

Coronel: Venezuela -- Without Heroes and Without Dreams

"Venezuela today lacks heroes and dreams," says Venezuela's Gustavo Coronel, identifying why the country is in the fix it is in and how to get out of it. "50 years ago we had a society with heroes and dreams. What we have experienced is not a revolution but a major involution. Our needs today are brutally primitive: staying alive, to have some money in our pockets, some stable occupation and food on the table. They are all legitimate aspirations, but they represent aspirations of a society at the bottom of the development scale. Only societies that have surpassed those basic needs are able to think of traditions and civic heroes and to dream of the future. "



By Gustavo Coronel

Venezuela today lacks heroes and dreams. The perverted form of Bolivarianism imposed by Chavez has prostituted heroism by bringing it down to the level of mediocre partisan politics. A similar fate has been met by the concept of civic heroes, essential for our collective self-esteem. It has simply disappeared from Venezuelan collective consciousness.

Bolivar has been twisted beyond recognition and now sits in Chavez Olympus, surrounded by minor and undistinguished figures such as Ezequiel Zamora and Cipriano Castro. We are becoming, also, a society without dreams, those desires of attaining a higher order of civilization and a society marked by solidarity. We stopped having dreams of moral and spiritual grandeur.

Venezuelan society lives today in the present, forgetting its past and without a dignified vision of the future. It lives in a survival mode. A recent poll (Consultores 21, March 2011) shows Venezuelans captured by four immediate, urgent fears: personal safety, unemployment, economic crisis and high cost of living.

Venezuelans are living day to day and hand to mouth. Only 7%, for example, worry about ever having a proper roof over their heads. Less than 4% are concerned about the lack of proper health services.

Inflation, the highest in the hemisphere, only receives the attention of 3% of the population. The lack of educational facilities is not even mentioned as an issue.

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50 years ago we had a society with heroes and dreams. What we have experienced is not a revolution but a major involution. We will need an equally dramatic attitudinal change in our society if we are to revert this trend and retake the road to progress.

In December 2012 we will have presidential elections. They will be marked, once more, by strong government intervention of the electoral process and obscene official propaganda. Chavez's campaign will be financed with money diverted from proper national use. Still, if we Venezuelans come together in our desire to recover the country we once had, if we are vigilant and fearless in the face of corruption and despotism, we have an excellent chance to get our country back.

Gustavo Coronel was on the Board of Directors of PDVSA from 1976 to 1979. He was Chief Operations Officer (COO) and acting CEO of the Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana (CVG), the \$35 billion Venezuelan government conglomerate designed to exploit and run all of Venezuela's mineral, metal and mining operations, from 1994-

1995. He was President of Puerto Cabello -- Venezuela's main port -- from 2001 to 2002.

Coronel was author of the Cato Institute study ["Corruption, Mismanagement and Abuse of Power in Hugo Chavez's Venezuela"](#) and was the Venezuelan representative to Transparency International from 1996 to 2000. In 1994, he founded Pro Calidad de Vida, an NGO promoting anti-corruption techniques in government and civic education for children in Venezuela, Panama, Paraguay, Mexico and Nicaragua.

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