



# Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez calls for Fifth International

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 President Hugo Chávez has called for a Fifth International at a mass meeting in Caracas. This is a statement from the International Secretariat of the League for the Fifth International about this new development.

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Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez has announced that he intends to take steps to form a Fifth International. The proposal was greeted by a standing ovation from delegates from 39 countries attending an 'International Meeting of Parties of the Left' in Caracas on November 20. They also signed a common declaration called the Caracas Agreement (El Compromiso de Caracas).

The League for the Fifth International has argued for many years that the assaults on the social and economic gains of the workers, carried out by the capitalist class under the banner of Globalisation, Neoliberalism and the War on Terrorism, urgently required an internationally coordinated fight back. In the many international forums of the anticapitalist and antiwar movements that have been held over the last ten years, we have proposed concrete steps to found a new global party of socialist revolution, a Fifth International.

Many of the groups that consider themselves followers of Leon Trotsky and V.I. Lenin responded by arguing that the call for a new International was utopian. They said the time was not ripe, it was 'too soon?', or 'too advanced?' because there were no forces willing even to consider such a step. Maybe Chávez' initiative will wake up such people? even though the world crisis of 2008-09 has not. Indeed, it is truly a scandal for organisations that call themselves anti-capitalist, be they of 'Trotskyist?', 'Maoist?' or 'Communist?' origin, that it has to be Hugo Chávez who makes this call. It demonstrates clearly the extent to which the 'far left?' has failed to address the needs of the day clearly and courageously.

Revolutionaries however cannot agree to entrust the initiative of founding a new workers' international to the head of a bourgeois state, that is, a state that defends capitalist ownership of the means of production and enforces this by a standing army and police force against the workers and poor of Venezuela. Of course, Chávez has clashed repeatedly with US imperialism and has, under mass pressure, carried out important reforms for the popular classes in terms of healthcare and education. But, as he himself admitted in the very speech in which called for the Fifth International, Venezuela remains a capitalist country and the state machine a capitalist one. This is a vital question, no matter many times Chávez has clashed with the USA, its Latin American puppet Colombia's Alvaro Uribe, and the business and landowning élite within Venezuela.

An International tied to such a state would not be a working class International committed to the socialist revolution, but one run by bourgeois nationalists merely dressed up as socialists. If it were to be founded under the aegis of Chávez and his bourgeois regime, then it would never be able to chart a course of class independence. It would become a glorified support mechanism for Chávez, Castro and his other allies. Indeed, it might even include such overtly pro-imperialist enemies of the working class as the Mexican PRI or the Argentinian Peronists (who also figured in Chávez' convention of 'left' parties). It should not be forgotten that Chávez recently supported and solidarised with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's brutal repression of the workers, women and youth of Iran who were fighting for

democratic rights and with Robert Mugabe's prolonged attempts to do the same in Zimbabwe.

In the twenty first century, an era of a severe, indeed a historic, crisis of capitalism, strategic alliances with the 'progressive' or 'anti-imperialist' or national bourgeoisies, not to speak of a common International of workers and such bourgeois nationalists, would tie the working class hand and foot to a section of capital. It would block the road to the socialist revolution and a programme of working class power. It would repeat the errors and crimes of the Communist International under Stalin. Tying the international to the foreign policy of any particular state, even a workers' state, is no healthy basis for an International.

Nonetheless, despite the bourgeois class character of Chávez's project, the Venezuelan president addressed a real need. A need felt by millions of workers, peasants and poor struggling against capitalist exploitation and imperialist rule. In order to repel the bosses' offensives, in order to prevent the governments making the workers pay for the crisis and also to prevent reactionary nationalist 'solutions' to it, the working class does indeed need a new, fighting, revolutionary International. It is vital to respond positively to this need.

Thus to reply to Chávez's call simply with negative criticism, principled as this might be, would be to ignore the burning issue. The working class and the impoverished masses of the world do need an International and they need it NOW. They need it to repulse the attempts to make them pay the costs of the crisis. They need it to bring an end to the series of imperialist wars of conquest and occupation. They need it to bring succour to the oppressed nationalities like the Palestinians and the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The working class and the oppressed of the whole world are threatened by a period of deepening chaos for the capitalist system. They face massive environmental destruction and new conflicts between the major powers as they try to re-divide the natural resources and the exploitable labour of the world, conflicts that can only end in a new world war. They need a global party of socialist revolution, independent of all states and their rulers.

Therefore it is the duty of all who consider themselves anticapitalist, like the NPA in France, all who call themselves revolutionary socialists, communists, Leninists and Trotskyists, to combine forces and to convene a conference of their organisations. Such a conference must discuss an action programme for coordinating our defensive struggles, transforming them into a revolutionary counter-attack against imperialism and capitalism. And it must discuss the types of organisation needed to fight for such a programme.

The League for the Fifth International, which will, if it is able, intervene in Chávez's gathering in 2010, calls on all who support the struggle for a new International based on proletarian class independence and a new revolutionary programme, (whatever name or number they presently give to it) to join forces with us in 2010 to take real steps in this direction.

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