Life and the People Have Never Let Us Down: The Twenty-Third Newsletter (2019).

Dossier no. 17
Venezuela and Hybrid Wars in Latin America
Dear Friends,

Greetings from the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

There was a time not long ago when 'Venezuela' referred to the epiphany of a new revolutionary dynamic. Election after election - all validated by international authorities - showed that the people of the country wanted to take control of their resources and build a country for themselves and not for big corporations. Hugo Chavez, with his immense charisma, understood that it was not enough to build socialism inside one country; the region had to be drawn into the new dynamic. Building from the legacy of Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), Chavez inspired millions of people across Latin America - what is called Patria Grande (The Great Homeland) or Nuestra América (Our America) - to join in the Bolivarian Revolution. There could be no solution to the immense problems of Latin America if each country in the region remained beholden to and dependent on the United States of America, Canada, and Europe. The problem of Venezuela was-and is-the threat posed by a leadership that stands firmly against the suffocation of the country by multinational corporations. It is a problem posed by a country that attempts to produce a new path for a population that has long been mired in poverty despite its resource wealth. The meaning of 'Venezuela' had to change. It could no longer mean Venezuelan peasants being tortured and burned alive. It could no longer mean a war of position to define what is happening that leads eventually to a war of manoeuvre. It could not anymore be seen as legitimate, but as a dictator. Every problem must be authored by him, every solution must be available from Washington's allies, all of reality must conform to the view of things from the White House rather than from the Venezuelan people. Of course, this war of position and war of manoeuvre - both terms from Antonio Gramsci - are not so easy to win. All the financial and technological resources seem to advantage the camp of the coup. But they lack one important resource – the loyalty of the people. For the past twenty years, the Bolivarian Revolution has dug deep trenches inside the communities of the poor not only in Venezuela but throughout the hemisphere. The pictures of Chávez that are painted and re-painted in the camp of the coup. It wants to steal the soul of the people so as to reduce them into zombies who must bow their heads down and work, putting their precious labour towards the accumulation of capital in the hands of the tyrants of the economy.

Our Revolution by coup and by delegitimization have failed. New, more sophisticated methods had to be devised. These methods go by the name of the Great Homeland- Our America. The Great Homeland is a combination of unconventional and conventional means using a range of state and non-state actors that run across the spectrum of social and political life. Our Tricontinental Institute for Social Research offices in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and São Paulo (Brazil), with assistance from scholars and militants in Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela, have produced a very thorough dossier on the hybrid war not only against Venezuela, but against the Bolivarian Revolution's embers across Latin America - or Nuestra América. This dossier, our seventeenth, is one of our richest studies of the mechanisms of power in our time. A hybrid war is not fought necessarily on a battlefield, with conventional armies. It is an ideological war, a war to shape the way reality is seen, a war of position to define what is happening that leads eventually to a war of manoeuvre to overthrow a government. Tyrants must no longer be seen as illegitimate, but as a dictator. Every problem must be authored by him, every solution must be available from Washington's allies, all of reality must conform to the view of things from the White House rather than from the Venezuelan people. Of course, this war of position and war of manoeuvre - both terms from Antonio Gramsci—are not so easy to win. All the financial and technological resources seem to advantage the camp of the coup. But they lack one important resource – the loyalty of the people. For the past twenty years, the Bolivarian Revolution has dug deep trenches inside the communities of the poor not only in Venezuela but throughout the hemisphere. The pictures of Chávez that are painted and re-painted in the camp of the coup. It wants to steal the soul of the people so as to reduce them into zombies who must bow their heads down and work, putting their precious labour towards the accumulation of capital in the hands of the tyrants of the economy. It is not for nothing that Latin America has produced so many hundreds of great poets, most of them people of the Left and many of them militants of various movements. They are needed to expend our imaginations, to give us courage in our fight and to show a light into the future. Amongst them is Otto René Castillo (1934-1967), one of Guatemala's great voices. Castillo took his notebooks with him to Guatemala's jungles, where he picked up the gun and joined the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces) in the faith in the capacity of people to overcome the counter-revolutionary war of his day danced into his poetry. The most beautiful thing for those who have fought their whole life is to arrive at the end and say: we believed in people and in life, and life and the people have never let us down.

Castillo - along with his comrade Rene Paz Cárcamo (1944-1967) - was captured in March of 1967, taken to the Zacapa barrack, tortured and then burned alive. Along with them, the army killed thirteen peasants, clothed them in rebel uniforms and left them all for dead - pretending that they had been killed in combat (a familiar ploy in today's Colombia, as we discuss in our latest dossier). No such thing had occurred. All fifteen had been massacred in the military base of Las Palmas. This is the way of the coup. It wants to steal the soul of the people so as to reduce them into zombies who must bow their heads down and work, putting their precious labour towards the accumulation of capital in the hands of the tyrants of the economy. It is not for nothing that Latin America has produced so many hundreds of great poets, most of them people of the Left and many of them militants of various movements. They are needed to expend our imaginations, to give us courage in our fight and to show a light into the future. Amongst them is Otto René Castillo (1934-1967), one of Guatemala's great voices. Castillo took his notebooks with him to Guatemala's jungles, where he picked up the gun and joined the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces) in the faith in the capacity of people to overcome the counter-revolutionary war of his day danced into his poetry. The most beautiful thing for those who have fought their whole life is to arrive at the end and say: we believed in people and in life, and life and the people have never let us down.

AMBASSADOR EDWARD KORRY TO US STATE DEPARTMENT, 5 SEPTEMBER 1970.

The US will have to move faster. That is the essence of US operations in Venezuela over the course of the past twenty years. It has always been the United States that has given the weak-kneed Venezuelan Right its marching orders and its guts. But the US is not alone in this operation. It has been joined – as I detailed in my column - by Canada, whose mining interests, represented by companies like Barrick Gold, are eager for the spoils of regime change. Attempts to overthrow the Bolivarian Revolution have never let us down. The problems posed by a country that attempts to produce a new path for a population that has long been mired in poverty despite its resource wealth. The meaning of 'Venezuela' had to change. It could no longer mean general strikes. It could no longer mean a war of position to define what is happening that leads eventually to a war of manoeuvre to overthrow a government. Tyrants must no longer be seen as illegitimate, but as a dictator. Every problem must be authored by him, every solution must be available from Washington's allies, all of reality must conform to the view of things from the White House rather than from the Venezuelan people.

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