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Venezuela

# Letter to the Venezuelan people, to the peoples of Latin America and the world, to the international left

- Debate - Venezuela -  
Publication date: Friday 18 August 2017

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**US President Donald Trump has just announced that he is considering the “military option” to remove President Nicolas Maduro from power. The threat of a possible military operation against Venezuela has been preceded by the adoption of unilateral economic sanctions. It would not seem likely that a direct military invasion will take place, even if the government is blackmailed to give more; but it is clear that there is an escalation. What Trump really wants to crush is the irreverence of the Bolivarian revolution.**

Marea Socialista strongly rejects Trump's military threats and all kinds of interference from the US government as well as economic sanctions. We close ranks with our indignant and courageous Venezuelan people, appealing to the victorious struggle for independence that made us a free nation. That does not mean that we endorse the policies followed by Maduro and the ANC in any way.

Although the crazed Trump does not seem very bothered about it, he is reaping a wave of repudiation of his armed blackmail and his invocation of war. We are seeing how other nations, even those most hostile to Maduro, strongly condemn this possibility, repudiated by the governments of Latin America and other parts of the globe, as it would only contribute to making the world more unstable and dangerous and could even ignite the whole of Latin America. It has also been rejected by spokespersons for international organizations and UN bodies, which criticise economic sanctions because they would only serve to worsen the situation of Venezuelans, and could even be harmful to those who apply them. From the international left, including the American left, voices are raised against interventionism, although a good part of them do not support Maduro.

The United States has for many decades crushed and invaded countries in Latin America and throughout the world for the imposition of its domination and in the dispute for imperialist hegemony. It has often got away with it but has also had huge failures, as in Vietnam and Cuba. These actions which they pretend to justify falsely in the name of “freedom” or “democracy” have always been at the cost of enormous suffering for the peoples attacked and even for their own people.

Within Venezuela, a broad diversity of parties and social organizations, regardless of their sympathy or antipathy towards the government and the “supra-power” established with the ANC [National Constituent Assembly], has come to express a strong rejection of imperial threats, and even sectors of the pro-imperialist right who have at some point supported external interference, have been forced to take a stand against an invasion or warlike action against Venezuela, even though they avoid expressly condemning their gringo strategic ally. But we believe that it is not enough to issue statements; it is necessary to contextualize and try to explain what is happening, as well as discuss ways to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In order to do so, we must examine the international situation in which the stage of Venezuela's transition is taking place, where the polarization between the right-wing opposition and a government that has lost its way also reflects the inter-imperialist dispute, where one and the other try to take advantage and appropriate our resources.

The government, with its bad policies, weakens and makes the country more vulnerable, by distorting the sovereign course that predominated in economic matters during the Chávez period and at the same time losing the support and confidence of the people, which was one of the main sustainers and sources of strength of the Bolivarian revolution. This is what has given opportunities for recovery to the right opposition, clearly pro-imperialist, and has opened the way to the risk of intervention.

Hence the need to restore the unity of the Venezuelan people for the defence of the country, and this is done with more democracy and not less, as well as effective political responses to face the situation that the people suffer with the scarcity of food and medicines. But the government prioritizes the payment of foreign debt and its commitments to (imperialist) financial capital, leaving aside attention to the urgencies of the crisis. The unity of the people cannot be forced with abuse and repression.

The government of Maduro and the bureaucracy is now implementing economic policies that are retrograde in the matter of sovereignty and independent development, in comparison of what was achieved with the Bolivarian revolution in the time of Chavez. Now these policies are acquiring an anti-national character and they damage sovereignty. Government policy is not consistently anti-imperialist, although it may sometimes have a provocative style, with verbal challenges to the empire. This does not strengthen us against imperialism.

Also, North American banks and “tax havens” have benefited from continued embezzlement in Venezuela and the criminal flight of capital. The USA intervenes partially and selectively for political manipulation, but in no way seeks to aid to the people of Venezuela in their most urgent needs.

## **Venezuela in the context of the world capitalist crisis and the inter-imperialist conflict**

The world capitalist system has not been able to recover from the chronic structural crisis that has been underway since the end of the first decade of this century. In the face of signs of a possible explosion of new bubbles created by speculative capital in the financial sector, investments seek to take refuge in a redoubled exploitation of natural resources (gold, silver, diamonds, coltan, among others), which also respond to the requirements of technological advances and new market areas. At the same time, capital uses the spirals of external debts to appropriate more assets and wealth from the countries and their territories.

All this is part of a re-colonizing escalation, in which the old and the emerging empires, together with the transnationals, dispute hegemony and positions of advantage in assaulting the riches of the planet, even at the expense of the destruction of the equilibriums of climate and of life, in the midst of growing geopolitical chaos, the disintegration of nations, wars and the proliferation of governments with the corrupt and criminal bosses of capital accumulation, which immerses societies in arbitrariness. There is no solution within the capitalist framework. What appears to be an attempt to establish a “new order” is actually part of a worldwide disorder, with an economic and political dispute over hegemony, with military tensions and conflicts that indirectly include Russia and China, and where regional confrontations extend.

Part of this international tableau is the prolonged instability in the Arab countries, the revolutions and counterrevolutions and invasions and resistances within them, the growing hostility with North Korea, possessor of nuclear weapons as well as the imbalances in Europe itself and in the periphery of the former USSR. In many of the scenarios in which the United States intervenes, we see a tragic disintegration as a result, because even though it is economically and politically weaker, its action is more aggressive and relies on its continued military supremacy.

This re-colonizing dynamic, within countries, dismantles social conquests and annihilates democratic rights to impose the implementation of new architectures and economic and financial mechanisms, serving the needs of a changing capitalism; and though they have contributed to these rights also, each in its measure, the so-called “progressive governments” in Latin America have remained subject to the capitalist model. In this general context, the so-called progressive governments, which once sought to barter the conditions of distribution established by the big imperialist

powers and companies, have been declining and succumbing. This has affected the sustainability of social benefits and the enjoyment of democratic rights, already unsustainable by rentier economies that did not become consistently transformed and because the processes of change were frustrated by the growth of parasitic bureaucracies and the assimilation of such progressive governments to the logic of capital. That is why the cycle of revolutions and processes of change that began in Latin America seems to be in the terminal phase, to be reabsorbed in the world capitalist re-adjustment that recaptures its possessions and areas of domination, despite the continuation of social struggles, and this mainly because of the renunciation of the political leaderships that have overseen the conducting of those processes.

This does not escape Venezuela, where the revolution is being stifled by Hugo Chavez's own political heirs, like the key elements that marked the Bolivarian process and the efforts undertaken for Latin American integration with truncated or semi-truncated projects such as the Banco del Sur, the monetary union with the Sucre, the expansion and strengthening of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas, the creation of an independent military framework with respect to the United States, the progress of the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The problem is not only the United States' struggle to regain space and economic control in Venezuela; It is also the geopolitics established by Chávez, who disturbed the international tableau with adverse or uncomfortable positions, capable of dragging other countries behind him against US plans and objectives, while favouring the entry of China and Russia affecting it in its closest area of ??interests, considered by imperialism as a "backyard."

So we must ask: is the policy of the Maduro government really anti-imperialist? In the economic field, the orientation goes in the opposite direction, because although it announces the vague idea of ??a new "post-oil" economic model and the replacement of the rentier system, all concrete actions are directed at the reinforcement of rentier, extractivist and dependent capitalism, tied to transnational corporations and international financial capital, as expressions of imperialism, as well as to the reinforcement of the mechanisms of subjection with respect to the imperialist countries properly so called, both the oldest and those that have been emerging as competitors of the United States and Europe, including China and Russia, with very clear interests within the country.

An expression of this is the exploitation of the Orinoco Mining Arc, with 112,000 square kilometres offered to the transnational mega-miner of diverse origins, in a vast and very delicate area, vital for the climatic and ecological balance, containing a great part of our water sources and hydroelectric power, where indigenous peoples live and much of Venezuelan biodiversity is concentrated. For these exploitation projects, the government did not even present environmental impact studies, nor did it consult indigenous peoples as mandated by the current Constitution of 1999. This has even been done with debt-generating financial arrangements aimed at paying the already existing debt, owing to the lack of foreign exchange due both to the reduction of oil revenues and to the embezzlement and criminal flight of capital that has occurred in the country. This is also evident in the Oil Strip and in the designation of the "15 Motors" of the economy, linked to the opening of Special Economic Zones that contemplate forms of greater flexibility and de-regulation favourable to capital and harmful to labour and national sovereignty. Instead of advancing along the path of "endogenous development" of which Chavez spoke so much, the old path of neo-colonial capitalism is resumed.

An expression of all this are the most recent contracts, amid the crisis and the street protests, with China National Petroleum Corporation, Rosneft, Schlumberger, Horizontal Well Drillers, Baker Hughes, Halliburton, among others, in the oil field, and big gas projects with companies such as Repsol or Shell. In mining, we have witnessed the return of companies that had been thrown out by Chavez, such as Gold Reserve, and the granting of extensive concessions to Barrick Gold Corporation, among other mining deals agreed with Chinese, Russian, Canadian, North American, South African enterprises and corporate countries under whose flag transnational capitals operate.

In these “strategic alliances” more than 90% of investment is in mining and the rest destined to tourism, without being an axis in productive reactivation related to food, agricultural development or medicines, to face the most serious problems which are affecting the people with the economic situation of the country. Food and medicines, on the other hand, are being affected even in imports, having been reduced by between 60% and 70% in order to secure most of the foreign exchange for the payment of an illegitimate external debt and with a high component of corruption, which the government refuses to audit and make transparent.

The right-wing opposition, for its part, has not made the slightest effort since its parliamentary control in the National Assembly to question or block these agreements and economic conduct of the government, since it does not oppose these policies and at the most it could disagree with the preferential partners or compete for business management. An eventual government of this opposition would have a similar orientation even if it changed the composition of the capitals.

Thus, beyond blackmail and threats directed at influencing the country's political control, imperialism, whether in its nation-state form (USA, European countries, China, Russia and so on) or through the transnational corporations and financial capital that are its economic expression, is regaining a strengthened power in our economy and in our territory, through the government itself, which rhetorically agitates anti-imperialist and revolutionary slogans, but which in fact has been opening the doors to it for some time through the appetite of a bureaucracy that has become part of the capital in society with sectors of the bourgeoisie.

Hence the first measures of anti-imperialist defence and national sovereignty should start from the review and rectification of this entire economic orientation, which is the main factor of vulnerability to external threats.

And faced with this, another question has to be asked: Are the constitutionalists of the ANC going to propose a truly anti-imperialist, consistent and responsible policy? They have not shown any signs of that and little can be expected of a “Constituent Power” made up of the same constituted power responsible for the economic policies applied to the detriment of the Venezuelan nation. If they really wanted to liberate the country from imperialism and move towards our Second Independence, they would have to take decisive steps in this direction.

Chávez was able to advance in his anti-imperialist positions because at the same time he relied on the social achievements of the Bolivarian revolution and a democracy that maintained the confidence of the great majority of the people. This does not happen with Maduro, who does not go beyond anti-imperialist discourse and opens space for transnationals and the looting of foreign powers in the country, while losing social and political support for the mistreatment and deprivations to which the population is subjected by the bureaucratic and authoritarian government.

Obviously, then, asking for support for Venezuela in the face of Trump's threats does not mean support for the policies of Maduro and the ANC. On the contrary, the changing of these dire policies is a precondition for the real defence of our country.

## **To face the threats of imperialism and defend our sovereignty**

Therefore, for the defence of our sovereignty we need to reverse all the economic policies described and resume the path of the Second Independence, since it is not only a problem of military defence.

We need to address the food and drug emergency that the people are suffering, giving priority to supply and the

reactivation of the production of basic consumer goods. The bulk of foreign exchange should be used for this purpose and not the payment of the foreign debt (with which even the imperialist aggression itself is financed) and the recovery of the capital which has left the country is required, something the government has made no effort to do, making it responsible for the continuity of embezzlement from the nation.

The recovery of democracy and the rule of law is fundamental to reunify our people and restore their mechanisms of participation, today usurped and totally monopolized by the power set up installed in the ANC, by the bureaucratic apparatus of the state and by the government of the PSUV. This is another weakness in which imperialism relies on pressure on Venezuela under the pretext of democracy.

One way of doing this would be to submit the installed Constituent Assembly to a referendum so that it is the entire people and not a minority and one-party partiality which approves or rejects it. But in no way can this disputed Constituent Assembly and the government continue acting outside the Constitution, still in force, adopted with Chavez in 1999.

The bourgeois opposition, whether or not participating in the MUD, must submit to the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and abandon definitively the violent and insurrectional methods or the attempts to implant a dual power to overthrow the government and pronounce itself unequivocally against the interventionism that it has been sponsored from its ranks.

For all this, it is necessary to recover the autonomous social force of the working people and the inclusive multi-dialogue of all sectors of society in full freedom, with the cessation of mistreatment and repression.

To the international left we propose an active campaign against the threats and US interventionism, and at the same time, that it demand that the government of Nicolás Maduro return to the Venezuelan people all their rights and constitutional guarantees that were conquered with the revolution.

*National Operative Team of Marea Socialista*