

TEN YEARS TEACHING AND LEARNING

"Hello President" began broadcasting on May 23, 1999. That day this year, Chávez was in Ecuador celebrating the 187th anniversary of the Battle of Pichincha. Tomorrow the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the program will begin.

The case of Hugo Chávez is an exceptional one in the history of politics. Others have achieved fame and celebrity through the written press, on the radio or on television, but never had a revolutionary idea made such efficient use of a communications media. In the Bolivarian Revolution's epic struggle, if it hadn't been for this program, imperialism and the oligarchy would have destroyed the Revolution in Venezuela with its almost absolute control of the mass media.

I have made a conservative calculation that in those ten years, President Chávez of Venezuela has dedicated 1,536 hours, the equivalent of 64 full days, to a program for informing and educating the nation.

In that unending exchange, he has been teaching and learning, educating and being educated by the people. He has read, acquired and transmitted knowledge. He has been studying and recommending books, remembering the rich history of his country, the struggles and prophetic dreams of Bolívar, many of whose speeches he knew by heart.

"Hello President" became a program for Venezuela and for those of us on this planet who want to know what is happening and what may happen. As part of my weekly agenda, I dedicate some time to "Hello."

It is most heartening that the support of the humble and spirited people of Venezuela for Chávez keeps growing. The number of workers and youths who join the revolutionary ranks is growing. He is winning the battle of ideas.

Close family tell me that his health is very good and that they have never seen him more enthusiastic and dynamic; he runs for 40 minutes every day and has lost some extra weight in one month. We are glad. He has been a great friend in the difficult days for the Revolution. We have resisted and we shall steadfastly continue to resist. Today we have more reasons than ever to do so.

Fidel Castro Ruz
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