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Venezuela

**"Chavez is very much
weakened, and it will incline
him still more towards
conciliation"**

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[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/chavez.jpg>]

Q Will the conflicts continue?

A Since February 27, 1989, and the Caracazo [an uprising against poverty and hunger in Caracas - ed], which mobilized 10 million people, two forces have faced each other: those fighting for social emancipation and those who are trying to impose neo-liberalism.

This rebellion of the poor has maintained a high degree of institutional instability in the country. This is still the case now under a government which claims to institutionalise this popular reaction. I think that there will be a succession of coups, confrontations and insurrectional strikes.

I mean that there is a confrontation over the political regime, over oil, but the two currents that face each other are both neo-liberal, even if they represent different tendencies. On the one hand there is the bloc that could be called the Fourth Republic, composed of the politicians of the traditional right, the bosses and their media, some putschist military elements and some 'moderate' trades unionists [social democratic or social Christian] in the CTV federation.

This bloc supports an old and classic neo-liberalism in the distribution of wealth. On the other hand, there is a neo-liberalism that is much more advanced in its philosophical conception of capitalism: this is the bloc that supports the government. What is lacking here is a third force, revolutionary and patriotic, capable of confronting the power of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

In this schema, how do we explain the fact that the people came onto the streets to defend Chavez and that the troops remained loyal to the president?

It is clear that there are two very distinct currents inside chavismo. One current, the minority one - including the higher officers in the Armed Forces, the Supreme Tribunal and the Executive - takes the economic decisions and the official ones from the ideological and political point of view. It is this current that makes chavismo continually lose cadres, which poses problems; for example if Chavez loses five more deputies, he will lose his majority in the National Assembly.

The other current, majority from the quantitative but not qualitative viewpoint, is that which came into the street to defend Chavez. It is composed partly of officers ready to fight to defend the government, even if they do not dominate the military apparatus, and also political sectors that believe in the Bolivarian revolutionary project.

Q What is the current situation of the government?

A The Chavez government has emerged very much weakened from the coup. However, this fragility will continue if he implements the conciliatory discourse that he has adopted since his return to power.

"Chavez is very much weakened, and it will incline him still more towards conciliation"

Conciliation as Chavez conceives it is a new pact - like that of Punto Fijo [an agreement reached in 1958 between the Democratic Action (AD), COPEI (Social Christian) and Democratic Republican Union (URD) parties, after the fall of the military dictator, general Pedro Jimenez - ed.] - which does not take into account those who supported him and negotiates with the rightwing sectors which tried to overthrow him.

Q What position did your movement adopt during the coup?

A Tercer Camino opposed the coup, we went onto the streets but we circulated a petition demanding the installation of a patriotic government.

Q What was your reference?

A In the current situation a majority socio-political sector in the country - what one can consider as the patriotic and popular bloc, composed of civilians and soldiers, some currently in the government and others not - is in the process of elaborating a document that will be presented soon to President Chavez.

Q What is this proposal?

A It amounts to a radical opposition to what we think will happen if Chavez pursues his policy of concessions, namely the privatisation of oil, gas and basic services.

Our initiative proposes, among other things, the expulsion of the right wing of the Armed Forces including some that Chavez is in the process of confirming in their posts, and the revision of measures seeking to create a consensus, like the acceptance of the resignation of the new leadership, appointed by him, of the oil company, the PDVSA.