# Venezuela's "normalization" of relations with Washington

**Bill Van Auken**
**12 June 2013**

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is flying to Rome next week, having obtained an audience with Pope Francis, the former Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who as a right-wing cleric in Argentina was complicit in the crimes of that country's dirty war.

This turn to the church hierarchy comes on the heels of Maduro's public accommodation with one of Venezuela's wealthiest capitalists last month and the private meeting last week of his foreign minister, Elias Jaua, with US Secretary of State John Kerry to seek a "normalization" of relations between the Bolivarian Republic and US imperialism.

Some two months after his razor-thin election victory over the candidate of the Venezuelan right, Henrique Capriles, and confronting a deepening economic crisis characterized by a near hyperinflation rate of 35 percent, stagnant growth and chronic shortages, it is evident that Maduro is making a decided turn to the right in an attempt to bolster his government.

Equally significant, Washington and Venezuelan capitalists—represented in the person of the billionaire owner of the Polar Foods conglomerate, Lorenzo Mendoza, who was invited to a cordial meeting with Maduro at the Miraflores Palace have effectively lent their support to this effort.

The Obama administration, it should be recalled, was the only government in the world to withhold recognition of Maduro's presidency following his 1.5 percent victory over Capriles. The US was also alone in demanding a full recount of the April 14 election ballots, despite there being no evidence of fraud, not to mention the lamentable record of the US electoral system, from the installation of an unelected president in 2000 to the computer rigging of the vote in Ohio in 2004.

As for Mendoza, aside from his personal fortune of $4.5 billion, he was an open supporter of the abortive 2002 US-backed coup that briefly deposed the late Hugo Chavez as Venezuela's president. Obliged to assume a lower political profile in the wake of the failed coup, he mounted a vigorous defense of his company in the face of Maduro's charges of "economic war" and "sabotage."

These natural constituencies of the Venezuelan right—Washington and Mendoza—have effectively pulled the rug out from under the right wing's campaign to brand Maduro an "illegitimate" president and force a new election.

Equally revealing is the move last month by the US oil conglomerate Chevron to provide $2 billion in financing for a joint venture with Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA.

For now, both US imperialism and the decisive sectors of Venezuela's capitalist ruling establishment view the stabilization of Maduro's government as a preferable alternative to a social and political explosion. They recall both the *Caracazo*, the mass urban uprising against IMF policies in 1989, and the popular revolt that erupted in response to the 2002 coup attempt.

While they may have chafed at the foreign policy pursued by the Chavez government and some of its domestic policies, they do not share the illusions so vigorously promoted by the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left in Latin America and internationally that *chavismo* and its post-Chavez incarnation represent some direct challenge to imperialism or a viable road to socialism.

They are fully aware that Venezuela, 14 years of the "Bolivarian Revolution" notwithstanding, remains a capitalist country and a source of super profits for transnational banks and corporations as well as Venezuelan capitalists. Fully 71 percent of production remains in private hands and the financial sector is

© World Socialist Web Site

among the most profitable in the world, recording a 31 percent growth in the first quarter of this year, even as manufacturing moved into recession and the real income of Venezuelan workers was slashed by runaway inflation, currency devaluations and the lifting of price controls.

The country boasts the largest petroleum reserves in the world, with its economy wholly dependent upon oil exports, the lion's share of which still goes to the US.

Those on the so-called "left" who promote illusions in the capacities of Maduro and *chavismo* to mount a genuine struggle against imperialism or provide a road to socialism, as well as those who pose the political task in Venezuela as one of pushing Maduro to the left, are working to politically disarm the working class in the face of real dangers.

For all the rhetoric about "fascists," "coups" and "economic war," the Chavistas, a bourgeois nationalist movement, has found no difficulty in reaching accommodations with those it denounced only days before.

If there is a genuine threat of a coup it comes from within the Chavista movement itself and one of its key pillars, the military, from which Chavez himself came. There are ominous rumors that Diosdado Cabello, the head of the national assembly and a representative of the *boliburguesia* that has enriched itself off of political connections and corruption, and who like Chavez is a former military officer, is mobilizing support from within the officer corps for a settling of accounts with Maduro.

Yet sections of the "left" actively seek to obscure such threats. Thus, Marea Socialista (MS—Socialist Tide), whose politics are promoted by both the Pabloites and the International Socialist Organization, recently wrote of the necessity to "actively incorporate military members of the Bolivarian people" in a political offensive to counter "disillusionment and frustration" within the population. MS, which functions as a tendency within the ruling PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela), assures its readers that "there are no immediate possibilities of a counterrevolutionary coup" because of the "Bolivarian" character of the officer corps.

Identical illusions have been promoted by Stalinists, petty-bourgeois nationalists and Pabloite revisionist tendencies over and over again in Latin America—from the declaration that the Chilean army represented the "people in uniform" on the eve of Pinochet's bloody 1973 coup to the assurances that Bolivia's left nationalist president Gen. J.J. Torres would arm the workers in the face of the right-wing military's seizure of power in 1971. The price for such illusions has been paid with the lives of tens of thousands of workers.

The burning political task in Venezuela as throughout Latin America is the building of a new revolutionary party fighting for the political independence of the working class as the sole means of achieving socialism. These parties must be firmly founded on the strategic experiences of the international workers' movement over the whole past period, assimilated through the struggle of the world Trotskyist movement represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

© World Socialist Web Site