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Bolivia: The First Plurinational State

Evo Morales was inaugurated into his second term as President of Bolivia, now the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Inclusion, equality, unity, development and social justice are key goals for the next several years, as well as a move towards a socialist model that represents Bolivia's diverse indigenous communities.

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Economy Venezuela has the largest oil reserves on Earth

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The Bolivarian Counterattack

The polarization that has characterized Venezuela over the past 50 years was once again visible in the streets last Saturday, during marches commemorating the fall of the last dictatorship 52 years ago. Thousands of supporters of President Chavez marched, danced and chanted "we are the majority" in the streets, while opposition forces rallied in the wealthier part of town, angrily calling for Chavez's ouster. The Venezuelan president, addressing a sea of red-shirted supporters called for unity and loyalty in preparation for upcoming legislative elections in September. "Those who want to build a nation, come with me!" declared Chavez.

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Africa is a Priority for Venezuela

Venezuela signed a series of agreements with the African nations of Eritrea, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic last week, formalizing diplomatic and commercial relations, explained Reinaldo Bolivar, Venezuela's Vice-Minister for Africa. "We have initiated the signing of general agreements with over 20 African nations based on the conclusions of the

II Africa-South America Summit (ASA) last September", explained Bolivar.

"One of our commitments is to strengthen relations and cooperation in the areas of healthcare, economics, education and culture for the mutual development of our nations", indicated the Vice-Minister, underlining that Africa is a main priority for Venezuela's international relations. The agreement with

Eritrea is oriented towards trade in agriculture and energy, and with Mauritania, bilateral cooperation will focus on the fishing and mining industries.

The government of Hugo Chavez is the first Venezuelan administration to engage in diplomatic and commercial relations with African nations.

T/Modaira Rubio



UNASUR Meets to Discuss US Military Bases in Colombia

Defense representatives from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) met this week in Ecuador to continue debating on the structure and mechanisms of their newly created Defense Council. Ecuador, as temporary president of UNASUR, selected Manta as the meeting site because the area was occupied by a US military base from 1999-2009. President Rafael Correa, re-elected in 2008, refused to renew the contract with the US to permit a continued military presence in the South American nation.

The main topic for discussion at the meeting was the agreement between Colombia and the US made last year to establish at least seven military bases in Colombia, which borders both Ecuador and Venezuela. A majority of South American nations oppose the disproportional US military presence on the continent and view it as a dangerous threat to regional security.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sent a letter to President Correa last week expressing Washington's willingness to meet with UNASUR. No date has been set yet for the meeting.

Indigenous Leader Evo Morales Ayma

“I will work together with the people to promote development, unity and integration in Bolivia”

Last Friday, after being officially sworn in as President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for a second term, 2010-2015, Evo Morales said he would move towards a socialist model

Evo Morales was inaugurated into his historical second term as President of Bolivia, this past Friday, January 22, in the building of the first Plurinational Legislative Assembly in La Paz. He was accompanied by the presidents of Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Venezuela, the Prince of Spain, Felipe de Borbon, and delegations from Canada, France, Peru and Brazil, amongst others.

“For the nation and for the Bolivian people, I swear in as president of the Plurinational State of Bolivia”, said the indigenous leader Evo Morales Ayma, as he received the presidential sash, which now includes the Wiphala Indian Flag, a symbol of Bolivia’s indigenous communities.

A MULTICULTURAL STATE WITH A SOCIALIST HORIZON

In his speech before the Bolivian nation, Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera affirmed that this second term, “will mark the end of the Apparent State and give way to an Integrated State with a socialist horizon, somewhere between a Colonial State and the new Plurinational State we are building”.

He explained that the Apparent State was unable to represent the totality of the population, but rather only an isolated fragment; “it excluded the indigenous majority, its culture, its heroes and its political role. Bolivia should move towards an Integrated State, where there is correspondence between civil society, citizens, social classes and political representation...where there is moral and intellectual leadership, and politicians that unite us all”, he said.

Garcia Linera expressed his thanks to the indigenous, farmer and student movements in the country that have led the pro-



Evo, before thousands of supporters in the Plaza Murillo



Evo Morales represents the dignity of Bolivia’s indigenous majority

cess of revolutionary change, “Bolivia was able to become a just State, a true participatory democracy, where indigenous communities and mestizos (mixed race peoples) are included in a unified way”.

THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE HAS BEEN KEY

“During the four years I’ve been at the head of government, I have learned a lot about the wisdom of the people with whom I’ve maintained permanent contact”, proclaimed the exuberant Boliv-

ian president. In his presidential address, Evo Morales compared the achievements during his first term, in which a process of social transformation began with a high level of popular participation, to those of governments before. He said he always “wanted to work for equality, unity and dignity in Bolivia, and it hasn’t been easy to govern with an opposition that uses all the tools and strategies possible to destabilize democracy and overthrow a government that seeks to end injustice”.

Several times during his first

term, opposition forces tried to overthrow the Bolivian president through an attempted coup d’etat, separatist proclamations and movements, political violence and economic sabotage.

Morales emphasized the improvements in education, the building of new schools and the implementation of a more accessible higher education system with scholarships to study abroad during his administration. He also explained how the healthcare system had improved during the past four years and the foreign debt was reduced by 50%. While minimum wage had only been raised by 10 bolivianos during the previous administration, during Evo’s first term the basic wage was raised by more than 230 bolivianos. There was more foreign investment, a doubling in job creation, a big surge in the reserves of more than six times than past administrations.

President Morales also detailed the importance of the social and political changes achieved during his first four-year term. “January 22 is a key date for me”, said the Bolivian president. “Not only is it inauguration day, but when I was a deputy in the legislature,

I went on a hunger strike to oppose certain government policies one January 22”. The government at the time, “ordered all the bathrooms in the congressional building to be sealed off, so I couldn’t use them”, he added. “That was how they got me out of the building”.

“When I left, I said, I’ll be back, with at least 10 more assembly members. Never did I imagine that I would be back, but with 115 assembly members”, he exclaimed. Evo Morales’ party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), won 115 of 157 seats in the legislature last December, a clear majority.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND JUDICIAL REFORM

Referring to the priorities during his second term, President Morales mentioned the need to improve food sovereignty and security, as well as “promote a revolution in the judicial system so that justice ceases to be controlled by the powerful and the Law is applied to all citizens”.

“We will also focus on industrialization, not just gas and oil, but also lithium, which requires millions in investments that will be opened to private partners. The exploitation and industrialization of iron will be developed in El Mutun, located on the border with Brazil, and not just with the Indian company Jindal Steel, but also with State investments”, he indicated.

Bolivia is one of Venezuela’s closest political, commercial and social allies in the region. Both are members of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA) and plan to expand relations in the near future.

Evo Morales is the only indigenous president in the world today and the first ever in Bolivia, a nation 80% indigenous. Last December, he won the presidential elections with more than 64% of the vote, the largest win ever in Bolivia’s history.

T/ Maria Elena Parada

P/ ABI

Caracas

Special Treatment for Terrorist Posada Carriles in the US

While Washington implements extreme measures against passengers and flights from 14 “suspect terrorist” countries, including Cuba, Federal Judge Kathleen Cardone authorized use of private plane for a violent international criminal to get him to court on time

Luis Posada Carriles, now 82 years old, and currently living freely in Miami, is responsible for a terrorist attack against a Cuban airplane in October 1976 that killed all 73 passengers on board, along with numerous other terrorist and criminal activities. After his reappearance in 2005 in the US, the Venezuelan government formally solicited his extradition, based on a pending criminal case against Posada for his key role in planning the bombing of the Cuban airliner while in Venezuela. The State Department has ignored the request.

A Cuban native and naturalized Venezuelan citizen, Posada Carriles was imprisoned in Venezuela following the fateful bombing in 1976, but he later escaped and fled abroad. As a former CIA agent, he eventually received the unspoken protection of the US government.

“ANTI-COMMUNIST” FIGHTER FREED

Posada was temporarily detained for his illegal entry to the US in 2005 and held at an immigration facility until he was indicted for



Terrorist Posada Carriles lives freely in Miami today

immigration fraud in 2007. But in a stroke of luck for the aging terrorist, U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone dismissed the case, accusing the prosecutors of manipulating evidence resulting from an interview with Posada in 2006. But Judge Cardone’s decision wasn’t only based on legal standards, in her judicial opinion she hailed Posada as an “anti-communist fighter”, evidencing that the case meant more to her than a question of law.

In 2008, the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans reversed Cardone’s ruling

and a new trial date was set for March 1, 2010. Posada appealed to the US Supreme Court, but his request for a hearing was denied.

The fraud indictment now includes additional evidence charging Posada with lying about his involvement in the 1976 airline bombing and other terrorist activities. Prosecutors also allege he lied about his role in the 1997 bombings of Cuban hotels, which resulted in the death of an Italian tourist. Posada had previously admitted involvement in the hotel bombings in a 1999 interview in the New York Times, later recanting.

FBI-CLASSIFIED TERRORIST

Now, Posada must appear again before the court in El Paso, Texas, his port of illegal entry into the US, on February 5 for a routine hearing, and again for the start of the trial on March 1. His US-based lawyers have admitted that ironically, their client “can’t travel on commercial US airlines because he is classified as a terrorist”, although they argued before the court that “he is not a terrorist”. Posada Carriles is, indeed, listed by the FBI as a terrorist for his numerous criminal activities over the decades that have caused the death and injury of over 100 people and the destruction of various buildings and installations.

In a strange twist, Judge Kathleen Cardone authorized private air transport for the FBI-listed terrorist in order to guarantee his court appearance.

The bizarre decision, which some ques-

tion as unethical and contradictory with US security policy, was apparently based on a medical note from Dr. Alberto Hernandez, Posada’s physician, who testified his patient has “hypertension, high cholesterol and a skin disease”, that prevents him from traveling long distances by bus or other land transport. The former CIA agent has utilized various “health conditions” to get out of court appearances or request judicial leniency in the past in Panamá and the US.

The decision by Judge Cardone determined that “travel by private plane is necessary because Mr. Posada is prohibited from commercial air travel”.

Journalist Jean-Guy Allard reported that Alberto “Al” Herreros, the man who is reportedly paying for Posada Carriles’ charter flight to El Paso, once ran a company linked to drug trafficking and covert aid to the CIA-backed Contras in Nicaragua.

The US has an arsenal of laws and regulations that prohibit terrorist suspects or known terrorists from traveling on commercial airlines. These rules have often been applied to innocent people whose names are similar to those on the “no-fly” or “terrorist” list, as in the case of Michael Winston Hicks, today 8 years old, who has been aggressively searched in airports by Homeland Security agents since the age of two.

T/EG
F/Agencies
Caracas

Alba nations prepare actions on Haiti

A \$100 million USD fund was proposed for reconstruction, hospitals and basic services

Foreign Ministers and high level representatives from Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, convened Sunday and met on Monday with President Hugo Chavez to strategize and consolidate concrete actions to aid reconstruction efforts in Haiti, devastated by an earthquake two weeks ago. Decisions were made by the regional governments, members of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA), to increase humanitarian operations to Haiti as a joint force and to engage in construction projects to help rebuild Port-au-Prince, the destroyed capital city. “ALBA nations have elaborated strategic short and long term plans to build more hospitals and water processing plants in Haiti”, revealed President Chavez on Sunday.

An ALBA fund of \$100 million USD was proposed to finance rebuilding Haiti’s destroyed capital. Venezuela also an-



ALBA nations pledge to build hospitals and clean water facilities in Haiti

nounced it would liberate Haiti from its \$295 million USD debt with Petrocaribe.

Venezuela has already sent more than 7000 tons of food, bottled water, medical

and sanitary supplies to the impoverished Caribbean nation. Cuba has several thousand doctors and medical personnel on the ground in Haiti, attending to the wounded,

sick and affected. Bolivia’s Vice President, Alvaro Garcia Linera, accompanied a shipment of humanitarian relief from the Andean nation to Haiti last week.

More than 150,000 bodies have been buried in mass gravesites over the past week in Haiti. Due to the increasing risk of infection, the bodies had to be taken off the streets as soon as possible, despite the lack of identification. Some estimates claim over 200,000 died in the deadly quake, which rocked Haiti’s capital last January 12, causing a majority of poorly-constructed buildings and homes to come crumbling down. The nation has been hit by more than a dozen aftershocks since then, some as strong as 6.1 on the Richter scale.

A marketplace in Port-au-Prince funded and built by the Venezuelan government withstood the earthquake, along with dozens of homes for the poor built through a cooperation agreement between Haiti and Venezuela.

T/CO
F/Oscar Arria
Caracas

Why Venezuelans march on January 23

The Fall of the Last Dictatorship and the Betrayal of a Nation

The determination of a united people, that together with the Armed Forces, achieved the overthrow of dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez, was clouded by the betrayal of Romulo Betancourt, Rafael Caldera and Jovito Villalba, who signed the Punto Fijo Pact and led Venezuela down a path to corrupt governments, subservient to foreign interests, excluding the people and condemning them to misery, a reality that was changed in 1999 with the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution



On January 23, 1958 Venezuelans united to overthrow the dictatorship and build a democratic state



Dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez



Party leaders betrayed the people through a power-sharing pact

In an unprecedented historical event in Venezuela, on January 23, 1958, a united and organized people, together with the National Armed Forces, overthrew the dictatorship of General Marcos Perez Jimenez, and gave way to the beginning of an authentic democratic government that would guarantee free elections and respect all political parties and the fundamental rights of citizens. But that dream vanished during the days following the uprising, as declarations and actions of the leaders of Accion Democratica (AD), COPEI and URD (then Venezuela's principal political parties), evidenced that, behind the backs of the people, a political agreement had been reached in New York City, and later ratified in Caracas, known as the "Punto Fijo Pact". The betrayal was sealed, and a nation that had given its heart and soul for freedom had been deceived.

A BRUTAL DICTATORSHIP

The military dictatorship of Perez Jimenez had been installed in 1952 and was characterized by political persecutions, arbitrary detentions and brutal torture against its adversaries, as well as a harsh media censorship that maintained the country intimidated and repressed. The Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) was the only political force that withstood the repression and was capable of organizing a united front against the dictatorship. PCV

militant Guillermo Garcia Ponce members, "Upon the initiative of a group of PCV journalists, a front was created that brought together different anti-dictatorship forces in order to fight for a government that guaranteed freedom for political prisoners, the return of those in exile, and the convening of free elections." "There were two political tendencies against the dictatorship: one was based on popular unity, public protest and a democratic agenda, and the other, led by Romulo Betancourt and AD, was based on an agreement with the US and the economic elite in Venezuela. They sought to replace the dictatorship with the old parties", explained Garcia Ponce. During the days before the fall of the dictatorship, several key events that withstood the repression and was capable of organizing a united front against the dictatorship. PCV

versity of Venezuela, and gave way to ongoing marches and anti-dictatorship demonstrations throughout December. Then, on January 1, 1958, a military insurrection, led by Air Force Major Hugo Trejo, attempted to overthrow the undemocratic government, but failed. "They didn't have enough popular support", explained Garcia Ponce, although it was growing, he added. On January 21, a press strike began and Caracas awoke to a world with no news. The strike soon expanded beyond just the media. Factories closed their doors, and citizens began collective protest actions in the streets. Even the church joined in by ringing its bells as a call to action. Caracas looked like a city at war. It was clear the end was coming. That evening, Perez Jimenez imposed a national curfew and ordered his troops to open fire in the streets as

a mechanism of intimidation. Garcia Ponce recalls that the situation began to create a conundrum for the Armed Forces. "It was either act against the people, or join with them against the dictatorship". The latter won out. On January 23, General Marcos Perez Jimenez fled the nation in the presidential airplane, arriving to the Dominican Republic. "He also took a large sum of money with him", added Garcia Ponce. When the dictatorship fell, the popular mass movement led by the PCV and other united forces, was known as the Junta Patriotica. But things changed as soon as Perez Jimenez was gone, and right wing forces began to maneuver the political scene, taking power from the Junta Patriotica and the people. "The Junta Patriotica also refused to recognize the temporary government installed by Roberto Casanova and Romero Vil-

arte, both close to the deposed dictator. That was an error, because the other parties did recognize them and so gained more power", explained Garcia Ponce. Later, businessmen Eugenio Mendoza and Blas Lamerti joined the interim regime.

A PEOPLE BETRAYED

The Punto Fijo Pact was signed at a meeting in Caracas, in the plush home of Rafael Caldera, on October 31, 1958 by Romulo Betancourt, Raul Leoni and Gonzalo Barrios, of AD, Jovito Villalba, Ignacio Luis Arcaya and Manuel Lopez Rivas of URD, and Caldera, Pedro del Corral and Lorenzo Fernandez from COPEI. The agreement, first made in New York, was to keep power in the hands of the economic and political elite and ensure US agenda would reign. The winner of the 1958 elections was Romulo Betancourt.

"All their policies became oriented towards displacing social movements, student movements, and excluding the PCV. It was an exclusionary democracy that took power because it distanced important sectors of our society", remarked Diana Perez, investigative historian from the Center of National History in Caracas.

"The biggest contradiction was that the government installed after the dictatorship was even more repressive. Political persecutions, tortures, assassinations, detentions and disappearances increased and forced hundreds into exile, many more than during the regime of Perez Jimenez," she elaborated. "The press was censored, newspapers were closed down, and there was no real freedom of expression."

The fight to change a dictatorship for a democracy was still not won. "Betancourt's policies, which were geared towards maintaining Venezuela tied to US interests and the Cold War, kept us in a repressive state", attested Victor Hugo Morales, president of the Andean Parliament. "But even though we didn't achieve a true democracy through the rebellion against the dictatorship", he added "January 23 still symbolizes the unity of students, Armed Forces, social movements, workers and politicians together fighting to bring down a dictatorship. And today, we continue to build our democracy, now in the hands of the people".

T/ Elizabeth Perez Madriz
P/ CO File
Caracas

Tens of thousands of Venezuelans took to the streets last Saturday to commemorate the fall of the dictatorship 52 years ago; several hundred marched against the current government while thousands rallied in support of President Chavez

"Today, the new Admirable Campaign begins", was the phrase repeated all day Saturday, as thousands poured into the streets to commemorate the events of January 23, 1958, and to demonstrate that now, a real democracy is being built in Venezuela with the Bolivarian Revolution. From the early morning hours, marchers rallied at three points in the city, on the east, south and west, and just after noon began marching towards the presidential palace.

"We are joyful, we are the majority", chanted a sea of red shirts filing through the streets of Caracas. Students, workers, senior citizens, children, cabinet members, community organizations and others walked together to celebrate the significance of a nation free of dictators and exclusionary and repressive political models. "We are showing our support for the rescue of our democracy that began ten years ago", said a group of Chavez supporters.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN, ANGER FILLED THE STREETS

While those on the west side celebrated and danced in the streets, in the eastern part of town, opposition groups marched and rallied against President Chavez. "1, 2, 3, Chavez you're out!" they yelled. Seventeen-year old Armando Quiroz, wearing a shirt saying "Globovision is Venezuela", referring to the leading opposition news station, exclaimed "Chavez's time is up and he has to go!"

Shouts against Chavez, accusing him of being a dictator, tyrant and incompetent president filled the streets. Many tried to compare the dictatorship of Perez Jimenez, overthrown 52 years ago, to the government of Hugo Chavez. Yet their mere presence in the streets, freely marching and expressing their ideas and opinions, proved otherwise.

Led by the leaders and members of the old political parties which held power before Chavez and newer

The Bolivarian Counterattack



People came from across the nation on Saturday to show support for President Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution



Anti-Chavez demonstrators angrily called for the Venezuelan President to resign

right-wing movements that have sprung up over the past few years, the opposition demonstration was also the beginning of a political campaign to win seats in the legislative elections next September 26. "Our objective is to get those vagabonds out of the National Assembly", affirmed Roderick Navarro, president of the student's union at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV). "Whatever they do, we will win next September", shouted assembly member Ismael Garcia from the stage, set up in a wealthy area of Caracas.

The opposition march had previously announced it would end with a big rally in the neighborhood of

Petare, the largest poor community in the city, with over 1 million residents. But at the last minute, the organizers opted for a plusher scenario, in Buena Vista, a middle-upper class neighborhood in east Caracas. "Those people don't like the smell of poverty", said Francia Delgado, a resident of Petare.

THE OPPOSITION UNIFIES

The opposition movements and political groups have a big challenge this year. Failure to rise above differences and divisions to unify behind their candidates has caused the opposition major electoral losses in the past. During the last legislative elections in 2005, the opposition parties decided to boycott

declared Antonio Ledezma, current mayor of Greater Caracas.

But at the rally on Saturday, the divisions were apparent. Leopoldo Lopez's new party, Voluntad Popular, wasn't allowed to speak from the main stage, while Miranda State governor Henrique Capriles Radonski, leader of Primero Justicia, an ultra right-wing party, insisted that Julio Borges, a member of his party, should be at the "top" of the list of candidates next September.

THE ADMIRABLE CAMPAIGN

Meanwhile, President Chavez took to the stage at the Plaza O'Leary, in the center of Caracas near the presidential palace, after riding in a caravan through the crowds. "May the Bolivarian hurricane be released throughout the nation!" he exclaimed before the multitude of red shirts and cheering faces.

"My call is for unity, always. To work together. Fishermen and fishermen, community councils, indigenous communities, communes, Venezuelan military, the call is the same as always. To follow the dream of Bolivar. The Admirable Campaign begins today. Oligarchs, tremble!"

The Venezuelan president urged his followers that unity and loyalty are two important aspects to "secure a clear victory" next September. Chavez's party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) now holds a clear majority in the National Assembly, but there is concern that failure to implement certain effective economic policies, old rooted corruption, and increases in inflation, insecurity and energy problems could lead to electoral losses. Also, many Venezuelans that support Chavez, don't support everyone in his party or government.

"Each day we need to be clearer and stronger in the Government, the party, in our youth and student groups, women's organizations, workers, the working class, the soldiers and social movements. We need for each of you women, of us men, to constantly raise our consciousness about the things we are living and doing. Behind each betrayal lies deceit. Only a people who are manipulated and deceived can be betrayed. But an alive, conscientious people can never be betrayed or defeated", declared Chavez, appealing to his supporters to work on consolidating the revolution during an important electoral year.

T/ CO
P/ Luis Racine - Miguel Romero
Caracas

US Confirms Venezuela has the Largest Oil Reserves on Earth

A new assessment done by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Office claims Venezuela is sitting on the largest recoverable oil reserves ever found

As the world enters into a dangerous energy crisis, Venezuela seems to be the newest target. According to the USGS report, an estimated 513 billion barrels of technically recoverable heavy oil are sitting in Venezuela's Orinoco Oil Belt. That is twice the size of Saudi Arabia's reserves, confirming that Venezuela is at the top of the list of oil-rich nations worldwide.

"This area contains one of the world's largest recoverable oil accumulations, and this assessment is the first to identify how much is technically recoverable", explained the official report.

Worldwide consumption of petroleum was 85.4 million barrels per day in 2008. The three largest consuming countries were the United States with 19.5 million barrels per day, China with 7.9 million barrels per day, and Japan with 4.8 million barrels per day.

"Knowing the potential for

extractable resources from this tremendous oil accumulation, and others like it, is critical to our understanding of the global petroleum potential and informing policy and decision makers," said USGS Energy Resources Program Coordinator Brenda Pierce.

"Heavy oil is a type of oil that is very thick and therefore does not flow very easily," said USGS scientist Christopher Schenk. "As a result, specialized production and refining processes are needed to generate petroleum products, but it is still oil and can generate many of the same products as other types of oil."

IT'S OIL!

Previously, the reserves in the Orinoco Basin were publicly said to be bitumen, a kind of thick tar, and not petroleum. This difference excluded those large accumulations from being subject to the 1976 oil nationalization laws that subsequently were reinforced in 2000 under Venezuela's new Constitution, ratified in 1999. But by 2007, the Chavez Administration had discovered the truth: it was oil, not bitumen, and lots of it. This revelation subjected the



reserves to the same nationalization laws applying to hydrocarbons that were already in place in the country.

The area was chock full of multinational oil corporations, such as ExxonMobil, Chevron Texaco, Conoco Phillips, Total, and oth-

ers, operating with free reign, not subject to the laws affecting other areas of the industry that require the Venezuelan State own a 51% minimum of all joint ventures, and permit no outright foreign ownership.

In May 2007, the Orinoco Belt region and its massive reserves were officially nationalized by the Chavez government. ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil angrily left the country, refusing to enter into joint venture with Petroleos de Venezuela, SA, (PDVSA), the State-owned oil company. They received market value for their shares. But Chevron and Total happily remained, abiding by Venezuelan laws and becoming the first two foreign companies to have access to what are now known as the world's largest oil reserves.

The Orinoco Basin has opened again to international firms seeking to invest in the region. The names of the companies will be announced on February 10 by PDVSA.

The USGS has confirmed these reserves as the largest accumulation ever assessed. The estimated petroleum resources in the Orinoco Oil Belt range from 380 to 652 billion barrels of oil.

Venezuela previously was a client-state of the US, subservient to its agenda and a faithful, steady supplier of oil. Under the Chavez government, Venezuela has not ceased supplies to the US, but it has diversified its clientele. Recently an agreement with China solidified the supply of more than 300,000 barrels of oil daily to the Asian nation.

The Venezuelan government has come under attack by Washington, which attempts to accuse it of violating human rights and supporting drug-trafficking and terrorism. Similar allegations were made preceding the US invasion of Iraq, a top world oil supplier, in order to justify the military action. Iran, another oil-wealthy nation, has been a recent target of Washington's threats. The confirmation that Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world and sits in the same hemisphere, not too far from the US border, places the country at extreme risk for future US aggression.

T/EG and USGS
P/CO file
Caracas

Law Applied to Cable Channels; Protests Nationwide

Local station RCTV publicly refused to follow regulations regarding viewing hours for adult-only content, transmission of the national anthem and other norms

Last week, Venezuela's National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) released a list of cable television companies subject to the Law on Social Responsibility in Radio and Television, marking an expansion of the law's jurisdiction over television broadcasters.

The law, known by the acronym RESORTE, establishes standards for child and adult programming, prohibits inflammatory content such as incite-ment riot or assassinate the president, places limits on commercial advertising, and requires stations to broadcast important government announcements.

When the law was passed in 2004, it applied only to companies holding public broadcasting concessions. Last July, CONATEL announced that cable broadcasters would undergo review and be subject to the law if 70% of their content and overall operations could be considered "national," meaning Venezuelan.

COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY

"Starting today, channels should comply with the technical norms pertaining to their broadcasting schedules, and there will be sanctions for those who violate regulations," said Cabello on Thursday.

One of Venezuela's largest cable stations, Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), was among the companies that claimed to be international, but was classified as national on Thursday.

RCTV, owned by media mo-

gul Marcel Granier, supported the coup d'état against President Chavez in April 2002 by broadcasting false and manipulated images while the coup was underway, later applauding the installment of the coup regime.

RCTV's twenty-year public broadcasting license expired in May 2007, and was not renewed. RCTV has continued to broadcast on cable and satellite television internationally.

On Thursday, RCTV released a statement calling CONATEL's measure "unconstitutional, because it establishes different, discriminatory, unjust, and arbitrary obligations for the channels whose content is mostly made in Venezuela." But by invoking the Constitution, RCTV is subjecting itself voluntarily to Venezuelan jurisdiction, which means that telecommunications laws also apply to the Venezuela-based station.

SIX STATIONS SANCTIONED

On Saturday evening, CONATEL announced that six cable stations, RCTV, TV Chile, American Network, America TV, Momentum and Ritmo Son had refused to abide by the regulations and would be subject to immediate sanctions. Cable companies chose to suspend the station's programming at midnight instead of facing steep administrative fines.

VIOLENCE ERUPTS, 2 DEAD

Supporters of RCTV promoted violent action and public disturbances this week that resulted in the deaths of two students on Monday in Merida. A 16-year old was shot by an alleged sniper during a pro-government rally. Eleven police officers were also wounded by opposition protestors. Later that evening, a 28-year old pro-RCTV demonstrator was killed by bullet fire.

The government has called for calm and reason, as opposition forces pledged to continue violent street protests in favor of RCTV.

But CONATEL has made clear that its mandate is to inform and enforce regulations, if RCTV or any other network refuses to abide by the law, then there are legal consequences.

"The decision to remove the stations from the cable networks was made by the companies themselves, and not by the government", stated CONATEL.

"If RCTV and others follow regulations, their signals will be restored", declared President Chavez on Monday.

Some question how many lives a corporate television station is worth.

T/James Suggett
www.venezuelanalysis.com
Caracas

Easier commutes, panoramic views

Metrocable Changes the Face of Caracas

Jobs, new homes and a pioneering transport system benefit the primarily Afro-Venezuelan community of San Agustin

It's a dream come true for the majority working class and poor community of San Agustin, one of the oldest and compact neighborhoods in Caracas. Like other poorer areas of the Venezuelan capital, San Agustin runs steeply and dangerously up the mountainside, making transport by vehicle difficult, and often, impossible. Some areas are only accessible via unstable stairs built into Caracas' towering hills. For some senior citizens and the disabled, leaving the neighborhood is only a rare possibility when sufficient help and support is available.

But now, all that has changed. The hardships of accessing a steep mountainside community have been relieved by the Venezuelan government's innovative new Metrocable car system. A combination of Austrian, Brazilian and French technology, the whole system cost the government over \$262 million USD. More than 36,000 people will benefit daily from the unusual transport that has been integrated with the Cara-



The new Metrocable system will bring relief to a poor community with homes in areas difficult to reach by vehicle

cas Metro, the city's underground public transportation system. Operating daily from 6am to 10pm, the Metrocable will cost each user .50 bolivars (approximately 10 cents) roundtrip. It's 50 cars will operate continuously from morning to night, carrying community members traditionally excluded from prior governments' policies.

JOBS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The system itself will be run by

residents of San Agustin who have undergone training during the last 2 years with the Caracas Metro. During its construction, community members were also employed to work as carpenters, builders and assistants. "The idea is that the community itself not only uses the Metrocable, but also identify with it as their own. They built it, they run it, they use it, so they will take care of it", said Victor Matute, president of the Caracas Metro.

"We are overjoyed, this is a proud and glorious day for the people of San Agustin", exclaimed Livia Rivas, a community leader and liaison with Metrocable. "We were once ignored, but now the government of Hugo Chavez sees us as important and invests in our well-being."

"These public works are to liberate the people", declared President Hugo Chavez during the inauguration of the new transport

system. Construction of another Metrocable has already begun in Filas de Mariche, also a low income mountainside community. Additional ones are planned for El Valle and the western part of Caracas, "probably in Gato Negro", announced Chavez.

NEW HOMES FOR SAN AGUSTIN

"But we can't just stop here", explained the Venezuelan president. "Because the intention is to transform everything." And so, new housing construction will begin in San Agustin in order to replace rickety old shacks with stable, liveable homes. "There are houses in San Agustin that are in really dangerous, unstable areas. Many of them must be replaced. That's why we have plans to build 10 new apartment buildings set on a plateau on the mountain", stated Chavez.

The objective is to benefit a historically excluded part of the population. "Poverty is a heavy weight that lashes us like a whip every hour of every day. We will not rest until there is social justice in Venezuela," declared President Chavez.

T/EG

P/Ubaldo Zabala

Caracas

National Police Force Will Ensure the Defense of Women's Rights

With the creation of Special Attention Units and Committees for the Prevention and Defense against Abuse, the goal is to eradicate domestic violence and violence against women

Almost 30 officers from the National Police Force participated in the first Workshop to Train and Sensitize Members of the Justice System led by the Women's Ministry last week in the community of Sucre in western Caracas. The initiative resulted in the creation of Special Attention Units and committees for the prevention and defense of female victims of violence.

Neyla Ysturdes, national public defender for women's rights, explained that the workshop was geared towards providing police officers with basic knowledge

regarding violence against women and how legal instruments should apply to such cases.

Ysturdes indicated that since Sucre is the most populated area in Caracas, it's appropriate for the pilot program to begin there. The community tends to have an elevated index of reports of abuse against women. Previously, there was only a civil registry to channel complaints and reports.

With the creation of these new community-based women's defense groups, not only will the victims be attended to by police and the prosecutor's office, but other public institutions will also work on eroding the patriarchal macho culture that violence against women originates from.

"It's important to inform and comply with the responsibilities we all have to fight against gender violence, because both wom-



Venezuela's police prioritize the fight against gender violence

en and men are affected, and we are here to break these paradigms", expressed Ysturdes.

Public defender Ysturdes also indicated that the workshops will be conducted in three stages so that all 90 police officers working in the community obtain the necessary knowledge to respond to

the daily complaints they receive on the job.

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

Morelba Jimenez, gender coordinator at the United Nations Population Fund for Development, underlined the importance of these workshops in order to

aid police officers in the recognition of abuse victims and which actions should be taken to attend to them, as well as against the male aggressor.

"This workshop will provide the officers with an understanding of the problem of violence against women and why it is a violation of human rights," she added.

Lismidi Tortoza, member of the National Police, remarked that as a community police force, they are closer to the families in the neighborhoods they work in and so "this knowledge is essential" in order to attend to complaints in an appropriate and effective way, as well as to "detect irregular situations" that could appear normal, but actually involve violence against women.

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P/Ubaldo Zabala

Caracas

EDITORIAL

Several major political developments have taken place in Latin America this past week. A hardline right-wing millionaire won the presidency in Chile, reversing the path of socialist president Michele Bachelet, who as Chile's first female president had an almost 80% approval rating throughout her presidency. Next door in Bolivia, Evo Morales, the world's first and only indigenous, socialist president, was sworn into a second term after winning over 64% of the vote in last December's elections. Under Evo's rule, the nation has become the Plurinational State of Bolivia, in recognition and representation of the country's diverse and numerous indigenous communities.

In Honduras, a seven-month long political crisis culminated in the inauguration of a new president, elected in a process deemed illegal and illegitimate by the international community, with the exception of Washington and a few staunch allies. The Honduran resistance continues to grow, despite the brutal repression the people have been living under since President Manuel Zelaya's ouster last June 28 in a coup d'état supported by Washington. ALBA nations, of which Honduras was once a member but formally withdrew from at the beginning of January, continue to refuse recognition of the regime in Honduras. The coup against Zelaya was a major blow to democratic advances throughout the region. Although the Obama Administration initially condemned the coup, the application of "smart power" tactics to deceive and manipulate the situation eventually led to the coup regime's consolidation, with Washington as its biggest ally. Today, the Honduran people struggle to restore their democracy and fight for social justice.

In Venezuela, campaigns for congressional elections this fall have begun. The Admirable Campaign, launched by President Chavez, seeks to maintain its majority in the National Assembly, while the opposition attempt to gain enough seats to have a viable influence over policy.

The struggle for power between the left and the right remains as ever present in Latin America today as throughout history.

A U.S. Supreme Court case decision from 1886, *The County of Santa Clara v. the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR)*, is the reason today that the U.S. is a corporate-empire.

Many people mistakenly believe that corporations were given the same rights (not just privileges) as persons in this Supreme Court decision, but nothing could be farther from the truth—the reason my nation is such a dysfunctional system now is not because of a Supreme Court decision, nor a law passed by Congress, nor by a referendum of the people: it's because of a single statement, one sentence, spoken by a Supreme Court Chief Justice before the hearing even began.

The founders of the U.S. did not like corporations and for the first few decades of the existence of this nation, corporations were only given limited "privileges" and not "rights," but after the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1868—which extended equal protection under the law to all male citizens of the U.S. regardless of race—attorneys for the corporations recognized the opportunity that had been gifted to them and started to scheme for corporate personhood.

After many assaults against common law, finally a perfect test case came up before the Supreme Court, the previously referenced case. The case was brought before the Supremes because the SPRR (the Halliburton of the 19th Century) objected to the fact the state of California would not allow it to deduct mortgage costs on its vast holdings from its before tax income as could private citizens.

Last Rites for the U.S.A.



The Supreme Court did not even try that case to grant corporate personhood—the reason corporations now have 14th Amendment protections is because of a statement made by Chief Justice Waite: "The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are all of the opinion that it does."

This one sentence changed the frame of North American politics in a very corrupt way. 1886 is when the "noble exper-

iment" of representative republicanism died. Despite some populist stabs at "anti-trust" laws and labor unionism, today we find that the U.S. system of government is "by and for" the corporations.

On Thursday, January 21, 2010—a (little noticed) U.S. Supreme Court decision took our critically ill republic that has been on life support and effectively murdered it.

Our elections have been compromised and the presidential candidates have been chosen for us by the tyranny of the oligarchy for many decades, and we the people of the U.S. are allowed to cast our votes to give us the

appearance that we have a voice in our nation, but now with the decision in the recent *United Citizens v. The Federal Elections Commission* even any appearance of representation for the people has been overturned.

In this decision, the Supreme Court removed limits from corporate campaign expenditures stating that even limiting these contributions in the first place put restrictions on a corporations' 1st Amendment rights to free speech.

Corporations have long held sway over our government and the soft fascism of corporate control has been running things behind the scenes.

However, the decision in *United Citizens v. The Federal Elections Commission* that expanded a mouth-less and mindless corporation's freedom of speech has effectively gagged 300 million more of us that don't have billions of dollars to buy the votes of our politicians who are just extensions of such crime cartels as Goldman Sachs, anyway.

I believe that *United Citizens v. The FEC* will go down in the history books as one of the most important, and most destructive Supreme Court decisions in U.S. history and we should just drop all pretense at democracy and call our leaders President Goldman and VP Sachs.

Cindy Sheehan

Cindy Sheehan is a US peace activist and founder of Peace of the Action, an anti-war organization that promotes profound structural change in the US.

OPINION PIECES WELCOME!

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