

Not Rich vs. Poor

The People vs. The Government

Posted in reply to questions at [TMF Political Asylum board](#)

Say, how big exactly is support for Chavez in Venezuela right now?

From BBC I get confusing information, they interview drivers in some gas station queue, they all hate him, the next queue they`re all for him.

Well, that shows you that people here still have an opinion :) According to the latest opinion polls Chavez has about a 15 to 20% popularity rating at this time. I don't know how accurate these polls are. Some weeks ago there were huge demonstrations against Chavez. Can you believe that close to 20% of the population was out on the streets -- an estimated 4 million people all over the country?

Here is a link to opinion polls but the latest ones I'm referring to don't appear in the list: [Opinion Polls](#)

How big is support among Venezuela`s poor and lower class and how many are there of them?

First of all you need to realize that rich and poor are relative terms. In North Korea the poor die of malnutrition on the streets. There is no hunger in Venezuela. In reality, in Venezuela the oil belongs to the government and all the people who have governed Venezuela since oil was found almost a century ago, have used the proceeds from oil to establish a populist economy. What this means is that the "poor" receive all sorts of subsidies from the government, free schools, free medicine, free lunch for the kids in schools, housing subsidies, transport subsidies, and the list goes on and on. What this means is that the poor might live in very poor neighborhoods but they have water, sewage service, electricity, TVs, refrigerators, gas or electric cooking ranges. Their kids go to school including technical and university level training.

Next you need to realize that since our so called democracy exists, the far left

has never been able to win more than 15% of the popular vote. Our two major parties (ex-mayor parties?) were both left of center, social democrats (AD) and social Christians (COPEI).

As for the rich, you have to realize that in an oil country that is the world's 5th largest exporter the truly rich is the government. Oil is well over 50% of the Venezuelan economy so you can truthfully say that Chavez is the richest man in Venezuela. This fact is easily forgotten.

There is a small group of very rich people in Venezuela, typically 20 families or groups that run the major private sector economy. Some of these people are extremely rich but never in the range of a Bill Gates.

The middle class is relatively limited. If the Venezuelan economy were properly administered, that is, as a capitalistic economy, the middle class would be a lot bigger.

Although I don't have verifiable number at hand, my best guess is that the rich could be about 5%, the middle class about 25% and the poor about 70% but, as I said, these are guesstimates on my part.

One thing that the rest of the world does not know or does not wish to acknowledge, and the left wing press likes to hide these facts as best they can. The fight in Venezuela is not poor against rich. It is the poor against governments that promise a lot and deliver almost nothing. The government is not run by the rich. The government is run by professional politician and this is one of the big weaknesses of our system. I believe this harks back to the era of the divine right of kings. Back then god put the pope on the throne of Rome and the pope gave his consent to kings. Who could argue with the representatives of god? In Latin America we are used to dictatorships that basically forbid you to talk against the government but that otherwise leave you alone. Castro is the exception to this rule because his is a tyranny with an ideological streak. Most other Latin dictators just want to be rich and powerful. These are the reasons why we have allowed our politicians to run the country. If you look at the US, you find that politicians come from all walks of life, wrestlers, actors, peanut farmers, oil men, lawyers and the list goes on. The importance of Chavez is that he has woken up the Venezuelan citizens to the fact that we have allowed the politicians to steal our country from

us.

Denny Schlesinger
Caracas - Venezuela
denny@softwaretimes.com