

The Revolution Will be Televised!

Most people know that the corporate newspapers, radio, and television exist to serve the interests of the big businesses that own them. In recent weeks, they have opened an all-out assault on the Venezuelan revolution. The U.S. media is flooded with negative appraisals of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian revolutionary process. Right-wing pundit Robert Novak recently referred to "Latin America's infection." At her confirmation hearing, Bush's secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called Chavez a "negative force" in the region. Chavez is often described as "anti-American", and is accused of "meddling" in neighboring states, harboring "terrorists" and "starting an arms race". *The Financial Times* recently reported that a "containment policy" is being formulated by the Bush Administration, aimed at "fencing in" the world's 5th largest oil exporter. Roger Pardo-Maurer, current deputy assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs at the U.S. Department of Defense, and former political officer for the right-wing Nicaraguan Contras is at the heart of this renewed attention on Latin America.

The reason for these attacks is clear: the Venezuelan Revolution is incompatible with U.S. corporate interests in the region and with the capitalist system as a whole. The fact is, the constant slanders and distortions of the truth reflect the growing fear of the U.S. ruling class in relation to the international repercussions of the developing Venezuelan revolution. What is at stake is the very existence of the capitalist system in Venezuela, Latin America, and ultimately, the world. Due to the quagmire in Iraq and their reliance on Venezuelan oil (providing 15 percent to the U.S.), Bush's hands are tied for the moment. But they are moving might and main to mobilize public opinion in the U.S. as well as in Latin America in order to strangle the Bolivarian revolution as soon as the opportunity arises.

Venezuela has some of the world's largest known oil reserves and is rich in other natural resources such as water and natural gas. Yet despite this wealth, 80 percent of Venezuela's population has lived in abject misery for decades. The Venezuelan oligarchy and their multi-national corporate pals used the country's wealth to

line their own pockets with profits, instead of improving the conditions of life of ordinary Venezuelans - the ones who actually produce all the wealth. This continued for decades, until the International Monetary Fund and the Venezuelan millionaires went too far: in February of 1989 they imposed intolerably harsh economic conditions on the already destitute population. The resulting "Caracazo" popular uprising was finally put down in blood by the state security forces, resulting in hundreds if not thousands of people killed. This was the beginning of a chain of events that continues today.

As a result of this brutality, left-wing paratrooper Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez led a failed military coup in 1992 against the right-wing government. Despite being sent to prison, he instantly became a popular hero. After mass support led to his early release from prison, he formed a new political movement and wiped the floor with the long-standing corporate political duopoly in the presidential elections of 1998. A new, far more democratic constitution was adopted by popular referendum, and Chavez was overwhelmingly re-elected in 2000. His initial goal was simply to improve the conditions of life of the long-suffering Venezuelan people. But even the most modest measures on land reform, taxing the profits of the multi-nationals, and increasing spending on health care, education, food programs and housing brought him into a direct confrontation with the Venezuelan oligarchy and their allies in the U.S. In April of 2002, the Venezuelan media, the country's business organization, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and a handful of reactionary generals helped orchestrate a coup d'etat against Chavez. This new "democratic" government, proceeded to abolish the Bolivarian Constitution and dissolve the National Assembly, Supreme Court, and the National Electoral Board. Not surprisingly, it was immediately recognized





Millions in Venezuela have Mobilized in Defense of the Bolivarian Revolution

as legitimate by Washington. But in an unprecedented uprising, the Venezuelan masses rose up against this illegitimate government and reinstated Chavez.

Since then, the revolutionary process has accelerated - but so have U.S. efforts to put a halt to it. The key to the Venezuelan revolution is the truly mass, democratic, grass roots participation of the Venezuelan workers, peasants, and urban poor. Time and again, they have mobilized and organized to defend the revolution, and it is on their continued participation that the fate of the revolution depends. Hugo Chavez himself has become increasingly radicalized in recent months. He has said that capitalism must be transcended, he nationalized an important paper mill under workers' control, and called for the "socialism of the 21st century". This reflects the pressure of the masses from below. The hopes and dreams of millions of Venezuelans are really quite simple and are very similar to the hopes and dreams of working people

in the U.S. and around the world. They are fighting for quality jobs, housing, education, transportation, health care, safe working conditions, a decent pension, and a bright future for their families and loved ones. Is it too much to ask that the vast wealth created by working people be used to improve their lives?

Despite the repeated provocations by the U.S. government, Chavez and the Venezuelan people are far from being "anti-American". Chavez always distinguishes carefully between the American people and their rulers. As he declared recently in a speech: "One day the decay inside U.S. imperialism will end up toppling it, and the great people of Martin Luther King will be set free. The great people of the United States are our brothers, my salute to them ... The U.S. people, with whom we share dreams and ideals, must free themselves... A country of heroes, dreamers, and fighters, the people of Martin Luther King, and Cesar Chavez."

It is vital that we counteract the lies and distortions of the corporate media. They are not interested in the truth about Venezuela - they will stop at nothing to demonize the struggle of the Venezuelan people in order to justify the crushing of the revolution. Having been defeated during the coup, during the oil sabotage and repeatedly at the polls, the Venezuelan oligarchy and their friends in Washington are threatening now to resort to terrorism and even the assassination of Chavez himself. It is therefore urgent to mobilize and demand U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!

The heroic efforts of millions of Venezuelan men and women to improve their lives proves in practice that it is possible to build a better world. Their struggle is our struggle! This summer, the World Festival of Students and Youth (WFSY) will be held in Caracas, Venezuela. This will be a perfect opportunity for thousands of young people around the world to visit Venezuela and see the revolution up close. This isn't ancient history, this is a living, vibrant, developing revolution in our own hemisphere in the 21st century. We must defend and spread the Venezuelan revolution internationally!

Join us in building the Hands Off Venezuela campaign! For more information on HOV and the WFSY, please visit our website or write us: contact@handsoffvenezuela.org www.handsoffvenezuela.org