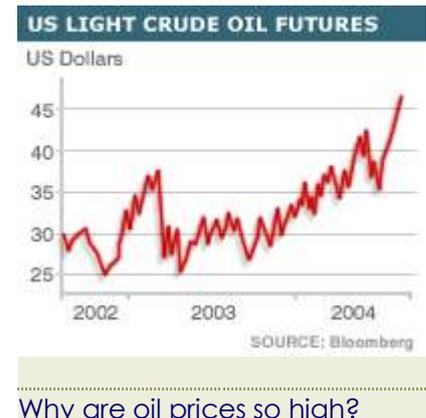
Fresh disruption to Iraq's oil exports and warnings that YUKOS' financial crisis could ultimately cut into oil shipments bolstered prices, which have set new records in all but one of the last 12 trading sessions. U.S. light crude oil for September was down 28 cents at \$46.30 a barrel, off an early peak of \$46.91 a barrel which was the highest since the New York Mercantile Exchange launched oil futures 21 years ago.

Prices have set new records in all but one of the last 12 trading sessions. London Brent was down 28 cents at \$43.60 a barrel, after also hitting a new record at \$44.11.

Prices made only modest falls following Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez' survival of a recall referendum, which eased the threat of disruption to the country's crude exports.

National Electoral Council President Francisco Carrasquero said in a national broadcast that the "No" option opposing Chavez's recall had obtained just over 58 percent of the vote, while the "Yes" vote obtained nearly 42 percent.

Two pro-opposition electoral officials questioned the result, saying that procedural checks had not been carried out on the results as required.



Energy markets have been worried about disruptions to the country's 2.6 million barrels per day (bpd) oil production if a disputed result sparked social unrest. Shipping sources had said shipments from Venezuela, the world's fifth-largest crude exporter, were running smoothly, informs Reuters.

OPEC members including Saudi Arabia this month will pump at capacity, said United Arab Emirates energy minister Obaid bin Saif al-Nasseri.

``With these prices all producers will go to the maximum they can," al-Nasseri said, when asked of his expectation for OPEC output including Saudi Arabia. ``There's no shortage in the market. All our customers are well supplied."

OPEC already boosted its official quotas on July 1 and Aug. 1, though in practice most members are pumping as much as they can. The group meets next on Sept. 15 in Vienna.

The International Energy Agency, which coordinates the use of government oil reserves to avert shortages, sees no need yet to tap its stockpile, said Klaus Jacoby, head of emergency planning at the Paris-based agency.

``For the time being, we don't think there is a severe supply disruption but we think there is a severe increase in price," Jacoby said in a telephone interview from Paris. ``We have plans on the shelf. We're clearly saying we could activate them, if needed, within 48 hours.", reports Bloomberg.

In accord with the Canadian Press, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. spokesman Mario Socorro said crude exports were not disrupted during the referendum.

The referendum followed a two-year drive to oust Chavez, which included a short-lived 2002 coup, a devastating two-month strike and political riots last March that claimed a dozen lives.

Traders also were weary of continuing unrest in Iraq. Journalists have been ordered to leave the holy city of Najaf after talks between the Iraqi interim government and forces loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr broke down.

Two weeks of continuous fighting have put crude pipelines at risk there, traders said, as militants threaten more attacks on the vital pipelines -which produces around 1.7 million barrels a day, or around five per cent of the world's daily supply.

Traders will also monitor developments surrounding Russian oil giant Yukos on Monday.

The company, which pumps roughly 1.7 million barrels a day, needs to pay the Russian government \$3.4 billion in back taxes, and there are fears it might have to shut down as bankruptcy looms.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/story/0,3604,1284578,00.html>

**Oil price dips after fresh record**

**Economists say that despite Venezuelan respite underlying trend is causing real damage**

**Ashley Seager and Mark Milner**

**Tuesday August 17, 2004**

**The Guardian**

Oil prices set a fresh record early yesterday of close to \$47 a barrel before falling back on relief that a referendum victory for President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela would be likely to ensure that crude keeps flowing from the world's fifth largest producer.

The poll result was sufficient to boost stock markets around the world which were relieved that oil prices, which had set a record in 11 of the past 12 trading days, had stopped rising, for now at least. The Dow Jones industrial average closed up 129 points, or 1.3%, to 9,954 in New York while the FTSE 100 closed 48 points better at 4,350.

Jitters about the Venezuelan referendum on Mr Chávez's rule had pushed US light crude to \$46.91, the highest in the 21-year history of the New York Mercantile Exchange. Further disruption to Iraqi oil exports and warnings that the financial problems at Russian oil giant Yukos could hit supplies added to the pressures pushing up prices.

However, they later slipped back to \$46.05 after news that Mr Chávez had won. There had been fears that workers at oil plants might have gone on strike if he had lost. Venezuela produces 2.6m barrels per day, about 3% of global output. ...

Economists are starting to worry about the impact of rising oil prices, particularly if they go much higher and stay there. Steven Fries, deputy chief economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, said soaring prices could be behind the recent apparent slowdown in the United States economy.

"It is also slightly negative for other OECD countries and for most of the countries in central and eastern Europe," he said, adding that he did not expect them to suffer a recession on the back of the current oil price. "It is just not a big enough shock."

The German Bundesbank warned that if oil prices continue rising, it would present a "serious risk" to the current growth outlook for Europe's biggest economy.

But Fadel Gheit, oil analyst with New York brokerage Oppenheimer & Co, believes oil prices are poised for a big fall. "\$45 per barrel is a shock for the world economy although it will take six months for that impact to be really felt. But when the first tanker of oil leaves the Middle East and there is no buyer, prices will fall off a cliff," he said.

Opec, the oil producers' cartel, is pumping flat out, at a 25-year high of 30m bpd. Saudi Arabia has pledged to pump "as much as fields allow" to cool prices.

[http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/releases/pr\\_2004\\_0319d.html](http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/releases/pr_2004_0319d.html)

**Kerry Statement on Venezuela**  
**19 March 2004**

With the future of the democratic process at a critical juncture in Venezuela, we should work to bring all possible international pressure to bear on President Chavez to allow the referendum to proceed. The Administration should demonstrate its true commitment to democracy in Latin America by showing determined leadership now, while a peaceful resolution can still be achieved.

Throughout his time in office, President Chavez has repeatedly undermined democratic institutions by using extra-legal means, including politically motivated incarcerations, to consolidate power. In fact, his close relationship with Fidel Castro has raised serious questions about his commitment to leading a truly democratic government.

Moreover, President Chavez's policies have been detrimental to our interests and those of his neighbors. He has compromised efforts to eradicate drug cultivation by allowing Venezuela to become a haven for narco-terrorists, and sowed instability in the region by supporting anti-government insurgents in Colombia.

The referendum has given the people of Venezuela the opportunity to express their views on his presidency through constitutionally legitimate means. The international community cannot allow President Chavez to subvert this process, as he has attempted to do thus far. He must be pressured to comply with the agreements he made with the OAS and the Carter Center to allow the referendum to proceed, respect the exercise of free expression, and release political prisoners.

Too often in the past, this Administration has sent mixed signals by supporting undemocratic processes in our own hemisphere -- including in Venezuela, where they acquiesced to a failed coup attempt against President Chavez. Having just allowed the democratically elected leader to be cast aside in Haiti, they should make a strong statement now by leading the effort to preserve the fragile democracy in Venezuela.

[http://www.todaysalternativenews.com/index.php?event=link,150&values\[0\]=1&values\[1\]=1817](http://www.todaysalternativenews.com/index.php?event=link,150&values[0]=1&values[1]=1817)  
08/16/2004

**Bravo Chavez! Bravo Democracy!**  
**Sam Hamod**

Democracy has won against the CIA and American dollars in Venezuela. The people of Venezuela saw through the American orchestration, along with the oligarchs of Caracas, that the CIA was behind the "recall" effort in Venezuela--in the same way that the Bush team was behind the recall of Governor Davis in California that put a limp minded Shwarzenegger into office.

The people of Venezuela showed they were, and are, smarter than the people of California and that they intend to stand up to the Bush machinations.

It has been apparent for months to experts on South and Latin America that the Bush team has had its hands in the Venezuelan unrest with orchestration, money and media attack aided by U.S. spin doctors--in Venezuela, in the U.S. and even in Europe. But, fortunately for Venezuela, the people have voted and have won the day. What were the "crimes" the Bush team was upset about in Chavez' administration. First, he wanted to distribute the wealth more evenly in Venezuela; at this time, over 90% of the land is owned by 3% of the population (that's why I use the term oligarchs, just as I used them about the oil barons who plundered Russia, with American Zionist help, after Gorbachev put Russia on a democratic path--that was abused in Russia by America and by Yeltsin's crew); second, he wanted to keep more of Venezuela's oil for Venezuela--he wanted to keep 30% for the country's profit, not the profit of the Big Oil (read America...) who used it for their profits rather than for the benefit of Venezuela; third, he wanted to serve out his term in office (this is his third term, and in each case, he has won office handily without corruption, according to observers from outside Venezuela and America). I don't think these were crimes--do you? It's time the people of the world do just as the Venezuelans and Chavez have done--say NO to GW Bush and his minions who want to control the world's oil supplies and other countries as well. Iraq is a test case for the Bush team, to see how much they can get away with in the world. Venezuela was another test case--America lost in Venezuela, and will eventually lose in Iraq and will find itself seen as an enemy throughout Latin America and the Arab and Muslim worlds. In Venezuela, America is no longer loved, as it had been. In a recent poll, over 68% of the people said they no longer admired America or trusted America. In Egypt, America's biggest and strongest ally in the Arab/Muslim world, it is now 76% unfavorable to America--that is from a 80% favorable rating just 3 years ago!

Viva Venezuela! Viva Democracy! Viva Chavez!

Viva Real Democracy, not the Bush/Ashcroft abuse of democracy. Now, we'll see if the American people have as much sense as the Venezuelans, and just like them, turn Bush down and out.

[http://www.marxist.com/Latinam/recall\\_referendum\\_venezuela.html](http://www.marxist.com/Latinam/recall_referendum_venezuela.html)

**The recall referendum in Venezuela**

**A crushing blow to the counterrevolution**

**By Alan Woods**

**London, August 16, 2004.**

At 4:03 this morning Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) announced the result of the recall referendum on the government of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frías. A tally count of 94,49 percent of ballots from automatic voting machines revealed that the opposition had failed to obtain more votes than those who wanted Chávez to stay. There

were 4,991,483 "no votes", representing 58.95 percent of those voting, against 3,576,517 "yes" votes, representing 41.74 percent.

Immediately the opposition "categorically refused" to recognise the result. Nevertheless, it is clear that the "no" has won by an overwhelming majority. Early reports suggested an even bigger majority – 63percent to 36 percent. This may be closer to the truth. Manual count of votes from rural districts and poor urban areas where Chávez has widespread support, and where automatic machines were not used, will probably increase the President's margin of victory.

### **Masses roused**

The referendum has roused the masses. There was unprecedented voter participation because everyone knew what was at stake. As a result Venezuelans were queuing for up to 10 hours to vote. Our correspondent in Caracas wrote last night, giving a taste of the mood on the streets during the voting:

"The euphoria on the faces of the people and the street celebrations in poor areas of Caracas contrast with the angry mood in the areas of the *escuálidos*. In all areas there have been big queues to vote, but whereas in the poorer districts they are still waiting to vote, in the upper class and middle class areas the queues have already vanished. In some areas people have been waiting six or seven hours to vote."

The participation was around 90 percent. This historic voter turnout stands in stark contrast to the participation in elections in Britain or the United States. This is what happens when the people feel that they have something to vote for – and against. It is what happens when people feel that politics really matter and that voting can make a difference. What a contrast to the situation in the "western democracies" where in most cases people do not even bother to vote because they feel that, whoever is elected, it will make no real difference to their lives. Yet Bush and Blair think they have the right to lecture the people of Venezuela on democracy!

This outstanding victory in Sunday's referendum is the eighth electoral victory of Chávez and the Bolivarians in the last six years. Yet the opposition still persists in describing him as a "dictator". This flies in the face of the facts. Whatever you think about Hugo Chávez he is not a dictator. After almost six years in government, President Chávez has not only maintained his popular support but increased it. He won 56 percent in the 1998 elections and 59 percent in the 2000 re-election. Now his support is near 60 percent.

Defeated in every election, the opposition has tried to remove Chávez from power through a coup d'etat in 2002, followed by a management-led shutdown of the state oil company PDVSA. When these attempts failed the opposition put all their weight behind the recall referendum to oust the democratically elected President before the end of his term.

This is ironical. The constitutional right to a recall referendum only exists thanks to the new Constitution drafted by an elected Constituency Assembly during Hugo Chávez's first year in office, and approved by popular referendum. The recall of elected officials was an idea proposed by Chávez to the Assembly, and it was supported by the majority and *rejected* by the opposition, which then hypocritically used that right to attempt to oust the President. By the way, if these "democrats" had won, the first thing they would have done is to abolish the right of recall referendum!

These gentlemen call themselves democrats but in practice show that "democracy" is only acceptable to them as long as their side wins. Right up to the last minute the opposition continued its manoeuvres. Before the official announcement was made by the CNE, a separate announcement was made by CNE board members Sobella Mejias and Ezequiel Zamora, questioning the result. It is an open secret that both Mejia and Zamora are aligned with the opposition. By such dirty tricks the opposition seeks to discredit the referendum and thus prepare the way for future acts of sabotage.

Once again the working class and poor people of Venezuela displayed an unerring class instinct. It was reported that in the working-class neighbourhood of Petare, people were queuing since 4 am. When it became clear that the opposition had been defeated, the mood of the masses erupted. The streets around the Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas were full of pro-Chávez demonstrators celebrating this new victory for the Bolivarian revolution. [Venezuelanalysis.com](http://Venezuelanalysis.com) reports: "Chavistas have taken the streets of working class neighbourhoods blowing horns and playing music. Fireworks and firecrackers can also be heard in working class sections of Caracas, resembling a New Year's celebration."

### **Blow to the counterrevolution**

There is no doubt that this result represents a body blow to the counterrevolutionaries, a section of which was clearly reluctant to accept the result. Intense negotiations were reported to be taking place between the Carter Centre and the Organization of American States (OAS) and the opposition coalition Democratic Coordinator to convince them to accept Chávez's victory.

It is quite natural that the masses should celebrate. They had yet again delivered a heavy blow against the counterrevolution and blocked it on the electoral plane. But strangely enough, Chávez opponents were also reported to be on the streets, ordered out by their leaders to celebrate their own "victory". Rank and file chavista groups have denounced the call as a plan to cause public disruptions and possible roadblocks as was done earlier this year. An opposition leader's call for a "civil rebellion" to protest the delays in the voting process clearly confirm these fears.

The counterrevolutionaries were hoping to use the referendum to engineer new clashes and disorders. Their ever-present hope is to cause sufficient chaos to provoke a coup. This would have been the scenario especially if the result had been close.

Opposition leaders Humberto Calderon Berti and Cesar Perez Vivas from the COPEI party gave a press conference Sunday night to thank international observers present in this "historic election". The miserable expression on Berti's face told its own story. It was not supposed to be like this! The counterrevolutionaries hoped that their control of the mass media would give them a sufficient advantage to win the referendum. In addition they counted on the scarcely concealed support of Washington and most of the governments of Latin America, in the person of Jimmy Carter and the OAS.

### **The role of the foreign "observers"**

We have still to hear the verdict of international observers, including former US President Jimmy Carter and the Organization of American States. More than 400 international observers, including a mission from the Organization of American States, descended upon Venezuela to "observe" the recall referendum process. This was really an unprecedented level of foreign interference in Venezuela's internal affairs. This recall referendum was the most closely monitored electoral process in the western hemisphere. There was certainly no such monitoring of the last US Presidential elections, which were rigged to allow George W. Bush to get possession of the White House. But such little contradictions do not bother Venezuela's foreign critics too much.

The best-known element in the "observer mission" is the Carter Centre, founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. This former peanut farmer made a mediocre President, but as a diplomatic manoeuvrer he has excellent qualifications. President Chávez told me how Jimmy Carter wept when he learned of the appalling conditions of the Venezuelan poor. His ability to weep at given intervals is part of his inheritance from the US's Southern Bible Belt. No doubt his ancestors also wept for the plight of the poor at the same time as they enriched themselves on the backs of their black slaves. This special brand of Christian hypocrisy is a most useful weapon in the armoury of international diplomacy, and one that Mr. Carter has mastered to the utmost perfection.

Hypocrisy is, in fact, very much in demand in Venezuela at the present time. The counterrevolution cannot afford to appear publicly in its real guise, but must disguise itself as "true democracy", even though its real aim is to install a dictatorship in Venezuela. Numerous counterrevolutionary organizations have sprung up posing as "human rights" groups and so on. In order to deceive public opinion, things must be turned into their opposite: an election defeat must be presented as a victory, and a victory as a defeat, dictatorship must be presented as democracy and democracy as dictatorship, and so on.

One of those who specialise in this special brand of hypocrisy and deceit is Súmate, which is supposed to be an objective non-partisan civil association but in reality it is a pro-opposition group, financed by Washington. The co-director of Súmate, Maria Corina Machado, was a participant in the 2002 coup that briefly overthrew Chávez—she signed the decrees of would-be dictator Pedro Carmona. She is currently being investigated for treason, for having received funds from a foreign government (the U.S.) earmarked for ousting the Chávez government.

Súmate used its funds generously supplied by US donors to organize a large team of "volunteers" whose aim was to collect the largest possible number of "yes" votes in exit polls.

These "objective results" could then be presented as "proof" that the opposition had won, and used as propaganda for organizing disturbances when a Chávez victory was announced.

Despite its public image of an "impartial body", the Carter Centre is a tool of Washington. The Carter Centre relies on U.S. government funding. And as the English proverb goes: he who pays the piper calls the tune. It is well known that the entire U.S. political establishment opposes Chávez and supports the opposition.

In testimony before a U.S. subcommittee hearing on March 15, 2000, the Carter Centre's lead observer, University of Georgia political science professor Jennifer McCoy clearly placed the Venezuelan government in the category of "*new, subtler forms of authoritarianism through the electoral option...*" In her declared quest to "deter new hybrid democracies," McCoy called for continued U.S. government support of the Carter Centre, claiming that such funding represented a "neutral and professional means to improve the electoral process." Dr. McCoy has called for U.S. pressure on the Chávez government, though there had never been any significant allegations of electoral fraud in either Chávez's 1998 election or in the plebiscites that his government sponsored in following years. She also portrayed the Chávez government in the same light as the Peruvian ex-dictator Alberto Fujimori!

### **Carter urges caution**

The fact that the sympathies of Carter and the OAS were all on the side of the opposition is not seriously in doubt. However, the plans of the opposition to make use of the foreign "observers" were dashed by the mass response to the referendum campaign. The campaign itself was conducted in a scrupulously fair and democratic manner. None of the hoped-for irregularities were found.

Early on Sunday, after visiting several voting centres, Carter was forced to admit that the voting queues in Venezuela were "unprecedentedly long and orderly". Carter, who heads the Carter Center mission to observe Venezuela's historic recall referendum, added that "from the first hours of the day we have visited several voting centres of Caracas and there are thousands of people waiting with plenty of patience and in peace." OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria stated on Sunday that the referendum results would be "trustworthy".

What else could these ladies and gentlemen say? The original intention of the OAS and the Carter Centre was to put pressure on the Caracas government to reach a "compromise" with the opposition, or, if possible, to rig the referendum in favour of the latter. If the result had been a close one, they might have tried to announce an opposition victory before the official result had been announced. This was probably the reason why the announcement of the result was delayed.

A section of the hardliners must have been demanding that the OAS and Carter should collaborate with such a manoeuvre. Some sectors of the opposition had apparently announced their intention to release the results of their own exit polls five hours before the voting centres were scheduled to close. This seems to have been the position of the opposition leader Enrique Mendoza. This would have been a clear provocation. But both the Carter Centre and the Organization of American States have understood that it is pointless and counterproductive to try to deny the result of the referendum.

At half past one in the morning, officials from the Carter Centre and OAS emerged from a meeting with the National Electoral Council. They were desperately trying to convince the Democratic Coordinator opposition coalition to accept Chávez's victory. There must have been a heated exchange in the small hours of the morning. But Carter could not oblige the hard liners. He is undoubtedly an imperialist scoundrel, but he is not a complete fool. A blatant attempt to hand victory to the opposition through fraud would have immediately provoked an explosion that could not be controlled.

Carter, a relatively astute representative of US imperialism therefore had to put pressure on the opposition to calm down. The Venezuelan newspaper *Diario Vea* stated that Dr. McCoy, had indirectly criticized the opposition's decision to release early and unofficial results. Dr. McCoy reportedly declared that all political actors should wait for the announcement of results by the accredited governmental body, the National Electoral Council.

Both the Carter Centre and the Organization of American States understood that it was pointless and counterproductive to try to deny the result of the referendum. But that was only a tactical decision. They understood that a coup was out of the question *at this moment in time*, because the class balance of forces was not favourable. Thus, a Chávez victory will

have to be grudgingly accepted by at least one sector of the opposition. The best that they can hope for is to cast some doubt on the process, exaggerating irregularities, shouting fraud etc. This they are already doing. In fact, they were already doing it before the referendum even took place.

### **What now?**

As we predicted in our last article ([As August 15 approaches: Why Marxists are fighting for a "No" next Sunday](#)), the imperialists understand that the time is not ripe for a new coup, which would lead to civil war – a civil war that they would certainly lose. *Therefore, they have decided to adopt a different tactic.* Having failed to take their objective by assault, they will resort to siege warfare. The struggle has not ended – merely passed onto a different plane. The counterrevolutionaries and their imperialist allies will wait until the correlation of class forces is more favourable. They will move again. But for now they must beat a tactical retreat and lick their wounds.

Does this mean that everything is solved and that the opposition has been decisively defeated? No, it means no such thing. What the referendum campaign has shown is that Venezuelan society is extremely polarized between right and left. This polarization will not disappear after the referendum, but steadily increase. In that sense, *the referendum has solved nothing.* The counterrevolutionaries will regroup their forces and prepare for a new offensive once the conditions are more favourable.

On the international plane they will not cease their noisy campaign against the Venezuelan revolution, or drop their claims that that Chávez has authoritarian tendencies. With the aid of organizations like Súmate, they will publish fake exit polls that directly contradict the official results to show that the result was based on fraud. They will continue to sabotage and obstruct the progress of the revolution, attempting to cause economic and social chaos. They will never be satisfied until Chávez has been overthrown and the gains of the Bolivarian revolution completely liquidated.

The latest victory of the Chávez government places the bourgeois opposition in a difficult position. This is the fourth time that a free election in Venezuela has given a decisive majority to Chávez. The Venezuelan bourgeoisie is getting increasingly desperate. The class war is intensifying all the time. The workers and peasants, encouraged by the result of the referendum, will demand more reforms and a deepening of the revolutionary process. The bourgeoisie and the imperialists will demand a halt and a reversal. The government will find itself ground between two millstones.

The massive voter participation on Sunday is a clear reflection of the extreme political polarization of Venezuelan society to the right and left. The immediate question was the permanence of President Hugo Chávez in office, but far deeper questions are involved, and these questions remain to be solved. It was necessary to win the referendum, but the referendum result will not solve these fundamental problems. It will only pose them in an even sharper way.

Those leaders of the Bolivarian movement who argued that, by holding the referendum, the enemies of the revolution would be silenced, have been shown to be wrong. The internal and external enemies of the Venezuelan revolution cannot be reconciled by elections, referendums and negotiations. They will only be satisfied when the revolution is defeated. Not to recognise this is the height of irresponsibility.

On previous occasions when the masses defeated the counterrevolution there was a golden opportunity to carry through the revolution to the end and finish the power of the oligarchy once and for all. But on each occasion the opportunity was thrown away. The leaders allowed themselves to be seduced by the siren voices that argued for "moderation" and "negotiation". The inevitable result was a new offensive of the counterrevolution.

It is time to learn the lessons! One cannot make half a revolution. As long as the oligarchy continues to maintain its hold on important sections of the economy, it will continue to act as a Trojan Horse of US imperialism, sabotaging and undermining the Bolivarian revolution. It is time to ask ourselves the key question: can we allow the interests of a handful of rich parasites to decide the destinies of millions of people? Or will we put an end to this situation once and for all, expropriating the property of the counterrevolutionaries and taking the road of socialist democracy?

*The 15 August will enter the annals of revolutionary history as a great victory for the working people – on one condition: that we do not waste it, that we do not hand the initiative back*

to our enemies, but strike blows against them that will destroy the basis of their power. That is the only way we can build upon our victory, and turn it into a decisive revolutionary transformation of society.

## ARTICULOS EN FRANCES

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/debats/20040818.FIG0173.html>

**VENEZUELA Après le succès du président de la République au référendum**

**Chavez, mi-Peron et mi-Guevara**

Alexandre Adler

[18 août 2004]

La victoire du semi-Caudillo vénézuélien Hugo Chavez est un tournant de l'histoire politique de l'Amérique latine. Même amplifiée par des fraudes et des bourrages d'urnes, elle est néanmoins incontestable. Mais, comme la langue d'Esopé, cette victoire du populisme créole est à la fois la pire et la meilleure des choses.

Commençons par le pire : l'Argentine – qui, dans ce domaine comme dans bien d'autres, a servi de laboratoire à tout le continent austral – a engendré, du temps de sa fragile prospérité, deux aberrations idéologiques durables : le péronisme et le guévarisme. Opposées en apparence, puisque Peron était un fasciste sympathisant actif de Mussolini et d'Hitler tandis que Guevara était, en tant qu'élève du grand avocat de gauche Silvio Frondizi, un semi-trotskyite à la recherche d'une révolution latino-américaine originale, les deux idéologies se sont pourtant rencontrées sur l'essentiel. Toutes deux se fondent sur l'exécration du modèle de liberté nord-américain. C'est d'ailleurs la diplomatie argentine qui aura constamment, de 1930 à 1980, opposé un veto immarcescible à toutes les propositions venues de Washington de bâtir une communauté des deux Amériques au départ contre Hitler, à l'arrivée pour étendre le libéralisme économique.

Ce syndrome argentin était à la fois l'expression d'«un embarras de richesses» et d'une émergence encore trop brutale de pouvoir populaire. L'Argentine du début des années 40 est en effet un pays au fait de la puissance économique apparente, car la guerre a valorisé considérablement les exportations de produits alimentaires qui proviennent d'une sorte de ferme collective, la pampa, probablement la plus performante de la planète, tandis que la même guerre, rendant plus difficiles les arrivées de produits industriels d'Europe et d'Amérique, a également permis une substitution d'importations qui a permis une croissance vertigineuse de l'industrie nationale. Dans ces conditions, la tentation sera forte de redistribuer à l'aveuglette les bénéfices de cette conjoncture exceptionnelle en faveur notamment des plus démunis, ceux qu'Evita Peron appellera avec bonheur les «sans chemise», les «descamisados».

Mais le péronisme est aussi l'expression d'une montée, sans cristallisation démocratique, d'une force populaire autochtone. Dans un pays où les oligarchies terriennes, qui se proclament comme partout en Amérique latine libérales ou conservatrices, dominaient sans partage le processus politique, l'irruption de Peron lui vaut le ralliement d'un peuple avide de justice sociale, et plus encore de prise de parole, mais dépourvu d'éducation politique véritable et d'organisations politiques solides : entre 1943 et 1945 le Parti socialiste explose, l'essentiel de sa base syndicale se ralliant au fascisme social de Peron, tandis que communistes et radicaux sont durablement marginalisés. Le jeune Che Guevara, issu d'une famille d'intellectuels de gauche, ne partage pas l'idéologie péroniste mais en conservera toutes les illusions : anti-américanisme fanatique dans lequel il poussera un Fidel Castro, lui aussi élevé dans ce culte barbare par un père espagnol et franquiste, vaincu de la guerre de 1898, populisme foncier faisant peu de cas du marxisme véritable des petits partis communistes jugés trop réformistes, mais surtout mépris de fer pour les difficultés de la production.

Même dans l'effervescence de la révolution cubaine, ces idées plus que courtes finiront par entraîner le limogeage du beau barbu argentin par Fidel Castro lui-même et pousseront le malheureux vers les forêts profondes, d'abord au Congo et pour finir en Bolivie, où il trouvera

la mort de manière plus lamentable qu'héroïque au moment même où – 1967 – le beau Peron, bien requinqué par son exil chez Franco, commençait à tisser le réseau serré de ses indécrottables partisans qui allaient lui permettre trois ans plus tard un retour triomphal à Buenos Aires.

Chavez est le résultat d'une synthèse particulièrement perverse de ces deux mouvements pulsionnels nés de la grande détresse argentine : il est péroniste car, comme son maître, c'est un militaire autoritaire et putschiste ainsi que le sont souvent en Amérique du Sud ces officiers qui n'ont jamais fait la guerre qu'à leur propre peuple (seul le Brésil et le Mexique auront participé à la Seconde Guerre mondiale au côté de l'allié américain). Tout comme Peron encore, Chavez, après une tentative infructueuse de coup d'Etat pur, s'impose à un système démocratique sclérotique et exsangue, où les radicaux argentins ont ici pour équivalents l'Action démocratique, un parti de type social-démocrate européen qui fut grand sous son fondateur Romulo Betancourt, et les conservateurs une formation démocrate-chrétienne, le Copei, dont les dirigeants finirent dans les années 80 par adopter le même programme populiste inepte que leurs adversaires du centre gauche.

C'est ici que l'on retrouve le guévarisme de Chavez : si Peron avait pris l'Argentine en 1943, avec toutes les facilités que cela lui permit initialement et le ralliement enthousiaste d'une partie des classes moyennes, Chavez, lui, est plébiscité au bas de la pente en 1995 alors que la dépression de la rente pétrolière a profondément érodé la société vénézuélienne. La gauche du pays quant à elle est profondément divisée et le demeure à ce jour, tout comme l'était le Parti socialiste argentin de 1945. Le communisme vénézuélien a éclaté dès la fin des années 60 entre partisans de la lutte armée, immobilistes prosoviétiques et partisans de la démocratie qui, condamnant l'intervention soviétique à Prague, constituent, à l'apogée de la démocratie et de la prospérité vénézuéliennes, le MAS (Mouvement pour le socialisme, mais aussi adverbe espagnol qui signifie «davantage»).

On ne sera pas surpris de constater qu'une moitié des fondateurs du MAS, les plus démocrates, sont à la tête du mouvement anti-Chavez tandis que l'autre moitié, la plus démagogique, a embrassé le chavisme avec enthousiasme. Chavez, en effet, tient un discours essentiellement de gauche : réforme agraire qui ici touche en les spoliant non les propriétaires absentéistes d'autrefois mais une agriculture productiviste de paysans moyens ; redistribution sans progrès de la productivité de ce qui reste de la rente pétrolière sous forme de cadeaux sans lendemain, tandis que s'effritent tous les jours les infrastructures du pays ; contingentement et réglementation des exportations industrielles et agricoles déjà faibles, en partie pour ruiner délibérément le monde des entrepreneurs foncièrement hostiles au chef. Qu'importe, le pétrole paiera, comme les cigares et le sucre devaient payer quand Guevara était le tsar de l'économie cubaine.

Voilà pour les mauvaises choses : la victoire nette de Chavez est la confirmation de la force du populisme qui balaie aujourd'hui toute l'Amérique du Sud. Même la Colombie de droite et le Chili de centre gauche, qui sont encore épargnés par le cyclone, ne manqueront pas d'en être affectés. Chavez, vainqueur aujourd'hui, c'est pour reprendre Barbey d'Aurevilly : *«Le bonheur dans le crime.»*

Mais il y a aussi un bon côté dans cette affaire : c'est le triomphe de la diplomatie brésilienne qui, patiemment, est à la recherche d'une voie non antagoniste d'indépendance des Etats-Unis ; tout oppose en effet le régime de Lula et celui de Chavez. Chez les dirigeants brésiliens du Parti des travailleurs, on ne trouve aucun excès économique, peut-être même parfois trop d'orthodoxie financière, aucun populisme irresponsable, aucune démagogie en matière de réforme agraire, aucune apologie du protectionnisme industriel et, bien que cela soit un élément secondaire, pas trace de l'antisémitisme populiste que Chavez a contracté au contact de ses interlocuteurs les plus extrémistes dans l'Opep.

Et pourtant le régime brésilien ne peut pas non plus se permettre de voir le Venezuela rebasculer dans le camp américain, soit sous l'impact d'une guerre civile froide débouchant

sur une victoire électorale de l'opposition, soit a fortiori sous le choc d'un coup d'Etat militaire sur le modèle de celui qui a échoué de justesse il y a deux ans. Cela tombe bien, les Etats-Unis aussi ne souhaitent pas à présent une défaite trop large de Chavez. Dans l'état de tension où se trouve le marché pétrolier, mieux vaut pour Washington disposer d'un approvisionnement pétrolier régulier du Venezuela que d'un pays en guerre civile qui contribuera ipso facto à la tension à la hausse du pétrole induite durablement par la situation au Moyen-Orient. C'est la raison pour laquelle l'Administration Bush et l'ambassadeur Shapiro à Caracas ont accompagné, sans mauvaise volonté excessive, le compromis élaboré par les Brésiliens avec lesquels ils siègent dans un comité baptisé, pour la bonne cause, Les Amis du Venezuela. Les Américains n'avaient plus qu'une exigence : que Chavez organise le référendum de révocation qui a constitué une sorte de présidentielle anticipée. Les Brésiliens ont obtenu en échange le lâchage par Washington de l'opposition vénézuélienne et l'absence totale de pression sur Caracas.

Leur victoire est certes celle du populisme, mais aussi d'un processus électoral à peu près limpide. Malgré le désir évident à l'entendre qu'éprouve Chavez, le gorille bolivarien ainsi remis en selle, de confisquer le pouvoir, la perspective de voir une dictature rouge-brune, étroitement alliée à Cuba, s'instaurer au Venezuela s'éloigne ; de même que s'éloigne le soutien vénézuélien aux guérillas communistes colombiennes, dont le président Uribe a obtenu le repli stratégique durant son mandat. Dans ces conditions s'esquisse une nouvelle architecture du continent austral : un populisme de gauche pas toujours très tempéré et foncièrement hostile aux Etats-Unis, mais aussi un respect encore précaire mais probablement définitif des procédures démocratiques. Un tel équilibre, fragile encore, vaut bien une messe trotskiste à Brasilia. Mais attention, tout repose ici sur le rôle civilisateur du Brésil qui hérite curieusement, à l'échelle de toute l'Amérique du Sud, du rôle dont Fernand Braudel rêvait pour le Portugal à l'échelle de la péninsule Ibérique sous Philippe II : inculquer à des peuples hispaniques plus intolérants et plus violents la douce mélancolie lusitanienne de ceux qui n'ont jamais été réticents à mêler leur sang et à cultiver un laïcisme improbable mais hédoniste.