



By Miguel Sorans, IS (Socialist Left) and IWU-FI leader.

There are sectors of the left, including comrades who sympathise with Chavismo although they are critical of Maduro, and organisations that claim to be Trotskyists, who criticise the policies of our organisation, IWU-FI, for Venezuela. Among them New MAS of Argentina and LTS, Venezuelan group linked to the PTS of Argentina.

They question that, together with the repudiation to any threat of imperialist invasion or coup attempt we also raise the slogan “Out with Maduro, for a workers’ government!” For them, the slogan: “Out with Maduro” plays into the hands of imperialism. We disagree with these positions that capitulate to the famishing and repressive government of Maduro.

These misguided criticisms have been developed by New MAS in *Socialismo o Barbarie* No 503 (14 February 2019), in an article by Victor Artavia, accusing IWU-FI of placing itself “in the shadow of the coups”. Similar criticism has been developed by League of Socialist Workers (LTS) in the article “With the politics of PSL (Socialism and Liberty Party), we fight neither imperialism nor the right”, published in their website

La Izquierda Diario
, on 13 March 2019.

Maduro and Chavismo’s politics serve imperialism

For several years, as the almost disappeared "squalid" right recovered, we have been

denouncing those responsible for this has been Hugo Chavez government first and then his heir, Nicolas Maduro. They have fed confusion and rejection to develop in the working people, thus making it possible for the pro-American right to resurrect and favour Trump and imperialism.

It is a double standard to speak about “the fight against imperialism” and the building of socialism while the people’s living standards are worsened because of the civic-military government. In fact, Chavismo has ruled almost 20 years associated to oil multinationals, it has paid the foreign debt, has attacked the living standard of the people and repressed their protests. This has been accumulating the people’s hatred and rejection towards the government, of which Guaido and Trump take advantage. These politics have played into the hands of imperialism.

From a perspective of rejection to any attempted coup or imperialist invasion, we have to establish Maduro is a famishing government and an independent mobilisation of the workers and the people has to take place to put an end to it. This is the crux of the situation of Venezuela today.

It is very important to clarify a distortion in the analysis by the New MAS comrades. According to the article mentioned above, “the IWU-FI calls to join the demonstrations (called by the putschists)”. That is a lie. Neither IWU-FI nor our section, Partido *Socialismo y Libertad*(PSL), call to join the meetings and demonstrations organised by Guaido. It is a slander they should withdraw.

LTS/PTS join in the distortions

Regrettably, the LTS and the PTS comrades join in to the misrepresentations against PSL in Venezuela to join the sectors that shamelessly support Maduro. They published the LTS article in their “website *La Izquierda Diario*” [www.laizquierdadiario.com]. They claim PSL is calling to join the Guaido demonstrations. That is a lie. As they cannot support this lie, they try to mislead

making up fake quotations by PSL, where our party would be calling for “all against Maduro”, “we can all be together”, “without stating the character of class”.

It is totally false to say the PSL has launched the slogan “we can all be together” against Maduro and that our axis is not calling the workers to a mobilisation independent from Guaido and Maduro. And they top it up with another falsification, accusing PSL of not doing a “frenzied attack against the putschist spearhead”. From the very beginning PSL has been denouncing the imperialist interference and coup attempt and has denounced Guaido. According to LTS/PTS “the return of the neoliberal and pro-imperialist right to power in this context does not seem to be a major problem for the PSL”. It is deplorable that revolutionary sectors use this kind of slanderous language. For our part, we will continue to refute the misrepresentations and falsifications but we will focus on giving a political response and help the fighters to unravel what is a true revolutionary policy that should neither give in to the right nor to the traitors of the workers’ movement like Maduro & Co.

We follow the teachings of Lenin

This is an important and needed debate among the revolutionaries and the entire left. In the current situation of Venezuela in the context of the coup attempt and imperialist meddling, we categorically say that not raising the dismissal of Maduro with the independent workers’ and popular mobilisation is to play into the hands of Maduro and his civic-military government, it is to surrender to Chavismo.

This is the famous Chavist argument to hold to power in a dictatorial way, accusing those from the left who do not support them, of “pro-American”. The great problem in Venezuela is millions of workers and young people hate Maduro and his austerity measures and they are prone to support Guaido. New MAS and LTS/PTS stance, giving in to Maduro, do not present a revolutionary option to fight the pro-American right.

PSL and IWU-FI reject the present coup attempt. We analyse there is still not a similar situation

to the one developed in 2002-2003 with the oil boycott and the pro-American coup against Chavez, when our Venezuelan comrades, with the support of the whole IWU-FI, were at the forefront with the workers' and popular mobilisation to defeat the coup. If that situation reappears, we will do the same as in 2002-2003.

We follow the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky. To New MAS and LTS/PTS comrades, as to other sectors vindicating themselves as anti-imperialists and from the left, which question both our permanent repudiation to Maduro's government, its fake "socialist" rhetoric and its repressive practices and our recognition of a workers' government, we want to remind them of the teachings of Lenin in 1917. General Kornilov headed a counter-revolutionary coup against the bourgeois and class conciliation government of the fake "socialist" Kerensky and the Mensheviks. Since his arrival in Petrograd in April 1917, Lenin got the Bolsheviks to adopt his policy of not supporting the provisional bourgeois government that resulted from the February revolution, and of propelling the Soviets into seizing power and creating a workers and peasants' government without the bourgeoisie. In August-September, Lenin was categorical: neither in the preparation nor once in power the Bolsheviks should abandon their opposition to Kerensky's government.

In mid-August there were rumours around Russia of a counter-revolutionary uprising headed by Kornilov. To those Bolsheviks leaders that doubted whether to form a block to "defend" Kerensky, Lenin said: "[...] any Bolshevik who came to terms with the defencists for the purpose of 'giving access', or indirectly expressing confidence in the Provisional Government (which is allegedly being defended against the Cossacks), would, of course, be immediately and deservedly expelled from the Party." ("Rumours of a conspiracy", 18-19 August 1917, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol 25, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 251.) Lenin was more than categorical: expulsion because "indirectly expressing confidence" in Kerensky's government. That is to say, a government of "socialist" double standard rhetoric.

In the articles cited, New MAS and LTS/PTS accuse IWU-FI of using the same slogan (Out with Maduro) as Guaido and Trump as part of the coup attempt. Lenin and Trotsky also adopted the slogan "Down with Kerensky", the same slogan used by Kornilov's associates and the Russian counter-revolutionary right. The revolutionary socialists use it from an opposed perspective, standing up for the working-class' interests. Kornilov/Guaido and Trump use it at the service of the imperialist counter-revolution.

When the coup attempt took place in September 1917, Lenin and Trotsky called a mobilisation to stop and defeat it but in those days they suspended the slogan of Down with Kerensky and

All the power to the soviets, using it again immediately after Kornilov failed.

Thus, our current is coherent with the traditions and teachings of our revolutionary masters: to stand up for a policy of class independence and permanent condemnation of the bourgeois governments that, posing as centre-left, pseudo-revolutionaries or fake “socialism”, attack the workers’ movement.

If an imperialist military invasion takes place, we will follow Trotsky's advice

LTS/PTS say we would go against Trotsky who, talking to the Argentinian Trotskyist union leader Mateo Fossa about the struggle of the oppressed nations against imperialism, provided the hypothetical example on how to answer to a hypothetical invasion of the “democratic” England against the semi-fascist Getulio Vargas’ government of Brazil. He said: “Let’s imagine that one day England starts a military conflict with Brazil. “I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally-in this case I will be on the side of ‘fascist’ Brazil against ‘democratic’ Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism.” (“Anti-imperialist struggle is key to Liberation”, 23 September 1938, Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938–1939, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, p. 35.)

We agree with Leon Trotsky's advice. But this is not the case now in Venezuela. There is neither a military invasion nor a right-wing coup. There are attempts, but it is not the present situation. We have said now and again that, with an American military invasion with the support of other countries, as Trotsky said, we would eventually be on the military camp —only military— of Maduro’s repressive dictatorship; giving it no political support. The same if there is a pro-American military coup. We have no doubts or ambiguities here. There is not any similar situation as in 2003 when the Americans invaded Irak against Saddam Hussein. Or during the 1982 Malvinas war against Great Britain under Galtieri’s genocidal dictatorship. In both cases, the revolutionaries were on the oppressed nation’s side against imperialism.

IWU-FI and PSL have that clear, consistent and revolutionary stand. We repudiate any coup attempt or the military invasion threats from Guaido and Trump. We call the workers and the

people to mobilise against Trump and Guaido and overthrow Maduro to impose a popular and workers' plan to overcome the crisis in Venezuela.