

Chavez against Marxism.

As compared to most Western governments, the regime in Venezuela, led by Hugo Chavez is a breath of fresh air. The Venezuelan government emphatically rejects both economic rationalism and US imperialist foreign policy. Chavez believes in mobilizing the people and in the welfare of the people. All this is in stark contrast to governments like that of Australia who are subservient to the interests of capital and US imperialism. Venezuela is still clearly a capitalist country but Chavez has supported popular committees and there is talk of a Venezuelan revolution.

Yet it is not enough to provide an alternative model. The Venezuelan revolution must win! Recent statements by Chavez are an obstacle to revolutionary victory.

On July 22 he made a significant speech disassociating himself both from Marx and from Marxism. Private property, he assured us will be respected. Marxism, he claimed "is a dogmatic thesis that has already gone out of style and is not in accord with today's reality" The "thesis like that of the working class as the motor of socialism and of the revolution are obsolete" All this is music to the ears for the Venezuelan bosses. It is poison to the revolution.

Marxism is a guide to action and not a dogma. Yes you can still disagree with many positions Marx took on individual issues and remain a Marxist. But the fundamental principle that the working class is the motor of revolution remains as true today as in Marx's time.

Chavez will no doubt argue that in Venezuela today the bourgeoisie are different and are comrades in arms with the workers for revolution. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas argued this also. Yet their revolution was defeated

In Nicaragua the bourgeoisie represented by Violetta Chomorra was a welcome component of the post revolutionary government. Eleven years later she led a bourgeois government which strangled the revolution

She was assisted of course, by US imperialism the fact that the bourgeoisie remained in tact was a decisive factor. Through Marxism we predicted that the Nicaraguan Revolution would be defeated. Chavez, of course fails to confront the defeat in Nicaragua. How does the Bolivarian model differ from the Sandinista one apart from local peculiarities? Why will the Bolivarian model deliver a better ending?

The defeat of the old Soviet Union and other post-capitalist states appears to refute Marxism as those states paid lipservice to Karl Marx. But in reality, on the contrary, Marxism has been vindicated. In Russia, before and after revolutionary victory, Lenin and Trotsky warned that both rich bureaucrats and peasants were the "internal enemy" whose promotion would lead to counter-revolution. Well it took about seventy years. But it is now crystal clear that promotion of these anti-proletarian forces led to the destruction of that revolution. Stalin and Bukharin treated Lenin's warnings with contempt. Others such as Mao modelled their revolutionary strategy on Stalin's degenerated method, actively promoting the peasantry as the revolutionary class. Whilst China has yet to re-establish capitalism, the counter-revolutionary nature of their leadership is now crystal clear.

It is necessary for the revolutionary proletariat to win over sections of the middle class such as the peasantry to its leadership. The agrarian question is an important part of our programme. But the issue is on what terms must they be won over. Peasants must accept the working class as the vanguard fighting for proletarian power. Adapting to privileged classes leads to either a bureaucratised revolution or to counter-revolution. It is clear that Chavez wants to keep the revolution within the framework of capitalism. For this working people and the poor, will pay the price.

One organisation which sees international consequences for the Venezuelan Revolution is Democratic Socialist Perspectives. Unfortunately DSP and the Socialist Alliance newspaper Green Left Weekly see Chavez through rose coloured glasses. Yes the Chavez regime supports a shorter working week measures to fight corruption and speculation and this is good. Of course there is opposition from business which Green Left Weekly mentions. But what is studiously avoided is that Chavez has given this business class the right to exist!

Trotsky's dictum of permanent revolution stems from Lenin. Lenin established that under the epoch of imperialism it was only the proletariat fighting for the dictatorship which can consistently democratic. It has been the critics of Trotsky who have been found wanting. DSP re-assessed and broke from Trotsky when it appeared that the Stalinist strategy of two stages worked in Nicaragua. Given the failure of the revolution, isn't it time to re-assess the re-assessment?

There is no report of this key speech in Green Left Weekly because GLW wants to politically cover for the Chavez Regime. Yet it is clear that revolutionary victory requires workers in Venezuela to overthrow both Chavez and the bourgeoisie. Supporting the bourgeoisie is treachery.

Unless a Trotskyist party is built committed to permanent revolution, the Venezuelan revolution will be defeated and all the progressive measures initiated and promoted by Chavez will ultimately mean nothing at all

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