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Explosions in Venezuelan capital, ultra-left blamed as tensions rise

by C. J. Atkins

Four small explosive devices were detonated in Caracas, three at a shopping mall and another near the Venezuelan National Assembly building. No injuries or major damage have been reported. The blasts come at a time of heightened political tensions, however, as the opposition-controlled legislature and the socialist president, Nicolas Maduro, face off over the future direction of the country.

One early report out of the capital described the bombs as “homemade,” and said they threw pamphlets into the air upon detonation. The tracts were purportedly issued by a group calling itself the Bolivarian Liberation Forces (FBL).

In the pamphlets, the group proclaimed its loyalty to the Bolivarian Revolution inaugurated by Venezuela’s late president, Hugo Chávez but also apparently criticized Maduro’s government for supposedly not being true to the late president’s vision. The pamphlets accused Maduro of not carrying forward Chavez’s work and called for an armed offensive against the opposition. This all comes on heels of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela’s (PSUV) loss in the legislative elections in December last year.

The language in the pamphlets is out of sync with the political line taken by the PSUV government since the elections. So far the



Maduro government has publicly remained committed to democratic procedure and the rule of law, despite destabilization attempts by its political opponents.

The tactic of bombing civilian areas, calling for a revolution within the revolution, and the vague appeal for increasing social conflict all raise questions about the FBL’s credentials as a left-wing group. The effect of its anti-democratic tactics, so far, is to bolster those opposing the

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government’s socialist agenda.

For several years the right-wing opposition has been engaged in attempts to reverse the advances that the Chávez government made in areas such as healthcare, education, and economic reform. In 2002, it acted in

The right-wing opposition is attempting to reverse the advances made by the Chávez government.

conjunction with the Bush Administration to overthrow the elected government. It was only after Venezuelans in their tens of thousands poured into the streets that the coup was defeated and Chávez was returned to power.

The campaign of destabilization by the opposition and external forces, however, did not ease up after the coup. It has continued up to the present, with the National Assembly, now under right-wing control for the first time in years, becoming the new center of anti-government activity.

In such an atmosphere of tension, the FBL bombings bear all the hallmarks of ultra-left adventurism and political provocation. Opposition politicians are wasting no time as they move to capitalize on the bombings.

One of their leaders, Julio Borges, immediately sought to pin blame for the bombings on the Maduro government. He told the press that the attacks were the work of “people close to the government or with the complicity of those in power who want to create... panic to drown out discussion on important

issues.”

Borges is a close associate of Henrique Capriles, who lost presidential elections to Chávez in 2012 and Maduro in 2013. He is also affiliated with Leopoldo López, the opposition leader who currently sits in jail for inciting riots in February 2014.

As tensions soar and accusations fly back and forth between the government and the opposition, the political situation in Venezuela only deteriorates further. Just last week, a prominent journalist working for the state media, Ricardo Durán was assassinated. The army has declared its loyalty to the elected government, but the right-wing leaders of the National Assembly appear determined to utilize their new-found position of power to chip away at Maduro's base of support.

Tuesday's bombings by the FBL play right into their hands.



C. J. Atkins is the opinion editor at Peoplesworld.

Black Radical Tradition conference features Dr. Cornel West, other activists

By James Bradford

A steering committee led by Dr. Anthony Monteiro, and including grassroots activists, organizers, educators, scholars, and faith leaders, convened a conference on the Black Radical Tradition. The title of the conference was “Reclaiming our Future: the Black Radical Tradition in our time.”

The conference, which took place on the campus of Temple University in North Philadelphia, was attended by hundreds of participants from places like Michigan, Virginia, and Boston.

The meeting featured faith-based activists Rev. Renee McKenzie and Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Jr. of Chicago. Both religious leaders spoke about the need for morality in a “morally broken world.” Other speakers of the evening included Obery Hendricks, and MOVE survivor Ramona Africa.

To officially kick off the conference, there was a “March for our Future,” followed by a panel discussion entitled “The Moral Bankruptcy of Capitalism: The Black Radical Tradition as Socialist Alternative.” It was led by Dr. Cornel West of

Princeton University and Dr. Anthony Monteiro.

The opening panel discussions and theme also focused on the need to implement an alternative solution to capitalism and importance of stopping imperialism around the globe. Such panel discussions included “War, Peace and Global Justice: Resistance to the U.S. Empire”, “Neoliberalism, Spatial, Domination and Gentrification: the Struggle to Resist the New Urban Strategy”, “Challenging White Supremacy: The Black Radical View”, and the “Souls of Black Folk: Art, Culture and the Emancipation of Humanity.”

The panelists, included great minds such as Angela Y. Davis, Glen Ford, Charlene Caruthers, Ewuare X. Osayande and Vijay Prishad who commented that “the Black Radical Tradition is an international tradition”, followed by an acknowledgment of the huge contribution to the movement by Black Communists and the Communist Party, USA. Patricia Armstead, a moderator for one of the discussions, put it best when she stated: “Until we are free of capitalism, we HAVE to resist.”

Until we are free of capitalism, we have to resist.

Among the Bernites, reporting from the trenches of the Sanders campaign

By Allen Levy

January 23 was a big day for Bernie Sanders supporters. It was a day of marches in various cities and, according to his campaign, over 2,000 meetings and gatherings where Sanders could thank his supporters and, more importantly, persuade them to participate in phone banks.

I attended one such house party - and it was indeed a party, though with a serious undertone. Held in a neat little house with two dogs running about, the living room was dominated by a huge flat-screen television tuned to the stream that Sanders was going to use. In fact, when I RSVP'd for the event, the host ended our conversation with "Feel the Bern." Obviously, a true believer.

The attendees were indeed a cross-section of the population, ranging from a woman from Manhattan Beach who drove all the way to Culver City because she couldn't find a house party nearer to her home, to a student from the University of California, Merced, who was determined that Bernie's plan to control student debt would make her life more livable. Young men, old men, ex-teachers, women and men of color, bookkeepers - they were all there.

Putting a remarkably graceful face on his campaign, he noted that it was we (his audience) who

had brought him as far as he had come, that he began as an afterthought and now he was, to quote some movie or other, "a contender." And he told us that the fight was nowhere near over, that his call for a "political revolution" was a long-term project.

Our host told us the nuts and bolts of phone banking - and that it was very necessary to reach out to people to find out if they were voting or caucusing for Sanders, or whether they were familiar with him. This kind of grassroots activity, I must admit, made me feel part of something bigger than myself - a good feeling.

We don't know whether Sanders is going to win Iowa, though New Hampshire looks pretty good for him. I have fears that by calling himself a "democratic socialist" he could scare some people away - I would much prefer that he call himself a "social democrat" - which is much less threatening and, in my opinion, more accurate anyway. But the guy - a hectoring yet endearing old guy - talks a good game. He even has details about how he's going to pay for his ideas - don't believe that he doesn't. He's about the future - yes, a long-term, rather visionary future, but when he shakes his finger at you, you believe.

Let me tell you, the Bernites believe.



The attendees were a cross-section of the population.

LOCAL NEWS

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AFL-CIO report on “Raise The Wage” campaign lauds grassroots success

By PAI

An AFL-CIO report on the first year of its “Raise The Wage” campaign lauds grassroots successes by local unions and unorganized workers out in the field, and makes an effort to link them to the campaign itself—a link that isn’t always obvious.

The nine-page report says workers hit the streets for causes ranging from decent pay to undoing two-tier wage systems to health and safety. It adds that in a record year of contract bargaining, 2015, the average worker won a 4.2 percent annual raise.

Some of the lowest-paid workers got double-digit percentage raises, it adds. And two-tier wage systems are on their way out in the auto industry, the fed says, with the UAW winning a 45 percent raise over the life of its FiatChrysler contract for lower-paid workers there.

The AFL-CIO also claims workers are educating themselves about Common Sense Economics, the fed’s multi-part platform that includes specific “raise the wage” ideas. But the report does not tie any platform planks, by name, into specific successes. By year’s end, “a growing number of people across the country were unwilling to accept stagnant and falling wages without complaint. They’re demanding new rules” for the U.S. economy, the report says.

As a result, even low-wage and non-union firms such as Walmart had to raise wages for their low-paid workers, the report claims.

Construir puentes, no paredes

AFL-CIO

Visitará Richard Trumka en Pasadena para demandar un fin a las deportaciones:

Durante el evento, jornaleros, funcionarios, y líderes inmigrantes y comunitarios recalcarán cómo las políticas de deportación debilitan a los derechos de los trabajadores

Richard Trumka, el presidente de la AFL-CIO, la central sindical más grande de EE UU, visitará a un centro de trabajadores en Pasadena, California, sábado 30 de enero, en donde expresará su oposición a las deportaciones que han destruido la unidad familiar y debilitado los derechos de todos los trabajadores. Junto a él estarán Rusty Hicks, presidente de la Federación Laboral de Los Ángeles; Terry Tornek, alcalde de la ciudad de Pasadena; Victor Gordo, concejal del Distrito 5 de Pasadena; Julie Su, comisionada para asuntos laborales de California; y decenas de jornaleros y trabajadores que compartirán sus experiencias como trabajadores inmigrantes.

Durante este evento el Presidente Trumka planea pronunciar el siguiente discurso [extractos]:

“La crisis de las deportaciones en EE UU es un fracaso bipartidista.

“Y no me puedo ir de aquí este día sin decir lo defraudado que me siento con la reciente decisión de la administración de Obama de enviar a mujeres y a niños de vuelta al peligro que enfrentan en sus países en Centro América.

“Tengo un enorme respeto y admiración por el Presidente Obama, pero la plaga de redadas migratorias

en Estados Unidos no es nada menos que una vergüenza. Una vergüenza humana.

“A través de todo el país, aquellos que huyen de la violencia y de la pobreza y vienen para alcanzar una mejor vida están siendo forzados a vivir con miedo. Esto está mal. Y este día lo repetimos: ¡detengamos la era de las deportaciones!

“Es hora que aumentemos la presión sobre nuestros funcionarios electos. Unidos, hombro a hombro, con el movimiento sindical de EE UU y con nuestros aliados, vamos a proteger a todos los trabajadores.

“Demandamos poner un fin a las deportaciones y la creación de zonas seguras para que los trabajadores puedan hablar con libertad en sus lugares de trabajo.

“Realizamos un llamado al Tribunal Supremo para deje que DAPA y DACA prosigan. Pero más allá de la decisión de los jueces, seguiremos movilizándolo y organizando.

“No deberíamos construir paredes. Deberíamos construir puentes – entre la seguridad y la prosperidad y una mejor vida.

“El futuro de los trabajadores inmigrantes, no está en los centros de detenciones. Está en los centros de trabajadores, como en el que ahora nos encontramos.

“Así que hermanos y hermanas continúen con su lucha cuando sus comunidades están bajo ataque. Su valentía es una inspiración. Su coraje nos impulsa a todos”.

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