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Venezuela

# **“October 7: Elect Chavez President – October 8: Get rid of the bureaucrats”**

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**This article by Marea Socialista was originally written for the paper of the Argentinean MST, [Alternativa Socialista](#). Marea Socialista is a revolutionary current in Venezuela that gives critical support to the Bolivarian government.**

The presidential elections in Venezuela will take place in a few days. President Chavez is aiming for a third re-election and faces Capriles Radonski, the single candidate of the opposition organised in the Mesa de Unidad Democrática (MUD), who personally participated in the April 2002 coup.

All polls show Chavez as the winner, although in the last days they show the gap between the candidates shortening significantly. After a triumphalist beginning, the leaders of the PSUV are calling on the population to widen the gap and secure victory for Chavez.

## **The relaunching of the Social Missions**

The Chavez campaign rests on three fundamental measures taken in the last year and a half. They are the launching of two big Social Missions and the reform of the organic labour law, a promise pending since the coming to power of the Bolivarian Government 14 years ago.

The Gran Misión Vivienda [Big Housing Mission] launched a year and a half ago has already built and delivered more than two hundred thousand decent housing units across the country as part of a projected plan of two million for the next government. And the Misión Amor Mayor [Greatest Love Mission] has given retirement benefits to nearly a million people who had no social security.

Thirdly, last April the reform of the organic labour law was passed, which incorporated some advanced measures in the employment field such as for example immunity from dismissal by organic law, six months post natal leave for the mother and two for the father, the end of employment outsourcing, reduction of the probationary period for new workers from three months to one month, and other measures seen as progressive for the majority of workers.

In this context the campaign of the opposition is based on a discourse that says it will maintain the social conquests of Chavism and is aimed primarily at the Achilles heel of the government: the abuse, inefficiency and neglect affecting the population.

## **The state bureaucracy, cancer of the revolutionary process**

The fourteen years of Chavista government have seen important advances in the standard of living of the people made possible by exceptional prices per barrel of oil. On the other hand these advances are insufficient.

In the absence of a break with the logic of capital, the main beneficiaries of oil revenues have been the local bourgeoisie and sectors of multinational corporations. This bourgeoisie, coupled with a new business sector of state

contractors, known in the country as the “boliburguesÃ-a” (ie. Bolivarian bourgeoisie), has worked closely with the government bureaucracy. Ministers, officials, leaders of the PSUV, function as the state aspect of the logic of capital with a mixed economy model, enjoying huge and obscene privileges. Meanwhile outstanding major debts to workers remain, for example discussion of the collective agreement for public employees and for health workers has been delayed for seven years.

To these privileges is added the mistreatment of the Bolivarian people. Persecution of Union leaders and trade unions. Impunity for hired killers. Discrimination against beneficiaries of the Missions. Promises unfulfilled in relation to business improvements. And among many other things, an inefficiency which hides corrupt procedures in the management of public enterprises and that puts them in crisis or at the edge of paralysis.

This is the basis of weariness, disillusionment and harsh criticism in a sector of the population which is one of the engines of the revolutionary process and the social base of Chavism. Affection for Chavez, who embodies the Bolivarian people, is now marred by the management of the bureaucracy protected by the President himself.

## **A new phenomenon is taking shape**

The most dynamic social process in the country is the developing rupture between sectors of the vanguard of the working class and the popular movement, and the bureaucracy. While defending Chavez, it is a fact that criticism of the PSUV has grown and that this is no longer the party of the fighters in the process.

Closely associated with the state bureaucracy, its main leaders are at the same time, governors, mayors or deputies, the party has lost its original impulse and it has been emptied of rank and file militancy.

Along with this process there is the beginning among the Chavista activists of a phenomenon of renewal in the unions and among middle-level leaders of the popular and community movements. There is growing criticism of the undemocratic methods of the traditional Chavista trade union leadership and there is a strengthening of democratic practices among rank and file workers and community movements that directly confront the bureaucracy. In recent months the conquest of a majority in the SIDOR steel company trade union by Alianza Sindical, as well as the victory in the Chrysler union by a platform headed by Marea Socialista, show that a change that is taking place. These leaders are capable of confronting Chavez as seen at SIDOR where José Meléndez, leader of Alianza Sindical and Marea Socialista, has demanded on one of Chavez' live TV and radio broadcasts, that the president fulfil the commitments he had made (see box at end of article).

## **The campaign of Marea Socialista**

Marea Socialista, as a critical current of the PSUV, has for some months been waging a significant electoral campaign with a different content from that of the official campaign of the government, the party and the Gran Polo Patriótico. Resting centrally on the critique of the state bureaucracy, mobilizing workers, youth and members of the communities, it has raised in the streets the slogan: 7-O Chavez Presidente, 8-O A limpiar de Burócratas la Revolución [“October 7, Chavez President – October 8, For the cleansing of the bureaucrats from the revolution”].

Distributing hundreds of thousands of flyers and tens of thousands of posters, the campaign has found an echo among critical sectors of the PSUV. That can be measured in the current significant growth in membership of the Marea.

Workers from different sectors, communities, members of the social missions, and students, have joined in the denunciation of the bureaucracy of the party and the state. The Venezuelan people face many problems and although they don't want to go back to the past represented by Capriles Radonski, and therefore will again vote for Chavez, they openly reject the neglect, abuse and obscene privileges of the bureaucracy of the party and the state. After the elections and a triumph for Chavez, the fight against bureaucracy will become a demand made by the Venezuelan people of its President. The need for the construction of a democratic and therefore revolutionary alternative is being felt across the country.

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## **SIDOR workers urge Chavez**

At a campaign rally, held in August and broadcast on national TV, in which the complete elimination of labor outsourcing in basic industries was announced, workers from the state-owned SIDOR steel company urged President Chavez to enforce the collective bargaining contracts and other agreements the company management has been postponing for two years. They also raised the transfer of the pipe factory from PDVSA to SIDOR among other demands.

Jose Melendez, leader of Alianza Sindical and the National Coordination of Marea Socialista, with all the respect and affection he has for the president, with whom he has had direct contact since the nationalization of the steel plant, urged him to meet these commitments. The opposition has tried to portray this event as an example of a process of rupture between the workers and Chavez. In fact it is the maturing of a sector of the Chavista political union leadership reflecting the feelings of the rank and file, that in the heat of important struggles against the state bureaucracy and the government itself is becoming committed to the method of democracy and the consistent struggle to defend the rights of workers.

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