

The Labour Movement and Socialism in Venezuela

An Interview with Pedro Eusse

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In mid-June, 2010, we met with Pedro Eusse, National Secretary of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) and part of the provisional executive committee of the labour confederation, Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (National Union of Workers, UNT). Revolutionary figures from times past stared down at us from the paintings hung on the walls in the office of the PCV in central Caracas. Refusing to be interrupted by the constantly ringing phone, Pedro spoke passionately for two hours about the centrality of organized workers in the revolutionary struggle and the need to unite the labour movement. He expressed his hopes for rebuilding the UNT at its third Congress planned for fall 2010.

What was your political formation?

I first joined the Communist Party Youth of Venezuela in the state of Zulia, fundamentally an oil-producing state in the West of the country. When I joined the Communist Youth I was just finishing high school, and had begun working at an agricultural production company. I was 17 or 18 and became involved in the union. Therefore, my initiation into the [Communist Party](#) coincided closely with my initiation into the labour movement.

An anecdote will reveal what union politics was like in Venezuela at the time. I was involved in the organization of a strike in our company against the abuses of excessive working hours. As a consequence of this, I was fired. From that point forward I have been dedicated full-time to political work, and work within the labour movement more specifically.

Over the years I assumed responsibilities within the party at the national level, as part of the executive of the Communist Youth of Venezuela. This was around the end of the 1980s, and I was in Caracas when the [Caracazo rebellions](#) occurred.

Around the same time I had also assumed responsibilities within the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CUTV), which was founded in 1963. I began my role as a youth leader in this union confederation beginning in the late 1980s, and later I was elected to be general secretary. So, my union activities have been very much integrated with my political work. The decision for me to dedicate myself to a leadership role within the CUTV was a decision of the party. I had experience in the union struggle and therefore I was deemed right for the job.

In the current conjuncture we are in the process of building a union current called La Corriente Clasista de Trabajadores "Cruz Villegas" (Classist Current of Workers "Cruz Villegas" - CCT-CV). Cruz Villegas had been a leader of the CUTV, a veteran Communist union leader in Venezuela, who was tortured and imprisoned during the era of the dictatorship of Marco Pérez Jiménez (1952-1958). Cruz Villegas died two years ago.

So the new current is attempting to keep the class struggle spirit of Cruz Villegas and the CUTV alive. The new current, CCT-CV was formed with the idea of uniting the labour movement. We have, for all practical purposes, deactivated the CUTV. The CUTV had been a very small workers' central, fundamentally composed of Communists. It was very strong in the 1960s when it was first founded, and maintained a pluralist perspective, because there were other currents involved alongside the Communist current. But all currents were on the left. The CUTV was the traditional leftist workers' central of the labour movement.

But for a number of reasons it began to diminish in strength and in numbers. One of the causes was the strategy adopted by the Acción Democrática (Democratic Action, AD) party, which was in power at the time, together with FEDECAMARAS (the business federation), the State Department of the United States, and the transnational petroleum companies, to create a new kind of unionism. The political pact Punto Fijo, established in 1958, ultimately required a workers' central to express its interests, and this was the Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos (Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, CTV). The CTV established control over the public sector workers, all the state enterprises, and all the enterprises controlled by transnational capital. This strategy succeeded in diminishing the numbers and strength of the CUTV over time.

The other factor contributing to the reduction of the CUTV was the international political and economic situation, the liberalization of trade, which was thrust on Venezuela through the International Monetary Fund, which demanded a series of neoliberal policies. The textile, metal-mechanical, and other sectors of Venezuela's economy practically collapsed. And these were areas where the CUTV had had a substantial presence. As the reduction of industry advanced, the CUTV was left eventually with almost no affiliates.

So when Hugo Chávez won the presidency in 1998, and initiated the Constituent Assembly in 1999, and this entire process of change, all of us on the progressive and radical left decided to put tremendous effort into destroying the power of the CTV within the labour movement. We wanted to defend the interests of workers and defend the revolutionary process.

So, we decided that continuing to work through the CUTV would not be the best way to contribute to this renewal of the labour movement, but rather through the creation of a new union current that would operate in wider spaces. So we created this new current, and deactivated or put on hold, the CUTV.

That's some of the story of how I was shaped politically. Today, I'm a part of the provisional leadership of the new labour confederation, the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (National Union of Workers, UNT). Elections are still pending.

We've pushed very hard for the UNT to regulate its basic functions, so that it can become an authentic workers' central, with the capacity to struggle, to unite, and mobilize the workers - so that it is independent from the state, from the party, and from the bosses.

And together with other currents we've been able to achieve some level of reactivation of the UNT. We're in a position to hold a national Congress in which we might finally transcend the divisions. It's normal and inevitable that there will be internal conflicts, the problem is when these conflicts become paralyzing, divisive, and destructive.

In the past this sort of destructive division has clearly been evident in the UNT. I'm not sure

how aware you are of this.

Can you tell us about the events that led to the breakdown of the UNT?

The UNT had what you might call a birth defect. The UNT was created in a very bureaucratic manner, with little debate among the workers themselves, and with little participation by the workers. It was very much created from above, essentially being the product of the will of a few leaders.

The first leadership of the UNT was simply appointed from above. It was not a product of consultations with the rank and file. There were no elections. The positions were merely distributed. Therefore, in this first phase, we [the CCT] decided not to participate in the UNT, because this sort of practice has no validity. Your actions have to be equal to your words. If we were promoting democratic unionism – not simply a formal democracy but a class democracy – if we wanted a unionism that broke with the bureaucratic and elitist schemes of the past, characteristic of the old CTV, we could not participate in the UNT as it was taking shape initially. We wanted to create a unionism that would spark a new hope for Venezuelan workers, and this wasn't going to happen with the characteristics that the UNT exhibited initially.

The first Congress of the UNT, for example, wasn't an authentic Congress because there were no elected delegates. There were no preliminary documents submitted for debate. There was basically a consensus that the first attempt was problematic, and so a second Congress was held in 2006 in order to really debate the project, the statutes, and the principles of the workers' central.

This second Congress was a disaster, however, which ended in blows. Discontent had been building for so long. The different fractions saw the UNT as "their" organization and treated other fractions as irreconcilable enemies. The situation was even more lamentable due to the fact that there were international representatives of the labour movement present at the Congress.

I attended this Congress as a guest. At the time we were in a period of transition, attempting to incorporate ourselves into the UNT. But there was no one to talk to. If you wanted to talk to the UNT you had to talk to all the different tendencies separately since there was no leadership.

This Congress caused one of the most important currents, the Fuerza Bolivariana de Trabajadores (The Bolivarian Force of Workers, FBT) to leave the UNT, along with the Trotskyist current led by Orlando Chirino, and a number of other currents, dividing the labour movement.

The FBT is one of the most important – although problematic – currents of the Venezuelan labour movement because it was the union instrument of the Movimiento Quinta República, Chávez's political formation at the time. After its separation, the FBT began to work toward building an entirely new and distinct workers' central, over which they wanted to have absolute and unconditional control. This new central, that they've called Central Socialista de Trabajadores (Socialist Workers' Central, CST) has not been constituted in practice.

The new proposed central would be a threat to the independent labour movement because the FBT is against any confrontation with the state. The Venezuelan state continues to be a

bourgeois state, even if it has undergone some changes during the Chávez period. They argue that the labour movement should not confront the state because the state is still transforming itself. Their lack of independence from the state has been expressed time and again. For example, during the Sidor strike in 2008, the FBT defended the bosses and abandoned the workers. They did this openly. In this period the Minister of Labour, Jose Ramón Rivero, a militant of the FBT, had tight relations with the governor Rangel Gómez in the state of Bolívar, where Sidor is located. Gómez is completely right-wing - although ostensibly part of the Bolivarian process, like many others "in the process" he is actually fundamentally on the right.

So, Rivero took the side of the Argentine multinational that owned Sidor against the workers. And the FBT aligned itself with Rivero, failing to show even the smallest sign of solidarity with the workers who were violently repressed by the police and the National Guard.

Another example is the strike that occurred in 2009 in the Mitsubishi plant in Anzoátegui. In this case there was a police assault on the workers that resulted in two deaths. And the Ministry of Labour gave the green light for Mitsubishi to fire 11 of 15 union leaders at the plant, destabilizing the union. An unknown number of workers were also fired. The objective of the Ministry of Labour and Mitsubishi was to destroy the union's capacity for resistance. Rather than siding with the workers, the FBT condemned the union, saying it was full of anarchists who were sabotaging the company. At no moment did they express solidarity of the workers, or question the position being taken by the company, or the horrible assassinations of workers that took place. Nor did the FBT reject or condemn the firing of the union leaders and other workers.

Given this, how are we supposed to work with this union current? It must be defeated. So with all the problems that are evident in the UNT, it is nonetheless essential that we work toward building it, so that it becomes an authentic instrument for the workers, with independence from the bosses, the state, and the party.

The Communist Party, and the current that represents it within the UNT, has made a series of proposals, which it is discussing with the rank and file, in an attempt to build consciousness amongst the workers of their role in society. We've called for the establishment of socialist workers' councils. There is also a proposal for a law defending this position that is currently before the National Assembly.

The other problem with the UNT from the very beginning was the proposal for the opposite extreme of horizontal unionism, under which no one would have responsibilities of leadership; everyone would simply be equal promoters of the UNT. We [the CCT] were never in agreement with this, either. And, fortunately, once we joined the UNT we defeated this idea through struggle and open debate.

We weren't in agreement with horizontalism because a union movement has to be an instrument for combat, for struggle. It has to have the capacity to respond, and to maintain unity. In the period in which there was no leadership, and all the sections in the UNT were equal, each one of the coordinators spoke for themselves as if they were speaking for the UNT. So one representative of the UNT would say something, and another leader would denounce it. This was absurd. It made building an effective, wide-reaching union movement impossible. It turned into a situation of permanent confrontation, and generated

irreconcilable conflicts. The UNT ended up destroying itself.

It's true that today in Venezuela there is the presence of participatory and protagonistic democracy, without a doubt, but this does not negate representation – whether at the level of the state or in social organizations. For example, when a community elects a spokesperson for their communal council they are electing a representative who is subordinate to the sovereignty and will of the decisions of the people through communitarian assembly. And this is the way it should be. But it must be understood that this is a form of representation. In short, we need representatives, but not representatives that usurp the power of the collective. Representatives that express the positions arrived at through debate in the rank and file, through mechanisms established in the assembly of the UNT.

Now that this horizontalist orientation has been defeated, the current debates and struggles revolve around different currents attempting to consolidate more influence and leadership within the UNT. This is normal and shouldn't be seen as problematic. It only becomes a problem when the struggle for leadership ends up destroying the organization itself.

What has been the role of the labour movement in the process?

The most important weakness of the revolutionary process in Venezuela today is the absence of a protagonistic workers' movement, with independence, with strength, with proposals, with its own demands. It is still necessary to build a movement of workers with revolutionary objectives – without renouncing the importance of demands for reform.

There are revolutionaries in all the sectors of the labour movement, such as in Guayana. There are many unions which are run by reactionaries or reformists, but the rank and file workers in Guayana have made real advances in their consciousness. Through the Socialist Plan for Guayana there has been an experience of direct workers' management of these enterprises, and determining how workers should control the means of production.

The workers in the petroleum sector have also advanced, but there is still a great deal of influence from the bureaucracy. The revolutionary currents within the petroleum sector are still weak. Many will say, "yes, we're with Chávez, we're with the process," but they haven't asked what is the transformative role of the workers in the process. Are you with Chávez because he's increased your salaries and improved the working conditions in your sector, or are you with Chávez because we're going to abolish this capitalist mode of production and build socialism?

While there are some pockets of activity, many of the unions in Venezuela today describe themselves as Bolivarian, revolutionary, and even socialist, but are reformist in practice. These unions therefore do not see their role as transforming society and the means of production, but rather as achieving minor economic improvements for workers, better salaries and collective contracts for their members. They don't see their role as struggling for transformation.

This is a major problem that we have to confront, for the absence of such a [revolutionary union] movement has allowed other social sectors, other social classes to have an influence on the revolutionary process. These sectors have specific conflicts with U.S. imperialism, with the transnationals, but they are also opposed to socialism. The bourgeoisie is never going to be in favour of socialism, nor is the petty bourgeoisie. There are, of course,

bourgeois or petty bourgeois individuals who will support the objectives of constructing socialism, but they are exceptions. As classes, as social instruments, these classes are going to defend their interests – their positions and privileges – and these interests are of course contradictory to the interests of the working class.

The petty bourgeoisie has captured control over much of the public administration, and state enterprises. And so we have these layers controlling public administration, without any type of social control or worker and community control, in the petrochemical industry, the state enterprises in Guayana, and so on. And they act in their own interests, through mechanisms of corruption, accumulating wealth and economic resources. Obviously this sector is not going to promote the submission of these companies to social control, from which they stand to lose.

President Chávez, in the last two years especially, has tried to change the economy, the mode of production, and the form of the state. But the problem is if these objectives are not taken up with force, passion, and intelligence by the workers themselves, the bureaucracy within the public administration – the petty bourgeoisie that has control over the important parts of the Venezuelan state – will prevent these objectives from going forward.

If a company is nationalized and then run in the same way a private company before it, workers are not going to feel that this is their project. It's often the case that the bosses of the public companies commit as many abuses against workers as the private bosses. Obviously, this situation is not automatically resolved through nationalization. We are in favour of the nationalizations that have taken place, and this process of expropriations must continue, but the contradictions must be acknowledged.

For example, we supported the move by the government to expropriate some of the monopolies that currently control the production of food in the country, such as Polar. But the problem is that the state companies that have been created for the production and distribution of food meet only a tiny proportion of the country's needs. We have not overcome the extreme dependency on food imports. So there are still a small group of companies that controls approximately 80 per cent of the food that is produced in the country, and the food that is imported as well.

The only way the government can ensure that these small groups do not use their power to engage in speculation, and to engage politically in a counter-revolutionary manner, is through expropriation.

We are proposing the nationalization of the banks, so that private interests do not control access to financial resources, and so that these resources can be used to strengthen the fundamental productive sectors of the economy.

We are also demanding more profound and far-reaching nationalizations that include new forms of management, involving collective control over decision-making. We need to move beyond statization and toward socialization of the means of production. The problem is that the sectors I've mentioned – the bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie which controls it – are resisting such a transition. They say, "Sure, let's nationalize the enterprises, but we will control them ourselves."

This is the fundamental contradiction at a general level that will not be resolved in favour of workers, in a revolutionary socialist direction, without a labour movement like the one I've

been suggesting we require. This is why we've been proposing things such as the socialist workers' councils, and building a workers' movement with a revolutionary orientation, a workers' movement that incorporates workers from the public, private, and mixed sectors of the economy, and a movement which incorporates all the currents that are with the revolutionary process.

What is the relationship between the communal councils, on the one hand, and the labour movement on the other?

There are very few relations between the two. The labour movement is too weak to establish such relations with the comunas, which are an important part of the Bolivarian process.

There are isolated examples, however. Some comunas have begun constructing housing, for example, and have tried to establish relations with construction unions. But it's often a very complicated and conflictual relationship, because the construction unions in Venezuela have deteriorated a great deal. Some of them can hardly be called unions; rather, they are better described as mafias that control access to work. Many times, the unions attempt to establish control over the comuna to determine who works in the construction projects. This has occurred when communities have tried to build their own schools, health clinics, sports centres, and so on. And it has created a dynamic where the comunas try to avoid relations with the construction unions. Because, many times, the construction unions have not served the interests either of the workers or the community, but rather those of the union leaders.

Our position that we've expressed to comrades in the communal councils and to construction workers is that the existing unions need to transform themselves so that they can work effectively with the comunas. Just because the unions are controlled by a mafia today does not justify a perspective which opposes the unionization of the construction industry in general. Having unions is important because often the infrastructure and housing built in the comunas is contracted out - either by the comuna itself or by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing - to private contracting companies. So these private companies that have the necessary machinery, technology, and resources try to hire labourers at the lowest cost possible in order to make the most profits possible, even when it means violating the rights of workers. The comunas should use unionized labour, but there is no planned, organized, and political relationship between the comunas and the labour movement, which is a major weakness.

As a point of clarification, from your perspective what are the most important social forces within the Bolivarian process?

There's a variety of social forces at play in the Bolivarian process, as I suggested earlier. The petty bourgeoisie has the most influence in the process, progressive sectors of the petty bourgeoisie in many cases. These sectors were radicalized by their experience with neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s when sections of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, and the middle classes were thrust into social conditions of misery, as they were replaced by more powerful fractions of the bourgeoisie.

This dynamic is what helped to create a very wide base for the opposition against the politics of AD and COPEI. And Chávez therefore received a very impressive level of support, and not only from the most impoverished sectors of the population - peasants, workers, and the lumpenproletariat - but also layers of the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie.

So, when discussions begin around the necessity of this process transitioning toward socialism, contradictions rise to the surface. These middle class layers, the petty bourgeoisie, and parts of the national bourgeoisie only want to strengthen themselves vis-à-vis making alliances with the transnationals with the support of the Venezuelan state. And they have received this support through oil rents. So when popular forces demand the socialization of the oil rents, the means of production and the political process, these sectors mount serious opposition. This dynamic creates a contradictory situation.

As a whole, when we look at the Bolivarian process the sector with the most power has been the petty bourgeoisie, in both its civilian and military components. There are many military officials who are committed to the defence of President Chávez who are from the professional middle class. Some of them also constitute part of the petty bourgeoisie because they own tracts of land, and they own properties.

The key thing to confront is that if there is no clear commitment to a new mode of public administration, a new mode of economic management, which is participatory and democratic and subordinated to the will of the workers and the community, these objective contradictions are going to express themselves.

There are subjective and objective contradictions within the public administration bureaucracy. There are some who defend their objective interests against the interests of workers and the people. And there are others who, because of their loyalty to Chávez or their conviction that a revolution is necessary, defend the revolutionary process.

But if there is no clear position on what role the state must play, the institutions and the public enterprises, to revolutionize the form of management and leadership, the objective contradictions of the situation will continue to prevent the deepening of the revolutionary process.

What can resolve this situation? A strong workers' movement, in alliance with the comunas, can push the process in a revolutionary direction. One of the obstacles is that many of the people working within the comunas do not share this perspective. They see the formation of the communal councils merely as a way of meeting very short-term, immediate demands of their communities. They do not see their role as transcending these issues as transforming the integral structures of society.

The communal councils, the workers, and the peasantry will need to confront the monopolies that continue to control large sections of the means of production, as well as the bureaucracy within the public administration. If communal councils are formed merely to receive money from the state and to deliver basic needs to their communities they will not play a revolutionary role.

It is also the case that there are people who work through the communal councils to appropriate the money that is coming from the state and is meant for the community. This explains why in some communities there are intense internal struggles over who will control the resources coming from the state. These conflicts are expressions of residual capitalist values, and in particular values associated with a backwards capitalism that has been extremely dependent on the state, and on oil rent. This tradition of struggle over oil rents has generated these types of deformities and values, which run against production, and gravitate instead toward merely capturing the resources of the state.

Changing themes for a moment, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) as a party?

To begin with the strengths, it was certainly the case that Chávez and the revolution required and still requires a way of unifying individuals and political currents who support Chávez, and who are not inclined to join the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) or other pre-existing parties of the left.

Prior to the [PSUV](#) there was the Movimiento Quinta República (Fifth Republic Movement, MVR), but it didn't have the characteristics of a party. It was fundamentally an electoral instrument. Moreover, there were many movements outside of the MVR that supported the process but were isolated, which have now been integrated into the PSUV. These are positive developments which have allowed for, among other things, important electoral and political victories.

But the weaknesses of the PSUV, from our point of view, have to do with the fact that it is a multi-class party that tries to bring together irreconcilable class interests. There are individuals and sectors within the party that are affiliated with fractions of the urban bourgeoisie, as well as the landholding class, and ranchers. There are within the party owners of small, medium, and also large private enterprises. These sectors exist together with landless peasants, workers, super-exploited sectors of the population, progressive middle class sectors, and revolutionary intellectuals.

There are therefore sectors within the party whose interests lead them to the necessity of revolution and socialism, and others whose interests are in maintaining capitalism, albeit a reformed capitalism. All of these interests coexist within the PSUV. Likewise, there is a similar level of ideological diversity within the party.

This permanent internal tension and contradiction makes it very difficult for the party to organize the popular sectors and build socialism.

These internal contradictions express themselves at different moments, including for example during electoral periods. So we have representatives of the PSUV who have won mayoralities and governorships who are clearly aligned with fractions of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. And once they have won these positions they use their institutional power to enhance the internal contradictions within the party. This is what is happening right now.

When they hold internal elections, they proceed precisely as any bourgeois party would. Each candidate defends their position against the others, and whoever has the most money to promote their cause through advertising and so on, wins against those candidates who lack these resources. The ideology of the party is also confused because of the competing interests and currents, and so on. Harmonizing and building a hegemonic ideology within the party is practically impossible.

We are allies of the PSUV despite these weaknesses since the party does have support within the masses, which enables it to win elections. So at the electoral level, the PSUV has achieved an important level of efficiency. In the current moment, this is a necessity.

But looking beyond the immediate conjuncture and into the future, the intrinsic weaknesses of the PSUV could very well put the revolutionary process at risk.

We can see that there is a new counter-offensive of imperialism being launched in Latin

America, with the coup in Honduras, the new U.S. military bases in Colombia, the elections of right-wing Sebastian Piñera in Chile, destabilization campaigns in Bolivia and Ecuador, and so on. What is the imperialist strategy in relation to the Bolivarian process in Venezuela?

It's clear that there is a multifaceted imperialist strategy against Venezuela. On the one hand there is a strategy to steer international public opinion away from the revolutionary process through the private media abroad and within the country itself. The instruments of ideological domination are lethal weapons, not only against the Venezuelan revolution but against Latin American revolutionary processes. They are continually generating a false image of this process - that Chávez is a dictator who wants a dictatorship, who violates human rights, etc., etc.

The last few years there has been a propaganda campaign which says that President Chávez supports terrorism, and that the revolutionary process is connected to drug-trafficking. It's the same set of tools that has been used in the past against other revolutionary processes.

This aspect of imperialist strategy hasn't had as much success as it might have considering the efforts put into it. Chávez has proved to be very agile in forging direct and wide-ranging international relationships, which has helped the process immensely. So this imperialist campaign to manipulate public opinion internationally is clashing directly with the international orientation of the leadership of the Bolivarian process.

The other possibility, besides the media campaign to satanize Chávez, is direct military attack. We can never exclude the possibility of a military offensive against Venezuela. This possibility is clear in the rebuilding of military forces, practically surrounding Venezuela - in Colombia there are seven bases with U.S. military presence, they've maintained a presence in Peru and Paraguay, and in the Caribbean with the reactivation of the Fourth Fleet. This is bound to continue to increase, because there is no discontinuity in the external affairs of the U.S. state between Bush and Obama - perhaps there are differences in forms of political diplomacy, but there is a deep continuity on the levels of military and economic strategy.

We never had any illusions that the foreign policy of Obama would be distinct. The president of the United States is a functionary of imperialism, whether he's black or white.

In addition to the media strategy and the build up of U.S. military presence in Latin America, around Venezuela, there is also the strategy of moving paramilitaries from Colombia into Venezuela. The Colombian state is a political operative against the revolutionary processes in Latin America; it has been activated for this purpose. And, in addition to the movement of paramilitaries, there is an open political provocation against Venezuela that could become a military provocation. The leadership of Colombia under the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos is a threat because he could provoke a military conflict with Venezuela in order to justify an imperialist intervention. This is perfectly possible.

There is also the strategy of imperialist meddling in the internal contradictions of the process, for example within the Venezuelan military. The Venezuelan military was created with the imperialist vision that its role was to police the country against internal threats; there are officers who are opposed to the process and who still share this vision. Of course, they have been weakened substantially, because Chávez has built up revolutionary forces within the military. But some officers say they're with the process, but are waiting for an

opportune moment to reactivate themselves. This is a very real possibility. We already had the experience of the coup attempt of April 2002. Military personnel who had seemed to be with the President were the operatives behind the coup d'état. So this could be one of the lines of action that imperialism attempts to take advantage of.

And, of course, imperialism uses the internal forces of opposition within Venezuela to foment instability and economic destabilization, to engage in speculation and so on. We know that there are counter-revolutionaries occupying positions within the state. They could be activated in opportune moments. The problems that have been occurring within the food industry are likely not merely the result of irresponsibility and corruption, but rather intentional sabotage.

All of these components form part of a totality of lines of action intended to weaken the internal process and to foment a coup from outside the process.

For these reasons it's important to strengthen the revolution. The role of the PSUV, in spite of all its weaknesses, will be important. That the PSUV can activate a popular mass in these times will be important, to destroy whatever counter-revolutionary initiatives.

We've argued, though, that the revolution can protect itself through a collective unity within its leadership. So Chávez can align himself with the PSUV, but also with the PCV.

It's important to construct a type of broad front, with a collective leadership, so that Chávez can lead together with the PSUV, the PCV, and other factors of the revolution that might be small but have a revolutionary quality. We could establish a political-social front, to transform the state and neutralize the counter-offensive by the enemies of this process.

To the present, we haven't joined in such a front. There is unity when there are elections, but not during the rest of the time. This is a big weakness in the process.

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