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COWBOY IN CARACAS

A Personal Account of Venezuela's
Democratic Revolution

Charles Hardy



Cowboy in Caracas

A North American's Memoir
of Venezuela's
Democratic Revolution

by

Charles Hardy

With an introduction by James W. Russell

No president today is more controversial than Venezuela's Hugo Chávez Frias. Elected in a landslide in 1998, he promised a peaceful revolution. That peaceful dream became a nightmare when Chávez was overthrown in a coup d'état in 2002. Surprisingly, he was brought back to power by his supporters, mostly barrio dwellers, within forty-eight hours. Although Chávez continues to be dogged by controversy, he stays in power because of these supporters who see themselves as active participants in a democratic revolution.

“Charles Hardy has given us a unique perspective on the Chavista revolution as viewed from a cardboard shack on a hillside barrio in Caracas. Writing in a graceful and conversational style in a series of vignettes, Hardy conveys with genuine affection and admiration the dignity and courage of the ordinary people of Venezuela—people whom the Western media, ensconced in fine hotels or toney apartments, only know as maids and waiters. A reader comes away understanding both why Hugo Chávez is loved by these people—and why the U.S. Government is trying so hard to oust him. With the Bush administration still trying to demonize Chávez and his backers, this book is a must read for all Americans—but a must read that you won't be able to put down.”—Dave Lindorff, columnist for *Counterpunch* and co-author with Barbara Olshansky of *The Case for Impeachment* (St. Martin's Press, 2006)

“Before we take one more bite of the toxic propaganda sandwich our government offers us to nourish their view that Hugo Chávez is a monster suppressing the poor of Venezuela, read this fine book by Charles Hardy, a former Catholic priest from the United States who spent 8 years tending and nurturing the poor in the cardboard slums of Caracas. Even if you choose to ignore that Chavez was democratically elected three times by his own people and defended by them from a US instigated coup, this book will make indelibly clear, the economic horror and chaos foisted on the Venezuelan people by the IMF, World Bank, and free-market privateers. When you understand the grinding, debilitating poverty our nation and its institutions have wrought on the Venezuelan people, it will take you a long way toward appreciating the Presidency of the man they consider their savior, Hugo Chavez. Read this important book, and drop the propaganda sandwich in the trash where it belongs.” — Peter Coyote, actor/writer

Currently residing in Venezuela, **Charles Hardy** has been writing and speaking about the political and social reality of Latin America for over forty years. Born in Wyoming, he has visited almost every Central and South American country, and, as a Catholic priest, lived eight years in a cardboard shack in a Venezuelan barrio.

James W. Russell is the Connecticut State University professor of Sociology and coordinator of Latin American Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University. He is the author of six books, including *Double Standard: Social Policy in Europe and the United States*.



Charles Hardy (Photo by Carlos Acosta)

“In these eloquent and moving pages, Charles Hardy takes us into the very heart of the revolution. This is not a book about the larger-than-life Chávez. Rather it is about the people who support him and why they support him. It is about people who are economically poor but rich in so many other ways as they go through lives of constant struggle to survive with dignity...For an understanding of Venezuela’s revolution, you can do no better than to start with this book.”—James W. Russell, author of *Double Standard: Social Policy in Europe and the United States*

“This book is an antidote to the poisonous US government mantra against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Ironically, “Cowboy” isn’t about Chavez, but about the exciting processes he has helped initiate and about the awakening of Venezuela’s poor whom the US media neglects.”—Saul Landau, author of *A Bush & Botox World*

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