

Revolution as Spectacle

Book Review

Fifth Estate Collective

2012

A review of

Venezuela: Revolution as Spectacle by Rafael Uzcategui, Introduction by Octavio Alberola, Translated by Chaz Bufe, Tucson, See Sharp Press, 2011, 232 pages; seesharppress.com

FE Note: What follows isn't strictly speaking a review. The one we had intended didn't materialize, so we are reprinting this from the Venezuelan anarchist publication, *El Libertario*, where much of Rafael Uzcatequi's writings appear, and whose themes are echoed in this book.

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One of the pillars of President Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Venezuelan government is its enormous propaganda machine that repeats lies and half-truths thousands of times until they become real in the collective imaginary.

A favorite theme of this propaganda in different media and languages are the so-called "social missions," a name given the public policies implemented by the Executive to reduce poverty.

As *Venezuela: Revolution as Spectacle* by *El Libertario*'s Rafael Uzcategui recounts, Chavez's discourse emphasizes social issues and that some of those missions, particularly between 2006 and 2009, contributed to reducing the percentage of poor families in the country. What is false, regardless of what some left intellectuals avow, is that these are populist, redistributive policies. The missions are far from being structural programs, and, indeed not revolutionary, to overcome the causes of poverty. Their depth and number of people who benefit are limited and does not correspond to the wealth derived from high oil prices, the nation's main source of income.

While the people get crumbs from the biggest economic windfall of the last 30 years, the well-connected elite, the boliburguesia, make fabulous deals and become wealthy overnight. Corruption and impunity at all levels, as well as bureaucratic inefficiency, have diminished the operational ability of the missions and their impact on reducing inequality.

Bolivarian educational policy is another of the key missions in state propaganda. However, according to a 2011 Report by Provea (Venezuelan human rights NGO, derechos.org.ve), based on official numbers, the total social investment, except for Social Security, has decreased in the last few years. Also, almost all indicators of investment in education have fallen.

Over a million and a half children between 3 and 17 are still not included in the education system. School enrollment for 2011 fell almost 11 percent below that of ten years ago. As far as the quality of education, it is worrisome that only 55 percent of teachers have a degree, 34 percent are temporary, and 10 percent are classified as "other" with no further explanation.

There is a significant lack of teachers in areas such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. There are no exams for jobs as principals or teachers, and there have been no evaluations of the efficiency of educational methods since 2003. The rate of scientific-technological innovation in Venezuela is at the lowest in decades, with much of the qualified talent fleeing abroad.

These issues are not the priority of those on top, immersed as they are in the struggle for more power and more oil money. The criticisms are met with hyper-ideology and barracks discipline. What Chavez and opponents have agreed on is electioneering, and ignoring the social agenda.

In spite of having over 14 demonstrations a day, according to human rights organizations, the biggest number of the Chavez period, the media attempts to redirect the capacity of people for autonomous mobilization and put it within the electoral machine. From each extreme, left and right, coalitions and fictitious organizations are promoted in support of some candidacy and to create the sensation of a secure future.

Faithful to our principles, the anarchist position is the rejection of the electoral farce, exposing the capitalist character of the conflict within the bourgeoisie and denouncing those sectors interested in more of the same as much as in coddling the state bureaucracy.

As anarchists, opposed to the strategy of “the lesser evil,” we are committed to creating a truly revolutionary and transformative alternative, against the ambitions of the Mesa de la Unidad Democratica (MUD, electoral opposition to Chavez) as well as those of the Gran Polo Politico (GPP, an alliance of parties and groups that support the government).

This road is being followed from different directions by many people and organizations disappointed by the inconsistencies and corruption of the elite who promote political polarization in Venezuela.

In 2012, we will continue the reconstruction of the autonomy and belligerence of the social movements and fight electoral demagoguery, the siren’s song, and sure source of further disappointment.

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El Libertario is a Venezuelan anarchist paper published in Caracas since 1995 in Spanish with a large English section. It is available on line at nodo50.org/ellibertario. The print edition is distributed in Venezuela and 15 other countries, being the best known and most widespread anarchist voice from within Latin America. Subscriptions and distribution information from **ellibertario-AT-nodo50.org**



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