Delcy Rodríguez thanks Trump at the UN: Chavismo and American fascism embrace

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On Tuesday evening, at the Lotte New York Palace luxury hotel, Donald Trump received Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodríguez, flanked by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, Chief of Staff Susie Wiles and Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller.

According to *Axios*, Trump did most of the talking and entertained his guest with an account of the "precision" military operation that seized her predecessor, Nicolás Maduro, on January 3. Hours earlier, she sat with a blank stare when Trump boasted, from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly, that US troops "arrested the outlaw dictator, real criminal Nicolás Maduro," and concluded: "To the victor belong the spoils."

Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, sat in a cell at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, about 10 miles away. Rodríguez later posted a photo of herself smiling beside Trump, calling the meeting "historic."

The next day she addressed the General Assembly. She thanked Trump for his "willingness to resume the path of diplomatic relations and cooperation," and hailed the August 28 deal handing the invading armed forces majority control over one-fifth of Venezuela's oil reserves—the largest in the world—as "one of the largest ever signed." She then promised elections at a "right moment."

What she left out said more. There was not a word about Maduro and Flores, nor about the more than 100 people killed in the invasion. Nor did she mention Wilber Rafael Garcés Pérez, the 28-year-old Venezuelan DoorDash driver shot by an ICE agent in Austin on Sunday and jailed with the bullet still lodged near his spine, or the Venezuelan immigrants who have died in ICE custody.

The choreography was unprecedentedly humiliating from beginning to end. Rodríguez arrived on Monday on a private jet with US registration and was greeted by Washington's chargé d'affaires in Caracas, John Barrett, with a kiss on the cheek.

The *Wall Street Journal* ran the headline "From 'Dictator' Deputy to Trump Ally," recalling that in 2019 she had told the same Assembly that Venezuela "does not kneel before any imperial power." *Al Jazeera*'s Belén Fernández wrote that she "returned to thank the man who delivered" the regime change and resource grab she had once warned against. The *Financial Times* observed that she "has had to show deference to Washington in a way most leaders would find humiliating."

In September 2019, as Maduro's vice president, Rodríguez led the "No More Trump" campaign, which the government said gathered 13 million signatures against US sanctions. She promised to deliver the petitions to the UN. "No more Trump, neither for Venezuela nor for humanity, because we know he is an international threat," she declared. Seven years later, the international threat has occupied her country, jailed her president and taken its oil. She has thanked him for it.

What, then, is "historic?" Never before has a government claiming the banner of socialism and anti-imperialism carried out so naked a surrender of national sovereignty, and then flown to New York to celebrate it before the world. This has major implications for workers everywhere.

In Venezuela, the state apparatus built by *Chavismo*, its army, police and intelligence services, now directly guards the interests of US oil companies and Wall Street creditors. In the United States, the same administration that Rodríguez praises is building a police state against immigrants and the working class, and it presents Venezuela as a model for the "Donroe Doctrine" in the hemisphere.

For workers internationally, the *Chavistas* are demonstrating what the bourgeois nationalists and their pseudo-left admirers will do when imperialism puts a gun to their heads.

Rodríguez thanked Trump for backing Venezuela's "reinsertion" into multilateral forums. Her appearance at the UN marks nothing of the sort. It is the country's entry into colonial servitude. Washington collects Venezuela's oil revenues and holds them in an account it controls. The *Financial Times* reports that Caracas must ask the State Department's Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, run until August by Caleb Orr, a 32-year-old aide to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, for permission to spend its own money on teachers' salaries or medicine.

Payments to Chinese or Russian companies are forbidden. Energy Secretary Chris Wright has declared that Beijing will have no claim on Venezuelan oil revenue, cutting off repayment of at least $10 billion in Chinese loans. No Venezuelan cargo has reached China since January, and Russian joint ventures have been terminated.

The episode refutes the fantasy that the US-dominated postwar order will give way peacefully to a "multipolar" world. American imperialism is answering its decline by seizing strategic resources at gunpoint and throwing its rivals out of what it regards as its backyard. This can only be interpreted as the initial stages of a world war.

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Washington fears "massive street protests"

The architects of the US protectorate know it rests on a volcano. "A democratic government is going to be facing massive street protests over inflation, the economy," a US source told *Axios*. "It could threaten the entire thing." At a press conference on Wednesday, Rubio explained that the "real threat" would be "electing someone who inherits an absolute economic and social disaster." Venezuela's debt must first be restructured for its creditors, and only then might elections follow.

The promise of elections without a date is a fig leaf. The political form required by a regime completely subordinated to imperialism, which must extract the nation's wealth for foreign capital while workers earn starvation wages, is a fascist police state. As Leon Trotsky explained in 1938, "In the Latin American countries fascism is the expression of the most slavish dependence on foreign imperialism."

In the 1970s, Washington installed or backed fascist-military dictatorships in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Peru to impose the dictates of US capital on a rebellious working class, murdering and disappearing tens of thousands. The Rodríguez regime, backed by the same military high command that served Maduro and is now reporting to Rubio, is being groomed for that role.

The explosion is already building. Blackouts of up to 16 hours a day in Aragua, Carabobo and parts of Caracas have provoked nightly protests, with residents blocking avenues in Maracay and banging pots in Guacara. For Thursday, teachers, university professors, industrial workers and retirees called a national protest in all 24 states demanding living wages. University professors report a base salary of less than one dollar a month.

Venezuelan history is full of such eruptions against subservience to imperialism. The general strike of January 1958 brought down the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez. In February 1989, when President Carlos Andrés Pérez imposed an IMF package that doubled fuel prices overnight, workers rose in the *Caracazo* in Caracas and a dozen other cities, and the army massacred hundreds, possibly thousands. Lacking its own revolutionary leadership, the working class saw its anger captured by a faction of the officer corps led by Hugo Chávez.

Chavismo used the oil windfall of the 2000s to buy social peace with limited welfare programs while the private sector's share of the economy grew and Venezuela's banks became the most profitable in the world. It never broke the country's dependence on oil or on finance capital. When prices collapsed and sanctions tightened, the ruling elite and the new layer of Chavista capitalists, the *boliburguesía*, placed the full burden of the crisis onto the backs of the working class.

Under US guns, they have now traded the nation's oil and their ties to Beijing and Moscow for Washington's guarantee of their own positions and fortunes. This is where the defense of capitalism inevitably led.

The "Pink Tide" and Permanent Revolution

The same process has unfolded across the "Pink Tide." The Workers Party in Brazil, Peronism in Argentina, the MAS in Bolivia and *Correismo* in Ecuador all administered capitalism, disarmed the working class politically and opened the door to the right.

Their collapse confirms Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: in countries oppressed by imperialism, the national bourgeoisie cannot win genuine independence or carry out the fundamental tasks of the democratic revolution, because it fears its own workers far more than it fears imperialism. Rather, as Trotsky established and the October 1917 Russian Revolution verified, these tasks can be carried out only under the leadership of the working class, which is compelled to take power and go over to socialist measures while seeking the extension of its revolution internationally.

Of all of the "Pink Tide" movements, *Chavismo* in Venezuela was held up, particularly by Pabloite revisionist tendencies that had broken with Trotskyism, as the exemplar of some new road to liberation from imperialist oppression and even to socialism. Among these pseudo-left elements, some went so far as to cast the Chavez government as the keystone for building a "Fifth International." Of this prognosis, not one stone rests upon another.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) alone prepared the working class for these developments. Going back 65 years, the ICFI waged an implacable struggle against the Pabloite attempt to portray Castroism as a new road to socialism that rendered the independent political mobilization of the working class and the building of a Marxist leadership in its vanguard superfluous. Workers in Latin America are still paying the price for the defeats and betrayals inflicted under their banner of substituting petty-bourgeois guerrillaism for proletarian revolution.

The only way forward for Venezuelan workers is a political break with every faction of the bourgeoisie, including Chavismo and the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left forces that served as its cheerleaders. The decisive task is that of assimilating the lessons of the long history of struggle of Trotskyism against revisionism and its intersection with the tumultuous struggles of the whole past period. This is the irreplaceable foundation for building sections of the ICFI across Latin America and uniting the working class throughout the hemisphere and internationally in the fight for world socialist revolution.

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