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Venezuela

Epitaph for a Revolution?

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"We are in a new political moment" is the summary expression with which Delcy Rodríguez describes what is happening in Venezuela. The North American intervention in Venezuela, the merciless bombardment that occurred over two hours in Caracas, La Guaira and other locations, as well as the worst disgrace in the history of the national Armed Forces, all seem distant now. [1] The events of 3 January have quickly become a historical event, worthy of remembrance in halls full of militants and for international audiences who prefer to live in Narnia because this serves to sustain their national political projects.

Anti-imperialism is the great absentee from current Venezuelan public policy. Although Chávez's cry still echoes in front of Miraflores: [2] "Yankee shits, go to hell!", over the past fortnight the government palace microphones have cautiously indicated that any complaint about what occurred on 3 January will be made exclusively through diplomatic channels, in an attempt to overcome the stain this has meant for bilateral relations between the United States and Venezuela. As bewilderment still pervades the social base of Madurismo, only in some militant meetings do people continue to speak ill of the gringos—taking care, of course, not to mention the blond one in the White House—a sort of consolation for those who are just awakening from the grief of loss.

Trump's statement on the afternoon of 3 January, whilst the weeping of humble mothers for the death of a hundred sons still resounded in every corner of the attacked homeland, has not been refuted by events: Delcy Rodríguez has committed to collaborating and not repeating Maduro's same mistakes. [3] The error Trump refers to appears to have been committed by Maduro in liquidating between 2014 and 2025 the national-popular programme—let alone the so-called twenty-first century socialism—that Chávez had embodied, whilst failing to fully implement the political, juridical and institutional measures that would turn Venezuela into a new North American colony. Maduro's error was not one of principles, but of political calculation: he believed he could negotiate his permanence in power simply in exchange for selling all the country's riches to the United States. Maduro fulfilled the liquidationist task of a frustrated revolution, but did not know how to present the death certificate without losing his audience. This does not prevent us from denouncing his abduction on 3 January and demanding his release, because Venezuela is a Republic that must resolve its affairs without the intervention of any empire. [4]

The Fantastic Four and Wonder Woman

On 15 January, Donald Trump—who so enjoys the spectacle of professional wrestling that he appointed ring businesswoman Linda McMahon to the Department of Education [5]—decided to use terms from the Marvel and DC universes to describe his range of political possibilities in Venezuela. He announced that in the morning he had held a long telephone conversation with interim president Delcy Rodríguez, whom he described as FANTASTIC and with whom, he said, "we are working very well". In the afternoon, he met behind closed doors with the right-wing opposition figure María Corina Machado, whom he had dismissed on 3 January for the current Venezuelan political stage, but whom he now calls MARVELLOUS—naturally, after she presented him with her Nobel Peace Prize medal. [6] Perhaps Trump wanted to use his discursive imagery to replace the saga of "Súper Bigote" and "Cilita"—the action figures that the Maduro government created to represent the president (nicknamed for his moustache) and his wife Cilia Flores, which were given as Christmas gifts to poor Venezuelan children. [7]

But, in fairness, the term "fantastic" is a shared designation for the four characters who today, besides Delcy Rodríguez, are at the head of the Venezuelan administration: Jorge Rodríguez (president of the National Assembly), Diosdado Cabello (Minister of Interior and Justice) and Padrino López (Minister of Defence). [8] They are the

Fantastic Four of the "new political moment", who must avoid angering the Lex Luthor who inhabits the White House. The pseudonym Wonder Woman is indivisible for María Corina Machado, who appears to have separated herself from the rest of the Venezuelan opposition, which is more inclined to reach agreements with Maduro and now with Delcy. As Franco "Bifo" Berardi might say, these are merely reflections of the mental health problems surrounding power in the twenty-first century. [9]

Dismantling the remnants of the Bolivarian revolution

The Bolivarian process arrives at 3 January 2026 as a zombie feeding on rhetoric with no basis in reality, transformed into a terrible caricature of what was promised in the 1999 Constitution. The decline began before the Unilateral Coercive Measures (North American sanctions), but these evidently accelerated the passage from entropy to counter-revolutionary dissolution. This was clearly expressed in the 2018 austerity package, through which the effects of the crisis were transferred to the working class, whilst guaranteeing the circuits of bourgeois accumulation. [10] The Maduro government became authoritarian, liquidating minimal democratic freedoms and deliberately executing the worst material living conditions experienced by any Venezuelan worker alive today. [11] Delcy Rodríguez and the Fantastic Four were a structural part of this decline—they do not merely inherit it; they are co-authors. The question we all asked ourselves was whether the imperialist attack on Venezuela on 3 January could serve as a trigger for an internal revolutionary movement, at the head of which the governing quartet might place themselves, retaking the path outlined in the 1999 Republican Constitution.

Events since then have unfortunately dispelled this illusion. Not only are diplomatic relations between Caracas and Washington being normalised within a framework of illiberal and colonial restoration, but the counter-reforms necessary to concretise the new status of relations between the United States and Venezuela are being implemented. At Delcy Rodríguez's request, the National Assembly simplified trade regulations to eliminate restrictions on foreign investment, whilst simultaneously initiating reform of the Hydrocarbons Law to provide legal cover for the plundering of Venezuelan petroleum and the entry of the transnational corporations that Chávez's revolution had expelled. These rapid restoration measures seek to align Venezuela with Trump's intentions, as expressed to the sixteen petroleum magnates assembled to form a \$100 billion (approximately €96 billion) investment fund that would allow the United States to move from currently seizing nearly one million barrels of oil to more than four million within a couple of years. [12]

Venezuela is once again fully entering the SWIFT banking code mechanisms, [13] so that local financial operations pass through the United States, and four private banking entities (BNC, BBVA Provincial, Banesco and Mercantil) have already been authorised to receive from the Trump administration the fraction of foreign currency they will transfer to the country for oil sales. Apparently, these private banks will be the ones offering the foreign currency, and the Central Bank of Venezuela will only receive the bolívares derived from this auction, less the respective intermediation commissions. This mechanism is announced by Delcy Rodríguez as a form of "energy cooperation with the US, which will allow any currency that enters to go to two funds: the first for social protection to improve workers' income and strengthen areas such as health, education, food and housing, whilst the second will be allocated to infrastructure and services". A simple calculation of the impact of the first \$300 million (approximately €288 million) to be transferred demonstrates the limited effectiveness this will have in improving the material living conditions of the working class—the 30% of oil sales income that the US will send to Venezuela through this colonial form of intermediation.

Already on 9 January, the White House had announced the executive order "Safeguarding Venezuelan oil revenue for the Good of the American and Venezuela people", which was the materialisation of the colonial relationship in managing resources from oil sales. The United States assumes the role of "custodian" of national funds, whose

authorisation for use and circulation will depend on the US Secretary of State, testing its application with the 50 million barrels of oil they announced they would confiscate for these purposes. The response of the government led by Delcy Rodríguez was to initiate the legislative and institutional reforms to make this concrete. On 15 January—the same day as the telephone meeting between Delcy and Trump—the reform of Venezuela's Hydrocarbons Law was announced. As if we were witnessing a competition to show the greatest obedience to the White House occupant, whilst María Corina Machado was presenting her Nobel medal to Trump, Delcy was presenting the reform of the Law on petroleum exploitation and sales.

As a smokescreen, the Trump administration ordered the closure of El Helicoide, [14] a detention facility denounced as also being a torture site, and the release of the political prisoners held there. The president of the National Assembly went from affirming that Venezuela had no political prisoners to reporting that more than four hundred have been released and that other cases are being studied. Human rights defenders had previously indicated that the number of political prisoners could exceed one thousand citizens. It must be emphasised that these releases are the result of the struggle of political prisoners' families and the human rights organisations that have accompanied them, not an imperial gift.

This occurs whilst Article 5 of the External Shock Decree orders the detention of anyone who criticises the government. Today it is common to see police and military officers at various points in Venezuelan cities checking telephones and detaining anyone with information against the government. The majority of the population now leaves home without a telephone or with a device incapable of receiving WhatsApp messages or accessing social networks.

As if this were not enough, on 15 January it was announced that the executive and legislature, together with the bureaucratic and employer-aligned Central Socialista Bolivariana de Trabajadores (whose architect was Maduro), [15] would undertake a fast-track reform of labour legislation, creating a new Labour Code adjusted to the new political moment.

The reaction of the bourgeoisie and business owners remains to be seen. However, Delcy Rodríguez knows very well how to move within business, financial and banking sectors. Indeed, between 2018 and 2025, she was charged by Maduro with seeking points of encounter and dialogue with the traditional business sector, a task she performed efficiently. FEDECAMARAS (the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production), which had participated in the coup against Chávez in 2002, [16] had severed dialogue with the government since then, but Delcy Rodríguez's efforts achieved what seemed impossible: not only did she become the star guest at national business meetings from 2021 onwards, but she managed to distance them from the confrontational calls led by María Corina Machado. This experience of Delcy Rodríguez could prove useful in achieving what Maduro could not: an agreement between the different bourgeois factions for an orderly transition where all the rich win and none lose. Of course, in such agreements, those below are always the losers.

Changes are occurring at dizzying speed, whilst the anti-imperialist perspective seems to dilute ever further. [17]

The great absentee

Common international public opinion asks: and the people? What is the popular response? The truth is that no expression of mass mobilisation has occurred as a spontaneous and autonomous response to what is happening. The weak marches that have taken place have been convened by the government, mobilising primarily public employees and the social base it still retains—reduced, but not insignificant for these purposes.

How is this explained? Madurismo produced such a disastrous situation in workers' material living conditions that

broad swathes of the population see his departure as the possibility that things might change. The citizenry appears to be at the point of giving events a chance to improve wages, permit the return of the eight million migrants who have fractured every Venezuelan family, restore the regular and stable functioning of public services (water and electricity), and provide institutions that address the health, food and housing demands of the great majorities. [18] However, the situation of colonial administration will find it difficult to concretise these aspirations, so the reappearance of the mobilised social subject will be possible as this impossibility becomes evident.

In the land of the blind...

Now the entire political world speaks of transition and solving problems in the short term. But this cannot be resolved through will alone; it demands that politics comprehensively understand the causes and structural origins of the current situation.

From our perspective, the current Venezuelan crisis originates in February 1983 with the collapse of the rentier model of bourgeois accumulation, cross-class alliance and political representation. [19] It deepened with the fracture that the disappearance of the category of "the people" as unifier of the nation-state meant for the State, beginning with the Caracazo of 1989, [20] and deepening further with the military crisis expressed in the uprisings of 4 February and 27 November 1992. [21] To this must be added the profound crisis of credibility in democracy that became undeniable with the 1993 electoral results—a phenomenon that widened with each subsequent election. [22] The 1999 Constituent Assembly, whilst achieving majority support, failed to reconstitute the people as subject of state consensus; on the contrary, chaos deepened, with peaks and periods of apparent stability. The beginning of a new bourgeoisie's formation from 2002 onwards, after the employer-military coup against Chávez, opened a dispute over wealth accumulation that nearly became civil war between 2014 and 2017. This inter-bourgeois dispute has not been resolved and, worse still, adds in both cases a vocation to deny cross-class alliance—that is, to impose itself by destroying the minimum conditions of a reformist social agenda—which keeps latent the germ of radical revolution. To all this must be added the trauma of sovereignty loss before the imperialist attack of 3 January and the shameful role of the armed forces. These are forty-three years of structural crisis in the model of accumulation and political representation without resolution. A transition conceived from the world of labour must be capable of addressing each and every component of this crisis. María Corina Machado has affirmed that her bet is different, and the Delcy Rodríguez government appears more interested in surviving in power than in solving this structural crisis. The coming months will be key to understanding and specifying the course of events in the country.

Swimming so far only to drown at the shore

Cuban writer Leonardo Padura has just published a novel that appears to be missing a chapter on Venezuela. *Morir en la orilla* (*To Die at the Shore*) is the tale of the disenchantment of a generation that criticised capitalism as a result of the political, economic, social, cultural and technological problems it experienced, that bet on socialism as an alternative, and that now seems to accept that the only solution to its problems is a return to savage capitalism—to free markets, competition and labour exploitation, but with a dignified wage. [23]

Explaining that what happened in Venezuela was not a socialist experience but rather an appropriation through dispossession of the narrative of radical transformation is no easy task. Certainly, the Chávez government had elements worth defending, as did the Fourth Republic before it, [24] but both ended up being bets on trying to resolve the capitalist crisis without changing the rentier model of production and accumulation.

Rather than constructing recipes, today putting projects of futures back in flight means listening to ordinary people,

because a revolution is only possible and sustainable when it is in tune with the expectations, needs and requirements of the humble. Swimming against the current so as not to drown at the shore.

The difficult task of revolutionaries in this context

Given this panorama, there can be no doubt about priorities. The central task is to defend the homeland's sovereignty with anti-imperialism from those who live by their labour—that is, every step in defence of the Republic must be accompanied by the demand for redemocratisation of Venezuelan society and wage justice. There is no territorial sovereignty without political sovereignty.

It is very difficult to articulate a defence of Venezuelan sovereignty that omits the need to overcome the problems of inequality and lack of freedoms in Venezuela. Correctly combining these demands is the challenge for anti-imperialism today. Therefore, the call for a world anti-imperialist front, based on solidarity with Venezuela, must be accompanied by the demand for full restoration of the regime of political, trade union and civic freedoms in Venezuela. This demands tact and creativity, commitment and clarity of horizon. In this sense and orientation, we join the call to organise a global platform from the virtual meeting of 17 January, to which it is hoped plural and diverse voices will come—as are we who continue to dream of another possible world and Venezuela.

18 January 2026

Translated for [ESSF](#) by Adam Novak from [Viento Sur](#).

PS:

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[1] On the military operation and its immediate aftermath, see Luis Bonilla-Molina, "United States Seizes Venezuelan Territory and Government", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026. Available at: <https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77572>

[2] The Miraflores Palace in Caracas is the official workplace of the President of Venezuela.

[3] Delcy Rodríguez assumed the role of interim president following the US military intervention of 3 January 2026. She had served as vice-president under Maduro since 2018. Her brother Jorge Rodríguez is president of the National Assembly.

[4] On the implications of Maduro's capture and the nature of the regime that preceded it, see Andrés Izarra, "A Perfect Regime Change in Venezuela? From authoritarianism to neocolonialism?", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026. Available at: <https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77627>

[5] Linda McMahon is a co-founder of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Trump nominated her as Secretary of Education in late 2024.

[6] María Corina Machado is a Venezuelan opposition leader and founder of the political organisation Vente Venezuela. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in late 2025 for her role in the Venezuelan democratic movement. On her trajectory and links to US interests, see Luis

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Bonilla-Molina and Leonardo Bracamonte, "MC Machado (Venezuela) - Nobel Peace Prize: Beyond the Dismay...", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, November 2025. Available at: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article76928>

[7] The "Súper Bigote" (Super Moustache) cartoon character, depicting Maduro as a moustachioed superhero, became a symbol of the government's propaganda efforts. Action figures of Maduro and his wife were distributed as part of state Christmas gift programmes.

[8] Vladimir Padrino López has served as Minister of Defence since 2014. Diosdado Cabello is a powerful figure in the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and has held various high-ranking positions in government.

[9] Franco "Bifo" Berardi is an Italian Marxist philosopher and cultural theorist known for his work on the relationship between media, capitalism and mental health.

[10] The 2018 economic measures included a massive currency devaluation, fuel price increases, and wage adjustments that failed to keep pace with hyperinflation, effectively slashing real wages whilst protecting business interests.

[11] On the situation of Venezuelan workers under both government repression and imperialist pressure, see the interview with oil union leader José Bodas, "Maduro's government has imposed an open dictatorship against the working class", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026.

[12] On the geopolitical and economic dimensions of US policy towards Venezuela, see Yolety Bracho and Franck Gaudichaud, "Trump's assault on the Caribbean", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, December 2025. Available at: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77324>

[13] SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) is the global financial messaging network used for international money transfers. Venezuela had been partially excluded from this system due to US sanctions.

[14] El Helicoide is a distinctive modernist building in Caracas originally designed as a shopping centre but converted into the headquarters of the Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional (SEBIN), Venezuela's intelligence service. It has been widely denounced by human rights organisations as a site of political detention and torture.

[15] The Central Socialista Bolivariana de Trabajadores (CSBT) was created in 2011 as a pro-government trade union confederation, replacing the previous Unión Nacional de Trabajadores. Critics have described it as lacking independence from the state.

[16] The April 2002 coup attempt briefly removed Hugo Chávez from power for approximately 47 hours. FEDECAMARAS president Pedro Carmona declared himself interim president during the coup before mass popular mobilisation and loyal military units restored Chávez to power.

[17] On the broader context of Trumpist recolonisation and the challenges facing resistance, see Luis Bonilla-Molina, "Venezuela: Trumpist recolonisation and the resistance to come", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026. Available at: <https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77665>

[18] On what Venezuelans want for their future amidst the current crisis, see Yolety Bracho, "We Venezuelans wish to decide our own future", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026. Available at: <https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77643>

[19] February 1983 saw the beginning of Venezuela's severe economic crisis when the government devalued the bolívar on what became known as "Black Friday" (Viernes Negro), ending decades of currency stability and marking the start of prolonged economic decline.

[20] The Caracazo was a wave of protests, riots and looting that erupted in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities in February 1989 in response to neoliberal austerity measures imposed by President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Government repression resulted in hundreds, possibly thousands, of deaths.

[21] These were two coup attempts led by military officers against President Carlos Andrés Pérez. The February attempt, led by Hugo Chávez, failed militarily but established Chávez as a national figure. The November attempt also failed.

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[22] The 1993 presidential election saw the victory of Rafael Caldera, running outside the traditional two-party system that had dominated Venezuelan politics since 1958, reflecting widespread disillusionment with the established political order.

[23] Leonardo Padura is a Cuban novelist and journalist, best known for his detective fiction featuring the character Mario Conde. His work often explores Cuban society and the disillusionment of the revolutionary generation.

[24] The "Fourth Republic" refers to Venezuela's political system from 1958 to 1999, characterised by the Punto Fijo pact between the two main parties (Acción Democrática and COPEI) that alternated in power. Chávez termed his new constitutional order the "Fifth Republic".