

# Hugo Chávez and the Fifth Socialist International

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# Table of Contents

■ Introduction: The Significance of Chávez' Call for a Fifth Socialist International By Bill Leumer and Ann Robertson .....	1
■ For the Fifth Socialist International, by Hugo Chávez.....	5
■ Venezuela's Chávez Calls for International Organization of Left Parties, By Kiraz Janicke .....	8
■ The Caracas Commitment: Declaration from the World Meeting of Left Parties .....	12
■ Agreements	
1. Mobilization and Condemnation of U.S. Military Bases .....	16
2. Installation and Development of a Platform of Joint Action by Left-Wing Parties of the World .....	16
3. Organization of a World Movement of Militants for a Culture of Peace .....	17
4. Artillery of International Communication to Emancipate Revolutionary Consciousness .....	18
5. Mobilize All Popular Organizations in Unrestricted Support for the People of Honduras .....	18
6. Solidarity with the Peoples of the World .....	19
Declaration of Solidarity with the People of Cuba .....	20
Special Declaration on the Coup d'état in Honduras .....	21
Special Decision .....	23
■ In Defense of Chávez' Call for a Fifth Socialist International by Ann Robertson and Bill Leumer.....	24



## Introduction

# The Significance of Chávez' Call for a Fifth Socialist International

By Bill Leumer and Ann Robertson

Note: This article is largely based on the Introduction for the group of articles with the same title, "Hugo Chávez Calls for a New Fifth Socialist International," published December 2, 2009.

Recently a conference was held in Caracas, Venezuela, that included representatives from socialist and left parties from around the world and that culminated in an official statement, referred to as The Commitment of Caracas. As reported by Venezuela Analysis, one of the points included in this statement was reference to a call by Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela, for the formation of a Fifth International in order to promote the defeat of capitalism and the creation of "Socialism of the 21st Century."

This conference and the official statement hold tremendous significance for socialists in particular and the working class in general around the world. It contains several points we wish to highlight.

First, the statement calls for the replacement of capitalism by socialism, pointing out that capitalism threatens the survival of humanity as well as the survival of all life, because capitalism combines "the economic crisis with an ecological crisis, a food crisis, and an energy crisis."

Second, some parties that have signed the statement, for example, from Venezuela and Bolivia, are large, mass political organizations, which means that powerful resources may be available for the creation of a world socialist movement.

Third, it calls for an "ideological debate on the fundamental aspects of the process of construction of socialism."

Fourth, it recognizes that the Third International degenerated under Stalinism, which betrayed struggles for socialism around the world.

Finally, and most importantly, as already mentioned, the statement of the conference notes that it "received" the call by Hugo Chávez for the creation of a Fifth International and voted to "create a Working Group comprised of those socialist parties, currents and social movements who endorse the initiative, to prepare an agenda which defines the objectives, contents and

mechanisms of this global revolutionary body.” The conference also called for a “constitutive event” in Caracas in April 2010 that would aim at organizing this new international.

This call for the creation of a Fifth International can serve as a lightning rod for uniting socialist parties and social movements around the world in order to magnify by many times the power of the movement for socialism. The new totality, achieved on an international basis, will be far greater than the sum of its constituent parts. Moreover, in countries where socialist parties currently do not exist or are small and lack any substantial power, the Fifth International has the potential to serve as a pole of attraction, thereby overcoming the isolation and accompanying sense of hopelessness and demoralization of those fighting for a better world. It can therefore serve as an indispensable tool in helping working people around the world organize themselves in order to fight against the routine daily assaults of capitalism that are throwing increasing numbers of humanity into abject poverty and completely destroying the environment while at the same time making a tiny minority obscenely rich.

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By joining such an international, socialist parties will be able to translate their aspirations for a better world into a framework that can realistically hope to achieve revolutionary change. It has the potential to forge the indispensable link between theory and practice.

This Fifth International can promote the strategical approach embodied in united front structures that can unite working people around the world in opposition to the capitalist class that oppresses them. The united front brings together working people, although they might adhere to different political points of view or persuasions, in order to unite them as workers rather than as members of a single political party. It unites working people as a class and in this respect promotes the development of class consciousness. Therefore, it encourages working people to act independently of the capitalist class in defense of their own interests, as opposed to their feeling compelled to support one capitalist candidate or another in exchange for a few crumbs.

The united front approach begins with those issues that workers themselves want to win and are prepared to fight for, no matter how modest these issues might be from a revolutionary perspective. In this respect, this approach is distinguished from that of the social democrats, who are fundamentally reformists and do not want to put up a fight. They look to the capitalists

to give workers some gains and are prepared to accept anything that comes their way, or nothing. The united front approach is also distinguished from that of the ultraleftists or sectarians who are only prepared to support a struggle if it exhibits a sufficiently revolutionary content. For example, revolutionaries who employ the united front approach are prepared to take up a struggle for higher wages, if that is what workers want and if that is all they are prepared to fight for, while the ultraleftists or sectarians insist on injecting more revolutionary demands into the struggle, even at the expense of alienating all, or almost all, the workers in the process. By encouraging workers to put up a fight, the united front establishes a link between the day-to-day struggles of workers on the one hand and the struggle for socialism on the other hand, because the act of standing up and organizing a fight has the potential to fundamentally alter the consciousness of all those involved and raise it in a revolutionary direction. When this is achieved, the relation of forces between workers and capitalists is changed to the advantage of the workers.

Although the call for the Fifth International deserves enthusiastic support, those who respond must be vigilant, since the road ahead can contain many pitfalls. One must not allow this international unwittingly to degenerate into another social democratic formation, where instead of fighting for socialism, members are content to reform capitalism. In fact, some of the formulations in the Commitment of Caracas leave open the possibility of being interpreted as endorsing such a deviation. For example, the statement declares: “One of the epicenters of the capitalist crisis is in the economic domain; this highlights the limitations of unbridled free markets ruled by private monopolies.” This might be read by some to imply that what is needed are government regulated free markets that are ruled by multiple private businesses that compete against one another.

The fight for socialism, like everything really worthwhile, will be a long, arduous struggle. Using the classical Marxist framework as a point of departure, the essential ingredients of socialism include the following:

1. The fundamental pillars of the economy are nationalized and operate according to a plan that has been determined democratically by the working masses. Hence, the economy will serve the needs of the people, not the profit margins of a rich minority at everyone else’s expense.
2. The people democratically control the government. The government does not control the people.
3. Quality education (through college) and health care are considered basic human rights and are free. Quality housing is available to all at affordable prices.
4. Everyone is guaranteed a well-paying job. People are rewarded first and foremost according

to how much work they perform. By guaranteeing work for everyone, as opposed to the capitalist system of condemning large numbers of working people to the ranks of the unemployed, the workweek can be reduced.

5. The environment is cleaned up and pollution is eliminated.

6. Government administrators can be recalled at any time and may not be paid more than working people.

# For a Fifth Socialist International

Hugo Chávez

During an international meeting of left-wing political parties, attended by members of 55 political organizations from 31 countries held in Caracas on November 19-21, 2009, Hugo Chávez, the central leader of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and president of the country's revolutionary working people's government, proposed the formation of a new, fifth international association of socialist parties. Below are excerpts of his remarks motivating the call for the Fifth Socialist International to the PSUV's first extraordinary congress. Translation from the Spanish for *Direct Action*\* by Roberto Jorquera.

**A**t last night's meeting, after hearing a few interventions, it was my turn to say a few words. For a while we have been reflecting on an idea that last night I decided was important to propose because we analyzed it and we felt that there was no better time to launch this idea. And I am very happy today that the international meeting of left organizations has taken up this call as part of its final statement even though it was not part of its agenda.

Here I want to read from the final statement: "The International Meeting of Left-wing Political Parties held in Caracas on November 19, 20, and 21, 2009, received the proposal made by Commander Hugo Chávez Frias to convoke the Fifth Socialist International as a space for socialist-oriented parties, movements and currents in which we can harmonize a common strategy for the struggle against imperialism, the overthrow of capitalism by socialism, and solidarity-based economic integration of a new type. We assessed that proposition in terms of its historical dimension which calls for a new spirit of internationalism and agreed, for the purpose of achieving it in the short term, to create a Working Group comprised of those socialist parties, currents and social movements who endorse the initiative, to prepare an agenda which defines the objectives, contents and mechanisms of this global revolutionary body. We call for an initial constitutive event for April 2010 in the city of Caracas. Furthermore, those parties, socialist currents and social movements who have not expressed themselves on this matter can subject this proposal to the examination of their legitimate directive bodies."

I want to take a few minutes to reflect on these issues, particularly to point to the importance

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\* Direct Action is the web site and publication of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (Australia).

that this call has [...] In relation to the Fifth International, I ask this special congress to include this issue in its debates so that we can analyze it and put it into context and study this proposal and its context. This proposal to call on political parties, revolutionary parties and social movements, to create a new organization that is able to adapt to the times that we are living under and the situation that we live under; to put itself at the forefront of the people of the world and their calls; to become an instrument of articulation and unification of the struggles of the world's peoples so that we can save this planet. It is important that the congress discuss this issue. That is why I made the call.

The Fifth International — let's remember that the First International was established in 1864. Karl Marx with a number of other comrades called for the First International. Many years later Frederick Engels called for the establishment of the Second International at the end of the 19th century. And then at the beginning of the 20th century Vladimir Lenin with many other great revolutionaries established the Third International, and Leon Trotsky in 1936-37 established the Fourth International. All of them had a context, but remember that all four Internationals, experiments to unite parties and currents and social movements from around the world, have lost their way along

the road for different reasons — some degenerated, lost their force, disappeared soon after their formation. But none of them was able to advance the original aims that they had set themselves.

From the heat of great workers' struggles and popular struggles against the so-called industrial revolutions and the dominance of the bourgeois class, many experiments were tried. Arising from the heat of the Russian Revolution, Europe was the epicenter of struggles. For many years many social movements and revolutionaries looked to Europe [...]

Now I think due to the product of the times we can say that the centre of gravity of revolutionary struggles on this planet is no longer in Europe ... With much due respect to all the movements in Europe, Asia and Africa and the Middle East and Oceania and North America where revolutionary forces also exist, the epicenter of the revolutionary struggles and socialist struggle today in the world at the beginning of the 21st century is in our America. And Venezuela has the task of being the epicenter of that struggle. It is our turn to be in the vanguard and we need to take up that challenge. We have a great responsibility. All of you

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comrades, all of us in the PSUV and allied parties and we in government have that responsibility.

I honestly believe that the time has come to convoke the Fifth Socialist International, and we call on all the revolutionary parties, socialist parties and currents and social movements that struggle for socialism and against capitalism and imperialism to save the world. Let us reclaim Rosa Luxemburg's slogan "Socialism or barbarism". Let us save the world. Let's make socialism. Let us save the world and destroy capitalism. Let us save the world and destroy imperialism. That is what it is about. That is the essence of this congress.

# Venezuela's Chávez Calls for International Organization of Left Parties\*

By Kiraz Janicke

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez called for the formation of a “Fifth International” of left parties and social movements to confront the challenge posed by the global crisis of capitalism.

The president made the announcement during an international conference of more than fifty left organizations from thirty-one countries held in Caracas over November 19-21.

“I assume responsibility before the world. I think it is time to convene the Fifth International, and I dare to make the call, which I think is a necessity. I dare to request that we create my proposal,” Chávez said.

The head of state insisted that the conference of left parties should not be “just one more meeting,” and he invited participating organizations to create a truly new project. “This socialist encounter should be of the genuine left, willing to fight against imperialism and capitalism,” he said.

During his speech, Chávez briefly outlined the experiences of previous “internationals,” including the First International founded in 1864 by Karl Marx; the Second International founded in 1889, which collapsed in 1916 as various left parties and trade unions sided with their respective capitalist classes in the inter-imperialist conflict of the First World War; the Third International founded by Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin, which Chávez said “degenerated” under Stalinism and “betrayed” struggles for socialism around the world; and the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, which suffered numerous splits and no longer exists, although some small groups claim to represent its political continuity.

Chávez said that a new international would have to function “without impositions” and would have to respect diversity.

Representatives from a number of major parties in Latin America voiced their support for the proposal, including the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) of Bolivia, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador, the Sandinista National Liberation

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\* Republished from Venezuelanalysis.com, November 23, 2009

Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua, and Alianza Pais of Ecuador.

Smaller parties from Latin America and around the world also indicated their support for the idea, including the Proposal for an Alternative Society (PAS) of Chile, New Nation Alternative (ANN) of Guatemala, and Australia's Socialist Alliance, among others.

Sandinista leader Miguel D'Escoto said, "Capitalism has brought the human species to the precipice of extinction... we have to take control of our own destiny."

"There is no time to lose," D'Escoto added as he conveyed his support for the proposal of forming a fifth international. "We have to overcome the tendency of defeatism. Many times I have noted a tendency of defeatism amongst comrades of the left in relation to the tasks we face," he continued.

Salvador Sánchez, from the FMLN, said "We are going to be important actors in the Fifth International. We cannot continue waiting — all the forces of the left. The aspiration of the peoples is to walk down a different path. We must not hesitate in forming the Fifth International. The people have pronounced themselves in favor of change and the parties of the left must be there with them."

Other organizations, including Portugal's Left Block, Germany's Die Linke, and France's Parti de Gauche expressed interest in the proposal but said they would consult with their various parties. A representative of the Cuban Communist Party described the proposal as "excellent," but as yet the party has made no formal statement.

Many communist parties, including those from Greece and Brazil, expressed strong opposition to the proposal. The Venezuelan Communist Party said it was willing to discuss the proposal but expressed strong reservations.

The Alternative Democratic Pole (PDA) from Colombia expressed its willingness to work with other left parties, but said it would "reserve" its decision to participate in an international

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organization of left parties.

Valter Pomar, a representative from the Workers Party of Brazil (PT), said its priority is the Sao Paolo Forum — a forum of various Latin American left, socialist, communist, centre-left, labor, social democratic and nationalist parties launched by the PT in 1990.

A resolution was passed at the conference to form a preparatory committee to convoke a global conference of left parties in Caracas in April 2010, to discuss the formation of a new international. The resolution also allowed for other parties that remain undecided to discuss the proposal and incorporate themselves at a later date.

Chávez emphasized the importance of being inclusive and said the April conference had to go far beyond the parties and organizations that participated in last week’s conference. In particular, he said it was an error that there were no revolutionary organizations from the United States present.

The conference of left parties also passed a resolution titled the Caracas Commitment, “to reaffirm our conviction to definitively build and win Socialism of the 21st Century,” in the face of “the generalized crisis of the global capitalist system.”

“One of the epicenters of the global capitalist crisis is the economic sphere. This highlights the limitations of unbridled free markets dominated by monopolies of private property,” the resolution stated.

**In synthesis, the crisis of capitalism cannot be reduced to a simple financial crisis, it is a structural crisis of capital that combines the economic crisis, with an ecological crisis, a food crisis and an energy crisis, which together represent a mortal threat to humanity and nature. In the face of this crisis, the movements and parties of the left see the defense of nature and the construction of an ecologically sustainable society as a fundamental axis of our struggle for a better world.”**

Also incorporated was a proposed amendment by the Australian delegation which read, “In synthesis, the crisis of capitalism cannot be reduced to a simple financial crisis, it is a structural crisis of capital that combines the economic crisis, with an ecological crisis, a food crisis and an energy crisis, which together represent a mortal threat to humanity and nature. In the face of this crisis, the movements and parties of the left see the defense of nature and the construction of an ecologically sustainable society as a fundamental axis of our struggle for a better world.”

The Caracas Commitment expressed “solidarity with the peoples of the world who have suffered and are suffering from imperialist aggression, especially the more than 50 years of the genocidal blockade against Cuba... the massacre of the Palestinian people, the illegal occupation of part of the territory of the Western Sahara, and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, which today is expanding into Pakistan.”

The conference of left parties also denounced the decision of the Mexican government to shut down the state-owned electricity company and fire 45,000 workers, as an attempt to “intimidate” the workers and as an “offensive of imperialism,” to advance neoliberal privatization in Central America.

In the framework of the Caracas Commitment, the left parties present agreed, among other things, to:

- Organize a global week of mobilization from December 12-17 in repudiation of the installation of U.S. military bases in Colombia, Panama and around the world.
- Campaign for an “international trial against George Bush for crimes against humanity, as the person principally responsible for the genocide against the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Commemorate 100 years since the proposal by Clara Zetkin to celebrate International Women’s Day on March 8, through forums, mobilizations and other activities in their respective countries.
- Organize global solidarity with the Bolivarian revolution in the face of permanent imperialist attacks.
- Organize global solidarity with the people of Honduras who are resisting a U.S.-backed military coup, to campaign for the restoration of the democratically elected president of Honduras, José Manuel Zelaya, and to organize a global vigil on the day of the elections in Honduras, “with which they aim to legitimize the coup d’état.”
- Demand an “immediate and unconditional end to the criminal Yankee blockade” of Cuba and for the “immediate liberation” of the Cuban Five, referring to the five anti-terrorist activists imprisoned in the United States.
- Accompany the Haitian people in their struggle for the return of President Jean Bertrand Aristide “who was kidnapped and removed from his post as president of Haiti by North American imperialism.”

# The Caracas Commitment\*

November 25, 2009

Declaration from World Meeting of Left Parties\*\*

Political parties and organizations from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania commemorate and celebrate the unity and solidarity that brought us together in Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and from this libertarian city we would like to express our revolutionary rebelliousness. We are glad of and committed to the proud presence of the forces of change in a special moment of history. Likewise, we are proud to reaffirm our conviction to definitively sow, grow and win Socialism of the 21st century.

In this regard, we want to sign the Commitment of Caracas as a revolutionary guide for the challenges ahead of us. We have gathered with the aim of unifying criteria and giving concrete answers that allow us to defend our sovereignty, our social victories, and the freedom of our peoples in the face of the generalized crisis of the world capitalist system and the new threats spreading over our region and the whole world with the establishment and strengthening of military bases in the sister republics of Colombia, Panama, Aruba, Curacao, the Dutch Antilles, as well as the aggression against Ecuadorian territory, and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We consider that the world capitalist system is going through one of its most severe crises, which has shaken its very foundations and brought with it consequences that jeopardize the survival of humanity. Likewise, capitalism and the logic of capital, destroys the environment and biodiversity, bringing with it consequences of climate change, global warming and the destruction of life.

One of the epicenters of the capitalist crisis is in the economic domain; this highlights the limitations of unbridled free markets ruled by private monopolies. In this situation, some governments have been asked to intervene to prevent the collapse of vital economic sectors, for instance, through the implementation of bailouts to bank institutions that amount to hundreds of billions of dollars. Said governments have been asked to stimulate their economies by increasing public expenditure in order to mitigate the recession and the private sector decline,

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\* El Compromiso de Caracas

\*\* November 19-21, Caracas, Venezuela

which evidences the end of the supposedly irrefutable “truth” of neoliberalism — that of non-intervention by the State in economic affairs.

In this regard, it is very timely to promote an in-depth discussion on the economic crisis, the role of the State and the construction of a new financial architecture.

In summary, the capitalist crisis cannot be reduced simply to a financial crisis; it is a structural crisis of capital which combines the economic crisis with an ecological crisis, a food crisis, and an energy crisis, which together represents a mortal threat to humanity and mother earth. Faced with this crisis, left-wing movements and parties see the defense of nature and the construction of an ecologically sustainable society as a fundamental axis of our struggle for a better world.

In recent years, progressive and left-wing movements of the Latin American region have accumulated forces, and stimulated transformations, throwing up leaders that today hold important government spaces. This has represented an important blow to the empire because the peoples have rebelled against the domination that has been imposed on them, and have left behind their fear to express their values and principles, showing the empire that we will not allow any more interference in our internal affairs, and that we are willing to defend our sovereignty.

**We have gathered with the aim of unifying criteria and giving concrete answers that allow us to defend our sovereignty, our social victories, and the freedom of our peoples in the face of the generalized crisis of the world capitalist system and the new threats spreading over our region and the whole world with the establishment and strengthening of military bases .....**

This meeting is held at a historic time, characterized by a new imperialistic offensive against the peoples and governments of the region and of the world, a pretension supported by the oligarchies and ultraconservative right-wing, with the objective of recovering spaces lost as a consequence of the advancement of the revolutionary process of liberation developing in Latin America. These are expressed through the creation of regional organizations such as ALBA, UNASUR, PETROCARIBE, Banco del Sur, the Sao Paulo Forum, COPPPAL, among others; where the main principles inspiring these processes are those of solidarity, complementarity, social priority over economic advantage, respect for self-determination of the peoples in open opposition to the policies of imperial domination. For these reasons, the right-wing forces in partnership with the empire have launched an offensive to combat the advance and development

of the peoples' struggles, especially those against the overexploitation of human beings, racist discrimination, cultural oppression, in defense of natural resources, of the land and territory from the perspective of the left and progressive movements and of world transformation.

We reflect on the fact that these events have led the U.S. administration to set strategies to undermine, torpedo and destabilize the advancement of these processes of change and recuperation of sovereignty. To this end, the U.S. has implemented policies expressed through an ideological and media offensive that aim to discredit the revolutionary and progressive governments of the region, labeling them as totalitarian governments, violators of human rights, with links to drug-trafficking operations, and terrorism; and also questioning the legitimacy of their origin. This is the reason for the relentless fury with which all the empire's means of propaganda and its agents inside our own countries continuously attack the experiences in Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Paraguay, as with its maintenance of the blockade against revolutionary and independent Cuba.

Part of the strategy activated by the U.S. Empire is evidenced by the coup in Honduras, as well as in other destabilizing initiatives in Central America, attempting to impose the oligarchic interests that have already left hundreds of victims, while a disgusting wave of cynicism tries to cover up the dictatorship imposed by the U.S. administration with a false veil of democracy. Along with this, it is developing a military offensive with the idea of maintaining political and military hegemony in the region, for which it is promoting new geopolitical allies, generating destabilization and disturbing peace in the region and globally through military intimidation, with the help of its allies in the internal oligarchies, who are shown to be complicit in the actions taken by the empire, giving away their sovereignty, and opening spaces for the empire's actions.

We consider that this new offensive is specifically expressed through two important events that took place this year in the continent: The coup in Honduras, and the installation of military bases in Colombia and Panama, as well as the strengthening of the already existing ones in our region. The coup in Honduras is nothing but a display of hypocrisy by the empire, a way to intimidate the rest of the governments in the region. It is a test-laboratory that aims to set a precedent that can be applied as a new coup model and a way to encourage the right to plot against the transformational and independent processes.

We denounce the military agreement between the Colombian government and the United States administration [that] strengthens the U.S.'s military strategy, whose contents are expressed in the so-called "White Book." This confirms that the development of the agreement will guarantee a projection of continental and intercontinental military power, the strengthening of

transportation capability and air mobility to guarantee the improvement of its action capability, in order to provide the right conditions to have access to energy sources. It also consolidates its political partnership with the regional oligarchy for the control of Colombian territory and its projection in the Andes and in the rest of South America. All this scaffolding and consolidation of military architecture entails a serious threat for peace in the region and the world.

The installation of military bases in the region and their interrelation with the different bases spread throughout the world is not only confined to the military sphere, but rather forms part of the establishment of a general policy of domination and expansion directed by the U.S. These bases constitute strategic points to dominate all the countries in Central and Latin America and the rest of the world.

The treaty for the installation of military bases in Colombia is preceded by Plan Colombia, which was already an example of U.S. interference in the affairs of Colombia and the region using the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism as an excuse. However, it has been shown that drug trafficking levels have increased in Colombia, therefore, the plan is no longer justified given that no favorable results have been obtained since its implementation, that would justify a new treaty with the U.S.

**We, the peoples of the world, declare that we will not give up the spaces we have managed to conquer after years of struggle and resistance, and we commit ourselves to regain those which have been taken from us.**

Today, the global strategy headed by the U.S. concerning drug trafficking is a complete failure. Its results are summarized by a rapid processes of accumulation of illegal capital, increased consumption of drugs, and exacerbation of criminality, whose victims are the peoples of Latin America, especially the Colombian people. This strategy should be revisited and modified, and should be oriented towards a different logic that focuses on drug consumption as a public health issue. In Colombia, drug trafficking has assumed the form of paramilitarism, and turned into a political project the scope of which and persons responsible should be investigated so that the truth is known, so that justice prevails and the terror of the civilian population ceases.

We, the peoples of the world, declare that we will not give up the spaces we have managed to conquer after years of struggle and resistance, and we commit ourselves to regain those which have been taken from us. Therefore, we need to defend the processes of change and the unfolding revolutions since they are based on sovereign decisions made by the peoples.

# Agreements

## I. Mobilization and Condemnation of U.S. Military Bases

- 1.1. To organize global protests against the U.S. military bases from December 12th to 17th, 2009. Various leftwing parties and social movements will promote forums, concerts, protest marches and any other creative activity within the context of this event.
- 1.2. To establish a global mobilization front for the political denouncement of the U.S. military bases. This group will be made up of social leaders, left-wing parties, lawmakers, artists, among others, who will visit different countries with the aim of raising awareness in forums, press conferences and news and above all in gatherings with each country's peoples.
- 1.3. To organize students, young people, workers and women in order to establish a common agenda of vigilance, and to denounce the military bases throughout the world.
- 1.4. To organize a global legal forum to challenge the installation of the U.S. military bases. This forum is conceived as a space for the condemnation of illegalities committed against the sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples and the imposition of a hegemonic imperialist model.
- 1.5. To organize a global trial against paramilitarism in Colombia bringing testimonies and evidence to international bodies of justice.
- 1.6. To promote a global trial against George Bush for crimes against humanity, as the person principally responsible for the genocide against the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 1.7. To promote a campaign for the creation of constitutional and legal provisions in all of our countries against the installation of military bases and deployment of nuclear weapons of mass destruction.
- 1.8. To promote, from the different social organizations and movements of the countries present in this meeting, a political solution for the Colombian conflict.
- 1.9. To organize solidarity with the Colombian people against the imperial aggression that the military bases entail in Colombian territory.

## 2. Installation and Development of a Platform of Joint Action by Left-Wing Parties of the World

- 2.1. To establish a space of articulation of progressive and left-wing organizations and parties that allows for coordinating policies against the aggression towards the peoples, the

condemnation of the aggressions against governments elected democratically, the installation of military bases, the violation of sovereignty and against xenophobia, the defense of immigrants' rights, peace, and the environment, and peasant, labor, indigenous and afro-descendent movements.

- 2.2. To set up a Temporary Executive Secretariat (TES) that allows for the coordination of a common working agenda, policy making, and follow-up on the agreements reached within the framework of this international encounter. Said Secretariat undertakes to inform about relevant events in the world, and to define specific action plans: statements, declarations, condemnations, mobilizations, observations and other issues that may be decided.
- 2.3. To set up an agenda of permanent ideological debate on the fundamental aspects of the process of construction of socialism.
- 2.4. To prepare common working agendas with participation from Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania.
- 2.5. To organize solidarity of the people's of the world with the Bolivarian revolution and President Hugo Chávez, in response to the constant imperialist attacks.
- 2.6. To commemorate the centenary of Clara Zetkin's proposal to celebrate March 8th as the International Day of Women. The parties undertake to celebrate this day insofar as possible.
- 2.7. To summon a meeting to be held in Caracas in April 2010 in commemoration of the bicentenary of our Latin American and Caribbean independences.

### **3. Organization of a World Movement of Militants for a Culture of Peace**

- 3.1. To promote the establishment of peace bases, by peace supporters, who will coordinate actions and denouncements against interventionism and war sponsored by imperialism through activities such as: forums, cultural events, and debates to promote the ethical behavior of anti-violence, full participation in social life, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, acknowledgement of the cultural identities of our peoples and strengthening the framework of integration. This space seeks to raise awareness among all citizens in rejection of all forms of domination, internal or external intervention, and to reinforce the culture of peace. To struggle relentlessly for a world with no nuclear weapons, no weapons of mass destruction, no military bases, no foreign interference, and no economic blockades, as our peoples need peace and are absolutely entitled to attain development. Promote the American continent as a territory of peace, home to the

construction of a free and sovereign world.

- 3.2. To organize a Peace Parliament as a political space to exchange common endeavors among the world's progressive and left-wing parliamentarians, and to know the historical, economic, legal, political and environmental aspects key for the defense of peace. Hereby we recommend holding the first meeting in February 2010.

#### **4. Artillery of International Communication to Emancipate Revolutionary Consciousness**

- 4.1. To discuss a public communication policy at an inter-regional level that aims to improve the media battle, and to convey the values of socialism among the peoples.
- 4.2. To promote the creation and consolidation of alternative and community communication media to break the media siege, promote an International Alternative Left-wing Media Coordination Office that creates links to provide for improved information exchange among our countries, in which Telesur and Radiosur can be spearheads for this action.
- 4.3. To create a website of all of the progressive and left-wing parties and movements in the world as a means to ensure permanent exchange and the development of an emancipating and alternative communication.
- 4.4. To promote a movement of artists, writers and filmmakers to promote and develop festivals of small, short and full-length films that reflects the advancement and the struggle of peoples in revolution.
- 4.5. To hold a meeting or international forum of alternative left-wing media.

#### **5. Mobilize All Popular Organizations in Unrestricted Support for the People of Honduras**

- 5.1. To promote an international trial against the coup plotters in Honduras before the International Criminal Court for the abuses and crimes committed.
- 5.2. To refuse to recognize the illegal electoral process they aim to carry out in Honduras.
- 5.3. To carry out a world vigil on Election Day in Honduras in order to protest against the intention to legitimize the coup, coordinated by the permanent committee that emerges from this encounter.
- 5.4. To coordinate the actions of left-wing parties worldwide to curb the imperialist pretensions of using the coup in Honduras as a strategy against the Latin American and Caribbean progressive processes and governments.

- 5.5. To unite with the people of Honduras through a global solidarity movement for people's resistance and for the pursuit of democratic and participatory paths that allow for the establishment of progressive governments committed to common welfare and social justice.
- 5.6. To undertake actions geared towards denouncing before multilateral bodies, and within the framework of international law, the abduction of José Manuel Zelaya, legitimate President of Honduras, that facilitated the rupture of constitutional order in Honduras. It is necessary to determine responsibility among those who participated directly in this crime, and even among those who allowed his aircraft to go in and out Costa Rica without trying to detain the kidnappers of the Honduran president.

## **6. Solidarity with the Peoples of the World\***

- 6.1. The Left-wing Parties of the International Meeting of Caracas agree to demand the immediate liberation of the five Cuban heroes unfairly imprisoned in American jails. They are authentic anti-terrorist fighters that caused no harm to U.S. national security, whose work was oriented towards preventing the terrorist attacks prepared by the terrorist counterrevolution against Cuba. The Five Heroes were subject to a biased judicial process, condemned by broad sectors of humanity, and stigmatized by a conspiracy of silence by the mainstream media. Given the impossibility of winning justice via judicial means, we call upon all political left-wing parties of the world to increase actions for their immediate liberation. We call on President Obama to utilize his executive power and set these Five Heroes of Humanity free.
- 6.2. The International Meeting of Left-wing Parties resolutely demands the immediate and unconditional cessation of the criminal U.S. blockade that has harmed the Cuban people so badly over the last fifty years. The blockade should come to an end right now in order to fulfill the will of the 187 countries that recently declared themselves against this act of genocide during the UN General Assembly.
- 6.3. To unite with the people of Haiti in the struggle for the return of President Jean Bertrand Aristide to his country.
- 6.4. We propose to study the possibility to grant a residence in Venezuela to Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was kidnapped and overthrown as Haiti's president by U.S. imperialism.

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• Points 6.1–6.2 are repeated as the “Declaration of Solidarity with the People of Cuba,” see page 20.

- 6.5. We express the need to declare a permanent alert aimed at preventing any type of breach of the constitutional order that may hinder the process of democratic change underway in Paraguay.
- 6.6. We denounce the neoliberal privatizing advance in Mexico expressly in the case of the Electric Energy state-owned company, a heritage of the people, which aims through the massive firing of 45,000 workers to intimidate the union force, “Luz y Fuerza”, which constitutes another offensive of the Empire in Central and North America.
- 6.7. To declare our solidarity with the peoples of the world who have suffered and are still suffering imperial aggressions, especially the 50 year-long genocidal blockade against Cuba; the threat against the people of Paraguay; the slaughter of the Palestinian people; the illegal occupation of part of the territory of the Republic of Western Sahara and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan which today is expanding into Pakistan; the illegal sanctions imposed against Zimbabwe; and the constant threat against Iran, among others.

Caracas, November 21st, 2009

## **Declaration of Solidarity with the People of Cuba\***

The Left-wing Parties of the International Meeting of Caracas agree to demand the immediate liberation of the five Cuban heroes unfairly imprisoned in U.S. prisons. They are authentic anti-terrorist fighters that caused no harm to US national security, whose work was oriented towards preventing the terrorist attacks prepared by the terrorist counterrevolution against Cuba. The Five Heroes were subject to a biased judicial process, condemned by broad sectors of humanity, and stigmatized by a conspiracy of silence by the mainstream media.

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Caracas, November 21, 2009

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\* This Declaration is repeated in as point 6.1–6.2 in the Agreements, see page 19.

## **Special Declaration on the Coup d'état in Honduras**

We, left-wing parties of Latin America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Oceania, present in the international encounter of left-wing parties, reject the coup d'état against the constitutional government of citizen's power of the President of Honduras Manuel Zelaya Rosales.

Cognizant of the situation of repression, persecution and murder against the Honduran people and the permanent military harassment against President Manuel Zelaya Rosales, which represents a breach of the rule of law in the sister nation of Honduras:

We support the actions of the national resistance front in its struggle to restore democracy.

We demand and support the sovereign right of the Honduran people to call for a national constituent assembly to establish direct democracy and to ensure the broadest political participation of the people in public affairs.

We denounce the United States intervention and its national and international reactionary right-wing allies and their connection with the coup, which hinders the construction of democracy in Honduras and in the world.

**We denounce the United States intervention and its national and international reactionary right-wing allies and their connection with the coup, which hinders the construction of democracy in Honduras and in the world.**

We condemn and repudiate the permanent violation of political and social human rights as well as the violation freedom of speech, promoted and perpetrated by the de facto powers, the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Congress of the Republic, the Ministry of Defense and Security since June 28, 2009.

We reiterate our demand to international governments and bodies, not to recognize the results of the general elections to be held on November 29, 2009 in Honduras, due to the lack of constitutional guarantees and the legal conditions necessary for a fair, transparent and reliable electoral process, the lack of reliable observers that can vouch for the results of this electoral process, which has already been rejected by most international governments, bodies and international public opinion.

To propose and promote an international trial against coup plotters and their accomplices in Honduras before the International Criminal Court, for the illegal actions, abuses and crimes they committed, while developing actions aimed at denouncing to the relevant bodies and in the framework of the international law, the violation of the rights and the kidnapping of the legitimate president of Honduras Manuel Zelaya Rosales, because it is necessary to establish

the responsibility of those who participated directly and internally in the perpetration of this crime.

We urge national and international human rights organizations to support these measures, to carry on the campaign of denunciation and vigilance with permanent observers in face of the renewed human rights violations, particularly the persecution and sanction through the loss of jobs for political reasons against the members and supporters of the resistance and President Manuel Zelaya.

We repudiate and condemn the attacks against the diplomatic corps of the embassies of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Republic of Argentina, and the embassies of the member countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA); and express our solidarity with the heroic work of the staff of these diplomatic missions, who have been victims of harassment and hostility by the coup plotters.

We agree to establish coordination among left-wing parties of the world to exert pressure to oust the de facto government and for the restoration of the constitutional president and the right of the Honduran people to install a national constituent assembly that allows for deepening direct democracy.

We urge governments, international bodies and companies to maintain and intensify economic and commercial sanctions to business accomplices and supporters of the coup in Honduras, and to maintain an attitude of vigilance, to break all relations that recognize the coup plotters and the de facto government officers, as well as to take migration control measures that hinder the movement of people who have the purpose of voting in another country where elections are held with the aim of changing the results through the transfer of votes from one country to the other.

We agree not to recognize the international and national observers of the electoral process who are aligned and conspire to attempt to give legitimacy to an electoral process devoid of legality and legitimacy. We demand that rather than observing an illegal and illegitimate process, the return of the state of democratic law and the constitutional government of citizen power Honduras President Manuel Zelaya Rosales is guaranteed.

Caracas, November 21, 2009

## **Special Decision**

The international encounter of Left-wing Political parties held in Caracas on November 19, 20 and 21, 2009, received the proposal made by Commander Hugo Chávez Frias to convoke the Fifth Socialist International as a space for socialist-oriented parties, movements and currents in which we can harmonize a common strategy for the struggle against imperialism, the overthrow of capitalism by socialism, and solidarity based economic integration of a new type. We assessed that proposition in terms of its historical dimension which calls for a new spirit of internationalism and agreed, for the purpose of achieving it in the short term, to create a **WORKING GROUP** comprised of those socialist parties, currents and social movements who endorse the initiative, to prepare an agenda which defines the objectives, contents and mechanisms of this global revolutionary body. We call for an initial constitutive event for April 2010 in the City of Caracas. Furthermore, those parties, socialist currents and social movements who have not expressed themselves on this matter can subject this proposal to the examination of their legitimate directive bodies.

Caracas, November 21, 2009

# In Defense of Chávez' Call for a Fifth Socialist International

Ann Robertson and Bill Leumer

January 13, 2010

Critics who have planted themselves firmly on the sidelines, have been lobbing all kinds of disapproving missives at President Hugo Chávez' call for a new international, urging others who have been carried away with enthusiastic support to join them on the sidelines. The laundry list of complaints is extensive: Chávez is the head of a bourgeois government; Chávez only pursues reformism, not genuine revolution; he made his call in the presence of an audience that included avowed supporters of capitalism; and so on.

We do not dispute that these criticisms contain a grain of truth. For example, the Chávez government is currently tied to a capitalist state. In other words, the economy of Venezuela is still predominantly capitalist and, to a significant degree, defends current property relations. Also, there are many functionaries in the government more than eager to accept bribes, and capitalists do not hesitate to take advantage of their wealth to press their needs on compliant bureaucrats. Moreover, Chávez's vision of socialism, which has not been spelled out in detail, might indeed contain flaws. One critique claimed that Chávez called for the building of socialism in collaboration with businessmen, which was interpreted to mean that capitalists would not be expropriated. However, if Chávez had small business owners in mind, this interpretation would not be warranted.

Nevertheless, even if all these criticisms are true, they miss the point because they leave out the vital role of the masses in defining the direction in which Venezuela's revolution is unfolding, and how their participation can influence the direction of the Fifth Socialist International.

Chávez has indisputably made inroads into capitalist property relations. His government took control of the oil industry, using much of the profits to provide social services to the poor, including food distribution. The government encouraged the organization of community groups that could then appeal to the government for grants to pursue their collective needs. Businesses, banks and telecommunication companies have been nationalized. Chávez helped inaugurate the United Socialist Party of Venezuela that has attracted between five and seven million members, including roughly two million that have actively participated. Steps such as these have in fact awakened a yearning among workers and the poor for a better life and have led to a strong show of support among the masses for Chávez, who has enjoyed unusual popularity. When the former oligarchy tried to overthrow Chávez in 2002, the coup was stopped by the intervention

of almost a million people who surrounded the presidential palace. They were determined not to let THEIR president be removed from office.

But the relation between Chávez and the masses is dialectical. At times, he has drawn them into the political arena in order to raise their consciousness. But at times they have taken the initiative, pushing Chávez to implement policies that he was not yet prepared to introduce.

So for those who say that the Venezuelan state is capitalist, one cannot dispute the technical truth of this characterization. And for those who say that Chávez' vision of socialism is fatally flawed, perhaps there is some truth here as well.

However, the failure of these critics is their static, unhistorical framework, their disregard for the masses, and their consequent inability to recognize that Venezuela is in a period of transition. The masses have become politicized and are now players on the field of history. Their hopes and aspirations have been raised. And they have the potential to play a decisive role in the unfolding of events. While the state is not a dictatorship of the proletariat, since the workers and the poor of Venezuela do not directly control and operate it in

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the interests of the majority, nevertheless the iron grip of the capitalists on the government has been pried loose. The oligarchy no longer directs and dominates it. Instead, the government stands somewhere between one controlled by workers and the poor on the one hand, and one controlled by the oligarchy and the capitalist class on the other. And there are no guarantees how these ambiguous dynamics will play out.

So rather than throwing themselves into the process in order to help build a favorable outcome, the critics remain entrenched on the sidelines, divorced from the masses, issuing calls for a puritanical International that never reach the ears of the masses. In the final analysis, they can take comfort in the self-fulfilling function of their prophesy: If more and more people sit on the sidelines, then this process will surely be condemned to failure.

Working people around the world who are attracted to the Fifth Socialist International are not demanding guarantees of revolutionary success before they enter the fray, but see glimmers of hope and the possibility of historical transformation, and they are willing to commit themselves to the struggle. These are the people who make history.