

Media lies in service of war for regime change in Venezuela

3 May 2019

Tuesday's abortive coup attempt initiated by the US puppet and self-proclaimed "interim president" Juan Guaidó in Venezuela has served once again to expose the criminal role of the US corporate media.

Guaidó's video of himself and Leopoldo Lopez, the leader of Guaidó's extreme right-wing CIA-funded party, Voluntad Popular, appearing with a few dozen armed men in uniform and calling for a military uprising, was greeted with undisguised glee by the major media outlets.

This stunt was staged as the 100-day "reign" of Mr. Guaidó, existing only in the greedy imagination of US imperialism and Big Oil, appeared no closer to establishing control over Venezuela. Even as it became evident that it had turned into an unmitigated fiasco, the media continued to broadcast reports suggesting that the military was divided, and the people were in revolt.

As the failure of the coup attempt became increasingly undeniable, CNN and the major networks all repeated the farfetched claims made by the regime-change operation's principal protagonists within the Trump administration as if they were incontrovertible fact.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told the media that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was set to board a jet waiting on the tarmac in Caracas to whisk him away to Havana but had only been persuaded at the last minute by the "Russians" to stay.

Did any of the talking heads who repeated this claim over and over have any evidence beyond the words of the former CIA director to substantiate its veracity? If so, they didn't bother to share it with their audience.

John Bolton, Trump's warmongering national security adviser, issued a statement on the White House lawn in which he asserted that Venezuela's Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, the head of the country's supreme court and the chief of the palace guard had all "agreed that Maduro had to go" and now had to act on their "commitments" or "go down with the ship."

This likewise was treated as fact, despite the public denunciations of Guaidó's actions by both Padrino and the supreme court. Bolton's peculiar repetition three times of the three men's names in the course of his remarks was an unmistakable sign that the national security adviser was

engaged in a bit of information warfare aimed at disrupting the Venezuelan government.

The *Washington Post*, owned by Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos, weighed in with an editorial on the very night of the US-backed coup under the headline, "Don't call it a coup. Venezuelans have a right to replace an oppressive, toxic regime." It might have benefited from an underline, "Who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?"

The *Post* editors declared, "Venezuelans responded to Mr. Guaidó's call for street protests and were met by troops loyal to Mr. Maduro. By late afternoon, clashes were taking place, regime officials were promising a decisive 'counterattack,' and there was no way to know whether 'Operation Liberty,' as Mr. Guaidó dubbed this high-risk move, would succeed or be crushed — or devolve into civil war.

"What is not, or should not be, ambiguous is the political and moral essence of this volatile situation," the *Post* declared.

The "moral essence" of the situation, all the invocations of "liberty" notwithstanding, smells decidedly of oil and excrement.

There was no "decisive counterattack" by the government because none was needed. Neither troops nor any sizeable number of civilians rallied to Guaidó's tweeted video calling for the storming of the La Carlota Air Base and the armed overthrow of the Maduro government. By the end of the day, Lopez, the apparent architect of the coup attempt, had sought refuge in first the Chilean and then the Spanish embassy. The handful of soldiers who stayed with the right-wing US puppets, some 25 in all, asked for protection in the embassy of Bolsonaro's Brazil.

Guaidó's political party has its roots in Venezuela's reactionary traditional ruling oligarchy, responsible for the oppression of the working class and poor and for such crimes as the massacre of thousands who rose up against IMF austerity in the *caracazo* uprising of 1989, which far eclipses any repression carried out under Maduro or his predecessor, Hugo Chavez.

There are clearly millions of Venezuelans, who, despite their anger over deteriorating social conditions as well as the Maduro government's corruption and its defense of a privileged capitalist layer known as the *boliburguesía*, see in Guaidó and his ilk the traditional enemy of the country's

working people.

The genuine overthrow of a government by its people, which in the present epoch can be successfully prosecuted only by means of the independent political mobilization of the working class against the entire capitalist setup, is defined as a revolution. The attempt to oust a sitting president by mobilizing small groups of armed men to storm a military base with the backing of a foreign power is, whether the *Post* likes it or not, a coup.

The *New York Times*, in the wake of the coup fiasco, made its own contribution to Washington's regime-change operation, publishing an article based upon a supposed "secret dossier" ostensibly provided by a turncoat Venezuelan intelligence officer and confirmed by a cohort claiming that former Venezuelan vice president and current industry minister Tareck El Aissami, the son of Syrian immigrants, had "pushed to bring Hezbollah into Venezuela."

The "dossier" has all the earmarks of the kind of reporting that the *Times* did about "weapons of mass destruction" in the advance of the 2003 US war of aggression against Iraq.

The *Times'* own readers responded to the story with suspicion and contempt. Among the top-rated readers' comments was the observation that "the report has all the smell of a conjured-up pretext the same as the basis to race into Iraq and wreak havoc and destabilize the Mideast. In fact, the smell is even more pungent."

Another reader wrote: "So why are 'secret dossiers' on the Venezuelan government suddenly appearing? Why not secret dossiers on Saudi Arabia? Why not secret dossiers on Egypt? Why not secret dossiers on Israel? Why not secret dossiers on Kazakhstan? Why? Because the US is 100 percent focused on regime change in Venezuela, and already has the regimes it wants in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and other countries."

There has been not a single critical voice raised within the so-called mainstream media against the US regime-change operation in Venezuela. The newspapers and television news programs are filled with lies and propaganda preparing for the realization of the continuously invoked threat that "all options are on the table."

The media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) recently published the results of a survey of the main trend-setting media outlets, both print and broadcast, covering the three-month period between January and April of this year. It concluded: "zero opinion pieces in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* took an anti-regime change or pro-Maduro/Chavista position. Not a single commentator on the big three Sunday morning talk shows or PBS NewsHour came out against President Nicolas Maduro stepping down from the Venezuelan government."

Underlying the corporate media's lockstep, shameless and undisguised support for another imperialist regime-change operation and coup in Latin America are the overriding interests of crisis-ridden US capitalism in asserting its

unfettered control over Venezuela's oil reserves, the largest on the planet, and in rolling back the growing economic and political influence of both China and Russia in a hemisphere that Washington has historically regarded as its own "backyard."

The US media has undergone a protracted degeneration, corresponding with the abandonment by the US capitalist ruling elite of any semblance of support for democratic rights and processes. While there was never a golden age of the capitalist press in the United States, the days when the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* could publish the Pentagon Papers, defying the US government to bring the criminal policy of US imperialism in Southeast Asia to the attention of the American public in the midst of a bitter war, are long gone.

Those attempting to carry out a similar function in today's environment confront the full weight of capitalist repression, with the media talking heads and columnists egging the state on.

That is the fate of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, sentenced on Wednesday to almost a year in prison by a UK judge and facing the threat of rendition to the US and a potential death sentence for the crime of exposing Washington's war crimes. Like him, Chelsea Manning, the army whistleblower who provided WikiLeaks with files exposing US crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and conspiracies around the world, has been jailed for nearly two months, much of it in solitary confinement and without needed medical care, for refusing to provide state's evidence against Assange.

The struggle against the threat of war on Venezuela and the defense of Assange and Manning lies with the international working class, whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the warmongers in the American ruling class and their lackeys in the media.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges everyone who wants to take a stand against war and in defense of Assange and Manning to participate on May 4 in the International Committee of the Fourth International's fifth annual International Online May Day Rally.

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