

44-PAGE SPECIAL ISSUE

VIJAY PRASHAD | WHITNEY WEBB | NEIL CLARK | YVES ENGLER | DAVID EDWARDS
LINDA McQUAIG | CJ HOPKINS | ALAN MacLEOD | JUSTIN PODUR | MEDEA BENJAMIN
& NICHOLAS JS DAVIES | CAITLIN JOHNSTONE | RAMZY BAROUD | NICOLAS MADURO

ISSUE 178

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

MID-FEBRUARY 2019

**WE
WENT
TO
VENEZUELA**

**FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, REGIME CHANGE AND OIL – HOW THE USA
IS PREPARING THE WAY FOR MORE MISERY IN SOUTH AMERICA**

Have you read all 177 issues of ColdType?



2

Didn't think so! You can download and read them all (plus our 6 original tabloid issues) at

www.coldtype.net or
www.issuu.com/coldtype

ColdType

Mid-February 2019 • Issue 178

VENEZUELA – SPECIAL ISSUE

4 WHY DOES THE US WANT TO OVERTHROW MADURO?

Vijay Prashad

7 POMPEO LINKS IRAN AND HEZBOLLAH TO VENEZUELA

Whitney Webb

10 PROTESTS IN PARIS GOOD, PROTESTS IN VENEZUELA, BAD

Neil Clark

14 CORPORATE CANADA BEHIND SLOW-MOTION COUP ATTEMPT

Yves Engler

16 PRESS FREEDOM, SANCTIONS AND OIL

David Edwards

22 CANADA TALKS DEMOCRACY, BUT THE US EYES THE OIL

Linda McQuaig

24 MAKING GLOBALISM GREAT AGAIN

CJ Hopkins

27 How THE MEDIA MANUFACTURE CONSENT FOR REGIME CHANGE

Alan MacLeod

30 TRUMP THREATENS FAMILIES OF VENEZUELAN MILITARY

Caitlin Johnstone

32 NEO-LIBERAL LABORATORY PREPARES FOR ECONOMIC THEFT

Justin Podur

36 THE US'S 68TH REGIME CHANGE DISASTER

Medea Benjamin & Nicholas JS Davies

39 ENOUGH INTERVENTION: LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

Ramzy Baroud

42 AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES

Nicolas Maduro

ColdType 7 Lewis Street, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada LG7 1E3. **Contact ColdType:** Write to Tony Sutton, the editor, at editor@coldtype.net. **Subscribe:** For a FREE subscription to Coldtype, send an e-mail to: editor@coldtype.net. **Back Copies:** Download back copies at www.coldtype.net/reader.html or at www.issuu.com/coldtype – © ColdType 2019

Why does the US want to overthrow Maduro?

By Vijay Prashad

4

SINCE 1998, the United States of America has tried to overthrow the government of Venezuela. What threatened the government of the United States since then was the Bolivarian dynamic set in motion by the election of Hugo Chavez as president of Venezuela that year. Chavez won the elections with a mandate from Venezuela's workers and poor to overhaul the country to tend to their long-neglected needs.

Venezuela, with the world's largest proven oil reserves, had enriched the US-based oil companies and its own oligarchy. Venezuela's key oil minister in the early 1960s (and architect of OPEC – the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries – Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso rightly called oil the “devil's excrement”. It promised so much and delivered so little. Chavez arrived as the embodiment of popular hope. He threatened the oil companies and the oligarchy, which is why the United States tried to

overthrow him.

The first attempt at a coup came in 2002, when the United States egged on the military and the oligarchy to overthrow Chavez. They failed. He was supremely popular, the Chavista base eager for change that would improve their lives. They had no faith in the United States or the oligarchy, both of which had suffocated them for the past century.

Never has the Monroe Doctrine – which the United States invoked to control the American hemisphere – done much good for the millions of people from the southern tip of Argentina to the northern reaches of Canada. It has helped the big corporations and the oligarchs, but not the ordinary people – the base of the Chavistas.

The residue of that base lined up recently to sign a pledge in public against a new US diplomatic and military intervention, against economic war.

What drives the United States to persist in its interven-

tions – diplomatic, economic and military – against the Venezuelan government?

1. Humanitarian Concerns

Is the United States of America motivated by humanitarian concerns? If it were so, why did the United States attempt to overthrow Chavez's government in 2002, when there was no problem with Venezuela's finances? Why has the United States tried to push policies for all of Latin America – such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) – that have been clearly shown to increase suffering for the people?

A logical person would look at these US initiatives – the attempted US coup in 2002 and the FTAA – and conclude that the US government has more concern for corporate interests than for the interests of the poor. After all, what bothered the United States with Chavez was that he demanded that oil companies pay higher royalties for the oil that they sucked out of Venezuela.

Such audacity has to be

repaid with a coup attempt.

It is what happened in 1953 to Mohammed Mossadeq of Iran, and in 1954 to Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, and in 1971 to Salvador Allende of Chile. You cross US multinational corporations, and you get overthrown.

Here's a quick way to end the humanitarian crisis: stop trying to destabilise Venezuela, end the economic war and allow Venezuela to manage its external revenues. If all this is done, Venezuela's government should be able to import goods and use its resources to continue the process of diversifying its economy. But this is not what the United States wants.

2. Democracy

Evidence from the past century of US interventions overseas suggests that the United States likes to use the word "democracy" to push its own agenda. Chavez was elected several times, his policies ratified by the people in several referenda. Nicolas Maduro asked the United Nations and external monitors to come to Venezuela and observe last year's election. The United States pressured these agencies not to go. The right-wing opposition lost the election because they could not come together around a credible candidate – and they have no platform to go to the people.



Juan Guaidó, self-proclaimed (and Trump-proclaimed) president of the nation, with his wife and child.

Even with the chaos in the camp of the right, the right won 33 percent of the vote. Rather than try to appeal to more people on a political basis – the path of democratic politics, in other words – the right has taken cover behind the United States Treasury Department and the US military, with the Canadians in the wings. This is hardly a good way to move a democratic agenda.

What does the United States mean by the promotion of democracy? It is worthwhile to allow US Ambassador William Brownfield to explain the process himself. In November 2006, Brownfield sent a cable to Washington with this five-point strategy (which had been worked out in August 2004):

- Strengthen Democratic

Institutions

- Penetrate Chavez's Political Base
- Divide Chavismo
- Protect vital US Business
- Isolate Chavez internationally

This is blatant US interference in Venezuelan politics. The first point – strengthening democratic institutions – is the most Orwellian of them all. The US government – via its agencies such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy as well as the CIA – has been funding a series of “civil soci-

ety” groups to challenge the legitimacy of the Venezuelan electoral process.

A vote monitoring group – Sumate – was used to challenge each election, while groups were funded to take to the streets. In 2009, unrest on the streets – the US State Department admitted – was funded by its agencies. Eduardo Fernandez of Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) said that “the streets are hot” and that “all these people” who have organized the protest “are our grantees”. So much for democracy promotion.

3. Steal the Oil

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. No question that the oil companies have long wanted to return to the days when they called the

shots in Caracas. When Chavez increased Venezuela's share of the profits, he threatened a broader challenge to the oil firms. They have long wanted to punish the Bolivarian experiment for its audacity.

But there is no immediate need to take the oil. The world currently faces a glut of oil production, with Saudi Arabia running its wells at full tilt and the United States able to produce more oil than previously.

Low oil prices, combined with currency problems within Venezuela, has provided the United States with a unique opportunity to challenge Maduro's government. The atmosphere for regime change was improved when Jair Bolsonaro came to power in Brazil, and when Canada and the dozen Latin American leaders were willing to create the Lima Group to push to overthrow the Maduro government.

Low oil prices and the rise of the Latin American right provided the opportunity for the United States, Canada and the Latin American oligarchies to go for regime change. This is about oil, but not only about oil.

4. Crush the Alternative

After the fall of the USSR, the United States and its oligarchic allies hoped that no alternative to their dominance would arise. Any challenge to the United States and its world order had to be crushed. To understand the approach of the US government toward the world, the best document to consult is the National Security Strategy (2002).

That document opens with a declaration of US power – “The United States possesses unprecedented – and unequalled – strength and influence in the world.” No question that the United States has the largest and most powerful military, “strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in the hopes of surpassing, or equally, the power of the United States”.

Key here is the idea that the United States must be the most powerful country in the world and that no one will be allowed to threaten this power militarily or with an alternative economic agenda.

Chavez attempted an alternative in Venezuela and, worse for the United States, through the Bolivarian project across Latin America. The Bolivarians understood that there was no hope for their revolution if they remained within their borders. They had to build bridges with their neighbours on a new foundation.

The US-attempted coup in 2002 came to break the political alternative posed by Chavez. Once more, the National Security Strategy is useful. “The United States has long maintained the option of pre-emptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security”, the US government wrote. “The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction – and the more compelling case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves. ...

To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively”. Coups are pre-emptive. So is economic warfare.

Greece, under Syriza, offered a mild alternative. It had to be shut down. Coups come these days, said the former Greek finance minister, by banks as much as tanks.

Venezuela, under the Bolivarians, offered a stronger alternative. It has to be shut down. Humanitarian concerns? Democracy? Not so important to the United States. Far more important is to deliver the planet into the hands of the billionaires, to extend the dictatorship of the billionaires over every square inch of the planet. **CT**

***Vijay Prashad** is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute. He is the chief editor of LeftWord Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. He has written more than 20 books, including *The Death of the Nation and the Future of the Arab Revolution* (University of California Press, 2016) and *Red Star Over the Third World* (LeftWord, 2017). He writes regularly for *Frontline*, *the Hindu*, *Newslick*, *AlterNet* and *BirGün*. This article was produced by Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute.*



Mike Pompeo: "The Iranians are impacting the people of Venezuela and throughout South America."

Pompeo tries to link Iran and Hezbollah to Venezuela

By Whitney Webb

DURING an interview with Fox Business host Trish Regan in February, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made several statements that raised eyebrows, such as claiming that Cuba had invaded Venezuela and "taken control" of the Venezuela's "security apparatus", and that US sanctions illegally imposed on Venezuela "aren't aimed at the Venezuelan people".

However, the most surprising claim Pompeo made in the interview was that Hezbollah

and Iran were "active" in Venezuela, presenting a national security "risk for America".

After accusing China, Cuba and Russia of interfering with US efforts to install US-funded opposition figure Juan Guaido and oust current Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, Pompeo made the following assertion:

"People don't recognise that Hezbollah has active cells – the Iranians are impacting the people of Venezuela and throughout South America. We have an obligation to take down that risk for America and part of what

we will talk about next week in Warsaw is certainly how we do that in South America and all across the globe".

Pompeo's mention of Hezbollah – a political party that has wide support in Lebanon's democracy – has been noted by many outlets for seemingly providing a justification for the US's "obligation" to intervene in Venezuela, potentially with military force, by attempting to link the Venezuelan government to the US's Middle Eastern enemies. What has been entirely overlooked, however, is the fact that Pompeo also signalled

a promise of military intervention “all across the globe”.

Indeed, if the US intervenes in Venezuela with Hezbollah as the pretext, it sets a precedent for going to war where Hezbollah is actually located – Lebanon – as well as against Hezbollah’s most powerful regional ally and favourite Trump-era boogeyman, Iran.

A whole doctrine out of whole cloth

Pompeo’s suggestion that Hezbollah is “active” in Venezuela has slowly become a Trump administration talking point over the course of the past two years, largely due to the influence of Pompeo – who publicly made the claim in August 2017 – himself and National Security Adviser John Bolton.

Bolton helped to bolster the claim that Venezuela’s government is connected to Hezbollah, through his connections to the Gatestone Institute, which Bolton chaired from 2013 to 2018 and used to heavily promote the alleged Hezbollah-Venezuela link over that period. Bolton, as recently as last January, argued that “Hezbollah, exploiting the long history of expatriate Middle Eastern trading networks in Latin America, remains a murky but continuing threat” in Venezuela, providing no evidence to back up his claim beyond suggesting that Middle Eastern immigrants to Venezuela are indicative of a Hezbollah presence.

Claims of Hezbollah’s links to Venezuela largely revolve around one man, former Vene-

zuelan Vice President Tarek Al Aissami, who is of Lebanon-Syrian ancestry. The claims have been promoted as fact – despite an absence of concrete evidence – by a mix of neoconservative think tanks, such as the Center for a Secure Free Society, and former Bush officials, such as Roger Noriega, along with the Bolton and AIPAC-linked Gatestone Institute.

Similarly, many of these same groups, particularly John Bolton, have been instrumental in asserting that Iran – a strategic ally of Chavista Venezuela – is not in Venezuela for any “normal” alliance but in order to provide cover for alleged illicit activities, including its alleged ambitions to build a nuclear bomb. Bolton has accused Venezuela of harbouring and collaborating with Iranian criminals and “smugglers”; and, during a 2013 hearing, Bolton claimed that Iran was operating in Venezuela in order to avoid international scrutiny:

These are expert smugglers with – the largest Iranian diplomatic facility in the world is in Caracas, Venezuela [...] they are laundering their money through the Venezuelan banks.”

Bolton has also asserted that Iran uses Venezuela “to retain access to the country’s extensive uranium reserves”, suggesting that Venezuela is connected to Iran’s alleged desire to acquire and develop nuclear weapons. However, independent scientists have long countered that Venezuelan

uranium deposits are minimal and likely impractical to extract.

Yet that didn’t stop the usual pro-intervention think tanks – such as the Center for a Secure Free Society and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, whose board of trustees includes Henry Kissinger, ExxonMobil CEO Darren Woods, and notorious neoconservative Richard Armitage – from promoting the claim.

Notably, no concrete evidence of either an illicit Hezbollah-Venezuela or an Iran-Venezuela connection has ever emerged beyond innuendo made by individuals and organisations with a vested interest in demonising anti-imperialist governments in Latin America and beyond.

Terror here, terror there, terror everywhere

While the lack of evidence should be enough to write off this claim, it is still regurgitated by Trump officials and pro-interventionists because it offers a “terror threat” justification for US meddling and potentially US military intervention in Venezuela, as Hezbollah is considered a terror group by the United States.

Indeed, the potential for US military intervention in Venezuela in order to “support” the parallel government of the US-backed Juan Guaido has been repeatedly mentioned by top Trump officials, including Trump himself in recent days. With Hezbollah and Iran thrown into the mix, the Trump administration is

seeking to link its aggressive Middle East policy with its aggressive Venezuela policy in order to justify intervention in Venezuela because it is in “our hemisphere,” as Pompeo stated during his recent interview.

However, given the attempt to establish this link between Venezuela and Hezbollah/Iran, it must be understood that this is a connection that the Trump administration will seek to use in both directions. Indeed, if the US succeeds in deposing the current Venezuelan government by using the alleged threat of Iran and Hezbollah as pretext, it could then link that intervention in Venezuela to the need to intervene at the source of those pretexts: Lebanon and Iran.

Indeed, the US-backed regime-change efforts targeting Iran are already well underway and the same Trump officials now promoting the alleged link between Iran, Hezbollah

and Venezuela are those who have long pushed for a preemptive war with Iran.

In Lebanon’s case, US threats towards Lebanon have failed to derail Hezbollah’s popularity in the country, as evidenced by Lebanon’s most recent elections.

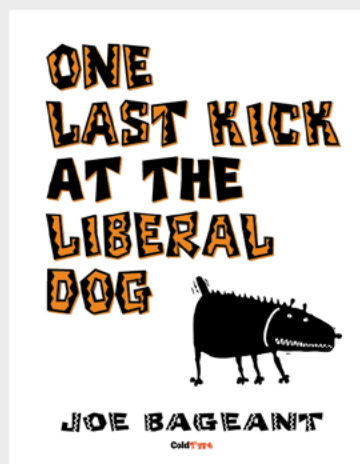
However, Israel – whose influence over the Trump administration’s foreign policy has been the subject of numerous reports – has been actively preparing for war with Lebanon for over a year, with Hezbollah and Hezbollah-supporting civilians as the targets.

These war preparations have the full support of the United States and top US military commanders have openly stated that – when the war starts – US troops are “prepared to die” for Israel and Israel’s military will

have final say over whether or not Americans are deployed to fight and die in this war.

With Pompeo’s recent statement that America is “obligated to take down” the risk of Hezbollah and Iran in Venezuela and beyond, his comments must be seen for what they are: a promise that US intervention and potentially a military invasion in Venezuela will be just the beginning for the new neoconservatives who hold complete control over Trump administration foreign policy. **CT**

Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News and has contributed to several other independent, alternative outlets. Her work has appeared on sites such as Global Research, the Ron Paul Institute, and 21st Century Wire among others. This article first appeared at www.mintpressnews.com



**READ THE BEST
OF JOE BAGEANT**

www.coldtype.net/joe.html

Protests in Venezuela good, protests in France bad!

By Neil Clark

10

LARGE street protests in both France and Venezuela. Two presidents with low approval ratings. But only one whose legitimacy has been denied by Western “democracies” and by the French president himself.

Just when you thought globalist hypocrisy couldn't get any worse, it just did.

France and Venezuela have both experienced widespread anti-government protests in recent weeks. These have been fuelled by economic factors and increased financial hardship of the majority.

But it's only in Venezuela where the democratically-elected leader, Nicolas Maduro, has been ordered to step down and his opponent, Juan Guaido, has been anointed president. The good old democracies of the US and the EU have been falling over themselves to recognise Guaido. They're simply Mad About the Boy, and mad at Maduro.

In France though, it's a very different story. Here it's

been the street protestors – les gilets jaunes – who have been besmirched. They're “populists” (boo, hiss) and there have been claims that the whole thing is being stirred up by Russia (an even louder boo, hiss).

Venezuelan people have legitimate grounds for taking to the streets to protest against their president in times of hardship, but the French people do not. No siree!

To add insult to rubber bullet injury, Emmanuel Macron, the man who has triggered the biggest protests in France for more than half a century, has the gall (no pun intended) to be right at the forefront of those supporting an unelected leader in Venezuela, and all in the name of “democracy”.

Gilbert and Sullivan could not have created a more topsy-turvy world. One in which those who bray the loudest about democracy and “human rights”, are the greatest destroyers of democracy and human rights. Where the most resolute de-

fenders of “law and order” in one country are the most vocal advocates of anarchy and setting fire to government buildings in another. Repeat after me: Street protests in Venezuela good, street protests in France bad! Very bad!

When it comes to their own populaces, Macron and Maduro seem to be just about equally unpopular if we believe the polls.

FRANCE, YOUNG POLL:

President Macron Approval Rating

Approve: 18 percent (-3)

Disapprove: 76 percent (+7)

Field work: 28/11/18 – 29/11/18

Sample size: 1,006

– *Europe Elects (@Europe Elects) December 6, 2018*

Macron's rating fell as low as 18 percent early December, but has surpassed 30 percent since then. Some 73 percent think he's an authoritarian.

In Venezuela, in November, 63 percent of people said they supported a “negotiated settlement” to remove Maduro



Destruction in the streets at a gilets jaunes protest in Paris. The French anti-government rallies were condemned by international media, unlike those in Venezuela, which were applauded by the mainstream press.

from office. We can say that it's probably true that most people in France and Venezuela want their present leaders out.

But the reason why there's international pressure on Maduro, but not on Macron, to step down is not because of the extent of the economic hardship, the scale of "human rights abuses" or the numbers out on the streets, but because one furthers the interests of what Greek political philosopher and economist Takis Fotopoulos has called the "Transnational Elite", while the other one doesn't.

The EU's failure to condemn the human rights abuses of the Macron government speaks volumes.

Macron is an ex-banker whose mission to is to "reform"

the French economy on neoliberal lines. On foreign policy he supports "liberal interventionism" and French troops staying (illegally) in Syria. France is a member of NATO and, since the end of Gaullism, a staunch ally of the US.

Maduro by contrast is a former bus driver whose country operates a largely socialistic economy. Its foreign policy is strongly anti-imperialist. Venezuela is an ally of Russia, and not the US. It opposed "regime change" in Syria.

You don't have to be Albert Einstein to work out why the Transnational economic/political/propaganda/academic and cultural elites, to use Fotopou-

los's classification in his book *The New World Order in Action*, are gunning for Maduro, but not for Macron.

Macron may be despised by millions of his fellow countrymen but he is not despised (far from it!) by the people who wield the greatest power in the West today. Maduro is. To get their hands on France's assets, the transnational elite need Macron to stay. To acquire Venezuela's assets, and in particular its oil, they need Maduro to go.

That could explain why much of the media coverage of the Venezuelan protests has been sympathetic, even if appalling acts of violence are carried out by anti-government protesters, such as the burning to

death of a black man in Caracas in 2017 while the coverage of protests in France has been begrudging.

Earlier this month in Britain, we witnessed the grotesque spectacle of an anti-war Labour MP, Chris Williamson, who opposes Western interference in Venezuela, being harangued by Channel 4 News presenter Jon Snow for not “changing sides” and supporting the recognition of an opposition leader as the country’s lawful president.

Can you imagine someone being attacked in such a way for not supporting Jean-Luc Melenchon being declared president of France?

Of course that’s not going to happen. The “transnational elite” don’t want to see Jean-Luc in power, nor Marine Le Pen for that matter. Macron is the “democratically elected” president and that’s the end of that, no matter how many take to the streets to protest. In Venezuela though, Maduro, despite his election victories, is ripe for plucking.

We have of course been here before. Lots of times.

We can state it as a rule that any leader of a strategically important, resource-rich coun-

try who obstructs the hegemonic aspirations of the transnational elite, will be subject to a campaign of demonisation and delegitimisation, as sure as night follows day.

In 2009, we were told that the presidential election in Iran which resulted in a victory for the “hardline” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was undoubtedly “stolen.” It took an ex-CIA man, Robert Baer, to challenge the dominant narrative. “One of the only reliable Western polls conducted in the run-up to the vote gave the election to Ahmadinejad – by higher percentages than the 63 percent he actually received”, he wrote in *Time*.

If the notion that Nicolas Maduro can no longer be considered the legitimate president of Venezuela because a large number of people oppose him, then, hardly any current leader in the world is “legitimate”,

Put simply, if “Maduro must go,” then so too, by the same logic, must Macron and indeed Donald Trump, who lest we forget did not win the popular vote in the US presidential election of 2016 and presides over a deeply divided country.

Furthermore, if “human rights” are brought into it, what about the “human rights” of street protesters in France who have subject to quite brutal treatment from authorities? Earlier this year 28-year-old Frenchman Hedi Martin was sentenced to six months in jail for calling for a Yellow Vest protest.

Hundreds have been arrested in the state-clamp down on dissent.

But it’s not in Venezuela, so we really shouldn’t be paying too much attention. Remember, the real revolution – one that challenges the transnational elite, instead of aiding their cause – will not be televised. And for sure, Macron won’t be cheering it. **CT**

*Neil Clark is a journalist, writer, broadcaster and blogger. He has written for newspapers and magazines in the UK and other countries and blogs at www.neilclark66.blogspot.com – where he invites readers to contribute to his legal fund to pay for court action against Oliver Kamm of *The Times*, who he has sued for libel and harassment. Full details at www.goo.gl/vaxyL*

**Get your FREE subscription to
ColdType**

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net – write SUBSCRIBE in the subject line

ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising Frontline, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow each month.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



13

Read the digital editions of Frontline, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at www.issuu.com/frontline.south

Corporate Canada behind slow-motion coup attempt

By Yves Engler

C'T'S convenient but incorrect to simply blame the USA for Ottawa's nefarious role in the slow motion attempted coup currently underway in Venezuela.

Critics of the Liberal government's push for regime change in Venezuela generally focus on their deference to Washington. But, Ottawa's hostility to Caracas is also motivated by important segments of corporate Canada, which have long been at odds with its Bolivarian government.

In a bid for a greater share of oil revenue, Venezuela forced private oil companies to become minority partners with the state oil company in 2007. This prompted Calgary-based PetroCanada to sell its portion of an oil project and for Canadian officials to privately complain about feeling "burned" by the Venezuelan government.

Venezuela has the largest recognised oil reserves in the world. The country also has enormous gold deposits.

A number of Canadian

companies clashed with Hugo Chavez's government over its bid to gain greater control over gold extraction.

Crystallex, Vanessa Ventures, Gold Reserve Inc. and Rusoro Mining all had prolonged legal battles with the Venezuelan government.

In 2016 Rusoro Mining won a \$1-billion claim under the Canada-Venezuela investment treaty. That same year Crystallex was awarded \$1.2-billion under the Canada-Venezuela investment treaty. Both companies continue to pursue payments and have pursued the money from Citgo, the Venezuelan government-owned gasoline retailer in the US.

In 2011 the *Financial Post* reported, "years after pushing foreign investment away from his gold mining sector, Venezuelan President Chavez is moving on to the next stage: outright nationalization".

Highlighting its importance to Canadian capital, the *Globe and Mail* editorial board criti-

cized the move in a piece titled "Chavez nationalizes all gold mines in Venezuela".

In a further sign of the Canadian mining sector's hostility to the Venezuelan government, Barrick Gold founder Peter Munk wrote a 2007 letter to the *Financial Times* headlined "Stop Chavez's Demagoguery Before it is Too Late":

"Your editorial 'Chavez in Control' was way too benign a characterisation of a dangerous dictator — the latest of a type who takes over a nation through the democratic process, and then perverts or abolishes it to perpetuate his own power ... aren't we ignoring the lessons of history and forgetting that the dictators Hitler, Mugabe, Pol Pot and so on became heads of state by a democratic process? ... autocratic demagogues in the Chavez mode get away with [it] until their countries become totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, or Slobadan Milosevic's Serbia ... Let us not give President Chavez a chance to do the same step-by-step transforma-

tion of Venezuela.”

A year earlier, the leading Canadian capitalist told Barri-
rick’s shareholders he’d prefer
to invest in the (Taliban control-
led) western part of Pakistan
than in Venezuela or Bolivia.

“If I had the choice to put my
money in one of the Latin Amer-
ican countries run by (Bolivi-
an President) Evo Morales or
Venezuelan President Hugo
Chavez — I know where I’d put
my buck,” said Munk, refer-
ring to moves to increase the
public stake in resource extrac-
tion to the detriment of foreign
investors.

Benefiting from the privatisa-
tion of state-run mining compa-
nies and loosened restrictions
on foreign investment, Canadi-
an mining investment in Latin
America has exploded since the
1990s.

No Canadian mining firm
operated in Peru or Mexico at
the start of the 1990s yet by
2010 there were nearly 600 Can-
adian mining firms in those
two countries. Canadian min-
ing companies have tens of bil-
lions of dollars invested in the
Americas. Any government in
the region that reverses the
neoliberal reforms that ena-
bled this growth is a threat to
Canadian mining profits.

Corporate Canada’s most
powerful sector was none too
pleased with Chavez’s social-
istic and nationalistic policies.
Alongside Canadian min-
ing growth, Canadian banks
expanded their operations in
a number of Latin American

countries to do more business
with Canadian mining clients.

More generally, Canadian
banks have benefited from
the liberalisation of foreign
investment rules and banking
regulations in the region. A few
days after Chavez’s 2013 death
the *Globe and Mail Report on
Business* published a front-page
story about Scotiabank’s inter-
ests in Venezuela, which were
acquired just before his rise to
power.

It noted: “Bank of Nova Sco-
tia [Scotiabank] is often lauded
for its bold expansion into Latin
America, having completed
major acquisitions in Colombia
and Peru. But when it comes to
Venezuela, the bank has done
little for the past 15 years – pri-
marily because the government
of President Hugo Chavez has
been hostile to large-scale for-
eign investment.”

While Scotiabank is a pow-
erhouse in Latin America,
Canada’s other big banks also
do significant business in the
region.

At the height of the left-right
ideological competition in the
region the Stephen Harper
government devoted signifi-
cant effort to strengthening
the region’s right-wing govern-
ments. Ottawa increased aid to
Latin America largely to stunt
growing rejection of neoliberal
capitalism and in 2010 trade
minister Peter Van Loan admit-
ted that the “secondary” goal of
Canada’s free trade agreement
with Colombia was to bolster
that country’s right-wing gov-
ernment against its Venezuelan
neighbour.

The *Globe and
Mail* explained: “The Cana-
dian government’s desire to
bolster fledgling free-market
democracies in Latin America
in an ideological competition
with left-leaning, authori-
tarian nationalists like Ven-
ezuela’s Hugo Chavez is rarely
expressed with force, even
though it is at the heart of an
Ottawa initiative.”

An unnamed Conservative
told the paper: “For countries
like Peru and Colombia that
are trying be helpful in the re-
gion, I think everybody’s trying
to keep them attached to the
free-market side of the debate
in Latin America, rather than
sloshing them over into the Bol-
ivarian [Venezuelan] side.”

Ottawa wants to crush the
independent/socialistic devel-
opments in Venezuela. More
generally, the growth of Cana-
dian mining, banking and
other sectors in Latin America
has pushed Ottawa towards a
more aggressive posture in the
region. So, while it is true that
Canada often does the bidding
of its US puppet master, capital-
ists in the Great White North
are also independent actors
seeking to fill their own pockets
and thwart the will of the Ven-
ezuelan people. **CT**

.....
Yves Engler is a Montreal-
based activist and author. He
has published eight books, the
most recent of which is *Left,
Right: Marching to the Beat of
Imperial Canada*. His web site
is www.yvesengler.com

Press freedom, sanctions and oil

By **David Edwards**

16

IN support of their claim that Maduro is a ‘tyrant’ who does not allow free elections, corporate media consistently point to a lack of press freedom. When British academic Alan MacLeod of Glasgow Media Group reviewed 166 Western media articles evaluating the state of press freedom between 1998-2014, he found that all depicted Venezuelan media as “caged”, or unfree.

Recently, Canadian political analyst Joe Emersberger commented in the *Canary*:

“The idea that Venezuela has a ‘caged’ media has to be one of the most unforgivable pieces of Western propaganda about the country. And a simple analysis shows just how ignorant that allegation is. Indeed, just a few days ago, one of Venezuela’s most widely read newspapers, *El Universal*, published an op-ed enthusiastically applauding the efforts of the US-backed opposition to bring about President Nicolas Maduro’s ouster by recognising opposition leader Juan Guaido as the country’s

new president. The op-ed said Guaido was managing his US-backed strategy ‘perfectly’. And it joyously stated that the US and its allies had Maduro surrounded, and almost ready to be ousted”.

In 2016, Emersberger wrote of earlier protests: “In fact the protests and the leading opposition leaders’ take on the protests are being extensively covered on the largest private networks: Venevision, Televen, Globovision. If people abroad sampled Venezuela’s TV media directly, as opposed to judging it by what is said about it by the international media and some big NGOs, they’d be shocked to find the opposition constantly denouncing the government and even making very thinly veiled appeals to the military to oust Maduro”.

The Venezuela Analysis website tweeted: “A cursory glance at any newspaper stand in Caracas will reveal that vast majority of Vzlan papers are anti-govt. Opposition also has

massive social media presence – just search Twitter for ‘Venezuela’ w/ Spanish filter. Intl journalists been lying re lack of media freedom for yrs”

Independent journalist Abby Martin did exactly as suggested and visited a Venezuelan newspaper stand. She offered this summary: “So, out of the seven papers, four are anti-government, two are pro-government, and one is neutral, can go either way. So, it looks like the press is not as controlled as we think”.

This is the kind of research even corporate journalists should be able to conduct for themselves.

Economic warfare – blocking recovery

Just as they blamed Saddam Hussein for the devastating impact of US-UK sanctions on Iraq (1990-2003), corporate media are united in laying the blame for Venezuela’s economic and humanitarian crisis at Maduro’s door. In fact, Venezuela has long been subject to severe US sanctions.



January's protests against Nicolas Maduro were eagerly followed by the international media, while rallies in favour of the president were largely ignored.

In 2017, political analyst Mark Weisbrot of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) commented: “At the end of August, the Trump administration imposed harsh sanctions on Venezuela that prevent the country from borrowing or selling assets in the US financial system. The new embargo will exacerbate shortages of food, medicine, and other essential goods, while severely limiting the policy options available to pull the country out of a deep depression”.

Trump’s order “makes a sustained recovery nearly impossible without outside help – or a new government that is approved by the Trump administration”.

Alexander Campbell, also of CEPR, reported: “Last week, the US formally adopted sanc-

tions on Venezuelan national oil company PDVSA, as well as on CITGO, its US-based distribution arm, as part of its press for regime change in Caracas. National Security Advisor John Bolton estimated the actions would affect some \$7-billion in assets and would block \$11-billion in revenue to the Venezuelan government over the next year”.

Campbell summarised Venezuelan economist Francisco Rodríguez’s 2018 analysis of the impact of sanctions: “Rodríguez’s basic story: the oil industry is critical to the Venezuelan government; under investment and the rapid decline in oil prices caused a significant drop in revenue; then, as oil prices began increasing,

Trump imposed sanctions making any international financial transaction extremely difficult and potentially ‘toxic’. Rodríguez explains... how Venezuelan and Colombian oil production both declined at the same rate, until the Trump financial embargo was implemented in August 2017. Then, Venezuela’s oil production collapsed...”.

The US media watch website, FAIR, placed all of this in context: “Trump ramped up the Obama administration’s sanctions, an action that caused Venezuelan oil production to plummet (FAIR.org, 12/17/18) and the economy to nosedive. Furthermore, US economic warfare against the country has cut Venezuela off from global capital markets – with the Trump administration threatening

bankers with 30 years in prison if they negotiate with Caracas a standard restructuring of its debt (AlterNet, 11/13/17). The UN Human Rights Council formally condemned the US, noting that the sanctions target ‘the poor and most vulnerable classes,’ called on all member states to break them, and even began discussing reparations the US should pay to Venezuela”.

Last month, Alfred de Zayas, the first UN rapporteur to visit Venezuela for 21 years, told the *Independent* that US sanctions are illegal and could amount to “crimes against humanity” under international law: “Former special rapporteur Alfred de Zayas, who finished his term at the UN in March, has criticised the US for engaging in ‘economic warfare’ against Venezuela which he said is hurting the economy and killing Venezuelans”.

The *Independent* continued:

“Sanctions kill,” he told The *Independent*, adding that they fall most heavily on the poorest people in society, demonstrably cause death through food and medicine shortages, lead to violations of human rights and are aimed at coercing economic change in a ‘sister democracy’.

“On his fact-finding mission to the country in late 2017, he found internal over dependence on oil, poor governance and corruption had hit the Venezuelan economy hard, but said ‘economic warfare’ practised by the US, EU and Canada are significant factors in the economic crisis”.

And: “Despite being the first

UN official to visit and report from Venezuela in 21 years, Mr de Zayas said his research into the causes of the country’s economic crisis has so far largely been ignored by the UN and the media, and caused little debate within the Human Rights Council.”

Our ProQuest UK national newspaper database search for the last 30 days for articles mentioning: “de Zayas” and “Venezuela” = 1 hit. That is, one mention in the entire UK press, the *Independent* article cited above.

An idea of the extent of Western economic warfare against Venezuela can be gained from this thread of examples sent by tweeter Francisco Nunes.

In 2015, a minimum wage comparison across Latin America by Mexico’s *Financialred.com.mx* found:

“Costa Rica has the second highest minimum wage in Central America and third in Latin America, US\$516 monthly. Venezuela tops the list at US\$885 and Panama US\$667.

“The average monthly minimum wage across Latin America is US\$354.”

The study reported: “The lowest in purchasing power is Colombia, where the minimum salary covers only 49.57 per cent of the Canasta Basica; in other words Colombians need more than two minimum wages to cover their basic needs. Colombia’s minimum wage is COP644.350 Colombian Pesos, while the cost of the Canasta

Basica is COP1,300,000.

“A similar situation is lived in Paraguay, Peru and Ecuador”.

Deep poverty is a problem across the region, but these crises never make the news. Even worse disasters are raging elsewhere, of course.

Since March 2015, a “coalition” of Sunni Arab states led by Saudi Arabia, and supported by the US, Britain and France, has been dropping bombs on neighbouring Yemen. In 2016, the independent journalist Felicity Arbuthnot reported that in one year, 330,000 homes, 648 mosques, 630 schools and institutes and 250 health facilities had been destroyed or damaged. In December 2016, it was reported that more than 10,000 people had died and three million had been displaced in the conflict. According to Patrick Cockburn in the *Independent*, the death toll now likely exceeds 60,000.

In August 2016, Oxfam reported that in excess of 21-million people in Yemen, out of a total population of around 27-million, needed humanitarian aid, more than in any other country. In December 2016, a new study by UNICEF, the UN children’s agency, reported that at least one child was dying every 10 minutes in Yemen.

As far as we are aware, nobody in the UK parliament or press has called for the overthrow of the Saudi regime, nor indeed of the UK government, for creating poverty and suffering that far exceeds anything seen in Venezuela.

Indeed, in October 2016,

Labour shadow foreign secretary, Emily Thornberry, placed a motion before the House of Commons that merely sought “to bring about a cessation of hostilities and provide humanitarian relief in Yemen” and “to suspend [UK government] support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in Yemen” pending an investigation of human rights violations. More than 100 Labour MPs – almost half the Labour Party – failed to support the motion. As a result, it was defeated by 283 votes to 193.

Similar indifference greeted the UN’s finding, in 1999, that the US-UK sanctions regime in Iraq had caused the deaths of 500,000 children under five. Senior UN diplomats who set up and ran the sanctions programme – and who later resigned in protest, describing it as “genocidal” – were almost completely ignored by the UK press. One such senior diplomat, Hans von Sponeck, wrote a superb, forensic book detailing US-UK responsibility for this mass death, *A Different Kind of War - The UN Sanctions Regime in Iraq* (Berghahn Books, 2006). The book has been mentioned once in the entire UK press and never been reviewed.

US Green Party Presidential candidate Jill Stein made the point: “The same blowhard politicians talking about ‘bringing democracy’ to Venezuela have aided & abetted the Saudi dictators executing dissidents, mur-

dering journalists & starving millions of kids in Yemen. They don’t give a damn about democracy or poor people’s lives. It’s about OIL”.

As Adam Johnson notes wryly, it is as if US liberals “keep a real-time report card on these Official Bad Regimes, and if these regimes – due to an ill-defined rubric of un-democraticness and human rights – fall below a score of say, “60,” they become illegitimate and unworthy of defense as such”.

Of course, no “real-time reports” are kept on “us” and “our” allies. The result is propaganda, not journalism.

Oil - “We could have had anything we wanted’

If Maduro is not in fact a tyrant, if Venezuela does in fact have a comparatively free press and fair elections; if the US-UK corporate press is not in fact concerned about the fairness of elections, press freedom, poverty and mass death, even when caused by their own governments – then what is their problem with the Maduro government?

A vague gesture in the direction of Truth was made by Channel 4’s Alex Thomson, who asked on January 27:

“Curious how much Venezuela suddenly matters to the EU when the recent notorious election in Bangladesh didn’t register like this ... nor the Catalan question ... nor the host of murderous dictators it supports across the Gulf. Why Caracas guys?”

As we replied, the reason is

hardly in doubt. We linked to a WikiLeaks US document:

“US GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT... VENEZUELA ...

“OUR FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS IN VENEZUELA ARE:

“THAT VENEZUELA CONTINUE TO SUPPLY A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF OUR PETROLEUM IMPORTS AND CONTINUE TO FOLLOW A MODERATE AND RESPONSIBLE OIL PRICE POSITION IN OPEC”

RT’s *Going Underground* tweeted a list of the “Largest proven oil reserves in the world”:

- “1. Venezuela
- “2. Saudi Arabia
- “4. Iran
- “5. Iraq
- “9. Libya

“The US is pursuing regime change/executed regime change against 4 of these countries in 16 years”.

On Twitter, redfish provided some detail on quantities of oil, showing that Venezuela is top of the list.

In an interview with Sky News, Peter Watt, lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Sheffield, noted that “90 per cent of Venezuela’s oil exports are destined for the United States, it’s about 700,000 barrels of oil every day”,

Marco Rubio, the US Senator for Florida, tweeted: “Biggest buyers of Venezuelan oil are @ValeroEnergy & @Chevron. Refining heavy crude from

#Venezuela supports great jobs in Gulf Coast.

“For the sake of these US workers I hope they will begin working with administration of President Guaido & cut off illegitimate Maduro regime”.

A few days later, apparently with complete unawareness, Rubio tweeted again: “Blessed the man who sets his security in the LORD, who turns not to the arrogant or to those who stray after falsehood. – Psalms 40:5”

In 2011, before becoming President, Donald Trump lamented the outcome of the US “intervention” in oil-rich Libya:

“The fact is, what we should’ve done is, we should have asked the rebels when they came to us. We should’ve said, ‘We’ll help you, but we want 50 percent of the oil’. They would have absolutely said, ‘Okay!’, one hundred per cent. In fact, they would have said, ‘How about 75 percent?’ ... Isn’t it sad, we could have had anything we wanted. We could’ve had 50 percent of those oil fields. You know, in the old days when you had a war, it’s ‘To the victor belong the spoils.’ So, we could have had some something special.”

Who cared that the oil belonged to Libya? Anyone who doubts that this same “compassion” informs US concern for



US special envoy Elliott Abrams: Appalling record.

the people of Venezuela now, should reflect on the naming of Elliott Abrams as America’s special envoy for Venezuela. Abrams has a simply appalling record of brutalising Latin America and other regions as part of the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush administrations. In 2002, the *Observer* reported of the coup that temporarily overthrow Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez that “the crucial figure around the coup was Abrams”, and that he gave a “nod” to the plotters.

US national security adviser, John Bolton, has urged the Venezuelan military to overthrow the democratically elected government: “We also today call on the Venezuelan military and security forces to accept the peaceful, democratic and constitutional transfer of power”.

Bolton has also said: “It’ll make a big difference to the United States economically, if we could have American oil

companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela”.

The *Independent* reports: “Venezuela’s government-in-waiting will allow foreign private oil companies a greater stake in joint ventures with its state-owned oil giant, Juan Guaido’s envoy to the US has said”.

Conclusion – what we are supposed to think

On January 26, the BBC reported: “Maduro given ultimatum by European leaders”.

We tweeted in response: “An ultimatum? By what right?”.

Our question was retweeted 369 times and liked 649 times.

Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Gaddafi in Libya also received “ultimatums” from the self-designated “Rulers of the World”, who then went on to destroy both countries. Lessons learned by corporate journalists on “our” right to act as moral arbiters? None.

Consider, for example, the moment on February 4, when Channel 4’s Jon Snow gave Labour MP Chris Williamson a piece of his mind: “Look, Mr. Williamson, you and Mr. Corbyn are in a very nasty corner now. You’ve got a country that is in terrible, terrible condition, and that is down to the people who ran it and the people you supported. Isn’t it time you changed sides and got behind what is happening now?”.

As noted above, many countries are in “terrible, terrible condition”, often thanks to Western “intervention”, without journalists being the least bit concerned.

And notice: Snow was asking Williamson to get behind Trump’s policy in Venezuela. Yes, that Trump – the monster that “mainstream” media have endlessly depicted as an out and out fascist.

Snow’s comment was a perfect example of a journalist being swept up by the mindless conformity of a propaganda blitz – everyone always, always has to get behind “what is happening now” when power is targeting Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Venezuela. To do anything less is irresponsible, shameful, is siding with “the Bad Guy”.

And what do the people of Venezuela – the people who have suffered so much under US-backed, right-wing tyrannies in the past - actually want? The *Canary* reports that “the vast majority of Venezuelan people oppose military intervention and US sanctions”.

“The poll, conducted by Hinterlaces in early January 2019, found that ‘86 percent of Venezuelans would disagree with international military intervention’. More than eight out of ten Venezuelans also oppose US sanctions on the country”.

Corporate politicians and journalists are playing a very familiar game. We, the public, are supposed to think: Yes, there’s lots of oil, but maybe they really do know that Sadd-

am Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. Maybe they genuinely are worried that he might use them or give them to terrorists. Bush looks totally convinced, Blair seems honest and sincere.

In fact, Saddam Hussein did not have any WMD – it was fake news. In 2007, economist Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the US Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, wrote in his memoir: “I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil.” (Leader, ‘Power, not oil, Mr Greenspan,’ *Sunday Times*, September 16, 2007.)

We are supposed to think: Yes, there’s lots of oil, but maybe they are worried that Gaddafi is going to commit a terrible massacre in Benghazi. Obama seems deeply concerned, so does Cameron.

In fact, Gaddafi was not planning a massacre – the claim was a fraud. In 2011, *Real News* interviewed Kevin G. Hall, the national economics correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers, who had studied the WikiLeaks material on Libya. Hall said: “As a matter of fact, we went through 251,000 [leaked] documents... Of those, a full 10 percent of them, a full 10 percent of those documents, reference in some way, shape, or form oil”. (“WikiLeaks reveals US wanted to keep Russia out of Libyan oil”. *The Real News*, 11 May 2011)

Hall concluded: “It is all about oil”.

We are supposed to think: Yes, there’s lots of oil, but maybe they really are worried that Venezuelans are suffering terribly, maybe they really do believe they would be better off under a new leader. Trump seems deranged, but maybe he has a heart after all.

Time and again, we are asked to give the benefit of the doubt to famously cynical, greed-driven Western political leaders and parties. We can’t believe they can be simply lying to us, making it up – week after week, month after month – so that they and their powerful corporate allies can get their hands on oil. Time and again, too many of us defer to authority and whole countries are destroyed.

The final pages of human history before climate collapse may show that the climate-denying Trump regime trashed one more country in its determination to control and burn yet more oil, thereby guaranteeing its own destruction and the destruction of the entire human race, and most of life on earth. With all this the work of a groping, orange-haired, reality-denying reality TV billionaire selling himself as a “man of the people”,

A tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing, indeed. **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog www.medialens.com – where this essay was first published.

Canada talks democracy, but the US eyes the oil

By Linda McQuaig

22

MAYBE my Spanish isn't good enough, but on a quick read-through of the Venezuelan constitution I could not find the section where it specified that Venezuela's president would be chosen by Canada.

I'm sure the section must be in there, however, because Canada exercised that power in recognising Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president – even though the Venezuelan people had chosen Nicolas Maduro in national elections last year.

The Trudeau government, assuming a leadership role as host of the “Lima Group”, explained that Maduro is not legitimate because the national elections he won were flawed, allowing the presidency to fall to Guaido, the head of the national assembly.

(Similarly, once it has been established that the 2016 US elections were flawed by Russian meddling, we can expect the Trudeau government to recognise Nancy Pelosi as the legitimate president of the Unit-

ed States.)

The turmoil in Venezuela has faded from the news somewhat this week, but the real action is just beginning. US President Donald Trump has assembled a team of hatchetmen, including war-hawks John Bolton and Elliott Abrams, to work on regime change in Venezuela.

It was this team that set things in motion late last month with a phone call from Vice President Mike Pence to Guaido, pledging US support “if he seized the reins of government”, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Canada has called for a peaceful transition. But if the US invades Venezuela to formally install Guaido, Canada will have played its part in teeing things up. Washington has been focused on regime change in Venezuela since the charismatic Hugo Chavez won the 1998 election with massive support from the nation's poor, and began redirecting the country's oil wealth to health care, edu-

cation and poverty alleviation. The privileged classes, who had managed the oil industry and siphoned billions out of the country, strongly resisted Chavez and later his successor Maduro.

As tensions escalated in the deeply polarised nation, the Trump administration imposed brutal sanctions that, along with falling world oil prices and economic mismanagement, have devastated the Venezuelan economy. Canada piled on its own sanctions which, while not as broad, lent credence to the idea that Venezuela deserved punishment.

The Trudeau government talks about restoring democracy to Venezuela, hoping to keep the focus off any suspicions that our involvement is helping Washington get control of Venezuela's oil reserves, which happen to be the world's largest.

One problem for Canada in confining the story to this “restoring democracy” narrative is that the Trump administration talks unabashedly about its keenness to open up



Trudeau



Canada's Justin Trudeau and Chrystia Freeland. Their government is acting as Trump's wingman.

Venezuela's oil to development by US oil companies, after years of it being under the control of Venezuela's state-owned oil company.

Bolton, Trump's national security adviser, showed this keenness in a recent interview on Fox Business when he said: "It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela".

This could amount to "massive opportunities" for US oil companies, said Scott Modell, a CIA agent turned energy analyst, in an interview last week on CBC Radio's *As It Happens*.

Modell added that Trump is relying on the support of ultra-conservative governments in Argentina and Brazil (both

members of the Lima Group) to bring about regime change in Venezuela.

But Canada is useful in a different way. Unlike those notorious right-wing Latin governments, Canada under Justin Trudeau has cultivated an image in the world as a "rule of law" country, with Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland rhapsodising about a rules-based international order in defiance of Trump's unilateralism.

Her apparent willingness to "defy" Trump only adds to Canada's credibility with many Western nations. No doubt this helped when Trudeau phoned a number of foreign leaders, including those of Ireland and Italy, to line up international

support for Guaido.

This Canadian credibility could also provide some cover for Washington if it uses force to install Guaido. After all, it will be installing a regime that has been endorsed by law-abiding Canada.

And so the Trudeau government presents itself as championing international law, in defiance of Trump, even when it's acting as Trump's wingman.

CT

*Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author. Her book *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths* was among the books selected by the *Literary Review of Canada* as the "25 most influential Canadian books of the past 25 years." This article first appeared in the *Toronto Star*.*

GET YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO COLDTYPE

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net – write **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject line

Making globalism great again

By CJ Hopkins

24

MAYBE Donald Trump isn't as stupid as I thought. I'd hate to have to admit that publicly, but it does kind of seem like he has put one over on the liberal corporate media this time. Scanning the recent Trump-related news, I couldn't help but notice a significant decline in the number of references to Weimar, Germany, Adolf Hitler, and "the brink of fascism" that America has supposedly been teetering on since Hillary Clinton lost the election.

I googled around pretty well, I think, but I couldn't find a single editorial warning that Trump is about to summarily cancel the US Constitution, dissolve Congress, and proclaim himself Fuhrer. Nor did I see any mention of Auschwitz, or any other Nazi stuff ... which is weird, considering that the Hitler hysteria has been a standard feature of the official narrative we've been subjected to for the last two years.

So how did Trump finally get

the liberal corporate media to stop calling him a fascist? He did that by acting like a fascist (ie, like a "normal" president). Which is to say he did the bidding of the deep state goons and corporate mandarins that manage the global capitalist empire ... the smiley, happy, democracy-spreading, post-fascist version of fascism we live under.

I'm referring, of course, to Venezuela, which is one of a handful of uncooperative countries that are not playing ball with global capitalism and which haven't been "regime changed" yet. Trump green-lit the attempted coup purportedly being staged by the Venezuelan "opposition", but which is obviously a US operation, or, rather, a global capitalist operation.

As soon as he did, the corporate media immediately suspended calling him a fascist, and comparing him to Adolf Hitler, and so on, and started spewing out blatant propaganda supporting his effort to overthrow the elected government of a sovereign country.

Overthrowing the govern-

ments of sovereign countries, destroying their economies, stealing their gold, and otherwise bringing them into the fold of the global capitalist "international community" is not exactly what most folks thought Trump meant by "Make America Great Again".

Many Americans have never been to Venezuela, or Syria, or anywhere else the global capitalist empire has been ruthlessly restructuring since shortly after the end of the Cold War. They have not been lying awake at night worrying about Venezuelan democracy, or Syrian democracy, or Ukrainian democracy.

This is not because Americans are a heartless people, or an ignorant or a selfish people. It is because, well, it is because they are Americans (or, rather, because they believe they are Americans), and thus are more interested in the problems of Americans than in the problems of people in faraway lands that have nothing whatsoever to do with America.

Notwithstanding what the

corporate media will tell you, Americans elected Donald Trump, a preposterous, self-aggrandising ass clown, not because they were latent Nazis, or because they were brain-washed by Russian hackers, but, primarily, because they wanted to believe that he sincerely cared about America, and was going to try to “make it great again” (whatever that was supposed to mean, exactly).

Unfortunately, there is no America. There is nothing to make great again. “America” is a fiction, a fantasy, a nostalgia that hucksters like Donald Trump (and other, marginally less buffoonish hucksters) use to sell whatever they are selling ... themselves, wars, cars, whatever.

What there is, in reality, instead of America, is a supranational global capitalist empire, a decentralised, inter-dependent network of global corporations, financial institutions, national governments, intelligence agencies, supranational governmental entities, military forces, media, and so on. If that sounds far-fetched or conspiratorial, look at what is going on in Venezuela.

The entire global capitalist empire is working in concert to force the elected president of the country out of office. The US, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, Austria, Denmark, Poland, the Netherlands, Israel, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and

Argentina have officially recognised Juan Guaido as the legitimate president of Venezuela, in spite of the fact that no one elected him.

Only the empire’s official evil enemies (ie, Russia, China, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and other uncooperative countries) are objecting to this “democratic” coup. The global financial system (ie, banks) has frozen (ie, stolen) Venezuela’s assets, and is attempting to transfer them to Guaido so he can buy the



US oil companies such as Exxon-Mobil have their greedy eyes on Venezuela’s vast reserves.

Venezuelan military.

The corporate media are hammering out the official narrative like a Goebbelsian piano in an effort to convince the general public that all this has something to do with democracy. You would have to be a total moron or hopelessly brain-washed not to recognise what is happening.

What is happening has nothing to do with America ...

the “America” that Americans believe they live in and that many of them want to “make great again”.

What is happening is exactly what has been happening around the world since the end of the Cold War, albeit most dramatically in the Middle East.

The de facto global capitalist empire is restructuring the planet with virtual impunity. It is methodically eliminating any and all impediments to the hegemony of global capitalism, and the privatisation and commodification of everything.

Venezuela is one of these impediments. Overthrowing its government has nothing to do with America, or the lives of actual Americans. “America” is not to go conquering Venezuela and plant an American flag on its soil. “America” is not going to steal its oil, ship it “home”, and parcel it out to

“Americans” in their pickups in the parking lot of Walmart.

What about those American oil corporations? They want that Venezuelan oil, don’t they? Well, sure they do, but here’s the thing ... there are no “American” oil corporations. Corporations, especially multi-billion dollar transnational corporations (eg, Chevron, ExxonMobil, et al.) have no nationalities, nor any real allegiances, other than to their major shareholders.

Chevron, for example, whose major shareholders are asset management and mutual fund companies like Black Rock, The Vanguard Group, SSgA Funds Management, Geode Capital Management, Wellington Management, and other transnational, multi-trillion dollar outfits.

Do you really believe that being nominally headquartered in Boston or New York makes these companies “American,” or that Deutsche Bank is a “German” bank, or that BP is a “British” company?

And Venezuela is just the most recent blatant example of the empire in action. Ask yourself, honestly, what have the “American” regime change ops throughout the Greater Middle East done for any actual Americans, other than get a lot of them killed?

Oh, and how about those bailouts for all those transnational “American” investment banks? Or the billions “America” provides to Israel? Someone please explain how enriching the shareholders of transnational corporations like Raytheon, Boeing, and Lockheed Martin by selling billions in weapons to Saudi Arabian Islamists is benefiting “the American people”.

How much of that Saudi money are you seeing? And, wait, I’ve got another one for you. Call up your friendly 401K manager, ask how your Pfizer shares are doing, then compare that to what you’re paying some “American” insurance corporation to not really cover you.

For the last 200 years or so,

we have been conditioned to think of ourselves as the citizens of a collection of sovereign nation states, as “Americans,” “Germans,” “Greeks,” and so on.

There are no more sovereign nation states. Global capitalism has done away with them. Which is why we are experiencing a “neo-nationalist” backlash. Trump, Brexit, the so-called “new populism” ... these are the death throes of national sovereignty, like the thrashing of a suffocating fish before you whack it and drop it in the cooler.

The battle is over, but the fish doesn’t know that. It didn’t even realise there was a battle until it suddenly got jerked up out of the water.

In any event, here we are, at the advent of the global capitalist empire. We are not going back to the 19th-century, nor even to the early 20th-century. Neither Donald Trump nor anyone else is going to “Make America Great Again”. Global capitalism will continue to remake the world into one gigantic marketplace where we work ourselves to death at bullshit jobs in order to buy things we don’t need, accumulating debts we can never pay back, the interest on which will further enrich the global capitalist ruling classes, who, as you may have noticed, are preparing for the future by purchasing luxury underground bunkers and post-apocalyptic compounds in New Zealand.

That, and militarising the police, who they will need to maintain “public order” ... you know, like they are doing in France at the moment, by beating, blinding, and hideously maiming those Gilets Jaunes (ie, Yellow Vest) protesters that the corporate media are doing their best to demonise and/or render invisible.

Or, who knows, Americans (and other Western consumers) might take a page from those Yellow Vests, set aside their political differences (or at least ignore their hatred of each other long enough to actually try to achieve something), and focus their anger at the politicians and corporations that actually run the empire, as opposed to, you know, illegal immigrants and imaginary legions of Nazis and Russians.

In the immortal words of General Buck Turgidson, “I’m not saying we wouldn’t get our hair mussed”, but, heck, it might be worth a try, especially since, the way things are going, we are probably going end up out there anyway. **CT**

***CJ Hopkins** is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, ZONE 23, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org*



Trump and Pence: Why do mainstream media outlets, which resist the administration at home, neatly align themselves with the administration's Venezuela policy?

How the media manufacture consent for regime change

27

By Alan MacLeod

THE latest extraordinary chapter in the bizarre world of Venezuelan politics is playing out before our eyes. After winning the 2018 presidential elections, Nicolas Maduro was inaugurated in January, only for the head of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido – a man whom, at the time, less than 20 percent of the country had even heard of – to

declare himself President.

Guaido was immediately backed by the governments of the US and UK, with Vice President Mike Pence stating, “Nicolas Maduro is a dictator with no legitimate claim to power. He has never won the presidency in a free and fair election, and has maintained his grip of power by imprisoning anyone who dares to oppose him”.

I've previously catalogued

how the media has been quick to echo the idea that Maduro is completely illegitimate and has been eager to position America's stance towards Venezuelan politics as one of a neutral arbiter.

Why do mainstream media outlets, who resist Trump at home, neatly align themselves with his administration's Venezuela policy? And why has there so little criticism of

what is essentially an ongoing US-backed coup attempt?

In a recent study, I analysed how the media presented the 2018 elections in Colombia and Venezuela. Looking at how these two elections were covered can help us understand why there's so little nuance in the media coverage of US-Venezuela relations.

A seminal study inspires

To study the 2018 elections, I used the propaganda model media scholars Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky outlined in their book *Manufacturing Consent*. Their propaganda model contends that mainstream, corporate media is not a neutral venue for truth. Instead, it is a vehicle that advances the interests of media owners and their advertisers.

The authors argue that, in contrast to the top-down censorship of authoritarian states, these outlets achieve uniform opinions through the pre-selection of “right-thinking” editors and reporters who have been trained at the “right” schools. They then disseminate information – or, at the very least, self-censor – in a way that protects or advances the ideology of ownership, advertisers and official sources.

Herman and Chomsky highlight this phenomenon through coverage of elections in three countries: Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The Guatemalan presidential election of 1982 and the Honduran presidential election of 1984 to 1985 were held under what



Dan Rather: “Heartening”.

Herman and Chomsky describe as “conditions of severe, ongoing state terror against the civilian population”. They show how the US media ignored the enormous waves of violence inundating these two elections. CBS’s Dan Rather, for example, described the events in Guatemala as “heartening”.

Meanwhile, Herman and Chomsky explain that the 1984 Nicaraguan elections were won by the Marxist sandinistas in a “model of probity and fairness by Latin American standards”. Yet American media coverage portrayed this election with a relentless tone of negativity. Time Magazine reported that the election mood was “one of indifference,” with voters “too apathetic to go to the polls” and that “the outcome was never in doubt,” suggesting a rigged system, while many articles discussed the “fear” of Nicaraguan voters.

Mainstream media coverage, they concluded, manufac-

tured a reality that was conducive to the interests of the US government – which sought to prop up their client states and demonise Nicaragua – and multinational corporations, who were eager to work with sympathetic right-wing governments to increase their foothold in Central America.

Coverage of two elections: A case study

Using this paired example method to test the propaganda model I studied Western media coverage of the 2018 elections in Colombia – a key US ally – and Venezuela, a sworn enemy. In Colombia, the conservative Ivan Duque triumphed; in Venezuela, the socialist Maduro won.

The elections in Colombia took place under a heightened state of terror, with the left-wing candidate Gustavo Petro narrowly surviving an assassination attempt and right-wing paramilitaries issuing generalised threats to those who tried to vote for him. The incumbent conservative party under President Alvaro Uribe had massacred over 10,000 civilians, while American election observers, such as University of Pittsburgh law professor Daniel Kovalik, were mistaken for voters and offered bribes to vote for Duque. There were over 250 official electoral fraud complaints.

The mainstream media, however, overwhelmingly endorsed the elections in the US-ally state, presenting it as a moment of hope for the country and downplaying any negative aspects, especially violence.

CNN reported that “though there have been isolated incidents of violence related to the election, they have been minimal”. The Associated Press went further, claiming the real danger facing Colombia was that Petro would push the country “dangerously to the left” while NPR described Alvaro Uribe as “immensely popular”. and failed to mention any connection to the massacres his government had implemented.

In contrast, the mainstream media virtually unanimously presented the simultaneously occurring elections in Venezuela as a travesty, the “coronation of a dictator”, according to the *Independent*. Other major outlets described them as “heavily rigged”, “the fortification of a dictatorship” and a “farce cementing autocracy.” The *Miami Herald* called them “fraudulent,” a “sham”, a “charade” and a “joke” in one column alone.

There were certainly some questionable aspects to the Venezuelan election. However, the idea of a full-blown “sham election” was flatly contradicted by every international election observation organisation monitoring the elections, many of whom produced detailed reports attesting to their exemplary organisation and implementation. There were a number of prominent international observers monitoring the 2018 elections, including former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Zapatero, who said he “did not have any doubt about the voting process”, and the ex-President

of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, who declared the “impeccably organised” elections proceeded with “absolute normalcy”.

But you would have been hard pressed to find any acknowledgment of this in Western media outlets.

The administration shows its true hand

Instead, since Maduro’s swearing-in, many seem to have been openly championing regime change in the country. One of the few positive things about the Trump administration is that it does not try to conceal its true intentions behind misleading, flowery words. John Bolton, Trump’s National Security Advisor, has openly described Venezuela as a business opportunity.

“It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela”, he said.

With clear parallels to the build-up to the Iraq War, he also labelled Venezuela as belonging to a “troika of tyranny”, and recently suggested sending Maduro to Guantanamo Bay. The UK government has blocked the transfer of Venezuela’s gold out of the Bank of England after it declared Guaido its legitimate leader. At the same time, the US has ramped up its sanctions on the beleaguered nation, in spite of pleas from the UN to do the opposite.

The Human Rights Council formally condemned them, noting they made the crisis far worse. One Special Rapporteur declared them a possible “crime against humanity”.

And yet the press overwhelmingly abets the pretence of “democracy promotion” and protection of human rights. The *Washington Post*, for example, applauded the administration’s actions, urging it to work with the body to tighten the sanctions while claiming Guaido had given hope to the people of Venezuela.

The mainstream media seems to ignore the opinions of everyday Venezuelans. Eighty-six percent are against military intervention and 81 percent disagree with the current sanctions, according to a recent local poll. Perhaps there’s a ulterior motive to the mainstream media’s uniform approach in delegitimising Maduro’s regime: to undermine and attack the rise of socialist-inspired ideas back home.

When it comes to key issues such as foreign policy, the charade that the media cares about impartiality and truth withers away to reveal its true role in serving the powerful. **CT**

Alan MacLeod

(@AlanRMacLeod) is an academic and writer for *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*. His book, *Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting* was published in April.

Trump threatens families of Venezuelan military

By Caitlin Johnstone

30

TODAY, President Trump presented Venezuela’s military officers with a choice - work for a democratic future for all Venezuelans or see the financial circle close for their families and loved ones,” tweeted US National Security Advisor John Bolton today following a Miami speech by the president on February 18.

If you know anything about John Bolton, you just know he typed “noose” first instead of “circle”.

This would be the same John Bolton, for the record, who once threatened to murder an international official’s children for obstructing his attempts to manufacture support for the Iraq invasion which killed a million human beings and plunged the region into terrorism and chaos. A man named José Bustani was the director-general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in early 2002, during which time the *Intercept* reports he came under fire for having too much

success in diplomacy with the Iraqi government, which undermined the case for an invasion. So Bolton attempted to scare him off.

From the *Intercept*: “Cheney wants you out,” Bustani recalled Bolton saying, referring to the then-vice president of the United States. “We can’t accept your management style.”

Bolton continued, according to Bustani’s recollections: “You have 24 hours to leave the organisation, and if you don’t comply with this decision by Washington, we have ways to retaliate against you.”

There was a pause.

“We know where your kids live. You have two sons in New York.”

And now we see this same psychopath threatening to starve and impoverish the families of a sovereign nation’s military if they don’t facilitate a coup by the most violent government on earth in the most oil-rich nation on the planet. All in the name of spreading

Freedom and Democracy™, of course.

“Today, President Trump presented Venezuela’s military officers with a choice - work for a democratic future for all Venezuelans or see the financial circle close for their families and loved ones”. – John Bolton (@AmbJohnBolton) February 18, 2019 (Twitter.com).

Bolton, who was in attendance at the president’s speech, gave a more direct and honest summary of what was happening than the one Trump’s speechwriters fed him.

“We seek a peaceful transition of power, but all options are open,” Trump said of the US-led Venezuela coup agenda. “We want to restore Venezuelan democracy, and we believe that the Venezuelan military and its leadership have a vital role to play in this process. If you choose this path, you have an opportunity to help forge a safe and prosperous future for all of the people of Venezuela. Or you can choose the second path: continuing to support Maduro. If you choose this path, you will

find no safe harbour, no easy exit, and no way out. You will lose everything”.

This would be the same President Trump, for the record, who just hours earlier tweeted about “an illegal coup attempt on the President of the United States”, regarding statements made by former Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe that there had been discussions among top officials at the Justice Department and the FBI about possibly using the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office. This same man who is outraged about

an attempt to oust him early on in his administration using laws and bureaucracy has no qualms about ousting the government of a sovereign nation using starvation sanctions, CIA ops, an aggressive campaign to deligitimise Maduro, and now outright threats to the nation’s military personnel.

Trump has also been tweeting furiously about the “lies” McCabe told about him, after he wrote the following in his new book about a 2017 Oval Office meeting:

“Then the president talked about Venezuela. That’s the country we should be going to war with, he said. They have all that oil and they’re right on our back door. He continued on, rambling and spitballing about whatever came to mind”.

I am sure that McCabe is as



Andrew McCabe: Controversial remarks.

much of a deceitful sleaze as every other FBI boss, but that part at least sounds truthful.

“Page 136 of McCabe’s new book, recounting a 2017 Oval Office meeting: “Then the president talked about Venezuela. That’s the country we should be going to war with, he said. They have all that oil and they’re right on our back door.” – Aaron Maté (@aaronjmate) February 18, 2019 (Twitter.com)

For the rest of Trump’s speech he very tediously introduced all his loyal sycophants backing his Venezuela agendas, he bloviated repeatedly about the horrible horrifying terror of socialism, he kept referring to Venezuela’s elected leader as “Dictator Maduro” and some rando that fewer than one in five Venezuelans had even heard of until last month as “President Guaido”. He tossed out nonsensical red herrings about Ven-

ezuela being controlled by Cuba, and he repeated his administration’s braindead talking point about the Venezuelan government refusing to let in US “humanitarian aid”, which the Red Cross, the UN, and even war-happy NPR recognize as a transparent ploy to foment regime change.

These are the people you’re meant to believe are the “good guys” coming to the rescue, America. The guys who threaten to kill the families of officials if they aren’t given their way. The guys who threaten to starve the families of military officials who

don’t turn on their government and kill anyone who tries to stop them. The guys who pick mass murder facilitator Elliott Abrams to spearhead Venezuela’s transition to Freedom and Democracy™. The guys who helped murder a million Iraqis and plunge us into a new era of military expansionism and Orwellian surveillance. Those guys.

Sometimes it’s hard to say what’s more frustrating: the fact that these deadly imperialist regime change power grabs keep happening, or the fact that people keep buying the same tired old stories that are used to sell them. **CT**

.....
Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian-based blogger. She has a podcast and a new book *Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers*. Follow her at www.caitlinjohstone.com

Neo-liberal laboratory prepares for economic theft

By Justin Podur

As we watch a US-backed coup unfold in a distant country, as in Venezuela today, our eyes are drawn to the diplomatic, military, and economic elements of the US campaign. The picture of a scowling John Bolton with a big yellow notepad with the message, “5,000 troops to Colombia” reveals the diplomatic and military elements. The *New York Times* headline “US Sanctions Are Aimed at Venezuela’s Oil. Its Citizens May Suffer First” reveals the economic element.

But US foreign policy mobilizes every available resource for regime change and for counterinsurgency. Among those resources, you will always find academics. The pen may not always be mightier than the sword, but behind every US-backed war on a foreign people there will be a body of scholarly work.

The academic laboratory of the Venezuelan coup has the highest academic pedigree of all – it’s housed at Harvard.

Under the auspices of the university’s Center for International Development, the Venezuela project of the Harvard Growth Lab (there are growth labs for other countries as well, including India and Sri Lanka) is full of academic heavyweights, including Lawrence Summers (who once famously argued that Africa was underpolluted).

Among the leaders of the growth lab is Ricardo Hausmann, now an adviser to Juan Guaido who has “already drafted a plan to rebuild the nation, from economy to energy”.

In an interview with *Bloomberg Surveillance*, Hausmann was asked who would be there to rebuild Venezuela after the coup – the IMF, the World Bank? Hausmann replied, “we have been in touch with all of them. ... I have been working for three years on a ‘morning after’ plan for Venezuela.” The hosts interrupted him before he could get into detail, but the interview concluded that bringing back the “wonderful

Venezuela of old”, for investors, would necessitate international financial support.

Never mind that the “wonderful Venezuela of old” was maintained through a corrupt compact between two ruling parties (called Punto Fijo) and the imprisonment and torture of political opponents – amply documented but forgotten by those who accuse Maduro of the same crimes.

The Growth Lab website provides some other ideas of what Hausmann’s plan likely including: “Chavez’s literacy, health care, and food subsidy Missions,” a growth lab paper argues, have not reduced poverty (and, implicitly, should go).

Another paper argues that the underperformance of the Venezuelan oil industry was due to the country’s lack of appeal to foreign investors (hence Venezuela should implicitly be made more appealing to this all-important group).

A third paper argues that “weak property rights” and the “flawed functioning of markets” are harming the busi-

ness environment – no doubt strengthening property rights and getting those markets functioning again will be in the plan.

If this sounds like the same kind of neo-liberal prescription that devastated Latin American countries for generations and was imposed and maintained through torture and dictatorship from Chile and Brazil to Venezuela itself, that is because the motivation is to bring back the “wonderful Venezuela of old”.

A *Wall Street Journal* article by Bob Davis from 2005 credits Hausmann with being part of the original Washington Consensus in 1989, “the economic manifesto [that] identified government as a roadblock to prosperity, and called for dismantling trade barriers, eliminating budget deficits, selling off state-owned industries and opening Latin nations to foreign investment”.

Decades later, if the *WSJ* article is to be believed, Hausmann looked at the data and found “Deep reforms; lousy growth” and concluded that there “must be something wrong with the theories of growth.”

Hausmann’s academic work is highly technical, macroeconomic modelling. The models reveal the consequences of the assumptions used to construct



Thumbs up to regime change: US National Security Adviser John Bolton.

them: at times there is some data fit to them.

Others are applied mathematics exercises. A paper on 2005 “Growth Accelerations” looks for periods when countries’ economies grew quickly.

An earlier paper, from 2002, presents a roundabout argument on the so-called “resource curse,” in which oil-dependent economies (like Venezuela) suffer poor developmental performance, arguing at that time that “more interventionist policies to subsidize investment in the non-tradable sector may also have a role to play”.

But whether it was written

by Hausmann or not, the economic plan of Guaido’s post-coup government has no such heterodox ideas in it, however. It is difficult to imagine Hausmann or Guaido going against Bolton, who told Fox News that “It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela”.

The post-coup Venezuelan economy will not be all about mathematically rigorous experiments in economic growth like Hausmann’s academic work. It

will be about the privatisation of Venezuela’s assets.

Hausmann might have a long record of publishing models of economic growth, but he has maintained a passion for regime change in Venezuela for more than a decade – even at the expense of academic integrity.

After the Venezuelan opposition failed to oust Chavez in a coup in 2002 and failed again to oust him using a strike of the Venezuelan oil company in 2003, they resorted to constitutional means – a recall referendum, in 2004.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected the recall in the referendum, which featured then new electoral machines that did

an electronic tally verified by printed ballots (still the system used in Venezuela and praised by former US president Jimmy Carter in 2012 as the “best in the world”) and was overseen by numerous international observers including the Carter Center. But Hausmann prepared a highly dubious statistical analysis to cast doubt on the outcome.

Hausmann’s dubious statistics were cited numerous times. More may have been made of them had they not been thoroughly discredited by the US-based Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). Mark Weisbrot of CEPR summarised the episode in a 2008 report:

“... the political impact of economic and econometric research on Venezuela can be very significant. For example, in 2004, economists Ricardo Hausmann of Harvard’s Kennedy School (a former Minister of Planning of Venezuela) and Roberto Rigobon of MIT published a paper purporting to show econometric evidence of electronic fraud in the 2004 presidential recall referendum. The theory of the fraud was implausible in the extreme, the statistical analysis was seriously flawed, and the election was observed and certified by the Carter Center and the Organisation of American States. Nonetheless this paper had a substantial impact. Together with faked exit polls by Mark Penn’s polling firm of Penn, Schoen, and Berland – which purported to show the recall succeeding by a 60-40 margin, the mirror image of

the vote count – it became one of the main pieces of evidence that convinced the Venezuelan opposition that the elections were fraudulent. On this basis they went on to boycott the 2005 congressional elections, and consequently are without representation in the National Assembly.

“The influence of this Hausmann and Rigobon study would probably have been much greater, but CEPR refuted it and then the Carter Center followed with an independent panel of statisticians that also examined these allegations and found them to be without evidence. Nonetheless, the *Wall Street Journal* and other, mostly Latin American publications, used the study to claim that the elections were stolen. Conspiracy theories about Venezuelan elections continue to be widely held in Venezuela, and are still promoted by prominent people in major media sources such as *Newsweek*, even with regard to the recent constitutional referendum of December 2, 2007”.

Hausmann’s 2004 statistical gambit is actually an established part of the US-coup playbook. The academic analysis of an election and the finding of flaws, real or imagined, in an electoral process are the beginning of an ongoing claim against the target’s democratic legitimacy.

The created flaw is then repeated and emphasised. Even if it was spurious and debunked, as was Hausmann’s 2004 analy-

sis, it can continue to perform in media campaigns against the target. After years of such repetition, the target can safely be called a “dictator” in Western media, even if the “dictator” has more electoral legitimacy than most Western politicians.

The elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown in a US-backed coup in 2004. Haiti’s Hausmann was an academic named James Morrell.

After Aristide won reelection in 2001 in a landslide, he stood poised to make major legislative moves on behalf of the country’s poor majority. Morrell published an article about how Aristide had “snatched defeat from the jaws of victory,” because of irregularities in the election of eight senators (out of 19, 18 of which were won by candidates from Aristide’s party): only the votes of the top four candidates in the senatorial elections were counted for these senate seats.

These senators would have won regardless of the methodology used, but these supposed irregularities were enough to initiate the financial punishment of Aristide’s government: the suspension of Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) financing, to the tune of \$150-million.

All eight senators were made to vacate their seats, but the IADB never provided the loan. Morrell’s article played a key role as the intellectual backing for the attack on the Aristide government’s legitimacy, despite Aristide’s overwhelm-

ing victory in the 2001 election and the contrived nature of the “irregularities” in the senate seats.

The coup against Aristide unfolded over a period of years: economic warfare, paramilitary violence, and the eventual kidnapping of Aristide from the palace were the tactics of choice in that regime change. But the academics preceded the coup, and followed it, providing justifications and obfuscations of what was happening in the post-coup, counterinsurgency violence.

Latin American social violence has even longer-running academic underpinnings. Today, Colombia’s president Ivan Duque (the protégé of the previous warlord-president Alvaro Uribe Velez) leads the call for regime change in Venezuela.

Duque’s country was reshaped by a multigenerational civil war during which the countryside was depopulated, through paramilitary violence, of millions of peasants (many of them Afro-Colombian or

Indigenous).

The academic theorist behind this was the Canadian-born, US “new dealer” Lauchlin Currie, whose theory (summarised by academic James Brittain in a 2005 article), called “accelerated development”, was that “the displacement of rural populations from the countryside and their relocation to the urban industrial centres would generate agricultural growth and technological improvements for Colombia’s economy”. Currie implemented these ideas as the director of the foreign mission of the World Bank from 1950, and as adviser to successive Colombian presidents. Today Colombia continues to suffer from Currie’s academic theories. Despite the peace deal of 2016, it has the largest internally displaced population in the hemisphere.

John Maynard Keynes wrote that “Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the

air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back”.

As Max Blumenthal and Ben Norton show in their recent article about him, Guaido is just such a practical man, a US-foundation-funded street fighter for the rich neighbourhoods of Caracas. But he certainly has use of the academic scribblers gathered at Harvard.

When it comes to suppressing the people of Latin America in their hopes to control their own fortunes and their own resources, the scribblers have a key role to play, as much as their diplomatic and military counterparts. **CT**

.....
Justin Podur is a Toronto-based writer. You can find him on his website at www.podur.org and on Twitter @justinpodur. He teaches at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies. This article was produced by Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

**READ THE BEST OF
EDWARD S. HERMAN**
www.coldtype.net/herman.html

The US's 68th regime change disaster

By Medea Benjamin & Nicolas JS Davies

36

IN his masterpiece, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, William Blum, who died in December 2018, wrote chapter-length accounts of 55 US regime change operations against countries around the world, from China (1945-1960s) to Haiti (1986-1994).

Noam Chomsky's blurb on the back of the latest edition says simply, "Far and away the best book on the topic". We agree. If you have not read it, please do. It will give you a clearer context for what is happening in Venezuela today, and a better understanding of the world you are living in.

Since *Killing Hope* was published in 1995, the US has conducted at least 13 more regime change operations, several of which are still active: Yugoslavia; Afghanistan; Iraq; the 3rd US invasion of Haiti since WWII; Somalia; Honduras; Libya; Syria; Ukraine; Yemen; Iran; Nicaragua; and now Venezuela.

William Blum noted that the US generally prefers what its

planners call "low intensity conflict" over full-scale wars. Only in periods of supreme overconfidence has it launched its most devastating and disastrous wars, from Korea and Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq. After its war of mass destruction in Iraq, the US reverted to "low intensity conflict" under Obama's doctrine of covert and proxy war.

Obama conducted even heavier bombing than Bush II, and deployed US special operations forces to 150 countries all over the world, but he made sure that nearly all the bleeding and dying was done by Afghans, Syrians, Iraqis, Somalis, Libyans, Ukrainians, Yemenis and others, not by Americans. What US planners mean by "low intensity conflict" is that it is less intense for Americans.

President Ghani of Afghanistan recently revealed that a staggering 45,000 Afghan security forces have been killed since he took office in 2014, compared with only 72 US and

NATO troops. "It shows who has been doing the fighting", Ghani caustically remarked. This disparity is common to every current US war.

This does not mean that the US is any less committed to trying to overthrowing governments that reject and resist US imperial sovereignty, especially if those countries contain vast oil reserves. It's no coincidence that two of the main targets of current US regime change operations are Iran and Venezuela, two of the four countries with the largest liquid oil reserves in the world (the others being Saudi Arabia and Iraq).

In practice, "low intensity conflict" involves four tools of regime change: sanctions or economic warfare; propaganda or "information warfare"; covert and proxy war; and aerial bombardment. In Venezuela, the US has used the first and second, with the third and fourth now "on the table" since the first two have created chaos but so far not toppled the government.

The US government has been opposed to Venezuela's socialist



Citgo gas station in Chicago. Blocking the company's funds in the US deprives Venezuela of \$1-billion a year.

revolution since the time Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998.

Unbeknown to most Americans, Chavez was well loved by poor and working class Venezuelans for his extraordinary array of social programs that lifted millions out of poverty. Between 1996 and 2010, the level of extreme poverty plummeted from 40 percent to seven percent. The government also substantially improved healthcare and education, cutting infant mortality by half, reducing the malnutrition rate from 21 percent to five percent of the population and eliminating illiteracy. These changes gave Venezuela the lowest level of inequality in the region, based on its Gini coefficient.

Since Chavez's death in 2013, Venezuela has descended into an economic crisis stemming

from a combination of government mismanagement, corruption, sabotage and the precipitous fall in the price of oil. The oil industry provides 95 percent of Venezuela's exports, so the first thing Venezuela needed when prices crashed in 2014 was international financing to cover huge shortfalls in the budgets of both the government and the national oil company. The strategic objective of US sanctions is to exacerbate the economic crisis by denying Venezuela access to the US-dominated international financial system to roll over existing debt and obtain new financing.

The blocking of Citgo's funds in the US also deprives Venezuela of a billion dollars per year in revenue that it pre-

viously received from the export, refining and retail sale of gasoline to American drivers.

Canadian economist Joe Emersberger has calculated that the new sanctions Trump unleashed in 2017 cost Venezuela \$6-billion in just their first year. In sum, US sanctions are designed to "make the economy scream" in Venezuela, exactly as President Nixon described the goal of US sanctions against Chile after its people elected Salvador Allende in 1970.

Alfred De Zayas visited Venezuela as a UN Rapporteur in 2017 and wrote an in-depth report for the UN. He criticised Venezuela's dependence on oil, poor governance and corruption, but he found that "economic warfare" by the US and its allies were seriously exacerbating the crisis. "Modern-day

economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns”, De Zayas wrote. “21st-century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees”. He recommended that the International Criminal Court should investigate US sanctions against Venezuela as crimes against humanity. In a recent interview with the *Independent* newspaper in the UK, De Zayas reiterated that US sanctions are killing Venezuelans.

Venezuela’s economy has shrunk by about half since 2014, the greatest contraction of a modern economy in peacetime. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that the average Venezuelan lost an incredible 24lb. in body weight in 2017.

Mr. De Zayas’s successor as UN Rapporteur, Idriss Jazairy, issued a statement on January 31, in which he condemned “coercion” by outside powers as a “violation of all norms of international law”. “Sanctions which can lead to starvation and medical shortages are not the answer to the crisis in Venezuela”, Mr. Jazairy said, “...precipitating an economic and humanitarian crisis is not a foundation for the peaceful settlement of disputes”.

While Venezuelans face poverty, preventable diseases, malnutrition and open threats of war by US officials, those same US officials and their corporate sponsors are looking at an almost irresistible gold mine if they can bring Venezuela to

its knees: a fire sale of its oil industry to foreign oil companies and the privatisation of many other sectors of its economy, from hydroelectric power plants to iron, aluminium and, yes, actual gold mines. This is not speculation. It is what the US’s new puppet, Juan Guaido, has reportedly promised his American backers if they can overthrow Venezuela’s elected government and install him in the presidential palace.

Oil industry sources have reported that Guaido has “plans to introduce a new national hydrocarbons law that establishes flexible fiscal and contractual terms for projects adapted to oil prices and the oil investment cycle... A new hydrocarbons agency would be created to offer bidding rounds for projects in natural gas and conventional, heavy and extra-heavy crude”.

The US government claims to be acting in the best interests of the Venezuelan people, but over 80 percent of Venezuelans, including many who don’t support Maduro, are opposed to the crippling economic sanctions, while 86 percent oppose US or international military intervention.

This generation of Americans has already seen how our government’s endless sanctions, coups and wars have only left country after country mired in violence, poverty and chaos. As the results of these campaigns have become predictably catastrophic for the people of each

country targeted, the American officials promoting and carrying them out have a higher and higher bar to meet as they try to answer the obvious question of an increasingly skeptical US and international public: “How is Venezuela (or Iran or North Korea) different from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and at least 63 other countries where US regime change operations have led only to long-lasting violence and chaos?”.

Mexico, Uruguay, the Vatican and many other countries are committed to diplomacy to help the people of Venezuela resolve their political differences and find a peaceful way forward.

The most valuable way that the US can help is to stop making the Venezuelan economy and people scream (on all sides), by lifting its sanctions and abandoning its failed and catastrophic regime change operation in Venezuela. But the only things that will force such a radical change in US policy are public outrage, education and organizing, and international solidarity with the people of Venezuela. **CT**

Medea Benjamin is co-founder of CODEPINK for Peace, and author of several books, including *Kingdom of the Unjust: Behind the US-Saudi Connection*. **Nicolas J. S. Davies** is a writer for *Consortium News* and a researcher with CODEPINK, and the author of *Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*.



Nicolas Maduro meets Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

Enough intervention: Let the people decide

By **Ramzy Baroud**

A **AMERICAN** politicians from the two main parties have finally found something to agree upon. Democrats and Republicans alike want more intervention in Venezuela.

“Now, despite [President Nicolas] Maduro, there is hope [in Venezuela]”, wrote Democratic Senator Dick Durbin,

in *USA Today*. “These events [the current political instability in the country] are a welcome development of Latin American nations defending democracy”.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio, meanwhile, claimed that Maduro has picked a battle he can't win. “It's just a matter of time”, he said in the *New York Times*. “The only thing we don't know is how long it will take,

and whether it will be peaceful or bloody”.

This unprecedented unity between Democrats and Republicans reflects a US legacy that precedes the Trump administration by nearly two centuries. In fact, it goes much further and deeper than America's hegemonic approach to South America, to encompass the entire Western political hemisphere,

with the exception of Italy, Norway and Greece.

The West's love-affair with intervention has little to do with restoring democracy, either in Venezuela or anywhere else. In fact, "democracy" has been the tool throughout the 20th-century to provide legal and moral rationalisation for US and Western meddling around the world. It matters little to Western leaders that Maduro was elected in presidential elections deemed "transparent" by international observers in May last year. Notwithstanding Maduro's own shortcomings in uniting his people in the face of a most pressing economic crisis, what gives America's Trump, Canada's Justin Trudeau and France's Emmanuel Macron the right to decide who rules in Venezuela?

Sadly, Venezuela is neither setting a precedent nor is it an exception. South America – like the Middle East and Africa – has long been perceived as a Western protectorate going back many years. And again like the Middle East and Africa, Venezuela is rich with oil and other mineral resources and is strategically significant in terms of global hegemony. Colonialism might have ended in its traditional form (with Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine being the ongoing exception) but it lives on in other ways.

While the US and its Western allies are challenged strongly by rising economic and military powers in Asia, the fate of South America, the Middle East and Africa is yet to be decided. The

US, in particular, has always viewed South America as its own turf – "America's backyard" – and has either directly or indirectly contributed to coups and political and economic instability across the region over the years.

US National Security Adviser John Bolton has garnered himself a terrible reputation due to his role in the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent destabilisation of the Middle East. Although discredited for his thoughtless and often militant approach to politics, he was resurrected by Donald Trump and is now travelling the world sowing the seeds of political and military discord.

While speaking about Washington's need to "protect democracy" in Venezuela, Bolton admitted that a coup there is an opportunity to exploit the country's vast oil and natural resources. He explained the economic logic of US intervention in an interview with Fox News soon after Venezuelan opposition leader and US ally Juan Guaido declared himself to be "interim president" on January 23. Regime change "will make a big difference to the United States economically, if we could have American oil companies invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela", the US official explained.

How is that to be achieved? Bolton let that slip, too. During a press conference at the White House a few days after the coup,

he "appeared to disclose confidential notes written on a yellow pad that included a plan to send US troops to Colombia" in preparation for military intervention in Venezuela.

Hasn't the Iraq debacle quelled Bolton's appetite for intervention, considering that the entire Middle East region now subsists in political uncertainty and unrelenting wars? And if Bolton the right-winger is yet to take the hint that the world is changing rapidly, and that it behooves his country to reconsider its destructive interventionist foreign policy, why are Democrats joining in with the clamour for intervention in Venezuela, alongside supposedly liberal and socialist European states? "Old habits die hard", apparently, and it seems that Western politicians refuse to abandon the old interventionist maxim and colonialist mentality through which they divided and ruled the world for far too long.

I do not mean to underestimate the horrific economic conditions in Venezuela or overlook the endemic corruption in that country, which need to be understood and, if necessary, criticised. However, while the Venezuelan people have every right to protest against their government, demanding greater accountability and economic solutions to the crushing poverty engulfing them, nobody else has the right to meddle in the affairs of Venezuela or any other sovereign country, anywhere.

Moreover, it is very obvious

that neither the US nor its allies are interested in helping Venezuela to overcome its economic woes. In fact, they seem to be doing everything in their power to exacerbate the problems.

Hyperinflation and the crumbling of Venezuela's oil industries have led to a dramatic economic downturn in recent years, with about 10 per cent of the population fleeing the country.

Poor policy choices also led to the significant weakening of local production and increasing devaluation of the currency. With Venezuela on America's radar for many years, the deterioration of its economy has provided the US with the perfect opportunity to trigger its Venezuelan allies into action, leading to the current coup and

political stalemate.

Those who are counting on the US to stabilise Venezuela in the long run, though, are ignorant of history. The US government has hardly ever been a source of stability in South America, certainly not since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Since then, Washington has done more than merely meddle; it has engaged in outright political and military interventions.

The situation in Venezuela is dire, with children reportedly dying as a result of the lack of medicine and food. The country is also gearing up for a US military intervention and possible civil war. Considering that all such tragic predictions have already been witnessed

in Iraq, Syria, Libya and elsewhere, South American leaders and the few sensible voices around the world must move to block any further US meddling, and allow the people of Venezuela, through democratic means, to determine their own future. **CT**

*Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and editor of Palestine Chronicle. His forthcoming book is *The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story* (Pluto Press, London). Baroud has a Ph.D. in Palestine Studies from the University of Exeter and is a former Non-Resident Scholar at Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies, University of California Santa Barbara. His website is www.ramzybaroud.net*



Get your **FREE** subscription
to **ColdType**

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net
– write **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject line

An open letter to the people of the United States

By **President Nicolas Maduro**

42

IF I know anything, it is about people, such as you, I am a man of the people. I was born and raised in a poor neighbourhood of Caracas. I forged myself in the heat of popular and union struggles in a Venezuela submerged in exclusion and inequality.

I am not a tycoon, I am a worker of reason and heart, today I have the great privilege of presiding over the new Venezuela, rooted in a model of inclusive development and social equality, which was forged by Commander Hugo Chavez since 1998 inspired by the Bolivarian legacy.

We live today in a historical trance. There are days that will define the future of our countries between war and peace. Your national representatives of Washington want to bring to their borders the same hatred that they planted in Vietnam. They want to invade and intervene in Venezuela – they say, as they said then – in the name of democracy and freedom. But it's not like that. The history of



President Nicolas Maduro: "We appeal to the good soul of American society".

the usurpation of power in Venezuela is as false as the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It is a false case, but it can have dramatic consequences for our entire region.

Venezuela is a country that, by virtue of its 1999 Constitution, has broadly expanded the participatory and protagonist democracy of the people, and that is unprecedented today, as one of the countries with the largest number of electoral processes in its last 20 years.

You might not like our ideology, or our appearance, but we exist and we are millions.

I address these words to the people of the United States of America to warn of the gravity and danger that intend some sectors in the White House to invade Venezuela with unpredictable consequences for my country and for the entire American region. President Donald Trump also intends to disturb noble dialogue initiatives promoted by Uruguay and Mexico with the support of CARICOM for a peaceful solution and dialogue in favour of Venezuela. We know that for the good of Venezuela we have to sit down and talk, because to refuse to dialogue is to choose strength as a way. Keep in mind the words of John F. Kennedy: "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate".

Are those who do not want to dialogue afraid of the truth?

The political intolerance towards the Venezuelan Bolivarian model and the desires for our immense oil resources,

minerals and other great riches, has prompted an international coalition headed by the US government to commit the serious insanity of militarily attacking Venezuela under the false excuse of a non-existent humanitarian crisis.

The people of Venezuela have suffered painfully social wounds caused by a criminal commercial and financial blockade, which has been aggravated by the dispossession and robbery of our financial resources and assets in countries aligned with this demented onslaught.

And yet, thanks to a new system of social protection, of direct attention to the most vulnerable sectors, we proudly continue to be a country with a high human development index and low inequality in the Americas.

The American people must know that this complex multi-form aggression is carried out with total impunity and in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which expressly outlaws the threat or use of force, among other principles and purposes for the sake of peace and the friendly relations between Nations.

We want to continue being business partners of the people of the United States, as we have been throughout our history. Their politicians in Washington, on the other hand, are willing to send their sons and daughters to die in an absurd war, instead of respecting the sacred right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination and safeguarding their sovereignty.

Like you, people of the United States, we Venezuelans are patriots. And we shall defend our homeland with all the pieces of our soul.

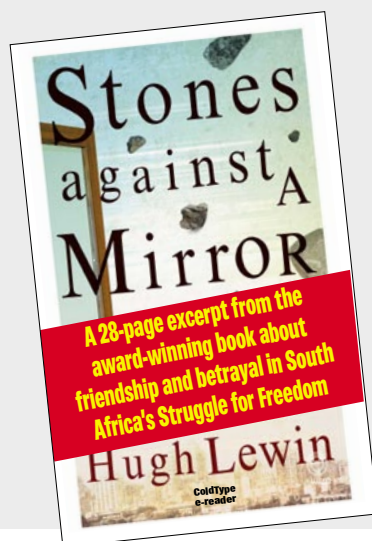
Today Venezuela is united in a single clamour: we demand the cessation of the aggression that seeks to suffocate our economy and socially suffocate our people, as well as the cessation of the serious and dangerous threats of military intervention against Venezuela.

We appeal to the good soul of American society, victim of its own leaders, to join our call for peace, let us be all one people against warmongering and war.

Long live the peoples of America! **CT**

Nicolas Maduro is the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Read ColdType's excerpts from two of Hugh Lewin's award-winning books



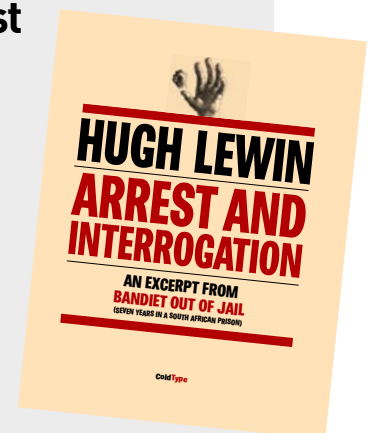
A 28-page excerpt from **Stones against A Mirror** – Friendship in the Time of the South African Struggle

<http://coldtype.net/Assets.12/PDFs/1012.Stones.pdf>

Arrest and Interrogation

A 48-page excerpt from **Bandiet Out of Jail** (Seven Years In A South African Prison)

<http://coldtype.net/Assets.04/Essays.04/LewinBook.pdf>



WRITING WORTH READING • PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ColdType

www.coldtype.net

*For a FREE subscription, email
editor@coldtype.net
(write *Subscribe* in Subject Line)*

