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Venezuela

Referendum: A Setback for Chavez

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The smears of the right and sections of the media have been contradicted by the facts. Chavez's Venezuela is not a dictatorship. It was in complete freedom that millions of partisans of the YES and NO camps participated in the electoral process and demonstrated in the streets of the country. The "putschist lieutenant-colonel" is not the dictator that the right and its press lackeys have presented to us. With the results barely announced, Chavez recognised his defeat. The democratic rights won since 1999 remain very much alive, the political discussion intense. But a question arises immediately: Why did Chavez lose?

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

He lost the referendum by around 200,000 votes. With about 4.5 million votes on each side, it was the Chavista camp which was not mobilised: 3 million Chavez voters in the last electoral consultation did not vote this time. The opposition won 300,000 votes corresponding to the defections to the right that have taken place in the "Bolivarian" camp (Podemos, the social-democratic wing of the bloc, and general Baduel who openly fights the "Marxist" evolution of Chavez).

It is too soon to provide all the explanations. But it is indubitable that Chavez lost millions of votes among the popular classes. With this constitution, he has not been able to respond to the expectations of a large part of the Venezuelan people. Chavez was weakened internally. It is the first electoral victory for his opposition. This vote strengthens the more conservative tendency of the coalition which will now advocate moderation, notably in the process of construction of the PSUV.

He is also weakened externally, even if his election in 2006 could only be challenged by a new recall referendum which can only happen at his mid-term in 2009. It is unhappily the Latin American radical left which will pay the cost of the defeat inasmuch as Venezuela represents a point of support for all the forces of transformation which have emerged in recent years in Latin America.

The "class struggle" forces are consequently weakened. This defeat reflects moreover to the degradation of relations between the government and the most combative sectors of the Bolivarian revolution which have fought for a long time for an anti-capitalist outcome for Venezuela, as shown by the significant defections in the popular sectors. In recent months Chavez has had a tendency to prefer the sectors linked to the bureaucracy and corruption rather than the partisans of radicalisation and self-organisation of the process.

Chavez's Bonapartist tendencies have led him to place confidence only in his own power resting on the state apparatus rather than on the mass movement. Chavez did not lose because he did too much, but because he has not done enough for the emergence of an authentic popular power.

For our part, we continue our support for the Bolivarian revolutionary process. We are without hesitation at the side of Chavez against the right and the imperialists on all sides, and we will continue to fight at the sides of our Venezuelan comrades for the radicalisation of the process, by defending their proposals for a break with imperialism and Venezuelan capitalism.