55th Anniversary of the Founding of The Internationalists

A Call to Take Up the Program That Emerges from the Conditions of Our Times

March and Rally in Burnaby, BC
Against Kinder Morgan Pipeline Extension
• Thousands Take a Stand: No Consent! No Pipeline!

International Women's Day 2018
• All Over the World Women Fight for Empowerment

Warring Factions Openly Talk of Civil War
• Federal Lawsuit Against California and Control of Policing Agencies
  - Voice of Revolution -

Fight for Peace on the Korean Peninsula
• Decisive Role of Korean People to Sort Things Out in Their Favour
  - Yi Nicholls -
• Missions by South Korean Envoys to China, Russia and Japan
Life and Legacy of Hugo Chávez Commemorated
• Events in Venezuela Highlight Significance of Bolivarian Revolution
• Our Peoples Have No Future Without Unity, Without Integration
  - Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz -
• Sanctions Must Be Terminated and Economic War Must End Says UN Rapporteur
  - Interview, Dr. Alfred de Zayas -

Supplement
• 135th Anniversary of the Death of Karl Marx

55th Anniversary of the Founding of The Internationalists
A Call to Take Up the Program That Emerges from the Conditions of Our Times

Mass rally at the University of British Columbia, October 1962, against U.S. blockade of Cuba during the Cuban Missile crisis reflected the spirit of the times that defied everything chauvinistic, backward and reactionary into which The Internationalists was born six months later.

On March 13, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) celebrates the founding of its precursor organization, The Internationalists, at the University of British Columbia in 1963. In their formative period, The Internationalists inscribed on their banner the aim which was inherent to those conditions which gave birth to the organization. The aim, the conditions and the birth were not separate from one another. This fact points to the great merit of The Internationalists which was that they paid attention to carrying out those tasks which were required by the conditions on the basis of bringing about progressive changes.
From *The Internationalists* the Party inherited this ability to set a program that emerges from the conditions of our times. This is one of its greatest achievements which today all the Party organizations are called on to master so as to make their work effective.

What is inherent in the present conditions and the aim which is consistent with those conditions? What is the work which the Party has set for itself in this period which has to be taken up in a very determined fashion? It is that millions of people on the world scale have risen demanding change. This movement for change also exists in Canada and, as is the case everywhere, despite setbacks and the twists and turns as a result of unfolding events, it is gaining momentum.

Long before the developments of the current period began, CPC(M-L) analyzed that the world was at a turning point within which no forces could continue to act in the old way. The Party took measures and as a result it was capable of analyzing the situation and pinpointing that in their striving for change, it is the political process which the working class and people want renewed. The leader of the Party at that time, Hardial Bains, noted that the renewal of the political process is a question facing the entire polity. This means it favours that class which spearheads it, he pointed out, adding that the striving of the people for change requires the leadership of the working class if it is not to be saddled with the aim which the reactionary forces impose on society to pay the rich and wage a vicious anti-social offensive.

Hardial Bains explained that the Party faces a complexity in this period because it must organize the class while at the same time it must be one with the broad masses of the people for the renewal of the political process. Between the two there is no Chinese Wall, he said, nor the possibility that one should be sacrificed for the sake of the other. In this regard, Hardial Bains emphasized that even if it were possible to renew the political process without the working class being organized, it would not go far nor succeed.

The rich and the governments and agencies in their service have nothing to offer in terms of renovating the political and economic spheres and working out mechanisms which can provide the working class with a means to open a path for itself in the present circumstances. Thus, one of the greatest battles of this period centres on the issue of whose agenda will prevail, that of the ruling class or that of the working people.

The Party sets the agenda of its organizations at all levels to make sure the renewal of the society is successful and favours the people. It is by taking up this agenda that the party organizations and the working people and youth will be able to overcome the damage caused by the official circles which are dead-set against anybody but themselves setting the agenda for the society.

We are living in dangerous times, with chaos in the world economy and the world powers fighting to see who is going to be the sole leader. There is a need for vigilance, particularly to ensure that the dangers are not aggravated by the working class being led into passivity and paralysis while the youth are diverted into dead-ends. The Party must carry its work to eliminate the weaknesses in the working class movement and arouse the workers to take political actions which the youth can join. Such work will also bring about significant improvements to their own conditions and the condition
of the society.

The working class, in spearheading the renewal of the political process, will open a path for the further development of the society, and give itself a greater role in the advancement of the society. The more the ruling circles shout that there is no alternative, the more the opportunity presents itself for the working class and its party to prove that there is an alternative to both the political process and the perpetual crisis of the capitalist system. Involving the working people and the youth in working out the alternative to the anti-social offensive and in the program to renew the political process is the crucial factor for the advance of the movement. With this crucial factor present it is impossible that the movement will not develop.

The significance of the work undertaken for the renewal of the political process cannot be overestimated. As this movement develops, the discussion and debate in the society will be broadened. This work is the basis for the deepening and broadening of the consciousness of the people.

On this anniversary of the founding of The Internationalists, CPC(M-L) hails that spirit and feeling of progressive Canadians that emerged from the University of British Columbia in 1963, that spirit which defied everything chauvinistic, backward and reactionary. With The Internationalists, a truly Canadian organization, born out of the conditions of Canada, came into being. It borrowed nothing from anyone else, but stood on its own feet, a characteristic the Party inherited and has practised since it was founded in 1970.

In 1993, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of The Internationalists, Hardial Bains called on the Party activists to hold the Party banner high. The issue is not to wave the red flag. It is to show our colours through our deeds, Hardial said. On this occasion, let us once again take up this call by showing that the Communist Party can lead. This is what the working class and the youth want and need from us as a Party!

Red Salute to The Internationalists!
Long Live CPC(M-L)!

March and Rally in Burnaby, BC Against Kinder Morgan Pipeline Extension
Thousands Take a Stand: No Consent! No Pipeline!
On March 10, some 10,000 people participated in a march and rally in Burnaby to say No! to twinning the Trans Mountain Pipeline from the Alberta tar sands to Burnaby, BC. In their thousands they made it clear that the government does not have the consent of the people and that No! Means No!

The actions were called by the Tsleil Waututh First Nation whose lands on the north shore of Burrard Inlet as well as their traditional fishing activities will be directly impacted by the increased number and size of tankers passing through the inlet.

A brief rally was held outside a Skytrain station near the foot of Burnaby Mountain while participants were still arriving. Several buses brought people from out of town. Marchers headed by Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Joan Phillip and Indigenous drummers completely filled the road up to the lower part of the mountain where the main rally was held on a sports field.

Frequent shouting of slogans, singing and music played by pipers enlivened the atmosphere. Amongst the many banners and signs carried by participants which included large numbers of children and youth were "Albertans Against Kinder Morgan," "Democracy or Oilocracy?" "No Consent. No Pipeline," "No Means No," "For a Modern Canada That Defends the Rights of All. All out to Build the New," "Workers Against Kinder Morgan," "Kinder Morgan Shall Not Pass," and a huge banner of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

An article from TML Weekly entitled "More on Trans Mountain Pipeline Controversy: Clash of Interests Between Energy Monopolies and Working People" was distributed.

The rally on Burnaby Mountain lasted several hours and was addressed by First Nations leaders and activists from across the continent. Three young women from Alberta talked about the elimination of wildlife in the lands surrounding the tar sands as well as the devastating effect that pollution of the air, land and water resulting from oil extraction is having on the health and well-being of Indigenous people living in the area. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip emphasized that the fight was not just for the present but for future generations.

More than a dozen activists have been arrested in recent days in front of the gate of the Kinder Morgan terminal. An injunction has now been granted barring the public from congregating within 50 metres of Kinder Morgan property. A "guard house" which is constantly occupied has been constructed just outside the "exclusion" zone. Kinder Morgan is seeking to get it removed as it tries to stop any actions which could impede construction. Dogs as well as security guards are patrolling inside the fence at the terminal. Floating razor wire fences have been installed in Burrard Inlet on the water side of the terminal and...
security guards with bull horns are harassing small vessel operators passing by. Meanwhile Kinder Morgan officials are lobbying for the immediate removal of remaining obstacles including legal challenges so that they can go full speed ahead.

First Nations leaders are promising further actions which will result in mass arrests. They have reaffirmed their vow that the pipeline will not be built.
One hundred and seven years ago, International Women's Day was established to highlight the fight of women for the right to vote and to take their rightful place in the vanguard of all fields of human endeavour. Since then, women have stood in the front ranks of the struggle for empowerment and this year was no different. Activities took place across Canada to mark March 8 and mass actions could be seen around the world, as women asserted their claims to a say and control over all the affairs of society. A society's progress is measured by the degree to which women have won their emancipation and the emancipation of women goes hand in hand with the emancipation of the working class.

In Canada, rallies, marches and gatherings of all kinds reiterated women's demands for an end to the brutal neo-liberal anti-social offensive and that the government take up its responsibilities on such questions as workers' rights, housing, health care and childcare. They demanded an end to Canada's participation in U.S. imperialist aggression and an end to its colonial relations with the Indigenous peoples. Support for the peoples of the world fighting for their rights, and against U.S. imperialist intervention in which Canada fully participates, was also taken up in this spirit.

In many of the actions the demand for justice for Tina Fontaine, and for all the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls was front and centre, as participants stood with the courageous Indigenous women demanding the situation where women are considered a legitimate target of attack must be made a thing of the past. In Toronto, the march concluded at a mass vigil demanding justice for Tina Fontaine.

In the U.S., meetings and gatherings followed the mass actions organized on January 20 in support...
of women's rights and against the Trump presidency and what it stands for organized on the one year anniversary of Trump's inauguration.

In Cuba, a mass national celebration of International Women's Day took place in Sancti Spiritus honouring the important role women play in all aspects of the society, and played in the Cuban Revolution. International Women's Day was just days before the March 11 elections in Cuba for deputies to the National Assembly of the People's Power and to the provincial Assemblies of the People's Power. In the elections 53.22 per cent of the deputies elected were women and close to 90 per cent of eligible voters participated.

In Mexico some 5,000, mainly Indigenous, women from Mexico and 34 countries around the world participated in the "First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle," hosted by the women of the National Liberation Zapatista Army and held in Caracol of Morelia, an autonomous municipality in the Mayan Tzotz Choj zone of Chiapas from March 8-10. The event celebrated women's struggle for liberation against a system that exploits, represses, robs and disrespects them.

In Venezuela women are playing a leading role in defending the Bolivarian Revolution, including in leading the National Constituent Assembly to redraft the constitution, and in doing so are guaranteeing their rights. On the occasion of International Women's Day, Delcy Rodriguez, President of the Constituent Assembly (ANC) announced that in the coming days the chapter on women's rights of the new constitution will be presented. Also, as part of the International Women's Day celebrations the president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, delivered the draft law for the protection of childbirth and gender equality in public office to the ANC.

Throughout Latin America vigorous mass actions took place in which women opposed the imposition of laws as to what they can or cannot do with their human persons. Some demanded the decriminalization of abortion and spoke out against the treatment of women as fair game, who can be abused and killed with impunity.

In Brazil demonstrations took place in many cities nationwide as women mobilized against the setbacks in the rights of workers and small farmers, and increased violence against women as a result of the usurpation of power by the corrupt Temer regime. Among the actions, 800 women occupied the Globo media offices in Rio de Janeiro, for its role in creating political instability in Brazil -- both for its role in creating the conditions for the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and for the persecution of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The occupation was part of the Landless Women's National Day of Struggle with similar protests taking place in other parts of the country, including the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pará, Maranhão and Goiás.

In Guatemala a protest and vigil was organized holding the government to account for the deaths
one year ago of 41 girls when a fire swept through an overcrowded government-run shelter for abused teens. Following the fire families and their supporters raised the call that "It was the state" and demanded the resignation of President Jimmy Morales. Fifty-six girls were locked in a room in the shelter and, despite calls for help, authorities did not open the door as flames engulfed the building. Investigations into the incident have since brought to light a long record of sexual abuse, suicide, criminal activity and human trafficking at the state institution.

In Spain, International Women's Day was marked by a 24-hour strike, with marches organized in some 120 cities and towns including Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Seville and Pamplona under the slogan "If we stop, the world stops." Women organized massive protests and traditional piquetes -- information brigades -- to mobilize fellow workers to join the strike. It is estimated that some 5.3 million workers participated in the actions which started at midnight when women rallied on Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square. A number of unions such as the General Confederation of Labour, the National Coordination of Labour and the Inter-Union Confederation called on their members to join a 24-hour general strike, while other unions organized two-hour work stoppages during the day. Feminist groups called for women to abandon their unpaid work for the day and not spend any money to show how integral women are to the economy. The first nationwide "feminist strike" called for an end to gender pay discrimination, and violence against women.

Mass actions marking International Women's Day took place in many other countries of Europe and Asia, including Italy, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Korea. Many of the actions focused on the right of women to participate fully in the society without the threat of violence. In Bangladesh, women workers demanded access to childcare, as one of the things they require to participate as workers in production.

In Spain, International Women's Day was marked by a 24-hour strike, with marches organized in some 120 cities and towns including Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Seville and Pamplona under the slogan "If we stop, the world stops." Women organized massive protests and traditional piquetes -- information brigades -- to mobilize fellow workers to join the strike. It is estimated that some 5.3 million workers participated in the actions which started at midnight when women rallied on Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square. A number of unions such as the General Confederation of Labour, the National Coordination of Labour and the Inter-Union Confederation called on their members to join a 24-hour general strike, while other unions organized two-hour work stoppages during the day. Feminist groups called for women to abandon their unpaid work for the day and not spend any money to show how integral women are to the economy. The first nationwide "feminist strike" called for an end to gender pay discrimination, and violence against women.

Mass actions marking International Women's Day took place in many other countries of Europe and Asia, including Italy, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Korea. Many of the actions focused on the right of women to participate fully in the society without the threat of violence. In Bangladesh, women workers demanded access to childcare, as one of the things they require to participate as workers in production.

In the Philippines, in a show of strength, thousands of women organized in their national women's organization Gabriela, participated in mass actions against the Duterte government, under the banner to "frustrate the dictatorship." Participants expressed their determination to resist the Duterte government, one of the worst violators of women's rights in the region, whose tax reforms, private shelter programs and contractualization of labour impoverish and dislocate women. They reiterated the demands of the Filipino people for land, jobs, justice and peace, and condemned the extrajudicial killings taking place as part of the government's law and order agenda.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea a national meeting took place in Pyongyang to celebrate the occasion and women's full participation in all aspects of the life of the country.

TML Weekly salutes the fighting women of the world for their courageous leadership in advancing the fight for their rights and the rights of all at a time counter-revolution has the initiative worldwide, with its vicious neo-liberal agenda, anti-social offensive, privatizations, aggressions and wars. Women's further development of their leading role is one of the most important contributions to the emancipation of all working people, the end of imperialism and war and the creation of a society that recognizes the rights of all by virtue of being human.
Canada
Montreal
Non à la destruction nationale de Couillard
Femmes du Québec, à la tête des changements pour une société humaine!

Ottawa

Our security lies in the fight for the rights of all!

Toronto

Justice for Caregivers
Justice for all
Landed Status Now!
You'll NEVER have the COMFORT of our SILENCE AGAIN

It's not a game

STOP STEALING OUR GIRLS

London

Regina
Calgary

Prince George

Vancouver
Chiapas, Mexico

Guatemala
Colombia

São Paulo, Brazil

Fortaleza, Brazil
Europe

London, England

Madrid, Spain

Bilbao, Spain
Barcelona, Spain

Oviedo, Spain
Asia

Istanbul, Turkey

Ramallah, Palestine
New Delhi, India; Allahabad, India

Bangladesh

Manila, Philippines
Indonesia

China
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Oceania

Melbourne, Australia
Federal Lawsuit Against California and Control of Policing Agencies
- Voice of Revolution -

Attorney General Jefferson Beauregard Sessions has launched a lawsuit against the state of California, targeting several of its immigration laws. The Justice Department lawsuit specifically targets California laws that prevent business owners from helping immigration agents track down workers living in the country without documentation, prohibit law enforcement from notifying U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) when immigrants are released from custody, and authorize state inspections of federal detention centres.

Sessions visited California March 7 and gave a speech at an event hosted by the California Peace Officers' Association. President Trump visited on March 13. Both insist California and its laws are a threat to national security.

Trump tweeted March 13, "California's sanctuary policies are illegal and unconstitutional and put the safety and security of our entire nation at risk."

Sessions said in condemning California's laws, "There is no nullification. There is no secession. Federal law is 'the supreme law of the land.' I would invite any doubters to Gettysburg, and to the
graves of John C. Calhoun and Abraham Lincoln."

Gettysburg is where Lincoln for the first time called the battle then raging in the country a great civil war and emphasized preserving the union. Calhoun was pro-slavery and an important force advocating secession of the confederacy.

Raising the spectre of civil war while saying to a state called the Republic of California, which could easily stand on its own, "There is no secession," is a means to tell California it had better submit. Sessions' comments reinforce those of Trump in his State of the Union, where he called on all to unite or face being branded as enemies. Claiming California is putting the "security of our entire nation at risk," provides justification for such branding and for federal intervention.

The Civil War Scenario

Governor of California Jerry Brown responded to Sessions saying Trump is, "Basically going to war against the state of California, the engine of the American economy." Brown added that a "reign of terror" is being instituted. He also referenced the civil war pointing out that Sessions, as someone coming from Alabama, should not be lecturing about secession.

Consistent with the talk of war, headlines in both the New York Times and Los Angeles Times refer to Trump coming into "enemy territory." The headline in the Los Angeles Times reads in part, "Trump to enter enemy territory." The New York Times echoed the theme saying, "A Visit Behind the Lines: President Trump Heads to California." Its opening sentence reads, "The president arrives in California on Tuesday morning for a brief trip into what the White House presumably views as enemy territory."

The exchanges between Trump, Sessions and California officials openly reference civil war. They are an indication that the intense conflicts among the warring factions within the U.S. ruling class as they vie for political power are moving closer to open violence.

The intensifying clashes within the governing factions of the ruling elite have in no way been sorted out by Trump's victory in the presidential election. Indeed we are witnessing conflicts within the presidency and between the executive and the intelligence agencies, military and various state officials all becoming sharper with increasing tempo and instability. Fear is growing among all these contending forces that the festering civil war, which always exists behind the scenes, will break out into open violence.

In this situation, control of the many highly armed policing agencies is a major concern of the contending factions. Trump is acting to secure federal control of all policing agencies, including those at the state and local level. He is also targeting California as a means to secure its submission, and if that is not forthcoming, to justify greater federal intervention including direct confrontations between immigration agents and local police.

Attorney General Sessions bluntly says, "We are simply asking California and other sanctuary jurisdictions to stop actively obstructing federal law enforcement. California has enacted a number of laws designed to intentionally obstruct the work of our sworn immigration enforcement officers -- to intentionally use every power it has to undermine duly established immigration law in America."
Sessions is emphasizing that California and all states must recognize federal policing agencies as supreme, or face the consequences. As he puts it, "California is using every power it has -- and some it doesn't -- to frustrate federal law enforcement. So you can be sure I'm going to use every power I have to stop them. And we intend to win."

Immigration is an area where Trump is striving to unite the warring factions behind the executive, while also putting in place justification for armed federal intervention against state and local officials who refuse to submit.

**The Organized People Can Defeat the Civil War Scenario with a New Direction Towards Political Power**

All these warring factions of the ruling elite are also greatly worried about what could be described as the largest and potentially most powerful faction, which is the people and their drive for a new direction for the country. This greatest of factions demands its rights and claims on society must be respected and recognized as inviolable. Renewal of democracy is increasingly on the lips of many as they seek a system of governing of, for and by the people in the modern conditions in opposition to the present unrepresentative governments of the warring factions of the ruling elite.

Fearful of the people and their increasing consciousness of the necessity for change, the current rulers of the dominant class try to divide and divert the people into lining up behind one or another of its dueling factions. Federal control of all the policing agencies is not only part of the vying for power among the warring factions, but also in preparation for contending with a broader organized resistance arising from the people who have had enough and want their views and pro-social modern outlook to take pride of place. Local and state police are highly armed and militarized for urban warfare. The federal police and military are already prepared to wage urban war against their own people as they have practised for years in the endless U.S. wars of aggression abroad.

As the youth strengthen their resistance and many others come forward to defend their rights, the battle to win political power for the people is on the agenda. Not to become embroiled in choosing sides among the warring factions emerges as important for such a thing diverts and blocks the people from strengthening their own forces and outlook. The necessity is to stand with the people in opposition to the ruling elite, and look at the social and political conditions from the people's own vantage point, one that favours their interests and the finding of a new direction. Political power belongs in the hands of the people themselves to govern and decide. By addressing this problem of political power and how to obtain it, the faction of the large majority, the people, will prevail.

*Voice of Revolution, publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization.*

*(March 16, 2018)*
Decisive Role of Korean People to Sort Things Out in Their Favour

- Yi Nicholls -

Fight for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

ROK National Security Director Chung Eui-yong (left) is welcomed to Pyongyang by DPRK leader Kim Jong Un, March 5, 2018.

Find Out About Korea and Join the Work for Peace

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Following the inter-Korean talks in January and the united efforts in February to make the PyeongChang Peace Olympics a success, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Moon Jae-in government in the Republic of Korea (ROK) continue to take practical measures to jointly advance peace and the reunification of their homeland. The past two weeks have seen unprecedented developments.

The inter-Korean summit proposed in a personal letter from DPRK leader Kim Jong Un to ROK President Moon during the PyeongChang Olympics is now taking shape for April, and in turn has set the stage for U.S. President Donald Trump agreeing to a meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un in May.

These developments bode well for peace on the Korean Peninsula. They demonstrate that the Korean people and their tenacious striving for peace and national reunification are the decisive factor, not the Cold War anti-communist framework used to maintain the division of Korea by portraying the DPRK as an aggressor nation. Join in to support the striving of the Korean people, who like all the peoples of the world, wish to sort out their own affairs and set their own agenda, free from outside interference and the threat of sanctions, aggression and war.
On March 5, DPRK leader Kim Jong Un, received a five-person delegation from the ROK led by National Security Director Chung Eui-yong in Pyongyang and held talks with them for more than four hours, following which he hosted a reception in their honour. The next day, the delegation met with high-level DPRK officials, including Kim Yong Chol, Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea.

The delegation returned to Seoul on March 6 and spoke of the friendly atmosphere and high level of political culture that characterized the meetings and gave the press a summary of the results of the meetings. The following is a translation provided by Zoom in Korea of the full press announcement:

- The north and south agreed to hold the third north-south summit at Panmunjom at the end of April and agreed to hold working level meetings for this purpose.

- The north and south agreed to establish a hotline between the leaders of both sides to ease military tension and for close consultation, and agreed to have the first call before the third north-south summit.

- The north made clear its will to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and clearly stated that if military threats against the north are resolved and the security of its system is guaranteed, it has no reason to possess nuclear weapons.

- The north expressed readiness to have candid talks with the United States to discuss the issue of denuclearization and normalization of U.S.-DPRK relations.

- The north made clear that as long as talks continue, it will not resume strategic provocations, such as additional nuclear or ballistic missile tests. The north also confirmed that it will not use its nuclear or conventional weapons against the south.

- In order to continue the positive momentum created through north-south reconciliation and cooperation during the PyeongChang Olympics, the north invited the south to send a taekwondo demonstration team and an artists' delegation to Pyongyang.
Looking at this summary, it is important to note that the DPRK is calling for the denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula, meaning the U.S. must also remove its nuclear weapons from south Korea that pose a direct threat to the DPRK (and other countries in the region), to which the DPRK will respond in kind. Those who are stuck in the Cold War framework of demonizing the DPRK, a small country seeking to maintain its sovereignty and block foreign interference, are mistaken to interpret the DPRK's position on denuclearization as a concession, rather than a reiteration of its long-standing and just demands.

It should also be noted that the DPRK has previously agreed to freeze its nuclear program and take part in the normalization of relations with the U.S. -- in the 1994 Agreed Framework and the 2005 Six Party Talks -- which were subsequently sabotaged by the U.S. when it did not reciprocate based on the principle of action-for-action.

The ball is in the U.S. court, so to speak, to rise to the occasion.

**U.S. Agrees to Summit with DPRK**

The special envoys then went from south Korea to the U.S., where National Security Director Chung debriefed President Trump on their visit to the DPRK. In a March 8 press stakeout at the White House, Chung stated:

"Good evening. Today, I had the privilege of briefing President Trump on my recent visit to Pyongyang, north Korea. […]

"I explained to President Trump that his leadership and his maximum pressure policy, together with international solidarity, brought us to this juncture. I expressed President Moon Jae-in's personal gratitude for President Trump's leadership.

"I told President Trump that, in our meeting, north Korean leader Kim Jong Un said he is committed to denuclearization. Kim pledged that north Korea will refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests. He understands that the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue. And he expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible.

"President Trump appreciated the briefing and said he would meet Kim Jong Un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization.

"The Republic of Korea, along with the United States, Japan, and our many partners around the world remain fully and resolutely committed to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Along with President Trump, we are optimistic about continuing a diplomatic process to test the possibility of a peaceful resolution.

"The Republic of Korea, the United States, and our partners stand together in insisting that we not repeat the mistakes of the past, and that the pressure will continue until north Korea matches its words with concrete actions."

In a statement, White House spokesperson Sarah Sanders said that Trump had accepted Kim's invitation and would be meeting Kim "at a place and time to be determined."

Chung's remarks appear to be a very calculated statement on the part of the Koreans, that is self-effacing and at the same time gives credence to the U.S.-led sanctions, while remaining silent on other U.S. aggression and its division of Korea. This plus the DPRK's willingness to concede on the upcoming U.S.-ROK war games and its nuclear and missile tests as acts of good faith, are all clearly to create an opening for the U.S. to play its part to work for peace. It is because of these joint efforts by the ROK and DPRK that the U.S. has now said it will engage directly with the
DPRK on the basis of dialogue and negotiation at the highest level, a remarkable achievement.

It remains to be seen if the summit will lead to the U.S. finally signing and actually implementing a peace treaty with the DPRK to end the Korean War -- an obligation it has refused to fulfill since signing the Armistice Agreement in 1953 -- by normalizing relations between the two countries and removing U.S. troops and armaments from south Korea (including nuclear weapons) that threaten the DPRK. A treaty would contribute greatly to the conditions for the Korean people to reunify their nation.


Actions are held across south Korea on March 15, 2018, to express the people's desire for peace and the success of the upcoming summit.

(With files from the Hankyoreh, Zoom in Korea, White House. Photos: Blue House, KCNA, SPARK)

---

**Missions by South Korean Envoys to China, Russia and Japan**

The delegation of envoys from the Republic of Korea (ROK) that travelled to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) then the U.S. proceeded to visit other countries in the region who have a stake in a peaceful resolution of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

The south Korean newspaper the *Hankyoreh* reports that, "After returning from a visit to the U.S. on March 11, Blue House National Security Advisor Chung Eui-yong and National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon will be departing once again on March 12 on separate trips to China, Russia and Japan. Chung and Suh will be giving these countries a detailed explanation of their visits to north Korea and the U.S. and asking for their support in bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula.

"The two envoys are expected to emphasize that peace on the peninsula is in these countries' interests in the hope of reassuring China, which welcomes the rapid improvement in north Korea's relations with the south and with the U.S. but is concerned about forfeiting its leadership on the Korean Peninsula, as well as Japan, which is suspicious of north Korea's motivations and is concerned about being sidelined in Northeast Asian affairs."
Notably, the conclusion of this round of visits by the south Korean envoys has effectively re-engaged all members of the original Six-Party Talks to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula that began in 2003, but were derailed by U.S. intransigence and sabotage by 2009.

Visit to China

The Hankyoreh reports that National Security Advisor Chung's visit to China began on March 12 with a more than four-hour long meeting with State Councillor Yang Jiechi, before meeting with President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People. He briefed President Xi on the results of his visits to the DPRK and the U.S.

President Xi welcomed the recent progress and acknowledged south Korea's role, saying, "We're happy that dialogue has been taking place between north Korea and the U.S. and that major progress is being achieved overall on the Korean Peninsula thanks to south Korea's efforts," and that he hopes "the inter-Korean summit and north Korea-U.S. dialogue go smoothly." Xi added, "True dedication can make grass grow on top of a stone. If each country focuses on the fundamental goals of peace, stability and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, the thick ice will melt and a spring day with flowers in bloom will come to the Korean Peninsula as well."

Chung conveyed that ROK President Moon Jae-in "thinks that the recent positive changes in the situation on the Korean Peninsula are due to the special leadership shown by China, and by you in particular." The Hankyoreh reports that Chung "also brought up principles long advocated by China -- namely, that the north Korea-U.S. conflict is at the heart of the north Korean nuclear issue and that south and north Korea should take the lead in resolving inter-Korean issues -- while expressing south Korea's 'gratitude' for the 'great contribution' that China has made."

The international significance of the rapid developments in inter-Korean and DPRK-U.S. relations is underscored by the fact that "Xi met Chung personally during the plenary meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Chinese political events of immense importance .... Xi made time to meet Chung despite attending various meetings each day and listening to a variety of viewpoints while major agenda items, including appointments for his second term in office, are still under deliberation," the Hankyoreh points out.

In the evening, Chung met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, where the minister reiterated China's "firm determination to safeguard peace and stability on the Peninsula" and Chung in turn reiterated the ROK's appreciation of China's support and ongoing role.

Visit to Russia

Chung arrived in Russia from China on March 13, where he met with Foreign Minister Sergei
Lavrov. In his opening remarks at the meeting, Lavrov stated, "We appreciate your coming to Russia as part of the current efforts to overcome the crisis on and around the Korean Peninsula. Your mission, carried out on behalf of the President of the Republic of Korea, Mr Moon Jae-in, is at the centre of attention of the international community. You have visited Pyongyang, Washington, Beijing and today you are in Moscow. This once again underscores the understanding by your leadership of the need to form a sufficiently strong front of all those who can help in a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

"Russia has consistently advocated a reduction in tension, a shift from confrontational rhetoric to specific ways to find a generally acceptable approach to settling the situation. In this regard, your impressions and assessments of the situation will be valuable to us. Once again, thank you for coming to talk with us."

Chung asked for Russia's support for all processes which the ROK thinks could lead to the resolution of the crisis on the Peninsula, in particular, the upcoming inter-Korean summit in April and the U.S.-DPRK summit in May, Xinhua reports.

On his return to south Korea on March 15, Chung reported positively on his visits to China and Russia.

**Visit to Japan**

Meanwhile, National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon carried out a visit to Japan, where he met with Foreign Minister Taro Kono on March 12 and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on March 13.

News agencies report that Suh and Kono agreed to work in close coordination on the issue of the alleged "abductions" of Japanese citizens by the DPRK in the 1970s and 1980s.

Prime Minister Abe, who had initially responded to news of the upcoming inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK summits by dismissing them as a stalling tactic by the DPRK, took a different tone in his meeting with Suh.

"North Korea has big negotiations to make at the
inter-Korean summit and later its summit with the United States and in light of the situation I don't think it will use this opportunity to simply buy time," Abe was cited as saying by the south Korean government in a statement. "It is extremely important for north Korea to take concrete steps and implement what it has said" to move toward denuclearization, Abe said.

Abe also promised cooperation "in all ways possible" for the success of the summits, according to Suh.

During the meeting, Suh conveyed President Moon's "message that the cooperation between south Korea and Japan is necessary to turn a peace move on the Korean Peninsula created by the PyeongChang Olympics to a good one," adding, "I believe such a good mood began as Prime Minister Abe and U.S. Vice President (Mike) Pence attended the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Olympics."

Abe has said he will visit the United States early next month to hold talks with President Trump to coordinate their policies on the DPRK ahead of the U.S.-DPRK summit, news agencies report.

(With files from the Hankyoreh, Xinhua, Chinese Foreign Ministry, Russian Foreign Ministry, Reuters, Kyodo. Photos: Xinhua, Yonhap)

---

**New U.S. Sanctions Against DPRK**

On February 23, the U.S. Treasury Department announced what it called the "heaviest sanctions" ever against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The new sanctions target 27 shipping and trade companies, 28 vessels and one individual. The targeted vessels are located, registered or flagged in the DPRK, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Marshall Islands, Tanzania, Panama and Comoros. These sanctions claim to target ship-to-ship transfers of coal and fuel which the Trump administration say enable the DPRK to side-step UN Security Council economic and political sanctions.

In making this announcement, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told the press that the U.S. now has imposed more than 450 sanctions against the DPRK, half of which have come in the last year. These are in addition to more than 20 UN Security Council sanctions imposed on the DPRK since 1950, and also in addition to those that have been imposed by the European Union, Britain, Canada and others under the pretext of the DPRK’s work to defend itself with a nuclear deterrent program.
While repeating that the DPRK refuses to be cowed by the latest illegal attempt to infringe on the DPRK's sovereignty, the Policy Research Director at the Institute for American Studies of the DPRK Foreign Ministry issued a statement in which it acknowledged, "The anti-DPRK sanctions and pressure by the Trump group can be described as 'harshest' ever seen in history in light of its vicious and reactionary nature."

More recently, the U.S. National Security Advisor addressed the UN Security Council in a closed-door meeting on March 12 regarding sanctions against the DPRK. He noted the upcoming meeting between DPRK leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump, telling reporters afterward, "We are all agreed that we are optimistic about this opportunity." He repeated the U.S. demand that the DPRK denuclearize, without pledging that the U.S. would do the same. "We are determined to keep up the campaign of maximum pressure until we see words match with deeds, and real progress toward denuclearization," he said.

By portraying the DPRK as an aggressor state, the U.S. and its allies sow disinformation about the grave threat posed to the DPRK by U.S. aggression, including its troops and nuclear arms in south Korea, the massive annual war games aimed at regime change, etc. Thus they obscure the rationale for the DPRK's recourse to a nuclear deterrent, give themselves a false pretext for sanctions while upholding an unconscionable double standard towards the massive U.S. nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to have any meaning requires that the U.S. also remove its nuclear arms from south Korea.

Gangwon Province Governor Choi Moon-soon announced on February 17 that he would look into the idea of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Republic of Korea (ROK) jointly hosting the 2021 Asian Winter Games. Pyeongchang, site of the 2018 Winter Olympics is located in Gangwon, which borders the DPRK provinces Kangwon and Kaesong. The announcement was made at a banquet welcoming the DPRK's cheerleading squad to the games. Speaking to the press at the banquet, Governor Choi stated that this proposal is "one way to increase the usage of the facilities after the PyeongChang Winter Olympics and of continuing inter-Korean harmony and exchange. We will initiate detailed preparations after the PyeongChang Olympics."

Besides the facilities built for the PyeongChang Olympic games, the Masikryong Ski Resort in Wonson, DPRK is considered to be at a standard capable of hosting events for the 2021 Asian Winter Games. Joint training of DPRK and ROK Olympic skiers was held there January 31.

This proposal was met with broad enthusiasm by the people of Gangwon, who have a long history of supporting inter-Korean relations, particularly since the signing of the June 15, 2000 North-South Joint Declaration.

Governor Choi in particular has championed inter-Korean contact and dialogue throughout his tenure, hosting sports teams from the DPRK in soccer competitions. Notably, Governor Choi denounced attempts by the anti-communist reactionaries in the ROK, egged on by the U.S. imperialists and monopoly media in Canada and elsewhere, to slander the PyeongChang Olympics as the "Pyongyang Olympics" suggesting that the government of the ROK were being stooges for the DPRK.
Among other things, Governor Choi is hoping that the Kaesong Industrial Complex will soon be reopened for the benefit of the Korean people. A very successful economic partnership was put in place at the Kaesong Industrial Complex as a direct result of the historic June 15, 2000 Declaration. Between 2002 and 2016, workers from the DPRK worked in enterprises from the ROK, to the mutual benefit of all Koreans. The decision by the reactionary anti-communist Park Gyeun-hye government in the south to end the partnership in 2016 was widely denounced and was a factor in eventually removing her from power on corruption and other charges.

Governor Choi's proposals and the support from the people of Gangwon exemplify the Korean people's profound desire for reunification, undiminished by the 65 years of foreign interference to unjustly divide their nation.

(With files from the Hankyoreh, Korea Times. Photo: Hankyoreh)
official delegations from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ecuador, St. Christopher and Nevis, Surinam, Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti, Dominican Republic and El Salvador.[1]

Addressing a large crowd gathered outside Miraflores Presidential Palace during the Summit, Maduro said, "The Venezuelan people are today more Chavista than ever, and we state with love: Chávez lives!"

Rally outside Miraflores Presidential Palace, March 5, 2018, honours the life of Hugo Chávez.
The Declaration adopted at the ALBA-TCP Summit upheld the legacy Hugo Chávez left behind, reflecting the principles he upheld and fought for to improve the lives of Venezuelans and the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole. It began by reaffirming the principles of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace adopted by the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2014. It urged the international community to "abstain from any type of coercive exercises against the political independence and territorial integrity of Venezuela," saying this was incompatible with international Law and the UN Charter and contrary to the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

Among other things the Declaration called for the peaceful resolution of differences, the prohibition of the use and threats of force, respect for self-determination, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of every nation. It denounced attempts to revive the Monroe Doctrine as well as military threats and attempts to carry out a military coup against the constitutional government of Venezuela and rejected the "unilateral coercive measures and sanctions imposed against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that affects the life and development of the noble people of Venezuela and the enjoyment of their rights."

The Declaration reaffirmed ALBA members' support for the constitutional President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, his government and the democratic process led by him and said it was the inalienable right of the Venezuelan people to hold and participate in elections at the national, state and municipal levels in compliance with their own norms and internal procedures. It ended by calling for the unity of the peoples of Our America -- not just as an ideal but a necessity.
Other commemorative activities were held in Venezuela the same day. An international solidarity gathering was held March 5-7 in Caracas under the banner "We are All Venezuela." It brought together some 300 activists from 65 countries with members of social movements, parliamentarians and others from Venezuela. At the opening of the gathering Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said that Chávez gave much more than the people and the world imagined or that imperialism had calculated. "Every day we see something of the Commander -- in our children, young people, women, workers Chávez is present, alive among us," he said. On March 5, the international delegations joined the ALBA leaders and others in paying their respects at the Cuartel de la Montaña located on a hill overlooking Caracas that houses Chávez's tomb and where an eternal flame burns in his memory. A cannon was fired at 4:25 pm, the precise time of Chávez's passing.

On March 15 a second commemoration was held at the same location, which is also known as Cuartel de la Montaña 4F -- signifying February 4, the date on which the civic-military rebellion led by Chávez was launched in 1992 and commanded from those barracks. A caravan of trucks and motorcycles travelled from the Military Academy in Caracas up to the Cuartel with a lighted cauldron carried in the lead vehicle, its burning flame a tribute to Chávez. Members of social and political organizations lined the route of the caravan as it retraced the route people had walked to accompany the cortège that carried Chávez to his final resting place five years ago.
Caravan to the Cuartel de la Montaña and ceremony in honour of Hugo Chávez, March 15, 2018.

People also came to honour the memory and legacy of Hugo Chávez and show their support for the Bolivarian Revolution at commemorative activities held at Venezuelan embassies and consulates around the world. At the commemoration held at the Venezuelan Embassy in Ottawa a delegation from CPC(M-L) presented the Chargé d'Affaires with a bouquet of roses, a card for the occasion addressed to President Nicolás Maduro and a tribute entitled "Long Live the Legacy of the Founder of the Bolivarian Revolution" from the March 3 issue of TML Weekly.
The Venezuelan Embassy in Ottawa commemorates the fifth anniversary of the death of Hugo Chávez.

Note

1. The 11 full members of ALBA-TCP are Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Ecuador, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada and the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis

(ACN, Granma, teleSUR, albainfo.org. Photos: AVN, Somos Venezuela, Venezuelan Embassy in Canada)
Compañero Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Esteemed Heads of State and Government;

Esteemed Heads of delegations and guests:

This March 5, on which we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the passing of President Hugo Chávez Frías, founder together with Fidel of ALBA, my first words are dedicated to reaffirming our tribute to his work and his example and the unwavering loyalty to his legacy.

Today, ALBA has as its strategic and urgent task the joint defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The military threat, hostility and economic aggression of U.S. imperialism against Venezuela; the neo-liberal onslaught to reverse the social gains; the interference against the sovereignty of progressive governments; the attempts to dismantle the progress in the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, destabilize the region and pose risks to regional peace and security.

The United States, since 1999 when Comandante Hugo Chávez became President, and even more so when compañero Nicolás Maduro did so, has resorted to methods of unconventional warfare, with the aim of defeating this country, the owner of immense riches coveted by imperialism.

President Donald Trump has just renewed the executive order that declares Venezuela an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

The threats to peace and stability in Venezuela also represent a threat to regional peace and stability.

Some appear to have forgotten the lessons of the past, the cruel years of the military dictatorships, the impact of neo-liberalism; that they attempt to reinstate the disastrous consequences that the policies of extortion, humiliation and isolation had for our region that, as then, have the United States as their chief articulator.

They openly announce the full validity and relevance of the Monroe Doctrine which proclaims colonial subordination to the governments and corporations of Washington and that, as Bolívar warned, plagued Our America with sorrow and misery in the name of liberty.

Once again, they underestimate our peoples.

We proclaim unwavering support for the Bolivarian Revolution and the civic-military union of its people, led by their President, compañero Nicolás Maduro Moros.

We condemn the unilateral coercive measures and external interference against the Bolivarian and Chavista process that threaten the peace and dialogue between Venezuelans, with destabilizing purposes, and create hardships for its population.

Cease the economic aggression against Venezuela so that its people can enjoy the rights conquered by their Revolution.

We reject the exclusion of President Nicolás Maduro from the 8th Summit of the Americas. This illegal decision is unacceptable and interventionist, whilst it takes the hemisphere back to stages
that appeared to have been overcome.

Exclusions do not contribute at all to peace, dialogue or hemispheric understanding.

It is unacceptable that a group of countries, with no right or mandate, intend to speak for the region and serve as an instrument of aggression against a member of the Latin American and Caribbean family, using as a pretext an alleged rupture of the democratic order, precisely in a country that has undertaken more than twenty electoral processes and has now called presidential elections, as was previously demanded, even via violent methods.

Why don't they denounce the covert coup d'états, the massacres, the forced disappearances suffered by the peoples of the region?

Nor do we recognize any moral authority of the discredited Organization of American States to give lessons in democracy, governability or constitutionality.

They violate the postulates of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), during the second CELAC Summit, in Havana, and evade strict compliance with the obligation not to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other state, and observe the principles of national sovereignty, equality of rights and the self-determination of the peoples.

The only solution to the problems of Venezuelans is in the hands of Venezuelans themselves.

Esteemed compañeros:

I speak on behalf of our Revolution and our people, as will any other Cuban compatriot from this position in the future, who will always know, as Fidel believed, that "Our peoples have no future without unity, without integration."

Bolívar and Martí, Fidel and Chávez bequeathed us invaluable teachings, among them loyalty to principles. Their lessons show us the course to follow in this decisive hour of the Great Homeland, which calls for our unity to forge together our second and definitive independence. Thank you very much. (Applause)

(Granma, March 6, 2018)

Sanctions Must Be Terminated and Economic War Must End Says UN Rapporteur

- Interview, Dr. Alfred de Zayas -

In the following interview with the Swiss newspaper Zeitgeschehen im Fokus, Professor Alfred M. de Zayas, JD, PhD, and the UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, relates his impressions and experience in Venezuela.

From November 26 to December 4, 2017, Professor Alfred M. de Zayas carried out an official mission in Venezuela. He had requested an invitation in August, which the Venezuelan government granted in September, making him the first UN rapporteur since 1996 to be invited and to conduct an official UN visit to Venezuela. The purpose of the mission was to explore how the Bolivarian Revolution had implemented human rights -- especially in the economic, social and cultural
domain. It was his special concern to compare the coverage in the mainstream media of the United States and Europe with the Venezuelan reality on the ground. In order to get a sufficiently objective picture, the UN expert met with representatives and activists of 35 non-governmental organizations specializing in human rights issues, representatives of industry and commerce, members of the opposition National Assembly, church officials, victims of violent demonstrations and relatives of detainees. Apart from meetings with a large number of government ministers, he met twice with Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza and his staff. During his stay he could move freely, as Zeitgeschehen im Fokus reported on December 23, 2017. He also gave a lecture at the University of Caracas.

***

Zeitgeschehen im Fokus: How would you assess the economic situation in Venezuela after you have stayed there?

Professor Alfred de Zayas: The Bolivarian Revolution, which has taken place in Venezuela, developed a model that worked rather well in the first 10 years. That was partly due to the high oil price. Venezuela depends on oil revenues by 95 per cent. With these revenues, the state could finance many social projects. But now that the oil price has dropped by more than half, the country faces massive disruptions in the acquisition and distribution of food, medicines and other products.

ZF: What distinguishes the model in Venezuela?

ADZ: It is a social model that wants to achieve a fairer distribution of the country's wealth. Meanwhile, 2 million homes have been handed over to the poorer part of the population. Thus at least 8 million persons have benefited from affordable apartments. There is also the so-called system of CLAP (Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción -- Local Committee for Supply and Production), in which the government distributes food parcels to the poor. Those who cannot pay for the packages, receive them for free, of course.

ZF: What does such a parcel contain?

ADZ: I did open one when I was visiting one of the modern and very clean "Urbanizaciones" (government housing for the poor). There are 16 kg of food in it: sugar, rice, cooking oil, flour, cornmeal, milk powder, etc. A family gets such a parcel twice a month. Therefore, there is no "famine" in Venezuela, despite media reports and generalizations. There is, however, a shortage in several sectors, and some products are hard to get, but the population does not suffer from hunger as for example in many countries of Africa and Asia -- or even in the favelas of São Paulo and other urban areas in Brazil and other Latin American countries. There are mainly problems in the timely distribution of imported products -- but this is predominantly the responsibility of the private sector, which often enough deliberately boycotts the distribution, sometimes stocks products in large warehouses and then takes them to the black market instead of delivering them to supermarkets -- just to make a higher profit.

ZF: What is special about the "Bolivarian Revolution"?

ADZ: It is an alternative model to capitalism, to unregulated free market economics. It is not "Marxism," and certainly not "Marxism-Leninism." It is an attempt to give the capitalist system a humane face. Since 1999, when Hugo Chávez came to power, a certain reorientation of the country took place, which could set a precedent for Latin America and many developing economies. There are major achievements, which the mainstream media systematically ignores -- e.g., illiteracy was eliminated within a short time (as was the case in Castro's Cuba). School education is free, from kindergarten to university. There is a system of free medical care, a system of support for young mothers, a major effort at building affordable housing and expanding the public transport system.
Today, if you read the *New York Times* or "inform" yourself about Venezuela on CNN or UN Watch etc., you repeatedly come across the concept of a "humanitarian crisis" ...

I warn against this technical term, because a "humanitarian crisis" can be easily exploited to justify a so-called "humanitarian intervention" or to aim at a "regime change," under the pretext that the government lets the population starve. Some states pretend that the Venezuelan government can no longer guarantee the rights of the people. Hence, a humanitarian crisis emerged and now they want to intervene militarily to "save" the Venezuelan people from a failed socialist experiment.

**ZF:** What is the situation on the ground?

**ADZ:** I stayed in Venezuela for eight days of intensive meetings back-to-back; I could move around freely wherever I wanted. I did not see any street children and I also did not see any person begging. I have not seen a single beggar in Caracas although I walked and drove across the entire city. I also walked by the poorer quarters, where I did see queues of people waiting for some subsidized or rationed products. The situation has many facets, and I do not claim that there is no hunger and no scarcity of medicine. I simply say that the existing cases of children dying of malnutrition or lack of medicine do not add up to a "humanitarian crisis." I did not see any violence, although the press keeps telling us about it. As a UN official I have been in many places where you "smell" violence, where you sense tension in the air and feel that you yourself may be in danger. That is not the case in Venezuela. There are homicides — many of them associated with drugs and international crime. Honduras is much worse.

People who beg are the order of the day in our western industrial nations. No one would think of talking about a humanitarian crisis, for example in Germany, because there are beggars in the streets.

In Venezuela, I did not see beggars. No doubt, there is poverty, but the population is not depressed -- certainly not in the same degree as the people of East Germany in the '70s, where people were dispirited and demotivated and went about with pale faces, sad and depressed. The population in the streets of Caracas is Latino in the best sense of the term, they make the best of things and do not let scarcity and boycotts turn them into zombies. Just like in any other city; everywhere there are cars, motorcycles and bicycles on the road.

**ZF:** Can the people supply themselves with food?

**ADZ:** There are enough fruits and locally-grown vegetables. People eat bananas or mangoes in the streets. There is a certain lack of the products that the domestic and foreign monopolies determine.

**ZF:** What is the situation like in the supermarkets?

**ADZ:** I have seen several food stores and markets -- and I took photos of them. It is not true that the food stores are empty. Of course, some have empty shelves -- I got such pictures from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) -- but there was always enough of everything. Of course, there are some products that are imported because Venezuela cannot manufacture them itself. They are scarce commodities. But you can live very well without these products. The fact that the supply of hygienic items for women or diapers for the babies are scarce is a direct result of the failure of the private sector to import these goods and to distribute them to the supermarkets. However, you can get everything on the black market -- but at exorbitant prices.

**ZF:** Is a specific shortage created there to stir up the people's dissatisfaction with the government?

**ADZ:** There are studies and statistical data from several university professors who investigated this phenomenon -- especially why and how supply shortfalls are getting worse, especially when elections or referendums are imminent. They are supposed to affect people negatively, so that they
vote against the government. This is called voto castigo (penalty vote) in Spanish. If you read an
article from the New York Times, it will say that there are bottlenecks in supply in Venezuela, for
example also for medicines. However, you will not read anywhere why this is so. You will not read
anywhere that the private sector does have the foreign exchange to import the necessary medicines.
This is not said. It is also not said that a huge smuggling has emerged of subsidized products --
subsidized Venezuelan rice or flour can be bought in Bogotá.

**ZF:** What are the reasons for these phenomena?

**ADZ:** There are a number of reasons, which I was able to observe during my stay. I have to study
them in more detail. I was given extensive documentation from various sources that I still have to
digest. There are also very good books about this topic. An economist in Caracas, Professor Dr
Pasqualina Curcio, carefully explained in her book how the economic war against Venezuela
caused this situation of shortage, and that was no accident -- it was deliberate, absolutely targeted.
In the period around the elections -- approximately two or three months earlier -- the goods
suddenly disappeared. Especially hygiene items could not be purchased any longer. However,
warehouses were discovered, and that is also documented, that were full of these products. I was
also given picture documentation on the matter.

**ZF:** Do you mean that shortages are artificially generated?

**ADZ:** Yes, the goods are often not delivered to the supermarkets but traded on the black market at
exorbitant prices. There are, of course, institutional problems and multiple inefficiencies in the
socialistic model, about which I made concrete recommendations to the government. Yet another
problem, which I discussed with several ministers, is the unnecessary price controls and artificial
exchange rates -- this all results in corruption and abuse. The government should instead give the
most vulnerable persons direct financial support, rather than making use of a price control.

**ZF:** Why that?

**ADZ:** The danger of price controls, as we know from the Soviet Union, is that parallel markets
emerge and with them large-scale corruption. People are people, and if they can buy subsidized
goods, the temptation to resell these subsidized goods at a higher price is too big. You can make a
killing with subsidized corn flour, with subsidized rice, which you can then smuggle into Colombia,
Brazil, Aruba and sell it there at great profit. Venezuela has a very long border with Colombia and
Brazil. The Caribbean Islands are easily accessible, too.

**ZF:** Who is responsible for this process?

**ADZ:** There is an internationally organized mafia that operates the process, but apparently the
governments of the neighbouring countries do nothing to stop this smuggling. If a store in Bogotá
offers cheap rice from Venezuela, we should assume that the traders know where the rice comes
from: It is either stolen or smuggled. In any case it was brought into the country illegally. The
government does nothing -- or too little -- against these supermarkets. Moreover, Colombia allows
the Venezuelan currency to be changed at wildly fluctuating rates of exchange. This has devastating
effects on the economy and financial situation in Venezuela.

**ZF:** What about agricultural production in the country?

**ADZ:** Diversified agricultural production is now being systematically promoted, but this is a
process that takes time and requires importing seeds and other goods. Venezuela no longer wants to
be exclusively dependent on oil exports and wants to produce its own food. However, the
procurement of seeds is in the hands of foreign monopolists, and the government has difficulties in
obtaining seeds at decent prices.
**ZF:** To what extent do sanctions have an impact on the supply situation?

**ADZ:** Direct and indirect sanctions have hit the economic situation in Venezuela seriously. The economic, financial and trade war against Venezuela reminds of the U.S. measures against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970-73 and against the Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

Deliveries from abroad are traded in dollars. However authorized persons must sign for the payment in dollars. Many of the persons who have this right to sign are on the sanctions list. This means that no trading partner dares to accept their signature. Thus, the company cannot earn any money because no payment can be made, and the goods do not come to Venezuela. The suppliers are afraid that they will be penalized by U.S. authorities -- with fines of tens of thousands of dollars if they fail to comply with the unilateral sanctions regime of the United States.

**ZF:** For which goods or sectors do the sanctions apply?

**ADZ:** That is the next problem. Nobody really knows how far they reach. They are based on so-called catch-all clauses, which can be interpreted one way or the other. But who wants to have to pay a fine? So many international companies are prudent and do not take unnecessary risks. For Venezuela this is devastating.

**ZF:** What would help the country?

**ADZ:** The sanctions must be terminated. The economic war has to end, that would be the greatest help for the country. However, what we can observe in Venezuela is the result of a targeted economic war. There are many countries participating, even from Europe. The misinformation about Venezuela has been successful -- even with people who should be better informed. You have to be on the spot to see that the situation is not like you read in the *New York Times*. If you look at the mainstream media, you get the impression that the country is close to collapse. In fact, the country is rich and with a bit of cooperation and solidarity it could sell its oil, its gold, its bauxite. Venezuela must now trade a lot with China and India because of the very limited trade with the U.S. and Europe.

**ZF:** Is the oil trade also subject to the sanctions?

**ADZ:** Yes, partly. The sanctions are very complex. It is not the case that a sale cannot be done at all, but it is connected with so many obstacles, and there are so many restrictions and delays that many people say, "We would rather not do business with Venezuela, there is too much imponderability."

**ZF:** During your stay you could certainly talk to the population. What impression have you gained here?

**ADZ:** Many are somewhat resigned because they suffer from an economic war. But when it comes to elections, Maduro wins. The majority of the population does not make the government responsible for all that, but they accuse the United States, Europe, Colombia, etc. When the Constituent Assembly was elected, there had been very violent demonstrations prior to the election for four months. In the foreign media we read about those "peaceful demonstrations." In fact, these were orgies of violence with Molotov cocktails and explosives. It was almost terrorism that hit many normal, non-political people when, for example, a supplier wanted to get from A to B, but the *guarimbas* (violent demonstrations with barricades) blocked his path. Several ordinary people were killed, who only wanted to go about their business. In addition, demonstrators attacked hospitals, nursery schools, burned ambulances and buses in order to intimidate the people. Is this not just classic terrorism?
**ZF:** Did the demonstrations succeed with these methods?

**ADZ:** No, 8.5 million people went to the polls for the Constituent Assembly, in spite of the *guarimbas* and in spite of the violence. In the local elections of December 15, 2017 more than 9 million went to the polls. The opposition does not succeed in changing the people's mind, but the polarization of the country continues to be a problem, because Chavistas are very strongly pro-government, and the MUD [U.S.-backed opposition forces -- TML ed. note] is very strongly against the government. There is very little sense that *la patria es de todos* (the fatherland belongs to all). According to media reports in the U.S. and Europe, the only solution is regime change, to chase the government from office. We must however not forget that this government was democratically elected in 1999, in 2002 it survived a coup because the people and the army opposed the coup and prevented the planned physical elimination of Chávez. In 2004 a recall referendum was held, which Chávez won easily -- 70 per cent of the population did not want to remove him from office. After his death in 2013, Maduro was elected President, in spite of a violent campaign, accompanied by terror and sabotage on the part of the opposition.

**ZF:** How did the government deal with all these organized attacks?

**ADZ:** The government relied on the 1999 Constitution. However, a number of major mistakes including excessive force by the police, did occur. If a government is under such pressure, then it must act quickly. If one acts fast, one makes mistakes, often goes too far. This includes, for example, introducing economic measures that can be counter-productive, including subsidies and price controls.

**ZF:** What kind of agenda does the opposition follow?

**ADZ:** They wish to cancel the Chávez and Maduro years and return to a purely capitalistic model. But there are at least 8 million Chávistas, and they will not disappear. These voters are convinced of the government's program. These people will not allow the social achievements to be swept away. If the economy does not collapse as a result of sabotage, smuggling and sanctions, the government is likely to be reelected in 2018. The administration and the army are on the side of the government. Certainly, the plan in Washington is to launch a military attack on Venezuela by making use of disinformation about the allegedly miserable situation in the country with hunger, infant mortality and economically desolate conditions, and then to chase the government out of office. We know this proceeding from other countries, so for example from September 1973 when the government of Salvador Allende was overthrown by a coup and Allende died.

**ZF:** How do you assess your stay?

**ADZ:** I got a very different impression from the one I pictured to myself before I visited the country. In our media there is scarce interest in truly investigative journalism, in discovering what the root causes of Venezuela's problems are. We get a caricature of the situation, and this caricature becomes dogma. Weeks before my journey, my independence, my professionalism, my honour were questioned. UN Watch published an article and called my visit a "fake investigation," even before I had set foot on Venezuelan soil. Some NGOs have claimed that I was not the right Special Rapporteur for these questions. That was before I had announced anything at all about my journey. On my personal blog I showed pictures of Caracas, its churches, monuments, and a picture of a supermarket that was full of goods. After that there were particularly offensive attacks against me. UN Watch found the picture and reacted to it. I had published the picture without any comment. I was attacked as a chavist, a castrist, a communist, etc. All I wanted to show is that the situation is not as they want us to believe. I had seen so many pictures of empty shelves that I thought it was legitimate to show a different photo in my private blog (which also reflected my observation in other supermarkets).
**ZF:** What did you suggest to the Venezuelan government?

**ADZ:** I submitted to the foreign minister six pages of preliminary recommendations, among others -- institutional improvements, the elimination of price controls, the fight against smuggling and corruption, but always within the rule of law. They ought to respect the UN covenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. They are already seeking dialogue with the opposition and showing commendable flexibility and patience. They should either release individuals who have been imprisoned for political reasons, or take them to court with a fair trial. And for the better management of the country they need technocrats, not only ideologists! Above all, the government must prove that it takes human rights seriously. Corruption must be fought at all levels, even with the help of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna. In doing so, UN organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), the International Labor Organization (ILO), etc. could help to ensure that the necessary improvements are translated into action.

**ZF:** What do you think of the conversations you had in the Dominican Republic?

**ADZ:** Every opportunity of dialogue with the opposition must be taken. The previous meetings in Santo Domingo in November and December 2017 and January 2018 have already been fruitful. Further meetings are planned. It is in the interest of all who care for human rights and who care for the Venezuelan people to support these negotiations. Unfortunately, a "human rights industry" has emerged that instrumentalizes human rights as weapons of mass destruction against governments. This "industry" is not interested in solving the "humanitarian crisis," they want to use the hyperbolic "crisis" as a pretext for military intervention and regime change. This "industry" does not want independent experts who travel to Venezuela to find out what the real situation is. They only want "experts" who go to Venezuela (or elsewhere) simply to grandstand and condemn governments. If anyone [is sincere about] humanitarian aid, they should offer their cooperation to the government and send food and medicines without strings attached. If they are interested in the Venezuelan people, they will make sure that sanctions and boycotts are lifted, so that the Venezuelan government can function normally, without discrimination, in the international community, so that Venezuela can import and export free of sabotage and political ostracism.