

2011

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Recommended Citation

Hugo Chavez, *Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's Speech to the UN*, 17 *Law & Bus. Rev. Am.* 627 (2011).
Available at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/lbra/vol17/iss4/2>

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VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ'S SPEECH TO THE UN¹

Caracas, Venezuela

September 26th, 2011

Your Excellency, President of the General Assembly:

Honorable Representatives of the Peoples of the World:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I address these words to the United Nations General Assembly, to this great forum where all the peoples of the earth are represented, to express Bolivarian Venezuela's truths and to reassert our inalienable commitment to justice and equality, that is to say, to peace.

Peace, peace, peace. . . We do not look for the peace of the cemetery, as said Kant ironically, but a peace based on the most zealous respect for international law. Unfortunately, the UN, through all its history, instead of adding and multiplying efforts in favor of peace among nations, ends up supporting, sometimes through its actions and other times by omission, the most ruthless injustices.

It should always be remembered that "SAVING FUTURE GENERATIONS FROM THE SCOURGE OF WAR" is mentioned in the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations – it's just a dead letter. From 1945 on, wars have done nothing but inexorably increase and multiply themselves. We see, once again, Libya destroyed and bloodstained by the will of the powerful.

I want to call on the governments of the world to reflect: since September 11[], 2001, a new and unprecedented imperialist war began, a permanent war, in perpetuity.

We have to look directly at the terrifying reality of the world we live in. It is necessary to ask a series of questions on the basis of the risks and threats we face: Why is the United States the only country that scatters the planet with military bases? What is it afraid of to allocate such a staggering budget for increasing its military power? Why has it unleashed so many wars, violating the sovereignty of other nations [,] which have the same rights on their own fates? How can international law be enforced against its insensible aspiration to militarily hegemonizing the world in order to ensure energy sources to sustain their predatory and consumer model? Why does the UN do nothing to stop Washington? If

1. President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Hugo Chávez Frías, Speech to the United Nations (Sept. 26, 2011) *available at* <http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Discurso-Maduro-AGONU-INGLES.pdf>.

we answer these questions sincerely we would understand that the empire has awarded itself the role of judge of the world, without being granted this responsibility by anyone, and, therefore, imperialist war threatens us all.

Washington knows that a multi-polar world is already an irreversible reality. Its strategy consists of stopping, at any price, the sustained rise of a group of emerging countries, by negotiating great interests with its partners and followers in order to guide multi[-]polarity along the path the empire wants. What is more, the goal is to reconfigure the world so it is based on Yankee military hegemony.

Mankind is facing the very real threat of a permanent war. The empire is ready to create the political conditions for triggering a war anywhere, and the case of Libya proves it. Within the imperial view of the world, the well-known Clausewitz's axiom is being reversed: politics is the continuation of war by other means.

What is behind this new Armageddon? The absolute power of the military-financial leadership which is destroying the world in order to accumulate ever more profits; the military-financial leadership which is subordinated, *de facto*, to an increasingly larger group of States. Keep in mind that war is capital's *modus operandi*: the war that ruins the majority and makes richer, up to the unthinkable, a few people.

Right now, there is a very serious threat to global peace: a new cycle of colonial wars, which started in Libya, with the sinister objective of refreshing the capitalist global system, within a structural crisis today, but without any limit to its consumerist and destructive voracity. The case of Libya should alert us to the attempt to implement a new imperial kind of colonialism: that of military interventionism backed by the antidemocratic organisms of the United Nations and justified on the basis of prefabricated media lies.

Humanity is on the brink of an unimaginable catastrophe: the world is marching inexorably toward the most devastating ecocide; global warming and its frightening consequences are announcing it, but their perspective on the ecosystem, which resembles the ideology of the conquistadors Cortés and Pizarro, as the influential French thinker Edgar Morin rightly pointed out, pushes them to continue degrading and destroying. The energy and food crises are sharpening, but capitalism continues to trespass all the limits with impunity.

Given such a meager outlook, the great U.S. scientist Linus Pauling, awarded the Nobel Prize on two occasions, continues enlightening our path: "I believe that there is a greater power in the world than the evil power of military force, of nuclear bombs — there is the power of good, of morality, of humanitarianism. I believe in the power of the human spirit [.]"[] Let us mobilize all the power of the human spirit: it is time now. It is imperative that we unleash a great political counter-offensive in order to prevent the powers of darkness from finding justifications for

going to war, from unleashing a widespread global war through which they attempt to save the western capital.

Venezuela calls for the establishment of a broad alliance for peace and against war, with the supreme aim of avoiding war at all costs. The war-mongers, and especially the military-financial leadership that sponsors and leads them, must be defeated.

Let's build the balance of the universe foreseen by the Liberator, Simón Bolívar—the balance that, according to his words, cannot be found within war; the balance that is born out of peace.

It is necessary to remember that Venezuela, alongside the member countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), was actively advocating for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Libyan conflict. That is also what the African Union did. However, in the end, the logic of war decreed by the UN Security Council and put into practice by NATO, the armed wing of the Yankee empire, was imposed. The logic of war having its spearhead in corporate mass media: let us bear in mind that the “Libyan Case” was brought before the Security Council on the basis of an intense propaganda by the western mass media, who lied about the alleged bombing of innocent civilians by the Libyan Air Force, not to mention the grotesque media setting of the Green Square of Tripoli. This premeditated bunch of lies was used to justify irresponsible and hasty decisions by the Security Council, which paved the way for NATO's military regime change policy in Libya.

It is worthwhile to ask: What has the no-fly zone established by Security Council [R]esolution 1973 become? How could NATO perform more than 20,000 missions against the Libyan people if there was a no-fly zone? After the Libyan Air Force was completely annihilated, the continued “humanitarian” bombing shows that the West, through NATO, intends to impose their interests in North Africa, turning Libya into a colonial protectorate.

How can we say that an arms embargo was imposed on Libya when it was NATO itself that introduced thousands of heavy weapons to support a violent upheaval against that country's legitimate government? The embargo was, of course, meant to prevent the Libyan government from defending its sovereignty. This demonstrates, once again, the cruel logic of international relations, where the law only applies to the weak.

What is the real reason for this military intervention? Recolonizing Libya in order to capture its wealth. Everything else is related to this goal. “Nobody colonizes innocently,” as the great Martinican poet Aimé Césaire said, quite rightly, in his extraordinary essay called “Discours sur le colonialisme.”

By the way: the Residence of the Venezuelan Ambassador in Tripoli was invaded and looted, and the UN kept it to itself, remaining ignominiously silent.

We call for the immediate cessation of bombing operations in Libyan territory. Similarly, we will continue calling for respect for international

law in the case of this sister nation. We will not remain silent in light of the evil intention of destroying the basis of its sense and reason. Therefore, we ask this Assembly: Why is the Libyan seat in the UN granted to the "national transitional council," while the admission of Palestine is blocked by ignoring, not only its lawful aspiration, but also the existing will of the majority of the General Assembly? Venezuela hereby ratifies its unconditional solidarity with the Palestinian people and its total support for the Palestinian national cause, which naturally includes the immediate admission of Palestine as a full member state within the United Nations.

And the same imperialist pattern is being repeated regarding Syria. If some permanent members of the Security Council had not taken the firm stance that was missing in the case of Libya, it would have authorized shooting missiles and bombs in Syria.

It is intolerable that the powerful of this world intend to claim for themselves the right to order legitimate and sovereign governments' rulers to step down. This was the case in Libya, and they want to do the same in Syria. Such are the existing asymmetries in the international setting and such are the abuses against the weakest nations.

It is not for us to bring forward a conclusive judgment about the national situation in Syria; first, because of the inherent complexity of any national reality and, second, because only the Syrian people can solve their problems and decide their fate in light of the people's right to self-determination, which is an inalienable right in all respects.

If we direct our eyes to the Horn of Africa we will witness a heart-breaking example of the UN's historical failure: most serious news agencies report that 20-29,000 children under the age of 5 have died in the last three months.

The great journalist Frida Modak, in her article, "To Die in Somalia," reveals all the misery there, which is worse than that ravaging the rest of the vast region of the Horn of Africa, and which undermines the role of large international organizations, the UN in the first place. She writes: "What is needed to face this situation is \$400 million, not to solve the problem, but just to address the emergency that Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia are going through. According to all sources, the next two months will be crucial to prevent more than 12 million people from dying, and the worst situation is that of Somalia."

This reality could not be more atrocious, especially if, at the same time, we ask ourselves how much is being spent to destroy Libya. This is the answer of U.S. congressman Dennis Kucinich, who said: "This new War will cost us \$500 million during its first week alone. Obviously, we do not have financial resources for that and we will end up cutting off other important domestic programs' funding." According to Kucinich himself, with the amount spent during the first three weeks in Northern Africa to massacre the Libyan people, much could have been done to help the entire region of the Horn of Africa, saving tens of thousands of lives.

The reasons behind the criminal military engagement in Libya are not humanitarian at all: they are based on the Malthusian notion that “there are just too many people in the world” and they have to be eliminated by generating more hunger, destruction and uncertainty, and creating—at the same time—more financial profits. In this regard, it is frankly regrettable that in the opening address of the 66th General Assembly of the UN, an immediate appeal to solve humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa was not made, while instead we were assured that “the time has come to act” on Syria.

As of 2010, 19 UN General Assembly votes confirm the universal will demanding that the United States stop the economic and trade blockade against Cuba. Since all sensible international arguments have been exhausted, we have no choice but to believe that such cruel actions against the Cuban Revolution result from imperial arrogance in view of the dignity and courage shown by the unsubmitive Cuban people in their sovereign decision to determine their own fate and fight for their happiness.

From Venezuela, we believe it is time to demand of the [United States] not only an immediate and unconditional end to the criminal blockade imposed against the Cuban people, but also the release of the five Cuban antiterrorist fighters held hostage in the prisons of the American Empire for the sole reason of seeking to prevent the illegal actions of terrorist groups against Cuba, under the shelter of the U.S. government.

From Venezuela, we believe it is time to demand the United States not only the immediate and unconditional end to the criminal blockade imposed against the Cuban peoples, but also the release of the five Cuban antiterrorist fighters held hostage in the prisons of the American Empire for the sole reason of seeking to prevent the illegal actions that terrorist groups prepare against Cuba, under the shelter of the [g]overnment of the United States.

Mr. President of the General Assembly and distinguished representatives of the peoples of the world:

We want to reiterate that it is impossible to ignore the crisis of the UN. Before this same General Assembly we expressed, back in 2005, that the UN model had been exhausted. Back then, we also expressed the urgent need for it to be rebuilt.

Up until now, nothing has been done. The political will of the powerful has prevailed. Certainly, the UN, in its current functioning, docilely serves their interests. For us, it is obvious that the UN is not improving, nor will it improve from the inside. If the Secretary General, along with the President of the International Criminal Court, take part in an act of war, as in the case of Libya, nothing can be expected from the current structure of this organization and there is no longer time for reform. The UN does not accept any reform whatsoever; the illness at its core is deadly.

It is unbearable that there is a Security Council that turns its back, whenever it wants to, on the clamor of the majority of nations by deliber-

ately failing to acknowledge the will of the General Assembly. If the Security Council is some sort of club with privileged members, what can the General Assembly do? Where is its room for maneuver, when Security Council members violate international law?

Paraphrasing Bolívar when he spoke of nascent Yankee imperialism in 1818, we have had enough of the weak following the law while the strong commit abuses. It cannot be us, the peoples of the South, who respect international law while the North violates it, destroying and plundering us.

If we do not make a commitment, once and for all, to rebuilding the United Nations, this organization will lose its remaining credibility. Its crisis of legitimacy will be accelerated until it finally implodes. In fact, that is what happened to its immediate predecessor: the League of Nations.

A crucial first step in rebuilding the United Nations would be to eliminate the category of permanent members and veto power within the Security Council. Likewise, the decision-making power of the General Assembly must be maximized democratically. We also require an immediate, in-depth revision of the UN Charter with the aim of drafting a new Charter.

Peoples of the World:

The future of a multi-polar world, in peace, resides in us, in the organization of the majority of the people on earth to defend ourselves against the new colonialism, in order to achieve a balance in the universe that is capable of neutralizing imperialism and arrogance.

This broad, generous, respectful, and inclusive call is addressed to all the peoples of the world, but especially to the emerging powers of the South, which must assume, with courage, the role that they are called on to play immediately.

From Latin America and the Caribbean, powerful and dynamic regional alliances have emerged, seeking to shape a regional democratic space, respectful of differences and eager to emphasize solidarity and complementarity in order to foster the ties that bind us and settle what keeps us apart politically. And this new regionalism allows for diversity and respects the various rhythms of nation. Thus, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) advances as an avant-garde experiment of progressive and anti-imperialist governments, seeking ways to break the prevailing international order and strengthening the capacity of the people to face, together, the prevailing powers. But this does not prevent its members from making an enthusiastic push for the consolidation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), a political bloc that federates the 12 sovereign States of South America with the purpose of grouping them under what the Liberator Simón Bolívar called "a Nation of Republics." Furthermore, the thirty-three countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are currently preparing to take the historic step of establishing a great regional entity that joins us all, without exclu-

sions, where we can together design the policies that will ensure our well-being, our independence, and our sovereignty, on the basis of equality, solidarity, and complementarity. Caracas, the capital of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is proud to host, next December 2nd and 3rd, the Summit of Heads of State and Government that will establish, definitively, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The people of Venezuela place our hopes on a broad alliance among the regional organizations of the South, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), CARICOM (the Caribbean Community), SICA (the System of Central American Integration), the African Union, ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) or ECO (the Economic Coordination Organization), and especially the cross-regional instances of coordination among emerging powers, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which should become a pole of influence in coordination with the peoples of the South.

I want to conclude by remembering the great Venezuelan singer, Alí Primera. In one of his songs he asks us: "What is man's struggle to achieve peace? And what peace, if they want to leave the world just as it is?" Today more than ever before, the worst crime against peace is to leave the world as it is: if we leave the world as it is, the present and future will be determined by perpetual war. On the contrary, to quote Alí Primera, achieving peace involves radically reversing all that impedes humanity from being humane.

Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Articles

