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Iranians Proclaim Their Right to Nuclear Technology

By Bahar Mast

As the U.S.-led campaign to prepare economic and military assault on Iran gathers momentum, Iranians are uniting in defense of their country's dignity and sovereignty. "Nuclear energy is our legitimate right," is the opinion most often heard from Iranians both inside and outside the country.

Many Iranians have said that they are worried that the transfer of Iran's nuclear case to the United Nations Security Council could lead to sanctions against the Islamic Republic. As the Iraq war has shown, such sanctions serve as the first step toward open war. But a survey of Internet resources in Farsi, Iran's national language, reveals that few Iranians favour bowing to such blackmail.

Polling Results

According to the Iranian state polling agency (ISPA), summarizing a February 2006 survey, "Some 85 percent of Iranian citizens are in favor of a continuation of the country's nuclear activities." The poll also showed that "about 75 percent of the citizens called for an expansion of nuclear technology," even in the case of a hostile ruling by the UN Security Council."

Capitalist media discount such evidence from Iran's own polling institutions. Yet the imperialists' own efforts to survey Iranian opinion have yielded similar results.

Consider the recent survey by *Radio Farda*, a short-wave radio service generously funded by the U.S. government, together with the *Voice of America*, *Persian Service*, in order to "support the aspirations of the Iranian people for freedom in their own country." Obviously, its listeners are found among Iranians most receptive to the U.S. propaganda line.

Yet the *Radio Farda* survey concluded that about 75 percent of Iranians called for an expansion of nuclear technology, even in the case of sanctions against their country.

A caller from Iran told *Radio Farda*, "I'm calling from Tehran regarding the UN Security Council; I think we have to resist," He added that he also believes "despite increasing pressure

Iran should continue its peaceful nuclear activity. Why does U.S. speak about the rights of the Iranian people such as the right to freedom of expression but it does not recognize a peaceful nuclear program as a right of Iran? Why should Israel have nuclear weapons but the Iranian people be deprived of having a peaceful program.”

Other imperialist-backed readings of Iranian opinion have come up with similar results. Thus a survey by Zogby, a leading U.S.-based agency, concluded, “A recent poll of the Iranian populace reveals widespread agreement with the radical views of their president, including with his quest for nuclear weapons.... To make matters even worse, the survey was conducted before the present crisis ... opinion today would probably be even more radicalized.” (as reported by TheTrumpet.com, a right-wing website run by the Philadelphia Church of God).

On Friday, September 1, a British government agency, BBC News, quoted Ali Rabie, a 21-year-old Electrical Engineering student in Tehran: “I know many Iranian who are opposed to this government; but they are even more opposed to other countries thinking they can dictate what goes on here.... This is our culture, this is our ideology—and we are going to export ours, not import yours.”

Chat Groups

In the last Iranian presidential elections, the Western media gave some attention to Internet chat groups based within the country, noting that many opinions friendly to the U.S. government were being expressed there. The election results showed that most participants in these groups, drawn from the more privileged layers of Iranian society, were quite out of touch with popular opinion.

Based on my own survey last month of Iranian chat groups, I would say they are less out of touch today. Most participants, including those who reside outside Iran and those inside who are hostile to the Iranian regime, are convinced that Europe and America, with their long record of hostility to Iran, are fundamentally against Iran’s technological advances and are simply continuing their policies of colonial times. As one participant said, “We have the right to develop nuclear technology or any other technology.”

Many Iranians writing in these groups view the nuclear program a matter of national pride. Some refer to the heritage of the ancient “Great Persian Empire.” One contributor wrote, “We have a very long, rich history and we could be as strong as we were before.”

Some argue that regionally, Iran is surrounded by nuclear powers including not only the United States and Israel but Pakistan, India, and Russia. Why should Iran be denied nuclear weapons? Some writers point to the double standards in Western foreign policy. Why the West is silent on Israel, which is already a nuclear armed power?

‘Enriching the peas’

Similar sentiments find expression in a very popular TV comedy series in Iran called *Barareh Nights*, set in a small fictional village called Barareh some 70 years ago. The series takes a sarcastic look on social and economic issues in today’s Iran. One of its sub-plots involves an Anglo-American profiteer, who goes about asking villagers to let him “enrich their peas,” that is, to soak the dried peas in order to prepare Iranian villagers’ most popular snack.

The reference is obviously to the request by the U.S. and Europe that Iran let them enrich its uranium abroad. Enriching uranium can serve, among other purposes, as a preparatory step toward building nuclear weapons.

In the show, the profiteer fattens the peas by soaking them in water and then tries to sell them back to the villagers at twice the price.

Monarchist warning

I was able to locate only one Iranian political current that has indicated any sympathy with U.S. policy on the nuclear issue: the Mujahedeen Khalgh (MKO). The Mujahedeen, which was prominent among organizations resisting the Shah in the 1970s and the Khomeini regime after the revolution, broke its ties with the Iranian masses by collaborating with Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran during the 1980s. Recently, it associated itself with U.S. Iranian policy by reporting details of the Iranian nuclear program to the imperialist countries.

Meanwhile, the monarchists, who have a more realistic hope of emerging as Washington's governmental alternative in a war to overthrow the Islamic Republic, take more care not to frontally oppose Iranian national sentiment. The former Iranian royal family and its backers have kept silent on the nuclear question. Moreover, in an interview with BBC, the former Crown Prince and pretender to the Iranian throne, Reza Cyrus Pahlavi, warned the U.S. government against any thought of military assault against Iran. "The Americans should support democracy in Iran," he said.

The fact that even the profoundly anti-democratic and pro-U.S. monarchists feel compelled to criticize U.S. policy, is vivid testimony to the strength and unanimity of popular opinion in Iran.

The near-unanimity of Iranian opinion has led to warnings by some U.S. ruling-class voices against Washington's aggressive intentions. Thus in a July 20 report before the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and governmental Affairs subcommittee, Ilan Berman, Vice-President for Policy of the American Foreign Policy Council, said:

"Since Iran's nuclear program is one of very few issues that is supported both by ordinary Iranians and regime hard-liners within the Islamic Republic, military action is likely to result in a 'rally around the flag' effect that strengthens — rather than weakens — the current regime in Tehran."

Needless to say, there is little popular support in the United States for a war of conquest against Iran.

Solidarity Task

The U.S. warmakers will attempt, as in the case of Iraq, to brush away the opposition both of the Iranian people and their own citizens, aiming to achieve their goals through reliance on military power alone. They are aware of the risks, but lured by the prize — the hope that conquest of Iran could give the U.S. effective world domination.

North American and European imperialism face a much more formidable antagonist in Iran than they encountered in the Iraq of Saddam Hussein. They have recently absorbed setbacks in Iraq,

Lebanon, and many countries in Latin America. But the U.S. government hopes to make all that good by doubling the stakes through military escalation. Their campaign against Iran can be defeated, but it will take a united effort by the Iranian people, international allies such as Venezuela and Cuba, and friends of peace and national sovereignty around the world.

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Venezuela Rallies International Resistance to U.S./Israeli War

By Suzanne Weiss

While Israel invaded and brutally bombarded Lebanon in July, most of the world's governments nodded in approval or folded their arms. Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, by contrast, roundly denounced Israel's aggression against the Lebanese people.

"It really causes indignation to see how the state of Israel continues bombing, killing ... with all the power they have, with the support of the United States," Chavez said August 21 after a military parade in Venezuela's northwestern state of Falcon. "It's hard to explain to oneself how nobody does anything to stop this horror."

Chavez backed up these words with action: Venezuela withdrew its ambassador from Israel. On August 4, he declared he is "not interested in sharing any business, offices, or anything" with the Israeli state. Israel responded by recalling its ambassador to Venezuela on August 7, criticizing what it called Chavez's "one-sided policy" and "wild slurs."

The Bolivarian government's actions, strikingly bold and courageous in the context of imperialist-dominated world diplomacy, were consistent with its foreign policy of defending and aiding countries under imperialist attack. Nor did Chavez hesitate to condemn the U.S. sponsors of Israeli aggression. "I am telling you with all honesty that the hand of the Americans is spurring (Israel) on," he told the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera on August 4. The "real threat to the world is the imperialistic threat posed by the U.S., and Israel is one of its imperialistic instruments in this part of the world."

Venezuela's Mideast Roots

Venezuela's stand in the Mideast conflict also reflects the direct experience of many of its citizens. About 1.5 million Venezuelans are immigrants or descendents of immigrants from Arab countries, many of them recent arrivals from Lebanon and Palestine. There are at least five deputies of Arab origin in Venezuela's National Assembly and one state governor of Lebanese descent. Across Latin America, 17 million are of Arab descent, of whom six million are Muslim.

During July, there were many marches in the streets of Caracas and other cities in Venezuela – as well as in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia – to show solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinians.

In 2005, the first Arab-South American Summit, held in Brazil, brought together heads of state and representatives of 33 countries. (A U.S. request for observer status was denied.) The summit adopted the "Declaration of Brasilia" calling for close ties between South America and the Arab world, and criticizing Israeli and U.S. aggression against Palestinians.

The solidarity expressed in Brasilia was tested in July this year, when member governments of the South American trade pact Mercosur held a summit in Cordoba, Argentina. The meeting was

also the occasion for Venezuela's formal entry into Mercosur. Plans had been laid for the signing at the Cordoba conference of a trade agreement between Mercosur and Israel. But the Mercosur nations refused to sign the accord and instead adopted an official document calling for a ceasefire and an end to the attack on Lebanon.

The Venezuelan president's participation in the Mercosur summit doubtless played a role in this decision. And surely the presence of Fidel Castro, who came to sign a Cuba-Mercosur trade pact, also weighed in the balance. Cuba's solidarity with the victims of Israeli government aggression is of long standing, and the island has no diplomatic relations with Israel. On June 29, Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned Israel's military actions and called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied territories, the ceasing of state-terror actions by Israel, and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Venezuela Walks the Talk

In an August 3 address to the Venezuelan people, Chavez asked "everyone in the country to give what we can for this fundraising campaign for the reconstruction of Lebanon ... destroyed by the genocidal and fascist hand of Israel and its masters, the U.S. empire."

In addition, his government pledged to send Lebanon 20,000 tonnes of aid to "help alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by the Israeli bombing," dispatching a Boeing 707 full of supplies as a starter.

Hezbollah representative Mahmoud Komati, told the Latin America-wide TV channel TeleSur that Venezuela took measures that were "an example for revolutionaries when defending "the oppressed, enslaved and humble peoples of the world." (Associated Press, August 8)

On world television channels one could see Venezuelan flags in demonstrations in Beirut, next to Lebanese and Palestinian flags. It was also reported that in Gaza and the West Bank city of Ramallah, people placed posters of Chavez next to those of Arafat and Che. (*Al-jazeera*, August 18)

Addressing the Masses

Israel's war on Lebanon coincided with an eight-nation tour by Chavez to discuss south-south cooperation and emphasize the need for a "multi-polar world," in which he advocated alliances to tie the third-world countries more to each other and break U.S. hegemony.

Chavez denounced Israel at each stop. He called the Lebanese and Palestinians "heroic people" and repeatedly voiced his criticisms of Israel over its military offensive in Lebanon.

During Chavez's visit to Iran, he called for a global coalition to combat "the U.S. imperialist monster" and reaffirmed that Venezuela would "stand by Iran at any time and under any condition." Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad responded that Hugo Chavez "one of the rare world leaders whose word and deed are the same."

In Damascus, Chavez received a hero's welcome: thousands of Syrians waved banners and Venezuelan flags along the route Chavez took to his meeting with Syrian President Hafaz el-Assad. The Syrian government daily, *Tishrin*, described Chavez as "America's enemy number

one, international leader and the biggest supporter of Arab cause.” After a meeting with Assad, Chavez said, “We want to cooperate to build a new world where states and peoples self-determination are respected.”

While Chavez’s official meetings were on a governmental level, his words were directed to the masses and had deep resonance throughout the Middle East.

In many prominent Arab newspapers, columnists ask why Arab government leaders could not do for Lebanon what a Latin American non-Arab non-Muslim leader dared to do. A protest held in Kuwait after Venezuela withdrew its ambassador from Israel featured a large placard of Chavez that declared him a “true Arab leader.”

The Venezuelan news service *Vheadline.com* reported on August 6 that it had been inundated with email from Arab readers supporting Chavez’s stand on Israel’s war.

UN Candidacy

The second Arab-South American Summit took place in Caracas in July, with delegations from 15 Arab and 12 South American nations. Among other issues, the Summit approved Venezuela’s application to join the Arab League, which was accepted in September. It also backed bids by Venezuela and Egypt for seats on the UN Security Council.

The U.S. has “stabbed the Middle East peace process in the heart,” Chavez said as he left for the Summit. “We see a Security Council blocked by the power of the veto, that of the government of the United States especially.... If Venezuela could occupy a seat on the council,” he continued, it might be able to “contribute modestly towards the battle to free the world from the imperialist threat.”

Venezuela’s foreign ministry is optimistic it will get the 128 votes it needs to gain a UN Security Council seat, despite strong opposition by the U.S. government.

Strategy of Solidarity

The outspokenly militant spirit of Chavez’s comments were frequently out of step with the politics of his often conservative governmental hosts. In fact, he used a diplomatic platform to address the Third World masses, irrespective of the nature of their own governments. It is to the masses that he entrusts the cause of 21st century socialism. And the popularity of Hugo Chavez in the Mideast reflects new thinking among the working masses of these countries.

Venezuela has taken initial steps toward socialism. Venezuela stands as a powerful example that the wealth generated by the oil industry can be used to improve the lives of Venezuelans and to aid working people in other countries, even as far away as the indigenous and poor people of Alaska. This is a contagious example that may not sit well with wealthy aristocratic and capitalist rulers in such countries as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and nearby states.

Behind Hugo Chavez’s response to the Lebanon war lies a powerful strategic concept. On January 31, 2005, at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, he declared, “It is impossible, within the framework of the capitalist system to solve the grave problems of poverty of the majority of the world’s population.” U.S. imperialism is not invincible, he said, repeating

the words of Jose de san Martin, an Argentine independence hero, "Let's be free without caring about what anyone else says."

Chavez's tour of the Middle East and Africa echoed this theme. "If we don't make that better world possible," he said, "if we fail through the rifles of the U.S. Marines, and through Mr. Bush's murderous bombs; if there is no coincidence and organization necessary in the South to resist the offensive of neo-imperialism, and the Bush doctrine is imposed upon the world, the world will be destroyed." (*Granma*, September 5)

As he told *Al-Jazeera* August 4, "We must defeat imperialism in this century, so that this elite will not annihilate the world."

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Venezuela and Cuba Promote Solidarity and Resistance

By Derrick O'Keefe

This December, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is widely expected to win a convincing re-election, with his approval rating soaring and the Bolivarian Revolution bringing material gains to the country's poor majority. Nevertheless, the opposition is preparing a major campaign against Chavez, aiming to heap scorn on the Revolution's internationalism.

In August, opposition candidates announced that they would forgo scheduled primaries to unite behind Manuel Rosales, the governor of the state of Zulia. Rosales, the candidate of Venezuela's oligarchy, has put a nationalist, populist spin on his criticism of Chavez. Unveiling the campaign slogan ¡Ni el imperio, ni el barbudo! (Neither the [U.S.] Empire, nor the [Cuban] bearded one!), Rosales stated, "No more dollars to any foreign country as long as there are slums in Venezuela, as long as there is unemployment and hunger." [1]

With an opposition discredited by their ties to the ancien regime of neo-liberal austerity and by successive failed counter-revolutions – the April 2002 coup, the "oil strike" in the winter of 2002-2003 and the August 2004 referendum – those campaigning against Chavez appear set to focus much of their criticism on the Revolution's foreign policy. Unable to openly criticize the redistributive measures taken by the Chavez government too harshly, Rosales' strategy will be to demonize the Cuban government with which Venezuela has close relations, and to stoke chauvinism by attacking Venezuela's foreign aid. This strategy's prospects are difficult to predict, and Chavez's popularity has not yet suffered for his alliance with Cuba. In fact, poor Venezuelans have benefited greatly from the Cuban foreign aid programs that Caracas has now joined and supplemented.

An examination of the foreign policy of Venezuela and its regional allies is an important part of understanding the dynamics of the December elections and the larger social struggles taking place regionally. It also helps to counter to steady stream of disinformation coming out of Washington and the corporate media in North America about Venezuela's foreign policy, their alliance with Cuba, and their aid to movements throughout Latin America.

ALBA's Challenge to the Empire So-called "free trade" agreements like NAFTA and the FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) have always been in reality agreements to maximize the power of capital over labour across borders, designed to minimize restrictions on corporate power. The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, whose Spanish acronym "ALBA" means "dawn," formally signed in December 2004 by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, is a comprehensive challenge to agreements like the FTAA. ALBA proposes a framework for Latin American regional integration that encourages economies of social solidarity, genuinely fair trade, and cooperation on a number of levels. A joint declaration issued at an April 2005 conference for the implementation of ALBA stated this perspective:

We fully agree that the ALBA will not become a reality with mercantilist ideas or the selfish interests of business profitability or national benefit to the detriment of other peoples. [2]

The ALBA signatories' vision for a future Latin America was given an important boost with the December 2005 election of Evo Morales in Bolivia. At the end of April 2006, Morales traveled to Havana to sign Bolivia into ALBA. Concrete measures now being taken to implement ALBA's goals include, among others: elimination of tariffs between the three countries, cooperation on literacy and health care programs including HIV treatment and optometry programs, and energy technology and resource sharing.

The ALBA agreements can be viewed as the codification of a revolutionary vision for Latin America in confrontation with U.S. imperialism. For Rosales and Venezuela's elites, this foreign policy is not just a "wedge issue" where they believe they can score some electoral points against Chavez; it is also a serious threat to their long-term interests. What is less easy to understand, however, is why the activities being undertaken to implement ALBA are coming under criticism from some socialist forces internationally.

Left Critics of ALBA The leading role of Cuba in ALBA is the target of criticism in a recent article by Chris Harman, a leading member of the British Socialist Workers Party. He describes Cuba's international solidarity as a mechanism to curry favour with capitalist governments and to quell revolutionary movements:

The Cuban government itself has long seen mass movements in other countries as little more than a means of putting pressure on established capitalist governments to establish friendlier relations with Cuba...

Dressing up the commercial exchange of Cuban doctors for Venezuelan oil as an act of "socialist solidarity" is then used to attempt to derail revolutionary possibilities today just as the exchange of Cuban sugar for Russian oil was 46 years ago. [3]

Harman does not mention ALBA explicitly, but Cuba's socialist solidarity in Latin America is a concretization of the ALBA vision shared with Venezuela.

The sugar analogy here is faulty, to say the least. Cuban teachers and doctors are surely commodities of a qualitatively different sort than sugar. To take only the most obvious and salient difference: Socially conscious doctors and teachers willing to serve the poor and marginalized for little or no financial reward are exceedingly difficult to produce at the early stages of a process of social transformation. Cuba's infusion of these health and education workers has made possible huge strides forward for the revolutionary process in Venezuela, and now in Bolivia as well. In a recent interview, Bolivian President Evo Morales described the aid received since his inauguration eight months ago:

Fidel helps us a great deal. He has donated seven eye clinics and 20 basic hospitals. Cuban doctors have already performed 30,000 free cataract operations for Bolivians. Five thousand Bolivians from poor backgrounds are studying medicine at no charge in Cuba. [4]

The scope of the human capital deployed by Cuba is indeed staggering. *Le Monde Diplomatique* recently profiled the medical internationalism of Cuba, explaining how the island's human resources are now being supplemented by Venezuelan technology and financing:

There are currently some 14,000 Cuban doctors working in poor areas of Venezuela. The two governments have also set up Operation Milagro (miracle) which, during the first 10 months of 2005, gave free treatment to restore the eyesight of almost 80,000 Venezuelans, transferring those suffering from cataracts and glaucoma to Cuba for operations. More widely, the project offers help to anyone in Latin America or the Caribbean affected by blindness or other eye problems. Venezuela provides the funding; Cuba supplies the specialists, the surgical equipment and the infrastructure to care for patients during their treatment in Cuba. [5]

One would have to be suffering from a certain schematic blindness to describe this cooperation as part of an effort to “derail” Venezuela’s transformative social process. Venezuela’s foreign policy is now thoroughly integrated with Cuba’s internationalism, and this has extremely positive implications for the entire region’s prospects. ALBA is part of a conscious and coordinated effort to promote economic integration and cooperation in Latin America, not a to prop up capitalist power but to build unity and strength against the imperial centre in North America.

Axis of Evil or of Hope? Chavez, for his part, has never attempted to conceal his admiration for the Cuban Revolution; in recent weeks, for instance, he has made two highly publicized visits to the bedside of Fidel Castro, who has been recovering from an emergency intestinal surgery. It is perhaps the fear of the combination of Venezuela’s oil power with Cuba’s human resources that prompted the far right-wing National Review to run a recent hysterical cover story about the “real Axis of Evil.” [6]

Venezuela’s potential to become something of an “anti-Saudi Arabia” – a regional power spreading oil wealth to bolster progressive causes and movements – extends even to the possibility of intervening to assist the poor within the United States of America. Over the past year, Chavez has signed agreements with U.S. state governments to provide preferential prices for heating oil to poor communities, including in places as unlikely as Maine. (Surely no critic on the Left would assert that this is an effort to prop up the capitalist regime in the United States?)

What is critical about the emerging ‘Axis of Hope’ (Cuba-Venezuela-Bolivia), as author Tariq Ali dubs it in a forthcoming book, is that it shows that a different foreign policy is possible. Given a revolutionary mass upsurge and a successful struggle for government, it is possible to wield the power of the state to the purpose of technology transfer, cooperation in health and education, and the larger process of integration and unity against the prevailing neo-liberal economic order. This example will certainly be spotlighted at this week’s Summit of the Non-Alignment Movement in Havana, Cuba.

The global outlook of the process, it should be noted, has developed together with the consciousness of its protagonists, the poor and working people of Venezuela. The internationalism of the Bolivarian Revolution is, then, much more than just a good idea of the leadership, although it tends to sometimes be understood that way, as seen in the growing popularity in recent weeks of Hugo Chavez across many Arab countries for his strident denunciation of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

This example from Latin America can allow us all to think about fighting for real social change and for foreign policies that seek genuine international cooperation among the world's peoples to fight the scourges of poverty and Empire.

Notes

[1] "Heading for presidential elections." EIUuniversal.com, August 26, 2006.

[2] "An alternative to the FTAA begins its implementation." Venezuelanalysis.com, September 7, 2006.

[3] "Cuba behind the myths," by Chris Harman. International Socialist Review, Issue 111, 2006.

[4] "Capitalism has only hurt Latin America: Evo Morales interviewed by Spiegel." Znet, September 4, 2006.

[5] "Cuba exports health," by Hernando Calvo Ospina. Le Monde Diplomatique, August, 2006.

[6] "Latin America's terrible two: Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez constitute an axis of evil," by Otto J. Reich. National Review, April 11, 2005.

Socialist Voice #125, September 25, 2006

Hugo Chavez: We Are Rising Up Against the Empire!

Hugo Chavez Speaks to the United Nations, September 20, 2006

Hugo Chávez Frías

President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Madame President, Excellencies, Heads of State, Heads of Governments, and high ranking government representatives from around the world. A very good day to you all.

First of all, with much respect, I would like to invite all of those, who have not had a chance, to read this book that we have read: Noam Chomsky, one of the most prestigious intellectuals of America and the world. One of Chomsky's most recent works: *Hegemony or Survival? America's Quest for Global Dominance*. An excellent piece to help us understand what happened in the world during the 20th century, what is going on now and the greatest threat looming over our planet: the hegemonic pretension of US Imperialism that puts at risk the very survival of the human species. We continue to warn about this danger and call on the people of the US and the world to halt this threat that is like the sword of Damocles.

I intended to read a chapter, but for the sake of time, I will leave it as a recommendation. It's a fast read. It's really good Madame President, surely you are familiar with it. It is published in English, German, Russian, and Arabic (applause). Look, I think our brothers and sisters of the United States should be the first citizens to read this book because the threat is in their own house. The Devil is in their home. The Devil, the Devil himself is in their home.

The Devil came here yesterday (laughter and applause). Yesterday the Devil was here, in this very place. This table from where I speak still smells like sulphur. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, in this same hall the President of the United States, who I call "The Devil," came here talking as if he owned the world. It would take a psychiatrist to analyze the US president's speech from yesterday.

As the spokesperson for Imperialism he came to give us his recipes for maintaining the current scheme of domination, exploitation and pillage of the world's people. It would make a good Alfred Hitchcock movie. I could even suggest a title: "The Devil's Recipe." That is to say, US Imperialism, and here Chomsky says it with profound and crystalline clarity, is making desperate efforts to consolidate its hegemonic system of domination. We cannot allow this to occur, we cannot permit them to install a world dictatorship, to consolidate a world dictatorship.

The speech of the tyrannical president of the world was full of cynicism, full of hypocrisy. It is this imperial hypocrisy with which he attempts to control everything. They want to impose upon us the democratic model they devised, the false democracy of elites. And moreover, a very original democratic model imposed with explosions, bombings, invasions, and cannon shot. That's some democracy! One would have to review the thesis of Aristotle and of the first Greeks who spoke of democracy to see what kind of model of democracy is imposed by marines, invasions, aggressions and bombs.

The US president said the following yesterday in this same hall, I quote: “everywhere you turn, you hear extremists who tell you that you can escape your misery and regain your dignity through violence and terror and martyrdom.” Wherever he looks he sees extremists. I am sure he sees you, brother, with your skin color, and thinks you are an extremist. With his color, the dignified President of Bolivia Evo Morales, who was here yesterday, is an extremist. The imperialists see extremists all around. No, its not that we are extremists. What is happening is that the world is waking up and people everywhere are rising up. I have the impression Mr. Imperialist dictator that you will live the rest of your days as if in a nightmare, because no matter where you look we will be rising up against US imperialism. Yes, they call us extremists, we who demand complete freedom in the world, equality among peoples and respect for national sovereignty. We are rising up against the Empire, against the model of domination.

Later, the president said, “Today I’d like to speak directly to the people across the broader Middle East: My country desires peace.” That is certain. If we walk the streets of the Bronx, if we walk through the streets of New York, Washington, San Diego, California, any city, San Antonio, San Francisco and we ask the people on the street: the people of the US want peace. The difference is that the government of this country, of the US, does not want peace; it wants to impose its model of exploitation and plundering and its hegemony upon us under threat of war. That is the little difference.

The people want peace and, what is happening in Iraq? And what happened in Lebanon and Palestine? And what has happened over the last 100 years in Latin America and the world and now the threats against Venezuela, new threats against Iran? He spoke to the people of Lebanon, “Many of you have seen your homes and communities caught in crossfire.” What cynicism! What capacity to blatantly lie before the world! The bombs in Beirut launched with milimetric precision are “crossfire”? I think that the president is thinking of those western movies where they shoot from the hip and someone ends up caught in the middle.

Imperialist fire! Fascist fire! Murderous fire! Genocidal fire against the innocent people of Palestine and Lebanon by the Empire and Israel.

That is the truth. Now they say that they are upset to see homes destroyed.

In the end, the US president came to speak to the people, and also to say, “I brought some documents Madame President.” This morning I was watching some of the speeches while updating mine. He spoke to the people of Afghanistan, to the people of Lebanon, to the people of Iran. One has to wonder, when listening to the US president speak to those people: what would those people say to him? If those people could talk to him, what would they say? I think I have an idea because I know the souls of the majority of those people, the people of the South, the downtrodden peoples would say: Yankee imperialist go home! That would be the shout that would echo around the world, if these people of the world could speak with only one voice to the US Empire.

Therefore, Madame President, colleagues, and friends, last year we came to this same hall, as we have for the past eight years, and we said something that today is completely confirmed. I believe that almost no one in this room would stand up to defend the system of the United

Nations. Lets admit with honesty, the UN system that emerged after WWII has collapsed, shattered, it doesn't work. Well, ok. To come here and give speeches, and visit with one another once a year, yes, it works for that. And to make long documents and reflect and listen to good speeches like Evo's yesterday, and Lula's, yes, for that it works. And many speeches, like the one we just heard by the president of Sri Lanka and of the president of Chile. But we have converted this Assembly into a mere deliberative organ with no kind of power to impact in the slightest way the terrible reality the world is experiencing. Therefore we again propose here today, September 20, [2006] to re-found the United Nations. Last year Madame President, we made four modest proposals that we feel are in urgent need of being adopted by the Heads of State, Heads of Government, ambassadors and representatives. And we discussed these proposals.

First: expansion. Yesterday Lula said the same, the Security Council, its permanent as well as its non-permanent seats, must open up to new members from developed, underdeveloped and Third World countries. That's the first priority.

Second: the application of effective methods of addressing and resolving world conflicts. Transparent methods of debate and of making decisions.

Third: the immediate suppression of the anti-democratic veto mechanism, the veto power over Security Council decisions, seems fundamental to us and is being called for by all. Here is a recent example, the immoral veto by the US government that freely allowed Israeli forces to destroy Lebanon, in front of us all, by blocking a resolution in the UN Security Council.

Fourthly: as we always say, it is necessary to strengthen the role, the powers of the general secretary of the United Nations. Yesterday we heard the speech of the general secretary, who is nearing the end of his term. He recalled that in these ten years the world has become more complicated and that the serious problems of the world, the hunger, poverty, violence, and violation of human rights have been aggravated, this is a terrible consequence of the collapse of the UN system and of US imperialist pretensions.

Madame President, recognizing our status as members, Venezuela decided several years ago to wage this battle within the UN with our voice, our modest reflections. We are an independent voice, representing dignity and the search for peace, the formulation of an international system to denounce persecution and hegemonic aggression against people worldwide. In this way Venezuela has presented its name. The homeland of Bolívar has presented its name as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Of course you all know that the US government has begun an open attack, an immoral global attack in an attempt to block Venezuela from being freely elected to occupy the open seat on the Security Council. They are afraid of the truth. The empire is afraid of the truth and of independent voices. They accuse us of being extremists.

They are the extremists.

I want to thank all countries that have announced your support for Venezuela, even when the vote is secret and it is not necessary for anyone to reveal their vote. But I think that the open

aggression of the US Empire has reinforced the support of many countries, which in turn morally strengthened Venezuela, our people, our government.

Our brothers and sisters of MERCOSUR, for example, as a block, have announced their support for Venezuela. We are now a full member of MERCOSUR along with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay. Many other countries of Latin America, such as Bolivia and all the CARICOM nations have pledged their support to Venezuela. The entire Arab League has announced its support for Venezuela. I thank the Arab world, our brothers of the Arab world and of the Caribbean. The African Union, nearly all of the African Union countries have pledged their support for Venezuela and other countries like Russia, China and many others across the globe. I thank you all deeply in the name of Venezuela, in the name of our people and in the name of truth, because Venezuela, upon occupying a seat on the Security Council will not only bring to it the voice of Venezuela, but also the voice of the Third World, the voice of the peoples of the planet. There we will defend dignity and truth.

Despite all this Madame President, I think there are reasons to be optimistic.

Hopelessly optimistic, as a poet would say, because beyond the threats, bombs, wars, aggressions, preventative wars, and the destruction of entire peoples, one can see that a new era is dawning. Like Silvio Rodríguez sings, “the era is giving birth to a heart.” Alternative tendencies, alternative thoughts, and youth with distinct ideas are emerging. In barely a decade it has been demonstrated that the End of History theory was totally false. The establishment of the American Empire, the American peace, the establishment of the capitalist, neoliberal model that generates misery and poverty— all totally false. The thesis is totally false and has been dumped. Now the future of the world must be defined. There is a new dawning on this planet that can be seen everywhere: in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania. I want to highlight that vision of optimism to fortify our conscience and our will to fight to save the world and construct a new world, a better world.

Venezuela has joined this struggle and for this we are threatened. The US has already planned, financed and launched a coup in Venezuela. And the US continues to support coup plotters in Venezuela. And they continue supporting terrorism against Venezuela. President Michel Bachellet recalled a few days ago... pardon, I mean a few minutes ago... the terrible murder of the former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier. I would only add the following: the guilty parties are free. Those responsible for that deed, in which a US citizen was also killed, are North Americans of the CIA. Terrorists of the CIA.

In addition, we here in this room must remember that in a few days it will be the 30th anniversary of that murder and of the horrible terrorist attack that blew up a Cubana de Aviación airplane in mid-flight killing 73 innocent people. And where is the worst terrorist of this continent, who admitted to being the intellectual author of the airplane sabotage? He was in prison in Venezuela for some years, but he escaped with the complicity of CIA officials and the Venezuelan government of that time. Now he is here living in the US, protected by the government even though he was convicted and he confessed. The US government has a double standard and protects terrorism.

These reflections are to demonstrate that Venezuela is committed to the fight against terrorism, against violence and works together with all people who struggle for peace and for a just world.

I spoke of the Cuban airplane. Luis Posada Carriles is the name of that terrorist. He is protected here just like the corrupt fugitives who escaped Venezuela. A group of terrorists who planted bombs in embassies of various countries, murdered innocent people during the coup and kidnapped this humble servant. They were going to execute me, but God reached out his hand, along with a group of good soldiers, and the who people took to the streets. It's a miracle that I'm here. The leaders of that coup and those terrorist acts are here, protected by the US government. I accuse the US government of protecting terrorism and of giving a completely cynical speech.

Speaking of Cuba, we went happily to Havana. We were there several days. During the G-15 Summit and the NAM Summit the dawning of a new era was evident with an historic resolution and final document. Don't worry. I am not going to read it all. But here is a collection of resolutions made in open discussion with transparency. With more than 50 Heads of State, Havana was the capital of the South for a week. We have re-launched the Non-Aligned Movement. And if there is anything I could ask of you all, my brothers and sisters, it is to please lend your support to the strengthening of the NAM, which is so important to the emergence of a new era, to preventing hegemony and imperialism. Also, you all know that we have designated Fidel Castro as President of the NAM for the next three years and we are sure that compañero President Fidel Castro will fulfill the post with much efficiency. Those who wanted Fidel to die, well, they remain frustrated because Fidel is already back in his olive green uniform and is now not only the President of Cuba but also the President of NAM.

Madam President, dear colleagues, presidents, a very strong movement of the South emerged there in Havana. We are men and women of the South. We are bearers of these documents, these ideas, opinions, and reflections. I have already closed by folder and the book that I brought with me. Don't forget it. I really recommend it. With much humility we try to contribute ideas for the salvation of the planet, to save it from the threat of imperialism, and god willing soon. Early in this century, god willing, so that we ourselves can see and experience with our children and grandchildren a peaceful world, under the fundamental principles of the UN, renewed and relocated. I believe that the UN must be located in another country, in a city of the South. We have proposed this from Venezuela. You all know that my medical personnel had to stay locked up in the airplane. The Chief of my security is locked on the plane. They would not let them come to the UN. Another abuse and outrage Madame President that we request to be registered personally to the sulfurous Devil. But God is with us.

A warm embrace and may God bless us all.

Good day.

(translation by Dawn Gable)