

Statement of the International Marxist Tendency and the Venezuelan Revolutionary Marxist Tendency (CMR) for the VI World Social Forum

The VI World Social Forum and II Forum of the Americas are meeting again, this time in Venezuela, where those who are fighting for a better world can debate and make proposals to transform society.

Since the previous Social Forum, which took place in Porto Alegre, the general crisis of capitalism has not stopped but has actually deepened. For this reason the search for an alternative to the capitalist system is needed, to oppose the dictatorship of the multinationals, the destruction of the environment, the misery and war created by capitalism that is imposed on workers, the oppressed and poor around the world.

Is a better world possible, a world without misery, exploitation and where humanity can live in peace, plenty and harmony? Or is it a pointless utopia to aspire to such a society?

In our opinion the answer is yes, another world is possible. Not only is it possible, but already in many countries around the world, the basis for a new society is being laid. And this is being done in the only way possible, through the struggle and organization of millions of workers, youth and oppressed, against the capitalist system, fighting to improve their lives and for a decent future, fighting for a socialist society. The fact that this Forum is taking place in Venezuela is a reflection of that.

Venezuela is the Vanguard of the World Revolution

Venezuela is the best example of how the masses, the workers, take their destiny into their own hands in order to transform society. The Bolivarian revolution is the best answer to all those who are sceptical about the ability of ordinary working people to face their enemies, the capitalist oligarchy and im-

perialism, the looters of Venezuela's wealth and those responsible for their misery and oppression. The Venezuelan workers and peasants have been able to stop successive attempts of reaction and imperialism to put an end to the revolution and to overthrow the government of president Chavez.

The masses defeated the coup in 2002, chased Carmona from the Miraflores Palace and brought back president Chavez. In the same year, the Venezuelan working class defeated the sabotage of the oil industry instigated by imperialism and carried out by the bosses' organization Fedecamaras, together with the corrupt and rotten leaders of the CTV.

Despite the fact that president Chavez's government has held numerous elections in the last six years and has received the overwhelming support of the population in each one of them, US imperialism has tried to create the impression that this is an undemocratic government in order to justify its overthrow. In all these electoral contests, the mobilization of the people has been crucial to ensure victory. The most important one was during the recall referendum in August 2004, when once again reaction and imperialism were defeated by the organization and struggle



of the people.

The Venezuelan revolution took important steps forward in 2005. First of all, the working class entered again into action, with the experience of factory occupations and workers' control (cogestión). Factories like Invepal, Inveval, Alcasa and others, where the workers have implemented programmes of workers' control, are a small glimpse of the ability of the workers to run the factories and the economy as a whole, under their own control, without bosses or directors imposed from above.

To these steps forward in the struggle against misery and illiteracy, to which the oligarchy had subjected the Venezuelan people, we must add the fact that president Chavez has raised the idea that capitalism cannot be reformed, that there is no such thing as capitalism with a human face, and that the alternative to capitalism is socialism. This is of enormous significance, because since the fall of the Eastern Bloc countries (which were bureaucratic regimes which had nothing to do with genuine socialism), no left-wing leader anywhere in the world had raised the need for socialism as an alternative to capitalism. This is the vengeance of history, against all the apologists of capitalism who talked about the end of history, the failure of socialism, and that the only alternative was the free market economy. This ideological campaign has failed, simply because the capitalist system is in decay and cannot offer anything but misery and oppression to humanity.

Socialism or Barbarism?

The capitalist system can only push the world towards barbarism. The war in Iraq is a very clear indication of this. This is a potentially rich country, with an educated population, which is proud to have been one of the cradles of civilization, but which has been destroyed, reduced to rubble and barbarism because of the thirst for oil and profits of US imperialism. The ferocious resistance of the Iraqi people against the occupation clearly shows the inability of the most powerful military machine in history to break the will of the workers, youth and the poor to shake off the yoke of imperialist occupation.

Capitalism is not even able to offer a decent life to the people in the most advanced capitalist coun-

tries. The revolt of the youth on the French estates is an indication of how, within the confines of the market economy, the bankers and big industrialists are unable to offer decent jobs and a future to millions of people. European workers are aware of this and we have witnessed mass mobilizations against the policies of cuts and attacks on their living standards and social gains. In Belgium there were two general strikes in the course of three weeks. The "NO" vote in the referendums on the European Constitution in France and Holland is an indication of the same phenomenon. Together with the recent general strike in Greece these are all examples of the militancy of European workers who are facing an assault on their living and working conditions.

Not even the United States, the most advanced capitalist country in the world, is free from convulsions. The crisis created by hurricane Katrina, revealed to the US population as a whole the rottenness of their government. While Bush sends thousands of troops and supplies to the Middle East, spending millions of dollars, his government is completely unable to help its own population at home. This was the direct result of cuts in social spending and increases in military spending and tax breaks for the rich. The crisis also revealed how an important part of the US population lives in conditions of misery. As always, it is the poor who suffer the most in these catastrophes, not as a result of the caprices of nature but because of the anarchy and chaos created by this society which is based on the quest for the highest profits for a handful of rich businessmen and speculators.

Hurricane Katrina itself, as also hurricane Rita, was a direct consequence of global warming, of the pollution created by massive multinational companies, and which is already destroying the ozone layer, and poisoning the seas, rivers and the air.

Capitalism does not only threaten humanity, but the very existence of life on the planet itself. This is why today the slogan of the Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, "Socialism or Barbarism" is truer than ever. More than 30,000 children die of starvation every day; 800 million human beings go hungry, while the three richest men on Earth have the same wealth as the combined GDP of the 48 poorest countries in the world. In order to go forward and not to fall into the abyss, humanity must get rid of those relics which are the basis of the capitalist system: private ownership



of the means of production, industry, banking and the land, and that other brake on human progress which is the nation state.

Latin America in Revolution

Faced with this crisis in society, it is only normal that Venezuela should appear as a beacon of hope for the oppressed around the world. In 2005 the Bolivarian revolution became a point of reference for the whole of Latin America. The reason for this is that the struggles that the continent is experiencing have awoken the consciousness of millions of people and led them to ask how can a better world be built and how they can build a decent future for themselves.

There are many examples. In Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, there have been impressive movements and mass mobilizations. The most recent one being the revolutionary struggle of the Bolivian workers and peasants for the nationalization of gas, to stop the multinationals from taking away the enormous wealth beneath the earth and rather use it to solve the enormous problems faced by the workers and poor of Bolivia.

The Bolivian workers were close to taking power in June last year, when after a month of struggle they overthrew the Mesa government. Reconquering the revolutionary traditions of 1952 and 1971 they set up Peoples' Assemblies and *cabildos abiertos* (mass meetings) to coordinate the struggle, particularly in the city of El Alto, which became the headquarters of the Bolivian Revolution. Parliament was forced to flee from La Paz to Sucre because of the pressure of the masses. The workers and peasants could have

taken power in those days. Unfortunately, the lack of a revolutionary leadership with a clear perspective of basing themselves on the mass assemblies, moving to the expropriation of the oligarchy and the imperialists, prevented a successful socialist revolution from taking place in Bolivia.

As a by-product of the mass movement in June 2005, Evo Morales won the December elections. The Bolivian workers and peasants put him in government hoping that he would undertake the necessary revolutionary transformations, above all the nationalization of hydrocarbons (natural gas.). Evo Morales is now faced with two alternatives: either side with the capitalists or with the workers and the peasants. Any attempt to solve the pressing needs of the masses will clash with the interests of the capitalists and imperialism. He will have to choose between bowing to the pressures of imperialism, in which case he will end up like Lucio Gutiérrez, who was overthrown by the masses of the poor who put him in power in the first place, or like president Chavez, standing up to the oligarchy and imperialism.

For a Socialist Federation of Latin American Republics! For a World Socialist Federation!

The shift to the left in the whole of Latin America puts on the agenda the possibility of a socialist transformation on the whole of the continent. It is not possible to solve the problems of misery in one country alone. The collaboration of all the Latin American peoples is needed, on the basis of fraternity and economic solidarity. A Socialist Federation of Latin American Republics, based on the enormous material and human resources of the continent and on the basis of the nationalization and democratic planning of the economy, could eradicate poverty within a few years and the population as a whole could reach living standards even higher than those the advanced capitalist countries have today. This is no utopia, but the only realistic way forward for the oppressed of the Americas.

The election of left-wing governments throughout the continent is a reflection of the desire of the majority of the population for a fundamental change in society. Venezuela is the country where this process is most advanced. However, in order to overcome misery, exploitation and oppression, the root causes must be

eliminated. As long as the oligarchy and imperialism continue to hold economic power in Venezuela or in any other Latin American country the control over the banks, large-scale industries and the land any progressive reforms will always be under threat.

In order to guarantee and deepen these conquests, it is necessary to expropriate the oligarchy and the multinationals, and for the economy to be democratically planned and organized by the majority of the population. This reorganization of society on a new basis, on a socialist basis, can only take place with the democratic participation and control of the workers and the poor.

Historically, the state has been a tool of the ruling class and has prevented the participation of the majority of the population, the workers and the poor, from taking part in the affairs of the country. The current Venezuelan state still has within it most of the old bureaucracy of the IV Republic in the Ministries, the judicial system, the police forces, etc. This must be destroyed and replaced by a new state structure which must be created on the basis of the organization of mass assemblies, rank and file committees, in the factories and the communities, which can take control of the affairs of the country. A democratic structure with delegates elected with the right of recall, having complete control over the administration of the country is also the only way to fight against the bureaucracy

which is threatening the revolution.

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For the revolutionary aspirations of the masses to become reality, the only thing that is missing in Venezuela, in Bolivia, in the U.S. and around the world, is for the most advanced revolutionary activists, workers, students and peasants, who already share many of these ideas, to gather in one revolutionary organization armed with a socialist programme and the method of Marxism. This is the central task today in all countries.

The crisis of capitalism, developing at different tempos, is creating the conditions for mass upheavals and revolutionary movements in all countries. Today more than ever it is indispensable for revolutionary Marxists to come together in one international Marxist movement to struggle for genuine socialism. This is the task we have set ourselves in the International Marxist Tendency, founded by the Marxist theoreticians Ted Grant and Alan Woods.

If you agree with our ideas, join us in the struggle for socialism worldwide. In the U.S., you can contact the Workers International League, publishers of *Socialist Appeal*:

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