



# Chávez party wins Assembly elections

*Opposition back in Parliament after boycotting previous poll • PSUV loses its super-majority*

by Allison Richards,  
Hands Off Venezuela

Venezuelans went to the polls on 26 September in the 15th election since the Bolivarian Revolution began in 1998 to elect representatives to the National Assembly.

The United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) won 98 of the 165 seats, with 64 seats going to the various parties in the opposition "Table of Democratic Unity" (MUD) bloc and the remaining seats being won by indigenous and other parties. The PSUV won 17 of 24 states, while the MUD won five, and two states were tied.

Despite initial opposition claims that they had won the popular vote, official figures released by the National Election Commission (CNE) showed that the PSUV had won a majority of both votes and seats.

While this gives the Bolivi-

ans a healthy majority in the National Assembly, it falls short of the 110 seats which would have been required for a two-thirds majority, which would have made it easier for the PSUV to pass major reforms and make key appointments.

Over 66% of the electorate participated in the elections, and international observers certified the election as free and fair and commended the democracy of the Venezuelan electoral system and the high levels of participation by the Venezuelan people.

There is no doubt that, despite having won fewer seats than in the last legislative elections in which they participated, the opposition will feel encouraged by these results and will increase their efforts to reverse the achievements of the past twelve years. Now more than ever, it is critical that workers around the world stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people and support the revolution.



Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez votes in central Caracas

pic: EFE

## Activists worldwide back revolution



by Rafael Rodríguez,  
Hands Off Venezuela

On Saturday 18 September, some 40 people attended the London branch of Hands Off Venezuela's vibrant rally outside Parliament in solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution. An international day of solidarity had been called by the Venezuelan branch of HOV and the Bolivarian People's Congress to coincide with the National Assembly elections and show the people of Venezuela that there is huge support around the world for their peaceful and democratic revolution.

Around the world, 30 events

were held in over 20 countries, and more than 1,000 people in 61 countries signed Hands Off Venezuela's solidarity statement, including trade union leaders in the UK representing more than five million workers. The international day of solidarity garnered much attention in Venezuela, with the Ministry of Foreign Relations highlighting the actions, articles in *Correo del Orinoco*, a full-page advertisement in *Últimas Noticias*, the country's most-read newspaper, and reports by *Agencia Venezolana de Noticias*, *Radio Nacional de Caracas*, *YVKE Mundial*, *Venezolana de Televisión* (channel 8), and *VIVE TV*.

# Bolivarian Revolution reaches a crossroads

by Rafael Rodríguez,  
*Hands Off Venezuela*

Despite the celebrations of the opposition and their cheerleaders in the western media, the election results do not represent a major setback for the Bolivarian movement.

The large increase in seats held by the opposition are due to the fact that they boycotted the 2005 elections, and are not indicative of an increase in popularity.

Compared with the last elections they contested, in 2000, they have actually lost 20 seats, despite receiving between 40 and 50 million dollars in funding from the US government in the past year. Hardly the beginning of the end of the Bolivarian revolution.

And it is positive that the opposition took part – it will be much harder for the media to continue to caricature Venezuela as a dictatorship now, or so one would think.

This was hardly a convincing victory for the Bolivarians either, however. While a mid-term dip in popularity, especially against the backdrop of a global economic crisis, is a well-established phenomenon in politics around the world, the opposition's gains can largely be attributed to frustration among the public with certain aspects of the government rather than the brilliance of the platform put forward by the opposition.

Where has this frustration come from? The cumbersome, bureaucratic nature of the state has left many Chavistas very frustrated,



President Chávez on the campaign trail

as many government officials who are well to the right of both Chávez and the people are slowing the pace of change to a crawl.

Despite the incredible achievements of the revolution, progress on many fronts has become smothered by bureaucracy, and grassroots supporters are becoming disillusioned. Until these challenges are addressed, the opposition will continue to capitalise on them in an attempt to reverse the advances that have been made so far.

The revolution is at a crossroads. This is an opportunity to finally rid the movement of the careerists and bureaucrats holding back progress. Chávez remains personally popular, and he stands well to the left of most of those around him.

This is a wake-up call to the revolution. The people want swift, radical change. The softly-softly, middle ground approach favoured by the right-wing of the PSUV will end in disaster.

## Transforming learning, transforming lives

by Elias Chacon Neri,  
*delegate to the founding  
congress of the PSUV Youth*

The development of capitalism in Venezuela throughout the 20th century condemned millions of people and youth to go through childhood and adolescence in very difficult conditions. Basic elements for a decent life, like proper food, a good education, and basic health care, were not available to the majority of the youth. Crime, drugs or a life of overexploitation at work were the only avenues open to most young people. The Bolivarian Revolution has started to address some of these problems.

Bolivarian social programs, known as "Misiones" (missions), have allowed millions of youth, workers and peasants, who were previously illiterate or had a very basic educational level, not only to learn how to read and write, but also to go through basic, secondary and even higher education.



A young Chávez supporter

Expenditure in education has jumped from 3% of GDP to nearly 15% and the schooling rate has increased to 95%. A programme of bilingual education has been developed, which allows children

and youth from the country's 34 indigenous ethnic groups to receive education in their own mother tongue. Venezuela also has the second highest university enrolment rates in Latin America,

after Cuba, with 70% of university students being women.

Along with these advances in education, we must also mention the creation of the Peoples' Power Student Councils. These bodies have been set up by university students throughout the country, with the aim of organizing students and involving them directly in the running of the universities.

These councils are linked together in local, regional and national federations, and they are part of a wide ranging debate about the transformation of the bourgeois university into a socialist university which fully responds to the economic, social, cultural and political transformations taking place in Venezuelan society.

We make an appeal to all the students in the world to participate in the defence of the Venezuelan revolution, and to do so, as well, by struggling for socialist transformation in their own countries. This is the only way we can put an end to capitalism once and for all, opening the path to a full, dignified human existence.