

The New York Times salutes a "democratic" coup

Bill Vann
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The Bush administration distinguished itself internationally with its laudatory pronouncements on the abortive military coup in Venezuela. Nowhere, however, did the arrogance and hypocrisy of the US ruling elite find a more finished expression than on the editorial page of the *New York Times*.

“With yesterday’s resignation of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuelan democracy is no longer threatened by a would-be dictator,” the *Times* wrote in an editorial published Saturday and entitled “Hugo Chavez Departs.”

“Mr. Chavez, a ruinous demagogue, stepped down after the military intervened and handed power to a respected business leader, Pedro Carmona,” the *Times* noted happily.

The Ministry of Truth in George Orwell’s *1984*—which perfected “newspeak” to define war as peace, slavery as freedom and ignorance as strength—could not have done a better job.

The military had taken power and overthrown an elected government; the threat to democracy was over!

“Wisely,” the *Times* continued, “Washington never publicly demonized Mr. Chavez, denying him the role of nationalist martyr. Rightly, his removal was a purely Venezuelan affair.”

Says who? The Nixon administration likewise insisted that the military coup in Chile in 1973 was a “purely Chilean affair,” though the long preparation by the CIA and the Pentagon for the overthrow of Salvador Allende was documented thoroughly by Senate investigators in subsequent years. As Henry Kissinger stated during the run-up to the coup: “I don’t see why we should stand by and let a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people.”

This is essentially the position taken by the *Times*

towards Venezuela. Why should the Venezuelan people be allowed to choose a “ruinous demagogue” by popular vote, when a “respected business leader” can be placed in power at the point of a bayonet?

Contempt for democratic rights is by no means restricted to Venezuela. The *Times* and other sections of the ostensibly liberal media played essentially the same role in the 2000 election at home, working to create a false semblance of legitimacy for an administration that came to power by using extra-constitutional means to steal an election. Such is the effect of decades of unchecked social polarization upon liberalism, that for the “opinion makers” of the *Times* the most elementary democratic principles are hollow phrases that can be easily turned inside out to defend the interests of the haves against the have-nots.

Translating the “newspeak” practiced by the *Times* and other publications merely requires saying what is. The “democracy” that it hoped would be preserved in Venezuela is, in essence, the defense of the ruling establishment and the interests of US transnational corporations. Should this require the overthrow of an elected government and a bloodbath against the people, so be it.



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