

## **Maduro, “the usurper”, keep telling tales at State of the Union**

Antonio De La Cruz

*Executive Director*

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When Nicolas Maduro, “the usurper”, delivered his 2018 State of the Union address in front of illegitimate representatives -constituents, chief justices, and chief electoral officers- and the diplomatic corps committed to his regime, at the headquarters of the National Assembly last Monday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, I remembered that Maduro has been telling tales for the last three years.

In January 2017, when Maduro presented the Annual Message to the Nation of his administration during 2016 in the Constitutional Chamber at the Supreme Court of Justice, he told that:

- Venezuela had increased social investment on a world record scale, 73% of the total expenditure of the nation;
- 1,945,441 Venezuelan families had received the CLAPs (Local Committee for Supply and Production) bag;
- 359,000 homes were built and delivered to the Great Housing Mission Venezuela (GMVV) for a total of 1,350,000 houses in 5 years;
- 454% had been the salary increase, four salary rises, and the socialist basket ticket; 100% coverage of the Barrio Adentro program in 8 states of the Republic;
- the rebound in the prices of the barrel of oil, from 24 to 45 dollars, after the historic agreement promoted by Venezuela; and
- the cancellation of more than 70 billion dollars in servicing the public and corporate debt, among others.

In January 2018, when Maduro made his presentation of the 2017 Report and Account before the National Constituent Assembly, he said that:

- 74.1% of the country's income was allocated to social investment -I suppose it was another world record-;
- 60.8% was formal employment, and 6% unemployment; 18.1% poverty and 4% extreme poverty -precisely equal to the figures presented in 2017-;
- 582,869 homes were built and delivered to the GMVV for a total of 1,932,869 households in 6 years;
- 16,595,140 Venezuelans had the national identity card;
- 93.1% of the country's pensioners were covered;
- 419,000 medical operations were carried out through the national identity card system;
- 860,000 young people were benefited by the Chamba Juvenil Plan; and
- One million five hundred thousand families received special bonuses from the Hogares de la Patria program, among others.

Two days ago, Maduro, “the usurper”, repeated the stories of 2016 and 2017. On this occasion, when he presented the Report and Account of 2018, he said that:

- 74.7% of the annual budget of 2018 was delivered to social investment;
- 6% was the unemployment, the same figure for 2017;
- 0.377% was the GINI coefficient –at the same level of the Nordic countries-;
- 1 million pensioners were incorporated for a total of 4,530,901;
- 6,000,000 families received the CLAP box;
- 567,131 houses were built and delivered to the GMVV for a total of 2,500,000 in 7 years;
- 1,000,000 homes were repaired by the Great Mission Barrio Nuevo Barrio Tricolor;
- 127,168,000 medical consultations for Barrio Adentro program -each Venezuelan visited Cuban doctors four times-;
- 13 million Venezuelans were vaccinated, and
- Three thousand fifty-four communes were integrated, among others.

According to Maduro's stories, the last three years of his administration have been excellent. To such an extent that his presidency enjoys "social legitimacy" (right to command), in the face of the loss of legal legitimacy, of origin and action. "The usurper" said regarding his social legitimacy: "In this historical cycle we have had a continuous increase of investment in social programs, in health, housing, culture, and communication".

The vast majority of Venezuelans know that the country does not have the welfare state of Denmark, Sweden or Finland, which have a social expenditure of more than 30% of GDP in health, disability, retirement, family assistance, unemployment, housing, and reintegration, according to the International Monetary Fund.

"The usurper," like Scheherazade in *The Thousand and One Nights*, seeks to surprise the people by telling a story every year that passes. The tales are very different: Maduro and the petro, similar to "Aladdin and the wonderful lamp"; Rafael Ramirez and the forty thieves, like to "Ali Baba and the forty thieves"; and Nicolas the worker president, in the style of "Sinbad the sailor".

Before yesterday, "the usurper" added one more line to the story of Maduro and the petro, an increase of 300% of the minimum wage to see if it can overcome the adversity of his legitimacy of origin. Maduro raised the minimum wage to 18,000 sovereign bolivars. Moreover, a month ago, it had increased by 150%. Maduro also said, "we have to build the petro ecosystem (...) for which 15% of oil production will be sold in petro".

"The usurper" thinks that just as in the tale of Aladdin, the genie of the marvelous lamp will come out, in Maduro's case he believes it is the petro, and the genie will accomplish his wishes. However, in reality, the announcements of January 14th, 2019 in his State of the Union presentation will bring higher inflation, which will reach 4% per day, because Maduro will continue monetizing Venezuela's budget deficit.

Also, the petro has been sanctioned by the United States Department of the Treasury. Therefore, 15% of Venezuela current production of oil equivalent to 170,000 barrels per day

that at a price of 50 dollars per barrel corresponds to 270 million dollars a month, will be used to money laundering from illicit activities and the political corruption.

Therefore, the tales told by “the usurper” at the State of the Union are nothing more than fiction stories. Reality will prevail. So, we Venezuelans will say to “the usurper” sooner rather than later “snip, snap, snout, this tales told out”.