

favour thus unwarranted, and would be unwarranted even if it should be concluded—as it should not be—that the responsive actions of the United States were unnecessary or disproportionate.”

### 13. THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE HOUSE

*Hugo Chávez, who began his career in the military, became president of Venezuela in 1999, and would remain so until his death in 2013. Early on in his administration, he dedicated a substantial portion of the country's oil revenue to poverty reduction and improvement of key social services for the poor. These changes made him immensely popular and brought him three consecutive reelections. Among other measures, Chávez implemented land reform and the nationalization of key industries, while centralizing power and alienating the opposition, which accused him of fostering division, violence, and corruption. Indeed, his brand of personalized “radical populism” polarized public opinion, and has deeply divided Venezuelan society to this day. Chávez developed an ambitious agenda in the arena of international politics. His program of “Socialism of the Twenty-First Century” drew its legitimacy from the appropriation of Simón Bolívar as the symbol of Latin American unity (he often referred to his “Bolivarian Revolution”). He soon made public his alignment with the Cuban regime, and fostered pan-regional integration with progressive presidents such as Evo Morales (Bolivia), Rafael Correa (Ecuador), and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua). He also developed close ties with Mercosur leaders, such as Lula da Silva (Brazil) and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner (Argentina), allowing for the formal entry of Venezuela in this organization in 2012. In Mercosur, Chávez tried to consolidate a southern counterweight of power as part of a larger plan of anti-US alliances. By the time he delivered his famous speech at the United Nations in 2006, he was the most conspicuous spokesman of the anti-imperial cause in Latin America.*

Yesterday the devil came here, right here. And today it still smells of sulfur around the table I am now standing in front of. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this same podium, the President of the United States [George W. Bush], the gentleman I refer to as the devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world, as the owner of the world. We could call a psychiatrist to analyze yesterday's speech by the President of the United States. As the spokesman of imperialism,

President Hugo Chávez, United Nations Speech, September 20, 2006. Excerpt translated by the editors.

he came to share his recipes, to try to preserve the current pattern of domination, exploitation, and pillage of the peoples of the world. An Alfred Hitchcock movie could use it as a scenario. I would even propose a title: “The Devil's Recipe.” . . .

The speech of the President, world tyrant, [was] cynical, hypocritical, full of this imperial hypocrisy from the attempt to control everything. They want to impose a democratic model, as they conceive it. It's the false democracy of elites, and a very original democratic model at that—one imposed by bombs, invasions, and cannon fire. What a strange democracy. We should go through Aristotle's thesis, and through the ideas of those who first spoke about democracy in Greece, to see what kind of democracy this is, imposed with soldiers, invasions, aggression, and bombs.

Yesterday the President of the United States said, right here in this room, and I'm quoting, “Anywhere you look, you hear extremists telling you that you can escape from poverty and recover your dignity through violence, terror, and martyrdom.”

Wherever he looks, he sees extremists. I'm sure he looks at you, my brother, with your color, and he thinks you are an extremist. With this same color, Evo Morales, the worthy President of Bolivia who was here yesterday, is an extremist to him. The imperialists see extremists everywhere. It's not that we are extremists. It's that the world is waking up. It's waking up all over. And people are standing up. I have the feeling, Mr. Imperialist Dictator, that the rest of your days will be a nightmare because wherever you look, the rest of us are standing up. We are rising up against American imperialism. We are shouting for freedom of the world, for the equality of all peoples, for the respect for sovereignty of all nations. Yes, you can call us extremists. We are rising up against empire, against the model of domination.

The President then . . . said: “I have come to speak directly to the populations in the Middle East, to tell them that my country wants peace.”

That's true. If we walk the streets of the Bronx, if we walk around New York, Washington, San Diego, in any city in California, San Antonio, San Francisco, and we ask people in the streets, citizens of the United States, [they will say that] this country wants peace. The difference is that the government of the United States does not want peace. It wants to impose its model of exploitation, of pillage, of hegemony through war. That's the small difference.

It wants peace. But what's happening in Iraq? What happened in Lebanon? In Palestine? What's happened over the last hundred years in Latin America and in the world? And now, threats against Venezuela—new threats against Venezuela, new threats against Iran. . . . He spoke to the people of Lebanon. Many of you, he said, have seen how your homes and communities were caught in the cross fire. How cynical can you get? What a capacity to lie shamefacedly to the world. The

bombs in Beirut, dropped with millimetric precision, are cross fire? I'm afraid the President is thinking of Western movies, when people would shoot from the hip and somebody would be caught in the cross fire.

This is imperialist fire, fascist fire, assassin fire, and genocidal fire. It's the empire and Israel firing on the innocent people of Palestine and Lebanon. That's the truth. And they say they suffer, that we suffer because we see their homes destroyed.

The President of the United States came to talk to the people. . . . "To the people of Afghanistan, I say . . ."; "To the people of Lebanon, I say . . ."; "To the people of Iran, I say . . ." And one wonders, just as the President of the United States addresses so directly the peoples of the world, what would the peoples of the world tell him if they were given the floor? What would they say? I know the soul of those peoples, the peoples of the south, the oppressed people, and I think I have some inkling of what they would say. They would say: "Yankee empire, go home." That would be the scream that would spring up all over, if the peoples of the world were given the chance to speak with one voice to the United States empire. . . .

Over and above all of this, Madam President, I think there are reasons to be optimistic. A poet would say "helplessly optimistic," because above and beyond the wars, and the bombs, and the aggressive and the preventive war, and the destruction of entire peoples, one can see that a new era is dawning. As [Cuban poet and singer] Silvio Rodríguez sings, the era is giving birth to a heart. There are alternative currents, alternative ways of thinking, alternative movements. There are young people with different thoughts. In the space of a mere decade it was shown that the thesis of the end of history was a totally false assumption, and the same was shown about the establishment of a Pax Americana and a capitalist neoliberal model. This thesis is completely false. It has collapsed. Now, we have to define the future of the world. Dawn is breaking all over. You can see it in Africa and Europe and Latin America and Oceania. I want to emphasize this optimistic vision, to strengthen ourselves, our will to do battle, our awareness. We have to build a new and better world.

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