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Venezuela: confronting the deceits and deceivers

El Libertario editorial collective

February 2019

[Introductory note: Anarchists from across the world have requested a text that summarises, from a libertarian perspective, what is happening in Venezuela, especially to dismantle the lies that authoritarians of all varieties have said about it. In response, we have prepared the following, which is already being translated and disseminated in various languages, with the intention of putting forward our perspective and unmasking the deceitful positions that have been widely disseminated about what is happening in this country.]

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Those who have read us before will be very familiar with the approach taken by various statist factions to the Venezuelan situation, and it is precisely to them and their deceptions that we will refer to here, in an attempt to clarify the situation in the face of their untiring efforts to confuse it. On one hand we have the defenders of liberal capitalism, with their political antics of representative electoral democracy, presenting

the Venezuelan setback as the inevitable result of the search for economic and political alternatives; on the other we have the paladins of state capitalism with their caricature of authoritarian socialism. Both sides are committed to jointly validating each other as the sole options for understanding and proposing the trajectory of Venezuelan society, as well as hiding their great similarities when defining and applying the strategies of oppression and exploitation that are imposed on the community: State and Capital.

Saying that “democratic” versus “socialist left” are essentially the same does not go down well with those who adhere to either of them, but in *El Libertario* (The Libertarian) we have, over many years, insisted on presenting compelling evidence that proves it. So, for example, both of them prattle on about anti-capitalism as something that defines the Bolivarian regime, whilst we only need to see how the governments of Chavez and Maduro have repeatedly invited and made deals with transnational capital, associated with the development of the extractive exploitation model of the natural resources of Venezuela. This policy culminated with the official deal to allow the ecocidal exploitation through the Arco Minero del Orinoco (large-scale mining project) which counts on silent support of the parliamentary opposition that is so loud on other issues, but with its tacit approval would not modify this model of looting plunder at all, if it came to power.

Another common policy is to refuse to acknowledge the militarist essence that the Chavez government had from the beginning, which has deepened over subsequent years. Especially now, where there are ongoing negotiations with the military as Maduro’s support wanes, they are being offered impunity (disguised as “amnesty”) from all responsibility for the outrages and corruption that are characteristic of a regime of which they have been key supporters. From the two dominant interpretations of the national crisis there is a huge effort to ignore that, from his ascension to the presidency in 1999, Chavez gave pri-

ority to military presence in the workings of government in a way not seen in Venezuela since the military dictatorship of the 1950s. Military predominance was reinforced from 2013 under Nicolas Maduro, reaching such a height that it has been one of the defining features of this dictatorial regime. With the proclaimed “transition” that is envisioned for sooner rather than later, the mood among the opposing political cliques to take over state power is bound to maintain the military elite with the juicy spoils they have enjoyed over the past decades, such that both “socialists” and “democrats” just accept the nefarious reality of militarist blackmail that has been imposed and grows in 21st Century Venezuela.

Intervention by external powers: Now you see it, now you don't

The leaders of both sides will grumble that we are ignoring an essential aspect of the fierce confrontation between them, vociferously denouncing how the rival gang is a servile agent of foreign interests. For the right-wing and social-democratic opposition, the evil foreign shadow is foremost the Cuban dictatorship, which has not only been a privileged parasite of Venezuela's notoriously buoyant oil income, but is also a decisive factor in imposing an authoritarian model that attempts to follow the steps of the one that rules in Havana; then China is mentioned, with growing importance as a financier and creditor of the Venezuelan government, and Russia, with less economic weight but which is a worthy political-military backer. In addition, reference is made to the presence — now declining as the oil revenues that sustained it — of governments that derived economic and / or political benefits from their relationship with the Venezuelan State; something that also applies to para-statist groups like the Colombian guerrillas, previously the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and now the ELN (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional/National Liberation Army). From the Chavista perspective,

the external Bete Noire par excellence is North American imperialism, fulfilled by the disgraceful leadership of Trump which appeals perfectly to Marxist left-wing propaganda. Then there would be the whole troop of lackeys, servants and junior partners of the Yankees.

It is plain to see that both perspectives are largely based on truths that the other side makes the greatest effort to ignore, so that, for example, the obvious and ostentatious presence of officials Cubans in military installations and state security becomes invisible data for some. Similarly for others, who are aware of the lucrative deals that the Maduro government has agreed with the transnational banks, there is a pretence of ignorance about the ways, yet again, that there is stealthy agreement amongst its “irreconcilable” opponents.

Final note: Limitation of space prevents us developing other aspects of this topic here. We invite contributions to blog of *El Libertario* to expand on information and details that reinforce an alternative vision to the above.