

The State as a collective capitalist

"The executive of the modern state is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848) and the Venezuelan state is an example of this.

In issue 61 of our review¹ (November 2018) we presented a brief summary of what Venezuelan capitalism has been since its birth and what are the reasons for the current economic situation in Venezuela: "The high and low prices of oil in the international market are those that govern life and health in Venezuela: when oil prices are high they buy everything, they pay gold prices for obsolete, bankrupt companies, when oil prices collapse in the world market they sell everything at a cheap price. This is what is happening in the Venezuelan economy, to Bolívar's deluded grandchildren. They abandoned the entire industrial park, dedicated themselves to the exploitation of capital and oil, high oil prices facilitated credit and they went into debt to the core, promoting the liquidation of their own industry by selling oil in exchange for manufactured products that have later flooded the Venezuelan market destroying first its own industry and agriculture and then producing runaway inflation, plunging the proletarian masses into unprecedented misery."

When the price of oil was around 100 dollars a barrel on the world market, Venezuelan capitalism bought everything in the so-called "Nationalization". From ruined farms, to companies such as communication, the basic companies of Guyana, all obsolete due to lack of modernization, mineral exploitation mines and the oil company were bought, paying them at the price of gold.

But what is "nationalization"? Nationalization or public sector companies are just a change in the ownership of the employer that becomes the bourgeois state directly, assuming the functions of the ideal collective capitalist:

"All the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees. The capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends, tearing off coupons, and gambling on the Stock Exchange, where the different capitalists despoil one another of their capital.(...) **But the transformation, either into joint-stock companies, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces.**" (Anti-Dühring, II Theoretical Notions, F. Engels, 1878).

But then, why is the slogan of nationalization or the defense of the public sector always so fashionable?

- The petty bourgeoisie defends nationalizations because it needs to lower the general costs of wages and investment in constant capital.
- The labor aristocracy finds in the state system a refuge for its condition, to pursue a career as civil servants.
- The big bourgeoisie itself needs the State to assume the function of the ideal personification of the total national capital for the realization of the infrastructures, but also to clean up its businesses at the expense of the State with the nationalization-privatization cycle: companies are nationalized when they have losses and re-privatized when they become profitable again.

We must not forget that "The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it

proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. **The workers remain wage-workers – proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head.**" (Anti-Dühring, II Theoretical Notions, F. Engels, 1878).

Therefore, in capitalism, all social classes obtain a benefit from the cycles of nationalization-privatization, except for the proletariat that continues to suffer exploitation regardless of whether the exploiter is a private or public company, and that is why they disguise these measures themselves as socialism: "(...) since Bismarck went in for state-ownership of industrial establishments, a kind of **spurious socialism** has arisen, degenerating, now and again, into something of flunkeyism, that without more ado declares all state ownership, even of the Bismarckian sort, to be socialistic." (Anti-Dühring, II Theoretical Notions, F. Engels, 1878).

The bourgeoisie (and especially the petty bourgeoisie) drags the proletariat in defending the slogan of nationalization, passing it off as a "socialist" measure.

Crisis and privatization

Now the price of oil is on the ground and it's time to sell these companies, that is, privatize them. The Venezuelan state is forced to sell cheaply without even having cleaned up them so that they become profitable again. Now, when the crisis has arrived, it is necessary to sell what was nationalized yesterday, at ridiculous prices.

The Bicentennial Supplies Network (*Red de Abastos Bicentenario*) has already been privatized in 2019, bought by the company Salva Food under the name Tiendas CLAP, and Iranian companies such as the Magasis supermarket have been allowed to enter.

On October 9, 2020, the "Anti-blockade Law" was approved, which allows the Venezuelan state to sell its companies to international capital. This law opens the door to the privatization of PDVSA itself, an issue around which the struggle for power in Venezuela has revolved.

The harsh reality is that PDVSA is currently a disabled company, unable to carry out its own oil production. The destruction of the Venezuelan capitalist productive network to which the rentier-imperialist policy of Chavismo has led to has reached such a point that it has to retrace its steps and practically give away PDVSA. No matter how much they try to blame the sanctions of North American imperialism, Venezuelan oil production had been falling for years due to insufficient supplies, maintenance, due to the generalized larceny and because of the reduction in demand and falling prices worldwide.

The dependence on foreign capital by Venezuelan capitalism is complete: an oil-producing country that in June 2020 needed 1.5 million barrels of gasoline and supplies to be brought from Iran in 5 ships to try to reactivate paralyzed Venezuelan refineries.

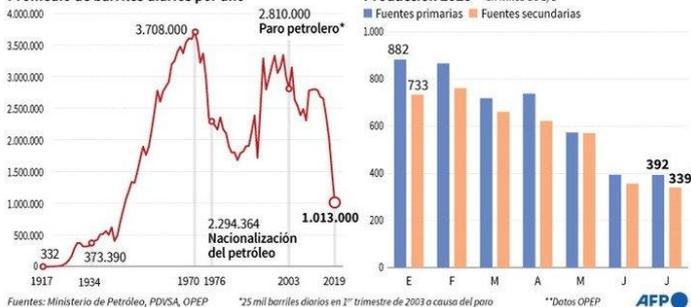
On November 6th 2020, the "anti-imperialist" Maduro pleaded: "I ask for the help of China, I ask for the help of Xi Jinping (...) so that the anti-blockade law is the expression of new associations" in an event with Chinese investors.

¹ Our review published in Spanish "El comunista" number 61

Producción petrolera de Venezuela

La producción siguió estancada en julio por debajo de los 400.000 barriles diarios

Promedio de barriles diarios por año



However, Article 303 of the Venezuelan Constitution explicitly prohibits the privatization of PDVSA shares but not of its subsidiaries. **And PDVSA has more than 327 subsidiaries!** Among these subsidiaries there is "PDVSA Petróleo", which is actually that which manages all oil and gas production, refining and commercialization of hydrocarbons in the country.

The tantrum of the petty bourgeoisie

The currents of the petty bourgeoisie, calling themselves marxists and revolutionaries (when in reality they are more nationalist than Simón Bolívar, whom they call the father of the country), have hit the roof.

They are the same currents that grew with Chavismo when the price of oil was high and for a few years they have seen how the cake is reduced and all the positions they could occupy and the good life they could have disappears without them being able to avoid it. Without being able to understand that it is not the will of one puppet or another but the economy that determined that they could grab onto the cow's teats then and that now the cow kicks them off when they approach it because the positions are already occupied and the udders are dry, they join forces and agitate to try to recover their lost seats and armchairs.

One of their arguments is that they say that the Anti-Blockade Law violates Article 303 of the Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela. These opportunistic currents are always waiting for the representatives of the government, the administrators that govern the State, to violate the national constitution, in order to go out to raise the voice of protest. They are more respectful of bourgeois laws than their institutional representatives, although of course, both sides justify themselves as being anti-imperialist. Nothing new, although they could have learned from "The class struggles in France" (K. Marx, 1850): *"Had the Montagne still not comprehended, all experiences in the Constituent Assembly notwithstanding, that the interpretation of the constitution did not belong to those who had made it, but only to those who had accepted it? That its wording must be construed in its viable meaning and that the bourgeois meaning was its only viable meaning; that Bonaparte and the royalist majority of the National Assembly were the authentic interpreters of the constitution, as the priest is the authentic interpreter of the Bible, and the judge the authentic interpreter of the laws?"*

The transfer of companies to the State is the reiterative claim of the petty bourgeoisie, of its program:

"The democratic petty bourgeois, far from wanting to transform the whole society in the interests of the revolutionary proletarians, only aspire to a change in social conditions which will make the existing society as tolerable and comfortable for themselves as possible. They therefore demand above all else a reduction in government spending through a restriction of the

bureaucracy and the transference of the major tax burden into the large landowners and bourgeoisie. They further demand the removal of the pressure exerted by big capital on small capital through the establishment of public credit institutions and the passing of laws against usury, whereby it would be possible for themselves and the peasants to receive advances on favourable terms from the state instead of from capitalists; also, the introduction of bourgeois property relationships on land through the complete abolition of feudalism. In order to achieve all this they require a democratic form of government, either constitutional or republican, which would give them and their peasant allies the majority; they also require a democratic system of local government to give them direct control over municipal property and over a series of political offices at present in the hands of the bureaucrats.

The rule of capital and its rapid accumulation is to be further counteracted, partly by a curtailment of the right of inheritance, and partly by the transference of as much employment as possible to the state. As far as the workers are concerned one thing, above all, is definite: they are to remain wage labourers as before. However, the democratic petty bourgeois want better wages and security for the workers, and hope to achieve this by an extension of state employment and by welfare measures; in short, they hope to bribe the workers with a more or less disguised form of alms and to break their revolutionary strength by temporarily rendering their situation tolerable. (Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, 1850)

It is with this policy that they constantly call on the proletariat to fight against privatization, as if they were unaware that the largest businessman in the country is the Bolivarian Army State, the same ones that have brought the wages of workers to poverty levels; that have been these national companies, those that belong to the state, who have approved memorandum 2792 that curtails the possibility of a salary increases through the discussions of collective agreements. That when the crisis arrives, the measure taken by the government in office (whatever it may be), administered by the army party or by the opposition, is none other than lowering production costs, lowering the salaries paid in bolívares so that both Government and opposition companies increase their profits by exporting their merchandise in dollars.

These opportunists are conservatives of the current regime of exploitation, they are reactionaries. They are the defenders of justice and peace. And for them, peace and justice is that the Venezuelan working class continues to be exploited while the bourgeois class continues to live like a king extorting other people's work. And that is why these opportunist currents reject the slogan of the payment of wages in dollars to the proletariat, because that would mean a reduction in their profits. Besides, for these patriots their currency, the bolívar, the one that does not allow the proletariat to even eat badly, is part of their identity, a treasure to preserve, like their Bolivarian bourgeois Constitution.

"For Marxism, a Constitution is not in fact an ideal. We consider constitutions to be temporary results of history, and not fundamental pillars of the future history of a people. Constitutions are a form of class domination, and they are characteristic of bourgeois revolutions. A comprehensive socialist revolution will not take into account the constitutional charters." (The great historical questions of the revolution in Russia, 1955).

Control and repression against the working class

Venezuelan capitalism needs cheap labor, with a disciplined working class that does not strike, that does not fight for wage increases. And to achieve this, the State has equipped itself with a subsidized "union" apparatus, such as SINAFUM at the level of education workers, which stimulates and develops the disorganization of workers, keeping them under the cloak of parliamentarism and the management of the bourgeois institution, thus avoiding the independent organization of the working class. As was the case of the strike carried out by the teaching workers in Lara state, supported by the Núcleo Proletario Clasista. The workers refused to return to work if the employer did not pay a salary of \$500 to cover the basic family basket. Fathers, mothers and worker students also participated in this struggle.

What, on the contrary, was the slogan of subsidized unionism? Resignation, abandonment of the job. That is to say, the same proposal of the employer since that action does not affect his interests, but quite the opposite: it benefits him because it reduces costs and debts with this sector and also facilitates disorganization.

In the political aspect, the army party has promulgated laws that condemn workers' struggles, such as 56th article of the organic law of national security that punishes and sentences up to ten years in prison to anyone who carries out demonstrations around or at the headquarters of state or government companies, basic companies, military garrisons or public services. They also decreed circular 2792 that eliminated the discussions of collective contracts: the employer is free to increase the salary of his workers above the minimum wage imposed by the State, but the workers cannot demand more than what is fixed by the State as minimum wage. It is not necessary to be very clever to know that the number of employers who will "freely" raise the wages of their workers above the minimum wage will not be higher than zero.

As if that wasn't enough, the government has allocated resources to finance evangelical religious groups to establish themselves in the neighborhoods, keeping the proletariat busy with religious rituals and meetings every day of the year: "*Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature.*" (Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx, 1844).

The military government created the militias to form the control quadrants in each neighborhood, handing over control of the most conflictive working class neighborhoods to the criminals, who are the ones who set the rules of coexistence with the so-called peace zone, they are the ones who in charge of delivering and safeguarding, when there are any, the food box called CLAP (Local Committee for Supply and Production). When all this is not enough, the police forces or commandos that have been formed go ahead with the repression, the so-called "*colectivos*", the OLP and now the FAES, which are extermination police.

In 2020 crime deaths surpassed car accident and "pandemic" deaths combined. According to a source from the bourgeoisie itself, the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence (OVV), since 2016 there has been a sustained increase in police fatality in relation to deaths caused by criminals. Every year there are more victims for having resisted authority than homicides of any other type. In 2016, for every 100 homicides there were 28 people who died in police actions, deaths that were later classified by the repressive Venezuelan bourgeois state as deaths for having "resisted authority". In 2017 they were 34 for every 100; in 2018 they were 72 for every 100; In 2019 they were 88 for every 100 and in 2020, for the first time, there were more deaths at the hands of the police than at the hands of criminals: 101 per 100 criminal homicides.

Murder or death in Venezuela is the epidemic of police violence.

It is not surprising that with all this repressive situation, the Venezuelan proletariat has only risen up on a few occasions, as a product of necessity and spontaneously. These current movements of the Venezuelan working class are movements void of revolutionary theory, and for that reason they do not go beyond the narrow bourgeois horizon, that is, the democratic proposal.

In this situation of lack of influence from the International Communist Party to give the movement the line and the program to make it a class movement, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois currents that call themselves the revolutionary left and Marxists take the lead in these spontaneous struggles of the working class, using them for their parliamentary and conservative purposes.

The narcotic of democracy

In the recent elections, the government speaks of a 30% turnout. The part of the opposition that participated in the elections speaks of 20%. The reality is that it did not reach 10%. As the day progressed and in view of the very low turnout, the military went house to house in the neighborhoods to force the population to vote. There was pressure from the "*colectivos*" and they threatened to remove the CLAP bags, but not even then did the population go to vote. A little more influence had the subsequent semi-virtual consultation carried out by the part of the opposition that had not participated (Volundad Popular, Justicia Primero, a sector of Acción Democrática, Vente Venezuela) but not even collecting votes in Colombia they reached a participation 40%.

Faced with this discredit, the petty bourgeoisie needs to rejuvenate the narcotic illusion by strengthening the wording and calling for "constitutional rebellion", as in the manifesto of "Resistencia Activa" that says:

*"The Maduro dictatorship has exhausted the democratic ways to resolve the crisis in Venezuela. The opposition has also exhausted electoral and negotiation channels. This 2021 begins at a crossroads that inevitably leads the Venezuelan people to understand that the only possible solution to their ills and sufferings is to remove from power the international organized crime gang that has appropriated state institutions in recent years. The time has come for the **constitutional rebellion** and it legitimizes the use of force by the people and all the national and international support forces that can resolve the serious crisis of our population. **Democracy always required sacrifice and this time it will be no different.**"*

Will this "constitutional rebellion" be different from that of his ancestors in Paris in 1848? Certainly not, the petty bourgeoisie does not know how to do anything other than repeat its past illusions:

"Till break of day the "Mountain" was in labor. It gave birth to "a proclamation to the people," which on the morning of June occupied a more or less shamefaced place in two socialist journals. It declared the President, the ministers, and the majority of the Legislative Assembly "outside the constitution" and summoned the National Guard, the army, and finally also the people "to arise." "Long live the Constitution!" was the slogan it put forward, a slogan that signified nothing other than "Down with the revolution!"

In conformity with the constitutional proclamation of the Mountain, there was a so-called peaceful demonstration of the petty bourgeois on June 13, that is, a street procession from the

Chateau d'Eau through the Boulevards, 30,000 strong, mainly National Guardsmen, unarmed, with an admixture of members of the secret workers' sections, moving along with the cry: "Long live the Constitution!" which was uttered mechanically, icily, and with a bad conscience by the members of the procession itself, and thrown back ironically by the echo of the people that surged along the sidewalks, instead of swelling up like thunder. From the many-voiced song the chest notes were missing. And when the procession swung by the meeting hall of the "Friends of the Constitution" and a hired herald of the constitution appeared on the housetop, violently cleaving the air with his claqueur hat and from tremendous lungs letting the catch – cry "Long live the Constitution!" fall like hail on the heads of the pilgrims, they themselves seemed overcome for a moment by the comedy of the situation. It is known how the procession, having arrived at the termination of the Rue de la Paix, was received in the Boulevards by the dragoons and chasseurs of Changarnier in an altogether unparliamentary way, how in a trice it scattered in all directions, and how it threw behind it a few shouts of "To arms" only in order that the parliamentary call to arms of June 11 might be fulfilled." (The class struggles in France, K. Marx, 1850)

But at one point these petty bourgeoisie have unwittingly said the truth: "*Democracy always demanded sacrifice and this time it will be no different.*" Let the Venezuelan proletarians listen well because what they have forgotten to say is that the sacrifice that is requested is ours, the immolation of the working class for the rejuvenation of the always rotten democracy. As a text from our current says: "*If Parliament could technically manage something and not only stun the citizens, over five years of maximum life it would not dedicate one to elections and another one to discuss the law for its constitution! After counting the hours of boisterousness, more than two fifths are dedicated! This deflated society is nothing more than an aim in itself, and the peoples that have had themselves killed to put it back on its feet have been cheated out of more than twenty percent of their little piece of sovereignty! Now many already vote in the other world.*" (The corpse still walks, 1953)

All these opportunist political currents that today direct and use the small movements of the working class are the main ideological support of the bourgeoisie. They deceive the working class with parliamentary promises, making them believe that this is the way to improve living conditions, presenting their program: the political program of the petty bourgeoisie as the program of "all", of the "majority", as the program of the working class.

Patriotism: tomb of the working class

Can the Venezuelan proletariat go hand in hand with the venezuelan bourgeoisie, which has declared "*war to 'trocheros'*" (EFE, 01-17-2020)? No and a thousand times no.

Many Venezuelan proletarians fled to other countries with the illusion of improving their standard of living and helping their family, expelled by the conditions of misery and lack of work in Venezuela. In most of these countries they were subjected to harsh conditions due to competition for a job, a situation that led to the rejection of the proletarians of those countries, who saw their jobs in danger and - the unemployed - less possibility of acquiring employment, as increase the population with immigrants. This is capitalism, based on profit. As the surplus value comes out of the time unpaid to the working class, the bourgeoisie takes advantage of any situation to make the labor force cheaper: the immigrants provided it with cheap labor force to lower wages and thus obtain more profits. Without a class solidarity that stands up to the

bourgeoisie, only the madness of the fratricidal struggle between proletarian brothers remains. In the absence of organization, only the poison of nationalism remains, which ideologically binds and subjects the working class to its exploiters and throws us against our class brothers.

Now, the capitalist system in Venezuela, administered by the Army Party (Chavismo), treats them not only as criminals, but also as bio-terrorists, like biological bombs, terrorizing the entire working class, using COVID-19 to justify its repressive anti-worker policy, promoting rejection to cause more division in the proletariat.

Fundamental lesson: "*The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.*" (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848).

For the resumption of the class struggle, against parliamentarism

The problem of the Venezuelan working class is not "dictatorship or democracy" or "Mr so-and-so or Mr Whatshisface" but capitalism: "*As long as the mercantile economy subsists, the drug addiction of land rent is a burden to the living conditions of the Venezuelan proletariat. The only way out of hunger in Venezuela is to defeat the capitalism that produces it.*" (El Comunista n°61, November 2018).

Against so many opportunistic currents that parasitize the proletariat in Venezuela like a tick clinging to the skin of an animal, the working class must understand:

"Arrival point: choice between three routes, each of which leads to a new dictatorship more fierce than the others. The voter who votes does nothing but choose between the red, white and blue dictatorship.

Two methods have historically declared bankruptcy here, from all points of view, but above all from the proletarian class, which is what interests us. The first method is the use of legal means, the constitution and parliamentarism with a broad political bloc in order to avoid the Dictatorship. The second is to lead the same crusade and form the same bloc on the ground of fighting with arms, when the dictatorship is ruling, with the sole democratic end.

Today's historical problems are solved not by legality but by force. Force is only overcome with greater force. The dictatorship is only destroyed with a more solid dictatorship.

It is to say very little, that this filthy institution of parliament does not serve us. It no longer serves anyone." (The corpse still walks, 1953).

Proletarian comrades, we know that what we propose is difficult but there is no other way. We must have the decision and the perseverance to go through it if we do not want to plunge for the umpteenth time into the farce that they have prepared for us and in which the working class is always the victim sacrificed to the twin altars of Profit and Democracy. Communist militants cannot stop working for the true social revolution: abolition of private property, wage labor and the mercantile and company regime: "*(...) sudden returns of the masses to a useful organization of revolutionary attack being not conceivable, the best result that the next times can give is to re-propose the true goals and proletarian and communist demands, and to clinch the lesson that any tactical improvisation that changes from situation to situation with the intention of exploiting unexpected data is defeatism.*" (Theory and Action, 1952)