

Venezuela — Now more than ever

Autonomy, self-management, direct action and solidarity

Editorial collective of El Libertario and individual anarchists

March, 2014

Statement about the events of February — March 2014

One doesn't have to be a genius to forecast that the sorry socio-economic situation in Venezuela, inherited after 14 years of Hugo Chavez's government and made worse in a little over a year with Nicolas Maduro, was creating a conflict ready to erupt, particularly when the huge income from "black gold", which up until 3 or 4 years ago sustained the fantasy of "oil socialism", stopped. The income is still abundant, but the waste, the incompetence, the corruption and the greed of those who rule are still greater. Between the narco-generales and other predators in uniform, highly placed bureaucrats who run the gamut from avid greed to nothingness, the boli-bourgeoisie, the bolichicos¹ and other beneficiaries of CADIVI², the fat slice of the castro-bourgeoisie³, the Cuban government and its advisers in the field ready to cheat, or the agents of those transnational corporations that have got such juicy benefits in their dealings with the "Bolivarian Revolution", the pot should have burst sooner rather than later, with the people watching this shameful government and at the same time suffering the worst insecurity, lack of goods, public service crisis and the world's highest rate of inflation.

Only the official propaganda in its shamelessness, plus the blindness -paid for or quasi-religious — of the authoritarian Left always ready to kneel in front of the Beloved Leader du jour, have been able to see in this sorry spectacle the machinations of a certain imperialism they don't like (while other sorts are presented as "friendly"). According to this absurd tale, from 1999 till today, Venezuela's economy has been managed within a brilliant strategy of building socialism, immediate attention to the needs of the poor, honesty in funds management and massive, active and vigilant social participation thanks to the institutions of "popular power" and "social control". Things being so, if something is temporarily wrong it is because of some coup conspiracy by the Yankees or their local servants, since in essence things have never been better and the future along this road is really promising.

¹Group of young capitalists that have been favored by corrupt dealings with the State.

²State organization in charge of regulating dollars and euros, since in Venezuela there is official control of the foreign exchange.

³Name given to the capitalist class emerging in Cuba in the current process from state capitalism to private enterprise capitalism.

But since February and very rudely, the street says otherwise because the truth is something else. In practically all the urban centers (and we are a country with 85% urban population) there were massive protests that, contrary to what has been said about “bourgeois and petit-bourgeois rioting”, they are a social cross-section of people from all walks of life, if it weren’t so, how can you explain the size and duration of the protests? Besides, if in the economic aspect (clientelar and extractivist oil capitalism’s crisis) there is a structural motive for the riots, there are many reasons for many to come out and protest, reasons that were impelled by the patent incompetence of a government which only works for the “enchufados” [TN:connected]⁴ and by now perhaps for less of them as production and oil income decrease.

It is important to insist that this collective insurgency has been and is basically spontaneous, if there were some who foresaw it in order to get political advantage (such as Leopoldo Lopez and his small party Voluntad Popular [TN: People’s Will] or Maria Corina Machado) of them it can be said that although they have had visibility in the events, they do not control what has been unleashed. Moreover, the rupture in the sector which formerly followed the electoral opposition and its Mesa de Unidad Democratica [MUD] is clear, evident in the people’s rejection of Henrique Capriles and other leaders at several recent public events. We see a certain correlation between that and what is happening to Chavism, where an important part of the electoral base which, faithful to Chavez voted for Maduro a year ago — a commitment the majority ratified by giving the victory to the official party in the December regional ballot — now appears indifferent to the desperate pleas to visibly show its loyalty to the government, so that the scant official public acts recently have not been even the shadow of what was normal when Chavez was alive. Such lack of action by the Chavista masses (which Maduro pretends to fix with hysterical calls to join the repression) is one of the most significant question marks of the current moment, since its permanence or break up in one direction or the other would determine what will in the end happen.

Ruthless repression has been the privileged and sole response given up to now by the Venezuelan government. It doesn’t seem to have any other, at least to replace it as their main option. First because it is economically entangled in the comings and goings of oil capitalism deeper than in the last 70 years; there are very few possibilities to earn support and legitimacy giving away crumbs from the clientelar carrot, so the only thing left is the stick of the People’s National Guard and the paramilitaries who form the so-called “collectives”. Not to say that this has resulted in immediate liabilities and future risks: they have the same problems with the Left paramilitaries as with a can full of worms, it is easy to open it and turn them loose, not so easy to gather them or control them. As far as the National Guard and the impression the people have of its recent work, we can only say that it has given rise to a vein of propaganda, conscience and spirit of anti-militarism that as anarchists we have to foster now and in the future, going further than the false dichotomy of the good or bad military, since we are against the very existence of military institutions as organs of social control and repression.

Second, after the experience of 2002⁵ Chavism was left with the obsession that the main danger of being shoved out of power was a coup d’etat, so it prepared its answer to that. The emphasis on arming, training and coordinating the paramilitaries comes from that line, as well as the

⁴Popular name for all who get rich under the “Bolivarian Revolution”

⁵Reference to the failed coup attempt with the participation of some military commanders to get Chavez out of power that year.

insistent propaganda: first talking about the “economical coup d’etat”, then the “coup d’etat in progress” and now the “slow coup d’etat”, all of which is refuted when, in the midst of the supposed coups this victimized government extends the dates for the Carnival holidays and calls for its celebration. Likewise, this worn out and well learned script demands that the current adversary be presented as unequivocally fascist and against the popular majorities, which on the one hand would fire up explicit support for the regime on the part of large sectors of the collective, while on the other hand it would earn it important international support. But in the end the facts, their consequences and -no less important- the clumsy performance by Nicolas Maduro and his entourage have made the repressive aspect uppermost, with the consequent damage to the government’s political credibility, which continues to invoke the Big Bad Wolf of a military coup which no one sees, smells or feels. Days and weeks pass without the least evidence, besides rumors and gossip, of an unconstitutional armed action to remove it from power (that’s what a coup is all about) while calling every critic a fascist and forecasting the coming “imperialist aggressions”, which only causes embarrassment among the more timid or discreet Maduristas, and is the butt of jokes for the rest of the people.

Let it then be clear: there are no plans for an immediate coup d’etat that would entail a significant rupture with the elite benefitting from the regime described in the first paragraph, as it would be absurd for them to kill themselves. In spite of all difficulties and the obtuse reaction by the government, there is still a margin so that, within capitalism and by applying the capitalist adjustment measures which all those in power today or aspiring to it fully agree with, the heirs of Chavism -with or without Maduro- could recover full governability. Perhaps the bromide of “socialism”, “communal power” and “popular power” will continue in use or not (that’s a minor detail) but in no way is it possible to believe that the boli-bourgeoisie and the connected in command will take another route except that which will give them guarantees and impunity. Now, even more so than under Chavez, everything points to that route going to political accommodation with the opposition, and in Venezuela that means giving more access to the oil manna. They did that with Lorenzo Mendoza⁶ and with that sector of the bourgeoisie that in recent years forgot to take risks with production, in order to now live off the engorged CADIVI teats and speculative exchange. There is also the arrangement with international financial agents and the expensive Chinese partners, who would help it climb out of the quagmire but would impose their conditions.

For our part, before the coming adjustment measures are imposed, we reject them. With such measures those below, once again, will pay the piper, as it’s usual whether under neoliberal capitalism or state capitalism. We anarchists will continue the struggle to empower real alternatives of autonomy for the majorities, those who somehow have made themselves known in the strength, enthusiasm and inventiveness that in so many ways have been expressed in these protests. Part of this task has been attending the events, presenting public evidence and denouncing the brutal State repression, as well as doing what we can to understand and analyze what these events have been. But for us the most important task is to continue struggling so that the greatest number of persons, in every area where we have a presence and influence, start to think and build together solutions to the problems that affect them, coming from themselves and not from some rulers whose only priority is theirs and their close allies’ profit. AUTONOMY, SELF-MANAGEMENT, DIRECT ACTION AND SOLIDARITY!

⁶Head of the main -and almost sole- large private industrial consortium of local property operating in Venezuela

Venezuela, March, 2014

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