

PCV INTERNATIONAL VIDEO CONFERENCE:

“Political crisis in Venezuela, the role of the working class and the PCV's strategy”

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Dear comrades, good morning

On behalf of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) and the Communist Youth of Venezuela (JCV), we would like to send fraternal greetings to the Communist and Workers Parties, trade union organizations and individuals who are with us today in this International Videoconference to present our analysis of the socio-political crisis that Venezuela is going through and that was deepened after the presidential elections of last July 28.

Before beginning our analysis, we want to send a particular greeting of solidarity to the Palestinian Communist Party, the Lebanese Communist Party, and the Syrian Communist Party, who are with us today. Peoples who at this moment are being subjected to a brutal and genocidal onslaught by Zionism and the imperialist powers. From the PCV we reiterate our unrestricted solidarity with the cause of the peoples of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, with their communist and workers parties, and with the Arab resistance. We are confident that the Palestinian people and the Arab resistance will be victorious!

On the subject that occupies us today, there are some previous considerations that are more than necessary to point out:

1) On the international scene, Venezuela is presented by government propaganda as an anti-imperialist bastion. This narrative is fed by the recurrent declarations of the main figures of the Venezuelan Government against the United States and the European Union. However, a careful review of the current government's economic policy shift to the benefit of foreign capitalist monopolies, and mainly the Western oil companies, would put paid to this discursive manipulation which is used to cover up the anti-working class and anti-popular drift of Nicolás Mauro's government.

2) In Venezuela, far from advancing towards the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production and opening the perspective to a socialist project, what we face is the deepening of the crisis of Venezuelan dependent capitalism and its particular rentier model of accumulation.

To face this systemic crisis, aggravated by the criminal unilateral coercive measures, the government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the PSUV leadership have imposed a neoliberal program. Proof of this is the gap between wages and profits: In 2014, of everything produced in the country, 36% went to wage earners and 31% to employers. In 2017, only 18% was distributed among workers, while the bourgeoisie appropriated 50%. These data are the prelude to a policy that was consolidated during Maduro's second term (2018-2024), whose fundamental pillar is the reduction to the minimum of the value of the labor force.

3) The dispute for power in Venezuela is developing within the framework of the inter-imperialist confrontations present within the world capitalist system, with an internal correlation of forces that confronts two fractions of capital: on the one hand, the one that currently controls the State apparatus headed by the government-psuv, which identifies itself as the “revolutionary bourgeoisie”, and on the other the traditional Venezuelan oligarchic bourgeoisie, both associated with transnational and local capitals. From the PCV we promote, together with other sectors of the popular and authentically democratic camp, together with the class-conscious trade union currents, the construction of an alternative to these two bourgeois blocs responsible for the deep national crisis.

1. Situation of the Venezuelan working class

The mandate of Nicolás Maduro has been characterized by the imposition of a policy of economic adjustment at the service of capital, one of whose fundamental axes is the redesign of labor relations in the country, with the aim of creating a paradise for private investment and preserving the profits of capital, at the cost of the sacrifice of the working class and the popular sectors, who bear the consequences of the socio-economic crisis, aggravated by the unilateral coercive measures of imperialism against the country.

In this sense, in the last six years, a government program restricting the social, economic, political and labor rights of the Venezuelan working people has been applied, in open violation of the Constitution, based on the destruction of wages and social benefits; the elimination of collective bargaining agreements; the extreme reduction of the cost of layoffs and, in general, the dismantling of rights and conquests of the working class, accompanied by a growing authoritarianism. Finally, the constitutional principles of progressiveness, intangibility and unrenounceability of workers' rights have been repealed de facto, as well as the limitation of political and trade union rights and the exercise of due process.

The Government of President Maduro masks its policy of destroying the income of the working class through farces such as the so-called “Integral Minimum Income”: a mechanism that replaces the salary with bonus payments with no impact on severance payments, vacations, social security and others established in the legislation and in the collective bargaining agreements.

To cover up its anti-worker policy, the Government makes use of de-classed union federations under its control, which negotiate fraudulent “agreements” with the public employers which are agreed upon without the holding of assemblies or consultations with the workers. This practice has marked key sectors such as oil and education workers.

The consequences of this neo-liberal package have been particularly dramatic for pensioners and retirees in the public sector, who receive payments calculated at a salary of less than three dollars a month and who also face the dismantling of social security.

Violations of labor rights are closely accompanied by violations of freedom of association: administrative obstructions and impediments to register unions and to recognize union elections are mechanisms used to neutralize class-based unionism, prevent the discussion of collective bargaining agreements, as well as the submission of petitions with conciliatory or conflictive character.

One of the most aberrant practices of violation of free union affiliation is that in many cases, affiliation to the Bolivarian Socialist Workers Central of Venezuela, an instrument of class collaboration created by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), used for the imposition of policies in favor of capital and the bureaucratic mafias of the State, is a condition for the legal registration of base unions.

Those workers who oppose the anti-worker and anti-popular package are criminalized and prosecuted. Hundreds of innocent workers, including union leaders, have ended up in jail with rigged trials, without any respect for due process and the rights of the workers, in most cases on the following charges: incitement to hatred, association to commit a crime, boycott and terrorism. Additionally, the government uses imperialist sanctions and its dispute against the parties of the other bourgeois pole to criminalize workers' struggles for decent wages. It has become habitual for the top government to issue false accusations against the workers in struggle, to try to link their legitimate protests with alleged destabilizing plans directed and

financed by “imperialism”. Thus, under a false “anti-imperialist” mask, the bourgeoisie in power covers up the ferocious repression against the working class and the restriction of their trade union and democratic freedoms, in order to preserve and deepen the current regime of overexploitation of the labor force in Venezuela.

More recently, the government-PSUV has introduced in the National Assembly a bill declaring class-based characterization — a historic attribute of the autonomous and revolutionary trade union movement— as a characteristic of fascism. With initiatives of this type, the Maduro government tries to intimidate the working class in order to efficiently serve the bourgeois class, the imperialist monopolies and so that there will be no resistance to its neoliberal program.

But the government not only uses imperialist sanctions to intensify the persecution against the working class, it is also its favorite pretext to justify the anti-popular adjustment. Certainly, foreign criminal sanctions have a negative impact on the economy, aggravating the gravity of the Venezuelan capitalist crisis. But these sanctions are not the cause of the crisis, as the Venezuelan government repeatedly points out to justify its neoliberal and authoritarian drift. The PCV not only condemns the sanctions and imperialist interference, we consider that this strategy of the forces of the traditional right wing only increases the suffering of the working people, on whom all the consequences of the crisis and the effects of these sanctions fall. For this reason we demand not only the immediate lifting of these measures, but also punishment for the political forces within the country that promote more sanctions and foreign attacks against the country.

2. The XVI National Conference of the PCV and the presidential elections

This economic program has been accompanied by an increasingly authoritarian political conduct: As you well know, the PCV was judicially intervened in 2023, and its electoral ticket was taken away. Previously, they had intervened judicially or administratively, to impose ad hoc leaderships subordinated to the government-psuv on other organizations of the left that took critical positions against the government, as was the case of the UPV, MEP, PPT and TUPAMARO.

After a political analysis carried out in three phases that lasted for eight months, the 16th National Conference of the PCV concluded that the authoritarian drift of the leadership of the Government-PSUV, the destruction of the living conditions of the Venezuelan people, the

dismantling of the rule of law, the systematic violation of human rights, the persecution of the workers and popular struggles —and in general of politics— have configured a new situation in which the recovery of the democratic rights guaranteed in the Constitution becomes a task of the first order.

With the de facto banning of the PCV, the Government-PSUV proposed to stop the advance of an alternative that could regroup the popular and revolutionary forces that confront its anti-working class and anti-popular administration. In such a way that the conquest of political conditions for the development of the struggles also became one of the objectives of the communists in this new situation, for which reason we decided to participate in the presidential elections.

In this sense, the PCV proposed forming an organized and combative alternative, which would confront and fight against the indignity and immorality of the corrupt and autocratic elites that currently hold power, and, at the same time, confront the pole of the traditional bourgeoisie. For this purpose, our party —together with organizations of the popular movement— worked on a candidacy that would allow: 1. To raise a broad and unitary programmatic proposal, which would have as its centrality the defense of the Constitution and the rights of the working people. To confront the political action of the mercenaries who, usurping our acronym, registered the candidacy of Nicolás Maduro and 3. To defend the own profile of the legitimate PCV and its national leadership elected in the 16th National Congress held in October 2022. However, the highly controlled and restricted character of the electoral process prevented the registration of the candidacy from taking place, in such a way that the working class and the revolutionary left did not have the opportunity to present its own candidacy.

Finally, in view of the decision to participate in the presidential elections, the XVI National Conference agreed that it was necessary to build a political-electoral agreement with political sectors beyond the left to prevent the isolation of the party and defeat the pretensions of the Government-PSUV to establish a tyranny disguised as false democracy. Such an agreement should be based on a minimum program that would have at its core the restitution of political and social rights taken away by the government leadership.

The PCV has not lost sight of the fact that the mere change of government will not automatically bring about a policy favorable to the aspirations of the working people. However, for the National Conference, to advance in the construction of an alternative social and political

option to the two bourgeois blocs responsible for the national catastrophe, is an objective that we should also promote in the presidential electoral process, since it would be an important step in the struggle for the recovery of the rights that have been violated. Hence, a call was made for the massive participation of the Venezuelan people to break with the imposed polarization and defeat the authoritarian, arbitrary and exclusionary scheme forged by the Government-PSUV and their accomplices.

3. Elections and political crisis

The presidential elections of July 28, rather than creating a scenario to overcome the socio-political crisis, exacerbated and worsened it. At the end of the voting process, the president of the National Electoral Council (CNE) presented to the country a first bulletin of results loaded with legal and mathematical inconsistencies, which alerted the entire population about the possibility of an electoral fraud.

The bulletin presented by the CNE did not come from the Vote Tallying Room, being this the first element that sowed doubts about the results presented. Secondly, the President of the CNE assured that this bulletin expressed an “irreversible trend” when the difference in votes between the first and second candidate was of only 704,114 votes, with more than 2.5 million votes still to be counted.

The following day, Monday, July 29, doubts about the transparency of the process increased due to the fact that the CNE, instead of making public the second electoral bulletin, with the vote disaggregated by voting center and polling stations—as established by the electoral law and as is customary in all electoral processes in Venezuela—, hurriedly proceeds to proclaim the victory of candidate Nicolás Maduro.

In Venezuela, voting is electronic. At the end of the day, the machines print a record of the votes at each polling station, which is signed by CNE officials and witnesses from the political parties. Copies of these receipts are given to the electoral witnesses of each political party participating in the contest. This guarantees that the information handled by the CNE and each political organization is the same, providing transparency to the process.

The campaign HQ of the candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia made public the results of 70% of the electoral records systematized by its witnesses in the more than 30 thousand electoral

centers set up in the country. In these results, he has a considerable electoral advantage over Maduro.

Without venturing to take for certain the results presented by the main opposition force in the country —although they coincide with the high rejection that the Venezuelan people manifest against the anti-worker and anti-popular administration of Nicolás Maduro—, the truth is that the non presentation of the receipts and data, disaggregated by polling stations and voting centers, within 72 hours after the first announcement, is an unprecedented event in the history of the electoral processes of the last 25 years in Venezuela.

The fact that up to now, the PSUV has not publicly presented copies of the minutes of its witnesses, accentuates the lack of confidence in the results presented by the CNE. It should be recalled that there is already a precedent in the 2013 presidential elections, when the opposition denounced fraud and the PSUV, in order to dispel doubts, published on its website the minutes in its possession to confirm its triumph.

4. Repressive escalation against popular sectors

Almost four months after the elections were held, it is indisputable what was perceived in the first 48 hours in the streets of the country: Nicolás Maduro lost the elections and an institutional conspiracy is underway to ignore and truncate the popular will expressed at the polls.

During July 29 and 30, a brutal repression was unleashed against popular protests —mostly peaceful— rejecting the results presented by the CNE. President Maduro himself reported more than 2 thousand detainees whom he presented as “terrorists”. During those days, 27 people were also murdered, whom the Government presents as militants of the PSUV. But the truth is that the great majority of the detainees are young people and workers -including minors- coming from popular neighborhoods; while unofficial but reliable data have documented that numerous murders occurred at the hands of repressive forces of the State or para-police groups.

The isolated actions of groups that carried out acts of vandalism were presented as justification for the massive arrests and the reckless accusations of “terrorism” against all those arrested, including people who were not even present at the demonstrations. Relatives

of imprisoned adolescents have denounced that these minors were tortured and subjected to cruel treatment in order to incriminate themselves.

The Maduro government also unleashed an escalation of raids and arrests without warrants in numerous popular neighborhoods. In addition, the PSUV ordered its base structures to inform on neighbors who had demonstrated. From the top, a propaganda campaign was launched to present the right to protest as a crime. In fact, the use of a mobile app to denounce demonstrators was rolled out.

At the same time, in the workplaces, mainly in state institutions and companies, an upsurge of labor harassment and threats has been launched. The witch hunt has implied hundreds of dismissals and resignations under coercion for political reasons in sectors such as health, energy, transportation, telecommunications, as well as in Governors' and Mayors' offices.

In the work centers of the public sector, a de facto prohibition has been established for workers to identify themselves with political options different from the Government and even more so for them to be members of political organizations contrary to the PSUV. Such was the case of the fraudulent set-up committed against our Secretary of International Relations, comrade Héctor Alejo Rodríguez, worker of the Ministry of Petroleum: a file was prepared against him with the serious and reckless accusation of “terrorism”, without any evidence, activating a procedure not only to dismiss him, but also to open a criminal trial against him.

5. Political situation and the tactics of the PCV

The National Government and all the Public Powers under its control have escalated to the extreme in the violations of the Constitution, to the point of rendering ineffective the validity of the guiding principles of the Republic, as well as the rights to peaceful protest, to public assembly, to association, to free participation in public life, to freedom of expression and the right to truthful information, to due process, to work, to a living wage, to social security and to freedom of union affiliation. In short, by means of deeds, they have suspended constitutional guarantees.

Faced with this concrete reality, the Venezuelan labor and popular movement has the need to defeat the consolidation of this form of authoritarian management at the service of capital, regardless of which political party embodies it.

Undoubtedly, the consolidation of the PSUV government by means of an electoral fraud, will only contribute to make its administration more despotic and the working class is the only one that loses in the face of this reality. Already in the past, with the experience of the so-called “interim government” of Juan Guaido, we saw how the bourgeoisie and its parties shook hands and reached agreements according to their interests. The same is happening now: the government of Nicolás Maduro negotiates and understands with the business leaders and transnational capitals to try to recover its lost legitimacy among the people, hence it develops an international offensive to falsely position itself as an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist world vanguard, while deepening its authoritarian features, its alliances with capital and the neoliberal character of its policies, going into an open phase of sale and privatization of the nation's assets.

The PCV defends the legitimate demand of the Venezuelan people for the National Electoral Council to publish the results broken down by polling station and voting center, and if necessary, a public recount of the votes deposited in the ballot boxes, as has already been done on other occasions. With this position, we do not defend the interests of any candidate, but the recovery of the democratic liberties of the country; a minimum condition for the working class to be able to organize itself and fight against its class enemies.

The PCV does not support any of the bourgeois poles in confrontation. We have an independent political action that is consistent with the interests and needs of the Venezuelan working class at this time. This policy consists in contributing to the awareness and organization of the workers on the need to build their own force against the two hegemonic blocs of the bourgeoisie.

In this direction, we have been taking important steps since the constitution of the Popular Revolutionary Alternative in 2020; then the National Meeting for the Defense of the Rights of the People in 2023 and now through the Popular Democratic Front; a response of genuinely democratic and popular organizations to the current crisis of political representation that the country is going through, whose north is the restitution of the rights enshrined in the Constitution and the recovery of the rule of law.

As you can see, the struggle for democratic liberties will tend to intensify in the coming months and with it the risks of greater repression and persecution against the working class, the

popular sectors and the PCV. Furthermore, the Government maintains a sophisticated national and international campaign of manipulation to present its anti-working class, anti-popular and authoritarian drift as a crusade against imperialism and fascism. However, a careful review of the development of the class struggle in the country, gives the lie to this farce: There is no anti-imperialism without a determined struggle against the yoke of capital. To deny this is nothing more than opportunism and the result is this type of government administrations that try to “make capitalist barbarism more humane”.

The government of Nicolas Maduro shows no intention of reestablishing the kidnapped liberties and democratic rights. The most radicalized bourgeois and military sectors, which have control of the main economic businesses of the country, impose their will to remain in political power at any cost, and to this end they escalate the actions of persecution, repression and imprisonment against all forms of opposition.

On the other extreme, the political forces of the traditional right are once again betting on the agenda of international interference, pressures and sanctions as a strategy to defeat the authoritarian government. The recent victory of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential elections could underpin the sharpening of the confrontation between these two bourgeois poles, with devastating consequences for the Venezuelan workers.

The monopolies are the only winners in this conflict. They take advantage of the desperation of the Maduro government in search of legitimacy, to obtain better conditions for their investments, advantageous participation in the privatization processes of public assets, etc., or they use the demands of the right-wing opposition sectors to justify the policy of interference and more sanctions, which could lead to a future exploitation of the Venezuelan wealth under more advantageous conditions.

This is the complex scenario that awaits the Venezuelan working people after January 10, 2025, when Nicolas Maduro will probably pretend to be sworn in, without presenting any evidence of his supposed victory.

As on other occasions, with this exposition we do not propose unconditional solidarity with the Venezuelan working class, nor with the Communist Party of Venezuela, nor with our politics, but rather the need to deepen the objective analysis of the existing reality in our country, through sources other than those offered by those in power.

Dear comrades, we thank you for your participation in this videoconference and your interest in finding out about the position of the PCV on the complex development of the political struggle in Venezuela. As you can appreciate, it is not objective to analyze the class struggle in Venezuela from the false political polarization between the government and the so-called right-wing opposition, without taking into account the class character and interests of the forces that dispute political power. To do so, is to leave aside the interests of the Venezuelan working class, as well as its legitimate and necessary aspiration to become an independent political force against the two political poles of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state.

This also generates a very negative precedent in the international workers' movement, the justification of governments of sectors of the bourgeoisie in power that destroy the rights of the workers, and the dangerous silence in the face of repression, criminalization and judicialization of the working class, their struggles and their political parties, which prevents the necessary exercise of proletarian internationalism.

Thank you for your attention. A great salute to all.

Caracas, November 23, 2024