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Venezuela

Lack of organisation of honest and consistent sectors which underlie revolutionary process

- IV Online magazine - 2007 - IV395 - December 2007 -

Publication date: Wednesday 19 December 2007

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Faced with the close victory of the “no” vote on reform of the Constitution, rendering possible a victory for the right, we should begin a profound reflection. It should be useful to us to understand the situation we are experiencing and that we are going to face in the months to come, with the aim of building what we need. It is urgent and necessary to change and deepen, it is the task of those who believe and fight for a socialist Venezuela.

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

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There is already, and there will be in the days to come, different balance sheets and analyses – the right and imperialism will debate the way to continue to weaken the process whereas the bureaucratic sectors will try to hide their responsibility for what has just happened. It is necessary to take these facts into consideration.

We who have campaigned for a “yes” vote, in trying to deepen the revolutionary process, who had put all our efforts into confronting imperialism, the bosses and the private media for all these months, we have the need and the duty to reflect deeply, to propose, to stress anew the existing problems. We believe that they are one of the reasons for our defeat, for the moment. We wish to have this debate and this exchange of proposals with the millions who voted “yes”. And also with the rank and file sectors of the workers and poor of the country who have not unhappily done so but who have nothing to do with imperialism and the opposition.

Maintaining the socialist objective and resolving neglected problems

In the first place, we believe that any proposal should be made starting from the reaffirmation of the actuality of the struggle to transform Venezuela into a socialist country. None of the problems that we have can be resolved in the framework of the capitalism which still exists in our country. Profiting from this defeat, numerous sectors – including inside the state apparatus itself – will bring pressure and will try to show that to speak of socialism was erroneous, that it is better to negotiate, rein in the march of the process. President Chavez will surely be subject to these pressures and we hope that he will reject them. Because to go back in this area will mark the defeat of the revolutionary process. We discuss the steps that we can take, measures that it is necessary to take, how to reformulate party, social and decision-making forms, so as to firmly maintain course towards the kind of country we need.

If an important sector of Chavista voters abstained, and there was even a sector that made the mistake of voting “no”, that is due to profound causes that we cannot ignore. A part of this has surely been the fruit of the media campaign of the right and imperialism that threatened individual expropriations. It is obvious that the weight of private media and the freedom that employers’ sectors still have to campaign all over the country weighs. But there are also other problems which are the direct responsibility of the government. First, having included in the reform proposal an excessive concentration of power in the hands of the President (including the end to presidential term limits, the choice of vice-presidents and other subjects) which has not been appreciated by a sector of the population which had voted for Chavez last December.

Obviously, while the right wing media campaign developed, other contradictions emerged. The government talks of the project of socialism and equality, but it does not always resolve key social problems like insecurity, housing, the wages of big sectors of the population, whereas other wealthy sectors still dispose of big companies and maintain

their economic and political power. We all know that there are very positive social gains and that the reform brought others, but revolutions have unavoidable laws: to advance, it is necessary to take clear measures which weaken capitalist economic power and orient according to social needs. In this area, despite the important steps we have taken, we are still far short of what is necessary. This contradiction between the media campaign of the right and the real still unresolved problems is at the origin of the doubts, mistrust and fear in a sector of our own social base.

At the same time the results of Sunday have shown that a big sector shares the idea of advancing towards socialism. But there is also discontent, doubts and fears faced with real problems. In this confrontation with the right and the empire, certain sectors, which were involved in the process, have unhappily called for a “No” vote, or abstention or a spoiled ballot, collaborating de facto with the right and its victory. Some like Podemos [Podemos is a centre left party which campaigned against the proposed Constitution reform.- ed/]or Baduel [General Raul Baduel was Commandant of the Maracay base during the failed coup in 2002 and threatened to march on Caracas against the putschists – now retired, he has become much more critical of Chavez and compared the proposed reform to a coup –ed.] because they have turned towards an anti-socialist project. Others, the trade union and social leaders, have refused to call for a “yes” vote through sectarianism and have thus helped the right win by a very short head. . It remains nonetheless that we, the class struggle union leaders and the workers, should mobilise and conquer from now the 6-hour working day, including in the informal sector, housing security, land ownership and other measures which appear in the reform proposal. No revolutionary or class-conscious person should then celebrate the result of the non-approval of the reform, but we should see how we organise, build morale and consciousness and develop the struggle to obtain the social conquests which appeared in the reform project. In remembering that even certain opponents to this reform, said that these conquests could be obtained without it.

Stopping the bureaucracy and the corruption of government and state sectors

A corrupt and bureaucratic structure in the federal governments, the town halls and ministries, is the product of unresolved social problems, reciprocally it leads to a situation without exit. Thus, either we deal with this problem at the root, or we lose the revolutionary process. As we militants of Marea Clasista y Socialista had already said, it is necessary to put an end to the enriched state functionaries, with those who have the links and who do business with the sectors of economic power, with those who go around in Hummers and other types of luxurious van. The Ministers who attack basic rights constitute obstacles, of which the current Minister of Labour and all his team are the most perverse and the most bureaucratic expression. The President should concentrate on this situation, which has heavily weighed in the decision to vote “no” or to abstain. All the Bolivarian socialist sectors together await a profound change of the governmental team. These are the state functionaries who demoralise the rank and file, who distance the workers and the poor from the process. These are those who have been able to convince certain sectors to vote “yes” because they indicate daily that they will do everything contrary to what they say. .

Our revolutionary process needs a profound and urgent change. It deserves it. The time is no longer for superficial, moreover impossible changes. It is necessary to open the debate on the big economic and political decisions with the rank and file and with the social, popular and political organisations of the process. It is necessary to break with the state functionaries chosen at discretion who act only according to their personal interests. It is necessary to revise the role of the Ministers and the Ministries of Popular Power, so that all the decisions taken are debated and decided by the bases concerned. As we have already proposed, it is necessary to put an end with the wages of state functionaries who live as if in Saudi Venezuela, buy properties and live in luxurious hotels. That has nothing to do with a socialist project. From the rank and file, we demand the dismissal of these inefficient and unscrupulous functionaries. It is necessary to make room to those who work for the process, to the real worker, popular, peasant and student leaders who are involved with their social sectors and reflect them directly.

Organisation of the honest and consistent sectors is lacking.

Lack of organisation of honest and consistent sectors which underlie revolutionary process

For a long time we have denounced these problems. During the “yes” campaign we have maintained our critical vision, as have done also thousands of compatriots in the battalions of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela [The United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) was proposed by Hugo Chavez during the electoral campaign of 2006. Most parties supporting the Bolivarian government have joined the PSUV, and the bulk of the far left also decided to participate grouped inside Marea Clasista y Socialista – ed]. and the social movements. In all the demonstrations for a “yes” vote we breathed the atmosphere of support for Chavez and the process, combined with a critique and the intuition that great problems remain. We have for our part thousands and thousands who support Chavez, together. We have been on the streets to support the demands of employees, peasants and those in need of decent housing. We have debated together so that the PSUV does not transform itself into a new bureaucratic body, or something similar to a new ministry or mission, as claim certain sectors of the apparatus who have controlled the functioning of its first months of life. We are also a big sector who have been the vanguard of the campaign for the “yes” vote and we will not accept that Congress now tries to maintain the bureaucratic vices which have led to the current situation.

To emerge from this situation and so the process can deepen, power should really pass into the hands of the people and its organisations. The Congress of the PSUV should transform itself into the most democratic body in which we can all express, propose, criticise and decide for the good of the Bolivarian revolution, without restrictions or bureaucratic interference which blocks a free discussion. We have an immense confidence that with hundreds of thousands of compatriots we can continue the socialist project and confront on this road any right wing attempts. But confidence should go in hand with unity and organisation, by building a common space to debate all these themes. We offer the publication of Marea and our meetings so that they are a place and a tool in the service of these necessities. It is indispensable that the most conscious and honest rank and file and militants of the process dispose of common spaces.

With the hundreds of class-conscious union and popular leaders of the country, and with tens of thousands of militants of the PSUV, we have been where we should be, with the Bolivarian people, confronting the empire and the right in making the maximum effort to deepen the revolution. We are satisfied with this. This task continues to be necessary and that is why we reaffirm our commitment to the revolutionary process as well as our demands for resolution of social problems, by seeking ways of giving the workers and the people the social conquests which were in the reform project. We repeat our proposal to transform the congress of the PSUV into the most democratic body, where the rank and file could express themselves and decide, bypassing the bureaucracy and the constituted government. All should be able to propose, express, criticise, that is the most important need. Of course, Chavez has the right to express his opinions and proposals. But he has also the responsibility of listening to the rank and file and to open himself to the changes that reality imposes.

Caracas, December 3, 2007

** Stalin Pérez Borges, Vilma Vivas, Marco García and Ismael Hernández wrote this statement in the name of Marea Clasista y Socialista following the defeat of the referendum for reform of the Constitution of December 2, the “no” having won 51% of the vote.*