

Opinion
Venezuela must
produce what matters
most Page 8

Analysis:
WikiLeaks sheds light
on U.S. foreign policy
failures Page 7

Politics

People and government build human rights plan

In an unprecedented review of current human rights policy in the country, and with hundreds of thousands of proposals submitted by diverse sectors of society, the Venezuelan people and government are finalizing a national process tasked with producing a new National Human Rights Plan. **Page 3**

Opposition already talking to IMF

Recently released audio recordings reveal top opposition ideologues are already negotiating Venezuela's future with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Speaking to Polar Corporation President Lorenzo Mendoza, opposition economist Ricardo Hoffman affirms the IMF is now committed to a "\$50 billion" package if the opposition is somehow able to "oust" the Bolivarian Revolution. **Page 4**

Integration

ALBA leaders condemn capitalism for climate crisis

The presidents of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia gathered in Cochabamba this month to stand with social movements and other anti-capitalist forces in the struggle for climate justice. Calling on UN Climate Negotiations to result in "justice for the people and Mother Earth", those gathered in Cochabamba rejected false solutions proposed by transnational corporations. **Page 5**

Economy

Venezuela continues to need production

In the context of a protracted economic war waged against the socialist government of President Nicolas Maduro, the Venezuelan economy continues its sluggish advance towards building a viable economy. Success continues to depend on popular participation and strict implementation of progressive policies. **Page 6**

CORREO | DEL | ORINOCO

Friday, September 30, 2015 | N° 223 | Caracas | www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve ENGLISH EDITION / The artillery of ideas INTERNATIONAL

Venezuelans commemorate life and legacy of slain lawmaker



A year after the brutal murder of socialist lawmaker Robert Serra and his comrade Maria Herrera, Venezuelans from all walks of life gathered on the streets of Caracas to demand justice for the two – victims of paramilitary violence the U.S.-backed opposition has spread across the country. Serra and Herrera, both militant activists in the struggle for social justice in Venezuela, were knifed to death in their Caracas residence by corrupted members of his security detail and a gang of criminals with ties to Colombian paramilitaries. In the context of National Assembly elections scheduled for December 6th, those gathered called on voters to honor the legacy of Robert Serra by maintaining a socialist majority in the legislature. **Page 2**

Venezuelan president announces minimum wage increase of 30%

T/ Lucas Koerner, venezuelanalysis.com
P/ VTV

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro this month announced a 30% increase in the national minimum wage and food tickets effective November 1st.

Marking the fourth raise in the minimum wage this year and the 30th over the last fifteen years, the measure will also nearly triple the amount Venezuelans receive in food tickets, which can be used to purchase food and other everyday items in a variety of supermarkets and government-run stores.

"If we protect employment [and] wages, we are going to de-



feat the criminal and speculative prices of the bourgeoisie and the bachaqueros. I call on you to join the battle so I don't have to face the criminal bourgeoisie alone", the Venezuelan leader declared, referring to the country's soaring

inflation, which he estimated to be at 80% for 2015.

The minimum wage increase will additionally affect all pensions, which since the start of the Bolivarian Revolution have been pegged to the national minimum wage.



Venezuela condemns violation of palestinian rights

T/ Telesur English
P/ Agencies

Speaking at the United Nations Security Council, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez said last week that she's concerned about the violence in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

"The Palestinian people have faced continuous disrespect for their most fundamental rights", said Rodriguez, adding "it's a shame that since its foundation 70 years ago, the United Nations has been aware of this situation and they have done nothing to end this bloody conflict".

The top diplomat is in New York to take part in the Security Council ministerial meeting on the Middle East, which is seeking to minimize the growing wave of violence that has hit the region. Even U.N. Chief Ban Ki-moon has traveled to the region to hold talks with Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

"It is time for Palestine to become a state with full recognition of rights", said Rodriguez adding that Venezuela will support any initiative that brings peace to the Palestinian people.

Meanwhile, deadly clashes continue between Israeli forces and Palestinian protesters in the occupied territories continue. Analysts have warned of a possible third "Intifada" or Palestinian uprising against Israel's regime, which has deployed its troops in the occupied territories and implemented a series of harsh measures against civilians.

Palestinian officials have condemned the security measures and directly accused the Israeli government of fueling violence.

Venezuelans commemorate life of slain lawmaker as elections approach

T/ Lucas Koerner, venezuelanalysis.com
E/ COI
P/ Agencies

Thousands took to the streets of the Venezuelan capital early this month, braving severe heat and humidity to commemorate the life of the slain 27 year-old socialist lawmaker Robert Serra on the one year anniversary of his assassination.

Robert Serra was murdered together with his comrade Maria Herrera in their Caracas residence on the night of October 1st, 2014 in a conspiracy allegedly involving several police officers, his chief bodyguard, and Colombian paramilitaries intent on intimidating Venezuela's socialist majority. Before his death, Serra had warned of death threats.

Organized by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and diverse array of grassroots collectives, the youth-led march honoring Serra this month began at the National University of the Arts in downtown Caracas, continuing on amid lively chanting and dancing until reaching the country's National Assembly.

"Today we are paying tribute to Robert Serra, a comrade in the struggle who beyond his words showed in his deeds, his praxis, what it means to be a revolutionary", explained Alexander Bustillos of the Ciudad Caribia-based Lautaro Collective.

As the youngest member of the National Assembly and a rising figure within Chavismo, Serra holds an iconic place in the hearts of much of Venezuela's youth. He was perhaps the most outspoken supporter of socialist leader Hugo Chavez within the Venezuelan parliament, and was known for his public speaking and leadership capabilities.

"Robert Serra didn't die, he's still with us young people as we continue the struggle for the motherland, come what may in the battle for December 6 [parliamentary elections]", affirmed fifteen year-old Rixiobelika Soto, a member of the Robert Serra Movement from Ciudad Bolivar.

Born in the western city of Maracaibo, Serra was active



in the PSUV youth wing, going on to successfully run for parliament in 2010 at the age of 23. During his tenure, the young lawyer played a leading role in efforts to take on violent crime as well as other key social initiatives. He was also known for his community-based approach to legislation, holding permanent dialogues with organized members of the Chavista majority in his district.

For Jose Vasquez and his fellow PSUV youth activists, Robert Serra remains an example for organizing among the people and building power from the ground up.

"Robert taught us to be leaders in the streets, among the poor people of our barrios—he comes from there", 23 year-old Vasquez told venezuelanalysis.com.

"Following Robert, we continue to work among the communities, showing them that we are building Venezuelan socialism".

"ROBERT'S KILLERS REMAIN FREE"

The march this month was also animated by calls for

those behind the assassination to be brought to justice, although the identity of the culprits remains disputed.

The Venezuelan government under President Nicolas Maduro has pointed the finger at Colombia-based paramilitary groups, naming ultra right Colombian ex-president Alvaro Uribe as a possible intellectual culprit.

Eleven men have been charged for their role in the crime, including various police officials, Serra's chief bodyguard, as well as the alleged Colombian-Venezuelan paramilitary Leiver Padilla, who was extradited from Colombia in June, accused of leading the eight-man team that assassinated the young legislator.

However, some hold Venezuelan criminal groups responsible for the murder, pointing to ex-members of Caracas' Metropolitan Police force, infamous for its corruption and long history of brutal repression in the decades prior to its dissolution under President Hugo Chávez.

"They [the authorities] should listen to the people of the barrio,

because the barrio is conscious that the killers of Robert Serra walk free, disguised as chavistas", says Angela Fernandez, 35, of the Guardians of the Liberator collective.

"They [the Metropolitan police] continue to function under the cover of 'colectivos', smearing the name of the colectivos of Chávez— agricultural, cultural, etc.—, doing the same thing they did under the Fourth Republic with impunity, and there is much suspicion among the people that they are responsible for the assassination of our Robert", she added, referring to the phenomenon of para-police groups which have come under increasing scrutiny by Venezuelan criminologists.

ELECTIONS COMING SOON

This month's march concluded at the door of the National Assembly, where a special session was held with Serra's family in honor of the slain legislator.

"The Venezuelan right is behind the death of Robert Serra, with its complicit silence", declared PSUV leader and Nation-

al Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, reiterating allegations that the opposition had a hand in the assassination.

Serra was also honored by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro during a special forum that evening.

"Social work from the base is the best homage to Robert", the head of state declared, adding that he had approved the plan "Venezuela Youth Zones" to install 4,950 free wifi networks in youth spaces, missions, and sports centers across the country.

President Maduro insisted that following the example of Serra, Chavismo would deal a blow to the rightwing assassins of the young lawmaker in the parliamentary elections of December 6th, which he promises "will be a victory of the people and the revolution".

CHAVISMO LEADING IN POLLS

A new poll released in late October found the ruling socialist party, PSUV, and its electoral coalition – the Great Patriotic Pole – to be leading by a wide margin in voter intentions for the upcoming parliamentary elections this December.

Published by the private polling firm Hinterlaces on Sunday, the poll found that 41% of respondents said they would vote for Chavista candidates in contrast to 24% who stated their intention to vote for the opposition.

Meanwhile, 18% of respondents replied that they would not vote for neither Chavismo nor the opposition.

The Venezuelan opposition, backed by Washington and private media outlets at home and abroad, claims it is guaranteed an electoral victory because of the difficult economic situation the country has been facing in recent years. Though polls indicate they are wrong – largely due to widespread disapproval of violent tactics used in 2014, as well as infighting that has left its leadership in disarray – they continue to demand international election inspectors come to Venezuela for the December 6th elections, specifically from the U.S.-backed Organization of American States (OAS).

The Venezuelan government has invited numerous electoral institutions to accompany elections in the country – both in the past and for this year's vote – but rejects any OAS involvement because of what it calls "historical bias".

Together, people and government build historic national human rights plan

T/ Paul Dosbon
P/ Minci

With more than 200,000 contributions, the six-month consultation process for the drawing up of Venezuela's National Human Rights Plan (2015-2019) concluded this month with an historic level of public involvement.

"This has been a consultation which has covered the entire country. The entire population has been able to offer proposals and recommendations" expressed Larry Devoe, Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Council.

"This has been the most important coming together between the State and human rights organizations in our history", he added.

Amalia Sanoja, from the Human Rights and Social Education Department of the Simon Rodriguez University, Caracas, explained that "this isn't some plan made by a small group to just be applied to them, but rather we are all going to participate so we can orientate human rights to the areas where they should be applied".

The National Plan will be constructed around five cen-



tral themes which include the creation of a liberating culture, strengthening institutional human rights, the leading role of Popular Power, interaction and transformation of international organizations, and the strengthening of human rights legislation.

HISTORY BEING MADE

Venezuela is a country whose history is marred by human

rights violations, particularly between 1958 and 1998 when thousands were tortured or murdered by the State.

"It wasn't in the dictatorships of Argentina and Chile where the first forced disappearances were. It was in Venezuela, where a supposedly democratic model existed. Previously, when a human right was violated everyone looked away. Now, our authorities

immediately stand up for the victim and those responsible are held to account" explained Devoe, citing an example of the death of a young protestor in Táchira State earlier this year, for which a policeman is currently serving time.

Amongst groups which contributed to this plan were workers of the health sector, religious communities, woman's groups, LGBT groups,

teachers, academics, and even school children.

"What a beautiful thing it is to see thousands and thousands of students contributing to the Human Rights Plan" declared Vice President Jorge Arreaza on receiving their ideas.

Similarly, indigenous tribes, youth groups, policemen, electoral workers, the legislative network, and the entire Armed Forces also participated, with the latter offering 72,000 proposals. "This shows how the Armed Forces has changed. What a revolutionary gesture from them", stated Arreaza.

Organized workers, social movements, environmentalists and even the prison population were also consulted. "In which other country in the world are prisoners consulted about national policy lines" asked Prisons Minister Iris Varela.

Proposals included guaranteeing people's rights to education and health, freedoms of religion, access to water, food, housing, political participation, the rights of Mother Earth, and the inclusion of minority sectors.

One key proposal was the right to be free from exploitation.

"We recognize that private business is that which most violates the human rights of our people and not the State... we are discussing an International Treaty in the United Nations to prohibit this", explained Devoe.

Venezuela slams *New York Times* for "lamentable" reporting

T/ Telesur English
E/ COI
P/ Agencies

Venezuela condemned The New York Times this month for running an article the government says misrepresented the country's economic situation. "The so-called report included malicious calculations of the currency exchange rate", the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The article in question included a claim that the value of Venezuela's currency, the BsF, had collapsed, with the report pointing to currency's falling value on the black market. The black market rate of the BsF is tracked on the website Dolar-Today, which regularly carries anti-government messages and which the Venezuelan State has previously accused of manipulating the exchange rate.

"It's lamentable the (Times) correspondent in Caracas, who repeatedly makes false claims against Venezuela...forgot to mention the parallel exchange rate they assume to be legitimate is...determined by a website involved in cyber-terrorism from Miami and Cucuta".

Cucuta is a border town in neighboring Colombia.

OVERSIMPLIFICATION

The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry also criticized the Times for failing to accurately explain Venezuela's currency exchange system, in which the national government maintains a series of official exchange rates, with a priority rate of BsF6.3 to the dollar reserved for businesses importing essential goods such as food and medicine.

The Times claimed the government's fixed exchange rates had created an "astonishing dis-



parity (that) makes for a sticker-shock economy in which it can be hard to be sure what anything is really worth, and in which the black-market dollar increasingly dictates prices".

The Foreign Ministry responded by stating that "this type of exchange system has guaranteed access to food and healthcare for Venezuelans, and achievements in this regard have been recognized not only by Venezuelan authorities, but also by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)".

In June 2014, the FAO praised Venezuela for halving the num-

ber of hungry people in its territory over the past 20 years. Under Venezuela's neoliberal government of the early 1990s, 13.5 percent of Venezuelans suffered from malnutrition, according to the FAO. Today that number is under 5 percent.

POLICY MEASURES

The Times overlooked, among other things, a renewed commitment by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to fight speculation and economic sabotage with a raft of new measures aimed at defending the spending power of ordinary Venezuelans.

"We're going to continue down our economic path, building our nation, working, working, and working", Maduro said during his weekly television show, En Contacto con Maduro (In Contact with Maduro).

"All of the mechanisms of calculating the just prices (of consumer goods) will be changed ... to protect our people", he said.

Price controls on basic goods were introduced by Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez, who argued caps on retail prices would protect Venezuela's poor.

One of the main changes now proposed by Maduro will be a new categorization of goods, with the prices of priority goods like basic foods and medicine being determined by a different formula than other products, such as luxury items. While not going into details of how the new prices will be determined, Maduro said his government is committed to ensuring price controls guarantee fair prices for both consumers and producers.

Opposition negotiating Venezuela's future with IMF

T/ Paul Dobson
P/ Agencies

Venezuelan National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello revealed damning evidence this month of a conspiracy by leading members of the U.S.-backed opposition to negotiate the country's future with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Making public recorded phone calls between high-ranking members of the opposition, Cabello revealed conversations about "an IMF investment" of \$50 billion should the Venezuelan opposition "oust" the democratically-elected government of President Nicolas Maduro.

"I have been talking to the IMF", stated Ricardo Hoffman, a Venezuelan economist currently based at Harvard University with strong ties to the opposition's historical leadership. IMF Vice-President, Mexican banker Alejandro Werner, "has been a good friend of mine for more than 20 years, and he thinks that at some point they will have to intervene", explained Hoffman.

"It's not possible to think of a way for Venezuela to overcome this situation without substantial international assistance, and the way the international community organizes financial help is through the IMF" he goes on to explain.



Hoffman made these comments while speaking to Lorenzo Mendoza, President of food processing giant Polar Corporation and one of the richest men in Latin America with a current personal value of \$2.7 billion. On the call, Mendoza repeatedly responds to Hoffman's comments with affirmative, endorsing comments.

"It will be for about \$40 or \$50 billion" claims Hoffman, provoking the reply of "that's

it, that's the amount" from Mendoza.

Lorenzo Mendoza, who recently lost a long running industrial dispute with his workforce, responded that "you don't have to tell me that, I am very clear on this... what you are telling me is the ABC of what we are going to have to do".

"I think that the moment has come", finalizes Hoffman.

In 1989, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez unleashed

a harsh IMF austerity package, resulting in a popular uprising known as the Caracazo. As the poor classes rose up in a disorganized fashion, they were confronted by the armed forces, resulting in over 3000 deaths in 24 hours. Ricardo Hoffman was Minister of Planning at the time.

SELLING OFF THE NATION

The telephone recording prompted a national outcry and forced Mendoza, who largely

stays out of direct politics, to admit the conversation took place. "I regularly talk to economists from distinct tendencies to exchange opinions and propose solutions", he affirmed.

President Maduro proclaimed that "the oligarchy is negotiating the nation, and the working class must come out and defend the People who want liberty and independence... they are cooking up a plan against Venezuela with the IMF! Alert! No one can sub-estimate these threats!"

President Maduro went on to request that "he should be arrested, I await reaction from the judicial organisms, this is a crime... the oligarchy thinks that they have the strength, through a great national violent event, to overthrow this government and impose a counter-revolutionary one, the international right has guaranteed them that they will have the support of the IMF".

Vice President Jorge Arreaza reiterated Maduro's comments, explaining that "finally (the opposition) take off their masks, finally they show their project - they want to submit the people to the dictatorship of the IMF again, with its hunger, privatization, the disappearance of the majority, and repression".

Diosdado Cabello described the revelation as "indignant" and a "selling off of the nation", whilst a group of socialist lawmakers requested an investigation be launched to see if laws have been broken.

Opposition fugitive detained on return to Venezuela

T/ Paul Dobson
P/ Agencies

Manuel Rosales, ex-presidential candidate and founder of the rightist opposition party A New Era, was arrested this month after returning to Venezuela. Rosales, who fled the country to avoid trial for acts of corruption, spent the past six years in exile as a fugitive of the Venezuelan judicial system.

On landing at Maracaibo International Airport on a commercial flight from the Caribbean island of Aruba, Rosales was arrested by the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and taken to Caracas where he is being held without bail until his trial on the November 12th.

Following his arrest, Venezuelan Interior Minister Gustavo Lopez assured the country that proper procedures were taken to assure his rights.

"Rosales was accompanied by a human rights attorney and is now in the hands of the courts".

Rosales is being accused of illegal enrichment, corruption, irregular purchase of property, improper use of funds, embezzlement, and the sale of police vehicles in accordance with articles 46 and 73 of the Anti-Corruption Law.

Rosales was Mayor of Venezuela's second-largest city and oil heartland, Maracaibo, from 1996 to 2000, and later Governor of Zulia State from 2000 to 2008. In the opposition's failed 2002 coup d'état, Rosales was one of the foremost leaders to sign the Carmona Decree which attempted to abolish judicial, parliamentary, and executive powers.

He lost the 2006 presidential election against Hugo Chavez and, following the culmination of his mandate as Governor in



2008, was formally accused of corruption. He fled to Peru one day before his trial was set to begin in 2009.

He was disqualified from holding public office by the Venezuelan Ombudsman's office in 2010, a decision which was recently extended for a period of six years and seven months.

Apart from the crimes he is being charged with, news agency Telesur also reports that testimony from captured Colombian paramilitaries shows that Rosales supported para-

military groups entering the border state of Zulia.

"The citizen has decided to give himself in voluntarily to face trial for these serious crimes" stated Lopez. "He was previously being tried in liberty, but when he removed himself from that process before the preliminary audience, an arrest warrant was issued".

"It seems excellent to me that he has come to face justice" commented Venezuela's Attorney General, Luisa Ortega Diaz. "This is the behavior which

people should have, and all of his rights are guaranteed".

MINIMUM IMPACT

Following his arrest, his wife Evelyn Trejo de Rosales, current Mayor of Maracaibo, declared that "we don't know what will happen, but Manuel returned with the intention of adding his voice, contributing, and helping to unify the leaders" of the opposition.

Many have speculated on the political consequences of Rosales' return, a decision he knew would result in his arrest, with prominent opposition journalist Vladimir Villegas describing it as "a mystery".

Rosales' party described his return as "a historic moment" and "a dose of combustible to leave the parliamentary elections in checkmate". However, his return was more a deflated affair, failing to generate the media support or street actions which other arrested rightists generated.

"Neither does it seem that he has breathed inspiration into the opposition nor damned the government", explained Villegas.



Venezuela calls on oil producers to collectively defend resources

T/ Paul Dobson
P/ Agencies

Following more than a year of severe oil instability caused in part by the flooding of the market by U.S. fracking firms and a drop in world demand, oil-producing nations heeded the call from Caracas this month to meet and discuss stabilizing the market.

The two-day Technical Meeting of the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC), which was held in Vienna, Austria, and included special participation from non-OPEC nations, was convened by Venezuela's Oil Minister, Eulogio Del Pino, following numerous international trips by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to gather support for their proposal of cutting production levels and establishing a calculated base price for oil.

"The objective of this meeting is to exchange ideas and technical information about the behavior of the international oil market, especially regarding the volatile prices and their subsequent consequences", explained Maduro in a letter to delegates.

Current oil prices, which have declined from \$110 per barrel in 2014 to less than \$40 per barrel, do not allow producing nations to "maintain the necessary investment levels" nor "compensate the natural decline in production", Maduro explained.

The Venezuelan proposal "goes beyond a simple cut in production" and "works around a periodic calculation of a balanced price which allows the necessary investments to replace the barrels produced and sustain the growth of inter-year demand" Maduro added.

The Vienna meeting, which discussed the proposal, took no decisions due to it being a "technical meeting", but analyzed

the issue in preparation for the Ministerial Meeting of OPEC on the December 4th, which is due to set production levels for the coming year. Of the eight non-OPEC oil producers invited, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Kazakhstan and the world's leading producer, Russia, were present, with Azerbaijan, Norway, and Oman failing to send delegations.

"We have presented a model here which includes a production decline of 10% due to the current value of black gold and which proposes a price at around \$88 per barrel" stated Del Pino. The proposal also includes a price floor of \$70.

"We the producing countries have a responsibility to humanity to produce 92 million barrels per day and at reasonable prices which allow sustainable development, the development of projects which allow the replacement of this limited natural resource, and guarantee in a stable and balanced way the supply of energy to the world" he went on to explain.

OPEC nations still produce around 30 million barrels a day despite suffering the severe drop in revenues. President Maduro has guaranteed social investment in Venezuela despite the stretching of their budget, and has frequently denounced the political motives behind the manipulation of the market.

Such motives are exposed in comments from U.S. Pentagon spokesperson, Edward Luttwak, who stated in reference to Venezuela, Russia and Iran that "the fall in oil prices is hitting the principal adversaries of the U.S. hard without the need for our government to do anything. It is an enormous leap forward for the U.S. that three of the four most active adversaries that we have are severely weakened and their margin of maneuvering has been greatly reduced".

ALBA leaders condemn capitalism for climate crisis



T/ Paul Dobson
P/ Agencies

As part of the build-up to the UN Climate Change Summit (COP21) this December, representatives from more than 54 nations met this month in Cochabamba, Bolivia, for the 2nd World Climate Change Summit of the Peoples and in Defense of Live. At the event, the Bolivian, Ecuadorian, and Venezuelan Presidents made damning statements regarding the responsibility of the capitalist system in the destruction of the planet.

"Capitalism is a cancer for Mother Earth" declared Bolivian President Evo Morales, "but I think that it is still a benign cancer, not malignant, and we have the obligation to propose policies, programs, and projects to eradicate it".

The Summit in Bolivia was held with 7,600 delegates who elaborated proposals which will be taken to the COP21 Paris summit. Themes included: the agenda of the interests of Capital against life; alternatives to capitalism; the universal right of Mother Earth to resist Capitalism; climate change knowledge, practices, and technology of the people; defense of our natural heritage; climate science to serve life; mechanisms for the non-commercialization of Earth;

and inter-religious dialogue to save Mother Earth.

"I have come here to listen to your message and I will try to eco it" stated French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who will be chairing the Summit in Paris. "What is in play is not simply our life, but that of our children, of the species, of the planet".

PROTAGONISM OF THE PEOPLE

Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro highlighted the important role of organized people and social movements "to save the planet of the wounds that capitalism has caused it".

"As People-Governments that we are, obedient to social movements, we have to guarantee that the Paris Summit is above all a summit of the organized peoples, of the movements which defend the planet".

Morales similarly called on people to "not cross your arms, our planet is injured", whilst UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon explained that "saving the planet is a question of morality. There is no plan B because there is no planet B".

CAPITALISM TO BLAME

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's contribution made it clear that "mercantile capitalism is incapable of resolving the environmental problems... it's a political problem", and Maduro warned again capital-

ist attempts to commercialize pro-environmentalism:

"Behind the new mask there is a worst monster, which wants to convert financing accounts and a green economy into instruments to economically, financially, culturally re-colonize".

Amongst the proposals discussed at the Summit was the creation of an International Court of Justice for Environmental Affairs to "quantify and help to pay the ecological debts which the richest countries have".

"The world requires an international organism which will be responsible for our lives and the commitments which we the countries assume" explained Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca. "When countries don't fulfil (their obligations) they would face a democratic court which defends the rights of Mother Earth".

Correa backed such a proposal, explaining that actually "there are no prison sentences for transnationals which destroy our nature".

Other proposals included actions to reduce the emitting of greenhouse gases through reforestation and the use of renewable energy sources.

"We won't accept another climate agreement which takes responsibilities away from the rich countries in Paris", stated Choquehuanca.

Venezuelan economy continues struggle for productivity

T/ Alfredo Serrano Mancilla, Pagina 12*
E/ COI
P/ Agencies

There's a constant tension in the Venezuelan economy between immediate needs and the structural changes necessary to advance the strategic horizons. In general terms, the pace of change will determine how intense this dialectical relationship becomes. These are tensions that don't exist in conservative politics. Yet by contrast, in the Bolivarian Revolution, during these past 15 years, there has been a rapid pace of change that has inevitably demanded overcoming tensions and contradictions, and this rapid pace of change constitutes the main creative drive for advancing forward.

Today, both the challenges and urgent needs of Venezuela are different to past times. Fortunately, none of Venezuela's current economic priorities are anything like those that existed in the late 20th century. In the current era, Venezuela has developed new economic expectations. All past successes have come to define today's accepted standards. Yesterday's success is today's acquired right. Yesterday's utopian dream is today's concrete demand.

Under these conditions, it's necessary to analyze the ongoing economic war that has plagued the country over the past two years. So far, five stages of this prolonged offensive can be defined:

1. The use of the word "default" to "isolate" Venezuela from the traditional sources of finance.

2. The beginning of races to the bottom such as the illegal dollar trading – it's economically irrational, but politically rational for those waging the economic war.

3. To increase consumer prices to deprive the social majority of their spending power.

4. To create shortages of certain basic products, and lastly;

5. The intention to spread the idea of dollarization of certain strategic sectors of the economy.

This current economic war, with effects that are very palpable in the current situation, also clearly has a structural basis with a very specific character. Venezuela's new economy in the 21st century is the result of a process of re-appropriating oil income to benefit the social majority. Without



exception, this is good for the promotion of social rights, and has been accompanied by a significant democratization of consumption. Yet a good part of the private business sector that is accustomed to the idle mode of profiteering declined the invitation to participate in the new model of productive development. They preferred to carry out a long-term investment strike instead. Then, they dedicated themselves to a new dispute, the dispute for the oil income. But this time, the dispute wasn't over where the oil income was coming from, but where it was going – its destination. That is, the dispute was over the fact that the oil income was in the hands of the Venezuelan majority. Inflation is the fruit of this struggle between the elite business minority and the social majority.

Now, the bourgeoisie that imports products has re-appropriated maximum profits using consumer prices to take the majority of oil income from its intended destination: the pockets of the majority of Venezuelans at the point of consumption. Why is this happening? How can this relationship be altered?

The key is in the process of transformation of the national

productive matrix. No one disputes that the production dynamics in Venezuela have not produced at the same rate as the strategic sectors have recuperated, or as much as the nation into the world system, the construction of a nation of missions and the democratization of consumption patterns. All these transformations were necessities and urgencies in order to today be able to consider the next essential stage in the production challenge. Nothing would have helped boost production without the enjoyment of a healthy economy in social, labor and human terms. This isn't to say more couldn't have been done. Rather, it's essential to understand the complexity of a process that held the position that eradicating historic social debt was more important than other macroeconomic issues. Accepting these contradictions is in itself a revolutionary process for the social majority, unlike what happens in other places in the world, where the objective of macroeconomic stability is imposed at the cost of great social unrest. It is a matter of choice.

Nonetheless, now there is no doubt production is the imperative, both in terms of the current situation and in broader

structural terms. Productivity is measured by the social indicators recognized by all international bodies, and its sustainability depends largely on our success in tackling future problems. This is the key strategic challenge for the Bolivarian Revolution's economic process: ensuring that what has already been achieved cannot be reversed, and what still remains to be changed can be transformed.

Therefore, in the current situation today, the aim is to deal with two of the consequences of the economic war: inflation and the shortages of certain basic consumer goods. Yet the key issue here is undoubtedly structural, and the biggest challenge for the Revolution is to transform the model of production, both in terms of what is produced, and who produces.

In other words, the difficult task is to produce more, be more efficient, and use a different model of production that allows small and medium businesses to participate more in an economy where community power has a central role.

The new productive task is to change access to foreign currency from an excuse for businesses to not produce, to an obligation to produce. The

Venezuelan state would grant the necessary foreign currency to producers, on the condition that they satisfy an obligatory production quota. This is about changing the economic paradigm to one where there are incentives to produce, instead of simply importing everything from abroad. This new policy on productivity should ensure that the agreement between the government and businesses to distribute foreign currency includes a compromise: if businesses don't adhere to their mandate to produce, they must reimburse the government.

The success of an economic model based on just prices and secure access to goods will largely determine how production policy and domestic development are unified with policies of taxation, finance, commerce, currency and labor, as well as foreign exchange policy. It's these and other emerging challenges that must be overcome in the fight against the new import-based rentierism of the 21st century, with the objective of overcoming the capitalist economic that still exists in Venezuela today. This is the real battlefield of Venezuela's economic struggle.

*Translated by Telesur English

Documentos de Wikileaks evidencian que EEUU financia a la oposición en Venezuela

Viernes, febrero 21, 2014, 0:16

Latinoamérica, Norteamérica

Comentar

Las estrategias del gobierno de Estados Unidos y el financiamiento de sus agencias a la oposición política venezolana para derrocar la Revolución Bolivariana siempre han tenido un mismo fin: proteger los intereses o “negocios” de Washington.



Wikileaks cables shed light on U.S. foreign policy failures

T/ Mark Weisbrot, Al Jazeera America
E/ COI
P/ Agencies

Some the most important historical information for understanding current events comes, not surprisingly, from sources that were intended to be shielded from the public. From November 2010 to September 2011, more than 250,000 communications between U.S. diplomats that were never meant to see the light of day were made public. They are available at WikiLeaks, the nonprofit media organization that accepts confidential information from anonymous sources and releases it to news sources and the public. A number of researchers have put together a treasure trove of information and analysis that can be immensely clarifying.

Consider Syria, which is dominating the international news because of increased Russian military intervention as well as a surge of some 500,000 refugees from the region arriving in Europe. Why has it taken so long for Washington to even begin – yes, it is unfortunately

just beginning – to reconsider the policy of requiring Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to agree to resign before any meaningful negotiations can take place? After all, any diplomat could have told the White House that demanding the political suicide of one party to a civil war as a condition for negotiations is not how civil wars end. Practically speaking, this policy has been a commitment to indefinite warfare.

The answer can be found in diplomatic communications released by WikiLeaks, which show that regime change in Syria has been the policy of the U.S. government as far back as 2006. Even more horrifying – after hundreds of thousands of deaths, untold lives ruined and more than 4 million refugees fleeing the country – is the evidence that Washington has had a policy of promoting sectarian warfare in the country for the purpose of destabilizing the Assad government. A cable from the top U.S. embassy official (the *chargé d'affaires*) in Damascus in December 2006 offers suggestions for how Washington could exacerbate and take advantage

of certain “vulnerabilities” of the government of Syria. Vulnerabilities to be exploited include “the presence of transiting Islamist extremists” and “Sunni fears of Iranian influence”.

Describing this strategy in “The WikiLeaks Files”, Robert Naiman writes:

“At that time, no one in the U.S. government could credibly have claimed innocence of the possible implications of such a policy. This cable was written at the height of the sectarian Sunni-Shia civil war in Iraq, which the U.S. military was unsuccessfully trying to contain. U.S. public disgust with the sectarian civil war in Iraq unleashed by the U.S. invasion had just cost Republicans control of Congress in the November 2006 election. The election result immediately precipitated the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense. No one working for the U.S. government on foreign policy at the time could have been unaware of the implications of promoting Sunni-Shia sectarianism”.

The cables also show that U.S. support for efforts to overthrow the Syrian government begin-

ning in 2011 were not a response to the Assad government’s repression of protests but rather a continuation of a years-long strategy by more directly violent means. They explain why the U.S. government could get so carried away by the protests and then the armed struggle that it helped to promote as to ignore what a large number of Syrians, were thinking: Whatever they thought of Assad, a glance at the mess in Iraq (even before the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) showed that a much worse fate for their country was possible.

That scenario has materialized. With hundreds of thousands of people dead and a military stalemate, both of which could have easily been foreseen, finally Barack Obama’s administration is showing some flexibility toward meaningful negotiations, a move strongly encouraged by many House Democrats. Why couldn’t this have happened earlier?

Cables from U.S. diplomats in Latin America shed a lot of light on U.S. policy in that region as well. They show a consistent pattern of not only hostility but action against left-wing governments, including those of Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Venezuela and others. The cables see Venezuela as so influential that it is almost as if they are talking about a new Soviet Union that must be contained. A five-point plan to

counter the political success of Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez (who died of cancer in 2013), outlined in a 2006 cable by William Brownfield, the U.S. ambassador to the country at the time, includes “penetrating Chavismo’s political base”, “dividing Chavismo” and “isolating Chavez internationally”. Other memos provide more details of how this was attempted. For example, U.S. pressure was brought to bear on countries as small and needy as Haiti, Honduras and Jamaica to reject energy assistance from Venezuela that would save them hundreds of millions of dollars.

The cables also show how Honduras, under the government of President Manuel Zelaya, became an enemy state for becoming too friendly with other left governments. He was overthrown by the military in 2009, and it was clear from the day of the coup, when the Obama administration released a statement that did not oppose it, which side Washington was on. Here WikiLeaks cables back up what could be deduced at the time from public information.

And now recently released emails from then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton provide more detail on how the U.S. government helped make sure that the democratically elected president of Honduras did not return until after “elections” – which almost all of Latin America refused to recognize – were held under the de facto government.

All these formerly classified documents help explain the intentions and strategy of the current administration and how internally consistent it has remained – with the exception of the historic deal with Iran – in so many places. In Latin America, these documents help us understand why the U.S. still refuses to accept an ambassador from Venezuela, even after it has accepted an ambassador from Cuba. These policies are consistent with one another and with the past half century of U.S.–Latin American relations. Whoever is making policy in the Obama administration (it is not that transparent) is still calculating that in Venezuela the opposition can best be helped by attempting to delegitimize the government, whereas in Cuba, opening relations and commerce with the U.S. is seen as the better bet. Not to deny the symbolic and historic significance of the United States’ re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, but in both cases the goal remains the same: regime change.

Opinion

Villegas: we must produce what matters most

T/ Hernan Carrera, contrapunto.com
E/ COI and venezuelanalysis.com
P/ mercal.gob.ve

Ernesto Villegas Polijak and his trajectory can be synthesized by mentioning his position as a national leader of the PSUV, ex-head of the Capital District government, ex-minister of communications and information, ex-anchor for the state [TV network] Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), and long time former journalist in the rightist newspaper El Universal up until the media-backed 2002 opposition coup led him to break with his bosses.

With a handful of other high state officials, the next National Assembly election [in December] pulled [Villegas] out from the hustle and bustle of [government] administration to launch him into the limelight: to the stage where Chavismo will foreseeably make a play for the continuation of its ideology.

Q: Let's look at the question of political hegemony: you have an extremely big project that requires effort, impulse of all types in order to be realized. The material, economic resources are beginning to diminish, it's getting harder to shift political consciousness. What is to be done in order to achieve hegemony in terms of thinking, convictions, in terms of sharing a project in a situation that is not the same as that of three, five years ago?

A: You know that I have always preferred to speak of counter-hegemony. Because the really existing hegemony is a capitalist, consumerist hegemony... These are the true hegemonies in today's world and in our societies: a capitalist, egoist, individualist, mercantile hegemony that is revealed in the phenomenon of bachaquerismo,* which is the transformation of anything into a commodity and the extraction of easy profits— astronomical if possible— placed above a culture of work.

I believe this is a challenge: [to build] a counter-hegemony that vanquishes this



bachaqueo vision of life so that we can, for example, promote a culture of work in this area. If there's something positive about the decrease in material goods as a result of the [fall in] oil prices, it's that now we have to begin to definitively produce the things that matter to us.

Q: Please speak about what is happening in this very moment on the borders, with Colombia, with extractive contraband. In the era of the Cold War, the “socialist camp” was described as the “Iron Curtain”. Today, looking at what is happening here, one could think of that curtain over there as not only political but as a sort of economic curtain, a unique and terrible way that they found to protect an economy of low prices. Today, would it be truly possible to have black beans at 80 or 200 bolívares a kilo in San Cristóbal and 1,800 or 3,000 in Cúcuta [Colombia]. Is this feasible?

A: That is the challenge. We are not going to throw in the towel and say: “well, since we have an extensive border with Colombia...” and then renounce our capacity to control

the prices in the Venezuelan market, and let the Bogotá oligarchy be the one that fixes prices of the products that Venezuelans consume.

We as a country have to take on the challenge, to achieve the national demand that we can have prices determined according to Venezuelan reality, and not by the external economic reality, where there is a confluence of drug-trafficking, money laundering on the border, via the money changers protected by the Colombian government...

Q: And how is this achieved?

A: We cannot as a country depend on the determination of our prices on the whims and caprices of the Bogotá oligarchy and other criminal factions that make up the Colombian para-state. Because we have formal relations with the Colombian state, but it turns out that within Colombia there are other states. In some territories, there is the guerilla state, or the states that they are trying to set up, where sovereignty is exercised by armed groups. And specifically on the border with Venezuela, there's a par-

allel criminal state, formed by the drug-trafficking mafias, the money launders.

Q: A few days after the closure of the border with Colombia, President Maduro said that the country had saved 500 million dollars with this measure. But the struggle against contraband has been going on for months, eight, ten... and suddenly, 500 million in savings. There are many voices who say that the problem is not the small time bachaquero, but rather much bigger things that occur under the watch of state agents.

A: That is what we call the corrupting power of this culture of bachaquerismo*

[Note from the translator: Bachaqueo or Bachaquerismo refers to the widespread practice of hoarding government subsidized products (i.e. corn flower, toilet paper, etc.) and reselling them at exorbitant black market rates]

Q: And the question then is if this [problem] needs a response beyond the ethical struggle for values, beyond, including, repression, but rather other types of measures, economic ones.

A: Yes, surely. Now, how do I put it: it's a counter-hegemony that must be constructed. But when bachaquerismo is hegemonic – the bachaquero mentality – that overruns all areas of society, then the panacea for all problems everywhere in the world is obviously bachaquerismo. But ethically that is not the society that we want. So it's a good thing that the borders have been closed and those elements that have been able to corrupt or have been able to accommodate themselves on the border or anywhere are beginning to suffer punishment and are becoming conscious. What is it worth to you if you make a few bucks but your family suffers the consequences from you making that money with the disappearance of certain products.

Q: Is there a consciousness of the impact of this economic situation among the people of the llano [southwest Venezuelan agricultural region]? Because—and not talking about Caracas—throughout the interior, the queues are gigantic, brutal...

A: The queues obviously worry me, but what worries me more is the issue of prices and access to products. It's not only the lines. There are people who are only worried about the lines, because they have the means... There are sectors that in era of the Bolivarian Revolution have bettered their economic situation and are in a position to sustain elevated prices; and there are sectors who, by way of their bachaqueo, can transfer the cost of these elevated prices onto others. He or she who engages in bachaqueo can then compensate for the increase in prices, because he or she is in turn raising the process of other things, transferring the price increase onto a third.

But I'm more worried about the worker, poor, waged, who doesn't have the means to engage in bachaqueo or doesn't do it for ethical reasons, and then doesn't have anyone to transfer onto the increased costs of the products he or she needs to buy. Beyond the lines, with lines or without lines, this is much more serious.