

## President Chávez's Letter to the Presidents of UNASUR

In the name of the spirit of Liberty and Justice that in this supreme era of greatness gathers us in this luminous present, I wish to extend to you all my most sincere and fraternal greetings.

I will begin by recalling that on August 10th, in the year of 1809, the brave people of Ecuador delivered the First Cry for their long-desired Independence in Quito. The same city in which today, 200 years after taking on our relentless process of Independence, we meet for the purpose of responding to an inevitable commitment and a concrete hope: to honor the efforts of an entire generation of liberators that blazed the trail for the new republics of Our America.

In the light and shade of the seed of liberty spread by our predecessors in the great lands of Abya Yala, the idea of the union of republics proposed by the Liberator during his political life, has been revived.

The same Bolivar who gave us these significant words on 6th of September, 1815, in his Letter from Jamaica, which was sent in response to Henry Cullen, a British subject living in Falmouth, as a grand ideological diary that for the sake of relevance and truth, allows me to include these lines: "Surely, unity is what we need to complete our work of regeneration. Nevertheless, the division among us is nothing extraordinary, for it is characteristics of civil wars formed by two parties: conservatives and reformers. The former are commonly more numerous, because the weight of habit induces obedience to established powers, the latter are always fewer in number although more vocal and learned. Thus, the physical mass of the one is counterbalanced by the moral force of the other, the context is prolonged, and the results are uncertain. Fortunately, in our case, the masses has followed the intelligence."

Father Bolivar thus revealed one of his greatest anguishes: to see all the nations of this far and wide continent united in one Great Homeland.

The spirit of the nation of Colombia was expressed for the first time at Angostura, bathed in the waters of our indomitable Orinoco, in the year 1819. Emerging from the dreams of Francisco de Miranda, Colombia was made reality by our Bolivar that very year, and although later dismembered, its spirit, now more than ever, must urgently be expressed so that it will never be lost.

Our Union was for Bolivar, a bountiful end at which we would arrive only through sensible acts and well-directed efforts. And today -200 years after that colossal historic deed- the birth of

the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is the faithful manifestation of that process of our national liberation which continues to triumph with great vigor.

However after presenting this historical synthesis, I must say with deep anxiety that the union and independence of our countries poses a threat to those who aspire to continue controlling our natural wealth, our economies and our political will, that is to say, our sovereignty.

It is evident that, in light of the progressive and democratic steps of our continent, the North American Empire -which in the last hundred years has exercised its hegemony over the lives of our republics- has initiated an anachronistic and reactionary counteroffensive with the purpose of subverting the union, sovereignty and democracy of our continent and imposing the restoration of imperial domination upon all aspects of our societies.

In this sense, we share the vision of many in Latin America and the world: this counteroffensive started on June 28th this year, with the perverse coup d'état against the sister nation of Honduras. The Honduran military coup-mongers and the powerful conservative voices in Washington say that the operation against President Zelaya was a maneuver plotted to destroy the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).

Our alliance is a project of peace, social justice, and unified solidarity, of participatory democracy with and for the majorities of our countries; and at the same time it is an independent project guided by the legitimate leadership of today's humble.

The infamous coup has met with a dignified response from the peoples of Honduras, confronting repression and demonstrating that they are the dignified heirs of the heroic Morazan, who after 200 years, still remains alert.

For this reason, in the name of the unity we have forever evoked and in light of recent events, I now call to your attention the following:

Comrades, in my government we are truly and deeply worried by the tense situation with our sister Republic of Colombia over the installation of at least seven North American military bases in that neighboring territory.

We wish to denounce, here and now, that this is part of a political and military plan orchestrated to destroy the project of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and moreover to pose the greatest threat in this historical moment to the infinite riches of our continent, which are: black gold, our petroleum; blue gold, our huge reserves of water; and green gold, our Amazon.

In the last few years, we have condemned the unending harassment against our country and our Bolivarian Revolution on the part of the elites that control the US Empire. Our People have defeated -to the astonishment of the international opinion- one coups d'état, several economic sabotages and the outright onslaught of media terrorism with international and national reach. Brothers and sisters of South America, the political and media justifications of the Colombian government and the heads of these military bases are a concrete threat to the peace, independence, and rights of the Venezuelan People.

In the last few days, we have received tokens of solidarity and concern from the peoples and governments of the continent, as well as, from a large sector of Colombian society. They believe that those who threaten us are able to stop the course of this new and heroic history that today we are writing in peace: "to make ourselves respectable is the indestructible guarantee of your subsequent efforts to preserve them" , said Jose Gervasio Artigas."

But, as in 200 years ago, our peoples made the decadent empire of Spain retreat, today we count on superior moral and political conditions to neutralize the warmongering sectors and guarantee that our continent will be a land of peace without a military threat.

"It would be a serious error to think the threat is only against Venezuela. It is directed at all southern nations of the continent", said comrade Fidel in his recent writings entitled "Seven Daggers in the Heart of America." Geopolitically, we are south of the hegemony, a reality that transcends the current political tendencies of the world's governments is that the problem of war is a concern of all humanity.

Never have our worries been a secret, and from this eternal truth spoke the Apostle of America Jose Marti, leaving in 1884 an unsolved question, which in our timestill bears a relevance: "What are we, General (Maximo Gomez)? Heroic and modest servants of an idea that enflames our hearts, the loyal friends of unfortunate peoples, or the brave and fortunate leaders that with whip in hand and spur in heel prepare to unleash a civil war upon the people, to then take over after them?"

We cannot conceal the clamor of the Colombian people and their desire to attain peace in their country. After seven decades of internal war, a solution will only be found in a negotiated political outcome that respects constitutional guarantees and enjoys the support of all South America.

The Colombian people have the right to peace. A servile elite, whose business is war in our sister nation, cannot expect to expand and impose their armed conflict with the pretense of

stigmatizing and destabilizing the progressive revolutionary movements that move forward by legitimate, democratic and peaceful means with the dreams and flags of our liberators, to complete their unfinished work of union, justice and independence.

We do not believe in a society completely free from conflict, that would be a utopia, but we understand that we are called to take on better fights, to recognize and contain them, to live - not in spite of them- but productively and intelligently with them. Only a people skeptical about the appeal of war, are a people ready for peace, to paraphrase our Colombian brother Estanislao Zuleta.

And if we do want an authentic peace, we must respond in a timely manner, with clarity and bravery, to the greatest needs of our peoples.

The time has come, South America, the hour of UNASUR, we trust in the political capacity of our nascent union to confront in this moment the threat that jeopardizes the future of our republics, the future of our peoples and the future of all of humanity.

We continue then, comrades, in the maxim of Bolivar, constructing that great American Pact, that all our republics may form one political body that represents America to the world with an original image of majesty and grandness that makes no reference to the old nations. America, so united, if the heavens concede this desire, will call itself the queen of nations and the mother of republics.

In brotherhood,

**Hugo Chávez Frías**

Miraflores Palace

Caracas, August 10th, 2009