

SUBVERSION

bulletin of the league of communists in britain

Issue # 8 December 2012



"The re-election of Chavez shows that its people care more about advances in their basic rights than they do about pandering to the fear factor"

VENEZUELA - WHERE NEXT?

Bolívarianism does not need an awful lot of justification. In the light of the re-election of Hugo Chávez in September this year, it does, however regain a position at the forefront of any debate about foreign policy and Latin America's role in international politics.

Left-wing Latin American nationalism rooted in indigenism – broadly, a leftist politics centred on restoration and respect for the rights of indigenous Americans - is an utterly admirable cause in the face of centuries of rape, pillage and looting of a continent. Go to Seville Cathedral and marvel at the hideous gold crown jewels, cabinet after cabinet... walk through Madrid and marvel at the palace of the Spanish royal family. Spain's colonial marvels are built on centuries of Latin American blood. None of this is really in any dispute; there's enough wealth in Seville's trinkets to fund third world healthcare for a couple of decades – all it takes is a basic education and a couple of reasonably good history books to see

what has happened. (Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* could be the starting point).

In the late 1950s Fidel Castro triumphed, but there have been huge tragedies before and after, such as Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and Salvador Allende in Chile. The threat of a good example – elected Socialism - in the back yard or the US, was of course too much for them to be allowed to survive. Any leader that displayed a touch of independence was seen as the enemy and could be disposed of; given the Kissinger of Death, and of course they were. Not only in Latin America, but this is the same time that, for example, the US was disposing of the democratically-elected Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran, and replacing him with the Shah. And we all know how well that turned out.

Guatemala was eventually the victim of a decade of far-right (read, peninsular-Spanish white supremacist) regimes, peaking at that of Efraín Ríos Montt. The civil war there saw hundreds of thousands killed, and the war was waged primarily against the indigenous Mayan people. Guatemala today has decades of truth commissions in front of it.

So what do we make of Chávez? Much of the

mainstream media, where Latin America does get news coverage, tends to an inherent neo-liberal bias against him. There is much misinformation on the actual achievements of the socialist programme in Venezuela which tends to ignore the Fidelista-style programmes of universal healthcare and education; fairly unprecedented anywhere outside the hemisphere outside of Cuba. There is also the fact of nationalised natural resources: Venezuela, being oil-rich, has an international clout that Cuba never had, and appears to be using that resource on the world stage to exert its influence, but primarily at home in order to redirect Venezuelan resources to their own people. Again, quite unique an example in a continent with vast natural resources totally at odds with the actual living standards of its people. The Venezuelan example may be unpopular in Washington, but the re-election of Chávez shows that its people care more about advances in their basic rights than they do about pandering to the fear factor that was put forward by his electoral opponents (class war, loss of investment, etc) which are so unfounded as to be virtually nonsense.

There are a few reservations to supporting the Chávez example, and these extend primarily to the support of Assad, Ghadafi and Ahmadinejad that has come from the Chávez camp. These are the questions that need to be asked of the legitimacy of a position of support for him, particularly in respect of the recent developments in Israel/Gaza. In this we intend to give no answers but to provoke debate.

☆ FROM 'A FUTURE THAT WORKS' ... TO WHERE?



After the coaches have gone home and the placards are put away for another year, it is time for the movement to ask how further forward we are after the 'A Future That Works' marches on October 20th.

What was intended to be a grand, key demonstration as part of an expansion of public sector industrial action was merely a stand-alone protest march, much smaller than it's much-vaunted sister event of March 2011. With no further national industrial action due to take place, even in the abstract, until the spring of 2013, it appears that the battle against austerity is in headlong retreat, if not being dismantled altogether.

Furthermore, the drab farce of national NUS march of November further demonstrates the bankruptcy of the the strategy leaderships of the students and trade union movements.

It is evident, then, that a change of direction is needed in 2013 - the principle of which must be a move away from the politics of the logistical constraints of mass organisations and towards a

resistance based on autonomy.

The independent, grass-roots action which took place in the civil service throughout November is an example of how it should be done. By organising independently of trade union structures, workers were able to put pressure on their national leaderships to endorse and recognise the protests, which they did to stunning effect on the 30th November protests in the civil service.

Furthermore, workers' groups and individual trade unions need to stop placing the responsibility for organising mass events on an organisation such as the TUC, which is both reluctant and incapable of building the mass movement of resistance that is required. New combinations of workers and unions need to be forged that are willing to take forward the struggle with the intensity it needs.

Coordinated action, although of course desirable, cannot be the sole benchmark in a climate where vast chunks of the movement are not willing to commit themselves to struggle. Independent action of willing trade unions, supported by rank and file action across the movement, must be considered where the alternatives are defeatism, followed by defeat.

Renewed struggle needs to be launched in the political and legal fields to overcome the legal obstacles to mass action. The anti-union laws and the lack of democracy across society need to be challenged, to enable much-vaunted projects like a 'general strike' to be achievable.

Mass organisations, as a counterpoint to the failure of national representative associations such as the TUC or NUS, need to be forged. The inclusive activism of UK Uncut, Occupy and local anti-cuts federations can form the real basis of such organisations. Decentralised and broad groups of diverse skills and talents, acting as a hot bed of new forms of struggle, need to be developed.

The radical overhaul of the political and legal system of the UK, from Parliament to the monarchy, needs to be advanced. Reform of the electoral system, a fully elected second chamber, and the establishment of a Republic are not secondary issues, but are one of the key fronts on which struggle needs to be fought if new opportunities for the workers and masses are to be opened.

The dream of reformism needs to be buried. What

possible role of advocacy or revolt can the union movement play when its leaders sit on the boards of banks and regional development quangos? When the political dead hand of Labourism and the politics of last resort and the 'lesser evil' dominate the narrative of the movement? The need to reconcile the real needs and struggles of the people to an imposed discourse of collaboration and neglect needs to be ended.

There are millions of people in Britain who are not prepared to let their lives be destroyed as a price of remaining within the system - these are people who are prepared to challenge and overcome the *status quo*. It is these people who the movement needs to turn to, for they are the future of the movement.



ABOUT

THE LEAGUE

The League of Communists in Britain was formed on 30th November 2011, and is a non-party, political organisation dedicated to grassroots political activity and practical solidarity. We are an inclusive, broad and non-sectarian platform for the non-authoritarian Left, and we include anarchists, communists, socialists and environmentalists in our affiliates. We believe that we are working in a post-Leninist politics, where the issue is not the establishment of another 'revolutionary vanguard' but the engagement of the working class with the masses, and the direct role of the masses in politics. The imposition of structure upon politics has failed, and the issue today is that of developing political consciousness and on supporting struggles against oppression and exploitation, and to work towards building a mass movement.

Communism in the 21st century is not a struggle for state power, but the struggle against it; it is the engagement in a radical, decentralised politics, which manifests itself as a challenge and resistance to exploitation and oppression on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, species and religion. Resistance and practical solidarity is the basis for all of the Leagues political work. We work to defend human rights and political autonomy, provide humanitarian assistance and support those in struggle. We publish a regular newspaper, 'Subversion', which acts as a focus for politics and organising. Our members are active in trade unions such as PCS, Unite and the NUT, and campaigning groups such as UK Uncapped, refugee support organisations and the anti-cuts movement.

We believe in a radical politics which is decentralised and broad; we do not have a structure of committees or branches, we have no conditions of affiliation or payment of dues, and we do not work on the basis of an agreed political 'line'. Instead our emphasis is on practical political work, and not on party building. Affiliation is open to anyone, regardless of membership of other organisations, who agrees with our core mission. statement and signs our equalities disclaimer. Affiliation costs £1 per month.



JOIN THE LEAGUE!

For more information contact us at:

The League of Communists in Britain

PO Box 507

Leeds,

LS6 9DN

info@commies.org.uk

Website: www.commies.org.uk