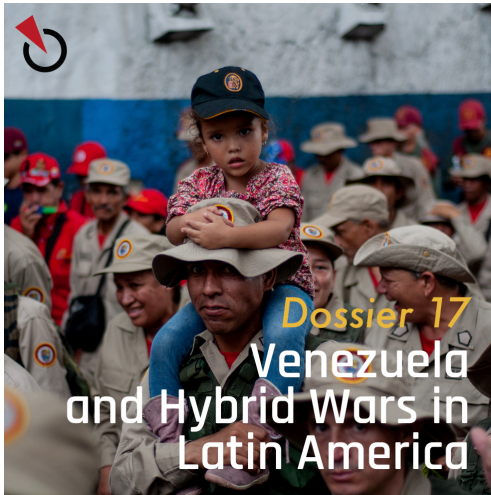


Life and the People Have Never Let Us Down: The Twenty-Third Newsletter (2019).



Dossier no. 17 Venezuela and Hybrid Wars in Latin America.

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the desk of the **Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research**.

There was a time not long ago when 'Venezuela' referred to the epicentre 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 Chávez, 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), Chávez 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, Europe, and Canada. If each country remained isolated, every country would remain weak. Unity was the central phrase, which is why hemispheric regionalism was essential. Caracas was the capital of this *Nuestra América*, a phrase made famous by the Cuban poet and radical José Martí (1853-1895).

The Bolivarian Revolution, with its promise of regional solidarity and social development, threatened the owners of multinational corporations, those who saw themselves as the rightful inheritors of the earth. Canadian billionaire Peter Munk, who owned Barrick Gold, wrote of Chávez that he was a 'dangerous dictator'; Munk compared Chávez to Hitler and called for Chávez to be overthrown. This was in 2007. That was twelve years ago. The plot to overthrow the Bolivarian Revolution does not emerge from any particular crisis inside Venezuela nor from any problem created by current President Nicolás Maduro. The real problem with Venezuela was – and is – the threat posed by a leadership that stands firmly against the suffocation of the country by multinational corporations; it is the 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 the promise of revolution. It could only mean dangerous chaos.

George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump – the three US presidents in the White House during the time of the Bolivarian Revolution – have in their own way attempted to overthrow Chávez and then Maduro. None of them have succeeded. The urgency for their action mimics that of the years before the 1973 coup in Santiago (Chile), when US Ambassador Edward Korry wrote scathingly about Chile's right-wing 'that blindly and greedily pursued its interests, wandering in a myopia of arrogant stupidity'. This defines the current Venezuelan Right. Then, Korry wrote, because the Right is so 'stupid', lamentably the US will have to move faster' – the US will have to do what the Right was not able to do on behalf of the United States.

[P] IT IS LAMENTABLY THE US THAT WILL HAVE TO MOVE
FASTER. TOMORROW WE SHALL REPORT ON THE MEASURES WE
ARE TAKING TO PREPARE FOR THE NEW ERA.

[S] LEADERSHIP DEPENDS UPON, IF I MAY USE SPANISH,
CABEZA, CORAZON AND CAJONES – HEAD, HEART AND GUTS –
[IN CHILE THEY COUNTED UPON CHACHARA... CHATTER,
KORRY]

CONFIDENTIAL

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 by coup and by delegitimization have failed. New, more sophisticated methods had to be devised. These methods go by the name *Hybrid War* – 'a combination of unconventional and conventional means using a range of state and non-state actors that runs 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. Maduro must no longer 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 of the financial and technological resources seem to advantage the camp of the coup. But they lack one important resource – the fellowship 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 these *barrios* are not to be scoffed at. They mean a great deal to ordinary people. This Revolution crafted new hopes for millions of people, and they will fight tooth and nail to defend not this or that reform but the great horizon of freedom that has opened before them.



Lorenzo González Morales, *Exhumación*, 2004/2016.

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 expand our imagination, to give us courage in our fight and to shine 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). His faith in the capacity of people to overcome the counter-revolutionary wars 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 Nora Patz 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 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.



Malangatana Ngwenya, 1936-2011.

Otto René Castillo is not an isolated figure. Across the world, art and rebellion have come together to imagine worlds beyond the time of the hybrid war. This week we celebrate Malangatana Ngwenya (1936-2011), the artist and militant with the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). Malangatana's mother was a healer, a tattooist, and a teeth-sharper. One of his most powerful early paintings – with inspiration from his mother – was called *The Mouth of Society Has Sharpened Teeth; The Only Way to Destroy A Monster Is to Pull Out his Teeth*.

It is time to identify all the monsters. It is time to pull out their teeth.

Warmly, Vijay.

